Stieglitz Groups: Race, Place, and the Essentializing Logics of American Modernism

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation offers a new interpretation of the second Stieglitz Circle (the loose group of artists whose key members – Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, Paul Strand, and Georgia O'Keeffe – assembled around the Manhattan photographer and gallerist Alfred Stieglitz beginning in the late 1910s) by connecting its members' works to racism in the interwar United States. During this period, they developed what they described as a nationally representative modernist movement rooted in the distinctively "American" soil and spirit. Drawing on the artists' papers, personal and professional correspondence, and historical and contemporary publications, this project seeks to historicize and change this understanding of their art, which remains influential today. It argues that, as they sought to define truths that seemed universal, these artists' unreflective reliance upon both subjective, abstract, and intuitive forms of expression and popular ideas about the supposed inherent differences between human populations frequently led to generic and stereotypical representations of racial, ethnic, and regional identities in their works. These representations not only reflected the heightened focus on race in 1920s and '30s America, but also helped to foment discrimination by playing into broader racialization practices. Nonetheless, for over a century, critics and historians' failure to challenge the narratives that these artists claimed for their paintings, assemblages, and photographs has allowed these works to continue to resonate as timeless and nationally representative. The introduction situates the Circle's work within the broader landscapes of nationalism and racial and ethnic discrimination within interwar U.S. society, uses Stieglitz' oeuvre as an example of the logics its artists employed, and addresses disconnects between art

history and critical race studies. A chapter on Marin draws on tourism studies scholarship as it investigates his attempted assimilation into what he perceived to be a rustic "Yankee" community on the Maine coast and describes how he attempted to channel the supposed unique physical and spiritual character of the "Maine folk". A second chapter on O'Keeffe suggests that, in its representation of buildings, objects, and places of spiritual significance to local Indigenous and Hispanic groups, her Southwestern oeuvre frequently relied upon and perpetuated romantic stereotypes. The following chapter investigates how the abstract and allegorical works that Dove produced on Long Island connect to period racial stereotypes. Some such works are abstract evocations of encounters from everyday life, while others represent Dove's internalized perceptions of entire identities and cultures. A final chapter analyzes how Stieglitz and O'Keeffe shaped interpretation of the group's members from the 1910s until and beyond O'Keeffe's 1986 death. For decades they perpetuated their preferred understandings of their art (which cast it as socio-politically disengaged) to the exclusion of other interpretations by encouraging like-minded critics and controlling artworks and archives. This analysis suggests that their elevation as enduring exemplars of American cultural identity long discouraged seeing their work as representative of a particular environment, let alone as implicated in racist cultural systems. By encouraging reevaluation of these artists, this project aims to not only emphasize the urgency of historiographical engagement and borrowing from critical whiteness studies scholars to other historians of U.S. art, but also to foster the development of a new popular understanding of how the works of famous artists like Dove, Marin, O'Keeffe, and Stieglitz connected to historical circumstances and what roles those works have played in shaping and perpetuating racial discrimination.

CHAPTER I

Race and the Stieglitz Circle: An Introduction

'291' is a religious fact: like all such, a miracle. It is an altar where talk was often loud, heads never bared, but where no lie and no compromise could live. A little altar at which life was worshiped above the noise of a dead city. Here was refuge, certain and solitary, from the tearing grip of industrial disorder. When you were heartsick with all the dominance of death, you came to '291' and you found life. No place could be so holy as this place, for no place could be less holy than the world around it. New York was a lying and destroying storm: '291' was a candle that did not go out, since it alone was the truth.

- Waldo Frank, *Our America*, 1919[1]

A focus on cultural production not only deepens our understanding and awareness of how… discourses of race and ethnicity circulate within capitalism, but also helps us formulate and consider potential cultural political interventions.

- Anamik Saha, *Race and the Cultural Industries*, 2018[2]

In her 2005 essay "Lovechild: Stieglitz, O'Keeffe, and the Birth of American Modernism", art historian Camara Holloway highlights a 1919 picture by the modernist photographer and gallerist Alfred Stieglitz of his future wife, the painter Georgia O'Keeffe, posing nearly nude, holding her breast in one hand. This image fits easily within the broader project of which it is a small part – one of Stieglitz' most extensive and acclaimed artistic endeavors, his collective "portrait" of O'Keeffe, comprising over 300 photographs and frequently emphasizing the sensuality of her nude body. However, what makes this photograph noteworthy within the larger multi-work "portrait" is what O'Keeffe holds in her other hand – a large wooden spoon, made by either the Guro or Bété peoples of what is now Côte d'Ivoire

[1] Waldo Frank, *Our America* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), 184.
[2] Anamik Saha, *Race and the Cultural Industries* (Cambridge, England and Medford, MA: Polity, 2018), 21.

(Figure 1.1).[3] The spoon, acquired from Parisian dealer Paul Guillaume by Stieglitz associate Marius de Zayas, had been included in the landmark 1914 exhibition of African objects, "Statuary in Wood by African Savages – The Root of African Art", held at Stieglitz' Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession (better known by their street number on Fifth Avenue, "291"). Holloway's analysis makes clear how Stieglitz' interest in African objects fit into period racial and aesthetic theories. She writes: "Modern, civilized Euro-Americans used these objects to (re)discover a simpler form of consciousness and create a new form of art that could combat the negative effects of modern life." The cultural and spiritual significance of these objects within the societies that produced them was evidently far less important than the visual inspiration or vague sense of spiritual resonance that they could offer to modernist creatives.[4] Ultimately, "Only whites were deemed truly capable of molding the primitive aesthetic sensibility into a viable modernist enterprise."[5]

For many casual observers of American modernism, Stieglitz' interest in African objects is hardly surprising.[6] As one of the primary conduits for bringing the newest innovations in European modernism to the United States in the early twentieth century, he might be expected to develop a fascination with African wooden functional and religious objects that mirrored the primitivist leanings that had played a role in the work of European artists like Picasso, Braque,

[3] In fact this is one of several photographs that Stieglitz took of O'Keeffe with two different spoons.
[4] An in-depth investigation of the life of one of these objects, a wooden female figure, including the context from which it was stripped in the Lagoon region of Côte d'Ivoire, is detailed in Monica Blackmun Visonà, "Agent Provocateur? The African Origin and American Life of a Statue from Côte d'Ivoire", *Art Bulletin* 94, no. 1 (2012), 99-129.
[5] Camara Dia Holloway, "Lovechild: Stieglitz, O'Keeffe, and the Birth of American Modernism", *Prospects* 30 (2005), 398-401. For more on Stieglitz' acquisition and use of these objects in his galleries and photographs, see Helen M. Shannon, "African Art, 1914: The Root of Modern Art", in Sarah Greenough, et al., *Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art and Boston, New York, and London: Bulfinch, 2000)), 168-79; Yaëlle Biro, "African Art, New York, and the Avant-Garde", *African Arts* 46, no. 2 (2013), 88-97; and *Tribal Art*, special issue 3 (2012), also related to Biro's Metropolitan Museum exhibition.
[6] Many of the historical figures with whom I engage in this study equated "America" and the United States in their speech and writings. In the interest of elegance I will also at times use the term "America" to refer to the U.S., and "Americanist" to refer to scholars studying the U.S., while recognizing that they are not synonyms.

and Matisse for a decade or more. Aside from its impact on the shows that Stieglitz organized and photographs that he made, interest in African objects also substantially affected the work of other, contemporaneous American modernists, including Stieglitz affiliates like Max Weber, Francis Picabia, and de Zayas (who published a deeply bigoted book on the topic in 1916).[7]

Primitivism involving crafting abstract and semi-abstract modernist styles with inspiration from the angular character of certain West African wooden objects has often been identified as the most important intersection between modernism and race. However, Holloway's article is nonetheless a welcome one because her investigation of primitivism in Stieglitz' photograph leads her to question many of the traditional pieties surrounding it, pieties that had seen him become the most important and celebrated figure in the narratives about both photography and modernist art in America in the period before the Second World War. In doing so, she argues that Stieglitz' interest in African art intersected with an interest in chronicling O'Keeffe's sexuality in ways that reveal his belief in the potential for connections between whiteness, modern art, and American national identity.

However, other questions remain, especially about the connections between Stieglitz and the artists in the new group that surrounded him after the First World War and issues of race beyond the realm of African art. Africana is, after all, an interest that only features in a handful of the group's exhibitions, photographs, and paintings. Are there other ways in which the system of social categorization that we know as "race" connects to works by these long-celebrated artists – a group that, along with Stieglitz, includes canonical painters like Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, and Georgia O'Keeffe? Certainly, it seems obvious that the role of

[7] A representative quote from the book: "Among the numberless tribes which compose the negro race… their psychology is everywhere the same… They remain in a mental state very similar to that of the children of the white race." See Marius de Zayas, *African Negro Art: Its Influence on Modern Art* (New York: Modern Gallery, 1916), 10.

everyday racism (whether we are thinking of casual racism used regularly within a particular social context in which one or more of these artists thrived, like modernist Manhattan or New Mexico or more generally across interwar American society) in all of its terrible banality would be worth exploring and analyzing in connection to not just these artists, but also many others. However, we might also ask: was there a particular fascination among these artists with people who were categorized as racial others? If so, how did it reveal itself in their works, beyond a sometime interest in collecting and depicting African wooden objects? How might it have informed their approach to modernism, or connected to the racism that prevailed within the interwar U.S.? Furthermore, were there ways in which their shared approaches or philosophies led them to take a special interest in racialized people, places, and things? The answers to these larger questions linger unanswered in the air of American art studies, even as some scholars continue to chip away at the problem through focused case studies. Meanwhile, the profit- and elitism-driven machinery of the art world also leaves these issues unexamined, instead continuing to churn out textbooks and exhibitions that emphasize the Circle's significance within the history of U.S. art and unquestioningly reiterate traditional narratives about their work to larger publics.

Art, Art History, and the Visualization of Race

This dissertation seeks to identify and analyze some of the connections between the art that Stieglitz and his followers made and racialization practices. Visual culture scholar Nicholas Mirzoeff writes that, "I use the word 'racializing' to stress that 'race' is always being made, never found."[8] Focusing on the ways in which race has been made because of and through these

[8] Nicholas Mirzoeff, *White Sight: Visual Politics and Practices of Whiteness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2023), 12. Racialization is an important concept in this dissertation in part because it emphasizes the ongoing creation/fictionalization of race as a category rather than its fixity or inherent truthfulness. When I refer to

artists' works is at the heart of this project. It also asserts that their shared philosophies offered avenues for exotic fascination with supposed racial "others" to emerge in their works, and considers the part that their widely displayed and reproduced paintings and photographs have played in the United States' racial system over the last century. In so doing, it highlights the various roles that notions of racial difference played in interwar American society at large and within the elite Manhattan art world in which the artists' paths intersected. Like many other privileged people in their era, the Stieglitz artists often approached race as a concept only relevant to other people – that is, non-white people. However, I attempt to address it here more as a naturalized yet fundamentally illogical social category constructed between an array of justifications (visual, genetic, social, cultural, etc.) that was applied to and deeply affected the lives of virtually all people in the twentieth century United States. [9] Of course, this includes all "white" people – no matter how much the racial system might encourage people to see them as "normal" or "raceless" (and others, by implication, non-normal and racial).[10] "Race" was above all used as a tool to uphold and perpetuate the social privilege of the purportedly superior group, "white" people, and to relegate non-"white" people to lesser status. Though many people of

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racialization hereafter I will typically mean something close to racial formation, or "the social and psychological processes that… [put] people into racial categories" and allow exclusionary practices to be legitimized, rather than the processes whereby things or phenomena come to be seen as connected to or characteristic of particular racial groups. The above quote is from Karim Murji and John Solomos, "Introduction", in Karim Murji and John Solomos, eds., *Racialization: Studies in Theory and Practice* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7-8, 11; See also Robert Miles, *Racism* (London: Routledge, 1989); and Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (1988; reis., New York and London: Routledge, 2015).

[9] A useful rudimentary definition of "race": "the idea that the human species is divided into distinct groups on the basis of inherited physical and behavioral differences. Genetic studies in the late 20th century refuted the existence of biogenetically distinct races, and scholars now argue that "races" are cultural interventions reflecting specific attitudes and beliefs that were imposed on different populations in the wake of western European conquests beginning in the 15th century." "race", *Encyclopedia Brittanica*, accessed March 31, 2023, https://www.britannica.com/topic/race-human.

[10] One useful discussion of the illogical character of "race" can be found in Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 1-12. Given its constructedness and historical mutability, we might define "white" in a racial context most usefully by simply identifying it as what society or individuals have defined it to be in any given time and place – though it is useful to note that it has typically been associated with people with light-colored skin and/or European (and especially Northern and Western European) heritage.

color take pride in racial identities that they associate with histories of solidarity and resistance, at its core race was and is always and everywhere a performance of a false identity. This false identity system is continually perpetuated throughout society to deeply damaging effect. Writes philosopher and artist Adrian Piper, "A self-styled White tells themselves and others that they are white. A self-styled Black tells themselves and others that they are black. Both pressure their listeners to racially style themselves and others in response… So each time racial self-stylers repeat them, they hammer those lies deeper into their own and others' habits of thought, speech, and action."[11]

In focusing on the role of racism in propelling the racial system, the project takes its cue from critical whiteness studies scholars who have, since the 1990s especially, brought new levels of scholarly focus and theorization to the roles of white people (including "white" racial self-perception) within racial systems.[12] Given that the art world is a realm in which social privilege is frequently exerted by elites, racial privilege would seem to be an especially relevant topic of study for art historians. Despite this, within art history the incorporation of the insights of the

[11] Adrian Piper, "Caste in Stone: Why Classifying Artists by Race Is Not Just a 'Social Construct'", *artnet*, published December 16, 2022, https://news.artnet.com/art-world/caste-in-stone-why-classifying-artists-by-race-is-not-just-a-social-construct-2229595. If I may ask a possibly inane rhetorical question (that, I will note, is in no way intended to diminish the power of racial and ethnic privilege or the horrors of racial and ethnic bias) – are we not all from the Horn of Africa? Is not every person "from" a certain country also from the waypoints where their ancestors stopped along the way to that part of the world? What about historical intermingling of human populations? When I think these questions through, the arbitrariness of declaring a person's "race" or "ethnicity" based on where (often just a selectively chosen portion of) their ancestors lived at some virtually random time in the past becomes more clear. So, too, does the modernity of the "ethnicity" concept.

[12] For example, I have found the writings of scholars including Thomas F. Gossett, Matthew Frye Jacobson, and Matthew Pratt Guterl on the history of whiteness in the interwar United States particularly useful. See Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*; Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (1963; repub., New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Matthew Pratt Guterl, *The Color of Race in America, 1900-1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). Classic theoretical texts I have in mind here include David Roediger's *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London and New York: Verso, 1991); Ruth Frankenberg's *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); and Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, though these are just famous examples from substantial bodies of literature. For a more complete (though now dated) bibliography of whiteness studies, see Tim Engles, "Toward a Bibliography of Critical Whiteness Studies", *Faculty Research & Creative Activity* 51 (2006), http://thekeep.eiu.edu/eng_fac/51.

broader field of critical whiteness studies remains infrequent and haphazard, especially regarding historically quotidian forms of racial bias and self-understanding. This project uses a series of case studies to highlight and give texture to this problem, and seeks to encourage art historians to consider whether topics such as white privilege and racism should not be more central to a discipline that is inherently devoted to studying elite culture.

Relatedly, it argues that cultural products like artworks can play key roles in creating and perpetuating racial distinction and discrimination. This is in part because art and other cultural media frequently repeat the lies of race, hammering the idea that race is real and that white supremacy is true deeper all the time through their position of influence in society, while obfuscating the social and cultural repercussions of the racial system. Much the same can be said for the related yet often (especially in the interwar era) far from distinct idea, "ethnicity". Though this term often assumes a veneer of respectability or logicality because it is typically rooted in ideas about heredity and the national "origin" of a person's ancestors, it is nonetheless also a fundamentally illogical modern construction.[13]

In this dissertation I am hoping to ask: how much of an impact can representations have on shaping the racial (and ethnic) thinking within a local, regional, or national community? And what about *these* images and objects, the works made by the Stieglitz artists in the 1920s and '30s? Did they help to "display power" and "reproduce domination" (in the words of scholar

[13] "Ethnicity" is illogical in part because it draws upon arbitrary, insufficiently complex, and vastly differing definitions of historical and present-day communities. According to scholar Werner Sollors, the ethnicity system, "lead[s] to an isolationist, group-by-group approach that emphasizes "authenticity" and cultural heritage within the individual, somewhat idealized group—at the expense of more widely shared historical conditions and cultural features, of dynamic interaction and syncretism…Is not the ability of ethnicity to present (or invent) itself as a "natural" and timeless category the problem to be tackled? Are not ethnic groups part of the historical process, tied to the history of modern nationalism? Though they may pretend to be eternal and essential, are they not of rather recent origin and eminently pliable and unstable? Is not modernism an important source of ethnicity?" Werner Sollors, "Introduction: The Invention of Ethnicity", in Werner Sollors, ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), xiv.

Saidiya Hartman) as representations that normalized whiteness and white supremacy and encouraged exotification of and discrimination against racial and ethnic others?[14] Shawn Michelle Smith writes about the need to "move the discussion of race and the visual beyond an assessment of representations to consider questions about… the ways in which looking produces racialized *viewers*, not simply racialized objects of view."[15] All of these artists' works connect in some way to the particular vision of national identity and belonging that they sought to articulate, to be sure – but how did their works, as individual objects and in the collective, play a role in racialization practices over the past century? How did they make racialized *viewers*?

As later portions of this introduction will discuss in greater detail, several scholars have conducted "assessments of representations" by connecting particular artworks by members of the Stieglitz group to issues of race in the past, but they have hardly ever taken up these bigger questions about the group as a whole, or canonicity, or broader racialization practices. However, art historians, sociologists, and philosophers have spent some time considering the broader question of the role that images can play in shaping racial views, and their examples prove instructive, not only as we seek to better understand the Stieglitz group, but also as we consider our priorities as art historians.

Art historian Martin Berger, whose 2005 book *Sight Unseen* pioneered borrowing from whiteness studies to better understand American art, argues that, "images do not persuade us to

[14] Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 7. See also Teresa A. Goddu, "Anti-Slavery's Panoramic Perspective", *MELUS* 39, no. 2 (2014), 12-41.

[15] Smith notes that "Many important studies of race… have understood race as the *object* of a gaze, rather than as a subjective status produced by the *performance of* a gaze". Shawn Michelle Smith, "Guest Editor's Introduction: Visual Culture and Race," *MELUS* 39, no. 2 (2014), 2-3. Smith draws upon bell hooks' writings on practices of looking in the history of racism in the United States in bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992; repub., New York and Oxford: Routledge, 2015). Notable writings on the topic of how whiteness and blackness are made through looking and the performance and circulation of ways of looking include Mirzoeff, *White Sight*; Nicole Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); and Richard Dyer, *White* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

internalize racial values embedded within them, so much as they confirm meanings for which the discourses and structures of our society have predisposed us. Instead of selling us on racial systems we do not already own, the visual field powerfully confirms previously internalized beliefs."[16] I do not entirely agree. Rather, I feel that images not only reinforce beliefs that viewers already hold, but also often play a foundational and powerfully determinative role in how people's views on "race" and the (supposed) particular character of racial groups are formed and shaped.[17] After all, surely the main point of decrying harmful representations in cultural media is that such representations can play a significant role in inciting racial hatred and discrimination.[18] As philosopher Alia Al-Saji summarizes, when it comes to the scope and particular character of an individual's views on race and other culturally formed modes of thought, "This imaginary constellation, this cultural view of the world, is acquired through childhood education, scholarly manuals, language, media, comic books, stories, films, and images" and so on. She continues, "The circulation of racializing images, in artistic and cinematic production, plays a constitutive role in the social imaginary."[19] In his classic study *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon argues that cultural sources play key roles in perpetuating racism: "Willy-nilly, the Negro has to wear the livery that the white man has sewed for him.

[16] Martin A. Berger, *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2005), 1. Berger doubled-down in a later book about Civil Rights Era photography: "The white-on-black violence pictured in and promoted by the photographs is ultimately a symptom of racism and not its cause." Martin A. Berger, *Seeing Through Race: A Reinterpretation of Civil Rights Photography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 159.

[17] Images powerfully reveal and, often, support the structures that form and perpetuate the racial system. This is not simply because race is in many ways a "visual" category, a point that is important but nonetheless sometimes overblown by those who study images. After all, there is no real way in which the racial system "makes sense" in any ideologically coherent fashion, be it hereditary, phenotypic, visual, social, or otherwise. Consequently there is no single plane upon which it can coherently and convincingly operate, and it instead functions at the intersection of a range of such justifications, or, more often, as a categorization system that is almost always already accepted and internalized, virtually without real justification.

[18] A relatively obvious example scenario might involve race-based hatred being fomented through harmful caricatures that impugn a racial group in some way.

[19] Alia Al-Saji, "Glued to the Image: A Critical Phenomenology of Racialization through Works of Art", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 77, no. 4 (2019), 476-77. Al-Saji is drawing on Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (1952; repub., London: Grove, 1967).

Look at children's picture magazines: Out of every Negro mouth comes the ritual 'Yassuh, boss.'"[20] In his influential book, *Racism,* Miles dedicates the entire first section to discussing "Representations of the Other", to which he attributes the very origins of racism as a social phenomenon in the Western world.[21] Says racial theorist Richard Dyer, "Racial imagery is central to the organisation of the modern world."[22]

Often this phenomenon, this shaping of racial views through representations, takes place in a very subtle and slow fashion. The experience of viewing a single artwork might be just a single brushstroke in the large and textured painting that constitutes an individual's thoughts, feelings, or subconscious inclinations about a particular racial or ethnic group or the racial system as a whole. Though, as Berger suggests, a single work might primarily function by reinforcing preexisting beliefs, images can also shape new ideas among those who view them, much as written or spoken words or observations of social interactions might. To Smith's point, pictures are not *just* mere representations that evince a particular (racial) perspective – they are objects that are used actively by those who see them as they continually refine their senses of self and their perceptions of the world and the roles and statuses of other people within it.

In some of Arthur Dove's cartoon work we see stereotypes similar to those Fanon mentions invoked through lazy written invocations of African-American Vernacular English that are duly accompanied by visual stereotypes. As Chapter Four will argue, even if they are not quite as obvious in their racism as some of his cartoons, other works like *Nigger Goes A' Fishin'* and *Nigger Barge* similarly invoke and perpetuate stereotypes through words, visualization, and allusion. Though few of the other works by Circle artists were quite so obvious in their use of

[20] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 34.
[21] Miles, *Racism*, 11-40.
[22] Dyer, *White*, 1.

damaging racial stereotypes, we can imagine works incorporating racialized content by other artists playing a similar role, with their relative subtlety possibly augmenting their potential for insidiousness. Though these works of "fine" art are less pervasive than the popular sources to which Fanon refers, the esteem and seriousness with which they are typically treated and their longevity in the public eye offer different avenues whereby they may have influenced public opinion and played a role in shaping and perpetuating racism.

Fanon also points out that both black and white audiences see their behaviors shaped by the power of the racial system: "The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation."[23] When depicting social and racial "others" in cultural media, elite/white creators typically not only reinforced the ostensible inferiority of these others, but also implied their superiority. They were not only white and therefore *not* not-white, but were also supposedly clever and observant enough to notice the supposed special, inferior character of the members of the other, purportedly non-normative groups and to comment upon those supposed racial differences in ways that denigrated those others and/or glorified their exotic character.

Meanwhile, scholar Anamik Saha, in a book dedicated to the interrelations between race and the cultural industries, points out that cultural media not only foment race-based hatred and discrimination, but leave a "scarring and disfiguring impact… on racialized minorities."[24] What happens when a person of color sees their culture held up as a source of exotic fascination in these artists' works? How do such experiences affect how these people go on in their lives, how they see themselves and others? What has the impact of the persistent focus on the "national" character of these artists and their works been given how often that term and idea have stood in

[23] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 60.
[24] Saha, *Race and the Cultural Industries*, 5.

for notions of "whiteness" or "Anglo-Saxon" identity?

Thinking more historiographically, for most of the twentieth century, and on a slightly reduced basis today, canonical works by white artists like the members of the Stieglitz group benefitted, too, from what Stuart Hall termed a system of "regulated, segregated visibility", whereby growing efforts to include and spotlight the work of non-white cultural creators, to "replace invisibility", frequently nonetheless resulted in their work being ghettoized.[25] Writes art historian Jacqueline Francis, "When survey texts add American minorities to art history, the profiles of these cultural producers improve, and yet they remain sidebar items because they are not integrated into the main story."[26] Under this regime, the work of canonical white artists could shine, not only explicitly as it continued to take up the majority of the attention paid to art amidst the art world's various institutions and within the broader American cultural realm, but also implicitly as the mainstream to which more diverse strands were appended and, inevitably, compared. Adds writer Daniel Blight, "What the white people who… fill the cultural superstructure of institutions programming exhibitions and projects call 'diversity work' actually serves to obscure whiteness rather than attack it head on. All these well-meaning white directors, producers, creatives and curators hold up and sustain the image of a 'white world'."[27] Clearly, artworks can not only perform racialization through their content, but also are themselves frequently racialized, typically because of racialized perceptions of their makers. In some cases, the artists themselves anticipate and play into the racialization of their own personae and artworks. In the case of the Stieglitz artists, it is hard not to perceive ways in which their artworks and the rhetoric that Stieglitz wove around those works were fashioned in reaction to

[25] Stuart Hall, "What Is This 'Black' In Black Popular Culture?", *Social Justice* 20, no. 1/2 (1993), 107.
[26] Jacqueline Francis, *Making Race: Modernism and "Racial Art" in America* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2011), 14.
[27] Daniel C. Blight, "The Image of Whiteness", in Daniel C. Blight, ed., *The Image of Whiteness: Contemporary Photography and Racialization* (London: SPBH Editions and Art on the Underground, 2019), 12.

internalized, often unthinking perceptions of the artists' whiteness and non-white peoples' supposed otherness.

The Stieglitz Circle artists made images that invoke racial identities in ways that run the gamut of obviousness from direct representations of people through the lens of racial stereotypes to images that feature no human figures but nonetheless subtly play into, perpetuate, and shape racial thinking through their invocation of racialized places, things, and ideas. In these works, allusion to racial difference could be affected even through visual characteristics as subtle as shapes and patterns, or even by playing into systems that categorized these artists as white and celebrated their work because they were white (like, for example, the praise of their work on national and modernist grounds). Impact can be substantial even in cases where race enters into a work only subtly or indirectly. Though such images may operate in large part through their ability to inspire connections to other ideas already existing within viewers' minds (or indeed ideas to which they are later exposed), they nonetheless have the power to shape ideas – to do more than confirm meanings to which viewers are already predisposed (to paraphrase Berger).

What, though, about when images become iconic and widespread, as the Stieglitz artists' did in the postwar era?[28] What about when they are used in the service of "blockbuster" museum exhibitions that have, as they have attracted millions of visitors to art institutions, turned the traditional status of the art and museum worlds on their heads, helping them to become, to quote visual theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff, "in some sense a part of mass culture, not its opposite"?[29] What if paintings become renowned images reproduced ad nauseam, not just in art history textbooks but as quasi-generic symbols of a nation or historical period – like, for example,

[28] We might also ask, what about when they contribute to tropes that are perpetuated in many other images/cultural sources, and the experience of seeing the trope reproduced many times over has a cumulative effect?
[29] See Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 12.

Georgia O'Keeffe's *Cow's Skull: Red, White, and Blue* (Figure 3.26, discussed at greater length in Chapter Three) has been? What if they become symbols of a region and are displayed as representatives of its character and history, like John Marin and Marsden Hartley's pictures of New England and New Englanders (Chapter Two)? What if they are simply canonical artworks displayed in many of America's most esteemed museums, like Arthur Dove's paintings and assemblages representing African-Americans (Chapter Four)? These are not the commonplace sort of images often referenced in declarations of the power of the visual in the modern and digital eras. Rather, they are exalted images presented to society as culturally significant not only because they are thought to be high art, but also because they are by esteemed, canonical artists. These images at times bridge the divide between high and popular culture.

Some scholars have focused in the past on the ways in which works by artists of color can help to "make race" by playing into art world establishment expectations about their racial and ethnic groups.[30] Others have written compellingly about the power of black-made visual culture materials in shaping a "black gaze" that allows black creatives to dictate black representation in popular culture as never before.[31] However, even today, what often receive far less attention are the ways in which works by white artists can, especially when they represent non-white-coded racialized people, places, and things, both reaffirm perceptions of their whiteness and shape perceptions of non-white groups.

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[30] Writes Francis about modern American artists of color whose work met such expectations, "In liberal quarters, racial art was welcomed as the translation of exotic heritage." Indeed, often "the perception was that minority artists had atavistic access to such visual expression." Francis, *Making Race*, 7.

[31] One such approach is exemplified by the works of creatives who are trying to unsettle the traditional "otherness" of black people as counterparts to normalized whiteness, and instead view the world and black peoples' role in it through black positionality See Tina M. Campt, *A Black Gaze: Artists Changing How We See* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021), 7-8. Nicholas Mirzoeff's *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), which argues for the relevance of imagining different realities as a way of thinking against forms of visuality that are the products of systems of authority and domination, may also be relevant to this conversation.

Past investigations of issues of race within the history of art in the United States have frequently focused on some of the most obvious cases of racism on the part of white artists, including instances in which artworks incorporated clear invocations of racist stereotypes or language or otherwise became articulations of artists' openly white supremacist beliefs. This is true, too, in the case of some of the Stieglitz artists. Some of the most forceful inquiries of issues of race in connection to their work have focused on the role of Hartley's white supremacist beliefs in his late New England work and the case of Dove's *Nigger Goes A-Fishin'*, which caricatures an African-American fisherman.

This project has different goals – for one thing, to encourage scholars to recognize the enormous, largely untapped potential of critical reconsideration of canonical figures and pictures in a field so inextricably linked to elitism and social differentiation.[32] Rather than separate efforts, analysis of elitism and the canon and new focus on groups that have been historically ignored and discriminated against should be complementary endeavors that together work towards the goal of offering a more expansive and honest version of the history of arts and visual culture and their connections to societal power systems. Using the Stieglitz artists' works as examples, it is an effort to think about how artworks and the writing about them and the institutions that are built around them, and especially artworks that do not engage in especially obvious forms of racism (including abstract works), can nonetheless be an important component of the "hidden apparatus" of whiteness, which has long allowed it to function through ideas and places where it largely goes unperceived and unanalyzed.[33]

It is, finally, also a consideration of why these artists chose to focus on racialized subjects

[32] A relevant, related conversation is: Naomi Slipp, Jacqueline Francis, and Keri Watson, response to Kimberly Orcutt, "But Who Will We Be?" Talk Back (letter to the editor), *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2021), https://journalpanorama.org/article/talk-back-issue-7-1.
[33] Blight, "The Image of Whiteness", 12.

in these ways. Though much of its response to this final question focuses on the pressures levied by various social contexts, it is important to acknowledge that, alongside influencing what seemed normal or worthwhile or interesting to these artists and therefore what they chose to represent, social contexts also affected their creative judgment because it affected their critical and financial success and survival as artists. That is, racism was frequently incentivized on both a financial and a reputational level. Wrote bell hooks later in the century, "…mass culture is the contemporary location that both publicly declares and perpetuates the idea that there is pleasure to be found in the acknowledgement and enjoyment of racial difference… Within the commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture."[34] hooks probably was not thinking of the widespread circulation of images made by modernist artists when she referred to "mass culture" in her book. However, a similar paradigm may be at play in the case of the Stieglitz artists. When they played into racial stereotypes, they also, to a certain extent, may have ensured the future popularity of their works among the large audiences for whom exoticism (and especially exoticism divorced from more blatant forms of bigotry) was an appealing cultural flavor.

The purpose of this investigation is therefore, on one hand, to articulate and argue for some claims that are very particular to these artists. However, it is also to point out some bigger issues within the historiography and state of current practice of the history of U.S. art, in both academia and within museums – including the field's struggles with adequately confronting issues of whiteness and casual racism and its difficulties with questioning and undermining traditional canonical narratives (topics that I address at greater length in Chapter Five). At the same time, it is to offer something to visual culture studies and whiteness studies, realms in

[34] hooks, *Black Looks*, 21.

which work is often highly theoretical and speculative, by rooting an analysis of the impact of images/art objects on broader the racial system in specific circumstances. I work towards this goal via close visual analysis and detailed archival research, including research into not only the circumstances of the creation of the objects but also their afterlives in print and other media and in museum collections. Finally, it is to make an argument for the importance of thinking about and analyzing how artworks and other cultural products, including and especially those that do not reveal racial biases in ways that have historically been widely recognized and deconstructed, play a real and substantial role in shaping and supporting the racial system we know and live within. Saha writes that, "A focus on cultural production not only deepens our understanding and awareness of how… discourses of race and ethnicity circulate within capitalism, but also helps us formulate and consider potential cultural political interventions."[35] I hope that what I write here will not only deepen understanding of a few artists or a particular historiographical problem, but also encourage transformation in academia, museums, and beyond.

Nation, Form, and Spirit: Identifying the Second Circle

The project focuses principally on a period beginning soon before Stieglitz photographed O'Keeffe holding the Ivorian spoon and lasting until just a few years before his, Dove's, and Hartley's deaths, in the mid-1940s – the U.S. interwar era (1918-1941), during which supposed racial differences took on renewed importance at the center of American social and political life. During this era Stieglitz' cohort also took on a new form, morphing into the more insular and focused group that scholars have termed the "second Stieglitz Circle".[36]

[35] Saha, *Race and the Cultural Industries*, 21.
[36] For a timeline of the events in Stieglitz' life in these years (and before and after), see "General Chronology", in Greenough, et al., *Modern Art and America*, 555-72. Stieglitz had, notably, known most of these artists, including Hartley, Dove, and Marin, for more than a decade before the coherence of the second Circle in the years after the war, while he did not meet (the much younger) O'Keeffe until 1916.

This new group formed in large part because, in 1917, amidst the social and cultural upheavals of the First World War, Alfred Stieglitz' professional life changed dramatically. He had been operating as the leader of the group of aesthetically transgressive pictorialist photographers known as the Photo-Secession since 1901. In 1905 he had opened 291 and transformed it into New York's foremost venue for displaying art that promised new directions in avant-garde artmaking, as well as art from purportedly "primitive" makers like Africans and children. In 1917 291 closed, its magazine *Camera Work* stopped publishing, and the German-American Stieglitz, distraught by mixed feelings about the war, began to look for a new direction.[37] When, the next year, O'Keeffe moved to New York and Stieglitz left his wife for her, he found inspiration in the project of photographing her. In the following years he focused on that work alongside organizing exhibitions at the Anderson Galleries (including exhibitions of Marin and O'Keeffe's works and his own photographs) before eventually opening his own gallery again, The Intimate Gallery, in 1925.

The first Circle had been more diverse in numerous ways, including in terms of ideology, interest, and background. Stieglitz' earlier orbit had, to varying degrees, included figures like the Mexican caricaturist de Zayas, the Japanese-German writer Sadakichi Hartmann, the Russian-born Jewish painter Max Weber, and the English-Ceylonese curator and photographer Ananda Coomaraswamy. The "second Circle" that formed in the interwar era was (like the earlier group) never an official association or organization. Rather, it was a loosely affiliated group perhaps most easily defined as those who were a part of the major 1925 Anderson Galleries exhibition that Stieglitz organized and named "Seven Americans": Charles Demuth, Arthur Dove, Marsden

[37] Stieglitz discusses the distress he felt because he could not "see Germany as all wrong and the Allies as all right" in the War, in contrast to prevailing opinion in America, in Dorothy Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer* (New York: Random House, 1973), 124.

Hartley, John Marin, Georgia O'Keeffe, Paul Strand, and Stieglitz himself. Dove, Marin, and O'Keeffe, especially, were at the heart of the Circle, as they were the main protagonists of the galleries that Stieglitz subsequently founded, The Intimate Gallery (1925-1929) and its successor, An American Place (1929-1950), until and beyond his death in 1946.[38] In contrast to the more eclectic and experimental first Circle, these artists all shared similarly privileged backgrounds and a commitment to making art that connected national meaning, modernist methods, and intuitive feeling.[39] The idea that authentic national meaning was best found not in the metropolis but among traditional cultures was part of the motivation for some of the members of the group, including Hartley, Marin, O'Keeffe, and Strand, to travel with increasing frequency to regional locales far from New York City. These moves coincided with artistic shifts away from their earlier, more experimental abstraction and toward more figurative work. It was this more figurative work, as well as writing by cultural critics that described the artists' personal connections to certain places, that eventually led to their lasting association with these regions, and that quickly became a hallmark of the new Circle's collective efforts.

Marin and O'Keeffe's lengthy and regular touristic visits to New England and the Southwest offered artistic inspiration that helped them combine modernist visual tendencies with racial and regional exoticism, while Dove's pictures made while living a few hours away from the city demonstrate how everyday life in East Coast exurbs could provide its own forms of creative stimulation to an artist interested in supposed racial others. These long periods spent away from Manhattan led them to develop voluminous bodies of correspondence with one another and with other friends and contacts in the world of interwar American art and letters.

[38] It perhaps goes without saying that "Seven Americans" and "An American Place" were symptoms of Stieglitz' growing obsession with American national identity in the interwar era.

[39] Hartley, notably, grew up in an atmosphere of relative poverty, though he did find ways to study at the Cleveland School of Art, New York School of Art, and National Academy of Design – experiences that accelerated his social and professional upward trajectory.

Through these and other projects, the artists sought to develop what they described as a nationally representative modernist movement rooted in the distinctively "American" soil and spirit. Drawing on these vast bodies of correspondence, this project seeks to historicize and change this understanding of their art, which remains influential today. It suggests that a far-larger, longer-standing, and often subtler set of connections between these artists' works and period racial ideologies exists than has previously been recognized, and argues that these works not only reveal certain elements of the racism of their time and place, but have continued to play a role in racialization processes in the century since.

The artworks on which it focuses range from Marin's expressionist watercolors of craggy headlands and weathered neighbors in Down East Maine, to O'Keeffe's smooth and spare paintings of Native-American lands and buildings in northern New Mexico, to Dove's more abstract and lyrical pictures reflecting his perceptions of racial others in the New York exurbs. These diverse bodies of art indicate the widely differing interests and methods that these artists brought to bear on paper and canvas with the help of Stieglitz' enthusiasm, support, and advocacy. Despite their differences, however, the artists nonetheless shared a set of philosophical and aesthetic commitments that seem to have played a significant role in encouraging the recurrent appearance of racialized things, places, people, and styles within their works.[40]

Under Stieglitz' guidance, the artists and their champions celebrated their work for its mystical spiritualism, unapologetic modernism, and nationally characteristic flavor. Indeed, along with friendship, love, and allyship, these three ideas were the main factors that united these artists under Stieglitz' umbrella and differentiated them not just from the more philosophically

[40] It is, naturally, worth wondering whether these artistic commitments were more chicken or egg when considered in concert with their social and political views. Is there an extent to which their views on race or other social issues influenced their artistic philosophies?

diverse first Circle, but also from the rest of the interwar American avant-garde. However, these professed shared artistic tenets – the spiritual, the national, and the modernist – were all rooted in significant ways in period racial stereotypes. Influenced by mystical thinkers who popularized spiritual philosophies like Theosophy and Transcendentalism within the American culturati in the 1910s and '20s, Stieglitz encouraged his followers to rely upon intensely subjective, personal, and abstract forms of artistic expression as they worked to convey what they believed to be the timeless and distinctive essence of the "American" nation and people. This use of an inherently simplifying visual language to represent personal intuitions about the "spirit" of particular places and people inevitably led to generic and romantic representations of racial, ethnic, and regional identities in these artists' works.

At a time when elite white interpreters both foreign and domestic were hailing the nation's black, white, and Native folk cultures as the key component of its cultural identity, the group's appropriative approach towards placemaking was by and large ideologically unoriginal.[41] However, by depicting such subjects through modernist idioms, the Stieglitz artists crafted bodies of work that resonated as both innovative and nationally characteristic among critics concerned with defining an original or autochthonous "American" culture unbeholden to European counterparts. In so doing they enacted a form of modernist primitivism that differed from European iterations not only in terms of its subject matter and intended national and

[41] For the purposes of this dissertation I will define placemaking as articulating the identity/key characteristics of a place and/or "culture" and publicly disseminating the results. Interesting theorization of making place, including interpretations that foreground how construction of local, regional, and national identities often connects to cultural hegemony, has come from anthropology – see, for example, Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, eds., *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1997). The idea of "cultures" in the anthropological sense is, interestingly, often traced to the early twentieth-century scholar Franz Boas, who is discussed later in this chapter. A theorization of the relevance of various racialized regional cultures in the period is: John Crowe Ransom, "The Aesthetic of Regionalism", *American Review* 2 (1934), 290-310. A relevant period theorization was the notion of the "spirit of place" – an idea popularized by Circle contemporary and fellow modernist D.H. Lawrence. See D.H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature (*New York: Seltzer, 1923).

universal meanings, but also because it sometimes implied white artists' and audience's sense of admiration for the racialized groups that their work exoticized. There is often lurking in the exoticism in these artists' works a sense of appreciation born of these supposed racial and ethnic others' potential to contribute to the national identity.

If racialized peoples were, then, a central interest for the group, it is equally noteworthy that, for almost the entire twentieth century, this element of their project was hardly discussed at all by the countless critics or historians who wrote about these artists and helped ensure their canonical status – and thereby their eventual omnipresence in the nation's most august collections, their central roles in classroom and museum narratives of American modernism, and the stunning value of their works on the art market. A second major focus for this dissertation is consequently historiographic, and it therefore seeks to uncover not only how these artists' reputations were built but also why the racial elements of their works went unexplored and uncriticized for so many years. In doing so it considers whether similar critique might extend to other modernisms of the period as well as to racialized cultural media beyond the art world.

Scholars have partially answered the first of these questions already. Most notably, Hartley's interest in the Nazis' Aryanist ideology and his application of related *volk*-fetishizing white supremacist values to the work he made after his return to Maine in 1937 has been the subject of significant interest over the past several decades. The pioneer in this area was Donna Cassidy, whose several articles beginning in the mid-1990s and subsequent 2005 book on Hartley focus on how his exposure to Nazi ideology during his extensive travels in Europe led him to produce "Expressionist paintings of the North Atlantic folk, the Maine coast, Mount Katahdin, and still lifes of coastal artifacts" in the late '30s and early '40s. She argues that these pictures were reflective of period social and cultural concerns including "the fascination with the

American past, …primitivism, sexuality, and race" and "reveal a person of conservative persuasion, uneasy about modern society, and… sympathetic to… racial cleansing".[42] Eventually, Cassidy asserts, Hartley came to believe in the inherent superiority of certain "races" over others, to think of race as rooted in the natural environment where ethnic groups live, and to advocate for the purity and superiority of certain racial groups, including and especially groups of "Nordic" descent from Maine and eastern Canada, while complaining about the nation's growing racial diversity.[43] In 2008 Randall Griffey built on this work by more clearly linking Hartley's work to the interwar eugenics movement.[44]

Given what has already been written about racialized regionalism in Hartley's work, I will not focus on it at length. However, it is worth pausing for a moment to consider his role within the group. Suffice it to say that Hartley was an outlier in some important respects, including the virulence and origin of his racism and the extent to which it affected his work. Though Hartley was for many years among Stieglitz' chosen artists just as Dove, Marin, and O'Keeffe were, he spent numerous long periods in Europe, much further away from Stieglitz' Manhattan orbit, from the 1910s through the 1930s, and was less involved with the operation of Stieglitz galleries and less close to Stieglitz personally than were his peers. However, though there are unique factors at play in Hartley's work, it is important not to overestimate the degree

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[42] See Donna M. Cassidy, "'On the Subject of Nativeness': Marsden Hartley and New England Regionalism," *Winterthur Portfolio* 29, no. 4 (1994), 227-45, Donna M. Cassidy, "Marsden Hartley's North Atlantic Folk: Constructing the Northern Race and the New America", in Teresa Alves, Teresa Cid, and Heinz Ickstadt, eds., *Ceremonies and Spectacles: Performing American Culture* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2000), 247-65, Donna M. Cassidy, *Marsden Hartley: Race, Region, and Nation* (Hanover and London: University of New Hampshire Press, 2005), and Donna M. Cassidy, "The Invisibility of Race in Modernist Representation: Marsden Hartley's North Atlantic Folk," in Patricia Johnston, ed., *Seeing High and Low: Social Conflict in American Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2006), 247-65. Although these are her most important texts on Hartley, race, and regionalism, Cassidy has published several further related essays. Quote from Cassidy, *Marsden Hartley*, 9-10.

[43] Cassidy, *Marsden Hartley*, 253, 261-66.

[44] Randall Griffey, "Marsden Hartley's Aryanism: Eugenics in a Finnish-Yankee Sauna," *American Art* 22, no. 2 (2008), 64-84.

to which his paintings were produced independently. Indeed, it was often only with Stieglitz' financial and promotional support that Hartley was able to undertake his journeys abroad. Writes art historian Lisa Mintz Messinger,

> "While Hartley is often described as peripheral to the Stieglitz circle… he was nonetheless important in the early years of their association for keeping the dealer abreast of what was happening in Europe… and for supporting Stieglitz' decisions to show the work of artists such as Picasso and publish the writings of Vasily Kandinsky and Gertrude Stein in *Camera Work*… Stieglitz showed his great faith in Hartley's work… by including it in eight group installations, both large and small; organizing nine one-man shows; and endorsing… [Hartley's] participation in… important modern surveys."

When Hartley left Stieglitz' galleries in 1937 they maintained their friendship, and it seems likely that his turn towards heroizing life in Maine was influenced by encouragement from Stieglitz to make more "American" pictures.[45] Hartley's interest in Aryanism was in part the product of his tenures in Germany (though there were certainly also many opportunities to encounter proponents of Nazi philosophy in the U.S. in the 1920s and '30s). However, the celebration of region and nation inherent in the focus on racial/quasi-racial groups in his Maine work often closely resembled the habits of the other artists working under Stieglitz' wing.[46] Indeed, as Chapter Two will discuss, Marin was doing something quite similar in his own extensive body of work inspired by Maine.

In part because of a persistent focus on social class among critical-minded art historians in the late twentieth century, past efforts to address the significance of racism and racial formation to other segments of work produced by Circle artists have been, in sum, piecemeal. A major impetus behind my own interest in this area of research is the question of why wide-ranging, prolonged, and persuasive work focused on issues of regionalism, modernism, and

[45] Lisa Mintz Messinger, "Marsden Hartley," in Lisa Mintz Messinger, ed., *Stieglitz and His Artists: Matisse to O'Keeffe* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011), 130-31.
[46] This was a newfound nationalist bent well-illustrated by Hartley's decision to supplement his Maine pictures with a series of portraits of Abraham Lincoln in 1939. Cassidy covers these portraits in *Marsden Hartley*, 119-38.

racism in the modern era of the type that she has published on Hartley has not been pursued in relation to other artists. The chapters that follow in this dissertation attempt to work towards answering this question, as well as articulating the ways in which the artistic philosophy and approaches towards race and nation shared within the Circle played out as the artists lived and worked in different regions across the country.

Though Cassidy was the first to connect these artists to issues of race, and her work helped to inspire my own, others have also followed in her footsteps. Holloway's work on Stieglitz *Portrait* of O'Keeffe is another notable example, as is Nancy Scott's 2007 article on Dove's *Goin' Fishin'* (a representation of an African-American fisherman Dove saw near his adopted home on Long Island), and the hidden history of its original titles, which were variations of "*Nigger Goes A-Fishin'*".[47] Sascha Scott has unveiled some of the ways in which O'Keeffe dealt casually with issues of ownership while living on and depicting lands of spiritual significance to Indigenous peoples in New Mexico and Hawaii, and has also discussed her handful of images of Pueblo dances.[48] Tara Kohn has analyzed how Stieglitz' photographs and work as a magazine editor sometimes revealed his feelings about his complicated racial status as a Jewish American, and has also written about the liminal role that 291's Montserratian elevator operator Hodge Kirnon held in relation to the gallery's activities.[49]

The most sustained investigation of issues of race in connection to the Stieglitz group is Lauren Kroiz' 2012 book *Creative Composites: Race, Modernism, and the Stieglitz Circle*.

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[47] Nancy J. Scott, "Submerged: Arthur Dove's *Goin' Fishin'* and its hidden history", *Word & Image* 23, no. 2 (2007), 138-55.
[48] Sascha Scott, "Georgia O'Keeffe's Hawai'i? Decolonizing the History of American Modernism", *American Art* 34, no. 2 (2020), 26-53; Sascha T. Scott, "Georgia O'Keeffe's 'Black Place'", *The Art Bulletin* 101, no. 3 (2019), 88-114; and Sascha Scott, *A Strange Mixture: The Art and Politics of Painting Pueblo Indians* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), 181-92.
[49] Tara Kohn, "An Eternal Flame: Alfred Stieglitz on New York's Lower East Side", *American Art* 30, no. 3 (2016), 112-29. Tara Kohn, "Elevated: Along the Fringes of 291 Fifth Avenue", *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 4, no. 2 (2018), https://journalpanorama.org/article/elevated/.

Kroiz' book focuses on the diverse set of international figures who influenced and played an active role in the first, more experimental iteration of Stieglitz' Circle, in the 1910s. Its discussion of the second Circle interprets later art by Dove and O'Keeffe using thing theory, describing their works as "evidence of… [a] modernist regionalism in which racial meaning inheres in stuff." In Dove's case, Kroiz argues, artistic interpretation of phenomena is eschewed in favor of pure re-presentation of an object. Meanwhile, she suggests, O'Keeffe "layered things to mate the places and people they represented."[50]

Though I find these interpretations helpful, especially when it comes to better understanding individual works, my goal is to understand the racial contexts for these artists' works by understanding the broader influence of their shared approaches and philosophies. I will argue that, as they sought to define truths that seemed universal, these artists' unreflective reliance upon both subjective, abstract, and intuitive forms of expression and popular ideas about the supposed inherent differences between human populations frequently led to generic and stereotypical representations of racial, ethnic, and regional identities in their works. As part of this assessment, I contextualize the artists more fully within their historical environments, moving beyond isolated examples or the artists' interests in resonant things and focusing instead on analysis of the cultural environments and influences that they shared and the individual milieux that each discovered in the places that they frequented outside Manhattan. By viewing their artistic projects through the lenses of the racial logic and racialized interests circulating within these social arenas and considering how these circumstances impacted their beliefs and actions, I provide a broader-ranging and more historical interpretation of how racism affected their work.

[50] Lauren Kroiz, *Creative Composites: Race, Modernism, and the Stieglitz Circle* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2012), 167-84.

"Aesthetic Solutions to Political Problems": Politics, Modernism, and the Second Circle

The second Circle's key figures were notably less diverse than their counterparts in Stieglitz' earlier cohort. This included, even, the extended constellation of writers and other artists who were also part of the second Circle, albeit in less central roles. Most of these others (including numerous figures whose names will also dot this dissertation, like the artist Rebecca Salsbury Strand James, the critic Paul Rosenfeld, and the writer Waldo Frank) were also raised under circumstances of financial ease, and were either indisputably "white" or enjoyed the relative privilege of being second- or third-generation German Jews.

Even Stieglitz, the son of wealthy areligious German Jewish immigrants, often passed as "white", at least later in his career.[51] While this degree of privilege that he enjoyed later in life likely in large part reflected his position of eminence within the U.S. art world, much of his career was shaped by his Jewish identity, both because of how it affected how others perceived him and how it influenced the way he saw himself. Though evidence of how anti-Semitism may have affected his early life is scant, Stieglitz biographer Phyllis Rose has suggested that the impetus behind his father sending him to Germany for university may have been the rampant anti-Semitism in higher education in the late nineteenth-century United States.[52] However, in his later work as a gallerist Stieglitz' ancestry was not the subject of much comment, and clearly did not prevent him from establishing a position of great prominence within the American art world. There are several explanations for this shift. Firstly, Stieglitz did not often publicly discuss his Jewish ancestry, which he likely considered a liability in light of the swiftly growing number of (typically much poorer, often ostracized) Eastern European Orthodox Jewish immigrants arriving

[51] Stieglitz' father, a merchant by trade, even briefly served as an officer in the Union Army – which might partially explain Stieglitz' passion for the idea of "America".
[52] Phyllis Rose, *Alfred Stieglitz: Taking Pictures, Making Painters* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019), 6, 18.

in New York in the first decades of the twentieth century. Another key factor may have been the relatively elevated status that German-American (typically Reform) Jews held in U.S. society in the early twentieth century despite ongoing widespread anti-Jewish hatred during the era, by which time many had become fixtures in culture and business.[53] Indeed, one might plausibly connect Stieglitz' interest in and eventual status within the arts realm as a symptom of the shame and ambition of many highly educated second-generation Jews in the twentieth century United States. Circle affiliates and friends including Frank, Rosenfeld, Gertrude Stein, and Paul Strand, along with Stieglitz, were among many such figures who may have been seeking to paper over feelings of inadequacy about their background brought on by the period's anti-Semitism by becoming aficionados and, eventually, leaders of American culture.[54]

Writes historian Eric Goldstein, "Unlike Progressive Era commentators, who either tried to subvert the troubling presence of the Jew beneath the categories of 'black' and 'white' or felt confident that the difficulties presented by Jewish distinctiveness would simply be worked out in time, white Americans of the interwar period were increasingly convinced that Jews represented a distinct 'problem' in American life." Indeed, "Jews increasingly became a target for those nervous about the direction of modern American culture. In their attempt to understand why the

[53] Kohn, "An Eternal Flame: Alfred Stieglitz on New York's Lower East Side", 112-13. The privilege that Jewish Americans experienced in the interwar era varied widely based on a variety of factors, including wealth, education, religious observance, and the nation that their ancestors came from. During this period the "whiteness" of Jews like Stieglitz, Strand, and Circle affiliate and champion Paul Rosenfeld remained something of a question, although, as German Jews and non-immigrants, they enjoyed higher status than Eastern European Jewish immigrants. Among the notable German Jews in American life in the early twentieth century we might count such names as Henry Lehman, Marcus Goldman, Samuel Sachs, Benjamin Altman, and the Warburg family. Franz Boas, discussed later in this chapter, also came from a wealthy German Jewish family, although he did not emigrate to the United States until adulthood.

[54] This is what scholar Jonathan Freedman, writing about a later generation of Jewish-American literary figures, calls "assimilation-by-culture". See Jonathan Freedman, *The Temple of Culture: Assimilation and Anti-Semitism in Literary Anglo-America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), especially 164-66. Strand's parents, for example, were also German Jewish immigrants, and his father was also a merchant. One notable difference is that Strand's surname was changed by his parents from Stransky at birth, in what we can surmise was an attempt to seem less Jewish and/or more "American". For more on Strand's life, see Maren Stange, ed., *Paul Strand: Essays on His Life and Work* (New York: Aperture, 1990); or Sarah Greenough, ed., *Paul Strand: An American Vision* (Washington, DC: Aperture, 1990), among many other sources.

nation was going astray from what they considered its core values, many white Americans cast the Jewish 'race' as an infiltrating force." Those who blamed the nation's supposed social and political problems (i.e. dishonesty, lewdness, the Communist threat, etc.) on Jewish influence extended well beyond the Ku Klux Klan's traditional rural base of support and into American high society's business and cultural leaders.[55] Within the cultural realm, this often seemed to take the form of disdain for the modernism being articulated by Jewish writers and artists like Stieglitz, Strand, Frank, and Stein on the part of traditionalist critics like Thomas Craven and Royal Cortissoz and high-minded institutions like the Metropolitan Museum. While Stieglitz had to navigate the minefield of how to reconcile Jewish and American identities and overcome antisemitism with his every movement, these were issues with which many of his close friends and followers, whose whiteness was not under question, did not need to concern themselves.

Whereas Stieglitz' earlier activities had equally prioritized encouraging photographic and modernist causes, in the years after the war his promotion forged a more focused direction that reflected an obsession with American national identity likely at least partially inspired by anxiety over his own racial and ethnic identity. Stieglitz Circle expert and National Gallery of Art photography curator Sarah Greenough describes the different tone that his promotion of modernism took on after "291" closed in 1917 and as the more insular second Circle formed in the early 1920s:

> Before the war his model was scientific: 291 was a catholic laboratory that, in its efforts to challenge conventions, tested the validity of new ideas, experimented with different kinds of art from… around the world, and allowed the results… to direct the course of future investigations. After the war, Stieglitz' model was more communal, even familial and intimate, with growing spiritual overtones: he endeavored to nurture, protect, and

[55] Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 119, 122; See also Karen Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

promote a community… whose… voice… would enrich a spiritually deprived nation.[56]

Writes historian Alan Trachtenberg, "Stieglitz stood at the center of a movement which sought to produce a new American art and culture, a movement openly critical of the aggressive commercialism, hypocritical moralism, and empty conventionality of the reigning culture."[57] Part of the Circle members' denunciation of societal trends played out in their participation in bohemian Manhattan's broader practice of rejecting conservative social and cultural mores in favor of questioning the virtues of consumerism and civility and embracing free love and expanded consciousness.[58] Stieglitz declared his interest in transgressing social and cultural norms in a 1912 interview: "There is nothing so wrong as accepting a thing merely because men who have done things say it should be so. A genius is born and strives against existing rules until he overthrows them. Then people make rules founded in accordance with the ideas of that man, and when a new genius is born the fight between individuality and established customs begins all over again."[59]

Despite all this rhetoric, though, Stieglitz was no crusader for social change – as Trachtenberg continues, Stieglitz was "more attached to aesthetic, individualist alternatives than to social or political solutions."[60] The philosophy of the group was dictated by Stieglitz and guided by a sense of iconoclasm and a professed desire to express individual instincts and reveal the inner character or "truth" of particular places, things, or people rather than an actual desire to affect social transformation in any sort of direct way. This approach was somewhat remarkable

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[56] Sarah Greenough, "Alfred Stieglitz, Facilitator, Financier, and Father, Presents Seven Americans", in Greenough, et al., *Modern Art and America*, 277-339, 279. Another useful account of this shift between the first and second Circles is shared in Susan Noyes Platt, *Modernism in the 1920s: Interpretations of Modern Art in New York from Expressionism to Constructivism* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), 13-15.
[57] Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History from Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 167.
[58] A useful history of this bohemian milieu is Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (2000; reis., Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010).
[59] In Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer*, 116.
[60] Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 167.

given that the group was operating alongside several waves of immense social activism across the 1920s-'30s, including increasingly vocal opposition to the Jim Crow system and growing labor, anarchist, socialist, and communist movements in the face of the Great Depression, growing white supremacist organization, and the rise of international fascism and Nazism. Rather than try to advocate for change as many other artists (from social realists and anarchists in America to avant-gardes from around the world) did across these decades, or even express a utopian vision as many other modernists had, Circle artists seemed content to articulate a more general sense of dissatisfaction with the state of U.S. society when discussing their shared project or complaining about others' efforts.[61] Underlying their rhetoric was a persistent sense of unhappiness with the status quo, but what changes they hoped that American society would actually make are less clear than their intuitions about what sort of art was worthwhile, or what sort of emotions should inform the best art. If the group hoped that the new modes of visual representation that they offered might allow for some sort of rethinking of social practices, as other modernists such as Kandinsky did, they never expended much effort to clarify exactly what they hoped to accomplish or how their work might help to achieve social change.[62]

What seems clearer is that, by the early 1920s, this iconoclastic attitude was regularly paired with nationalistic rhetoric. Stieglitz famously wrote in a 1921 exhibition catalogue: "I was

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[61] Allan Antliff has written about anarchism among early twentieth-century U.S. modernists in *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). Andrew Hemingway has written about U.S. artists' engagement with Communism in the 1920s and '30s: *Artists on the Left: American Artists and the Communist Movement 1926-1956* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002). A more diverse set of radical political inclinations and their connections to art in the interwar U.S. are described in Helen Langa, *Radical Art: Printmaking and the Left in 1930s New York* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); and Susan Noyes Platt, *Art and Politics in the 1930s: Modernism, Marxism, Americanism – A History of Cultural Activism During the Depression Years* (New York: Midmarch, 1999).

[62] Wrote Kandinsky in his influential tract *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, which was shared and appreciated within the Circle: "Our minds, which are even now only just awakening after years of materialism, are infected with the despair of unbelief, of lack of purpose and ideal. The nightmare of materialism, which has turned the life of the universe into an evil, useless game, is not yet past; it holds the awakening soul still in its grip." Wassily Kandinsky, Michael Sadleir, trans., *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911; repub., Auckland: Floating Press, 2008), 23, 25.

born in Hoboken. I am an American. Photography is my passion. The search for Truth my obsession." The statement continues:

> "PLEASE NOTE: In the above STATEMENT the following, fast becoming "obsolete", terms do not appear: ART, SCIENCE, BEAUTY, RELIGION, every ISM, ABSTRACTION, FORM, PLASTICITY, OBJECTIVITY, SUBJECTIVITY, OLD MASTERS, MODERN ART, PSYCHOANALYSIS, AESTHETICS, PICTORIAL PHOTOGRAPHY, DEMOCRACY, CEZANNE, "291", PROHIBITION. The term TRUTH did creep in but it may be kicked out by any one."[63]

Though Stieglitz made countless statements of artistic intent during his long career, this one (well, at least the first part) has long had wider resonance given its confluence with the widely held impression that the Circle's collective project was one that could not only represent America but also cure it as it spoke "truth" to the world. However, the longer quote also reveals his anxiety about being pigeon-holed into any one philosophical or aesthetic position, as well as a desire that he and his followers' works be interpreted as timeless – that is, removed from any specific idea of the moment, or a particular political or social stance. Instead, it is a central contention of this project that the Circle's works were very much of their sociopolitical moment, and that Stieglitz was so successful in popularizing the idea that they were *not* of their time and place in large part simply because he and his affiliates stated it over and over, for decades.

Despite this persistent effort to avoid categorization or perceptions of social or historical contingency, these artists nonetheless shared a few tenets that defined their collective project. These included a focus on the spiritual, a dedication to modernist expression, and an emphasis on defining America and working to solve its social problems through art (a project to which they felt they brought a certain authority as especially "American" people). These concerns were in

[63] Alfred Stieglitz, "A Statement", in "An Exhibition of Photography by Alfred Stieglitz" pamphlet, 1921. Photocopy available in William Innes Homer Papers, Georgia O'Keeffe Research Collections, Georgia O'Keeffe Library & Archive, Santa Fe, NM, Box 54, Folder 24.

keeping with the preoccupations of other members of the Manhattan avant-garde community in the late 1910s and 1920s, including the so-called "Young Americans" – the writers Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, and Lewis Mumford. These men similarly channeled their intense dissatisfaction with modern American industrial society by relying upon romantic and mystical thought as they reckoned with what "America" meant and who belonged to it and hypothesized about how to construct U.S. democratic culture and society anew.[64] Significantly, though, several of the Young Americans (and especially Bourne, despite his premature death in 1918) would become standard bearers for radical politics in ways that the Stieglitz artists (aside from Strand, who stepped away from the group) did not. Even so, we might wonder whether an argument that historian Casey Nelson Blake advances about the Young Americans – that they articulated a vision of U.S. society that was *culturally* radical and inspired by their disdain for the status quo of American capitalist modernity but was inconsistently politically liberatory – might not also apply in some way to the Stieglitz Circle. These two groups may have shared a propensity for advocating for "purely aesthetic solutions to political problems" and prioritizing the romantic over the pragmatic.[65]

Circle acolyte and writer Paul Rosenfeld neatly encapsulated the confluence of these principles in his 1924 book *Port of New York*, which was an appreciation of the Stieglitz artists and other likeminded creatives. In a passage that reflects these figures' tendency to criticize the commercialism and non-spirituality of modern society, he writes, "If ever [an] institution in America came to bring the challenge of the truth of life to the land of the free, and the show the

[64] See Casey Nelson Blake, *Beloved Community: The Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, and Lewis Mumford* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1990). Stieglitz follower Dorothy Norman explicitly notes that Stieglitz' thoughts paralleled those published in Brooks' 1915 book *America's Coming of Age* about "the problems and challenges facing America". Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer*, 138. See also Van Wyck Brooks, *America's Coming of Age* (1915; reis., New York: Huebsch, 1924).
[65] Blake, *Beloved Community*, 6-7.

face of expressivity to a trading society living by middle-class conventions, it was the little gallery '291'." In Rosenfeld's eyes Stieglitz was not just a patriot and a countercultural artist, but a "prophet and awakener". He encapsulated: "If any career in America has demonstrated spirit; if any career has flowed out of a man's complete obedience to the imperative of the unborn stuff of worlds in his bosom, it is Stieglitz'."[66]

The "Religious Fact": Spirituality and Intuitive Expression

Art historian Kristina Wilson has written convincingly of the centrality of spirituality and spiritualism to the Circle's activities in the 1920s. She describes the atmosphere of Stieglitz' Intimate Gallery, where "references abounded with a mantralike repetitiveness to an art that would help viewers to achieve an enlightened awareness of a spiritual realm. Stieglitz engineered this spiritual and aesthetic experience through the choice of artworks, the pamphlets he printed for the gallery, the arrangement of the hang, and the atmosphere he cultivated in the small space."[67] Stieglitz described himself as the "directing spirit" of the Room, and his follower Dorothy Norman wrote soon after the opening of its successor, An American Place,

> What, other than pictures, brings people to this… center? Why is the quality of light so significant, as though it had some special meaning, the way the light in a cathedral with its unearthly, strange, concentrated quality seems to have special significance?... It is an embodiment of the manifold aspects of a tradition… created by… Stieglitz. Within this tradition, the scientific, experimental concerns of the laboratory, the sacred ones of the cathedral, the aesthetic ones of the museum and workshop, all play their role.[68]

In the 1934 book honoring Stieglitz' career, *America and Alfred Stieglitz*, Marin used similar rhetoric as he discussed the special character of An American Place and its proprietor, who so vigorously worked to defend the group's philosophy: "This spirit place took form – cared for and

[66] Paul Rosenfeld, *Port of New York: Essays on Fourteen American Moderns* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1924), 242, 253, 257.
[67] Kristina Wilson, "The Intimate Gallery and the *Equivalents*: Spirituality in the 1920s Work of Stieglitz", *Art Bulletin* 85, no. 4 (2003), 746.
[68] Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer*, 193-94.

nourished by this man. This spirit had to be fought for offensively and defensively for this spirit had its reason for existence from there being surrounding opposing spirits."[69]

The spiritual element of these artists' works has inspired comparisons to nineteenth-century European symbolists, who likewise foregrounded "spirit" in the rhetoric surrounding their work as they sought deeper meaning than modern society could provide. However, the interwar Circle's spiritual interests were, in particular, rooted in a mixture of Transcendentalist and Theosophist ideas popular among antiestablishment thinkers in the early twentieth century.[70] As Wilson describes, Stieglitz and other modernists like Frank admired 19th-century Transcendentalist writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau for their celebration of the connectedness between God and nature and their belief in the spiritual resonance of objects in the everyday world. Appreciation of the spiritual power of experiences in nature was a key point of connection for Stieglitz and his followers and a recurrent element of the rhetoric that they constructed in descriptions of the group's landscape works and the outdoor experiences that inspired them.[71] Rosenfeld wrote of Stieglitz' photography, "If ever American man brought American people into relation with people and trees, rocks and skies, brought the finite into tune with the infinite, it was this man of the black box and chemical bath."[72]

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[69] John Marin, "The Man and the Place", in Waldo Frank, Lewis Mumford, Dorothy Norman, Paul Rosenfeld, and Harold Rugg, eds., *America and Alfred Stieglitz: A Collective Portrait* (New York: Literary Guild, 1934), 233-34. Similar claims had been made about the spiritual power of Stieglitz' earlier gallery, 291 – Marin wrote in a special "What is 291?" edition of Stieglitz' journal *Camera Work* in 1914 that "I know a place / where reason halts / in season and out of season / where something takes the place / in place of reason / a spirit there hovers roundabout / a something felt by those who feel it / here together and to those who come / a place of comfort / a place electric a place alive / a place magnetic..." John Marin, "What is 291?", *Camera Work* 47 (1914), repub. in Dorothy Norman, ed., *The Selected Writings of John Marin* (New York: Pellegrini and Cudahy, 1949), 13-14, 13.

[70] See Wanda Corn's comments comparing the Circle to Symbolists in *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1999), 32, 250. Corn provides a helpful history of writings that connect the group to Symbolists in 363-64n49.

[71] Wilson, "The Intimate Gallery and the *Equivalents*: Spirituality in the 1920s Work of Stieglitz", 748-49.

[72] Rosenfeld, *Port of New York,* 269. Rosenfeld seems to imply here a special irony (or perhaps attest to the special power of Stieglitz' photography) in that it was an artist working through chemical and mechanical means who could best interpret the American natural world.

Rosenfeld's comment also reveals some of the racist thinking inherent in the Transcendentalist approach towards God and nature that modernists were borrowing from. In imagining an "American people" who were finding spiritual meaning in nature, Rosenfeld, like the Transcendentalists before him, was helping to define America and the places and things within it through the terms of white settler subjectivity. Other groups' preexisting or simultaneous relationships with American nature were evidently not worthy of contemplation.[73]

Stieglitz was likely introduced to Theosophy, the occultist religious movement originating in the late 19th century and rooted in a combination of Western, Hindu, and Buddhist beliefs, by Hartley, who had encountered it in Berlin in the early 1910s, and through reading Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. Stieglitz re-encountered these ideas in the 1920s through the mystic G.I. Gurdjieff, after Gurdjieff and his coterie moved to New York. O'Keeffe attended lectures by members of Gurdjieff's circle in the 1920s and maintained close friendships with several of his disciples.[74]

Group members were similarly interested in the spiritual and philosophical writings of the French philosopher Henri Bergson. Stieglitz published extracts from Bergson's works in *Camera Work* in 1911 and 1912. Dove's interest was part of a much broader curiosity about Theosophy and other period spiritual ideologies, which included a particularly passionate interest in the related ideas published in Maurice Burke's 1901 book *Cosmic Consciousness* as well as

[73] A useful source on this topic is Paul Outka, *Race and Nature from Transcendentalism to the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

[74] These disciples included salonnière Mabel Dodge Luhan, writer Jean Toomer, and art educators Florence Cane and Louise March. Anne Hammond, "Ansel Adams and Georgia O'Keeffe: On the Intangible in Art and Nature", *History of Photography* 32, no. 4 (2008), 303. Stieglitz also encountered Eastern spiritual thinking through his niece and nephew, Elizabeth and Donald Davidson, who were extremely interested in Hinduism and invited a Hindu leader, Swami Nikhilanda, to spend the summer at the family Lake George estate in 1937. Sarah Greenough, ed., *Alfred Stieglitz: The Key Set – The Alfred Stieglitz Collection of Photographs* (Washington, DC and New York: National Gallery of Art and Harry N. Abrams, 2002), vol. 1, 922. Dove was also notably interested in and exposed to Eastern philosophy and religion, including exposure through his own friendship with Donald Davidson and via another friend, Teddy Bryner – see Chapter 4 for more details on Dove's interest in this topic.

longstanding fascination with spiritual ideas from ancient Indian and Chinese philosophy.[75] In O'Keeffe's case, her interest in early twentieth-century Western spiritualism was paired with decades of fascination with Indigenous American spiritual beliefs and practices (a topic covered in depth in Chapter Three).

In a way, these two strands (Transcendentalist and Theosophist/Bergsonian) show the twin influences inherent in much of Stieglitzian aesthetic, social, and cultural philosophy, which paired emphasis on the foreign (i.e. modernist ideas from Europe and inspiration from "primitive" cultures) and the supposed unique power and value of the American. Underlying both of these categorizations is a belief that things and places had some sort of fundamental, essential character that existed within them, one that often hummed with a spiritual resonance – an idea that became a key component of Stieglitz and his followers' worldviews.

These artists' spiritual interests are relevant here in part because, like the group members' interests in nationalism and modernist experimentation, they were an avenue through which racism filtered into their work. However, invocations of spiritual meaning were also a veil that they and countless of their defenders hid behind when confronted with doubts or questions about the connections between their work and social or political thinking. Cooptation of exotic groups' spirituality has long been an important component of primitivism, and has often been used by Western modernists interested in finding meaning in ostensibly unsophisticated societies in order to combat feelings of dissatisfaction with the supposed spiritual bankruptcy of modern urban life.

[75] Judith Zilczer, "*Light Coming on the Plains*: Georgia O'Keeffe's Sunrise Series", *Artibus et historiae* 20, no. 40 (1999), 196; Sherrye Cohn, *Arthur Dove: Nature as Symbol* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), 23, 50-51, 92-93. In addition to encouraging a spiritual approach to the world that filtered into the work of the Stieglitz artists and other modernists, as these authors note, Bergson's philosophies also played a more direct role in influencing the theory underlying European primitivism in the early twentieth century. Mark Antliff has written about Bergson's connections to European modernism in *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

However, the character of the Stieglitz artists' primitivist engagement with supposedly exotic groups' spirituality was specific to their time, place, and philosophical influences. The artists' interests in racialized peoples often included not only appropriation of the groups' religions/spirituality but also affectation (or other forms of essentializing representation) enacted under the guise of incorporation of more generic forms of intuitive spiritual feeling. O'Keeffe and Stieglitz' works, in particular, showcase a sense of immanence that was likely the product of their exposure to the religious ideas of mystics like Gurdjieff. Though in many ways the primitivizing spiritual invocation inherent in many of the Stieglitz artists' works is reflective of far broader practices within Western modernisms, they also used exotic groups' spiritual traditions to their own very particular ends.

The degree to which the sympathetic writing about the group focused on the spiritual character of their works and used religious terminology to explain them is telling. When Frank called 291 "a religious fact", a "miracle", and an "altar", or Rosenfeld called Stieglitz a "prophet and awakener", he helped to justify these artists' appropriation, essentialization, and exotification of non-white identities (including spiritual identities) by focusing on the seemingly timeless, raceless, natural, and inevitable character of the spirituality that seemed central to their work. Spiritual rhetoric seems to have often gone hand in hand with notions of timelessness in their work – if their work was speaking to immutable truths (including truths about the nation or the people within it), then its meaning was unmoored from particular historical ideologies.

Naturally, these artists' interests in diverse spiritual traditions were motivated by a variety of social, cultural, and personal pressures beyond the period's widespread societal fascination with racial others. All the same, rhetoric like this, which ignored and effaced the inspiration that they drew from Native-American, Hispanic, African-American, and South and

East Asian religions and spiritual traditions, instead effectively subsumed all these diverse spiritual influences under the greedy banner of invisible whiteness.[76] Marin wrote in 1916 that, "These works are meant as constructed expressions of the inner senses, responding to things seen and felt."[77] The intuitive approach that these artists shared foregrounded their subjectivity but masked it behind a veil of ethereality, and thereby opened the door for unthinking biases to shine through in their works in ways that they and their peers typically failed to recognize.

Race, Modernism, and the Stieglitz Artists

Despite their friendship and shared philosophy, the works that the Circle artists produced varied widely in terms of both style and subject matter. Stieglitz' photographs typically focused on scenes from Manhattan, near his family vacation home on Lake George, or of posing friends or lovers. While many of his images were relatively conventional, a sizeable number feature unusual poses or cropping, in some cases (like that of his *Equivalents*, a series of abstract cloud photographs) resulting in radically abstract pictures. Stieglitz described his ambition for his abstract photographs in a 1923 article, proclaiming his hope that a composer friend would, upon seeing them, exclaim "Music! Music! Man, why that is music! How did you ever do that?"[78] Meanwhile, though he also pictured New York City, Vermont, and New Mexico, Marin's works in the 1920s and '30s above all else focused on scenes of Maine, and especially its coast, shore, and native denizens, and were often executed in watercolor with a personal, energetic, and improvisatory semi-Cubist expressionist style. Critic Henry McBride compared him to his forefather among Maine watercolorists, Winslow Homer, and called him "a human volcano…

[76] Rosenfeld, *Port of New York*, 155-56, 253.
[77] John Marin, untitled essay, *The Forum Exhibition of Modern American Painters* (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1916), 72.
[78] Alfred Stieglitz, "How I Came to Photograph Clouds", *The Amateur Photographer & Photography* 56, no. 1819 (1923), 255.

simply [exploding]… with meaning."[79] By contrast, O'Keeffe's work in the interwar era moved from Manhattan skyscrapers to New Mexican landscapes and still-lifes to close-ups of flowers, and was far more polished, typically featuring easily legible scenes and objects, albeit ones that magnified and simplified their subjects in implausible ways, and led her work to be praised for its "definiteness" and "cleanness", as well as her "honest expression of inner feeling".[80] Hartley worked in Europe and New Mexico in the '20s before exploring more of New England and Southeast Canada in the '30s, applying his characteristic rough, heavy-handed style to landscapes, still-lifes, and portraits of locals. Wrote critic Jerome Mellquist, "…the mountain passages, the sea gulls…, the wild, northern fragrance of his rural Maine, translated to canvas, remain his most convincing contributions".[81] Dove's work was the most stylistically diverse, moving between the figurative, the abstract, and the non-objective as he sought to record his impressions of places and phenomena as diverse as farm animals, small towns in New York and Connecticut, the weather, and favorite musical compositions in media as varied as watercolor, oil, and assemblage. According to a 1914 Dove letter, a key idea for his work, for 291, and for modern art writ large, was the "elimination of the non-essential."[82] In his hands, as he suggested in a 1925 poem, "Works of nature are abstract, / They do not lean on other things for meaning".[83]

Thinking about these artists' personal, expressive styles might well help us to better understand the role of subjectivity in their works more generally. They each invite contemplation of their subjectivity by creatively cropping, distorting, and abstracting scenes and objects as part

[79] Henry McBride, "A Prediction on Marin", *New York Herald*, March 11, 1923, repub. in Daniel Catton Rich, ed., *The Flow of Art: Essays and Criticisms of Henry McBride* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), 170.
[80] Dorothy Lefferts Moore, "Exhibitions in New York", *The Arts* 15 (1929), 185-87, repub. in Barbara Buhler Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz, and the Critics, 1916-1929* (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, 1989), 299-300.
[81] Jerome Mellquist, *The Emergence of An American Art* (New York: Scribner's, 1942), 360.
[82] Arthur Dove to Alfred Stieglitz, October 19, 1914, in Ann Lee Morgan, ed., *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove* (Newark, London, and Toronto: University of Delaware Press and Associated University Presses, 1988), 41.
[83] Arthur Dove, "A Way to Look at Things", 1925, repub. in Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, 112.

of their modernist expressionism and experimentation. However, as examples explored in greater depth in subsequent chapters, such as Marin's *Lobster Boat, Cape Split Maine* (Figure 2.1), O'Keeffe landscapes including *My Front Yard, Summer* (Figure 3.48), or Dove pictures such as *Swinging in the Park (There Were Colored People There)* (Figure 4.36), demonstrate, quite often these artists foregrounded their own subjectivity not only by expressing themselves stylistically but also by, in various ways, inviting viewers to step into their shoes and contemplate a scene from the artist's perspective. There are, in short, several planes on which subjectivity operated through these artists and their works. Focusing on the role of subjectivity in these artists' works is also a way to better understand their relationship to modernism, in which subjectivity was often paramount. Because, as modernists, they felt compelled to assert their own perspectives and inclinations through their work, and because they chose to extend that approach beyond style and towards their subjects, there were often many opportunities for the biases that shaped their worldviews to work their way into their pictures.

There are also other, more obvious ways in which the principles shared within the group connected to a persistent fascination with race that pervaded interwar American culture. Perhaps the most significant was their interest in placemaking, which often relied upon perceptions of America and nationally distinctive regions therein as connected to particular racialized groups or identities. Quite often, these artists' racialized visions of American regions were the outgrowths of semi-touristic, semi-professional visits to those regions, some temporary or seasonal, some permanent. To various degrees and in various places, White, Black, Hispanic, and Native-American peoples all were compelled to play the role of regional mascot for early twentieth-

century white tourists.[84]

As mentioned earlier, the Circle artists also buttressed the spiritual claims of their work by coopting the supposedly mystical attributes of exotic groups. This pattern is most clearly illustrated in the enduring interest of several of the artists (including Hartley, Marin, and especially O'Keeffe) in the Indigenous and Hispanic religious cultures they encountered in the Southwest. In focusing on many objects and places of spiritual significance to supposedly exotic racial groups, these artists were in keeping with the trend among most white visitors to the region, for whom the cultural practices of the region's Native and Hispanic peoples were the area's principal attraction. Undergirding this appeal was the often unspoken notion that the spirituality of these peoples pervaded the region and lent it a special supernatural appeal.

The artists further incorporated racial stereotyping into their aesthetics by uncritically borrowing motifs and stylistic elements from racialized groups' visual cultures. There is an extent to which many or even all of their works evince a style derived from the fetishization of racial others because the early twentieth-century Euro-American avant-garde movement as a whole was in part predicated upon a certain interpretation of the formal elements of particular non-western peoples' material cultures. Writes art historian Yve-Alain Bois in a discussion of the influence of African sculpture on Picasso's aesthetics, while "the imitation of an [African] object's specific formal traits" was an impetus for his work for a time, afterwards "what was significant was the understanding of its principle, what Picasso called the '*raissonable*' character

[84] Without going too far into the weeds, it is important to recognize that in the early twentieth century these terms did not necessarily mean what they might mean in vernacular American English today, not just because racial categories have been "defined" differently in different times and places but also because the terms themselves in some cases have changed with time, as well. On another note, I will mention there was even an element of regionalism inherent in some of the Circle artists' representations of African-Americans – writes Kroiz in a discussion of Dove's representations of African Americans, for example, "In the United States of the 1920s and 1930s, especially among New York audiences including Stieglitz's circle, the African American became a symbol of the particular culture of the South, whereas the Native American and the Hispanic American embodied the Southwest." Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 146.

of African sculpture."[85] We can see in the Stieglitz' artists' works a range of possible inspirational relationships with the visual and material cultures of racialized and ethnicized "others". These include interest in actually depicting exotic material objects, incorporation of characteristic motifs into abstract and semi-abstract designs, and deployment of stylistic principles borrowed from exotic groups on a more holistic level – what Bois is referring to as the "*raissonable*" character of the exotic object. This last principle likely most often had its impact on the Stieglitz artists' works only in quite an indirect way, via the works of other artists whose modernist sensibilities had directly or indirectly been shaped by non-Western ways of making. However, a more direct relationship also inevitably existed in at least some cases because of exposure to the "character" of the non-Western objects Stieglitz and others displayed in Manhattan, as well as the time some of the artists spent in other places where non-Western objects were to be seen, including New Mexico and Paris.

Not all subsequent modernism stems from the influence of Picasso's experiments in the first decade of the twentieth century in the way that some introductory art history courses might imply. However, Stieglitz' featuring of Picasso and other Cubists in his galleries and his interest in West African wooden sculptures suggests the possibility of similar forms of influence on his photography and, perhaps especially, among those of his followers who worked in media in which the fracturing of legible three-dimensional space could be more readily conveyed. When we look at the sinuous lines or striking zones of color in Arthur Dove's abstractions or John Marin's angular divisions or calligraphic flourishes, we might wonder whether they were, directly or indirectly, inspired by exposure to African sculptures (or other non-Western sources)

[85] As with the Stieglitz artists, Picasso's primitivism was fundamentally bound up with his self-understanding as an avant-garde artist – a key difference from many earlier European artists interested in supposedly "primitive" cultures. Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* (1990; reis., Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1993), 73-74. Much of Bois' analysis draws upon the writings of the Parisian gallerist and critic Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler: see Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, *The Sculptures of Picasso* (London: R. Phillips, 1949).

and the supposed new perspectives on the construction of space that they offered. Though they at times found inspiration in the same sorts of objects that the Cubists had, they also often looked beyond African wooden sculpture and out towards other (American) supposedly exotic groups, while also refracting the primitivist ambition through their own interests and styles.

Circle artists at times appropriated non-Western aesthetic traditions in quite direct and obvious ways. Perhaps the clearest example lies in Marin's work in the Southwest, where he was drawn by the allure of a tourism industry that focused on the purported authenticity and primitive character of local Indigenous populations and attracted many early twentieth century modernist artists and writers (including Hartley and O'Keeffe). Consider Marin's incorporation in *Dance of the Santo Domingo Indians* (Figure 1.2) of a border consisting of colored geometric segments reminiscent of the elaborate blankets made by the Diné and Pueblo peoples for community use and tourist markets (like Figure 1.3) alongside allusions to a similarly appropriative decorative interior scene, including a pot, columns, and vegetal motifs. These allusions to Indigenous material and religious culture seem to frame the painting within a broader set of essentializing ideas about the nature of the Southwest as a region and the Pueblo peoples as connected to and emblematic of that region.[86] This picture further invites consideration of how the movements and rhythms of Indigenous ceremonials (perhaps the region's foremost tourist attractions) may have influenced the visual patterns and rhythms of his, Hartley's, or O'Keeffe's pictures of dances and other Southwestern subjects. It also draws attention to Marin's broader habit of framing his pictures in exotic regions in efforts to apparently augment their authenticity, a practice that also extended to his work in Maine.

[86] Celeste Connor mentions how the "acute angles" in Marin's picture "signal [the Native dancers'] unity with the environment" in *Democratic Visions: Art and Theory of the Stieglitz Circle, 1924-1934* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2001), 181.

O'Keeffe and Hartley notably took an interest in representing Pueblo and Diné objects directly during their tenures in the Southwest (see Figures 3.27 and 3.40). Their curiosity may have been partially inspired by the challenge of representing these objects and their (to the eyes of Easterners) unusual forms and patterns. Although O'Keeffe's smooth and simplifying style is sometimes compared to modernist photography, one might equally wonder about how it may have been informed by the work of Indigenous potters like Maria Martinez or Popovi Da (i.e. Figure 1.4). Meanwhile, although he never travelled to the Southwest, some of Dove's work also shows the stylistic influence of Southwestern Indigenous visual cultures, with the trapezoidal patterns in some of his works attesting to the circulation of Pueblo and Diné blankets in East Coast markets (see Figure 4.15).

Given the depth of their shared interest in racial and ethnic others, supposedly exotic visual and material cultures likely inspired these artists in numerous further ways unnoticed and unnoticeable. We can think of these connections as extensions of the modernist impulse demonstrated by Cubists' interest in African statues and masks (or indeed by other classic instances of modernist primitivism). Though the Stieglitz artists have never been hailed for deconstructing the nature of representation in the same way that the Cubists often have, they nonetheless at times looked to exotic sources for inspiration that, in ways as diverse as their styles themselves, borrowed from sources from outside the traditional art world mainstream as they sought new modes of visual representation. These artists were therefore often primitivists in the classic sense – they found stylistic/representational inspiration in non-Western modes of making.[87]

[87] Some would argue that searching for spiritual meaning and criticizing modern culture were further components of most "classic" primitivism.

Stieglitz Pictures Race and Nation

Unlike most of the artists he supported, Stieglitz had little interest in traveling to semi-exotic domestic locales like Maine or New Mexico, instead spending the vast majority of his adult life moving between Manhattan and the Stieglitz family compound on Lake George, which he had been visiting since childhood. However, his photographs nonetheless reveal not only his belief in the central tenets of the group's work, but also a preoccupation with immigration, national identity and belonging, and racial difference. The most obvious examples of photographs that exhibit a preoccupation with racial distinctions are those that feature African objects, like his photograph of O'Keeffe with an Ivorian spoon, or the similar pictures he made of O'Keeffe's sister Claudia posing nude with a mask made by the Baule or Yaure peoples.[88]

Stieglitz also featured African wooden objects not just in his gallery, but also in further photographs of O'Keeffe and in installations of European artworks that he organized at 291.[89] In a 2002 essay Greenough suggests that numerous photographs from Stieglitz' extensive "portrait" of O'Keeffe were also influenced by Stieglitz' interest in Africana, singling out closely cropped pictures that isolated O'Keeffe's face and juxtaposing them with African masks that had been exhibited at 291 (Figures 1.6 and 1.7).[90] Holloway has also persuasively argued that within Stieglitz' many nude portraits of O'Keeffe and others there is evidence of a persistent fascination

[88] These photographs not only show and celebrate the direct exotification and exaltation of African things being put into practice, but also reiterate a white/colonialist view of who its sitters and maker are – *they* are the ones who contemplate and elevate these foreign things into new stratospheres of meaning and importance, occupying a role that is not only traditionally white, but also elite and characteristic of the artist (and even of the modernist) given its role in the central exotic/non-exotic relationship of primitivism.

[89] A notable example is the Picasso-Braque exhibition he organized in 1915, during which he, unusually, chose to photograph a special grouping of objects he had arranged temporarily for the exhibition – a collection that included Picasso drawings, a large wasp's nest, an American brass bowl, and a Kota reliquary later donated to Fisk by O'Keeffe (Figure 1.5). Evidently, the juxtaposition between the African, the European/modernist, the natural world, and the American on view in that corner of the gallery was compelling enough to entice Stieglitz to document it in a way that he rarely did for other exhibitions. Holloway analyzes this grouping of objects and Stieglitz' photograph in "Lovechild: Stieglitz, O'Keeffe, and the Birth of American Modernism", 399. Shannon outlines the evidence for this being a temporary grouping in "African Art, 1914: The Root of Modern Art", 178-79.

[90] Sarah Greenough, "Essay: The Key Set", in Greenough, *Alfred Stieglitz: The Key Set*, xxxviii-xxxix.

with whiteness in a more literal sense (see Figure 1.8).[91]

More broadly, however, the range of images within the *Portrait* reflects a fascination (or even an obsession) with not just O'Keeffe's form, but above all the whiteness of her skin. The same might be said of Stieglitz' nude portraits of other women, which included series of portraits of the artists Rebecca Salsbury Strand James, Eva Herrmann, and Frances O'Brien and his niece, Georgia Englehard. Though Stieglitz made a few portraits of non-white sitters (including, most notably, the pair of photographs he made of Hodge Kirnon, the 291 elevator operator (Figures 1.9 and 1.10), this general focus on white skin and white subjects is suggestive of the centrality of whiteness in his portrait work.[92]

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[91] She positions Stieglitz' photographs of O'Keeffe's body within a lineage of modernist interest in the white female nude, and especially the juxtaposition of white female bodies with black/African motifs in pictures like Manet's *Olympia* or Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* (a signal, perhaps, of the persistence of fascination with the exotic other among modernists questing to find and convey something new). She writes that "Stieglitz made a significant number of images that were cropped to frame O'Keeffe's nude upper torso, highlighting the whiteness of her breasts. Elements that were associated with darkness and sexual desire, such as O'Keeffe's hair… were excluded from the visual field." In its focus on O'Keeffe's sexuality (and, by implication, Stieglitz' own virility) and whiteness, Holloway suggests that the *Portrait* also reflects the "transcendence and control" of eugenic thought popular in the interwar era, which often promised utopic results. Furthermore, "The rhetorical insistence on O'Keeffe's whiteness in the *Portrait* stemmed from the paradoxes of white female identity… Stieglitz needed to emphasize O'Keeffe's primitivism and sexuality while maintaining her racial purity." Holloway, "Lovechild: Stieglitz, O'Keeffe, and the Birth of American Modernism", 417-18, 422-23.

[92] Stieglitz' photographs might also be construed as evidence of the centrality of whiteness in the conventions of photographic portraiture and technology that largely date back to the medium's very invention. I refer here to the ways in which its practitioners helped it to "both construct and image whiteness" by typically focusing on white subjects, using them as a reference point as the technology developed, perpetuating scientific racism through use of photographs as supposed unchallengeable evidence, and generally offering fodder for the widespread practice of equating "race" with skin color. Blight, "The Image of Whiteness", 20-23. Kirnon had, notably, been invited by Stieglitz to contribute to the special "What is 291?" issue of *Camera Work* in 1915, in which he was introduced as a "West Indian Elevator Boy". Hodge Kirnon, "What 291 Means to Me", *Camera Work* 47 (1915), 16. See also p. 5. Though he was a "respected writer and historian" in Montserrat and was active as a writer and editor for African-American publications in New York, Kirnon was perceived through the lens of anti-black stereotypes by some of 291's visitors. In another essay in the same issue of *Camera Work*, photographer Anne Brigman calls Kirnon a "six-foot African" and a "dark brother" and says that she felt like the infamous stereotypical character Brer Rabbit in his presence. Anne Brigman, "What 291 Means to Me", *Camera Work* 47 (1915), 17. Stieglitz frames Kirnon in a doorway, perhaps symbolizing his quiet place on the periphery of gallery operations or, as art historian Tara Kohn notes, his "in-betweenness" as a black intellectual performing a working-class job in a foreign country. Stieglitz pictures Kirnon respectfully, showing a contemplative man holding an issue of *Camera Work*, presumably in reference to his contributions to the earlier issue. Perhaps, a bit like O'Keeffe with Toomer, substantive interaction with a person of color had compelled him to move on from thinking of Kirnon as just an "elevator boy". Kohn, "Elevated: Along the Fringes of 291 Fifth Avenue".

Most of the time, however, Stieglitz' energies as a photographer seemed focused on defining and glorifying the unique character of America as a place while still lamenting its shortcomings in the modern age, a project that at times incorporated racist undertones. Emblematic of this effort is his 1923 photograph *Spiritual America* (Figure 1.11), a closely cropped image of the genitals of a castrated horse. It is heavily implied that America, in Stieglitz' eyes, was a place that had been metaphorically castrated by consumerism and bourgeois social norms. In this interpretation, America was struggling to retain and reassert its traditional identity in a rapidly changing era, when its purported traditional racial character was under threat.[93]

Few images demonstrate anxieties about the nation's identity more clearly than Stieglitz' most famous photograph, 1907's *The Steerage* (Figure 1.12). Often perceived as an iconic photograph of early twentieth-century immigration and class differences (embodied by the differing conditions and populations on the ship's upper and lower decks), the photograph in fact was taken on a voyage Stieglitz' family took from the U.S. towards Europe. However, it nonetheless documents Stieglitz' own growing concerns over the makeup, character, and meaning of "America" in an era in which mass immigration supposedly menaced the nation's very identity. To many, in no small thanks to the artist's confident and persistent promotion of the picture, Stieglitz' photograph came to embody these widely shared anxieties.[94] As Kohn has argued, it was also a part of Stieglitz' efforts to define himself as American, and thereby to

[93] This notion that *Spiritual America* represented America's metaphorical castration and soullessness in the modern age is now a common interpretation of the image – see, for example, Corn, *Great American Thing*, 32. We might also wonder whether the focus on sexual control evident in *Spiritual America* is reflective of Stieglitz' interest in the eugenic movement, in which castration was a common tactic for controlling human breeding.

[94] Anthony Lee has written about Stieglitz' confident and longstanding promotion of the photograph in "Introduction", in Jason Francisco and Anne McCauley, eds., "*The Steerage" and Alfred Stieglitz* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2012), 1-15. Francisco and McCauley's essays in this same volume (one focused on how Stieglitz' Jewish identity affected his perspective on immigration and immigrants, the other concerned with how the photograph connects to contemporaneous practices of looking and Stieglitz' artistic philosophy) help suggest the two levels on which the picture is routinely appreciated – as a social document and as an artistic intervention. See also Jordan Reznick, "Settler Modernism: Alfred Stieglitz's 'The Steerage' and the Vicissitudes of Whiteness, 1890-1930" (PhD. diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 2020).

achieve an ideal of whiteness that he, as a Jew, could never fully reach, despite his position of prominence within the interwar Manhattan culturati.[95]

The Steerage was not Stieglitz' only photograph to demonstrate such concerns. Stieglitz' interest in documenting lower-class people in New York City dated back to the 1890s.[96] As Trachtenberg has argued, the "picturesque conventions" inherent in these images "fit an affluent view of New York" that was characteristic of the turn of the century Manhattan cultural environment.[97] The working people that these photographs focused on were doubtless often immigrants (see Figure 1.13). Part of what is striking about these street photographs is the degree to which, even though they do not dwell on race in any sort of specific way, they nonetheless suggest that Stieglitz saw himself as someone fundamentally different from the people under observation. He, the learned modernist and second-generation American, seems to have been interested in these people principally as an "other half" to be observed and commented upon from a position of detachment that betrayed little feeling of kinship with the immigrants that fell under his camera's eye (and once again foregrounds the importance of subjectivity in these artists' works). The picture of the steerage is taken from the first-class deck.[98] Even if this

[95] Tara Kohn notably argues that Stieglitz himself was anxious about displaying the photograph (and did not publish it for four years after taking it, until a 1911 issue of *Camera Work*) because he saw it as a commentary on his own position as the Jewish son of an immigrant and on immigration more broadly. Kohn, "An Eternal Flame: Alfred Stieglitz on New York's Lower East Side", 114-15, 122-23.

[96] Stieglitz also made street photographs of wealthier New Yorkers as well as many portraits of friends, family members, and peers. In his pictures of working-class people he often focused in on individuals, categorizing them by their profession and place of origin. This persistent fascination with working-class labor and the quasi-heroicization of individuals in many of these photographs seems resonant with the work that Marin and Hartley later did in Maine.

[97] Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 189.

[98] In this discussion I have found Sara Blair's discussion of Strand's photographs of the Lower East Side's streets and inhabitants to be useful – see Sara Blair, *How the Other Half Looks: The Lower East Side and the Afterlives of Images* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 93-118. This interest in immigrant and lower-class populations in New York was also part of Stieglitz' assertion of himself as a key chronicler of the city and all that it represented – that is, what Rosenfeld later praised as the "Port of New York", the city that both represented the cosmopolitanism that could come to exist under the banner of "America" and the city that could connect it to Europe and therefore help to define the nation to an international audience. Meanwhile, this focus on immigrant populations was also a part of Stieglitz' larger effort to highlight the changing character of the city and nation, an artistic vein that also saw him focus on new building projects or Manhattan's teeming crowds – though, unlike

practice of detachment and othering did not always play out along racial and ethnic planes in his work, it was a key part of the racialization that he did practice.[99]

Though the members of Stieglitz Circle attained their status among the gallerist's chosen few because they were sympathetic to his priorities as a creator and promoter and because Stieglitz was likewise interested in what they were already doing, it seems clear that working under his umbrella also affected their creative directions. Of course, his primary example for the artists whose careers he shepherded was offered through conversation and writing, including personal correspondence and the writing he published (by himself and others) in *Camera Work* and other journals. However, it seems plausible to suggest that his photography, which Circle artists of course encountered regularly not only in private but also through exhibitions at his galleries, was also an influential example.

Rather than developing a longstanding interest in a particular racial or cultural group as followers like O'Keeffe, Marin, and Hartley did, Stieglitz' racial beliefs instead affected his photographs most commonly in less obvious ways. Perhaps most of all, they subtly betray the degree to which his understandings of and interests in issues of nationalism, modernist experimentation, and spiritual feeling were tied up with understandings of race that cast "whiteness" as normative and members of non-white groups as exotic yet fascinating outsiders.

Meanwhile, his photographs of O'Keeffe (i.e. Figures 1.14 and 1.15) and other sitters

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Strand, almost never on close-up views of the poor. We must imagine that Stieglitz' anxieties about immigration and American national identity did not disappear overnight – however, this interest diminished from prominence in his work as he moved away from his focus on New York street scenes in the 1910s, amidst what Trachtenberg has described as a disenchantment with the shifting character of the city, shifting his work picturing the city "from picturesque effects to a critical… commentary on the changing skyline". Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 180.

[99] As a wealthy and relatively socially privileged second-generation American of German Jewish descent, Stieglitz himself was evidence of the degree to which "racial" differences could in some cases be above all else differences of social and economic class. He also photographed other immigrants and people of color, including Marius de Zayas and Jean Toomer, but these photographs seem to fit more into his longstanding practice of photographing friends and peers than his interest in working-class people.

(particularly other nude women, like Figure 1.16) frequently feature hands and/or nude bodies in contorted positions, in ways that not only foreground the painter's sexuality but also suggest a sort of spiritual elevation of her bodily form. Lauren Kroiz has linked these photographs of O'Keeffe's hands in unusual positions to Coomaraswamy's photographs of traditional hand gestures used in Indian dance and sculpture and his images of his wife, a professional dancer who used Javanese styles (see Figures 1.17-19). These pictures, "at once erotic and spiritual, in which body and spirit were conjoined", offer an exotic context for Stieglitz' similar photographs of O'Keeffe and other female models making twisted poses and gestures.[100] Indeed, they suggest that Stieglitz may have been attempting to express the eroticism and spirituality of certain subjects via imitation of or allusion to Indian religious and cultural traditions. At the very least, Stieglitz' incorporation of these poses shows a kinship with artists like Dove and O'Keeffe who brought their own interests in non-Western religious traditions to bear on their works.

His photographs of O'Keeffe featuring her posing with distinctively American things like apples, ears of corn, a cow's skull, Native-American blankets, and even automobiles and tires (see Figures 3.32 and 3.33) not only asserted an American identity for their subject by suggesting a connection to a national spirit, but also (at least in some cases) reiterated Stieglitz' focus on defining America through a focus on the natural world. If these pictures were an articulation of Stieglitz' understanding of what America was (including the special exotic element within American identity born of its racialized and ethnicized subgroups), however, they were also an articulation of who he and his sitter were. They cast O'Keeffe as a modernist who beholds and understands other cultures, and who defines them as exotic and therefore herself as non-exotic. If, in surrounding her with American things, Stieglitz offered evidence of her status as American

[100] Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 113-14.

and elite, artist and modernist, he also, by extension, offered evidence of her whiteness, and even helped to confirm his own in the eyes of a world that often correlated those qualities.

Most of all, though, Stieglitz' photographs, alongside his teachings in person and in writing, offered a model for his followers of how to visually articulate a particular understanding of what America was. Though the regional landscapes and subcultures that the Circle's artists explored were varied, it is hard not to see a shared kernel of inspiration that connects Stieglitz' photographs of a swiftly modernizing New York City, the bucolic scenes he found around his family compound on Lake George, and the carefully conceived photographs he took of O'Keeffe and others. In each of these bodies of work Stieglitz articulated an understanding of the nation that was defined through closely managed views of particular places, people, buildings and objects, subjects that he had decided were resonant with his very particular intuition about American identity and how its many parts connected to its whole. This example was a potent one, and although the works of the other artists in the Circle in some ways differed quite significantly from Stieglitz', their fundamental interest in depicting personal interpretations of small slices of American life as Stieglitz did often led them to construct the national through the racial stereotypes that frequently informed their perception of the world.

Race and Racialization in the Interwar United States

The Circle artists' works take on new dimensions when considered in connection to the heightened focus on race in the interwar United States. Race and racism took on new dimensions and importance within American society during this period, when a growing array of white supremacist movements sought to define the nation as a white entity under threat from the supposed rising power of non-white groups both foreign and domestic. In the first decades of the century, while the Jim Crow system and other regimes of racial discrimination continued on

unabated, American racial discourse often seemed to center upon worry over immigration. Anxieties over immigration dated back to the mid-nineteenth century, but accelerated with the arrival of millions of Southern and Eastern European immigrants in the years around the turn of the century (immigration that especially affected New York City, whose population nearly tripled between 1880 and 1920). Anti-immigrant sentiment often took the form of public worrying about the decline and decay of the nation's "Anglo-Saxon" and "Puritan" population and character, resulting in the formation of xenophobic organizations like The Immigration Restriction League (founded in Boston in 1894) and a growing number of state and federal laws harshly capping immigration from certain nations and regions.[101] However, in the wake of the First World War (during which minority communities had been empowered amidst the nation's work shortage), racial discourse expanded in several directions as it reached new levels of prominence in mainstream U.S. society. During these years the eugenic movement and the Ku Klux Klan reached unprecedented levels of influence, while immigration policy and Indigenous and black civil rights issues continued to provoke highly polarizing national debates.[102] Popular culture sources often peddled exoticism to the masses in forms as various as "Yellow Peril" fiction stories, appropriations of black cultural inventions like jazz, and advertisements that commodified exotic cultures objects and experiences, like "Indian detours" or Indigenous crafts. Wrote historian Thomas F. Gossett in his classic history of race in America, in the 1920s,

[101] Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America*, 306-9. This focus on the nation's "Puritan" past combined ideas of history, religion, region, and heredity in ways that proved potent. In invoking colonial settlers, cultural interpreters rooted American identity as deeply as possible in the past (at least, as far as possible without relying on Indigenous histories), while also suggesting that the nation's true history and identity was rooted in Anglo-Saxon Protestants from New England. An extension of this approach was a belief that this "Puritan" character had a substantial impact on American behavior – that in some sense the truest Americans enacted a willingness to confront social, economic, and religious tyranny through the radical project of American democracy much as their ancestors had by fleeing England and beginning a new society in North America. In other cases, notions of the "Puritan" were associated with strait-laced behavior, piousness, or self-discipline, among other qualities. A relevant period discussion of "Puritan" history and disposition and its supposed combination with the "Pioneer" mentality in America is in Frank, *Our America*, 59-77 (see also further discussion of Frank's book below).

[102] Notably, in this resurgent iteration the KKK expanded the purview of its activities to include anti-immigrant hate alongside discrimination and violence against domestic minorities.

> …factory and industrial workers – many of whom were immigrants or the children of immigrants from southern and Eastern Europe – were determined to improve their economic position… The Negro, aware from his experience in Europe [during the Great War] that ideas of racial caste were by no means universal, was determined to better his position… And the Americans of the older ethnic groups were more and more intent upon holding the line against the rise in status of ethnic groups they believed to be inferior… In the summer of 1920, the Ku Klux Klan… began to pick up speed and attract members on a large scale. By 1923 its membership was to be variously estimated at between three and sex million persons… It was about this time that anti-Semitism became a really significant phenomenon… [R]acism was increasing in the United States in terms not merely of violence and open hatred but of subtle and insidious forms of discrimination… [Q]uite a large number of people eminent in the sciences and the social sciences were… genuinely convinced that races vary greatly in innate intelligence and temperament.[103]

For many (including, even, many "liberals" and "progressives"), this era was not just a time in which race took on increased prominence within American culture and politics, but also a moment of crisis as the traditional racialized conceptions of who and what an American was came under ostensible threat. This was, arguably, an important component of the impetus for "modern" artists to reckon with the changing, even traumatic experience of "modern" life in the twentieth century, when the search for personal and national belonging could seem never-ending.[104] Many of these scions of wealthy families seemed to be asking: where was the world that they had grown up in, in which there had seemed to be less interclass social contact and conflict, more simplicity and complacency and less agitation from the disenfranchised – in which, in short, their privilege was under substantially less threat? And what was this strange and frightening new world that had replaced it (or at least the idealized version of the past that they held in their memories)? Waldo Frank argued in 1919 that, for members of the American avant-garde, "What they have found wanting" – that is, what inspired their iconoclasm – "is precisely

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[103] Ibid., 370-73. Other useful sources on race and nativism in this period include Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (2001; reis., Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017), 81-186, and John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (1955; reis., New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 264-99.

[104] A relevant phrase here may be Raymond Williams' "modernists against modernity". See Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1989), 76.

the pioneer existence, the Puritan culture which their Fathers have set up."[105] In Frank's formulation, New York City was the frontier for a new generation of pioneers. However, we might well ask: if this new generation of Americans did desire to break the rules of society and artmaking as they had come to know them, why, then, did they so often return to visions of America rooted in idealized understandings of its past and reductive views of its present and future?

Better understanding the mounting racism of the interwar period can help to answer these questions. Firstly, buoyed by the writings of racist pseudoscientists like Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard, eugenics and scientific racism reached their apogee in American cultural discourse in the 1920s. During these years the utopian promise of eugenic control to cure the problems of modern society through selective human breeding seduced even supposed liberals (including some elite members of minority communities), and briefly became an idea with mainstream popularity.[106] Indeed, eugenic thought held widespread appeal in America throughout most of the first half of the twentieth century, and was codified through anti-sterilization and marriage restriction laws in many of the states. These laws, along with trying to combat supposed national racial degeneration by discouraging immigration and interracial marriage, also often targeted poor whites as they sought to weed out the "feebleminded" and "degenerate".[107]

A related influence was the rise of international fascism and Nazism in the 1920s and

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[105] Frank, *Our America*, 176-77.
[106] See Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race* (New York: Scribner's, 1916), and Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (New York: Scribner's, 1920). Interestingly, this interest in using eugenics to fix the nation's social issues echoed the Circle's own stated aspirations for their work to help to solve the ills of America's modern age.
[107] One useful resource on the history of eugenics in the United States is: Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

’30s. Some pseudoscientists like Stoddard and Grant became apologists for Nazi racial ideology, and other elements of post-World War I U.S. society, including the 1919-20 Red Scare, rising nativism, anti-Semitism, and KKK-led white-protestant supremacism, and the efflorescence of right-wing patriotic societies like the National Security League, American Defense Association, and U.S. Flag Association in the 1920s, also showed the influence of fascism in American nationalist ideology.[108] These trends allowed space for widespread racial and ethnic discrimination and hatred to flourish under the guise of nationalism, political commitment, and social science.

Equally influential as interwar populist white supremacism was the ongoing dominance of and exertion of power by white people at the top of the nation’s cultural, political, academic, and business hierarchies. Ivy League universities instituted new quotas on Jewish students, academics devised new intelligence and personality tests that fueled scientific racism, and leaders including Presidents Harding and Coolidge and Secretary of Labor James Davis openly espoused racist anti-immigration rhetoric. While some corporate leaders promoted immigration as a source of inexpensive labor, many businessmen not only implemented discriminatory hiring and labor practices but also used their funds to support racist research and advocacy groups.[109] Often, though, the influence of white supremacist leadership was far subtler, implemented through the cultures and norms of the institutions (including cultural institutions) that these leaders controlled as the nation’s gentry, which collectively asserted the dominance of whiteness

[108] Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America*, 427-28. Peter H. Amann, “A ‘Dog in the Nighttime’ Problem: American Fascism in the 1930s”, *The History Teacher* 19, no. 4 (1986), 559–84. Especially notable here are fascism’s authoritarian, anti-Marxist, and propagandist tendencies.

[109] Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America*, 372-78, 383, 405. Regarding discrimination in hiring, one useful source is: Thomas N. Maloney and Warren C. Whatley, “Making the Effort: Contours of Racial Discrimination in Detroit’s Labor Markets, 1920-1940”, *Journal of Economic History* 55, no. 3 (1995), 465-93. Regarding corporate philanthropy, a prominent example is the Eugenics Record Office, the longtime epicenter of eugenic research in America, which was founded by the Carnegie Institution. “Carnegie Institution of Washington”, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, accessed February 23, 2023, https://www.cshl.edu/archives/institutional-collections/carnegie-institution-of-washington.

as they policed the boundaries of American high society and high culture.

In the meantime, in ways that they never had before, privileged white thinkers and makers (who were quite often the semi-disaffected sons and daughters of political and business leaders), looked towards America's racial subgroups for inspiration and national meaning. Writes historian Ann Douglas, "In the decade after the war…, Americans, black and white, discovered their African-American heritage of folk and popular art." This growth of interest in African-American culture as a nationally distinctive phenomenon centered above all else on New York City, where hundreds of thousands of black workers and creatives were moving amidst the Great Migration.[110] Some white artists and writers took a more hands-on interest in the events of the Harlem Renaissance by participating in its nightlife. However, many, rather than document the contemporary realities of African-American life and cultural production in their work, instead began to focus more on incorporating tired stereotypes about American black people as a means of asserting a distinctive national identity. Other groups were treated similarly. Native Americans and symbols of Native-American culture were likewise extolled by interwar critics and creatives for their potential to set the United States apart, as they had been for decades. However, in most cases this celebration reflected only a monolithic and vague perception of American Indigenous cultures, a pattern of simplification and distortion encouraged by the relative paucity of Indigenous peoples in and near the nation's East Coast centers of cultural production (or at least whites' lack of interest in or knowledge of East Coast Native groups). Finally, and by contrast, Asian-Americans were still widely seen as foreign and incompatible

[110] Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1995), 4.

with racialized notions of American nationhood.[111]

Perhaps the most famous example of interwar white fascination with racial others was the soaring mainstream appeal of jazz in the 1920s. Harlem's music scene not only attracted white audiences, but also inspired imitators in the form of white bandleaders who often topped the nation's music charts while black jazz musicians (like their ragtime predecessors) were often lambasted by white critics. Similar impetuses also impacted high culture. As scholar Werner Sollors has argued, writers telling stories of the lives of "ethnic" people in America was a central component of American literary modernism.[112]

Among other things, the interwar fascination with race propelled racialized conceptions of national identity. Writes sociologist Robert Miles about the connections between race and nation,

> … 'nations', like 'races', are the product of human invention… The ideas of 'race' and 'nation' are… both supra-class and supra-gender forms of categorisation… That potential was reinforced by the development of scientific racism from the eighteenth century. In its most extreme form, it argued that 'race' determined both cultural capacity and historical development, and it therefore followed that each 'nation' was the expression of a particular biological capacity. This was an articulation in which 'race' was 'nation'.[113]

"Race" and "ethnicity" have long been one of the principal ways in which, to paraphrase

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[111] Kroiz calls upon anthropologist Susan Hegeman in her analysis of the process of forging American national identity in the 1920s and '30s, writing that as "Hegeman argues… distinct regions came to be thought of as embodied in specific cultures and racial groups… African American[s] became a symbol of the particular culture of the South, whereas the Native American and Hispanic American embodied the Southwest." Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 146. Hegeman's analysis focuses on the works of critics including Sherwood Anderson, Van Wyck Brooks, and Waldo Frank, who were inspired to view cultures in this way in part through their connection with Boasian anthropologists. Susan Hegeman, *Patterns for America: Modernism and the Concept of Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[112] We might think of the Stieglitz artists' interests in racialized and ethnicized communities as counterparts to some of the literary examples Sollors enumerates, which include Circle familiar Gertrude Stein's 1909 book *Three Lives*, which focuses on two German-Americans (one an immigrant, the other a servant) and a mixed-race African-American, Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep* (1934), which focuses on a young Jewish immigrant, and even works by other close circle affiliates like Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* and Jean Toomer's 1923 novella *Cane*. Werner Sollors, *Ethnic Modernism* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[113] Miles, *Racism*, 89.

Benedict Anderson, national communities get "imagined" into existence.[114] Though this direct linkage between the two categories was not historically immutable, the centrality of nationalism to the interpretation of the Stieglitz artists' works during and in the decades after their interwar heyday invites consideration of the degree to which "nation" came to be a sort of stand-in for "race", and "nationally representative" a substitute for "racially distinctive" – that is, distinctively "white" and, even, to a certain extent "Anglo-Saxon". For all the focus on issues of nation in connection to these artists works from the 1920s until the 2020s, including more recent critical-minded writings connecting their works to cultural nationalism, there seems to have been quite little consideration of what other ideas such notions of the "American" might be standing in for. As later chapters will relate in greater detail, as they focused on different racial and regional contexts in their works, the Stieglitz artists participated in different trends in how people were "making America" and defining who counted as "American" through race in ways that included some while excluding others. Above all else, they benefited from an art-world ecosystem in which they were taken seriously as true American artists precisely because they were white.[115]

At the same time that many white nationalist artists and critics were working to center the "Anglo-Saxon" within American identity, a far smaller number of others, including Randolph Bourne, were intent on interpreting it through the lens of its growing diversity via immigration. It is fascinating that, for those who sought to center Western and Northern European (or even Anglo-Saxon) heredity within American identity, acclaiming America's supposed "Puritan" past and present and the unique character of its African and Native American denizens were frequently less oppositional ideas than complementary ones. Indeed, for many influential

[114] I am referencing here Benedict Anderson's classic *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983; reis., London and New York: Verso, 2016) – see especially the chapter on "Patriotism and Racism", 141-54.
[115] And Stieglitz was not taken seriously in this way by those who did not see him as white, as Thomas Craven's anti-Semitic criticism of Stieglitz demonstrates.

interpreters, the longstanding presence of black and Indigenous people in the nation was more an opportunity to culturally and dispositionally differentiate themselves from their counterparts born across the pond than any sort of retreat from a position declaring their fundamental hereditary sameness with Western Europeans. The actual humanity of America's non-white peoples was evidently beside the point.

Importantly, this same benevolent attitude was not often extended to immigrants, whose claim to American identity was more theoretical and at least supposedly less historical (though some like Bourne saw historical and ongoing immigration as central to the nation's story). In transitioning from a cohort around Stieglitz that included artists and writers of various backgrounds to a far less diverse set of people in the second Circle, the group's changes mirrored the rising nativism in U.S. culture in the 1920s.

One part of what makes interrogating the racism evinced in the Stieglitz artists' works worthwhile is that they thrived during the same era in which public intellectuals like the anthropologist Franz Boas and the sociologist and activist W.E.B. Du Bois were beginning to work to undermine the very concept of race in public fora. Though the racial views of both men were complex and evolved with time, both not only participated in anti-racist activism but also offered influential rebuttals to the scientific racism popular in the early twentieth-century United States.

Though Du Bois' thinking on "race" at the turn of the twentieth century had still advocated for a partially biological understanding of the concept, by 1920 he was ready to proclaim that, *"There are no races, in the sense of great, separate, pure breeds of men, differing in attainment, development, and capacity. There are great groups - now with common history,*

now with common interests, now with common ancestry."[116] *However, as scholar Daylanne English has argued, amidst the eugenic movement's popular heyday in the 1920s, Du Bois nonetheless became an advocate for the use of eugenic techniques as a tool for the "racial uplift" of African Americans.*[117] *Nevertheless, by 1940 he was willing to go even further in his repudiation of biological definitions of race: "It is easy to see that scientific definition of race is impossible; it is easy to prove that physical characteristics are not so inherited as to make it possible to divide the world into races; that ability is the monopoly of no known aristocracy; that the possibilities of human development cannot be circumscribed by color, nationality, or any conceivable definition of race."*[118] *Ultimately, though Du Bois' approaches towards race never clearly advocated for a complete demolition of the concept, his was still one of the loudest voices to question the prevailing racial essentialism of the period, especially among African-American audiences. His numerous books and other published writings, work as editor of the NAACP magazine The Crisis, and advocacy in public debates and conferences led him to become one of America's most prominent voices against racism in the early twentieth century.*[119]

By contrast, Boas fought more clearly and forcefully across these decades against the prevailing practice of judging non-Western peoples by Western standards, conducted research to rebut scientific racist theories that suggested that physiological and behavioral differences between the peoples of the world were rooted in "race" rather than circumstantial differences, and refuted widely held beliefs that "civilized" racial groups were more intelligent or capable

[116] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 98.
[117] Daylanne K. English, *Unnatural Selections: Eugenics in American Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2004), 35-64.
[118] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of A Race Concept* (1940; repub., New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction, 2011), 137.
[119] A usefully comprehensive account of Du Bois' life and advocacy is David L. Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois – Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York: H. Holt, 1993) and David L. Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois – The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963* (New York: H. Holt, 2000).

than "primitive" races.[120] Unlike other scientists of his era, Boas was unafraid of addressing the connections between his scientific insights and political issues, which led him to decry racial inequality in numerous public fora. Anthropologist Regna Darnell writes that Boas "explicitly countered the eugenics and social evolutionary theories of so-called 'primitive' culture that were pervasive at the time… He took public stands… that were unpopular…, wrote to newspapers, spoke to non-academic audiences, prepared museum exhibits…, encouraged minority group scholars, and supported aboriginal and Afro-American communities".[121]

Though Boas was a scientist and Du Bois often focused on speaking to an African-American audience, both men's ideas were accessible to members of the Manhattan intelligentsia like the Stieglitz artists. For example, one of the most dedicated friends of and advocates for the Circle artists, Herbert Seligmann, was the NAACP's publicity director from 1919 to 1932, a period during which Du Bois was the organization's loudest public voice and both were intimately involved in its operations.[122] Similarly, there were countless opportunities for the Stieglitz artists to interact with members of Boas' circle in both New York and New Mexico, where anthropologists like Boas' students Ruth Benedict and Elsie Clews Parsons often

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[120] However, Boas still did sometimes suggest that certain groups were more or less "civilized" or "primitive" by circumstance rather than biological difference, and that certain characteristics were inherent to certain such groups. Gossett, *Race: The History of An Idea in America*, 418-24. Boas published many books and papers on related topics – see, for example, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (New York: MacMillan, 1911). A complex account of Boas' approaches towards issues of "race" is offered in Vernon J. Williams, Jr., *Rethinking Race: Franz Boas and His Contemporaries* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1996).

[121] Regna Darnell, "Franz Boas' Legacy of 'Useful Knowledge': The APS Archives and the Future of Americanist Anthropology", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 162, no. 1 (2018), 1-14. A useful overview of Boas' life and career is: Rosemary Levy Zumwalt, *Franz Boas: The Emergence of the Anthropologist* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2019). However, there have been some recent criticisms of Boas' work, including his tendency to emphasize the "primitive" character of certain peoples even as he fought against racist systems. See, for example, Audra Simpson, "Why White People Love Franz Boas; or, The Grammar of Indigenous Dispossession", in Ned Blackhawk and Isaiah Lorado Wilner, eds., *Indigenous Visions: Rediscovering the World of Franz Boas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 166-81; and Rainer Hatoum, "'The First Real Indians That I Have Seen': Franz Boas and the Disentanglement of the Entangled", *ab-Original* 2, no. 2 (2018), 157-84. An interesting analysis of the connections between Boas' ideas and Du Bois' is: Brad Evans, *Before Cultures: The Ethnographic Imagination in American Literature, 1865-1920* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 152-89.

[122] Herbert Aptheker, *The Literary Legacy of W.E.B. Du Bois* (New York: Kraus International, 1989), 266.

intermingled with modernists. But most of all, it is important to note that these were thinkers with public platforms whose ideas were available to all, and especially to inhabitants of the Manhattan modernist/bohemian scene, even if most members of that environment were not exactly vigilant in fighting against racism. Though the racial attitudes we can glimpse in what the Stieglitz artists wrote, said, and made are not out of lockstep with the mainstream thinking of the social milieux in which they lived, they were also not the only perspectives available to them.

Another complicating factor in evaluating the views and actions of the Stieglitz artists, or indeed most any figures from the 1920s and '30s, is the complexity of racial politics in the interwar era. What might seem to signal an arch-progressive or -conservative standpoint to observers in the 2020s need not have done so a century before, as, for example, the popularity of eugenics even among many progressives in the interwar era so clearly suggests.

While many know the era as one of cultural efflorescence for African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance, it was also one in which American society sought to place a damper on increasing racial and ethnic diversity. Even many leading African-American intellectuals (like Du Bois) were not only proponents of eugenics, but also concerned about the effect of immigration and interracial mixing on their own community.[123] The most impactful law aimed at controlling the United States' racial makeup was the Immigration Act of 1924, which was co-authored by a eugenicist, effectively banned all immigration from outside of Europe, and harshly reduced European immigration to 2% of the foreign-born population from each nation represented in the 1890 U.S. Census. This latter provision effectively targeted and denied entry to the vast majority of would-be newcomers from Eastern, Central, and Southern Europe, nations from which the number of immigrants had dramatically swelled since 1890, with the goal of

[123] See English, *Unnatural Selections*.

helping to preserve America's supposed Northern and Western European racial homogeneity and identity. Tellingly, the law was soon thereafter acclaimed by Adolf Hitler as a model for his own plans for racial purification in Germany.[124]

Though open recognition of supposed Western European racial superiority and the theories of global history and heredity that typically accompanied it never achieved mainstream acceptance within U.S. society, these ideas were also certainly available to those with contacts within the Manhattan intelligentsia like the Stieglitz artists. In her book about bohemian New York City in the early twentieth century, historian Christine Stansell describes the complex racial politics of the time and place in which the second Circle formed:

> …it was in the 1910s that a particular American chemistry had first gone to work, as if a dash of the "other", whether the Jew or the New Woman, was necessary to distill the modern from the cultural solvent. The early crossover into bohemia was possible for other outsiders, too – a few Italian immigrants, sons and daughters of the Irish tenements… but not for blacks… [T]he New Negro would not appear on the bohemian spectrum until the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, and then only episodically.[125]

The growing acceptance of racial others (that is, more or less, the swift but halting and ambiguous expansion of who counted as "white") was what made the prominent roles that figures like Stieglitz and Rosenfeld held in Manhattan's interwar art world possible. However, the environment was still one in which discriminatory attitudes reigned, including attitudes that condoned and encouraged discrimination against African-Americans and lower-class immigrants from Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe, but gave a pass to the (often wealthier) second- and third-generation Americans descended from past immigrants from those same regions.[126] Indeed, bohemian Manhattan both before the First World War and after might well be defined as a

[124] See Stefan Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
[125] Stansell, *American Moderns*, 66-67.
[126] A helpful source on the changes in racial categories in the early twentieth-century United States, including the complex and often ambiguous expansion of who counted as "white", is Guterl, *The Color of Race in America*.

cultural milieu where many who were purportedly fighting for equality under various social and political guises (like Socialism, Communism, Anarchism, etc.) were nonetheless often heavily inclined towards bigotry, discrimination, and inequality – as an environment defined by ambiguities and dissonances. This milieu was largely an atmosphere of great social and economic privilege even as many of its participants railed against the capitalist status quo. Meanwhile, it was also an environment of significant racial privilege even as many of its members fixated on supposed racial differences.

Race and Racism in the Stieglitz Artists' Lives

The Stieglitz artists' racial beliefs were in many ways illustrative of their social circumstances. Influential contexts include their upbringings in atmospheres of varying degrees of significant privilege in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century United States, their various exposures to racialized groups and resident and tourist communities in areas across the country including New Mexico, Maine, Long Island, and upstate New York, and, perhaps most of all, their shared experience living amidst the Manhattan avant-garde in the racially fraught 1920s and '30s. While, as one might expect given their membership in this milieu, they were, for the most part, not out-and-out reactionaries, they were also not the most progressive members of their environment. Fascination with supposedly exotic racial and ethnic others was normalized, but other ways of thinking about society, identity, heredity, and national belonging were also available.

Anecdotes suggest that the casual use of racial epithets was relatively common within the group – a shared trait that reveals a tendency to not only view the world's people through racial lenses (even as whiteness seemed natural and invisible), but also to participate in broader practices of denigration of non-white people and groups through hate speech. Most strikingly,

Dove used the "n word" in the titles of several artworks in the 1920s, a decision that was decried by some at the time but that he and Stieglitz defended as emulations of African-American vernacular speech.[127] For the 1914 exhibition of African objects at 291, the pamphlet proclaimed an "exhibition of statuary in wood by African savages".[128] The Chinese restaurant that the group frequented was casually referred to as "the Chink's".[129] In a 1923 tale about trying to hire a new housekeeper Stieglitz contrasts the "negresses" who came to interview for the job with the "nice looking competent women, American, German, Swedish" who came.[130] Several letters Marin wrote to Stieglitz include casual use of the "n word", and according to Sherwood Anderson, O'Keeffe once told him that "she was afraid of 'niggers'".[131] Though there are even more examples of the artists using terms that were considered more appropriate during the period, like "Negro" or "colored" as terms for Black people, use of more offensive terms was not a rarity within the group, particularly in private.

Stieglitz, especially, often focused on race, ethnicity, and color aloud and in writing. At

[127] These works are covered at much greater length in Chapter Four.
[128] Copy of 1914 Photo-Secession Gallery pamphlet, in Homer Papers, Box 53, Folder 5. Interestingly, the pamphlet that accompanied the Henri Rousseau exhibition Stieglitz put on in 1910 showcased a different sort of interest in the "primitive" that followed on from European artists and art historians' longstanding interpretation of Gothic and Renaissance painters as "primitives". By emphasizing that Rousseau "was truly naïve and personal; a real 'primitive' living in our time… His… work… recalls Giotto and other primitives", Stieglitz offered some art historical cachet and lineage for the idea of "primitive art" that he was highlighting. Transcript of 1910 Photo-Secession Gallery pamphlet, in Homer Papers, Box 53, Folder 5. For an interesting analysis of the importance of Giotto to early twentieth-century modernists, see Robin Simon, "'A Giotto conviene far ritorno': The Arena Chapel, the British, a Futurist, and the Reputation of Giotto (c1267-1337)", *British Art Journal* 16, no. 2 (2017), 3-19.
[129] Paul Rosenfeld to Georgia O'Keeffe, October 1921[?], Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Archive, Yale University, Box 212, Folder 3722.
[130] Paul Rosenfeld to Georgia O'Keeffe, October 22, 1923, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 212, Folder 3722.
[131] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, October 19, 1924, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 34, Folder 783; John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 20-September 3, 1933, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 34, Folder 786; Sherwood Anderson to Alfred Stieglitz, November 11, 1923, in Howard Mumford Jones, ed., *Letters of Sherwood Anderson* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1953), 111. For more instances of Marin's casual use of stereotypes about African Americans, see John Marin to Roy Wass, undated, Marin Family Papers, Section I, Part II, Group II, Folder 1, as well as some of Marin's attempts at short story writing available in the Marin Family Papers, Section I, Part III, Folder 1. An important note about this terminology: the "n word" was widely considered to be offensive in the 1920s and '30s, leading to protests and criticisms of Van Vechten's book and other public uses of the term. Writes scholar Robert F. Worth, "*Nigger Heaven*'s title alone was widely considered to be a terrible insult." Robert F. Worth, "*Nigger Heaven* and the Harlem Renaissance", *African American Review* 29, no. 3 (1995), 463.

times he seemed to underline the supposed inherent traits of ethnic groups, while at others he fixated on the supposed racial character of certain artworks. In 1925 he called Dove's father "a Puritan, an American", and the following year he rationalized the characteristics of an O'Keeffe painting by explaining that she had Irish and Hungarian ancestry. In 1925 he also professed after a visitor brought up "ancient savage art" in reference to some "Negroid masks" that were sitting in the gallery that he felt that his own work was "related to the Egyptian".[132] Marin similarly focused on the supposed racial character of art by Africans, writing in a 1953 letter that "African Negro Sculpture" was "hideous – repulsive – revolting – There is quite enough of disease in the world without hero worshiping it" – a notable divergence from Stieglitz' admiration of such sculpture's "primitive" character.[133]

A 1926 conversation is indicative of the degree to which the group frequently (and often subconsciously) used color to discuss art and people in ways that suggest racial undertones in their thinking. Stieglitz was quoted as saying that "he had gone to the Pennsylvania Station to see… [O'Keeffe] off, and had then walked through the streets of New York alone, as he had not done in years, and the streets and the city became unreal, and disappeared, and everything took on the aspect of O'Keeffe's whiteness. He had felt her as white, himself gray by comparison, and no one could ever be for him the white thing O'Keeffe was. That was what was in her work in Room 303 and O'Keeffe's absence intensified that feeling of her whiteness."[134] This last comment is particularly interesting given its emphasis on the subjectivity of Stieglitz' preoccupation with O'Keeffe's "white"-ness. This preoccupation is made clear in his many photographs dwelling on her bare skin, but his description also makes clear how such

[132] Herbert J. Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking: Notes on Some of His Conversations, 1925-1931, with a Foreword* (New Haven: Yale University Library, 1966), 2, 10, 50.
[133] John Marin to Louis Kalonyme, May 2, 1953, Marin Family Papers, Section I, Part II, Group II, Folder 1.
[134] Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 63-64.

terminology went beyond direct consideration of race and towards the racial*ized* vocabularies that Stieglitz and his contemporaries used to describe people and things. This idea of her as "white" seems to have been augmented in her absence because it was not just rooted in her appearance or background, but also how he imagined her to be, not just physically but also spiritually.

Meanwhile, Marin's letters from visits to New Mexico in 1929 and 1930 expressed a fundamental distrust of people of Mexican descent: "I like the Indians – don't much like the Mexicans – would lie down beside an Indian and feel all right – don't think I would lying down besides a Mexican."[135] Later in the same letter he wrote that, "A big Indian dance I attended – I feel my greatest human Experience – the barbaric Splendor of it was magnificent."[136] The pictures he produced during these brief trips to New Mexico reflect a similarly casual incorporation of stereotypes about the Native and Hispanic cultures he found there, and offer an example of the type of evidence of racist ideologies offered by these artists works. For example, the 1930 watercolor *Taos Indian Girl* (Figure 1.20) seems less an attempt at representing a particular young woman than an image of the monolithic vision of a particular type within the artist's mind. In this sense Marin was representing the local Indigenous population in a manner typical of the colony of Taos artists who had been working in the town since the turn of the century. As scholar Sylvia Rodriguez has described such paintings, they "were not realistic portraits of individuals as they actually appeared in everyday life, but rather romantic compositions for which the subjects dressed in prototypical costume. Indians tended to be portrayed as ideal types… caught at some pristine, eternal moment."[137] Similarly, *Dance of the*

[135] John Marin to Emil Zoler, August 25, 1929, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 132-33, 132.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Sylvia Rodriguez, "Art, Tourism, and Race Relations in Taos: Toward a Sociology of the Art Colony", *Journal of Anthropological Research* 45, no. 1 (1989), 83.

Santo Domingo Indians (Figure 1.2) reflects an outsider's idealizing yet primitivizing understanding of the dance, one which reveled in its beauty and "barbaric Splendor", yet showed little comprehension of the actual cultural and spiritual meanings of the dance, let alone the ways in which it had been altered for a tourist audience.[138]

Given the Stieglitz artists' professed desire to have their work speak to America's modern social problems, that eugenic thought might appeal to them during an interwar era in which its popularity reached an apogee also seems plausible. Notably, in a 1924 letter to Dove, Stieglitz mentions reading a pair of reflections on science and futurism by the Marxist geneticist J.B.S. Haldane and the polymath Bertrand Russell. Both of these tracts expressed dissatisfaction with mainstream views on the application of eugenic methods to population control, but nonetheless saw controlled human breeding as a means of creating a more utopian world, if applied correctly. Interestingly, in the same letter, Stieglitz mentions a local handyman whom he had hired for several odd jobs, calling him "a real person with blue eyes" and suggesting that he was part of "A dying race I fear."[139] Though Stieglitz was not himself of "Anglo-Saxon" descent as Dove was, he nonetheless evidently felt sufficiently comfortable with his own racial and ethnic identity to ponder the implementation of human breeding practices without worrying for his own future. Likewise, he felt secure reiterating contemporaneous theories about the relative humanity and fitness of different "racial" groups without concern for incurring such judgments himself.

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[138] Quotes from Ibid. and John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 4, 10, and 14, 1930, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 134-36, 135. For more on representations of Pueblo dances in modernist art in the 1920s and '30s, see Scott, *A Strange Mixture*, 182-85. For more on the manufactured presentation of Pueblo culture for tourist audiences in the early-to-mid twentieth century, see Leah Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996); and Marta Weigle, "From Desert to Disney World: The Santa Fe Railway and the Fred Harvey Company Display the Indian Southwest", *Journal of Anthropological Research* 45, no. 1 (1989), 115-37. See also discussion in Chapter 3.

[139] Alfred Stieglitz to Arthur Dove, June 23, 1924, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 13, Folder 318; J.B.S. Haldane, *Daedalus; or, Science of the Future* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Trubner, 1923); Bertrand Russell, *Icarus, or, the Future of Science* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1924).

This collection of evidence of the ways in which Stieglitz and his followers engaged in the casual racism characteristic of their era and social environment is complicated by their sometimes productive and friendly relationships with people of color, as well as the openly anti-racist commitments of some of their closest friends and supporters. Stieglitz himself, even, openly stated that "I make no distinction between classes and races and creeds. There is no hatred in me unless it be a hatred of pretense and hypocrisy and maybe… stupidity."[140] Perhaps most striking are Stieglitz and O'Keeffe's friendships with the African-American artist Beauford Delaney (who was the subject of several O'Keeffe portraits) and the mixed-race author Jean Toomer. Toomer, who resisted being identified as a "Negro" and has been alleged by some scholars to have passed as white for long periods, was also famous for his writings about Black experiences, including his now-classic 1923 novella *Cane*.[141] Though O'Keeffe was hesitant to meet Toomer because of his race when Seligmann first invited him to a dinner party, she took a liking to him and the pair even shared a brief romantic affair in 1933-34.[142] As Chapter Three will discuss, she also became friends with Mabel Dodge Luhan's Puebloan husband, Tony, during her time in New Mexico. Earlier in his career Stieglitz also maintained cordial and productive relationships with other creatives of color, including Hartmann, Coomaraswamy, and, most notably, de Zayas, who had collaborated with Stieglitz on his 1914 exhibition of African art and subsequently written a book on the topic.[143]

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[140] Alfred Stieglitz, "Alfred Stieglitz: Ten Stories", *Twice a Year* 5/6 (1941), 137.
[141] See Jean Toomer, *Cane* (1923; reis., New York: Liveright, 1951). Further information on Toomer's life can be found in Barbara Foley, *Jean Toomer: Race, Repression, and Revolution* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014), among many other sources.
[142] Amanda Mehisma Licato, "The Shared Journeys of Jean Toomer and Georgia O'Keeffe", Yale Program in the History of the Book, accessed August 24, 2022, https://bookhistory.yale.edu/blog/shared-journeys-jean-toomer-and-georgia-okeeffe; Donald C. Gallup, *Pigeons on the Granite: Memories of a Yale Librarian* (New Haven: Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, 1988), 241.
[143] Lauren Kroiz discusses these figures and their relationships with Stieglitz at length in *Creative Composites*. In fact, the first-ever exhibition of non-photographic art at Stieglitz' Photo-Secession Galleries was a 1907 show of work by the possibly mixed-race artist Pamela Colman Smith, though, as scholar Kathleen Pyne suggests, "Much of

Notable, too, are the anti-racist commitments of some of the Circle members' friends and colleagues within Manhattan's interwar intelligentsia, which sometimes peppered the (at least supposedly) antiestablishment attitudes that such figures shared. Perhaps most remarkably, Bourne challenged Anglo-Saxon-centric visions of American identity in his classic 1916 essay "Trans-National America", which considered the diverse origins of the nation's immigrant populations to be central to the type of national identity to which it should aspire.[144] Waldo Frank, meanwhile, was a willing mentor to Toomer as he developed *Cane*, but also insisted upon the importance of Toomer's African-Americanness (in defiance of Toomer's wishes to be interpreted without regard to his ancestry) as he helped edit and write the foreword for the book.[145] Frank's influential 1919 book *Our America* also looks at length at the purported fundamental characteristics of groups including the "Puritan", the "Anglo-Saxon", the "Jew", and the "Mexican" and the role that they might play in the nation's future.[146]

Photographer and writer Carl Van Vechten, another close associate of the Circle, was a longtime advocate for African Americans and played an important role in promoting Harlem Renaissance artists and writers. However, he also published a book, *Nigger Heaven*, that was intended as a celebration of Harlem and his experiences enjoying the nightlife there but garnered significant controversy for its title, content, and presumptuous concept, which were the outgrowth of the author's unhealthy, primitivizing obsession with the neighborhood and its

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her fascination for Stieglitz depended on… Her identity as an authentic primitive and childlike voice." In truth it is unclear just what Smith's family background was, or indeed whether she was biracial at all. What is much more clear is that her contemporaries typically perceived her to be part Asian or part Black and she did little to dissuade them, often leaning into an interest in and experience with Caribbean culture in her work and persona. See Kathleen Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice: O'Keeffe and the Women of the Stieglitz Circle* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2007), 47, and Melinda Boyd Parsons, *To All Believers: The Art of Pamela Colman Smith* (Wilmington, DE: Delaware Art Museum, 1975).

[144] Randolph S. Bourne, "Trans-National America", *Atlantic Monthly* 118 (1916), 86-97.

[145] For more on Toomer and Frank's relationship see Kathleen Pfeiffer, ed., *Brother Mine: The Correspondence of Jean Toomer and Waldo Frank* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010); and Foley, *Jean Toomer*, 84-119.

[146] Frank, *Our America*, especially pp. 78-98.

inhabitants.[147] Seligmann, a friend and ardent supporter of all the members of the Circle and the author of multiple books about the group, is perhaps best-known outside of art circles for his anti-racist writing and advocacy, which included publications about racism in Europe and America, among them a 1920 book, *The Negro Faces America*, that was republished in part in the NAACP magazine *The Crisis*.[148] But Seligmann's contributions as an anti-racist advocate did not preclude him from participating in the same sort of casual racism that his friends in the Circle did. He excused Dove's use of the "n word" (and Stieglitz' defense of the title and advocacy for its continued use) in the title of his assemblage *Nigger Goes A-Fishin* as artistic interpretation of American folk language, and edited epithets out of a collection of Marin letters published in 1931.[149] Clearly, as even just these few examples show, the racial thinking and commitments of "radicals" and "progressives" in interwar New York were often more complicated than one might expect given their professed social, political, and creative beliefs.

While Stieglitz' professional network grew less diverse in the interwar era, it might still seem strange to some to focus so intently on his or his followers' racial biases given these relationships with people of color. However, I would suggest that these relationships are reflective of the differing status that highbrow, highly educated, wealthy intellectuals of color could enjoy in early twentieth-century New York in comparison to less privileged non-white people. This was an intersectional privilege that Stieglitz, Rosenfeld, Frank, and other Jewish intellectuals also, to a significant extent, enjoyed. While members of the Circle incorporated stereotypes about unfamiliar racial, ethnic, and cultural groups into their artworks, they

[147] See Carl Van Vechten, *Nigger Heaven* (New York: Knopf, 1926). For more on Van Vechten see the recent biography of him: Edward White, *The Tastemaker: Carl Van Vechten and the Birth of Modern America* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, & Giroux, 2014). Ann Douglas has an insightful analysis of Van Vechten's relationship with Harlem in: *Terrible Honesty*, 287-91.
[148] Herbert J. Seligmann, *The Negro Faces America* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1920).
[149] Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 18. Herbert J. Seligmann, ed., *Letters of John Marin* (1931; repub., Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1970).

nonetheless interacted with non-white intellectuals in a professional capacity as something like peers, while still exoticizing them in certain ways. Race was often as much a proxy for other forms of social differentiation (that is, perceiving divides based on class and cultural differences) as it was its own category of or excuse for differentiation.[150] Still, despite the importance of social, cultural, and economic divides and intersections, one should not underestimate the degree to which race was indeed a determinative factor in how Circle members and most of their avant-garde peers perceived the world and made art.

O'Keeffe's comments about an interaction with a student that took place when she visited the historically black Fisk University after donating part of Stieglitz' collection there in 1949 certainly suggest that, though she had some empathy for African Americans and an interest in African art, she had not spent much time thinking about black Americans' lived experiences and still thought of race as an inherent form of identity:

> "There was a very black girl – who asked me a startling question – why do you associate the idea of purity with white and not with black… It was impossible for her to accept the idea that she was black – She wanted only to be a person… I had no idea befor [sic] of the many things color of the skin can mean and do – it is sad – That black girl had something that made me discount the color of her skin as I never have with any other colored person."

However, earlier in the same letter she also complained that "all the dark skins [at Fisk] hated us because we were white".[151] In one conversation with Fisk students she defended Hartley against their accusations that his work was connected to Nazism.[152] Ultimately, even if O'Keeffe's politics would seem to suggest that she would be the least likely of the Stieglitz artists to harbor

[150] Writes Stuart Hall, "social divisions which assume a distinctively racial or ethnic character can be… explained principally by… economic structures and processes." Stuart Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance", in Marion O'Callaghan, ed., *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism* (Paris: UNESCO, 1980), 306.
[151] Georgia O'Keeffe to Daniel Catton Rich, November 13, 1949, photocopy available in Jane Cramer Papers Relating to the Fisk University Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Georgia O'Keeffe Research Center, Box 1.
[152] Jane Cramer interview with Greg Ridley, June 15, 1993, Cramer Papers, Box 4.

racial prejudice, the evidence is mixed.

Regardless of the degree to which the individual members of the Circle should be construed as "prejudiced" or out of step with the prevailing views of their era, it is important to consider how the role of race and racism in shaping their shared philosophies and the artists' individual interests in particular racialized communities actually came to be visualized in their works, and what the role of such works has been in perpetuating racisms small and large over the last century. These are some of the principal aims of the chapters that follow here.

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A chapter on Marin investigates his attempted assimilation into what he perceived to be a rustic, authentic "Yankee" community on the Maine coast and describes how and why he tried to evoke what he perceived to be the unique physical and spiritual character of the "Maine folk" and their transcendent connection to the state's lands, seas, and lifeways in his work. As well as relating representations of denizens of the Maine coast such as *Young Man of the Sea, Maine* to contemporary notions of whiteness and New England identity, I situate Marin's fascination with Maine within the long history of ethnic and cultural tourism there. Finally, I discuss the roles that Marin's ethnic heritage and performative adoption of a Mainer outdoorsman's lifestyle played in encouraging public perception of an innate connection between the artist and his work and the granite, seawater, and people of the region.[153]

A second chapter compares the touristic racialized regionalism that Marin pursued in Maine with O'Keeffe's project in the Southwest, arguing that past interpretations of O'Keeffe's New Mexican oeuvre have obscured the extent, character, and stakes of her engagement with Southwestern Indigenous and Hispanic cultures. Unlike previous scholars, I contest the notion

[153] Mainer is the accepted demonym for people from Maine and has been in use since the mid-to-late nineteenth century. "Mainer", dictionary.com, https://www.dictionary.com/browse/mainer, accessed March 30, 2023.

that after an initial more touristic period, O'Keeffe's New Mexican work evinced a unique sense of place that had little to do with contemporary racial attitudes. Instead, I highlight the ongoing influence of tourist contexts (including her many visits to Pueblo and Diné ceremonials and heavy involvement in Indigenous commodity markets) on her work beyond the early 1930s, when appropriation of Indigenous spirituality through representation of objects and places of spiritual significance to local Native groups became a regular feature of her work. Using her paintings of *katsina tithu* and landscapes of Indigenous holy sites as case studies, I argue that she regularly distorted her representations of these objects and locales, ignoring their significance to local groups in order to expressively convey a proprietorial personal relationship with them and incorporate them into her mystical and modernist experimentation.

Chapter Four investigates how Dove incorporated racial commentary into the abstract and allegorical works he produced on Long Island and in upstate New York. Though informed by the same emphases on modernism, spirituality, and nationalism as Marin and O'Keeffe's paintings, Dove's works were less connected to racial and ethnic tourism and often far more abstract and allegorical. Instead, some of his works that evinced casual racism, like *Swinging in the Park (There Were Colored People There)* and *Goin' Fishin'* (formerly known as *Nigger Goes A' Fishin'*), are abstract evocations of encounters Dove experienced in his everyday life. Others like *Chinese Music* and *Indian One* represent Dove's internalized perceptions of identities and cultures more broadly, and were often inspired by representations of racial others he experienced through sources both middlebrow (including jazz music and mail-order Native-American blankets) and highbrow (such as readings in ancient Chinese and Indian philosophy). I argue that such pictures can be seen not only as abstract visual experiments but also as articulations of patrician racial views shaped by Dove's white identity and upper-class

background, and that his reputation as a pioneering and influential abstractionist has obscured the social content of his work. Seen together, Dove, Marin, and O'Keeffe's oeuvres demonstrate the several ways in which privileged "white" Americans were typically exposed to people of color and in the early twentieth century – in a limited sense through everyday interactions, but often more fully (though imaginatively) when mediated through mass culture and the tourism industry.

Chapter Five, by contrast, focuses on the historiography of the group, and seeks to identify the roles of the artists themselves and sympathetic critics and historians, as well as larger pressures within the 20th- and 21st-century art worlds, on the development and perpetuation of the artists' status as iconic American modernists whose works and lives were characterized by progressive or, at minimum, a-political ideals. This status obscured both the histories of each artist's own engagement with everyday racism and the broader ways that their work contributed, especially as it was popularized, to processes of making race.

CHAPTER II

"Into My Blood": John Marin's "Maine Soil" and "Yankee Folk"

His work attests frankly to a conscious recognition on his part that he is rooted in the American continent. The rocks and hills of Maine, its turbulent icy seas, its vast skies, claim his love inevitably.

- Paul Strand, "American Water Colors at the Brooklyn Museum", 1921[1]

…whatever may be left of that famous old New England, sometime puritan and always protestant, will be found today more purely and abundantly here in Maine than elsewhere… It is the last stronghold of the Puritan.

- Robert Herrick, "The State of Maine: 'Down East'", 1923[2]

Sometime in the summer or fall of 1938, John Marin painted *Lobster Boat, Cape Split, Maine* (Figure 2.1). The picture positions the viewer near the middle of the titular vessel, looking out over its prow at a choppy sea inhabited by the vague form of a large, three-masted sailboat and intruded upon by a forested shoreline. This coastline is doubtless that of the aforementioned Cape Split, the site of Marin's longtime summer home, a remote peninsula in sparsely-populated Washington County, far Down East, far, even, from Maine's modestly sized largest cities. Although, as an oil painting, the picture lacks some of the stylistic flourishes typically associated with Marin's watercolor-filled oeuvre, including his angular, cubistic construction of space and reliance on the artful and evocative bleeding of water-based paint, it nonetheless effectively embodies his characteristically loose, almost calligraphic style. Meanwhile, picturing as it does a

[1] Paul Strand, "American Water Colors at the Brooklyn Museum", *The Arts* 2:3 (1921), 148-52, 151.
[2] Robert Herrick, "The State of Maine: 'Down East'", in Ernest Gruening, ed., *These United States: A Symposium* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923), 119.

scene of the rural coast and sea, its subject also conforms to the larger body of work Marin produced in Maine, which almost exclusively focused on the state's mountains, coasts, small towns, and maritime activities. Often, rather than fashioning abstract "equivalents" of the world that interested him, Marin expressively warped recognizable subjects or shattered space *around* them, synthesizing selection with distortion.

However, despite being an outlier in some ways, *Lobster Boat* epitomizes Marin's attitude towards the state in a way that few other of his pictures can.[3] Although the artist represented boats off the coast of Maine countless times in his career, in *Lobster Boat* the role of the viewer is more than that of a neutral onlooker. Looking down into the boat, rather than out towards the horizon, foregrounds the active role of the lobsterman in the world that expands around his craft, incorporating Maine's coast, sea, and maritime life. More importantly, depicting this scene in this way, from *within* the boat, implies that the viewer is themself the lobsterman, and, more importantly, that Marin was himself indulging in the personal fantasy of working in such a role. Although many interpreters came to suggest that his connection to Maine's lands and seas was a natural, virtually inevitable one, and that the artist was an effective representative of the "Yankee folk" who personified that natural environment, this chapter will describe how Marin crafted and negotiated a complicated, arguably dissonant personal and professional relationship with the state over the course of decades of living and working along its coasts. This relationship speaks not to any sort of inborn affinity between artist and place, but instead to Marin's conscious and concerted cultivation of such a connection, one that negotiated (and frequently sought to overcome) the racial, ethnic, gender, class, and regional barriers that differentiated the cosmopolitan artist from the working-class Mainers whose lives he so deeply

[3] A detailed chronology of Marin's life and career was compiled for the National Gallery's 1990 retrospective of his work. See Ben Glenn II, "Chronology", in Ruth E. Fine, *John Marin* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art and New York: Abbeville, 1990), 289-98.

admired, and one that was deeply rooted in the racialized understandings of Maine and the United States and their "native" white citizens that held sway in early to mid-twentieth century elite American society. Ultimately, this chapter argues, Marin's celebration as a nationally representative artist was in large part predicated upon his assumption of this "Yankee" persona and the conveyance of the regional stereotypes that that identity embodied in his paintings.

An Artist's Eden: Marin in Maine

By the time he painted *Lobster Boat* in 1938, John Marin had been journeying to Maine on a regular basis for nearly two-and-a-half decades, having first visited in 1914 at the encouragement of a friend, the artist Ernest Haskell.[4] This visit, to West Point, a small town in the state's Midcoast region, inspired an affinity for the state that would grow into a lifelong passion, and led Marin to return to it again and again for personal and artistic affirmation and inspiration until he died there in 1953 (see Figure 2.2 for a map with the sites of Marin's summer homes highlighted). However, his love for the state was not immediate. Soon after arriving in August 1914, the artist, who lived with his wife Marie in a modest shack by the sea during this first visit, complained of the rough conditions in a letter to Stieglitz, describing it as "one fierce, relentless, cruel, beautiful, fascinating, hellish, and all the other ish'es, place. To go anywheres I have to row, row, row … it is work, work, work, pulling and hauling at cussed boats, plowing your way through the underbrush."[5] Still, he soon warmed to the place, and as his summer visit was drawing to a close, he wrote that he was finding it to be "a beautiful island… constantly offering surprises".[6] Indeed, this first visit not only inspired nearly 100 pictures of Midcoast

[4] Fine, *John Marin*, 75.
[5] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 7, 1914, in Norman, *The Selected Writings of John Marin*, 14-15.
[6] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, September 16, 1914, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 17.

scenery in just 8 weeks, but also led him to buy a small island nearby (see Figures 2.3 and 2.4).[7]

In 1915 Marin upgraded from his hut to a hotel in nearby Small Point, using his newly purchased but uninhabitable island (promptly nicknamed "Marin Island") as a base for his camping, fishing, and painting activities. He reported to Stieglitz that year that "The place continues to grow on one. I have my interests. There are my wife and child, boat, island, fishing tackle and… last, my work which has just begun."[8] In 1919 he moved further down the coast, to the town of Stonington on Deer Isle. He summered there for about ten years and spent a few summers back at Small Point and in Taos, New Mexico before buying a house at Cape Split in 1934 that he visited for the remainder of his life.[9] As he moved north and east along the Maine coast over time, he also moved away from the state's larger cities and more popular summer destinations and towards the working-class communities of the more remote Down East region. He would eventually paint thousands of pictures in the state, cementing it as a central part of his artistic identity and legacy, not only because he lived and worked there for so many years, but also because Maine's natural life and rural communities swiftly became his favorite subjects.

For Marin, Maine was a comfortably exotic place. After being raised in the New York suburbs by a well-to-do extended family, he failed as a wholesaler and architect before enrolling in art school at age twenty-eight.[10] In the years that followed, he lived something of a peripatetic life, studying in New York for a year before moving to Paris (where he first met Alfred Stieglitz in 1909) for four. Although he first returned to the U.S. in 1909, he made further painting

[7] For a listing of pictures produced by Marin in 1914, see Sheldon Reich, *John Marin: A Stylistic Analysis and Catalogue Raissonné*, vol. II (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1970), 384-404.
[8] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 1, 1915, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 20.
[9] Marin also spent the summer of 1916 in the Kittaninny Mountains in Pennsylania, and the summer of 1918 in Berkshires. In 1925 he was sick and thus didn't make the trip up to Stonington. In 1931 he spent time both in Small Point and on the shore of Lake Champlain, in Vermont. Glenn, "Chronology", 291-94.
[10] The most thorough account of Marin's youth can be found in Mackinley Helm, *John Marin* (Boston: Pellegrini and Cudahy, 1948), 3-11. Marin's father was an accountant, and he was principally raised by female relatives after the death of his mother soon after his birth.

excursions to Europe, as well as visits to the Berkshires, Long Island, and upstate New York, before that fateful first trip to Maine.[11]

In 1914 Maine was, then, apparently just another stop on Marin's longstanding search for aesthetic inspiration, one that had already led him to some of Europe and the American Northeast's most renowned painting sites. Yet something apparently captured his attention during those few months he spent at West Point that year that led him to return again in 1915, and then again and again to the state throughout the remaining four decades of his life. The evidence of his pictures and writings suggests that this recurrent interest was encouraged in part because he perceived Maine and its "Yankee" people through a lens that was colored in large part by their supposed racial and ethnic makeup. Ultimately, this chapter will argue that his work in Maine was not only heavily affected by the ongoing racialization of the state and its citizens, but also played an important role in perpetuating such racial stereotypes.

Marin's attitude towards Maine and its people and the art that he wanted to make in the state was an extension of the principles that Stieglitz shared within his Circle. Like other artists in the group, Marin had his own fascination with a regional culture that extended far beyond Stieglitz' interest in any particular American region or racial or ethnic subgroup, and led him to work to assimilate into that culture while Stieglitz moved back and forth between Manhattan and Lake George (a rural retreat *without* a clear and famous regional identity). However, the evidence of Marin's interest in Maine and its supposed racial and ethnic character in his work (as well as his writings) was frequently filtered through the lenses of modernism, mysticism, and, most of all, nationalism. As later portions of this chapter will relate in detail, in some cases Marin suggested the presence of a mystical connection between Maine's people and the state's

[11] Glenn, "Chronology", 289-91. Notably, precious little of Marin's work from his tenure as a student seems to survive, and what does exist can only be tenuously dated. See Helm, *John Marin*, 6-31, for a more thorough account of this period.

natural land- and seascapes, one that he also hoped to develop himself as he sought to deepen his relationship with the place over time. Meanwhile, as he applied an expressive modernist style to Maine subjects while also conveying his fascination with the state's semi-exoticism, he enacted a unique form of modernist primitivism that reveled in the state's ostensibly pre-modern lifeways. Finally, and most importantly, Marin's fascination with the place and its denizens was a reflection of a cultural environment in which the "Puritan" (i.e., among other things, Anglo-American) character of New England (and, increasingly, specifically Maine) was regularly cited as a key component of American identity that was now eroding elsewhere in the nation in the face of growing racial and ethnic diversity. His persistent focus on this reputedly uniquely "American" region not only at times directly perpetuated this cultural fascination with the region's colonial past, but also often played into the racial and ethnic elements of the "Puritan" ideal that was the subject of so much celebration.

Playing "The Ancient Mariner": Affecting Mainer Ways of Life

The idea that Marin had an inherent, almost mystical connection with Maine does not account for the many ways in which his interest in the state and the perspective on it shared in his paintings may have been shaped by social and historical factors particular to the time and place in which he lived. Reading about Marin's descriptions of his life in Maine makes clear that this notion ignores the artist's purposeful cultivation of an affected, yet supposedly authentic Mainer identity across the four decades in which he lived and worked in the state. Marin was not a native Mainer, and did not visit the state until he was 43 years old. Even then, he never took up full-time residence there, only visiting for a few months each year, just as thousands of other

summer pilgrims to "Vacationland" did and still do.[12] While he was, on one hand, eager to pursue something akin to an authentic lower-class Mainer lifestyle because it excited and satisfied him personally, he also worked to promote a public perception of his personal life and artistic production that was rooted in the sort of mastery over the forces of the natural world that such a lifestyle encompassed. This is clear from his first visits to Maine (and earlier), even if his personal and professional identities were not inextricably linked with one another as they would later be.

For artists as for many of the state's other visitors, one of the Maine coast's principal attractions was its scenic views, which artists could hope to profit from effectively evoking. However, for Marin and many other tourists, temporarily adopting the behaviors of the "native" residents of Maine, and especially participating in some of the activities for which the state was well-known beyond its borders, such as hunting, fishing, boating, and berrying, was also a natural component of a summertime stay.[13] Marin evidently felt that the state's residents' skillful engagement with outdoor activities was a key part of what set them apart from people in other places. He wrote in 1921 that "people, they're about the same the world over. Only I do somehow respect the fisherman in some ways. He knows something and uses it."[14] That participating and cultivating expertise in outdoor activities was central to his interest in the state is evident from his earliest visits to his last. In 1921 he wrote that he was "Glad to walk down to the shore and jump in the boat. To take out a can and pick berries. To take out a clam hook and

[12] Note that the term "vacationland" was coined in the 1920s – see "vacationland," Merriam-Webster, accessed August 21, 2020, https://www. merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vacationland.
[13] I have not found evidence of Marin having participated in lobstering although he did frequently write of enjoying eating lobster while in Maine. This might make sense given the territoriality of Mainer lobstermen and the need of specialized equipment, though his close friendships with some lobstermen later in life do make me wonder if he ever joined them in their work.
[14] Later in the same letter he says, in a less sincere tone, and for reasons that are unclear, "Yesterday I said I respected the fisherman. Well, today I don't respect them any too much… Your opinion of your fellow man is like a thermometer, up and down." John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, September 11, 1921, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 71-72.

dig clams."[15] He reveled as his understanding of such activities advanced with time: "I lie in bed and about 4 o'c. in the morning… [the fisher- and lobstermen] start… and I can detect engine troubles in the different boats. I didn't notice it before. Then I laugh in glee and go back to sleep, content."[16]

Marin also felt that his participation in these activities deeply affected his artistic work. In 1930, in response to a *New Yorker* article that suggested that he wanted to separate his painting practice from his fishing habit, but could not, he wrote that he "Wouldn't think of disassociating Fishing from Art – one and the same thing with me."[17] In 1920 he opined that "Looking for masterpieces is quite an occupation, only there is such a sameness to… [others'] methods. I'd have the nut go out with a gun. Another nut comes along, asks What you gunning for? Answer, masterpieces. Or have him go out in a boat with a fish line. Other nut asks, What you fishing for? Answer, masterpieces."[18] On one hand, this quote suggests that Marin looked at his own skillful manipulation of paint as something akin to the labor of Maine fishermen and hunters. However, it also seems as if Marin felt that his close understanding of Maine's natural environment and participation in some of its traditional forms of labor made him a more insightful artist than others who sought to interpret the state without such prolonged exposure to its lifeways.[19] Indeed, even in published writings that focused on the creative process, he extolled the value of the way of life he pursued while in Maine:

> Seems to me the true artist must… go from time to time to the elemental big forms – Sky, Sea, Mountain, Plain… to sort of re-true himself up, to recharge the battery… But to

[15] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 26, 1921, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 69.
[16] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, September 11, 1921, 71.
[17] John Marin to The Editor of *The New Yorker*, April 11, 1930, Marin Family Papers, Section I, Part II, Group II, Folder 2.
[18] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, October 7-12, 1920, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 62.
[19] As another example, in a brief autobiographical note prepared for publication in the short-lived Stieglitz-helmed journal *Manuscripts* in 1922, he glibly described his entire 15-year career since a 1907 visit to Venice thusly: "Since then I have taken up Fishing and Hunting and with some spare time knocked out a few water colors for which in former years I had a leaning." See John Marin, "Notes (Autobiographical)", *Manuscripts* 2 (1922), 5.

> express these, you have to love these, to be a part of these in sympathy. One doesn't get very far without this love… to enfold too the relatively little things that grow on the mountain's back. Which if you don't recognize, you don't recognize the mountain.[20]

These words celebrate the importance of a close, intuitive connection with the natural world as a prerequisite not just to accurately representing Maine, but to being a "true artist" of any sort. In this way they signal the broader relationship between art and place that Marin sought to embody and encouraged others to adopt.

Marin's efforts to establish himself as a Mainer in the public eye resulted in appraisals that described his art and lifestyle as inextricably tied and mutually constitutive. In 1942 Jerome Mellquist went so far as to suggest that Marin's emulation of traditional Mainer lifeways was the key element in his work, which he felt constituted the culmination of the development of a unique, authentic, and nationally representative mode of artmaking in the early twentieth-century United States. Comparing the artist to a figure in one of his pictures, Mellquist writes: "A pilot is steering a tiny power-boat through a threatening sea, but he stands as if better to demonstrate his balance. So with Marin. He too steers straight and sure…"[21] When reading Mellquist's words, it is difficult not to think of Marin's self-evocation as the man in the boat in *Lobster Boat* (Figure 2.1), fighting against storm and tide to make his catch. As he alludes to Marin's characteristic restrained expressivism, Mellquist (no doubt to Marin's satisfaction) further underlines the parallels between Marin and these fishermen by implying a similarity between the careful balance of Marin's watercolor painting and the sureness needed to successfully navigate the Gulf of Maine's tempestuous waters.

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[20] John Marin, "John Marin by Himself", *Creative Art* 3 (1928), republished in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 127.

[21] Mellquist, *The Emergence of an American Art*, 402. Another example from E.M. Benson in 1935: "For Marin painting is and always has been an end product, the consummation of living with the physical world in closest intimacy; not the passive intimacy of… [a] spectator but the active intimacy of… [a] participant." E.M. Benson, *John Marin: The Man and His Work* (Washington, DC: American Federation of Arts, 1935), 20.

What Mellquist's interpretation also captures is that participating in outdoor activities (and publicly foregrounding that participation) was also a part of Marin's affectation of a rugged masculine image, which was a fundamental component of the Mainer identity he was cultivating. Marin himself wrote that "I have gotten so much of the country man in me… Wandering over trackless mountains, feel sort of at home."[22] Although his "playful spontaneity" had seen him cast as a child-like figure early in his career, his affiliation with Maine helped him come to be perceived as possessing of "A kind of blind, instinctive determinism which… carries him unerringly to his port of call."[23] As Cassidy and others have shown, this was a popular practice in the early twentieth century, when supposedly unchanging rural regions offered solace for those seeking traditional gender roles in a world in which they seemed to be rapidly changing. She writes: "Within these… places outside the modern world, men recovered bodily strength through intense physical experiences working with their hands and becoming pioneers once again." In the tourist trade, "Traditional occupations of the Maine people, from hunting and fishing to farming, were offered as the summer antidote for urban living." Meanwhile, cultural representations of these lifeways offered urbanites a means of experiencing that "antidote for urban living" from afar. Fundamental to this paradigm was the idea that this "pioneer" identity was something that native white Mainers had never lost, and that deracinated outsiders could therefore re-attain by imitation or imagination.[24] When Marin publicly foregrounded his participation in activities like hunting and fishing in his writings and paintings, he was therefore also crafting an ultramasculine identity whose assertion was central to his emulation of the traditional lifeways of the Maine folk and offering experiences of those lifeways for secondhand consumption.

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[22] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, September 28, 1916, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 31.
[23] One such example of Marin's work being compared to that of children can be found in J. Nilsen Laurvik, "The Water-Colors of John Marin", *Camera Work* 39 (1912), 38. Quote from Benson, *John Marin: The Man and His Work*, 15.
[24] Cassidy, *Marsden Hartley*, 81-83.

After all, Marin *did* affect a Mainer image – although there was much in Maine that meshed with who Marin was before 1914, and that attracted him there in the first place, he also changed his behavior to adopt a Down East Mainer way of life that met his own standards of authenticity.[25] This included adopting a Yankee identity in his writing. Review of his correspondence with friends and family reveals consistent attempts to affect a rural Mainer vernacular. In a 1920 letter Marin mocked the peculiarities of Mainers' speech: "The people up here are certainly a funny bunch. They call Tamarac, Ramatac. They call a bush with berries on it wild raisins and a lot of other silly names. You feel like batting them in the head for their damed insistence".[26] Yet later that same fall he was adopting Mainer speech patterns for his own purposes in a letter to Stieglitz: "Just a word before ye leave… Just a word my de-as (Maine pronunciation), I shed te-as for ye…"[27] Soon, his habitual use of the valediction "Your friend, Marin" in letters to Stieglitz was being replaced by "Yer friend" or "Your dogoned" and eventually by the appellations "the Ancient Mariner" or "Aged Marin the Ancient Mariner", titles he began to use in countless variations beginning in the mid-1930s.[28] At the same time, Marin also began employing nautical terminology and metaphors in his writing, as when he suggested that a recently married couple were newly "spliced" or declared that he was back "on

[25] But to what extent was Marin's passion for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities in Maine driven by his desire to emulate and project a Mainer identity, and to what extent was it the result of an interest in the outdoors that had blossomed long before 1914? As Marin's identity slowly became more and more thoroughly tied up with the state, what had existed of the artist before that first visit became harder to see. In a 1937 article, Paul Rosenfeld remembered that Marin already possessed upon his arrival in France in 1905 the "curious personal dignity", "simplicity" and "look" of a "Yankee farmer" and a remarkable "self-sufficiency" that helped make him the "most characteristically Yankee of all painters". Is this recollection colored by Marin's subsequent affiliation with rural Maine and/or the "all-American" qualities that his time in Maine encouraged critics to identify him with, or did he really strike this friend that way nearly a decade before his 1914 West Point trip? Though this question seems unanswerable, it is undeniable that both how others saw Marin and how he saw himself were fundamentally changed by his affiliation with Maine, and above all else by his *performance* of that affiliation. Rosenfeld, "John Marin's Career", 289-90.

[26] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, October 7-12, 1920, 62.

[27] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, November 16, 1920, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 64.

[28] For examples of use of the "Ancient Mariner" appellation, see John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 26, 1921, 70, John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, July 9, 1927, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 114, John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 18, 1935, in Norman, ed., *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 168.

deck" after recovering from an illness.[29] He described a 1931 letter as "just a line – without a hook or sinker – put in an envelope with a stamp and a lick – Guaranteed not to catch – a fish".[30]

Also part of this affectation were Marin's persistent attempts at what some termed "Yankee humor", a dry wit that was a common feature of his letters and jibed well with the supposed playfulness of his paintings. At times this humor was notably terse, as in a 1917 missive that begins: "Native humans are few. Native Mosquitos are many."[31] In a typically laconic and morbid 1918 letter, Marin writes: "Man who took us berrying… Saw a lineman up a telegraph pole, fixing wires. Our man: Well you'd better look out or you'll take a tumble. Lineman: Yes, guess if I did wouldn't be much loss. Our Man: No, I s'pose not."[32] In a 1921 letter that describes his acquisition of a new boat, Marin writes: "I have a wife… too… She measures 17 feet – no I was refering to my boat – not my wife… and can carry 6 people – yes – boat – not wife [–] Confound it if this occurs again I'll pitch wife overboard and you'l[l] be held responsible."[33] In this letter there is, aside from the obvious wife/boat joke, also a certain humor in Marin's anger, a cartoonish and childish frustration that in other letters sprouted into a noticeably mild form of profanity, with frequent "gol darn"s, "dogone"s, and "blanked-de-blank"s reflecting a comical blend of Puritan innocence and Yankee hotheadedness.[34]

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[29] John Marin to John Marin, Jr., May 18, 1939, Marin Family Papers, Section I, Part II, Group I, Folder 3. John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, September 16, 1925, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 103.
[30] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, June 28, 1931, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 137.
[31] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, July 3, 1917, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 32.
[32] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, July 26, 1918, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 36.
[33] John Marin to Lyda and Retta Currey, September 11, 1921, Marin Family Papers, Section I, Part II, Group I, Folder 6. As in other instances in which I am quoting directly from handwritten letters (rather than published transcriptions), I have preserved Marin's spelling errors and unusual use of grammar and syntax in this quote.
[34] See John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 8, 1916, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 28; John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 15, 1919, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 46-47; John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 21, 1927, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 114-16; and John Marin to Lyda and Retta Currey, August 27, 1932, Marin Family Papers, Section I, Part II, Group I, Folder 6, for examples of his use of such curse words (of which there are many). These letters also reveal that Marin's use of such "profanity" was not exclusive to his visits to Maine, and we cannot be confident that it was even initiated by them. However, one can argue that it remained an effective part of his affectation of a Mainer identity, especially given that it does seem to appear more frequently in his Maine letters.

Though Marin had discovered his funny bone long before visiting Maine in 1914, these anecdotes also share a willingness to borrow from comic strategies that were considered particular to New England and that had been featured for comedic effect in popular culture representations of the region.[35] Marin's lineman and boat stories recall old stereotypes about uneducated Mainers speaking in an unsophisticated rural dialect, while the lineman and mosquito anecdotes reflect a characteristic predilection for the pithy and understated.[36] According to folklorist Edward Ives, even if many Mainers did themselves eventually come to see such jokes as authentic, much "traditional" Down East humor was predicated upon stereotypical understandings of the state's citizens that suggested that, in contrast to the modern and cosmopolitan summer tourist, Mainers were unsophisticated, crusty, taciturn, and/or quaint.[37]

What Marin's use of such humor reveals on a broader level, however, is his ability to see himself as simultaneously a part of and separate from the Maine community in which he made his summer home. Though he frequently adopted a Mainer dialect, he also continued to poke fun at the speech of the locals in his letters.[38] All the same, Marin wrote glowingly of the acceptance he felt that he eventually began to receive in Maine, a newfound sense of belonging that seems to have directly influenced pictures like the later *Lobster Boat* (Figure 2.1). Although in 1922 he

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[35] Examples abound in George Wasson's *Cap'n Simeon's Store*, from 1903, which featured a slew of bickering old sea captains, and among the eccentric, heavily accented townspeople of Sarah Orne Jewett's Down East stories. See Cameron C. Nickels, "The New England Humor of George Savary Wasson (1855-1932)", *Studies in American Humor* 3, no. 6 (1999), 61-63; George S. Wasson, *Cap'n Simeon's Store* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1903); and, as one example, Sarah Orne Jewett, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1896).

[36] See Chard Powers Smith, "Plain Humor: New England Style", *New England Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (1970), 465-66; Nickels, "The New England Humor of George Savary Wasson (1855-1932)", 63; and Edward Ives, "Maine Folklore and the Folklore of Maine: Some Reflections on the Maine Character and Down East Humor", *Maine Historical Society Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (1984), 111-32. For more on humor in New England, see Cameron C. Nickels, *New England Humor: From the Revolutionary War to the Civil War* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1993); and, for an influential period perspective, Constance Rourke, *American Humor: A Study of the National Character* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1931).

[37] Ives, "Maine Folklore and the Folklore of Maine: Some Reflections on the Maine Character and Down East Humor", 112-15.

[38] See, for example, John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, September 24, 1924, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 99.

suspected that "The natives… think we are yearly pests", by 1924 he felt confident enough to write that, "They are beginning to take me into their *bosoms* here down East – they no longer class me in with the *rusticators*… [from] the warm summer months". In a passage that seems to indulge in stereotypes about the people of the Maine coast, he goes on to lament that "I can stand the natives but those damned *Rusticators* again get my goat – I'd a great deal rather have… Billy the simple minded who lives down in a little shack by the shore – …Billy with a voice of the sea".[39]

He would also sometimes complain about the impact of tourism on the Maine coast, as when he lamented the number of cars crowding the roads on which he, too, was driving (a classic tourist lament), or wrote that innovations in the fishing industry had resulted in a North Atlantic in which "there are now not so many fish to be caught". While at the turn of the century tourism in Maine was largely the unique preserve of societal elites, by the 1920s the tourism there had exploded as travelling to and staying alongside Maine's coasts became more affordable to the Northeastern-American middle class.[40] Marin's dissatisfaction with other summertime visitors to the state extended to their participation in outdoor leisure activities, which he evidently viewed in a different light from his own excursions: "We have one… [visitor] up here – comes up summers with his wife… his yacht is out there now and it's the only blot on the seascape… to Hell with him".[41] This disdain for summer "rusticators" is reflective of an attitude that he had adopted years earlier in which he acted like he was more Maine "native" than temporary tourist, a type of visitor whose supposed dilettantism and relative lack of understanding of the *real*

[39] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, July 23, 1922, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 79-80. John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, September 24, 1924, 99-100.
[40] George H. Lewis, "The Maine That Never Was: The Construction of Popular Myth in Regional Culture", *Journal of American Culture* 16, no. 2 (1993), 95-96; John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 14, 1923, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 89; John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 10, 1941, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 200.
[41] John Marin to Emil Zoler, September 14, 1933, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 154.

character of life in Maine set them in stark opposition to the wise and familiar Marin.[42]

This attitude extended to his artmaking, as well. In a 1919 letter Marin makes clear that he felt he already possessed a distinctive ability to accurately represent Maine's true character. As he discusses encountering an unnamed pair of fellow artists whose work had initially impressed him, he describes having a revelation that he was "not seeing in theirs a trace of my Maine. Theirs… [was] a sort of Pseudo Romantic… Combination Vision… a monumental memory of other things."[43] On one hand, by casting others' work as overly nostalgic or inauthentic and his own as vital, insightful, and new, Marin was enacting a typical modernist complaint. However, these comments also demonstrate that even within his first few visits to the state, he felt that his pictures represented the true essence of Maine, whereas the often-Arcadian work of other chroniclers seemed unrealistic and sentimental by comparison. By the next year, Marin was complaining that the authentic qualities of native Mainers were "fast being spoiled by summer people".[44] At the same time, he also showed his clear preference for Mainers who, like "Billy", seemed to conform to stereotypical expectations for the state. If vacationing "rusticators" were all that was inauthentic and wrong with visiting the New England coast, a figure like "Billy", who led a simple rural life with complacency, who supposedly shared a natural connection with the North Atlantic sea and shore, but whose depiction in Marin's letter also seems to have been shaped by the idealizing forces of the artist's imagination, represented a far more preferable sort of neighbor.

A Tourist's Eden: Marin, Maine Vacation Culture, and the "Yankee Race"

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[42] See Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken, 1976), 137-41, for an explanation of the significance of supposed insider knowledge to feelings of authenticity and relative superiority in tourist experiences.
[43] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, October, 1919, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 51.
[44] Ibid. See Nickels, "The New England Humor of George Savary Wasson (1855-1932)", 63; and George S. Wasson, "Rusticators at the Cove", *Century Magazine* 64 (1902), 701-4, repub. in *Studies in American Humor* 3, no. 6 (1999), 66-69.

In defining which sorts of Mainers were authentic or inauthentic to his eyes, and therefore what sort of "Maine" he really wanted to commune with during his summer visits, Marin revealed a complex, arguably dissonant attitude towards the state. This attitude was itself predicated upon an understanding of the region that, in its idealization of a preindustrial past, meshed poorly with the lived realities of the Maine coast that Marin knew. By 1914 fishing and lobstering had long since ceased to be Maine's leading industries. By 1913 the U.S. lobster catch was down 60% from 1889 levels, and after the First World War Maine's lobster fisheries suffered a two-decade downturn. Other fisheries also diminished, with ecological changes propelled by overfishing severely impacting the North Atlantic maritime economy.[45] Less romantically appealing were the timber, paper, and power industries, which throughout the early twentieth century fought for control over woodland resources with tourist and conservationist forces.[46] As the shipbuilding industry reckoned with the transition from wooden to steel craft, into the role of the state's principal economic engine stepped a vacation industry that, ironically, traded perhaps above all else upon the idea that the fishing, lobstering, and shipbuilding industries were still alive, well, and available for vacationers to experience.[47] Though tourism had been an important force in Maine since the mid-nineteenth century, the number of visitors to

[45] Furthermore, the Maine fishing and lobstering industries were hardly participating in the idealized version of a localized rural economy that Marin likely imagined, but rather functioning as part of a vast network that exported their wares throughout the United States, above all through a seafood canning industry that had been operating in the state since the 1840s and thriving on a massive scale since at least the 1870s. W. Jeffrey Bolster, *The Mortal Sea: Fishing the Atlantic in the Age of the Sail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 253-55; Kenneth Martin and Nathan Lipfert, *Lobstering and the Maine Coast* (Bath, ME: Maine Maritime Museum, 1985), 77. For more on the lobster canning industry see Richard W. Judd, "Saving the Fisherman as Well as the Fish: Conservation and Commercial Rivalry in Maine's Lobster Industry, 1872-1933", *Business History Review* 62, no. 4 (1988), 596-625.

[46] Richard W. Judd, "Reshaping Maine's Landscape: Rural Culture, Tourism, and Conservation, 1890-1929", *Journal of Forest History* 32, no. 4 (1988), 180-90.

[47] Wooden shipbuilding endures in Maine even today, though its role in the state's economy was significantly reduced around the turn of the century as steel came to be preferred to wood for most industrial and military shipbuilding. Farming (especially potato farming) and canning were also major industries. For more on the lobster's central role in perceptions of Maine's regional character, see George H. Lewis, "Shell Games in Vacationland: *Homarus americanus* and the State of Maine", in Tad Tuleja, ed., *Usable Pasts: Traditions and Group Expressions in North America* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1997), 249-73.

the state grew rapidly in the early twentieth century, as resorts and hotels (like the one Marin visited on Small Point in 1915) were developed in countless theretofore-anonymous towns along the state's coast, and particularly in the Midcoast region (which includes Small Point) and on Mount Desert Island (which Marin lived near and frequently visited during his Stonington years). By the mid-1910s, almost 500,000 vacationers were visiting the state each year, more than doubling the number in the 1890s, and that figure only grew as the decades passed.[48]

Despite these significant shifts in the state of life in Maine, Marin's pictures from the state virtually invariably represented a place in which tourism was insignificant and small communities and natural resource industries continued to thrive. Although unpeopled land- and seascapes were his most common subject, he also returned again and again to images of boats, and especially lobstering and fishing craft. In pictures like *Lobster Smack Passing Through* and *Fishing Smack* (Figures 2.5 and 2.6), Marin applied the stylistic methods employed in his landscape pictures to these implements of maritime labor, casting the boats and, at times, the men within them as objects rollicking above and within a sea that emerges from a distorted, permeable vortex of the artist's own making. On one hand, these pictures demonstrate Marin's interests in expressionist representation and valorizing outdoor labor, aspects of his work that transcended his interest in Maine. However, they also evince his commitment to representing a certain vision of the state, not only stylistically, but also by focusing on subjects that, by selection and omission, reflected his distorted perspective on what kind of place it was, had been in the past, or should be in the future. Like those of many early twentieth-century Maine artists working in less experimental veins, such as N.C. Wyeth and George Bellows, Marin's paintings

[48] Richard R. Wescott, "Economic, Social, and Governmental Aspects of the Development of Maine's Vacation Industry 1850-1920" (Masters thesis, University of Maine, Orono, 1961), 32-41, 64-65, 87-89. For further history of the interrelated fishing and tourism industries in Maine, see Lincoln P. Paine, *Down East: A Maritime History of Maine* (Gardiner, ME: Tilbury House, 2000), 118-45.

foregrounded and valorized the traditional role of Maine's maritime industries while ignoring their diminishing impact in an increasingly tourism-focused state economy.[49] Indeed, this pattern was reflective of a far broader trend among late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century U.S. and European artists of nostalgically glorifying the lifeways of ostensibly picturesque and traditional rural communities (and especially fishing communities) despite their ongoing diminishment and the mounting encroachments of modernity within them.[50] Meanwhile, seen within the greater context of Marin's work in the state, these paintings also demonstrate his tendency to subsume all of his subjects into his peculiar angular style, which, celebrated as it was as a reflection of his rare insight into Maine's essential character, helped place all of his pictures from Maine within a narrative of life in the state that emphasized its romantic and authentic qualities.

Even more steadfastly traditional than his pictures of small fishing and lobstering craft were his many paintings of tall ships, and especially schooners. Although these craft could have been in use as pleasure boats for wealthy tourists, it is more likely that Marin's representations of these ships reflect his interest in the historical and ongoing significance of the shipbuilding, fishing, and shipping industries in Maine, as the title of one such painting, *The Old Salt*, suggests

[49] Note that the art colonies that Bellows and many other early twentieth-century artists visited in Maine (such as Monhegan and Ogunquit) were both manifestations of tourism and driving forces in the industry. The state's reputation for attracting artists, and certain sites reputations as art colonies, were another important component of its appeal to non-art world urbanites. For more see Thomas Denenberg, Amy Kurtz Lansing, and Susan Danly, *Call of the Coast: Art Colonies of New England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

[50] Examples of this phenomenon abound, from Winslow Homer's work in Cullercoats, England, to the artists practicing in Falmouth, Newlyn, and St. Ives in Cornwall, to the Danish colony at Skagen, to the longstanding interest in Breton fishing villages among French artists. A useful perspective on Cornish fisherfolk imagery, including extensive discussion of the frequent falsity of the images of the region that it offered and such imagery's use to British nationalist ends, can be found in Mary C. O'Neill, "Model Citizens: Fisherfolk Imagery from West Cornwall, 1860-1910" (PhD. diss., Oxford Brookes University, 2015). Meanwhile, the celebration of peasant village life was an even more widespread phenomenon within late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European art, with countless examples from Iberia to Russia. Notably, while some of these artists worked in steadfastly traditional styles, some others (for example, the St. Ives artists and the Russian Neo-Primitivists) adapted experimental techniques to these conventional subjects much as Marin did.

(see Figure 2.7).[51] Marin also sometimes represented small coastal towns in his work, often with an emphasis on these towns' harbors and the ships within them (see Figures 2.8 and 2.9). These pictures not only typically showed tightly grouped settlements of modest size, but also emphasized the architectural features in such towns, with small white cottages in the Cape Cod or other neotraditional styles predominating (see Figure 2.10). However, as Donna Cassidy has noted, Marin also presented a reasonably truthful image of the evolving realities of life in these towns, with modern contrivances like telephone poles and automobiles sometimes appearing alongside the modest homes and ship-filled harbors (see Figure 2.11, featuring a telephone pole).[52] All the same, Marin's paintings present relatively little evidence of the impact that the tourism industry was wreaking on the Maine coast, and on Deer Isle specifically. Though, according to a 1930s state guide, "In recent years many of the palatial yachts of millionaires have been manned from cabin boy to captain by Deer Isle sailors", one would hardly know it from Marin's pictures.[53] Indeed, the suggestion in his work that Maine life was largely unaffected by the forces of mass tourism and ecological disturbance indicates that he was buying into much the same idealized, timeless vision of the state that the "rusticators" he so heartily complained about did – or, at least, that he wanted his pictures to convey such an impression.[54]

Historian John Sears has noted that, beginning even in the early nineteenth century, the appeal of tourist sites like the Maine coast for Northeastern elites was rooted not just in their potential to provide diversions from the hectic and cramped nature of modern city life, but also their capacity to provide those elites with "a means of defining America as a place" by "taking

[51] Notably, many schooners were still in commercial shipping and fishing use in the 1920s and '30s, along with their growing use as pleasure boats.
[52] Donna Cassidy also briefly touches upon the importance of focusing on buildings to Marin's New England placemaking in "Framing Region: The Modernist's New England", *Colby Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2003), 81-82.
[53] *Maine: A Guide 'Down East'* (Boston: Houghlin Mifflin, 1937), 400.
[54] There are very few exceptions to this perspective evident in Marin's work, although 1951's *Bather Seated on Rocks* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC), which shows a female shore-goer looking out at the Maine sea, is worth mentioning as one of the few indications in Marin's work of the presence of a thriving tourist trade in Maine.

pride in the special features of its landscape". Ultimately, Sears argues, this appeal was fundamentally rooted in quasi-religious feeling, whereby the distinctive natural features that were at the root of the appeal of Maine and other turn-of-the-century tourist sites allowed these sites to become "sacred places" for the devotees of American nationalism.[55] Other scholars have suggested that this nostalgic and idyllic understanding of twentieth-century life in Maine was one that sought to popularize a vision of the state that was predicated not on its actual past or present but on an imaginary history, on what has been called "the Maine that never was", or what historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger call an "invented tradition". This narrative, ignoring the present-day economic and cultural struggles in the state in favor of a false account of timeless and immutable rural plenty and ethnic purity, had developed in the late nineteenth century with the help of the romantic visions of artists like Frederic Church and Winslow Homer before blooming alongside the early twentieth-century tourist industry.[56] Naturally, this nostalgic perspective on life in Maine was typically the unique prerogative of those who, like Marin, did not rely on the state's tourist industry or harvesting its natural resources for economic support.

This supposed timelessness speaks to an underlying belief that Maine was a sort of time capsule from an ideal premodern past that was available to access and experience for any urbanite who could afford the price of transportation and lodging. This vision of the state ignored not just the realities of life in Maine in the early twentieth century, but also, by asserting a monolithic understanding of the state, the diversity of its citizenry. We can reconsider elements of Marin's pictures and the interpretation thereof as examples of this phenomenon. After all, the belief encouraged by Marin and certain of his champions that his works gave visual form to the

[55] John Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 4-5, 7.
[56] See, for example, Lewis, "The Maine That Never Was: The Construction of Popular Myth in Regional Culture", 91-94; Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

region's spiritual essence is predicated upon the presumption that such a singular essence exists.

Race played a critical role in such idealization. Tellingly, since at least the early 1920s Maine had exceeded even other parts of New England in terms of perceived racial purity, in part because of the growing diversity of urbanized southern New England, which supposedly diluted its Yankee character. Consequently, Maine, which, for as long as the idea of New England had existed, had been at the region's geographical and ideological periphery, now became its new imagined center.[57] This repositioning of Maine as the cultural and spiritual home of "New England" occurred because the state supposedly possessed virtually all the characteristics fundamental to that regional idea in a way that other parts of New England no longer did. As a 1923 history of Maine described it, "whatever may be left of that famous old New England, sometime puritan and always protestant, will be found today more purely and abundantly here in Maine than elsewhere. The types of faces… are much like those I remember in the Massachusetts of thirty years ago. It is the last stronghold of the Puritan."[58] Of course, commonly held notions about what New England stood for were hardly exclusively racial or religious. However, race, and specifically whiteness, was an integral part of that idea, and in early twentieth-century New England, as elsewhere in the United States, "race" and "place" were mutually constitutive categories, though few would have openly recognized them as such.

In fact, although it is a term more commonly associated with white travelers' experiences of non-Western cultures, one can consider much tourism in Maine as an atypical form of what sociologist Dean MacCannell and others have called "ethnic tourism", in which the "ethnicity" of the locals with whom the visitor comes into contact plays a key role in the appeal of a tourist destination, usually because it contributes to the imagined exotic character of the place being

[57] Joseph A. Conforti, *Imagining New England: Exploration of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 279-80.
[58] Robert Herrick, "The State of Maine: 'Down East'", 119.

visited. In this scenario, locals frequently feel pressured to embody external expectations for their comportment because they themselves are the attraction.[59] Though Maine's appeal for tourists (and especially Marin) was in some sense historical in character, the historical component of that appeal was rooted not in particular sites or attractions but rather in the idea that life in the state retained elements of an idealized American past. This appeal was rooted in the shared hope that, somewhere between the state's rugged shorelines, its rugged people, and their rugged labor, wealthy visitors could "find that lost sense of commitment, or authenticity, or intensity of experience" that their modern, urban lives were lacking, and that Marin wrote of when he complained about having to leave "the real turf" when he felt forced to "leave our heritage – The Country – and go back to a semi Citified Existence" at summer's end.[60] At the same time, geographer Stephen Hornsby notes that the notion that its "old-stock Yankee" population afforded it an atmosphere of "racial purity" was fundamental to the rise of the Maine coast as a tourist destination in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period of intense anxiety over the rising ethnic heterogeneity of major East Coast cities.[61] One historian wrote in 1923 that, "Of Maine's… inhabitants today, five-sevenths are native-born white stock, less than one-seventh of foreign parentage (mainly French Canadians), with only a thousand Negroes and less than a thousand Indians. Where else in the United States can be found an equal

[59] Dean MacCannell, "Reconstructed Ethnicity: Tourism and Cultural Identity in Third World Communities", *Annals of Tourism Research* 11, no. 3 (1984), 375-91. See especially 384-87. See also Pierre van den Berghe and Charles Keyes, "Introduction: Tourism and Re-Created Ethnicity", *Annals of Tourism Research* 11, no. 3 (1984), 343-52. As van den Berghe and Keyes point out, the lure of the exotic is fundamental to all tourism, but ethnic tourism is differentiated from other forms by the role of the ethnicity of the destination's inhabitants in that exotic appeal.

[60] Dona Brown, *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, DC and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 185-86, 190-93; John Marin to Lyda and Retta Currey, August 19, 1948, Marin Family Papers, Section I, Part II, Group I, Folder 6.

[61] Stephen J. Hornsby, "The Gilded Age and the Making of Bar Harbor", *Geographical Review* 83, no. 4 (1993), 456. For more on antimodernism during this period, see T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (1983; repub., Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

homogeneity of Anglo-Saxon blood?"[62] Because that historically oriented present was exemplified less by particular places within Maine than by the attributes and actions of its denizens, the performance of Mainer identity by the "natives" whom visitors like Marin met was arguably the central tenet of the state's touristic appeal. At the same time, the simultaneously exotic and comfortable experience of visiting a community of ethnically similar (i.e. predominately "white" and "Anglo") yet culturally semi-distinct people lent itself to relationships to the state like Marin's, in which a deeper assimilation into the regional culture was more desirable than it was for other, more ethnically and culturally foreign tourist sites (like, for example, New Mexico).

Maine's whiteness was unimpeachable not just because of the (at least supposedly) nearly exclusively white racial makeup of its population, but also because of the perception that patterns of life that had historically been associated with whiteness were prevalent there.[63] No example is clearer than that of the lobsterman, whom Marin had imagined himself embodying in *Lobster Boat*. Given whiteness' ongoing power as a normative racial category and the historical dominance of white populations in the areas where lobstering has thrived, it can be easy to avoid considering that most of us could likely not recall ever hearing of a non-white lobsterman. Indeed, when most of us imagine one, we likely conjure an image of a wizened and

[62] Robert Herrick, "The State of Maine: 'Down East'", 119-20. The 1923 date of these remarks is telling, it was the year before Congress passed the infamous eugenics-inspired Johnson-Reed Act, which heavily restricted the immigration to the United States from Asia and Southern and Eastern Europe that was causing the growth of ethnic diversity in American cities that so worried many of Western-European descent.

[63] Maine was over 99% "white" in every census taken during the first half of the twentieth century, although what counted as "white" is itself a fraught question in Maine's history. It is worth wondering if non-white, and particularly Native-American, communities were accurately surveyed in these censuses, and therefore if the 99% figure is accurate. The census data just cited is taken from Robert M. Vanderbeck, "Vermont and the Imaginative Geographies of American Whiteness", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96, no. 3 (2006), 655. In the 1920 census, the state is listed as 99.7% white, with only 1310 listed as "Negro" and 839 as "Indian" out of a total population of approximately 768,000. U.S. Census Bureau, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, Volume III: Population*, 1920, 406. It may be that Maine's Native peoples, four tribes collectively known as the Wabanaki, were undercounted because they had been driven to remote and isolated parts of the state and were ignored there. Today there are about 8700 members in these four tribes. "Wabanaki Tribes", Four Directions Maine, accessed March 30, 2023, https://fourdirectionsmaine.org/about-four-directions/wabanaki-tribes/.

weatherbeaten "old salt" like the men in Gerrit Beneker's *Pageant of Cape Cod* poster or Gifford Beal's *Lobster Boat* (Figures 2.12 and 2.13).[64] These figures seem out of time, inevitable participants in the timeless and humble work of lobster fishing. Though the appeal of this archetype was in large part rooted in its age, experience, and intrepidity, the "old salt" was also thoroughly and unmistakably white, and indeed "white" in a way that visually signaled no ethnic deviance from the norms of that category according to the racial logics of the period.

Of course, in light of its metonymic relationship with the state of Maine as a whole, it is perhaps unsurprising that whiteness was a crucial component of the image of the lobsterman. As other early twentieth-century United States fishing industries began to attract nonwhite or ostensibly less-white immigrant workers, the relative lack of ethnic diversity along the Maine coast during the era suggests that many or most of the era's lobstermen may indeed have been of British and Scandinavian descent. Census records suggest that, at the very least, most foreign immigrants to Maine were not coming from northern Europe but instead from Canada, and Down East Maine principally attracted non-French Canadians.[65] Regardless, there existed a widely shared perception that Maine's population, and especially its nautical trades, were heavily British and Scandinavian. This is the narrative, for example, presented in the 1922 white supremacist book *America's Race Heritage*, in which Maine is mentioned as a home for English,

[64] I borrow the Beneker example from Robertson, "Perils of the Sea", 165. Perhaps tellingly, Marin evidently attempted to symbolize this archetype through the lens of a boat itself in the 1922 painting *The Old Salt* (Figure 2.7).
[65] According to the 1920 U.S. Census, only about 6.8% of the 107,349 "foreign-born whites" in Maine in were from England or Scotland, and only about 4.7% were from Denmark, Finland, Norway, or Sweden. By contrast, about 33.1% of white immigrants in Maine were French Canadian, and about 36.1% were from elsewhere in Canada or Newfoundland (and presumably these other Canadians were of predominantly British descent). In Washington County, the heart of Down East Maine and the home of Cape Split and much of the Maine lobstering industry, 87.7% of residents are listed as "native-born white" (of which 24.5% of those who listed parentage information were of "foreign" or "mixed parentage") and 11.3% as "foreign-born white" (state averages were 84.8% (18.5% of foreign or mixed parentage) and 14.8%, respectively), but a notable 87.1% of foreign-born whites are listed as from non-French Canada or Newfoundland. In light of these figures it remains plausible that a large majority of denizens of Washington County, and indeed the state at large, were of British and/or Scandinavian descent, though it is unclear given the lack of ethnicity information for "native-born whites" (or indeed Canadian immigrants) included in the Census. *Fourteenth Census of the United States, Volume III: Population*, 409, 411-12, 415.

Scotch, Scotch-Irish, and Swedish communities and it is noted that "In New England the Norwegians are particularly numerous in the fisheries and in shipping."[66]

At the same time, it would be misleading to suggest that the identity of the lobsterman as a living cultural myth was primarily predicated upon race or ethnicity. However, like other professions heroized into myth in the early twentieth century (like the cowboy or the lumberjack), the figure of the lobsterman benefitted from an intersectional appeal, rooted in a combination of ideas about class, masculinity, and regional and national identity as well as whiteness.[67] Given Marin's own interest in cultivating a masculine image, his attraction to the figure of the lobsterman is thus unsurprising. But it is notable that Marin, like so many others, seemed so much more interested in depicting Maine's fisherfolk than its lumber workers, another oft-mythologized type of American laborer who likewise executed a traditional form of resource harvesting and worked in an environment that had long played an important role in the state's appeal to outsiders, the Maine woods. We can surmise that the reason may be not only that lumberjacks worked far from the coastal sites that Marin and most other tourists preferred, but also that were typically lower-class francophone immigrants, who, to someone like Marin, were far less clearly "white" in the early twentieth century than were "native-born" mariners of British

[66] Clinton Stoddard Burr, *America's Race Heritage: An Account of the Diffusion of Ancestral Stocks in the United States During Three Centuries of National Expansion and a Discussion of Its Significance* (New York: National Historical Society, 1922), 34, 37-38, 45, 49, 106. Burr also notes English settlers encountering "French rivalry" in Maine and briefly mentions minor German presence there – see pp. 38, 54. For a critical perspective on Burr's book, see Jørn Brøndal, "'The Fairest Among the So-Called White Races': Portrayals of Scandinavian-Americans in Filiopietistic and Nativist Literature of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries", *Journal of American Ethnic History* 33, no. 3 (2014), 5-36.

[67] See Jason L. Newton, "'These French Canadian of the Woods are Half-Wild Folk': Wilderness, Whiteness, and Work in North America, 1840-1955", *Labour/Le Travail* 77 (2016), 121-50, for more information on ethnic diversity in the logging industry in early twentieth-century Maine. See also, Bill Parenteau, "Bonded Labor: Canadian Woods Workers in the Maine Pulpwood Industry, 1940-55", *Forest & Conservation History* 37, no. 3 (1993), 108-19. There is a voluminous bibliography on diversity among cowboys, which similarly undermines the myth of their "whiteness". See, for example, Bruce A. Glasrud and Michael N. Searles, eds., *Black Cowboys in the American West: On the Range, on the Stage, Behind the Badge* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016).

or Scandinavian descent.[68]

After all, when he represented or attempted to personally embody the figure of the lobsterman or fisherman in his writings and paintings, Marin traded upon an identity partially rooted in a particular, Northern European-centric conception of whiteness. Given the centrality of both whiteness and lobstering to Maine's touristic appeal, it seems likely that race also played a role in Marin's interest in affecting that persona. However, whatever racial affinities Marin might have believed that they shared, there nonetheless remained a class divide between the artist and the white "natives" whom he sought to emulate. As Cassidy has remarked, tourism was an important context for many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century artists' experiences of New England. She suggests that their "work and cultural viewpoints… were complicated… [As] middle-class and elite New Englanders and New Yorkers… [these artists] perceived New England as a haven from modernization and the tribulations of urban living".[69]

Marin was the product of affluent circumstances that allowed him the freedom to pursue art study in Philadelphia, New York, and Paris. Eventually, his professional success assured him of pleasant accommodations at coastal hotels or in cottages he rented or owned. This success also allowed him to purchase several boats and to regularly hire locals to work for him, whether as fishing or berrying guides, doing repair work, or performing odd jobs. At some point after

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[68] Lower-class quarriers present a similar case. Quarrying was the industry that had given Stonington its name, though the Maine stone industry was less active by the early twentieth century than it had been in much of the nineteenth. Unlike the lumber industry, which operated principally in the Maine interior, some of the state's largest quarries lay along its coast, near the haunts of Marin and other tourist visitors. However, similar to lumbering, in the late nineteenth century quarrying jobs began to be taken over by immigrants, notably Finns and Swedes according to a 1930 paper. See Grant E. Finch and George F. Howe, "The Lime Industry at Rockland, Maine", *Economic Geography* 6, no. 4 (1930), 391, 393-4. Note also that the lumber industry, like virtually all the other natural resource harvesting industries in Maine, was, by the early twentieth century, hardly the idealized component of a self-sufficient local economy that many outsiders imagined but instead a cog in far larger network controlled by major companies (in lumber's case, timber and paper companies). Meanwhile, the first decades of the century also saw the efflorescence of a conservation movement that prioritized the preservation of the Maine woods – see Judd, "Reshaping Maine's Landscape: Rural Culture, Tourism, and Conservation, 1890-1929".

[69] Cassidy, "Framing Region: The Modernist's New England", 68. For information on the impact of tourism on earlier American artists, including Winslow Homer, see Gail S. Davidson, et al., *Frederic Church, Winslow Homer, and Thomas Moran: Tourism and the American Landscape* (New York and Boston: Bulfinch, 2006).

moving to Cape Split he hired a full-time caretaker for his home.[70] Along with employment at hotels, part-time work serving as guides or handymen for tourist visitors became an important component of Maine's economy in the early twentieth century, as it offered a method of supplementing dwindling incomes from farming, fishing, or logging.[71] Such workers were key to the faux-rugged experience cherished by well-to-do visitors from away. Although he frequently described his outdoor adventures in paint and ink, Marin also made it clear in a 1947 letter that, "Up here we are living like Lords".[72] By contrast, the locals he idealized frequently relied on second or third jobs working for tourists to get by. Avoiding the modern realities of life in Maine, as Marin did in his paintings, was a key component of the vacation experiences of early twentieth-century elites, who often went to great lengths to preserve the picturesque charm of tourist communities as a means of fostering what MacCannell has called the "staged authenticity" upon which most modern tourism relies. As in Marin's case, a component of this "staged authenticity" is often "work display", wherein the forms of labor that resonate as "authentic" to visitors become a tourist attraction.[73]

Although he did not join the throngs of visitors in Bar Harbor or Boothbay Harbor

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[70] Examples of Marin mentioning such helpers can be found in: John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, July 3, 1917, 33; John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, July 26, 1918, 36; John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, July 23, 1922, 80; and John Marin to Mackinley Helm, undated, John Marin Family Papers, National Gallery of Art Library, Section I, Part II, Group II, Folder 2. Marin evidently owned a number of boats during his four decades of visiting Maine. See: John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, July 3, 1921, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 65, John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 10, 1934, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 160, and John Marin to Lyda and Retta Currey, August 12, 1947, Marin Family Papers, Section I, Part II, Group I, Folder 6, among many others.

[71] In larger tourist settlements like Bar Harbor other industries virtually vanished in the early twentieth century as the service industry offered locals greater and greater opportunities. Wescott, "Economic, Social, and Governmental Aspects of the Development of Maine's Vacation Industry 1850-1920", 90-91. Hornsby, "The Gilded Age and the Making of Bar Harbor", 464-65.

[72] John Marin to Lyda and Retta Currey, August 12, 1947.

[73] Stephen Hornsby describes the lengths to which wealthy vacationers in Bar Harbor went to shape and maintain their vision of an idyllic rural New England village, including extensive landscaping work, discouraging and thwarting electrification and public transportation efforts, buying up land to discourage further development, and relocating a nearby Native-American settlement, in "The Gilded Age and the Making of Bar Harbor", 462-64. Dean MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity: Arrangement of Social Space in Tourist Settings", *American Journal of Sociology* 79, no. 3 (1979), 589-603. MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 36, 62. See also Patricia Mooney-Melvin, "Harnessing the Romance of the Past: Preservation, Tourism, and History", *The Public Historian* 13, no. 2 (1991), 35-48.

(communities in which the manufacturing of authenticity was all the more imperative given the scope of tourist operations), Marin sought a different form of authenticity when he chose his various temporary homes in small settlements along the Maine coast.[74] For example, when he first chose Cape Split as a summertime destination, Marin wrote his close friend Herbert Seligmann, who had been summering there for a decade, and made clear that he was interested in visiting the community because of its "nearness to the sea… [and] a fishing village", but was also keen make sure that life there "not be too strenuous" for "old folks" like him and his wife.[75] Rarely did Marin so neatly encapsulate the dynamics inherent to his approach towards living in Maine – although he supposedly sought to experience, observe, and represent the "real thing", or at least something that seemed real enough to his eyes and to those of New York-based art observers, he also made clear that the struggles inherent in the actual experiences of Maine's coastal people were something he wanted to only partially imitate rather than fully experience. Instead, he seems eager to pursue a sort of "simple life" on the Maine coast, a lifestyle that could only be actively pursued by the wealthy – as historian David Shi writes, in the early twentieth century, "When one was comfortable, one could and should worry about the bad taste of excess and the tensions of modern complexity; when one was… living on the edge of… survival, simplicity was a… fact of existence, hardly a voluntary ideal by which to live."[76]

The class divide between Marin and most native Mainers was further illustrated in a 1932

[74] Although he did always live within communities that at were at least partially filled with tourists while in Maine, and sometimes led an active social life while there, Marin at least purported to prefer isolation, telling Stieglitz in 1926 that the presence of some acquaintances in Stonington was discouraging him from visiting there that summer and that he was considering other destinations instead, writing that "you know how it is – when others come I skip." John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, July 9, 1926, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 106.
[75] John Marin to Herbert Seligmann, May 29, 1933, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 150.
[76] As Shi describes it, meanings of "the simple life… have included a hostility toward luxury and a suspicion of riches, a reverence for nature and a preference for rural over urban ways of life and work, a desire for personal self-reliance through frugality and diligence, a nostalgia for the past and a skepticism toward the claims of modernity, conscientious rather than conspicuous consumption, and an aesthetic taste for the plain and functional." Even if Marin's aesthetic taste was hardly "plain", his affinity for and conduct while in Maine seem to show evidence of several of these other traits. David E. Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 3, 181.

letter in which he recounts days spent boating, swimming, digging for clams, picking berries, and eating lobsters with his wife and son. The day before writing the letter, Marin had chopped down some trees on his island "and then came home for crackers and cheese and we built… a fire".[77] While for Marin and his family activities like digging for clams, picking berries, or chopping trees were the sorts of pleasant diversions inherent to summer visits to Maine, part of their attraction was that they were considered authentic to Maine itself because of the state's residents' historical reliance on these activities to harvest resources for subsistence or export. Marin's ability to return home to cheese and crackers after a fishing trip or berrying expedition hints at the difference between the artist and the native Mainers he imitated – whereas Marin, like most other visitors, could afford to playact subsistence, most of the "real" Mainers he sought to emulate needed to either work in one of Maine's growing industrial sectors, such as textile manufacturing or shipbuilding, harvest the state's natural resources in order to consume or sell them, or peddle the experience of harvesting those resources to wealthy tourists. As MacCannell points out, transforming the labor of locals into a "do-it-yourself" "amusement" is just one of a number of ways in which tourists regularly "make a fetish of the work of others" as part of their pursuit of leisure and escape from their own work.[78]

Although Marin did sometimes take note of locals' labor practices, and was keen to cast his own artmaking as labor (sometimes calling it his "trade"), he showed little sympathy for Mainers' economic difficulties, suggesting that many were lazy in a cynical 1917 letter: "…all the young males… have gone to Bath to work in the shipyards and they need 3000 more men.

[77] John Marin to Lyda and Retta Currey, August 27, 1932. By regularly eating lobster, that most quintessentially Mainer of foods, Marin was perhaps inadvertently signaling his tourist status, as the growth of the vacation industry in Maine from the mid-nineteenth century onward directly coincided with lobster's growing inaccessibility for and unpopularity (both as a food and a state symbol) among native residents as prices skyrocketed in the face of increasing demand outside the state and among tourist visitors. George H. Lewis, "The Maine Lobster as Regional Icon: Competing Images Over Time and Social Class", *Food and Foodways* 3, no. 4 (1989), 307-9.
[78] MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 6-7.

Here's a chance for some duffers bellowing for work and hoping they won't get it."[79] Marin also showed concern for the impact of tourism on the traditional lifeways of the local population, writing from Stonington in 1920 that "The young bloods hire themselves off on yachts during the summer and imbibe freely of their wealthy city employers' ways".[80] Evidently, Marin wanted to criticize Mainers for their indolence in certain instances, yet was also inclined to find fault with those who, by working in the tourism industry, supposedly risked stripping themselves of their authenticity.

Although activities like hunting, fishing, and lobstering remain important features of Maine tourism today, one can also regard well-to-do visitors from outside the region travelling to Maine and temporarily adopting the lifeways of its resident population as a form of cultural appropriation in which "decisions regarding which objects [or activities] are… labeled as authentic cultural forms" are made by outsiders but then come to be "viewed by the consumer as representing people and places with little to no context or critical examination." This is a common component of modern tourism practices, in large part because they rely on the transversal of a cultural divide between the visitor and an exotic destination.[81] In Marin's case, it seems clear that his understanding of Maine was as much shaped by the external expectations

[79] Accusing "native" workers of laziness was common among wealthy vacationers in Maine. This passage also suggests that Marin preferred if Mainers worked in traditional outdoor trades instead of participating in industrial work like shipbuilding (although one can wonder if he would have felt the same about wooden shipbuilding – Bath was (and is) a major steel shipbuilding center just a few miles from Small Point). John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, July 3, 1917, 33. Hornsby, "The Gilded Age and the Making of Bar Harbor", 465.

[80] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 22, 1920, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 57.

[81] Since at least the nineteenth century this divide between tourist and tourist site has frequently been, in part, a colonial or neo-colonial one, and therefore often involves encountering political, racial, and ethnic differences as well as more purely socioeconomic ones. Although the Maine coast primarily served domestic tourists, the state's peripheral position in relation to urban American society nonetheless cast it into a quasi-colonial social and economic position. At the same time, there was an element of racial othering at play in tourism in Maine that I will address at greater length later. Quotes from Christine Balengee-Morris, "Cultures for Sale: Perspectives on Colonialism and Self-Determination and the Relationship to Authenticity and Tourism", *Studies in Art Education* 43, no. 3 (2003), 232. For more on tourism and the transversal (or semi-transversal) of cultural divides, see Chris Rojek and John Urry, eds., *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), especially Sharon Macdonald, "A People's Story: Heritage, Identity and Authenticity", 155-175.

prescribed for the state by advertisers, other artists and writers, and locals who had an economic incentive to perpetuate myths about the state (or, by 1914, believed such myths themselves) as it was dictated by any sort of truly "authentic" experience of life in Maine.[82] Indeed, the artist even admitted as much in a 1919 letter to Stieglitz: "I suppose I have my view point of the real Maine and somewhat fail, being, too, hampered by… memories of the work of others."[83]

All the same, Marin frequently made his appreciation of the "authenticity" of Maine's natural world and the lifeways of its "native" citizens clear. He most frequently expressed this admiration (as in the 1919 letter just mentioned) by referring to the elements of his experiences in Maine as being especially "real" in a way which, it is implied, his life and the lives of other New Yorkers typically were not. Even in his first visit to Maine in 1914, he took special care to point out that the waters off the state's coast were "real ocean".[84] Later, he made the contrast between the authenticity of life in Maine and the apparent falsity of suburban living apparent in a 1943 letter written from New Jersey, asking Seligmann to "write to the degenerate Ancient Mariner here in Cliffside – and… send down two bottles… one containing a Sample of that real old North Atlantic and… [the other] a sample of that genuine Cape Split salty ozone".[85]

Indeed, Marin freely admitted that he viewed his time in Maine as a means of escape

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[82] This is perhaps an appropriate moment to acknowledge that seeking cultural "authenticity" is itself a virtually impossible task, as cultural norms and practices are almost always shaped by interchange between groups and "authenticity" is a concept that can only make sense when viewing a community as an outsider.
[83] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, October, 1919, 53.
[84] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 7, 1914, 15.
[85] Marin purchased his home in Cliffside, New Jersey, directly across the Hudson River from Manhattan, in 1920. John Marin to Herbert Seligmann, July 28, 1943, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 208. For more of Marin's use of the term "real" in this vein, see John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, September 19 and 26, 1915, 27; John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, September 1, 1919, 48; and John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, October, 1919, 52-53; and John Marin, undated manuscript, Marin Family Papers, Section I, Part III, Folder 5, among others. Marin evidently felt that such an approach applied equally to other places as well, as he suggested when describing another artist's pictures of New York: "Its (to me) powerful but lacks life – lacks real viewpoint – no more (to me) real New York than Stella's masterpiece (Brooklyn Bridge) (to me) had anything of the real bridge feeling in it". Marin's (and Dove's) preference for art that exuded a sense of the "real" that went beyond mere imitation is briefly discussed by Matthew Baigell, *Artist and Identity in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 37.

from city life. As he wrote to relatives in 1941, "one way out – is to grab what little one has and go and live on one of the islands + forget the world and its troubles".[86] In a letter sent just before his 1927 trip to Stonington, he suggested that the opportunity to be among common people and away from the falsity and pretentiousness of New York was an important factor motivating his visits to Maine, writing that "I am sick and tired of good ? books, good ? people, good ? everything… I'd rather have trash for at least trash is honest as trash… I am leaving soon in search of more trash, or rainbows, anything to get away from this local trash and these local well kept lawns, well kept trees, well kept houses and well kept people".[87]

On one hand, Marin's simultaneous exotic othering and intense admiration of Maine "natives" seems to have significant resonance with modernist primitivism in a broader sense. Ostensibly "primitive" societies' supposed conformity to simpler, more natural ways of life was often the source of both distance and desire for the world-weary modernist.[88] Although this description applies well to Marin's relationship with Maine, the degree and character of his appreciation is unusual among primitivizing modernists. These were persistent decisions to not just temporarily experience Maine's culture or co-opt it for his creative project but to work to assimilate into it as an equal (or what he considered to be an equal). Marin's approach therefore demonstrates a level of admiration and a perception of fundamental ethnic, racial, national, and dispositional similarity that differs significantly from the attitudes underlying most modernist primitivism (including, even, the attitudes taken by O'Keeffe and other modernists in the Southwest).

Crucially, whereas the American West could afford white elites a more purely exotic

[86] John Marin to Lyda and Retta Currey, July 27, 1941, Marin Family Papers, Section I, Part II, Group I, Folder 6.
[87] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, July 9, 1927, 113-14.
[88] Sieglinde Lemke describes primitivist dissonance in *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 24-27.

escape from city life by commodifying Native cultures and the American South offered a space where whiteness was virtually indelibly tied to the subjugation of African-Americans, in New England no such complicating factors existed.[89] Instead the region benefitted from the perception that it contained an atmosphere of benign, unchallenged whiteness (with divides between Euro-American ethnic communities and the presence of non-white peoples in the region evidently forgotten). Therefore, in contrast to most other American vacation destinations, the Maine coast, in addition to being more convenient to major cities like New York and Boston, allowed visitors to revel in the rustic feeling of a bygone era while avoiding the potentially distasteful experience of sustained interaction with a racial other.

Marin and the "Yankee Race"

During Marin's own time, the naturalness of the "Yankee" as a real entity that had existed since the English colonization of New England in the seventeenth century was virtually unquestioned. In the case of early twentieth century Nova Scotia, scholar Ian McKay suggests that "cultural history was rewritten to erase evidence of an urban, capitalist society, of class and ethnic differences, and of women's emancipation". New England's past was similarly distorted during the period to erase evidence of industrialization, changing gender roles, tourist impact, and racial and ethnic "impurities".[90] Marin's pictures of the Maine coast fall into this pattern of

[89] For relevant analyses of the racial dynamics of white tourists visiting the early twentieth century American West and South, see John A. Jakle, *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth-Century North America* (Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 214-17, 234-38. Steven Hoelscher addresses the significance of segregation to notions of whiteness and regional identity in the early to mid-twentieth-century South in "Making Place, Making Race: Performances of Whiteness in the Jim Crow South", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93, no. 3 (2003), 657-686. See also Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage, 1998), and Vanderbeck, "Vermont and the Imaginative Geographies of American Whiteness".

[90] Ian McKay, *Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal, Kingston, London, and Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), i. The construction of this artificial past for New England, and especially how that artificial past played out in the visual arts of the region, is covered thoroughly in William Truettner and Roger Stein, eds., *Picturing Old New England: Image and Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

representation by erasing many of the realities of life in Maine that did not jibe with outsiders' idealizing conceptions of the place. As he analyzes a tourist postcard that idealizes the "traditional" lifeways of coastal Nova Scotians, McKay suggests that:

> Produced for the probable purpose of making a profit within a tourism economy, the postcard presents the fisherfolk as the Other, as a spectacle to be appropriated and enjoyed within the objectifying gaze of tourism. If the narrowly economic context of this photograph is the rise of the tourism industry in Nova Scotia, within which the rural "Folk" came to play the role of attraction, its cultural context… seems to be… [a] thirst for an existence released from the iron cage of modernity into a world re-enchanted by history, nature, and the mysterious.[91]

Marin's career in New England unfolded during an era in which long-held perceptions of the region's history and racial makeup were beginning to change, including a rise in recognition of the role of racial and ethnic minorities in its history.[92] However, by representing the state in a way that diverged from tourist postcards and the work of earlier artists like Homer far more in terms of style than subject matter, Marin perpetuated the still-popular notion that New England remained a timeless, bucolic, ethnically pure Eden.

Although this simultaneous erasure of the realities of early twentieth-century North Atlantic life and construction of a false past and present for the region was far from exclusively racial and ethnic, the supposed purity of the region's inhabitants was fundamental to it. This was especially true in the racially fraught interwar period, during which people all around the world worked to proclaim "their rootedness in their particular region and the distinctive call of their particular blood". In many cases, such "rootedness" was proclaimed by "digging up folktales and folksongs as icons of eternal cultural truths", thereby participating in the longstanding strategy of

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[91] McKay, *Quest of the Folk,* xv.

[92] For example, in the 1930s, Works Progress Administration guidebooks began to celebrate Portuguese-American fishing communities in Massachusetts, discuss the controversial late nineteenth-century murder trial of the Italian-American anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti as an important event in the region's history, and even reckon with Native-American genocide. Dona Brown and Stephen Nissbaum, "Changing New England, 1865-1945", in Truettner and Stein, *Picturing Old New England,* 10-11.

linking "folk" and "race" in order to identify biological determinants for cultural practices.[93]

It is therefore unsurprising that, like other parts of the country, New England saw a major uptick in white supremacist (and, relatedly, anti-Catholic) activity during the interwar period. For example, beginning in 1925 Vermont conducted an extensive eugenics survey with the goal of reducing the impact of the "lawless, immoral, degenerate, and mentally defective" elements of the state's society. This effort was in large part inspired by racialized thinking about the state's social problems and culminated in a 1931 sterilization law (Maine had already passed a sterilization law for the "insane or feeble-minded" in 1925 that was strengthened in 1931).[94] In 1924, the year of the landmark anti-immigration Johnson-Reed Act, the Ku Klux Klan claimed 50,000 members in Maine out of a population just 388,000 men in the 1920 census and planned marches in several French-Canadian communities, even bombing the heavily francophone town of Lewiston in an effort to intimidate the state's French-Canadians. This shocking percentage of Mainers involved in the Klan in the 1920s hints at the mainstream status of white supremacist views in the state during that era, as well as the degree to which the KKK became an umbrella under which class- and religion-based prejudice operated in concert with racial and ethnic bias.[95]

The Maine KKK's anti-French-Canadian campaign in the 1920s hints at some of the complex history of ethnicity and notions of "whiteness" in Maine. While the atmosphere of whiteness attributed to Maine was in large part predicated on the historical and ongoing predomination of protestants of "Anglo-Saxon" and "Nordic" descent within the state's life,

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[93] McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, 37, 116.
[94] See Nancy L. Gallagher, *Breeding Better Vermonters: The Eugenics Project in the Green Mountain State* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1999), especially 71-126. Quote from 84. See also Julius Paul, *"…Three Generations of Imbeciles are Enough…": State Eugenic Sterilization Laws in American Thought and Practice* (Washington, DC: Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, 1965), 366-71.
[95] Brown and Nissbaum, "Changing New England, 1865-1945", 7; *Fourteenth Census of the United States: State Compendium – Maine*, United States Bureau of the Census, 1925, 2; Mark Paul Richard, "'This is Not a Catholic Nation': The Ku Klux Klan Confronts Franco-Americans in Maine", *New England Quarterly* 82, no. 2 (2009), 285-303, especially 285-89.

unlike most other parts of New England this atmosphere was significantly complicated by the long history of Catholic people of French descent living within its borders. Significantly, as approximately one million Quebecois moved into the United States between 1850 and 1930, the Maine francophone community became closely associated with backwoods jobs, and especially lumbering, despite the fact that late nineteenth-century French Canadians settled far more frequently in industrial towns like Lewiston and Biddeford than in rural logging communities. For lumber companies, and eventually the public, the large numbers of francophone Americans who worked in the industry came to be attributed not just to geographical and economic circumstance, but also the idea that French-Canadian immigrants were "innately suited for logging work".[96] This supposed affinity propelled a class divide that saw French-speakers become strongly associated with inland natural resource industries, while Anglo-Mainers remained associated with the state's more famous maritime industries, yet also considered themselves superior to their often impoverished, supposedly "half-wild", Catholic French-Canadian immigrant counterparts. In Vermont, which likewise saw its French-Canadian population grow exponentially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, French-Canadians were seen as a substantial enough threat to racial purity and societal health that they were investigated in the late 1920s as a potential source of "defect" and "subnormalcy" in the state's rural population.[97]

Marin was known to be of French descent and possessed a French surname. His father, the son of French immigrants, may possibly have been Catholic, but his parents were married in a Dutch Reformed (Protestant) church, and Marin was raised in a Protestant atmosphere by his

[96] Newton, "'These French Canadian of the Woods are Half-Wild Folk': Wilderness, Whiteness, and Work in North America, 1840-1955", 121-23. For more on the discrimination and persecution that French Canadians endured in the early-to-mid twentieth century, see David Vermette, *A Distinct Alien Race: The Untold Story of Franco-Americans, Industrialization, Immigration, Religious Strife* (Montreal: Baraka, 2018).
[97] Gallagher, *Breeding Better Vermonters*, 95-97.

mother's family.[98] However, the perception that Maine's racial character was partially French and potentially Catholic may have contributed to the strength with which he was tied to the state. Indeed, in a 1930 *New Yorker* profile it was unambiguously suggested that Marin was "of French-Canadian ancestry."[99] This label prompted an angry response from the painter, who insisted that "[I] Do not come of French Canadian stock [.] Grand parents on my fathers side real French all the rest Old Hudson River stock".[100]

This differentiation between "real French" and "French Canadian" was an important one during Marin's era. As a Maine state guide from 1937 suggests, there were also some "old-stock" French inhabitants in Maine, who were not differentiated in terms of social status from other Mainers like the late-coming, lower-class French Canadians or Acadians were. According to the guide, "Today, especially in coastal towns, there still live members of the old Protestant French families who strive proudly to keep their blood… purely French… These people are not to be confused with the Canadian French…"[101] For someone like Marin who sought to be perceived as one with the Maine fisherfolk, being cast as "French-Canadian" was a damaging accusation, and the vehemence with which he denied it suggests the degree to which the

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[98] Some of the details of Marin's upbringing are mentioned in Helm, *John Marin*, 3-5. Helm also mentions that Marin's own marriage was held in the same church as his parents' (p. 28). Note: the notion that Marin's father may have been Catholic is a conjecture based on his background.

[99] "Paint with Fish", *The New Yorker*, April 5, 1930, 15.

[100] John Marin to The Editor of *The New Yorker*, April 11, 1930.

[101] *Maine: A Guide 'Down East'*, 74-75. Alongside religious affiliation, an important part of the equation here may be the origins of these populations within France – Acadian settlers were mostly from Southwestern France, whereas many Quebecois settlers came from the North and West, and under many of the racial schema of the early twentieth century denizens of southern France were significantly racially inferior to their northern counterparts. Acadians were also noted for having subsequently intermarried with Indigenous peoples in many cases. Note, also, that most immigrants to Quebec in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (i.e. after New France was ceded to the British in 1763) were actually from the British Isles, rather than France. Many of the "old stock" French-Mainer families were descendants of Huguenot (that is, protestant) refugees, though it is noteworthy that most Huguenots came from the Southern and Western parts of the Kingdom of France. See G.E. Marquis, "The French Canadians in the Province of Quebec", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 107, no. 1 (1923), 7-12, Marc Tremblay and Hélène Vézina, "Genealogical Analysis of Maternal and Paternal Lineages in the Quebec Population", *Human Biology* 82, no. 2 (2010), 181, 189-91, James Pritchard, *In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670-1730* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 36, and Roderic Beaujot and Don Kerr, *Population Change in Canada*, 2nd. ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 27-28.

component of his identity that had come to be rooted in Maine was grounded in a very particular racialized self-understanding.[102]

In a phrase frequently repeated by later chroniclers of his career, Marin described his familial heritage by writing that "My ancestors were of the best English Ale, Dutch Bitters, Irish Gin, French Vermouth, and plain Scotch… [They] came over in… the Mayflower".[103] Although it is unclear if this account is entirely accurate, it is noteworthy that it takes care to point out that Marin's family's roots in the United States date back to the early colonial era, an element of his background that was highlighted by interpreters including Rosenfeld and Marin's biographer, Mackinley Helm.[104]

In a way that perhaps speaks to the artist's success in projecting an ethnic persona, far more than its French-Canadian qualities, the "French" character of Marin's work was remarked upon by critics. In "American Painting" Rosenfeld wrote that Marin's work suggested "the temperate and light blood of the French in him".[105] In a tribute published in the wake of Marin's 1953 death, Jerome Mellquist suggested that Marin's work "unfolded only in France, the home of the ancestors on his father's side…"[106] Notably, in the white-supremacist theory of the 1910s, the racial character of the French people was the subject of debate, with many casting France as a nation where several racial groups came together, making their "whiteness" in comparison to those of "Anglo-Saxon" or "Nordic" descent a point of ambiguity.[107] However, Marin was not

[102] At the same time, that people who originated from the same country but had come to Maine by different pathways were treated as ethnically distinct helps put the lie to the entire racial system on which Marin and so many others relied, and encourages consideration of socioeconomic class and religious affiliation as the possible fundamental means of social differentiation between many "white" ethnic groups.
[103] John Marin to Egmont Arens, August 26, 1928, in Seligmann, *Letters of John Marin*, n.p.
[104] Rosenfeld, *Port of New York*, 306. Helm, *John Marin*, 4.
[105] Rosenfeld, "American Painting", 664.
[106] Jerome Mellquist, "John Marin: Rhapsodist of Nature (1870-1953)", *College Art Journal* 13, no. 4 (1954), 311.
[107] The influential theorist Madison Grant, notably, did not consider the French Canadians to be a true "race" in and of themselves, but rather an "Alpine" political group that cohered around a shared language and religion. Grant, *The*

French-Canadian, nor indeed solely French, and his mixed ethnicity likely helped him occupy a complex position in relation to both the supposed heritage of Maine's "native" peoples and the supposed racial and ethnic characteristics of his work. As white supremacist racial theories became a more mainstream part of American social discourse in the interwar era, Marin's mixed (though unimpeachably white) ethnic position may have influenced those who suggested that he had an innate spiritual connection to both Maine's forests and its seas (even if Marin himself rejected affiliation with the state's ostensibly woodsy French-Canadian population).

Marin's made his understanding of the racial and ethnic character of the Maine people all the more clear in other writings. In a letter from one of his first visits, in 1919, he indicates that he saw similarities between the Maine-born Marsden Hartley and the people he saw around him: "Hartley surely came out of Maine. I have run across two or three, and the likeness, a certain similarity or something, is striking."[108] In another letter, Marin describes how a local fisherman who bore a striking resemblance to Hartley, Eddie Gross, sold him an old powerboat which had washed ashore and then helped him repair it. Marin linked Gross quite strongly with the sea, returning to him for boat-related advice several times and later in the same letter telling Stieglitz about Gross' father, a fisher- and lobsterman, writing that "You ought to see the old man, you'd want to photograph him right off. He *belongs* to the sea. Comes home week ends. Rest of the time 10 miles away, off the outer islands, ahauling his lobster traps and fishing."[109] In descriptions like these, Marin links the physical characteristics of local Mainers with quintessential Mainer activities like fishing and lobstering, and represents the elder Gross as a

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Passing of the Great Race, 53, 72-73; William Z. Ripley, *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study* (New York: D. Appleton, 1899).

[108] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, July 1, 1919, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 42.

[109] It is unclear if Gross was also one of the men Marin referred to in his 1919 letter. John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, July 3, 1921, 65-67. For further mentions of Eddie Gross, see John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 26, 1921, 69-70.

stereotypical "old salt", like the men in Beneker's poster and Beal's etching (Figures 2.12 and 2.13). By tying Mainers' physiology with their lifeways in this way, Marin implies that the Maine folk were in some way predisposed to such work and that there was not just a cultural, but a more fundamental link among them, assumedly born of shared heredity and/or the effects of long-term association with the Maine sea and soil, that had a determinative impact on their appearance and behavior.

However, that Marin linked physical characteristics with behavior need not imply that he held the same beliefs that Hartley did. As Donna Cassidy and Randall Griffey have written, Hartley's late works evince an unequivocally white supremacist perspective that had been partially inspired by the artist's exposure to Aryanism in Nazi Germany.[110] Eventually, he came to believe in the inherent superiority of certain "races" over others, to support racial cleansing and eugenics, to think of race as rooted in the natural environment where ethnic groups live, and to advocate for the purity and superiority of "Nordic" and "Anglo" racial groups, including and especially groups of "Nordic" descent from Maine and the Canadian Maritime provinces.[111]

These attitudes appeared in paintings that celebrated the supposed physical, mental, and cultural superiority of the North Atlantic folk. For example, *Madawaska-Acadian Light-Heavy* idealizes the muscled, angular torso of a French-Canadian boxer, sexualizing the model as it holds his form up as evidence of the physical superiority of the North-Atlantic race (Figure 2.14).[112] Meanwhile, pictures like *Lobster Fishermen* and *Down East Young Blades* not only valorize the physical qualities of the Maine folk, but also, by painting them on the docks, surrounding them with lobster traps, and showing them holding fish and lobsters, suggest that

[110] It is important to note here that while the 1933-34 visit was Hartley's only to Germany during the Nazi era (in large part because by the mid-1930s travel to Germany became quite difficult for U.S. nationals), he had spent years there in the 1910s and '20s. Cassidy, *Marsden Hartley*, 243-44, 262, 266.
[111] Ibid., 261-66.
[112] Ibid., 243-44, 275-76.

they are one with their surroundings, and are therefore naturally suited to working in the traditional Down East (and Scandinavian) trades of fishing and lobstering (Figures 2.15 and 2.16).[113]

While they did share a great deal with Hartley's late Maine pictures, Marin's representations of the state and its people also differed significantly from those of his colleague. Though both artists reveled in the state's sublime beauty and connected the physical characteristics of the people of its coast with the natural world that they inhabited, Hartley demonstrated a consistent penchant for expressively representing the bodies of the Maine folk, focusing on the physicality of hardworking Mainers as he depicted them in characteristically thick, rough brushstrokes. By contrast, Marin was far more interested in the "spirit" of the place, the cultural and economic practices of its denizens, and the connections between those "natives" and Maine's lands and seas than he was in their bodies themselves, and dedicated himself to expressively representing these subjects in his lighter, more calligraphic style. Revealingly, although fishing and lobstering were major themes of his work, unlike Hartley, for most of his career Marin typically represented the workers of these industries at a distance, in boats, as in pictures like *Lobster Smack Passing Through* and *Fishing Smack,* when he pictured them at all (Figures 2.5 and 2.6). Whereas Hartley's lobstermen seem fundamentally rooted in their environment, for Marin lobstering was subsumed by the broader scope of his visualization of that identity. While Hartley was tightening his focus around idealized male bodies, Marin's paintings of lobster and fishing boats, like the body of images he produced in Maine more generally, evince the more touristic and spiritual qualities of his pictures, oriented as they are towards

[113] Cassidy even points out that the men in *Lobster Fishermen* resemble lobster traps and the granite blocks quarried on Vinalhaven Island. However, she also notes that some of the figures in these images wear clothes that appear German rather than American, a detail that hints at the formative impact of Nazi ideology on Hartley's white supremacist leanings. Ibid., 12, 87, 169-70, 195, 199, 228, 244, 275, Griffey, "Marsden Hartley's Aryanism: Eugenics in a Finnish-Yankee Sauna," 69-71.

recreating his gaze towards picturesque sights, people, and activities and capturing his personal understanding of the state's character.

Race therefore played a different sort of role in the work Marin produced in Maine than it did in Hartley's (or indeed in O'Keeffe's or Dove's) because of the rather different postures that each had towards belonging to coastal Maine society. Consider how the two pictured themselves. In the pictures and autobiographical writings from Hartley's late Maine period, he suggests that he was returning to his native land, a place where, despite his decades-long cosmopolitan adventures in New York, Berlin, and other major cities, he supposedly immediately felt at home again. Though this attitude was in part conveyed through his new emphasis on the Maine landscape and the "North Atlantic" folk in his painting work, it was also communicated more directly in a series of romantic essays and poems that cast his renewed interest in Maine as the triumphant "return of the native".[114]

Marin was also a great admirer of Hartley's work, and implied after Hartley's 1943 death that he did not think himself capable of heroizing Maine in the same way that his friend had: "Poor Hartley alas who is there to take up the brush where he left off with the… Maine Legend… Hartley… produced some things both in his painting and in his writing well worth the preserving".[115] However, while *Lobster Boat* (Figure 2.1) paints Marin as a lobsterman, unlike Hartley's late paintings it also casts its artist as an observer, watching and representing life in Maine as it whirls around him rather than truly seeing himself in its native practitioners or participating actively in their labor. The endurance of this element in Marin's work over the decades he spent painting Maine testifies to the notion that assimilating into the state's society

[114] See Marsden Hartley, "Return of the Native" *Contact* 2 (1932), 28, and Marsden Hartley, "On the Subject of Nativeness – a Tribute to Maine", in *Marsden Hartley: Exhibition of Recent Paintings, 1936* (New York: An American Place, 1937), reproduced in Gail Scott, ed., *On Art* (New York: Horizon, 1982), 112-15. This public posture was notably belied by an ongoing private existential despair.
[115] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, September 29, 1943, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 209-10, 209.

remained as much an aspiration as an achievement for him even in his later years.

However, Marin was also not a white supremacist ideologue like Hartley was (though this does not mean that Marin had not internalized many of the lessons of white supremacy as it was widely practiced within early twentieth-century U.S. society).[116] Notably, Hartley at times expressed great appreciation for Marin's work, as in a 1928 essay in which he writes that in Marin's pictures, "The earth has body, the sea has body, the sail has strength, the island remains fixed in the sea, and the houses are set on their islands where generations of islanders have lived," before noting his admiration for the accomplishments of past generations of "Anglo-Saxon" watercolorists.[117] Still, in an undated letter Marin himself suggested that Hartley's link to German culture and politics may have played an influential role in his work in a way that it did not in Marin's own. He wrote that Hartley possessed "a diseased concept a species of [Nazism]" because "his concept is showing Maine <u>he</u> <u>alone</u> coming down to it." Although it is not completely clear what Marin hoped to convey in this unpublished, fragmentary draft, he seems to think that Hartley's approach towards Maine was too personal and close-minded, too "divorced from humanity" like Nazi ideology, in contrast to his own "wisemans philosophy", which foregrounded openness and genuineness.[118]

Though he did not subscribe to exactly the same set of racial beliefs that Hartley did, Marin still viewed the people of Maine, his own connection to the state and its inhabitants, and their shared connection to its natural features through an essentializing lens. In 1932 he told Dove that "One can smell the earth here [in Maine] and it is in the manners and speech of the

[116] It is perhaps telling that, in a disquisition on the meanings of various colors, Marin went so far as to suggest that "white represents purity". Marin would no doubt have disputed the suggestion that this comment was a reflection upon racial purity, but it is provocative nonetheless. Undated manuscript, Marin Family Papers, Section I, Part III, Folder 3.
[117] Marsden Hartley, "The Recent Paintings of John Marin", in Scott, *On Art*, 80-81.
[118] Marin confusingly spells the term "Nazism" as "natscism" in this manuscript. Marin Family Papers, Section I, Part III, Folder 4.

people. Also the sea."[119] In a 1943 letter to Stieglitz, he suggested that Maine's natural world had become an integral part of who he was on a physiological level: "I am again… occupying the Ancient Mariner's lookout up here on the Cape – and I sit and look at the Seas coming up and it gets into my blood – They say that blood and water don't mix but who are they?".[120] It is worth noting the date of this letter, for although his work in Maine was virtually always focused on the state's distinctive features and executed in some form of his signature expressive, gestural style, the attitude towards the state manifested in his pictures also evolved significantly over time. Indeed, his early Maine works (i.e. Figure 2.4) share no small resemblance to the landscapes he was doing before 1914 or during his trips to Pennsylvania or Massachusetts in the mid-to-late 1910s (see Figures 2.17 and 2.18).

Picturing the Maine Folk

However, as time passed, and as Marin grew more fond of fishing, clamming, and berrying along Maine's coast, and as he began to feel that the locals were really "beginning to take me into their *bosoms* here down East", his increasing interest in and devotion to Mainer lifeways led him towards painting subjects that related more directly to the Maine "natives" whose lives he and other tourist visitors fetishized, resulting in the many pictures of towns along the Maine coast and of fishing and lobstering boats that he began to produce during the interwar period. Eventually the line between painting and his involvement in Mainer activities began to blur, as he suggested in 1930 when he wrote that fishing and painting were "one and the same thing with me". After moving to Cape Split in 1933 he began to feature figures in his paintings with much more regularity and prominence, and, though many of these pictures focus on

[119] John Marin to Arthur Dove, July 26, 1932, Arthur and Helen Torr Dove Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington, DC, Box 1, Folder 4.
[120] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, September 29, 1943, 209.

allegorical, nymph-like female nude figures, many others represent local people whom Marin knew or imagined. This second group is one that has gone virtually unstudied within analyses of Marin's career, and yet also provides important opportunities for better understanding the racial component of his interest in Maine's folk culture.[121] Even if Marin's passion for living in and representing Maine was fundamentally rooted in an idealized perception of the state's racial character, the land-, sea-, and townscapes he painted there could never express this element of his interest in nearly as direct or explicit a way as his depictions of Mainers themselves.

For example, few, even, of Hartley's canvases convey the associations between the "Maine folk", whiteness, and the state's lands and seas as well as Marin's 1934 watercolor *Young Man of the Sea, Maine*, which shows an astonishingly bright blue-eyed figure floating above the Maine coastline, his ruddy skin suggesting his "whiteness" despite an apparent tan from the exposure inherent in his profession (Figure 2.19). Whereas Hartley's late pictures of the North Atlantic folk tend to show them either entirely disconnected from the environment (Figure 2.14) or existing logically within a real space of labor (Figures 2.15 and 2.16), *Young Man of the Sea, Maine* more clearly evinces the spiritual connection that Marin felt existed between Maine's folk and its soil and sea, an attitude that recalls that of Nazi artists who sought to emphasize a connection between the "Aryan" folk and the German landscape.

By picturing the titular *Young Man* floating above the seashore, Marin cast him as a mystical presence who was both within and himself consisting of the seascape – as not just a young man who lived by or worked on the sea, but as a young man *of* the sea, whose very

[121] For further information on these female nude paintings, see Donna Cassidy, "John Marin's Dancing Nudes by the Seashore: Images of the New Eve", *American Art* 4, no. 1 (1990), 70-91.

essence was in some sense marine.[122] The nautical element of his identity is confirmed not just by his looming presence above the North Atlantic's waters, but also by his bright red fisherman's sweater, and perhaps, even, by his resemblance to a ship's figurehead thanks to a forward-leaning pose. Perhaps most notably, however, the young man possesses unnaturally bright blue eyes that stare luminously towards the viewer, drawing attention to themselves as the unmistakable supposed markers of Nordic ancestry that helped suggest the racial superiority and nautical orientation of the Maine folk to outsiders like Marin. While cannot know whether the *Young Man of the Sea*'s bright blue eyes were intended to convey a racial message *per se*, in combination with the picture's title, the figure's clothes, and his juxtaposition with the Maine seashore beneath him, the presence and prominence of those blue eyes sends a potent message about what kind of person Marin felt that a "Young Man of the Sea" could or should be, and about how he perceived the "native" folk of the Maine coast in a broader sense.[123]

Though Marin seemed fond of representing a version of Maine in which people were absent or seen only from afar, his other works prominently featuring denizens of the Maine coast frequently indulge in similar visual tactics.[124] Consider the 1949 portrait *The Spirit of the Cape: Susie Thompson* (Figure 2.20). Thompson, Marin's Cape Split neighbor and the daughter and wife of lobstermen, was born Susie C. Wass in 1892, a scion of a line of Cape Split Wasses that stretched back to the late 18th century, when Wilmot Wass' family moved from Martha's

[122] This sort of characterization of the "native" folk was also popular in Nova Scotia, where Ian McKay notes that locals were seen by many antimodernists as "'a race apart,' shaped by the rocks and the wind and the sea." McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, 73.
[123] Though bright blue eyes may have been a feature of the model whom Marin employed for the picture, even if that were the case his choice of model would be similarly revealing.
[124] The scenes representing nude female figures dancing along the seashore that Marin executed from 1931 onward also feature human or humanoid figures much more prominently than do most of Marin's earlier paintings. See Cassidy, "John Marin's Dancing Nudes by the Seashore: Images of the New Eve".

Vineyard and became the first to settle the peninsula.[125] The picture shows her as one with the Maine environment, with her body floating within and above a hectic background that resembles the cacophony of pine trees in a Maine forest or green-blue waves crashing against a shoreline.[126] As art historian Ruth Fine described the portrait, "Susie… is at one with nature, at much a part of her surroundings as Marin's schooners were with the sea." This effect was only heightened by Marin's construction of a frame for the portrait out of driftwood – a practice he took up with increasing frequency late in his career as he focused more intently on portraying the Maine folk, and which further suggested a fundamental link between his subjects and the Maine sea.[127] Perhaps most noticeably, however, the title of the picture (and of one of two similar earlier portraits of Thompson (Figures 2.21 and 2.22)), *The Spirit of the Cape*, in combination with the portrait itself, casts the sitter as naturally, spiritually connected to the Maine landscape, not just to an idea of Maine but to the granite, pine needles, and sea foam of the cape itself.

One might argue that Marin is engaging in typologization in his Thompson portrait not just by associating his sitter with Maine's natural environment but also by choosing to depict her in the first place. Just as the weathered skin and white hair of an aged Maine fisherman might recall the stereotype of the "old salt", the thin, humble figure of a Maine matriarch bedecked in what looks to be a homemade dress is its own sort of archetype, that of the no-nonsense, unsophisticated, self-reliant, and aged lower middle-class Mainer woman. Consider Kosti Ruohomaa's 1950 portrait of Helen York posing in front of a family portrait in her home, a

[125] See the "History" section of the Addison, Maine town website. "Addison, Maine", addisonmaine.org (accessed September 30, 2019).
[126] I have not yet been able to locate an image of this picture aside from the small reproduction included in Reich, *John Marin*, vol. II, 716. Reich lists the painting as part of the collection of Mr. and Mrs. John C. Marin, Jr. Thompson's lack of extensive formal education is noted by Marin's daughter-in-law Norma in Debra Spark, "Marin's Maine", *Maine Home + Design*, April, 2016, https://mainehomedesign.com/features/marins-maine/.
[127] Fine, *John Marin*, 203, 207, 251. For more on Marin's construction of custom frames for his pictures, see Charles Pietraszewski and Christine Conniff-O'Shea, "Part of the Picture: The Power of the Frame in John Marin's Watercolors", in Martha Tedeschi with Kristi Dahm, *John Marin's Watercolors: A Medium for Modernism* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago and New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 59-77.

picture originally entitled *Maine Matriarch* (Figure 2.23). Though Ruohomaa's photograph depicts an older woman (Thompson was in her sixties when Marin painted her) and associates her more strongly with the domestic sphere than does Marin's painting, comparing the two images highlights the degree to which Marin's picture also hews closely to stereotypical conceptions of Mainer womanhood even as it defies them slightly by associating Thompson with nature.[128]

The extent of Marin's simultaneous typologization and expressive distortion of Thompson in *The Spirit of the Cape* is made more clear when it is compared with a Paul Strand photograph of her from roughly the same period (Figure 2.24). Despite Strand's similar affiliation with Stieglitz and his close friendship with Marin (whom Strand was visiting at Cape Split when he took his photograph of Thompson), the two images of the woman are remarkably different.[129] Whereas Marin's painting shows Thompson as one with Maine's natural environment, Strand's presents her in a minimalist scene, with hints of a rustic domestic sphere but relatively little in the way of contextual detail. While Marin's lines seem to expand in every direction, burgeoning with enthusiasm and meaning, Strand's photograph is an exercise in simplicity and restraint. Perhaps most significantly, however, casting Thompson herself in stark

[128] Ruohomaa offers an interesting comparison to Marin, Hartley, and other modernist chroniclers of Maine life. The son of Finnish immigrant blueberry farmers, Ruohomaa, grew up in Rockland, Maine. Working primarily in the 1940s and '50s, mixed representations that played into stereotypes about Maine and echoed previous generations of artists representations of the state and its citizens with other images that reveled in state's beauty and small-town life without shrinking from the modern elements affecting everyday life there. "Kosti Ruohomaa Collection", Penobscot Marine Museum, accessed March 30, 2023, https://penobscotmarinemuseum.org/kosti/.

[129] Helm mentions the visit in *John Marin*, 90. That Strand felt compelled to also attempt to represent Thompson may indicate the degree to which the "native folk" of the Maine coast were a fundamental element of its appeal for all visitors from away, not just Marin. Strand notably focuses intently on the region's "Puritan" past and current character in the book that emerged from his visit to the region. For more on Strand's interest in New England, including his book with Nancy Newhall on the region, *Time in New England* (1950; repub., Millerton, NY: Aperture, 1980), see John Rohrbach, "*Time in New England*: Creating a Usable Past", in Stange, *Paul Strand*, 161-77, and Cécile Whiting, "A New England Lament: Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand in the 1940s", *Art Bulletin* 89, no. 4 (2007), 879-914. As Whiting describes, Strand's project in New England was the first of several focused on particular regions of the world. His work in New England pictured a mixture of scenes of nature, abandoned mills, and working-class people, a set of subjects that signals the socially conscious bent that his work took beginning during the Great Depression.

detail as Strand does allows the viewer to perceive her as a real person rather than the mystical folk figure visible in Marin's portrait, and his photograph ultimately offers a far more neutral and less expressive representation of a Cape Split native.

In a somewhat similar vein to *The Spirit of the Cape,* Marin had in 1941 completed a picture, *Leo Wass and His Boat*, that effectively echoed his other portraits of lobstermen heading off to work (see Figure 2.5), yet incorporated a personal element by identifying the figure as his friend Leo, another member of the Wass family (Figure 2.25). More similar to the Thompson portraits, the 1949 *Portrait of Roy Wass with Apologies* also shows a friend, neighbor, and Wass, in this case Roy (another lobsterman), as part of the Maine landscape, with the black outline of a mountain appearing behind the subject, echoing his form (Figure 2.26).[130] In both cases, the rough-hewn, angular features of the sitters recall those of many of Hartley's portraits of Mainers, in which he cast the people of the North Atlantic coast as solid, substantial, and hard-edged, like the granite of Mt. Katahdin or the massive boulders that dot the region's coasts.[131] The weathered character of both Wass and Thompson's faces is also featured in further sketches Marin did of each of them, and collectively these Cape Split portraits stand in stark contrast to the artist's late portraits featuring non-Mainers, which were far more conventional (see Figures 2.27-29).

On one hand, these portraits serve as evidence of Marin's great friendship with the Thompson and Wass families, who often welcomed his company on nature walks, fish bakes, or evenings spent talking and eating in their homes, and thereby as proof of his deepening

[130] Interestingly, the title of this picture may imply that, try as he might, Marin felt that his representations of denizens of the Maine coast did not always capture their essence as completely or effectively as he might have hoped.
[131] Cassidy, *Marsden Hartley*, 87.

assimilation into Down East society over time.[132] However, they also reflect the stereotypical lens through which Marin viewed Maine as he moved further and further Down East over time in search of a community that better conformed to his expectations for the state. It is telling, after all, that he only chose a permanent seasonal home in Maine after finding a house on a remote seaside promontory surrounded by the homes of these lobstermen and their families.[133]

However, they also speak to the particular way in which Marin viewed Maine's "native" people, whereby he cast them as physically representative of and inherently spiritually connected to the region's natural environment and traditional lifeways. One way in which Marin described his perception of this connection was by referring to the Thompsons, Wasses, and other locals as "real people", a term that echoes his admiration of Maine for being a "real" place and Stieglitz' admiration of "a real person with blue eyes" in his 1924 letter to Dove.[134] Marin writes of a visit to the Thompsons in July 1938: "Was over to the Thompsons the other night – six kids… all healthy and well behaved… How do they do it?... I guess because they are real people".[135] In an undated manuscript, the artist celebrated "How much there is in a country of real people of virility stuff".[136] Such characterizations further crystallize Marin's simultaneous othering and

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[132] For more on Marin's relationships with the Thompsons and Wasses, see Helm, *John Marin*, 81-82, 103. As Helm notes, despite this closeness, Marin hardly told his neighbors anything about his artistic career, and none of them knew that he was famous or wealthy until an article about him was happened upon by a denizen of the Cape.

[133] In a sense, Marin's movement Down East over time is reflective of a broader pattern whereby a tourist is unsatisfied by the authenticity of an easily accessible "front region" and seeks out a supposedly exclusive and more authentic "back region", ignorant of the fact that the "back region" was manufactured to appeal to visitors seeking greater authenticity. If Marin did eventually move to a part of Maine that was less popular among tourists and where he eventually came to be seen by the locals as something closer to a peer, it seems unlikely that he ever entirely escaped a touristic relationship towards the state and its people. See MacCannell *The Tourist*, 92-96, 101-2; and Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), 144-45.

[134] Alfred Stieglitz to Arthur Dove, June 23, 1924.

[135] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz and Georgia O'Keeffe, July 18, 1938, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 181.

[136] See undated manuscript, Marin Family Papers, Section I, Part III, Folder 2. The confusing way in which Marin has written these lines in this manuscript draft means that he may have intended to write "people of real virility stuff" rather than "real people of virility stuff". It is worth noting how this line demonstrates the degree to which authenticity and masculinity were connected in Marin's mind. The notion that authenticity was a key concept for many modernists seeking to find something "real" within the artificiality and detachment of modernity is articulated

fetishization of the Maine "natives" he encountered during his visits to the state. Maine was where authenticity happened, while cities, by contrast, seemed to thrive on artificiality.

Marin also occasionally made the connection between folk identity, the natural landscape, and Maine heritage more explicit. For example, when he wrote to the Wasses after the death of the family matriarch, Vesta, in 1937, he lamented of "The passing of… The older ones – the Old Stock – the land marks as it were".[137] Another, undated letter is addressed to "Harry of the Wasses – of the ancient Wasses".[138] Both this talk referring to the timelessness of the Wass family "stock" and the implied physical connections between native Mainers like the Thompsons and Wasses and the natural environment in Marin's portraits make clear the racial element of the artist's internalized understanding of Mainer identity and of his painted representations of the state's people. While the pale skin of these figures was in a certain sense such an obvious component of Mainer identity that it would hardly have ever needed to be identified as such during Marin's lifetime, the idea suggested in certain of his pictures, including *Young Man of the Sea* and *The Spirit of the Cape*, that the links between the Maine folk and the Maine environment were not merely cultural but also deeper, and perhaps even inherently spiritual or physiological speaks to his belief in a determinative hereditary link among native Mainers, an idea with significant ethnic and racial implications.

Though Marin could speak of Maine's seawater getting "into my blood", and could adopt Mainer linguistic and behavioral habits, and could refer to himself as "the Ancient Mariner" time and again, and though critics could praise the distinctively "Yankee" qualities of his art at great length, Marin himself seemed to recognize that he would never be able to fully embody all of the

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at length in Miles Orvell's *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (1989; reis., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

[137] John Marin to Harry and Leo Wass, June 14, 1937, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 173.

[138] John Marin to Harry Wass, undated, Marin Family Papers, Section I, Part II, Group II, Folder 1.

same traits that he felt that "real" Mainers possessed. Indeed, although he often expressed feelings of kinship with his Cape Split neighbors, and felt that he could talk with them as "one critter to another", he seems to have never felt himself capable of fully embodying "the spirit of the cape" in the way that Susie Thompson did.[139] Instead, a mystical connection linked native Mainers like the Thompsons and Wasses to the fundamental essence of the state, its natural environment, and its traditional lifeways in a way that, try as he might, Marin could never fully imitate.

On one hand, paintings like *Young Man of the Sea* or *The Spirit of the Cape* evince understandings of Maine as a place that are grounded in racial and ethnic stereotypes in a much more direct way than are most of the pictures Marin produced there. However, virtually all of his works from the state, from the personally aspirational *Lobster Boat* (Figure 2.1), to observations of small town and nautical life like *Fishing Smack* or *Three Houses, Barn and Chicken Coop* (Figures 2.6 and 2.10) to, even, pure land- and seascapes such as *Little Tree, Maine* and *From Deer Isle, Maine No. 1* (Figures 2.6 and 2.30), share a connection to Marin's personal quest to better understand and celebrate the affinity between Mainers and the state's natural environment and to try to capture some of that connection for himself. As he painted his intuitive interpretation of a small pine tree at the edge of a forest in *Rock and Scrub Pine* in 1916, he was articulating his own burgeoning connection to that natural world. When he painted Susie Thompson decades later, he celebrated both his friendship with her and his decades of study, emulation, and exaltation of the traditional folkways and the link with the Maine coast and sea that she and her kin represented. Even when not directly featuring "native" bodies, Marin's Maine pictures are proof of his personal investment in understandings of Maine that were

[139] "Critter" quote from John Marin to Roy Wass, undated, Marin Family Papers, Section I, Part II, Group II, Folder 1.

fundamentally rooted in racialized conceptions of its identity. Though this element of his work was in several ways the product of the artistic philosophy that he shared with Stieglitz and others who were a part of their cadre, it was also the outcome of the unique relationship that Marin tried to forge with Maine and the unique semi-exotic appeal of its people to cosmopolitan Americans in the early-to-mid twentieth century.

These conceptions of the state and its "native folk" idealized the unimpeachable whiteness of Maine's citizens, their predominantly Northern and Western European ancestry, and their supposed natural, spiritual, and timeless connection to the land and sea, all of which helped shape understandings of the state elsewhere in the country. By representing such ideas about Maine, Marin's pictures, though they did so differently than other "antimodernist" representations of the state, nonetheless "naturalized conservative assumptions" not just about race and ethnicity, but also "about class, gender and sexuality, …and local identity" much as countless earlier images, from tourist postcards to Winslow Homer's paintings, had.[140] At the same time, the writings of the critics and historians who appreciated that work through nationalist lenses attest to the power of New England's racialized regional identity to synecdochally stand in for the nation's as a whole, and the power of Marin's paintings to inspire such interpretations. Given Marin's substantial profile within canons of American modernism as they have played out in museums, galleries, magazines, and textbooks over the last century, one can imagine these messages having reached countless visitors and readers, and ultimately, in concert with countless other inaccurate and reductive representations of the place produced or coopted by the state's tourism industry, contributing to an impression of Maine and its people that remains rooted in stereotype. In other words, Marin's pictures not only revealed the influence of the artist's belief in stereotypical, frequently racialized ideas about the character of

[140] McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, 100.

Maine as a state and Mainers as people, but also played a role in perpetuating those stereotypes, which still play an important role in the ways in which many people "make" whiteness and national identity in connection to New England's regional character and colonial history today.

Although the evidence of Marin's pictures and writings suggest that his perspectives on Maine evolved over the course of the nearly four decades he spent visiting its coast, during which time his relationship to the state and its people grew closer, the role of tourism in Maine's economy and the life of its native residents changed, and understandings of New Englander and American identity shifted, his work continued to tie together stereotypical ideas about folk cultures with notions of the American "soil" and national identity and avant-garde modes of visual representation via his uniquely gestural and expressive style, a combination that gave his work unusually widespread and longstanding appeal among his era's cultural interpreters. At the same time, his paintings also played into stereotypical ideas about what Maine and New England were and how their histories and the character of the people who lived there connected to American national identity, past and present, as they reached large audiences eager to consume his work because of its visual appeal, its role within modernist art history, and its evocation of a pleasant regional ideal/stereotype. If Maine was, in the eyes of Marin and many of the chroniclers of his work, his "spiritual home", it was also a place whose identity he understood, represented, and conveyed to audiences in part through a racial and ethnic lens. If Maine, eventually, came to be perceived as a critical component of Marin's soul, it was because it had gotten "into his blood".

CHAPTER III

"Hogan-Minded": Race and Place in Georgia O'Keeffe's Southwest

Something of the aboriginal Indian soul… seems to have descended on O'Keeffe.

- Herbert Seligmann, undated typescript[1]

Much like Marin, Georgia O'Keeffe travelled to parts unknown in search of personal and artistic inspiration, and eventually settled in an exotic American region that captured her imagination. What Maine became to Marin, New Mexico eventually, in its own fashion, became to O'Keeffe, as her initial visits to the state on a 1916 roadtrip and as a guest of Mabel Dodge Luhan in 1929 led to lengthier stays nearly every year until she moved there permanently in 1949.[2] Though O'Keeffe is also known for her work elsewhere, including in New York City, north Texas, and at the Stieglitz compound on Lake George, like Marin and Maine her evocative representations of and supposed mystical connection with New Mexico led her to eventually becoming famously tied to the place, and a symbol not just of the Taos and Abiquiu communities that she inhabited or of the state of New Mexico, but of the Southwest as a whole.[3]

Like the regionalist pictures produced by other Circle artists, O'Keeffe's New Mexican

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[1] Herbert J. Seligmann, quoted in Charles Eldredge, *Georgia O'Keeffe: American and Modern* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 180. Eldredge cites the source as: Herbert J. Seligmann, "Georgia O'Keeffe," undated typescript (Yale). Seligmann, O'Keeffe's peer and a close affiliate of the Circle, most likely made this comment in 1929 in the wake of O'Keeffe's visit to New Mexico or sometime in the next few years, when her engagement with Indigenous themes was relatively new.

[2] A useful timeline of O'Keeffe's life and career is included in Barbara Buhler Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 2 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 1142-47.

[3] As art historian Jack Cowart wrote, O'Keeffe's "truest, most consistent visual sources were in the American Southwest. These sources refreshed her physically, mentally, artistically… No artist has seen and painted like O'Keeffe, whose spiritual communion with her subject was of a special quality, unparalleled, and irreducible." Jack Cowart, "Art and Artist", in Jack Cowart and Juan Hamilton, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters* (New York and Boston: Graphic Society and Little Brown, and Company, 1987), 5.

paintings have only recently begun to be analyzed through the lens of their perspectives on the racial and ethnic issues of their time and place. Instead, they have typically been interpreted through the lenses of modernist abstractionism, mystical spirituality, and regionalist and nationalist feeling without regard for the influence of the racial ideologies percolating within bohemian-modernist Manhattan or Anglo-New Mexico or deeply informing those other modernist, spiritual, regional, and national contexts.[4] According to a 2012 publication, "very little has been known or written about her involvement with Native-American and Hispanic art and culture. It is popularly assumed that she had none."[5] However, as some scholars have begun to suggest, her pictures and writings demonstrate a fascination with Indigenous and Hispanic cultures.[6] Whether picturing sites of spiritual significance, like Taos Pueblo or the Pedernal mesa that overlooks Abiquiu, or objects produced by those communities for tourists or internal use, from Virgin Mary sculptures to Hopi "kachina dolls", O'Keeffe displayed a persistent interest in picturing New Mexico's non-white cultures through an exotic and romantic lens.

On one hand, analyzing O'Keeffe's representations of New Mexico in this way is merited because O'Keeffe, like most of her white peers in interwar New Mexico (and much like Marin in Maine during the same period), saw the whole region through a racialized perspective. This was in large part because her experience of the region was frequently mediated through the lenses of both of a bourgeois tourism industry that relied upon the exotification of its non-white denizens and a coterie of modernist creatives that viewed their group as separate and superior to the short-term tourists but nonetheless shared many predilections with them. Anthropologist Sylvia

[4] Note that in New Mexico, Euro-Americans who are not of Spanish or Hispanic descent have been referred to as "Anglos" for centuries. Of course, not everyone within the "Anglo" community is actually of English descent.
[5] I would characterize this as an overstatement, but it is still telling that an O'Keeffe Museum catalogue stated it only a decade ago. Robert A. Kret, "Director's Foreword", in Barbara Buhler Lynes and Carolyn Kastner, eds., *Georgia O'Keeffe in New Mexico: Architecture, Katsinam, and the Land* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2012), 7.
[6] O'Keeffe first painted *Taos Pueblo* in 1929, but then reworked it a few years later. See Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, 419.

Rodriguez has written that, "The tourist gaze in northern New Mexico has… simultaneously projected and fed upon a romantic mix of arid landscape, adobe architecture, and ethnic symbolism."[7] The same might be said of O'Keeffe's work, which repeatedly engaged with each of those themes. However, it would be a mistake to assume that O'Keeffe's pictures of New Mexico were just another iteration of what other modernists or traditionalists like the Taos Society artists (discussed below) had done in New Mexico, or what Marin was doing in Maine. For one thing, her New Mexican work differs from Stieglitz Circle regionalist projects completed elsewhere because of the unique geography and racial and cultural environment of northern New Mexico. At the same time, her pictures' invocation of Indigenous and Hispanic cultures stands out from others' because her style and approach were uniquely potent in their mystical and romantic appeal, even as her perspectives on those cultures often showed the influence of interlocutors from Stieglitz to Mabel Luhan to the forces of the region's tourism industry.

The goal of this chapter is to untangle this web of influences. In so doing, it asserts a newly comprehensive, detailed, and critical understanding of O'Keeffe's engagement with the Indigenous and Hispanic people, places, and things that she encountered in the Southwest and explains how that perspective affected her artmaking, particularly during the period between her 1929 visit to New Mexico and her permanent move there in 1949. Perhaps more so than any of the other artists in the Stieglitz Circle, or indeed any other modern American artist, full stop, understanding O'Keeffe's art demands parsing through and undermining the layers of mystification that have accumulated around her persona over the last century. Better situating her life and work in the Southwest within the contexts of the perspectives on race, ethnicity, region, and nation popular within both the New York avant-garde and elite Anglo-New Mexican society

[7] Sylvia Rodriguez, "The Tourist Gaze, Gentrification, and the Commodification of Subjectivity in Taos", in Richard Francaviglia and David Narrett, eds., *Essays on the Changing Images of the Southwest* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1994), 105.

can help us to resurrect her life and work from the realm of mythology and come closer to seeing that work as the product of a particular set of socio-historical circumstances rather than some timeless regional, national, or feminist ideal.

Specifically, I would like to describe two problems with the historiography of O'Keeffe's New Mexican work and its relationship to Native and Hispanic cultures. Though the influence of tourist contexts and, relatedly, issues of race and identity on O'Keeffe's early New Mexican work has been recognized by a handful of scholars, including Wanda Corn, Lauren Kroiz, and Sascha Scott, I contend that these accounts have undervalued the impact of period Anglo-New Mexican (tourist and modernist) racial thinking on O'Keeffe's early work in New Mexico. This oversight has occurred because these scholars have either a) focused on particular pictures without regard for the larger arcs of O'Keeffe's career and developing relationship with the state and its tourist and Anglo-modernist communities (Kroiz, Scott) or b) dismissed these early pictures as the products of an immature period that served as a necessary prelude to her more mature later landscape and still-life practice (Corn).[8] At the same time, I also intend to present evidence that will undermine the commonly held notion, also notably advanced by Corn, that the paintings O'Keeffe produced in New Mexico after this initial, more baldly touristic period evinced a unique sense of place that had little to do with contemporary racial attitudes. Instead, I use analysis of O'Keeffe pictures and writings and their connections to period social and cultural contexts in New Mexico to highlight her continued interest in representing Native American-related sites and things beyond the early 1930s, including new readings of her "kachina" paintings and landscape work, before considering the ongoing impact of her romanticization of the region's Native and Hispanic peoples.

[8] The publications to which I refer here include: Corn, *Great American Thing*, 239-91, Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 173-86, and Scott, *A Strange Mixture*, 181-92.

The scholar who has most comprehensively approached the issue of the O'Keeffe's relationship with New Mexico's Indigenous and Hispanic cultures is perhaps Patricia Marroquin Norby, whose dissertation discusses O'Keeffe's relationship with the denizens of Abiquiu. Though Norby's work fruitfully links O'Keeffe's life in New Mexico to issues of whiteness, appropriation, and colonialism, she focuses more on O'Keeffe's personal relationships with Abiqueños than the connections between her art and contemporaneous race-related social and cultural contexts.[9] My project carries this critique further, situating O'Keeffe's New Mexican work within the contexts of the Euro-American social and intellectual environments that most heavily influenced it and offering new interpretations of that work as it developed alongside O'Keeffe's evolving understanding of the region.

O'Keeffe in New Mexico: Race, Exoticism, and the Tourist Spectacle

O'Keeffe arrived in New Mexico in late April, 1929 as a mature artist who had been working with Stieglitz for more than a decade. Under his promotion, she had grown famous for her close-up flower paintings and New York cityscapes, receiving significant praise from pro-modernist critics beginning in the early 1920s.[10] By the spring of 1929 she was in search of personal and creative independence from Stieglitz' Manhattan-Lake George orbit and, with the encouragement of a number of friends who had spoken glowingly of the place, she set out for northern New Mexico alongside her close friend and fellow artist, Rebecca Strand.

Almost the first thing that the pair did, the day after their arrival, was attend the annual corn dance at nearby San Felipe Pueblo. While there they ran into Mabel Luhan, who was attending the dance with her husband, Taos Puebloan Antonio "Tony" Luhan, and the artist

[9] Patricia Marroquin Norby, "Visual Violence in the Land of Enchantment" (PhD. diss., University of Minnesota, 2013), 85-127.
[10] For more on the history of critical reception of O'Keeffe's work in the 1910s and '20s, see Barbara Buhler Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz, and the Critics*.

Dorothy Brett.[11] Mabel, who (along with Brett) knew O'Keeffe and Strand from the New York art scene, immediately invited them to attend another dance near Taos and to stay at her expansive Pueblo Revival ranch there, Los Gallos, where she had been supporting a literary and artist colony for several years. O'Keeffe stayed the entire summer, and while there not only advanced her work in a studio Luhan set aside for her, but also socialized with the community of artists, writers, and other Anglo intellectuals that gathered at the ranch and elsewhere throughout Taos.[12] She also made numerous trips in the company of these new friends and acquaintances to sites of aesthetic and cultural interest in the region, including a camping trip to Bear Lake on the Taos Indian Reservation, a visit to see the ancient Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde, a tour across Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah that incorporated visits to several "Navajo" (Diné) sites, and multiple trips to further Pueblo dances.[13]

It was while under Luhan's auspices, then, that O'Keeffe produced her first New Mexican paintings that summer.[14] Though many of these paintings represented flowers, trees, or landscape views, others directly demonstrated her interest in the region's distinctive cultures. Just that first summer she produced not only a painting of *Taos Pueblo* (Figure 3.1), but also a series of pictures of Taos' *Ranchos Church,* among other adobe church buildings (Figures 3.2-4).

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[11] Luhan had invited them to visit with her but was not aware that they were coming – they surprised her at the San Felipe dance, anticipating that she would be there. The episode is recounted in Roxana Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 325.

[12] Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 2, 1144; Sarah Greenough, ed., *My Faraway One: Selected Letters of Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz*, vol. 1 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 408, and Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [May 2, 1929], in Greenough, *My Faraway One*, 412. For more on Luhan's colony, see Lois Palken Rudnick, *Utopian Vistas: The Mabel Dodge Luhan House and the American Counterculture* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), esp. 28-62. In the summer of 1929 other guests at the ranch included Marin, photographer Ansel Adams, artist Miguel Covarrubias, and art museum curator Daniel Catton Rich. O'Keeffe also went on trips with others, including Charles Collier (son of the Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), filmmaker Henwar Rodakiewicz, and writer Spud Johnson. Several of the people O'Keeffe met that summer, including Adams and Rodakiewicz, became lifelong friends.

[13] Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 2, 1144.

[14] It is possible that O'Keeffe represented New Mexico during her brief 1917 visit, though this is uncertain, as her landscape sketches from the trip may also have been executed in Texas, Colorado, or New Mexico. See Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, 126.

A closely cropped still-life painting of a *Wooden Virgin* speaks more directly to her experience of and interest in the material cultures she encountered in the state (Figure 3.5). Perhaps more enigmatic are two paintings that convey impressions of her experiences at Indigenous dances that summer, *At the Rodeo* and *Grey Blue and Black – Pink Circle* (Figures 3.6 and 3.7), and her ominous pictures of crosses looming over the New Mexican landscape (Figures 3.8 and 3.9).

In various ways, this assemblage of pictures conveys not only what O'Keeffe did and saw that summer before she returned to New York in late August, but also the developing state of her artistic practice. By 1929, O'Keeffe was well-established in New York as an artist whose work blended figuration and abstraction, often through the simplification of visually complex places and things into a blend of angular and curved lines describing unmodeled planes of color. Her interest evidently seemed clearly split between the sites and things themselves, including their ineffable "essential character" as she perceived it, and their unique visual qualities, which she explored through distillation, simplification, cropping, and enlargement until, often, the things themselves were no longer easily recognizable.[15] O'Keeffe did not make "equivalents" in the way that Stieglitz or others did because her work was rarely as abstract as that of her peers. Instead, abstraction seeped into her work through her simplifying tendencies, and the differences between "original" and "equivalent" were often subtler. Objects and locations were divorced from contexts and stripped of complexities but held up as spiritually resonant and visually meaningful in reaction to O'Keeffe's emotional reaction to the overwhelming experience of the region's grandeur and the influence of Anglo-modernist interests, aspirations, and expectations.

O'Keeffe's early New Mexican paintings run the gamut from instantly recognizable and specific (i.e. Figures 3.1 and 3.2)) to scarcely figurative patchworks or whorls of color and line

[15] For a more comprehensive interpretation of O'Keeffe's abstraction, see Jonathan Stuhlman and Barbara Buhler Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Circling Around Abstraction* (Manchester, VT: Hudson Hills, 2007), or Barbara Haskell, ed., *Georgia O'Keeffe: Abstraction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

(i.e. Figures 3.6 and 3.7)). As these pictures suggest, for O'Keeffe in the late 1920s, part of the site's attraction was not only the prospect of encountering new visual stimuli that could lead her painting in new directions, but also the possibility of discovering people, places, and things whose inner character she could depict in a semiabstract modernist practice that combined visual selection, description, and distortion with expressionism. She wrote to Stieglitz soon after arriving in Taos in 1929, "This really isn't like anything you ever saw – and no one who tells about it gives any idea of it… It is no use to try to… tell you what the country feels like."[16]

Unsurprisingly, then, this set of pictures also conveys how she perceived New Mexico's fundamental essence, much as Marin's pictures conveyed his perceptions of the internal character of the Maine coast. O'Keeffe's understanding of Taos was no doubt molded to some extent by the environment at Los Gallos, where Luhan had been bringing artists and writers together for more than a decade. According to historian Lois Rudnick, under Luhan's aegis, these creatives helped give form to a mythic understanding of the Southwest as "a garden of Eden, whose climate, terrain, and indigenous peoples offered cultural renewal for the dying Anglo civilization". Though Luhan was absent for much of the summer of 1929, O'Keeffe's choices of subjects that year suggest that she felt a form of the primitivist interest in the region's exotic sights and cultures that was prevalent within the town's Anglo community, whose numbers that summer included Marin, the photographer Ansel Adams, the regionalist author Mary Austin, and Neith Boyce, the freethinking author and wife of writer Hutchins Hapgood.[17]

Alongside the Southwest's pleasant arid climate and natural beauty, and much like New England's ethnic tourism industry, a central component of what lured metropolitan elites to New Mexico was a tourist trade fixated on the cultural character of its Indigenous and Hispanic

[16] Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [May 2, 1929], 411-12.
[17] Lois Palken Rudnick, *Mabel Dodge Luhan: New Woman, New Worlds* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 144-45, 236-38.

communities. Meanwhile, the racial identities and influence of whites in the region were typically ignored in ways that reinforced whiteness' normativity and invisibility. As scholar Michael Riley suggests, though three distinct cultures coexist in the Southwest, the dominant "white" culture, and the tourist industry in particular, has long used simplistic understandings of the other two cultures in order to augment the region's appeal. He notes that the Euro-American "attention to cultural representation [in the Southwest] must be understood in relation to the substantial economic and political benefits that have been realized through the marketing of ethnic identities as a form of cultural capital and the concomitant carpeting of the cultural landscape with alluring but shallow images of ethnic identity."[18] Though the forces of the Southwestern tourist trade have changed in the decades since O'Keeffe's 1929 visit, the fundamental tactic of marketing facile and stereotypical understandings of the region's two major non-white cultural groups to whites near and far seems to have hardly changed at all. The result is a region "where marginal ethnic enclaves persist in subordinated relation to members of national society".[19]

O'Keeffe consumed the understandings of New Mexico promulgated by the region's tourist trade both before her 1929 trip, during her subsequent visits, and after becoming a permanent resident of the state, and in several respects both her paintings and the vision of her lifestyle there that she broadcast through her public and private self-presentation reiterated these normative conceptions of New Mexican life, which cast its non-white populations as exotic spectacles "in subordinated relation" to Anglos. The most famous and powerful entity in shaping understandings of New Mexico among wealthy members of American metropolitan high society in the early twentieth century was the Fred Harvey Company, a tourist outfit that eschewed

[18] Michael J. Riley, "Constituting the Southwest / Contesting the Southwest / Re-Inventing the Southwest", *Journal of the Southwest* 36, no. 3 (1994), 225-26.
[19] Rodriguez, "Art, Tourism, and Race Relations in Taos: Toward a Sociology of the Art Colony", 79.

opportunities to appeal to a growing middle-class tourist market, instead focusing on offering wealthy members of East Coast high society and their families opportunities to experience a distorted version of Native-American cultures through craft markets, ethnographic displays, and "Indian Detours" that brought the tourists directly to Indigenous ruins, pueblos, and picturesque natural sites. That O'Keeffe stayed in at least one Harvey hotel, travelled on the Harvey-partnered Santa Fe Railway's "The Chief" line, wrote letters on its chieftain-logoed stationery, and attended Indigenous dances, races, rodeos, and markets during her 1929 trip suggests that, despite being immediately welcomed into Taos' elite Anglo-modernist community, her early visits to New Mexico also included participation in mainstream ethnic tourism activities.[20] Indeed, the influence of tourist enterprises that foregrounded Indigenous cultures would have been inescapable for O'Keeffe as a visitor to Taos in 1929. It is telling that "Indian Detours" also included activities that seemingly had little to do with Native Americans, including visits to Anglo artist communities and scenic vistas: in a way, everything of interest to the tourist in New Mexico was connected to the central attraction, the state's picturesque and exotic Native-Americans. In the tourism experiences offered by Harvey, virtually every "sight to be seen" was Native-themed, from female tour guides who wore "Navajo" costumes to the train cars and hotel spaces in which guests were housed. Even when outside of the camera's frame, New Mexico's Native Americans remained its central attraction, and thus, though in a different way than the

[20] See Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [June 27, 1929], in Greenough, *My Faraway One*, 446. This stay took place at a hotel in Gallup, New Mexico after a day of driving through "the Navajo country" while O'Keeffe was on her way back from a road trip to Mesa Verde with Rebecca Strand and Tony Luhan (whom Strand and O'Keeffe paid to take them on the trip as their guide). For further evidence of O'Keeffe's participation in mainstream tourist activities during her early visits to New Mexico, see Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [April 30, 1929], in Greenough, *My Faraway One*, 411, in which she peruses "Indian pottery" at a Santa Fe market, Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [May 20, 1929], in Greenough, *My Faraway One*, 423, which recounts her visit to a Taos horse race which "the whole town" attended, or her many letters that reference her attendance at Indigenous dance ceremonies (covered later in this chapter). For an example of O'Keeffe using "The Chief" stationery, see Georgia O'Keeffe to Henwar Rodakiewicz, August, 1929, Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz Correspondence and related material, 1929-1947, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, MMC-3941, Box 1, Folder 1. Her use of the stationery was by no means restricted to her 1929 trip – see, for example, Georgia O'Keeffe to Henwar Rodakiewicz, May 1945, Library of Congress, Box 2, Folder 1.

New England tourist trade, the Southwestern tourist industry also represented a form of the "ethnic tourism" described by MacCannell and other theorists.[21] From the moment of her arrival in Santa Fe, O'Keeffe would have been hard-pressed to avoid this tourist industry. Indeed, she seems to have embraced it with enthusiasm, at least during her first visit.

As historian Carmella Padilla describes it, for the creative class, New Mexico was "a place to experiment with new ways of life and art that recognized Indigenous cultures as integral to America's cultural heritage, and thus brought new meaning to being American."[22] This understanding was predicated upon the supposed timelessness of the region's Indigenous cultures, which were offered up as "living ruins" from the past, an attitude that led guide companies to present modern-day, inhabited Pueblos and Ancient Puebloan sites like Mesa Verde to visitors with little differentiation.[23] Like the link between the "Yankee folk" and colonial-era New England, this tie to a supposedly purer and more distinctive version of "America" than that offered by the crowded and diverse modern metropolis was central to the Southwest's appeal for both the common short-term Anglo tourist and the world-weary modernist aesthete (over whom the region often held a more potent and long-lasting spell).

O'Keeffe's views of New Mexico were also shaped by experiences particular to the state's modernist social milieu. As Rudnick describes it, "American modernists desired to break

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[21] Many scholars of early twentieth-century Southwestern history and culture have written about the Harvey Company. I have principally drawn upon Dilworth's work on the company in this description. See Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest*, 77-124. Quote from 87. See also Marta Weigle and Barbara Babcock, eds., *The Great Southwest of the Fred Harvey Company and the Santa Fe Railway* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996); and Weigle, "From Desert to Disney World: The Santa Fe Railway and the Fred Harvey Company Display the Indian Southwest". For more on "Indian Detours" in particular see Marta Weigle, "'Insisted on authenticity': Harveycar Indian Detours, 1925-1931", in Weigle and Babcock, eds., *The Great Southwest of the Harvey Company and the Santa Fe Railway*, 47-59;. MacCannell, "Reconstructed Ethnicity: Tourism and Cultural Identity in Third World Communities"; van den Berghe and Keyes, "Introduction: Tourism and Re-Created Ethnicity".

[22] Carmella Padilla, "Whose History? Anglo Patronage and the Reframing of Hispano Art and Culture", in Lois P. Rudnick and MaLin Wilson-Powell, eds., *Mabel Dodge Luhan & Company: American Moderns and the West* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2016), 148.

[23] For a critical reinterpretation of this view of Native cultures as "timeless", see Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); and Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

down… the political, social, and moral disorder of Anglo civilization…" and "The physical and cultural landscapes of New Mexico seemed to have most of the requisite attributes… to create a modern American culture that would cure the malaise of modernity."[24] Part of the Southwest's appeal for all types of Anglo visitors was the notion that it could both provide a retreat from the excess, regularity, and banality of urban living and offer an opportunity to experience Native inhabitants who were, unlike the supposedly "savage" Plains Indians or the helpless urban poor, ostensibly "semicivilized" and self-sufficient people who "seemed to be ethnic others who were happy to remain outside modernity", and who had a special set of artistic talents, too.[25] Within the Taos community a greater familiarity with and augmented sense of affection and admiration for the local Indigenous and Hispanic communities led to a somewhat different form of exotification from that practiced and celebrated by the Harvey Company and the short-term tourist set (for whom Southwestern Native cultures were just one of many exotic spectacles waiting to be experienced).[26] For modernists (and especially those who returned to the state repeatedly or moved there permanently, like O'Keeffe) comfortable exoticism was often complicated by a more intense form of admiration for Native and Hispanic groups, or even a desire to emulate or assimilate into those groups in order to absorb the some of the beneficial aspects of their character. Perhaps, these modernist primitivists felt, deeper investment into the lifeways of New Mexico's non-white peoples could provide Euro-Americans with the spiritual

[24] Rudnick, *Utopian Vistas*, 14. According to scholar Stephanie Lewthwaite, "As they pursued alternatives lives, values, and sensibilities, Anglos found inspiration in the region's Native American and Spanish-speaking Hispano cultures" as they articulated a "romantic regionalism" in the Southwest." Stephanie Lewthwaite, *A Contested Art: Modernism and Mestizaje in New Mexico* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), 3, 6.
[25] Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest,* 6.
[26] This attitude was only encouraged by the fact that, as time passed, Anglo artists began to become a part of the attraction for transitory visitors, too. Meanwhile, scholars Wanda Corn and Carmella Padilla mention that, in the early to mid-twentieth century, Anglos in New Mexico tended to celebrate the region's Indigenous peoples and cultures far more often and with far more enthusiasm than they did its Hispanic citizens or history. I will address this issue at greater length later in this chapter when discussing O'Keeffe's pictorial allusions to Hispanic culture. See Wanda Corn, "Introduction: Mabel Dodge Luhan and Company", in Lois P. Rudnick and MaLin Wilson-Powell, eds., *Mabel Dodge Luhan & Company,* 19, and Carmella Padilla, "Whose History? Anglo Patronage and the Reframing of Hispano Art and Culture", 154.

and cultural direction that they so desperately needed.[27] As so often seems to be the case among avant-gardes from across the world, the cultural renewal and "authenticity" of experience that New Mexican modernists sought seemed to always rely on the appropriation and exploitation of non-white cultures.

In many cases, coastal elites who made regular visits to New Mexico or adopted it as their home, including several of O'Keeffe's close friends, assumed an attitude of superiority to or disdain for the attitudes and practices commonly seen in popular culture representations of the state, within the tourist sphere, or even among other adoptive New Mexicans (much as Marin complained about other tourists in Maine).[28] Some art critics also made complaints about the insubstantiality of tourist perceptions of Southwestern cultures, and viewed O'Keeffe's work as a welcome corrective to the problem.[29] O'Keeffe eventually developed such an attitude of superiority herself, one that led her to not only isolate herself from the state's tourism hubs but also to increasingly believe in the rarity of her own ability to understand the inner character of its lands and peoples. Indeed, the evolution of her representations of non-white cultures in New Mexico evinces the transition she made over the course of her many visits to the state from wide-

[27] Meanwhile, many Anglo women in the Southwest, from authors like Luhan and Austin to anthropologists like Elsie Clews Parsons, also fetishized Indigenous cultures through the lens of an "antimodern feminism" that exalted the social power that Indigenous women sometimes wielded. For an in-depth investigation of this phenomenon, see Margaret D. Jacobs, *Engendered Encounters: Feminism and Pueblo Cultures, 1879-1934* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

[28] For example, in 1930 Brett wrote O'Keeffe complaining of the overbearing presence of "Harvey busses" in Taos, and the next year a letter from her friend, the artist, arts administrator, and fellow adoptive New Mexican Vernon Russell Hunter, demonstrated his disdain for other artists' persistent exploitation of Native-American aesthetic principles in the name of nationalism (as well as a fascination with their supposed racial character): "I have become very interested in some Apache Indians of late, not as paintable objects but as racial persons… This stuff going about that we should use their designs because they… [are] the only indigenous American art sources gripes me to no end, for have we not already used everything which the Indian had and taken enough away as well?" Dorothy Brett to Georgia O'Keeffe, April 22, 1930, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 181, Folder 3024. Russell Vernon Hunter to Georgia O'Keeffe, December 29, 1931, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 196, Folder 3349.

[29] For example, in response to O'Keeffe's first show of New Mexican paintings, Henry McBride wrote that "So much is brought back to us of the frivolities of the tourist colony at Taos… that it is intellectually thrilling to find Miss O'Keeffe adopting so quickly the Spanish idea that where life manifests itself in greatest ebullience there too is death most formidable." Henry McBride, "O'Keeffe in Taos", *The New York Sun*, January 8, 1930, repub. in Rich, *The Flow of Art*, 261.

eyed tourist to experienced seasonal visitor to, eventually, sage and familiar longtime resident.

The region's Hispanic and Indigenous lifeways held a special appeal for many modernist "New Women" who travelled to the region seeking independence from traditional social roles. Mabel Luhan has been hailed as an influential exemplar of New Womanhood, and many of the other women with whom she crossed paths in New Mexico, including Austin, Cather, Brett, and O'Keeffe, also clearly embody the type - indeed, travelling to New Mexico in search of creative or personal inspiration often required intellectual and personal independence of the sort that defined New Womanhood, and O'Keeffe had adopted an independent and empowered attitude and style since in the 1910s.[30] Among these women, the egalitarian principles, open sexuality, and connection to the natural world of the region's Native peoples were celebrated as correctives to the inequality, unnaturalness, and sometime moral rectitude of modern Euro-American society.[31]

Mentioning O'Keeffe's likely exposure to two essays on Native-American art published in *The Dial* in 1920, art historian Jackson Rushing notes that the publications exhibit "widely held beliefs, including the… importance of 'primitive' Indian art because of its racial character, lack of artifice, natural authenticity, freedom of expression, anti-materialism, reductive essentialism, vital designs, and modern character".[32] The same might be said for countless other

[30] O'Keeffe's adoption of an attitude and style typical of New Womanhood beginning in the 1910s is discussed in Linda Grasso, *Equal Under the Sky: Georgia O'Keeffe & Twentieth-Century Feminism* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017), 33-71. Luhan is noted as a prominent and influential New Woman by Stansell in *American Moderns*, 106-7. Critically, Stansell also notes that by the interwar period the New Woman was past its apogee, and figures like Luhan had been stripped of much of their agency within modernist society (333-34). This may have played a role in certain of these women's decisions to head west. New Women did participate in tourism in the Southwest, but quite often their desire to more permanently solve the inadequacies of their lives out East led them to live in New Mexico for the long term, which led to less tourist involvement.

[31] Margaret D. Jacobs, "Making Savages of Us All: White Women, Pueblo Indians, and the Controversy Over Indian Dances in the 1920s", *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 17, no. 3 (1996), 187-89.

[32] W. Jackson Rushing III, "Pictures of Katsina Tithu: Georgia O'Keeffe and Southwest Modernism", in Lynes and Kastner, eds., *Georgia O'Keeffe in New Mexico*, 33. The essays Rushing refers to here are: Walter Pach, "The Art of the American Indian", *The Dial* 68 (January 1920), 57-65, and Walter Pach, "Notes on the Indian Water-Colours",

essays and exhibition reviews on Native-American arts and cultures published in modernist journals in the 1920s. Whereas the supposedly "primitive" or timeless character of Indigenous Southwesterners helped them function as curiosities for tourists, for modernists it offered a sense of profundity and truth in a shallow and corrupted world. Meanwhile, the exotic character and simplicity of Native designs also offered modernists a new path forward aesthetically. Among both short-term tourists and adoptive New Mexican modernists, differentiation between the racial and cultural attributes of New Mexico's non-white populations was virtually unheard of – whereas the modernist movement itself was predicated upon the presumption of independence of thought among the European and Euro-American cultural elite, those elites did not typically extend their differentiation between a group's race and its culture to non-white groups. This was true even in New Mexico, where Boasian scholars like the anthropologist Elsie Clews Parsons and the linguist Jaime de Angulo intermingled with the modernists in Taos and Santa Fe.[33]

O'Keeffe's own fascination with supposedly "primitive" groups and dissatisfaction with the conditions of modern urban living is suggested in a 1937 letter she wrote after a visit to New York's Museum of Natural History: "There is something so real – true – about some of the

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The Dial 68 (March 1920), 343-45. See also W. Jackson Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde: A History of Cultural Primitivism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), esp. 9-40.

[33] Boas and his followers did not undermine the concept of race so much as suggest that "racial" attributes should be attributed to social and environmental factors rather than heredity, and that no race was inherently superior to another. This did not preclude attitudes that saw certain groups as more or less "civilized" or "primitive" by circumstance rather than biological difference, or that viewed certain characteristics as inherent to racial groups. For American modernists, among whom the popularity of intuitive expression was such that advancements in anthropology were only haphazardly absorbed, the persistence of this last idea was key, as exaltation of the fundamental superiority of "primitive" societies was widespread, particularly in New Mexico. See Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America*, 418-24, for a useful summary of Boas' contributions to racial thought in the early twentieth century. Boas returned to these themes repeatedly in his work – see Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man*, and Franz Boas, *Race, Language, and Culture* (New York: MacMillan, 1940), among many other works. Boas extolled the virtues of "primitive" societies much as the modernists did – in his view, all "races" had contributed meaningfully to society, even if there remained substantial divisions between groups. Examples of Parsons' works in New Mexico include Elsie Clews Parsons, *The Social Organization of the Tewa of New Mexico* (Menasha, WI: American Anthropological Association, 1929); and Elsie Clews Parsons, *Pueblo Indian Religion*, 2 vol. (1939; repub., Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996). For more on Parsons' time in the Southwest, see Desley Deacon, *Elsie Clews Parsons: Inventing Modern Life* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997). For more on de Angulo's time in Taos, see Gui de Angelo, *Jaime in Taos: The Taos Papers of Jaime de Angulo* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1985).

primitive art… I feel so surely that… civilization destroys anything that might be big – real – in us".[34] In 1951, she wrote during a trip to Mexico City that, "things that were done before the Spaniards got here will outlast it all – our civilization doesn't seem to improve anything."[35] "Primitive" cultures were particularly attractive to O'Keeffe because she had already established herself as an artist whose commitment to reveling in the romantic character and attempting to convey the true spiritual essence of her subject matter was arguably unmatched even within the Stieglitz group, and had been manifested in her work in a variety of locales for over a decade.

Writes scholar Brenda Mitchell, "O'Keeffe was a modern romantic, emphasizing individual experience… [and] intensified emotional responses" in pictures that positioned her as a "clairvoyant artist representing the true essence of her subject".[36] For such an artist, the supposed heightened spirituality of New Mexico lent the state an appeal that few others could match. Writes art historian Sharyn Udall, in New Mexico, "Here were the crossroads of the chthonian and the cosmic… [T]he… aura of the Southwest… [continues] to lure and fascinate… as if, emanating from the sky, rocks, sun, and… earth, the ageless force compels but at the same time eludes interpretation."[37] New Mexico offered the opportunity to represent places and things that retained the mystery of the mystical. Communing with the state's supposedly primitive, authentic, and naturally connected Indigenous and Hispanic communities was key to the appeal.

Even before her 1929 trip, O'Keeffe would have been exposed to the perception of New Mexico as a timeless, mystical, and authentic place in a few ways. Firstly, like virtually all

[34] This "us" seems to be a reference to modern urbanites, with an implication, even, of a more exclusive "us" made of whites and/or elites who viewed the "primitive"/non-modern world from a distance. Georgia O'Keeffe to Henwar Rodakiewicz, March 1937, Library of Congress, Box 1, Folder 9.
[35] Georgia O'Keeffe to John Marin, March 2, 1951, Marin Family Papers, Section 1, Part 1, Group 1, Folder 16. It is worth noting that, among her many travels from the 1950s onward, O'Keeffe undertook several lengthy trips to Mexico and Spain, as well as a 1956 visit to Peru. Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 2, 1146-47.
[36] Brenda Mitchell, "'Music that Makes Holes in the Sky': Georgia O'Keeffe's Visionary Romanticism" (PhD. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1996), ii-iii.
[37] Sharyn Udall, "Modernist Painting in New Mexico 1913-1933" (PhD. diss, University of New Mexico, 1981), 15-16.

members of early twentieth-century East Coast society, she inevitably would have encountered representations of the state and its attractions through travel advertisements. Like the offerings that tourists encountered after their arrival, these materials frequently suggested that the state's Indigenous inhabitants' ways of life, histories, and material cultures were its foremost attraction (see Figure 3.10).[38] The Santa Fe Railway and the Harvey Company collaborated on promotional materials including books, postcards, pamphlets, and playing cards that presented Natives as both "good, peaceful, [and] domesticated" and "threatening, unassimilable, …frightening, or grotesque", a combined strategy that echoed descriptions of them in period cowboy fiction and helped them retain both the allure of the exotic and dangerous and the comfort of the familiar and subjugated.[39] In the hands of authors like Willa Cather, Mary Austin, and D.H. Lawrence, this narrative was partially preserved in the period's Regionalist fiction, too.[40]

However, both O'Keeffe's understanding of New Mexico and her representations of the

[38] For example, the 1929 tourist booklet *Roads to Cibola: What to See in New Mexico and How to Get There* features many photographs of Native Americans, with several showing dance scenes, as well as numerous images of Native-American buildings, including the structure at Taos Pueblo that O'Keeffe painted in 1929. *Roads to Cibola: What to See in New Mexico and How to Get There* (Santa Fe: New Mexico State Highway Commission, 1929). This publication is discussed in Marta Weigle, *Alluring New Mexico: Engineered Enchantment 1821-2001* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2010), 104-5.

[39] Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest*, 92, 98-99.

[40] For example, in Mary Austin's 1931 *Starry Adventure*, the protagonist, a young Anglo boy who moves to a ranch outside Santa Fe with his family, frequently finds himself enchanted by the exotic appeal of Native people and objects. See Mary Austin, *Starry Adventure* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1931), 14-15, 41-42. Meanwhile, Willa Cather's 1927 *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, which focuses on two Roman Catholic clergymen, presents a largely sympathetic picture of the state's Indigenous inhabitants even as it suggests their potential for violence. See Willa Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927; repub., New York: Modern Library, 1993), 157-58, 246-64. Kathryn Faber points out that both O'Keeffe and Cather stayed at Luhan's ranch and knew D.H. Lawrence in Taos, though their visits to the town did not overlap. See Kathryn Faber, "Willa Cather and Georgia O'Keeffe: Modernism and the Importance of Place in Color, Light, and Imagery" (D. litt. diss., Drew University, 2002), 6. It is unknown if O'Keeffe read any of Cather's work, though at the time of her death her library held two memoirs about Cather, one from 1963 and another from 1973. Abiquiu Book Room Inventory, O'Keeffe Research Center. D.H. Lawrence, whose writing O'Keeffe admired and whose wife Frieda became a close friend, wrote in the 1925 story "The Woman Who Rode Away" of a Luhan-like figure who "felt it was her destiny to wander into the secret haunts of these timeless, mysterious, marvellous Indians". D.H. Lawrence, "The Woman Who Rode Away", in *The Woman Who Rode Away* (1925; repub., Kingswood, Surrey, UK: Windmill, 1928), 51. Though Lawrence's story is set in Mexico, it was written in New Mexico and based on his perceptions of the place and his experiences there. O'Keeffe and Stieglitz' admiration of Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is noted in the Stieglitz –Lawrence correspondence, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 30, Folder 702. O'Keeffe also visited the Lawrences' New Mexico ranch in 1929. Tellingly, Austin, Cather, and Lawrence were all former guests at Los Gallos.

state were also shaped by her experiences in bohemian-modernist Manhattan. Until her 1949 move to Abiquiu, many of her pictures of New Mexican subjects were painted while she was in Manhattan or at Lake George, often with the help of props she brought back with her. More importantly, though she was already being recognized by museums outside of New York before 1929, and received even more national attention in the 1930s and '40s, her works were principally intended for a New York audience – the principal venue for her work was An American Place until Stieglitz' 1946 death, and thereafter the Downtown Gallery remained the main showcase for her new work until the late 1960s.[41] White urban viewers from outside the Southwest have remained its main audience over the last century, and its ongoing critical and commercial success is above all attributable to its appeal for that audience. Like so many images of the West before them, and despite the growth of a large middlebrow audience for them beginning not long after they were made, these were rural paintings made for East Coast elites.[42]

Of course, O'Keeffe's works were not only oriented towards elite urban audiences but also informed by the Manhattan milieu that she lived and worked within from the 1900s through the 1940s. O'Keeffe's art school mentor, Arthur Wesley Dow, had been incorporating Indigenous principles into designs since the 1890s, and interest in such principles intensified after she moved back to New York in 1918. Writes Rushing: "Numerous American artists, anthropologists, collectors, and writers were 'discovering' Native American art after World War I…[resulting in] pivotal exhibitions and publications… associated with avant-garde culture in

[41] For a detailed chronology of O'Keeffe's exhibitions over time, see Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 2, 1150-61.

[42] Relevant here is art historian Marcia Crosby's suggestion that "external interest in native communities would logically produce work that has more to do with the observers' own values". Marcia Crosby, "Construction of the Imaginary Indian", in Stan Douglas, ed., *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art* (Vancouver: Talon, 1991), 270.

New York."[43] In addition to regionalist novels and articles on Native-American culture in modernist journals, O'Keeffe would also have been exposed to romantic and idyllic notions of the Southwest in conversation with her numerous Euro-American friends from the Manhattan art world who had previously visited or lived there, a group that included Mabel Luhan, Dorothy Brett, Marsden Hartley, Paul Rosenfeld, and Paul and Rebecca Strand.[44] Her work therefore reiterated understandings of the region that had been instilled in her in interwar New York back to many of the same people who had encouraged her to develop them in the first place.[45]

Naturally, after her 1929 arrival, O'Keeffe's perspectives on New Mexico's Indigenous and Hispanic peoples were no longer shaped only by their representations in popular culture or the accounts of friends, but also by her own interactions with them, and especially her

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[43] Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde*, 41, Rushing, "Pictures of Katsina Tithu: Georgia O'Keeffe and Southwest Modernism", 33.

[44] Greenough, *My Faraway One*, 405. The Strands' 1926 visit is recounted in Suzan Campbell, "In the Shadow of the Sun: The Life and Art of Rebecca Salsbury James" (PhD. diss., University of New Mexico, 2002), 160-70. Beck Strand would also have had her perspective on the West significantly shaped by her upbringing – her father, Nate Salsbury, was the manager of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. In many cases, these visitors to the region emphasized the central role it could play in conceptions of American national identity, especially in light of the unique character and supposed ancientness and authenticity of its Native populations. Esther Lanigan Stineman attributes this nationalistic attitude to Austin, Luhan, and O'Keeffe in particular in *Mary Austin: The Song of the Maverick* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 155. Though Native-Americans from throughout the United States had played an important role in conceptions of American identity throughout the nation's history, interest in Native-American art, in particular, peaked in the wake of World War I "as part of a broad effort to define American national consciousness, character, and aesthetics." Rushing, "Pictures of Katsina Tithu: Georgia O'Keeffe and Southwest Modernism", 33. Philip Deloria notes the centrality of Native-Americans to American national identity as it is interpreted by D.H. Lawrence in his book *Studies in Classic American Literature* (New York: Seltzer, 1923) in *Playing Indian* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 3-4.

[45] Though these people did not all have exactly the same relationship with New Mexico or share a singular view of the place and its inhabitants, they did all share a proclivity for exoticizing and romanticizing its non-white peoples and unfamiliar scenery. Hartley expressed his views in an essay from the 1920s that foregrounded the state's Indigenous populace as the central element of its identity: "I miss the call of the coyote among the sage brush in the prairies of New Mexico, the soft voices of the American Indians and the Spanish songs of the Mexicans… I miss the great folk dances of the American Indians… which have to do with… their ancient religious rites." Marsden Hartley, "Impressions of Provence from an American's Point of View", in Scott, *On Art*, 144. Hartley even made his fascination with Southwestern Native Americans clear to O'Keeffe herself in a dramatic and somewhat bizarre 1920 letter: "I have changed the country of my citizenship from the east to the west. The redman is going down into the west. I am on my way outward. I will go with him." Marsden Hartley to Georgia O'Keeffe, January 14, 1920, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 194, Folder 3318. Brett, whose primitivist paintings of Southwestern Native Americans became her trademark, had also written O'Keeffe of her experiences in New Mexico several times in the fall of 1928, commenting enthusiastically on her interactions with its Native peoples and exhorting O'Keeffe to join her in Taos: "I would so much like to see your paintings + talk to you of the Wild and Woolly West – [and] Red Indians". Dorothy Brett to Georgia O'Keeffe, n.d., 1928, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 181, Folder 3021. See also Dorothy Brett to Georgia O'Keeffe, November 27, 1928, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 181, Folder 3021.

relationship with Tony Luhan. In 1931 she described Luhan to Hunter as intuitively attuned to the natural world, an "indian" "who is one of the most remarkable people I have ever known… wonderful to me like a mountain is wonderful – or the sky is wonderful… such an uncanny sense of life and human ways – such a child and such a man at the same time".[46] Still, despite the amazement she felt at his unfamiliar ways, she and Tony did share a substantive and affectionate friendship, whose seriousness even prompted jealousy from Mabel Luhan.[47] O'Keeffe described Tony in 1929 as "really a remarkable person… very simple – and honest – and real – and kind… [He has] a rich kind of simple knowledge of life."[48] In another letter from the same year: "Tony just being what he is – seems to pull out of me the best things that are in me".[49] Though the pair became friends soon after her arrival in 1929, substantive interactions with other non-white New Mexicans were limited for O'Keeffe, even after her 1949 move to the predominantly Hispano village of Abiquiu but especially during her earliest trips, wherein she was often insulated by northern New Mexico's Anglo community.[50] On these early visits she did meet other Puebloans through Tony or other friends, but seemed to principally view them as exotic and foreign.

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[46] Georgia O'Keeffe to Vernon Russell Hunter, January 1932, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 196, Folder 3349. In response, Hunter admired that "Indians" are "in rapport with the elemental forces in nature from which… they have sprung – This… seems childish because… we believe we have been given a mind and faculties… above all other animals… and… other races." Vernon Russell Hunter to Georgia O'Keeffe, January 9, 1932, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 196, Folder 3349. In other letters to O'Keeffe, Hunter comments extensively on Indigenous and Hispanic peoples, including comments on the "racial aptitude" and "native impulse" of certain groups.

[47] See Rudnick, *Mabel Dodge Luhan: New Woman, New Worlds*, 238-40.

[48] Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [June 13, 1929], in Greenough, *My Faraway One*, 433.

[49] Georgia O'Keeffe to Mabel Dodge Luhan, July 1, [1929], Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 27, Folder 781.

[50] "Hispano" is a term that is used to describe the ethnic background of people of Iberian, Indigenous, and mixed-ethnic descent whose ancestors began living in New Mexico before the mid-nineteenth century. For most of this chapter I have used the more inclusive term "Hispanic" to avoid confusion between Hispano and non-Hispano Hispanic groups, though in a few instances (as here) I have used more specific terms. I will also note that O'Keeffe's level of interaction with non-white peoples in New Mexico was in some ways unique – most long-term Anglo-modernist denizens, like Mabel Luhan or Mary Wheelwright, lived somewhere in or near Taos or Santa Fe rather than in a remote, predominantly Hispanic town, and they also, in certain instances, became far more involved in activities related to Native and Hispanic life and culture, including collecting, administrative, and advocacy efforts. However, despite the fact that some of O'Keeffe's peers interacted more substantively with local non-white populations, they tended to share her practice of viewing the members of these groups as part of a fascinating world apart rather than as peers (even in the case of Mabel Luhan's relationship with her husband Tony).

She eventually developed a few acquaintances among the Hispanic elite, including the curio dealer John Candelario, but most of her interactions with people of Indigenous and Hispanic descent were colored by class as well as racial divisions. After purchasing her property in Abiquiu in the mid-1940s she met many townspeople, often after hiring them as construction or domestic workers, but frequently took on a condescending and paternalistic attitude towards them and the denizens of other nearby Hispanic and Indigenous settlements, and in many cases she and sometime friend and assistant Maria Chabot were befuddled by what she considered to be their strange and backward ways.[51] According to O'Keeffe's friend Mary Adams, she once said of the locals, "I don't know anything about these people."[52] Though she supported some young Abiqueños financially and gave funding for new school buildings, she also sometimes meddled in townspeople's affairs, as when she forced a pregnant worker to marry the father of her child or repeatedly interfered in the troubled life of one of the young men she supported.[53]

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[51] For more on the construction workers O'Keeffe employed, the best source may be her correspondence with Chabot. For more on O'Keeffe and domestic workers, the best source may be her correspondence with Chabot or with her sister, Anita Young – see Anita O'Keeffe Young Papers, Georgia O'Keeffe Research Center (though references to these workers litter her letters to many friends). Chabot notably suggested in a 1942 letter that several of the Indigenous workers whom they employed would "love to be a slave" if O'Keeffe were their "patrona" (though we can note that O'Keeffe sometimes referred to servants of all races as "slaves"). See Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, April 9, 1943, in Barbara Buhler Lynes and Ann Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe: Correspondence, 1941-1949* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 101. In other instances O'Keeffe referred to adult workers as "girls". See Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, June 7, 1947, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 421. In other letters Chabot revealed suspicions that the denizens of Abiquiu would envy and steal from O'Keeffe – see Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, March 18, 1946, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 335. O'Keeffe and Chabot were puzzled by the Abiquiu townspeople's traditions on many occasions – for example, Norby notes that Chabot and O'Keeffe found the concept of collective ownership of land through the land grant system odd when it became an issue during reconstruction of O'Keeffe's Abiquiu house. Norby, "Visual Violence in the Land of Enchantment", 108.

[52] Mary E. Adams, "The Underside of the Iris: Conversations with Georgia O'Keeffe", in Christopher Merrill and Ellen Bradbury, eds., *From the Faraway Nearby: Georgia O'Keeffe as Icon* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1992), 220.

[53] Support for individuals frequently took the form of tuition payments. The struggles with alcoholism and the law of O'Keeffe's most significant protégé, Jackie Suazo, distressed her – see Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 215, Folder 3180. For mention of O'Keeffe's donation of funds for school buildings, see: Georgia O'Keeffe to Robert F. Sanchez, September 14, 1981, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 212, Folder 3738; and Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 190, Folder 3221. For the pregnant worker episode, see Georgia O'Keeffe to Maria Chabot, June 4, 1941, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 9; and Georgia O'Keeffe to Maria Chabot, June 12, 1941, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 10 (see also n22 on p. 10). Patricia Norby points out that O'Keeffe was a somewhat unwelcome interloper in Abiquiu from the start, as her purchase of the property

There is also some evidence that O'Keeffe made an effort to educate herself about New Mexican history and culture in the 1930s and '40s. In 1933 she read *Rio Grande* by Harvey Fergusson, a romantic history of New Mexico's Rio Grande Valley, and her library papers include a 1941 ad for a book on the Navajo creation myth written by Indigenous artist Hasteen Klah.[54] Learning opportunities also existed in New York, though whether O'Keeffe attended exhibitions like Museum of Modern Art's 1941 *Indian Art of the United States* is unknown.[55] The state of O'Keeffe's library at her death in 1986 shows that she at some point gathered a significant collection of reading materials related to Native art, though it is unclear when most of them were acquired.[56] However, it is also unclear just how much of this information O'Keeffe internalized. In a 1974 letter, O'Keeffe's friend Sybil Browne complained to Chabot about O'Keeffe's "ability to underrate or be oblivious to the quality of work… by Indian young people" when she did not have guidance from Chabot or others in the know.[57] Her efforts to learn about Indigenous cultures may well have been similar to her efforts to learn Spanish – something she intended to do and worked on intermittently but never really committed to.[58]

The course of O'Keeffe's relationship with the state may have been idiosyncratic given

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from the local Catholic Archdiocese displeased townspeople who had been using the land to raise animals and planned for a school building to be built there. Norby also notes O'Keeffe's sponsorship of things like a youth baseball team, trips to the movies for children, and a modern plumbing system for the village (though some resisted and resented this modernization), her stipulation in a donation for school buildings that they be built to her taste, and the prevailing attitude that O'Keeffe's financial contributions to the town were entirely altruistic rather than tactical and mutually beneficial. Norby, "Visual Violence in the Land of Enchantment", 106-7, 115-17, 126.

[54] See Georgia O'Keeffe to Rebecca Strand, August 1933, Rebecca Salsbury Strand James Papers, Box 1a, Folder 30. Interestingly, Fergusson was the brother of Erna Fergusson, who was the director of the Harvey Company's Indian Detour Service and an authority on Indigenous ceremonials. Note that the Klah book was "recorded" and published by Mary Wheelwright, the co-founder of a museum of Diné culture with Klah, and a prominent art collector and member of Taos' Anglo elite whom O'Keeffe knew well. Hasteen Klah, *Navajo Creation Myth: The Story of the Emergence* (Santa Fe: Navajo Museum of Ceremonial Art, 1942).

[55] O'Keeffe was in New York during the exhibition's run and she did own a copy of the catalogue at her death, as Rushing notes in "Pictures of Katsina Tithu: Georgia O'Keeffe and Southwest Modernism", 34.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Sybil Browne to Maria Chabot, March 26, 1974, Maria Chabot Papers, O'Keeffe Research Center, Box 33, Folder 22.

[58] For evidence of O'Keeffe trying to learn Spanish see Georgia O'Keeffe to Maria Chabot, March 18, 1942, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 79.

her decision to physically isolate herself from most of her modernist peers by living at Ghost Ranch, the former dude ranch that she had first visited in 1934 and purchased in 1940, and in Abiquiu, where she moved nine years later. However, the attitudes she exhibited towards the state's Indigenous and Hispanic peoples and cultures in paintings, writings, and actions from throughout her lengthy tenure there seem to have been heavily influenced by the variety of perspectives on the place and its peoples to which she was exposed in the 1920s and '30s, whether reading a modernist journal in Manhattan, relaxing at a Harvey Hotel, or sharing drinks at a Los Gallos dinner party. Though they were not all the same, these contexts shared a tendency to cast those peoples and cultures through an exotic lens, and in certain cases to revel in the timelessness and profundity that their primitive character supposedly lent them.

Scholars have debated just how much O'Keeffe knew about the Indigenous and Hispanic subjects that she featured in her paintings, and much of the discussion has revolved around her paintings of so-called "kachina dolls" (katsina tithu), the carved representations of the Pueblo spirit beings known as "kachinas" (katsinam).[59] Rushing foregrounds O'Keeffe's significant interest in "tribal and folk arts", which led her to save "museum bulletins on Navajo textiles and mythology, religious folk art of the Southwest, Pueblo silver, and prehistoric baskets" and eventually amass so many publications on Native-American art that her collection might "constitute the raw materials for a historiography of the subject in the twentieth century."[60] In response to O'Keeffe's depiction of a "fake" katsina tihu whose proportions and "iconography"

[59] I will use the term katsina (pl. katsinam) to refer to Pueblo spirit beings, and the term katsina tihu (pl. katsina tithu) to refer to the carved figures that represent those spirit beings. Though katsina is not a word of Hopi origin (it apparently comes from a different Puebloan language, Keresan), these terms more closely approximate the current Hopi terms than does that more common "kachina". "kachina", dictionary.com, https://www.dictionary.com/browse/kachina, accessed April 10, 2023.

[60] Rushing, "Pictures of Katsina Tithu: Georgia O'Keeffe and Southwest Modernism", 34. This collection notably included a 1938 anthropological study of Hopi katsinam, among many other publications on Southwestern Indigenous art. The study in question is: Edwin Earle and Edward A. Kennard, *Hopi Kachinas* (New York: J.J. Augustin, 1938).

are "all wrong" in her 1941 painting *A Man from the Desert*, Rushing says that "She knew far too much about Pueblo art not to have known that this… wasn't the real thing".[61] By contrast, Lynes points out that "O'Keeffe never explained how or why she became interested in" katsina figures. Citing many of the pictures' generic titles, she suggests that "she may not have been aware of their specific names, meaning, or function."[62]

Ultimately, more so than any approach towards a particular subject or topic, what O'Keeffe seemed to absorb from the tourist and modernist contexts that so heavily informed her experience of and interest in the Southwest was a confidence that her own views, her own perspective on the region, including all of the sites and things within it of significance to its Indigenous and Hispanic communities, was adequate, and her subjective interpretation could suffice in the place of learning about and articulating what such subjects meant to the groups whose exoticism seemed to lend them much of their appeal for O'Keeffe and other Anglos. When O'Keeffe foregrounded her own subjectivity as she approached these subjects, she not only suggested her connection to the Stieglitz Circle's broader project, but also revealed her complicity in far longer and broader settler practices in New Mexico that normalized wanton appropriation and exploitation of the region's communities of color. This attitude revealed itself time and again in her work there. Though she did show an intermittent interest in learning about the Southwestern cultures in which she seemed so interested, which led her to sometimes direct

[61] Rushing, "Pictures of Katsina Tithu: Georgia O'Keeffe and Southwest Modernism", 39. O'Keeffe's late-in-life interest in Pueblo cultures is also reinforced by the curiosity she demonstrated in a 1972 interview with scholar of Native-American art Leo Bushman in which she asked him about the adobe construction techniques used at Isleta Pueblo and the work of students at the Institute of American Indian Arts. See Interview with Georgia O'Keeffe by Leo N. Bushman, Georgia O'Keeffe Research Center. Combing through her papers at the O'Keeffe Research Center reveals postcards, exhibition pamphlets, and brochures advertising Native-American tourist sites, material culture, dances, and artworks, including postcards picturing katsina tithu and tourist brochures advertising Indigenous dances. See Papers from the Ghost Ranch Library, Box 1, Folder 46, Abiquiu Bookroom Archives, Folders 08:04-12 and 09:03-86.rc, Georgia O'Keeffe Papers (unprocessed), Travel Box 1, "Mexico Maps – 1951, Mexico Brochures" Folder, and O'Keeffe Papers, O'Keeffe Subject Files (all from O'Keeffe Research Center).

[62] Barbara Buhler Lynes, "Introduction", in Lynes and Kastner, eds., *Georgia O'Keeffe in New Mexico*, 9.

her collector's instinct towards publications on Native and Hispanic arts, whatever she did learn from these experiences does not seem to have affected her picture-making nearly as much as the romantic view of the region and its peoples that she shared with so many other of its Anglo settler inhabitants.

"A Romantic Backdrop for Anglo-American Newcomers": O'Keeffe Paints Adobe

Though they are related by the shared social, intellectual, personal, and artistic contexts that surround O'Keeffe's initial visits to New Mexico in 1929, 1930, and 1931, the various subjects that O'Keeffe painted during these early trips to the state evince the influence of those contexts in diverse ways. Some works, like her pictures of adobe churches or her painting of *Taos Pueblo* (Figures 3.1-4), represent buildings that were among the region's most popular tourist sites and were therefore natural points of interest for new artists seeking to understand or convey the state's character. The north-side structure at Taos Pueblo, for example, was featured with frequency and prominence in the art and tourist materials of the period (see Figures 3.10 and 3.11).[63] Indeed, according to scholar Sylvia Rodriguez, the building has long been "one of the most photographed and painted architectural structures in North America", in large part because of its romanticization by Taos Colony artists.[64] Meanwhile, the San Francisco de Asís Church, which O'Keeffe pictured ten times in 1929 and 1930, was, though less celebrated than the Pueblo, nonetheless a site that virtually always merited mention in tourist guidebooks.[65]

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[63] *Roads to Cibola*, 19. In the version of the booklet featured in Weigle's book, another picture of the structure is included on the back page. See Weigle, *Alluring New Mexico*, 105. *Indian-detours – Most distinctive motor cruise service in the world* (Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1930), 23, accessed via University of Arizona Library, http://uair.library.arizona.edu/system/files/usain/download/azu_c9791pam2_w.pdf (accessed January 10, 2020). In at least one other version of the Harvey Indian Detour pamphlet a photograph of Taos Pueblo was used as the cover image.
[64] Sylvia Rodriguez, *The Matachines Dance: A Ritual Dance of the Indian Pueblos and Mexicano/Hispano Communities* (Santa Fe: Sunstone, 2009), 17.
[65] See Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, 396-98, 422-25 for O'Keeffe's paintings of the site. For examples of its inclusion in tourist guidebooks, see *Roads to Cibola*, 19, Charles Francis Saunders, *Finding the Worth While in the Southwest* (1918; reis., New York: McBride, 1937), 27, *The WPA Guide to 1930s New Mexico*

Both O'Keeffe's pictures and her written comments about them emphasize her interest in their formal qualities. For example, when she wrote to Stieglitz about her *Ranchos Church* paintings, she took care to stress her interest in its unusual shape and color: "I am painting the back of an old church – it is the queerest shape you ever saw and has no windows – sand color against a blue sky".[66] This interest is clearly manifested in the spare simplicity of certain of these pictures, most of which show little more than brown brick, blue sky, and white cloud as they picture the building from its unostentatious rear – a perspective that was echoed by several other modernists in late '20s and '30s depictions of the church.[67] Meanwhile, her painting of the

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(1940; repub., Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 287-88, or *Indian-detours – Most distinctive motor cruise service in the world*, 21-22. This last example includes a large photograph of the church. The WPA guide was originally attributed to "the Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of New Mexico" and published as *New Mexico: A Guide to the Colorful State*. For more on this building, see Van Dorn Hooker and Corina Santistevan, *Centuries of Hands: An Architectural History of St. Francis of Assisi Church* (Santa Fe: Sunstone, 1996). That same summer of 1929, Mary Austin and Ansel Adams collaborated on a book, *Taos Pueblo*, that featured the two structures alongside dramatic images of the Pueblo's inhabitants and an essay by Austin that cast the subjects in typically romantic and mystical terms (and does relatively little to suggest the differing location or origins of the mission church). Ansel Adams and Mary Austin, *Taos Pueblo* (1930; repub., Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1977). See also Daniel Worden, "Landscape Culture: Ansel Adams and Mary Austin's *Taos Pueblo*", *Criticism* 55, no. 1 (2013), 69-94; and Anne Hammond, "Ansel Adams and Mary Austin: Taos Pueblo (1930)", *History of Photography* 23, no. 4 (1999), 383-90. Both traditional Pueblo buildings like those maintained at Taos Pueblo and Spanish Colonial ones like the Ranchos de Taos structure became so crucial to understandings of the region's identity that a distorted version of them became its dominant modern building style, the Pueblo Revival, which had been sparked in the region in the early twentieth century as part of an international movement towards nationally and regionally distinctive romantic and picturesque architectural styles. Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 111-14. Buildings in the style, such as the famous La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe, combined the Pueblo's characteristic terraced construction with Spanish features like bell towers, corbels, and projecting wooden beams ("vigas"). Often, such structures incorporated false features, include faux adobe made with stucco over concrete and purely ornamental vigas. Inside, Mexican tiles, Pueblo pottery, Diné blankets, New Mexico Mission style furniture, and low wooden ceilings completed the look. Buildings like La Fonda offered another aspect to the experience that travel companies could offer to tourists who were interested in the illusion of living a few days and nights in a Puebloan's shoes (with the Spanish influence on the development of this style typically largely ignored) and added another layer of meaning and interest to tourists' subsequent interactions with both Spanish Colonial and Pueblo buildings. Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*, 100-1, 138-40. For more on Southwestern tourism and the appropriation of Native building styles, see Mathilda McQuaid with Karen Bartlett, "Building an Image of the Southwest: Mary Colter, Fred Harvey Company Architect", in Weigle and Babcock, eds., *The Great Southwest of the Harvey Company and the Santa Fe Railway*, 24-35.

[66] Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [May 29, 1929], in Greenough, *My Faraway One*, 428.

[67] The church was also pictured from behind by Ansel Adams in several late 1920s and early 1930s photographs, John Marin in a 1930 watercolor, photographer Laura Gilpin in a 1930 photograph, and Paul Strand in his photographs of the church from 1931-32. Adams and O'Keeffe both began picturing the church from behind while working on it during the same summer spent staying with Mabel Luhan. In another letter from that summer, O'Keeffe describes showing her *Taos Pueblo* to Tony Luhan and being pleased that he thought that her painting was

Pueblo showcases not just an attention to detail, but also an interest in the structure's irregular smoothed angularity and the visual effect of its brown forms standing against the blue sky, seemingly emanating naturally from the land. This interpretation was shared by critics – a 1930 review appreciated that, in her Ranchos Church pictures, "the compelling masses to which adobe lends itself so well are clearly delineated" and praised the accuracy of her depiction of adobe as "flat and thin against the sky".[68] While these pictures were perceived to be pure aesthetic experiments, her paintings of crosses from that same summer were, by contrast, consistently praised for their successful evocation of the character of the local Hispanic population.[69]

Though foregrounding the sites' aesthetic qualities arguably frees them from the ethnographic meanings that earlier portrayals had layered upon them, there seems to only be room in these paintings for what O'Keeffe finds interesting about the buildings (their form and supposed spiritual power), rather than their actual religious, cultural, and practical significance within the communities that they were built to serve.

With O'Keeffe's paintings of adobe buildings in mind, Corn suggests that the artist's 1929 work was her most unstintingly touristic in its choice of subject matter and the perspectives on Indigenous and Hispanic cultures that it demonstrated. She writes: "O'Keeffe was drawn as much as others to the constructed romance around Indianness and Spanishness…"[70] In this influential account, Corn casts O'Keeffe as an artist whose initial tendency of representing some of the subjects that were most popular among the region's Anglo artists, including not just Taos

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"just like it" and that "he likes it – tho he has told me several times that he doesn't like paintings". Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [June 13, 1929], 433. Evidently it was important to O'Keeffe that the Puebloan whom she knew best appreciated the accuracy of her representation of his community's most prominent building, especially given that she had made numerous trips to rework the picture, repeatedly incurring fees charged by the Pueblo to visiting artists. See Norby, "Visual Violence in the Land of Enchantment", 97.

[68] Marty Mann, "Through the Galleries", *Town & Country*, March 1, 1930, 92. Wrote Ralph Flint the same year, "She… took decorative stock of the fine adobe structures". Ralph Flint, "The Current American Art Season", *Art and Understanding* 1, no. 2 (1930), 214.

[69] Mann, "Through the Galleries", 92.

[70] Corn, *Great American Thing*, 260.

Pueblo and the Ranchos de Taos Church, but also Catholic crosses and wooden *santo* figures, was overcome as she "had to work her way through the obvious picture-making sites before she could get beneath the surface of this foreign landscape" (see Figures 3.12 and 3.13).[71] O'Keeffe herself admitted the town's popularity among artists in her memoir: "Most artists who spend any time in Taos have to paint it, I suppose".[72] Corn suggests that in the following summer, though she painted the Ranchos de Taos church again, she began "searching for an indirect way to express her deepening sense of the Southwest" as she spent more and more time painting landscapes rather than local architecture or material culture.[73]

Though Corn goes on to describe O'Keeffe's later interest in painting bones and the New Mexican landscape, she seems untroubled by O'Keeffe's engagement with Indigenous cultures. Writing of O'Keeffe's sometime incorporation of Indigenous objects into her still-life paintings, Corn suggests that "While she might include a piece of Indian pottery or a basket, she rigorously eschewed the explicitly ethnic ensemble that members of the Taos Society of Artists had in their studios. The few Indian artifacts O'Keeffe owned… she used functionally…"[74]

Here, Corn evokes the familiar example of comparing O'Keeffe with the Taos Society artists. The Taos Society (1915-27) was a consortium founded by some of the artists who had first turned Taos into an Anglo art colony in the 1890s. Society artists crafted picturesque genre or historical scenes depicting local Native-American and Hispanic communities in a conservative style, with Indigenous protagonists often posed dramatically in front of local landmarks, especially the north-side structure at Taos Pueblo and the San Francisco de Asís Church. By

[71] Ibid. In a similar vein, art historian Charles Eldredge writes that "In her initial efforts with the local scene, O'Keeffe responded… as a tourist." Charles Eldredge, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York: Abrams, 1991), 114.
[72] Georgia O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York: Viking, 1976), n.p.
[73] Corn, *Great American Thing*, 265.
[74] Ibid., 282. See later in this chapter for an investigation of how O'Keeffe used the "Indian artifacts" she owned, of which there were in fact many.

circulating their work through exhibitions and reproductions, the group helped establish Taos as a site of interest for artists, writers, and tourists who felt the pull of the exotic. O'Keeffe had ample opportunity to see these exhibitions while living in New York City in the late 1910s and 1920s, during which time individual and group shows of Taos Society work were regularly featured in Manhattan galleries and covered in the press.[75]

Taos Society paintings were critical to the town's birth as a destination for both creatives and run-of-the-mill tourists by constructing a "myth of Pueblo life" that endures even today. As art historian William Truettner suggests, their pictures enacted "a mild form of primitivism… [that] conditioned Anglos to view Pueblo life in idyllic terms" and constructed Native Americans as "picturesque and repugnant, docile and rebellious, pure and tainted, civilized and savage".[76] Though contrasting O'Keeffe with the Taos Society is not Corn's only rationale for suggesting that O'Keeffe's engagement with Indigenous and Hispanic cultures was largely innocuous, it is an important one in her (and others') interpretation of O'Keeffe's work both before and after 1930.[77] O'Keeffe's work may have come to less openly resemble the images featured in Taos

[75] For example, group shows were held in New York City at the Milch Galleries in 1920, the Howard Young Galleries in 1922, and the Ferargil Galleries in 1924. See "Notes on Current Art", *New York Times*, January 25, 1920, "Art Notes", *New York Times*, November 4, 1922, "Conventions and Exhibits", *El Palacio* 16, no. 1 (1924), 44-45.

[76] William H. Truettner, "The Art of Pueblo Life", in Charles C. Eldredge, Julie Schimmel, and William H. Truettner, *Art in New Mexico, 1900-1945: Paths to Taos and Santa Fe* (New York: Abbeville, 1986), 63. Still, theirs was hardly a simple application of European Orientalism to Southwestern subjects – as Julie Schimmel has described it, Society painters' works' engaged with their subjects in ways that were more complex than some art historians have suggested, as they often "eschewed titillation or extravagance. Artists attending Indian dances… were less apt to comment on lithesome bodes than to extol a ceremony in which visual beauty and spiritual resonance were subtly joined." Julie Schimmel, "From Salon to Pueblo: The First Generation", in Eldredge, Schimmel, and Truettner, *Art in New Mexico, 1900-1945*, 43-57, 54-55. By the time of O'Keeffe's arrival in the late 1920s this attitude towards the area's Native peoples had softened (especially towards Puebloans, who were often the subjects of greater Anglo admiration than were Hispanics or other Indigenous groups) into a sort of condescending admiration rather than suspicion of violent or "savage" tendencies. Scott, *A Strange Mixture*, 44, 113.

[77] Though Corn alludes to the touristic character of O'Keeffe's early representations of Pueblo and Spanish New Mexican structures, she does little to connect tourism and race. Meanwhile, the 2012 catalogue *Georgia O'Keeffe in New Mexico: Architecture, Katsinam, and the Land* implies that such pictures could be interpreted alongside others that more clearly evoke Indigenous New Mexican cultures, but does not offer much evidence to support that implication. See later in this chapter for more on O'Keeffe's representations of *katsina* figures.

Society exhibitions or tourist guidebooks after her first few trips. However, as she perpetuated clichéd and inaccurate understandings of Indigenous and Hispanic lifeways, misrepresented local religions, and used these cultures to her own personal and professional ends, she demonstrated the partial evolution of elite Euro-American creative interest in and exploitation of the state as it entered a new modernist phase. Quite often, O'Keeffe's interest in using local sites and objects for her own purposes precluded seeing them in other ways, and encouraged the notion that she was their true owner, maker, and interpreter.

O'Keeffe Paints Adobe

Whereas earlier artists had used these distinctive buildings to suggest the authenticity of their scenes to their audiences through evocative detail, much as they used the bright, patterned clothes in which they often dressed Native protagonists, O'Keeffe's spare scenes of the same structures emphasize the buildings themselves and feature no human forms, recognizably Indigenous or otherwise.[78] Indeed, they are typical of O'Keeffe's style: smooth and simplified, with a tendency towards erasure of surface detail but a careful incorporation of the formal elements of the buildings themselves. This attention to the form of the buildings is only heightened by her tendency for close cropping, at times to the point of fragmentation and monumentalization (see Figure 3.14). O'Keeffe's pictures of adobe buildings face either the front or the back of the edifices directly, often making parts of the structures seem two-dimensional. In comparison to picturesque works like Society artist Ernest Blumenschein's *Church at Ranchos de Taos* (Figure 3.12), O'Keeffe's pictures seem coolly observational, suggesting an interest in the combination of flat and curved lines, planes, and masses in the adobe structures they picture

[78] O'Keeffe felt she was making a theoretical point by choosing to excise people from her pictures – she mentions in a 1935 letter that she was fighting against critic Thomas Craven's notion that "a painting isn't interesting unless it has a human figure in it." Georgia O'Keeffe to Henwar Rodakiewicz, December 1935, Library of Congress, Box 1, Folder 6.

as much or more than any exotic fascination with the people who erected them.[79]

However, that O'Keeffe's representations of these famous sites fail to perform the same dance between admiration and primitivizing that other paintings did need not mean that her images of such sites were born of a wholly dissimilar set of attitudes towards Indigenous New Mexicans. Indeed, it would have been quite difficult for O'Keeffe's paintings to completely sidestep the exotification inherent in the paintings and tourist materials that had made those sites famous. And after all, what had driven O'Keeffe not just to New Mexico, but to these particular sites in the first place?

Brenda Mitchell writes that "the pervasive spirituality of the Pueblo culture… played an important role" in O'Keeffe's interest in these structures, and it is interesting that O'Keeffe chose to represent San Francisco de Asís, in particular, rather than one of the many other Mission churches whose designs might seem less simple, natural, or autochthonous than the massive earthen form of San Francisco de Asís' apse.[80] In O'Keeffe's hands, as the church and the pueblo

[79] By picturing architectural sites that were considered to be evocative of a certain place, these Southwestern architectural pictures are analogous to the depictions of New York skyscrapers that O'Keeffe had been executing since the mid-1920s and the paintings of barns she made in upstate New York, Wisconsin, and Quebec from the early 1920s through the early '30s. While the barns more neatly align with the rural/semi-rural regionalism inherent in O'Keeffe's New Mexican architectural work, the skyscrapers share the distinction of being well-known local landmarks that could more clearly convey a recognizable sense of place. For more on the sense of place conveyed in O'Keeffe's skyscraper paintings, see Anna Chave, "'Who Will Paint New York?': 'The World's New Art Center" and the Skyscraper Paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe", *American Art* 5, no. 1/2 (1991), 86-107; Elizabeth Dean, "Georgia O'Keeffe's Radiator Building: Icon of Glamorous Gotham", *Revue française d'études américaines* 11 (1981), 81-92; and Merrill Schleier, *The Skyscraper in American Art: 1890-1931* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986), 108-110. This broader pattern may, too, play a role in the tendency to dismiss the relationship between these pictures and O'Keeffe's understanding of and interest in New Mexican Indigenous life as minor and inconsequential, as it seems logical to assume that the creative impulse underlying these paintings is the same one that led her to paint similar pictures in less exotic and racially charged environments.

[80] Mitchell, "'Music That Makes Holes in the Sky': Georgia O'Keeffe's Visionary Romanticism", 187. The north-side structure at Taos Pueblo and the Ranchos de Taos Church also showcase the two strands of New Mexican history and culture that most deeply informed external perceptions of the state's character. Whereas the former structure was fetishized as a part of the spectacle of the ostensibly pure and timeless Pueblo, the Ranchos de Taos Church, though it marries traditional Indigenous and Spanish Catholic techniques and styles, was perceived as an example of the lingering influence of the romantic and mysterious Spanish Colonial past, and was often noted for its age and association with local Catholic groups. The predominance throughout the Pueblo of adobe construction, which was introduced by the Spanish after their arrival in the area in the 16th century, is just one architectural element that puts the lie to these claims of purity and timelessness. For examples of the San Francisco de Asís

structure's forms emanate starkly from the ground, and, in certain cases, have their edges surrounded by a sharp glowing halo of white against blue sky, seemingly humming with spiritual power, they acknowledge and celebrate both form and spirit (see Figures 3.1 and 3.3).

O'Keeffe wrote in her memoir that her paintings of Ranchos de Taos were efforts "to create an equivalent for what I felt about what I was looking at – not copy it."[81] Looking at the pictures again, the side effects of fashioning "equivalents" become clear. While Taos Society paintings of the site evinced the uninhibited exoticism that prevailed within Anglo-New Mexico in the first decades of the twentieth century, O'Keeffe's pictures of these buildings reflect the modernist search for formal and mystical inspiration in Hispanic and Indigenous material cultures that surged in the 1920s and '30s.

Though O'Keeffe expressed enthusiasm over the accuracy of and possibilities for formal experimentation within her representations of Taos Pueblo and the Ranchos de Taos Church, these pictures also demonstrate her early tendency towards selecting subjects in New Mexico that were heavy with racialized meanings born of their many previous representations. O'Keeffe's images of these sites seem to have been less purely motivated by Anglo fascination with Indigenous Southwesterners than those of her predecessors and peers who used them as backdrops for romanticizing scenes of Native life, and were not praised for their successful evocation of the region's racial and cultural character as some of her other pictures from her early visits to New Mexico were. However, though these paintings were an extension of the efforts she had already or would soon make at representing the spirit of other places through architecture, they nonetheless arrived on O'Keeffe's canvas and, eventually, on museum walls laden with racial meanings that other buildings from other places that O'Keeffe had represented

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Church being praised for its age or association with the Penitentes, see *Roads to Cibola,* 19; *WPA Guide to 1930s New Mexico,* 287-88; or *Indian-detours – Most distinctive motor cruise service in the world,* 21-22.

[81] O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe,* n.p.

did not.[82] Though the rounded angularity of adobe structures fit in well with O'Keeffe's preexisting style, when her pictures of such buildings aestheticized and spiritualized them through the lens of modernism they also, in a sense, thereby misinterpreted them by divorcing them of their meaning within the cultures that produced them. Perhaps more saliently, more so even than O'Keeffe's many contemporaneous and later paintings that more directly drew upon racial, cultural, and regional stereotypes, these pictures also existed within and were a direct product of a tourist environment that was fundamentally rooted in racial and cultural exoticism. In their vague invocation of Indigenous and Catholic spirituality, they played into the Anglo fascination with the foreign spirituality of the region's non-white peoples.

Ghost Ranch and "La Tapia": O'Keeffe's Homes

Perhaps the best argument for connecting O'Keeffe's early Southwestern architectural pictures to her racialized understanding of the region lies in the homes that she later made at Ghost Ranch and Abiquiu.[83] The characteristics of these structures suggest that having a home

[82] Though Manhattan skyscrapers were also often tourist sites, they held far more interest for visitors from foreign countries or rural America than they did for elite American cosmopolitans like O'Keeffe and most of New Mexico's other Anglo tourists. Writing in reference to a painting she did of a church in Cebolla, New Mexico in 1945, O'Keeffe suggested in her later memoir that, "After I had been in Canada painting the wide white barns along the Saint Lawrence river, I thought how different the life of the Canadian farmer was from life in Cebolla. So I painted the Cebolla church which is so typical of that difficult life." O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, n.p. There is an argument to be made that these other buildings may have been racialized or ethnicized in their own way, as structures that were representative of white subgroups, but I would argue that the widespread tendency among early twentieth-century Euro-Americans to fail to see "whiteness" as a racial category at all likely prevented O'Keeffe and her contemporaries from thinking about them in a racial way analogous to the way they saw many "indigenous" New Mexican buildings, rather than in a more purely regional way.

[83] At the same time, the public's longstanding fascination with her Ghost Ranch and Abiquiu houses signals the ongoing significance of "traditional" architecture to external understandings of New Mexican identity. This is especially true of the Abiquiu house, which she had rebuilt from ruin on a site she had long admired in the 1940s. This fascination has produced a voluminous bibliography, though several of the books seem to be principally aimed at tourist audiences rather than scholarly ones, O'Keeffe's own myth having become one of New Mexico's greatest tourist attractions. See Wanda Corn, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Living Modern* (Munich: DelMonico/Prestel, 2017), Alicia Guzman, *Georgia O'Keeffe at Home* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2017), John Loengard, *Georgia O'Keeffe at Ghost Ranch: A Photo Essay* (New York: Stewart, Tabori, and Chang, 1995), Barbara Buhler Lynes and Agapita Judy Lopez, *Georgia O'Keeffe and Her Houses: Ghost Ranch and Abiquiu* (New York: Abrams, 2012), Myron Wood, *Georgia O'Keeffe at Abiquiu* (New York: Abrams, 1995). The Ghost Ranch" house, originally called Ranchos de los Burros, was an adobe structure in the Pueblo Revival style. For more on the house, see Lynes and Lopez, *Georgia*

that met her own standards of New Mexican authenticity was quite important to her, and that she wanted to not just view or represent exotic Southwestern architecture, but also to inhabit such structures herself. Meanwhile, the popularity of both homes as tourist sites today suggests not just the degree to which O'Keeffe's legend remains a significant tourist draw, but also their ongoing success in conforming to tourist expectations for regional architectural authenticity.

O'Keeffe's longtime primary residence, on a promontory overlooking the Chama River in the small, largely impoverished rural town of Abiquiu, where a Hispanic community had been founded in the 18th century on the site of a prehistoric Pueblo settlement, was rebuilt under Chabot's direction after O'Keeffe purchased the site in 1945.[84] That same year she began a lengthy series of paintings of the structure that, like her earlier Southwestern architectural paintings, focused intently on the modernist elements of its design, and at many points edged towards pure abstraction (see Figures 3.15 and 3.16). The pair nicknamed the house "la Tapia", Spanish for "adobe wall" or "garden wall", and built it as a marriage of purportedly authentic "native" techniques and styles with the conveniences of twentieth-century utilities and the stylishness of Anglo-modernist aesthetics.[85] As Barbara Buhler Lynes and Agapita Judy Lopez describe, "O'Keeffe transformed these rather typical Southwestern structures into expressions of

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O'Keeffe and Her Houses, esp. 23-108. For a history of Ghost Ranch and O'Keeffe's involvement with it, see Lesley Poling-Kempes, *Ghost Ranch* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005).

[84] Both the supposed "native" character and the age of the Abiquiu house (parts of which date to the early seventeenth century) were significant to its appeal – in one letter, Chabot excitedly notes the discovery of foundations that seemed to have been built using regionally distinctive ancient Puebloan, pre-Spanish building techniques. Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, [March 8, 1946], in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, , 327.

[85] According to a 1935 study, at that time Abiquiu had a population of 563 and included ten Anglo families, with the remaining population all Hispanic (though some were of mixed Hispanic and Indigenous heritage). Marta Weigle, ed., *Hispanic Villages of Northern New Mexico: A Reprint of Volume II of The 1935 Tewa Basin Study, with Supplementary Materials* (Santa Fe: Lightning Tree, 1975), 154-58. Norby discusses the "la Tapia" nickname in "Visual Violence in the Land of Enchantment", 93. It has recently been revealed that avant-garde architectural ideals likely played a more direct role in the rebuilding that Chabot oversaw, as the studio building on the estate bears a strong resemblance to a set of plans for a seemingly Bauhaus-inspired studio that O'Keeffe had had drawn up by Harvard architecture student and "International Style" proponent Peter van der Meulen Smith in 1927. See Sarah Rovang, "A 'Studio-House' for Georgia O'Keeffe", *Panorama* 6, no. 1 (2020), accessed June 17, 2020, https://editions.lib.umn.edu/panorama/article/a-studio-house/.

the modernist esthetic that is… revealed in her life and art" by populating the Pueblo Revival-style hacienda's interior with modernist furniture and decorating it with keepsakes including rocks, animal bones, African masks, and Diné rugs, as well as her own paintings (see Figure 3.17).[86] In enacting this scheme, O'Keeffe echoed the decorative practices she had been using in her Lake George and Manhattan homes since 1931, when she had first begun to array animal bones, Native-made blankets, and Hispanic-made cloth flowers on walls and furniture.[87] Though these decorations were not documented by journalists and photographers as the interiors of her New Mexican homes later were, they nonetheless speak to O'Keeffe's interest in using Southwestern curios as home decorations even in the wake of her earliest visits to New Mexico.

In constructing a Pueblo Revival-style structure, O'Keeffe and Chabot showcased attitudes towards architecture and racial and regional heritage that were typical of Anglos in early to mid-twentieth century New Mexico. The Pueblo Revival was one of many "revival" styles that relied upon a negotiation between the conveyance of feelings of authenticity and traditionalism to an Anglo audience and an underlying array of modern conveniences and design features that made the building seem pleasant and stylish to those raised in East Coast cities and suburbs. The result of these compromises is the holy grail of tourism, the comfortably exotic experience. Writing about the widespread use of the style in Santa Fe, architectural historian Chris Wilson suggests that it "has provided a unifying civic identity for the city, a promotional image to attract tourists, and a romantic backdrop for Anglo-American newcomers." The myth that the omnipresence and homogeneity of the style promoted, a story of "coherence and continuity" and "tricultural harmony", is also one that "obscures longstanding cultural and class

[86] For more on this house, see Lynes and Lopez, *Georgia O'Keeffe and Her Houses*, 111-248. Quote from 14.
[87] See Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Life*, 413, 596. Robinson quotes Stieglitz: "The house is full of bones and skeleton heads – Mexican flowers etc." Alfred Stieglitz to Rebecca Salsbury Strand, August 2, 1931, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 26.

frictions."[88]

As O'Keeffe fashioned the structure and its interiors in her own vision, she shaped a similarly romantic backdrop for herself, one that, in her ignorance of its inherent hybridity and artificiality, she felt could connect her to the broader landscape of New Mexican ethnic and cultural identity. Admittedly, even today the vast majority of the buildings in Abiquiu are made of adobe and feature traditional local and/or Pueblo Revival architectural features. Although, as a wealthy white artist from the East Coast, O'Keeffe was a unique presence in the town, for almost anyone building a home in Abiquiu in the 1940s, to build in adobe was a foregone conclusion.[89]

However, though one could construe O'Keeffe's construction of a Pueblo Revival home as (at least in part) the result of wanting to live in a particular place, we might just as well wonder why O'Keeffe wanted to live in Abiquiu in the first place. That question is doubtless complicated, but it seems foolish to simply assume that she chose to live in a small, remote, and deeply traditional settlement built on the site of a former Pueblo settlement for reasons that had nothing to do with its picturesque and supposedly authentic qualities, elements of her perception of the town in which its architectural character played a key role. She had, after all, coveted the ruined Abiquiu hacienda that she eventually rebuilt for more than a decade before buying it.[90]

O'Keeffe's fascination with Indigenous architectures was made even more clear in a 1945 letter to Chabot in which she wrote of a desire to erect a hogan (a traditional Diné dwelling) at her Ghost Ranch house. Though we can imagine that a hogan might have appealed to her desire for authentic indigeneity even more than the hybrid Pueblo Revival style could, it is

[88] Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*, 8.
[89] In other parts of New Mexico, to build in the Pueblo Revival style was not only expected or encouraged, but mandated – the style was first required in parts of Santa Fe in a 1912 city plan, and the rules were applied to the entire city in a 1957 resolution. Ibid., 121-24, 252-62.
[90] Lynes and Lopez, *Georgia O'Keeffe and Her Houses*, 10.

unclear exactly why she wanted it.[91] Certainly, it would not have been a comfortable home for someone like O'Keeffe who was accustomed to the stylishness and conveniences of most twentieth-century American homes. This episode is suggestive of the degree to which Native cultures became central to the sense of escape that O'Keeffe found in the state before she moved there permanently in 1949 – as she noted after mentioning the hogan, "where I dream of wanting something I haven't got it is never anything of this town… It is always something of out there."[92] Tellingly, in 1947, as she struggled to settle Stieglitz' estate in New York, she described her mounting longing for New Mexico as becoming "more and more hogan-minded".[93]

A "Dark Veil": Painting the Spirit(s) of New Mexico

The paintings O'Keeffe completed of San Francisco de Asís and other adobe churches in New Mexico also speak to her fascination with the ongoing significance of both Catholic and Indigenous religions in New Mexican life and culture. Her interest in the lingering influence of Spanish Catholicism in the state was displayed more overtly in the five images of crosses towering over the New Mexican landscape that she also produced during her 1929 visit (Figures 3.8, 3.9, and 3.18). These pictures evince the Anglo fascination with the Penitente Brotherhood, a folk Catholic group that became renowned for secrecy and its members practice of self-flagellation and crucifixion.[94] The crosses O'Keeffe pictured were inspired by her discovery of a

[91] For more information on hogans, see David P. McAllester and Susan W. McAllester, *Hogans: Navajo Houses & House Songs* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1980); and Christopher E. Drover, "Navajo Settlement and Architecture in Southeastern California", *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology*, 7, no. 1 (1985), 46-57.
[92] Georgia O'Keeffe to Maria Chabot, January 8, 1945, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 234-35.
[93] Georgia O'Keeffe to Maria Chabot, March 8, 1947, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe: Correspondence, 1941-1949*, 403.
[94] For more information on the Penitente Brotherhood, see Michael P. Carroll, *The Penitente Brotherhood: Patriarchy and Hispano-Catholicism in New Mexico* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Marta Weigle, *Brothers of Light, Brothers of Blood: The Penitentes of the Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976); Marta Weigle, *The Penitentes of the Southwest* (Santa Fe: Ancient City Press, 1970); and Ray

Penitente cross during an evening walk in the hills behind a morada (a Penitente meeting building) during her first summer in Taos.[95] Though the Brotherhood incorporated Hispanic and Native-American traditions and its members were of mixed-race, it was also a clear remnant of historical Spanish influence in the region, and therefore was perceived differently from local Indigenous religious groups. Nonetheless, Anglos often fixated on the violence inherent in some of their practices, as Dorothy Brett did in a lurid early April 1929 letter to O'Keeffe that describes the adherents' "shrieking + howling + groaning" and "whipping themselves into pulp" and speculates about their crucifixion practices, or as Chabot did in many of her letters to O'Keeffe from Abiquiu, or as D.H. Lawrence and other authors did in their fiction set in the region.[96]

In her 1976 book, O'Keeffe writes that she "saw the crosses so often… like a thin dark veil of the Catholic Church spread over the New Mexico landscape… For me, painting the crosses was a way of painting the country."[97] Though she cited a desire to witness Penitente

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John de Aragón, *The Penitentes of New Mexico: Hermanos de la Luz/Brothers of the Light* (1998; repub., Santa Fe: Sunstone, 2006). The secrecy of the Brotherhood was in large part driven by their persecution at the hands of governmental and Roman Catholic authorities beginning in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Of course, the four paintings and one drawing referenced here do not include the numerous representations of crosses that O'Keeffe included in her pictures of New Mexican churches.

[95] O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, n.p. She also later depicted crosses she found elsewhere, including one she found by the road and another that stood in front of a scenic vista. This first cross near the Penitente morada near Luhan's house may have been on Taos Pueblo land (this is a matter of dispute). Activities near the morada were sometimes surreptitiously viewed by Luhan and her guests. See Sylvia Rodriguez, "Over Behind Mabel's On Indian Land: Utopia and Thirdspace in Taos", *Journal of the Southwest* 53, no. 3/4 (2011), 382-83.

[96] Dorothy Brett to Georgia O'Keeffe, April 6, 1929, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 181, Folder 3021. Examples of Chabot letters include Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, April 13, 1943, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 108; and Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, March 31, 1943, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 91. Relevant here is D.H. Lawrence's focus on the supposed inherent violence of Spanish culture in the Americas – see Michael Squires, "Modernism and the Contours of Violence in D.H. Lawrence's Fiction", *Studies in the Novel* 39, no. 1 (2007), 93-96. It is possible that the Anglo suspicion of the Penitentes and Catholicism in the Southwest more broadly was propelled in part by the so-called "Black Legend", the centuries-old historiographical tendency to cast the Spanish presence in the Americas in negative terms and encourage suspicion and demonization of Hispanic and Catholic communities and their practices.

[97] Ibid. Art historian Jeffrey Richmond-Moll has described certain of these pictures (Figures 3.9 and 3.18) as images that collapse time and space, thereby encouraging the viewer to imagine the crosses in movement and subtly suggesting their ritual use in processions as well as O'Keeffe's movement around them over the course of the evening. Though there are other possible explanations for the slightly varying perspectives, the differing times of

processions as a major consideration when weighing when to return to New Mexico in March 1943, the next month, in response to a Chabot letter describing Penitente activities in Abiquiu, O'Keeffe described her hesitation about witnessing the violent ceremonies: "I envy your native doings but I doubt I could take the blood and pain of it… Your tales of native doings sound pretty curdling. I think you had better get out of their way – I begin to think anything can happen – maybe they have crucified you by now".[98] Though this last comment is a joke, it is nonetheless suggestive of the suspicion with which the supposedly violent and secretive Penitentes were treated by many Anglos during the era. In 1943 O'Keeffe described a visit to an Abiquiu morada where she found "an altar full of gory christs and saints – a startling death figure in black with a bow and arrow – 7 crosses… large enough to crucify a man on… a wall all splattered with blood…".[99] Though she found Penitente rituals to be "moving" and eventually came to think of them as an inescapable part of life in Abiquiu, she nonetheless never seemed to sidestep the prevailing Anglo notions of the group as incomprehensible, bizarre, and disgustingly violent.[100]

Though O'Keeffe knew relatively little about the Penitentes when she first painted one of their crosses in 1929, her memory of feeling that Catholicism was "a thin dark veil… spread over the New Mexico landscape" suggests something of her attitude towards them even during those

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day, and the odd relationship between fore- and background in these pictures, Richmond-Moll's interpretation is buoyed by O'Keeffe's evident interest in Penitente processions. Jeffrey Richmond-Moll, "Georgia O'Keeffe, Black Cross with Stars and Blue", *MAVCOR Journal* 2, no. 1 (2018), doi:10.223322/mav.obj.2018.1. O'Keeffe's interest in Spanish Catholicism is further conveyed in letters she sent from her travels in Mexico – see, for example, Georgia O'Keeffe to Anita O'Keeffe Young, January 16, 1970, Anita O'Keeffe Young Papers, Box 5.

[98] Georgia O'Keeffe to Maria Chabot, March 24, 1943, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 84, and Georgia O'Keeffe to Maria Chabot, April 18, 1943, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 113. The "santos" referred to here are in fact bultos, painted or carved wooden representations of saints that were used in Penitente rituals.

[99] Georgia O'Keeffe to Ettie Stettheimer, August 1943, in Cowart and Hamilton, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters*, 234-35.

[100] See Georgia O'Keeffe to Blanche Matthias, April 20, 1973, Blanche Matthias Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Archive, Yale University, Box 3, Folder 80. O'Keeffe's interest in the Penitentes is also discussed in Mitchell, "'Music That Makes Holes in the Sky': Georgia O'Keeffe's Visionary Romanticism", 178-81. It is worth noting that suspicion of Catholicism may have been especially prevalent among New Mexico's modernist contingent because of broader modernist suspicion of organized religion and belief in the promise of secularization.

earliest days.[101] However, one might argue that juxtaposing these crosses with the New Mexican landscape was, like her pictures of distinctive architectures elsewhere were, simply "a way of painting the country" through representation of its distinctive sights. As art historian Charles Eldredge points out, O'Keeffe's cross pictures seem more concerned "with the close identification of Hispanic culture with the land" than anything else.[102] Notably, O'Keeffe also painted crosses during her 1932 visit to Quebec (Figure 3.19), but later emphasized how dissimilar those crosses seemed.[103]

In 1962 she clarified what she felt was different about the New Mexican crosses, stating that "In New Mexico the crosses interest me because they represent what the Spanish felt about Catholicism – dark, somber – and I painted them that way."[104] But these pictures seem to reflect what she felt about Spanish Catholicism just as much as what she felt the "Spanish" felt, and in a 1971 interview she said that not just Hispanic Catholicism, but all religion was like "a thin black veil of sorrow covering everything".[105] The paintings are indeed somber, but also highly dramatic – demonstrations, even, of (or "equivalents" for) the romantic and mysterious attitudes that frequently characterized Anglo interpretations of Hispanic history and culture in New

[101] Though commentators have noted O'Keeffe's enrollment in Catholic School as a youth (her father was Catholic, her mother Episcopalian), her sometime attendance at services in and near Abiquiu later in life, and her acquaintanceships with certain priests, O'Keeffe maintained a distance from organized religion throughout her adult life – see, for example, her comments in Leo Janos, "Georgia O'Keeffe at Eighty-Four", *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1971, 117. However, she retained a certain spirituality and interest in religion despite this distance.
[102] Eldredge, *Georgia O'Keeffe,* 105.
[103] "After my summers in New Mexico where I had heard the Penitente songs and painted the dark crosses as I felt them there, the Canadian crosses seemed very different… they had a feeling of gaiety." O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, n.p. See also Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [June 10, 1932], in Greenough, *My Faraway One*, 631. In this letter O'Keeffe calls them "so different from the New Mexico crosses – Sharp and white with obvious hearts on them". Elsewhere she also stated that she painted the Canadian crosses through the lens of "Catholicism as the French saw it – gay, witty." Katharine Kuh, *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists* (New York and Evanston, IL: Harper and Row, 1962), 202. It is clear that O'Keeffe found the Canadian crosses to be compelling symbols of Canada (or at least the Gaspé region that she was visiting) as well, though it seems unlikely that she (or most other East Coast Euro-American elites) saw Quebec or its denizens through a racial lens to the extent that they saw Hispanic Catholics in the Southwest through one.
[104] Kuh, *The Artist's Voice*, 202.
[105] It is unclear whether, in her 1962 comment, O'Keeffe intends to refer to the Spanish themselves during their colonial reign in Southwest, or the past or present New Mexican Hispanic population, or indeed modern Spaniards. Janos, "Georgia O'Keeffe at Eighty-Four", 117.

Mexico. This connection is less than coincidental – New Mexican tourism was, as tourism in most places is, predicated upon the sacralization of certain sites.[106]

O'Keeffe admitted to sometimes manipulating what she saw in certain of these pictures, including her first cross paintings, *Cross with Red Sky* and *Black Cross with Stars and Blue* (Figures 3.9 and 3.18), in order to more literally represent the spiritual "veil" of Catholicism stretching across the landscape. She wrote: "The cross was large enough to crucify a man, with two small crosses – one on either side… If I turned a little… I saw the Taos mountain – a beautiful shape. I painted the cross against the mountain although I never saw it that way."[107] By showing this Christian symbol looming above the mountain, a famous local feature and a holy site to Taos Puebloans, she may have not only been crafting a more picturesque and recognizable regional scene, but also suggesting that the fundamental "sorrow" of Spanish Catholicism in the Southwest was the dominance that its forces had long asserted over the region's Native groups.

It is easy to imagine that the simplicity of these pictures, which show little other than cross, sky, and mountain, was fundamental to their appeal. After all, though the seeming foreignness of New Mexican Catholicism and those who practiced it prevented the state from ever becoming a home for Anglo *religious* pilgrims, fascination with the characteristics of Christian practices past and present in the region was nonetheless an important component of its draw for tourists. Adobe churches like San Francisco de Asís were not just popular stops for Anglo visitors, but their distinctive Spanish Colonial architectural features, including towers,

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[106] Highlighting places and things that local religious communities had already declared sacred has always been a natural shortcut for tourist industries eager to celebrate the special and foreign elements of the cultures they fetishize. See MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 42-45, for his theorization of "Sightseeing as Modern Ritual" and "Sight Sacralization".

[107] O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, n.p. In a sense this manipulation towards the incorporation of scenic vistas in the background was representative of O'Keeffe's artistic process more generally, which frequently relied on small changes and omissions as part of her simplifying style. O'Keeffe's use of this strategy in her New Mexican landscapes is described in Barbara Buhler Lynes, Lesley Poling-Kempes, and Frederick W. Turner, *Georgia O'Keeffe and New Mexico: A Sense of Place* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), esp. Lynes, "Georgia O'Keeffe and New Mexico: A Sense of Place", 11-58, 13-14.

exterior porches, and cloistered courts, were also frequently featured in the Pueblo Revival buildings in which many such (non-Catholic) visitors slept, shopped, and dined.[108] Meanwhile, many of the cultural representations of the region, including Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and Austin's *Starry Adventure*, prominently depicted Hispanic religion in mysterious and romantic terms for the benefit of audiences that viewed Catholicism as slightly foreign and suspicious.[109]

By featuring crosses in this suite of paintings, O'Keeffe played into these preexisting understandings of New Mexico as a place where the practice of Catholicism, and the specter of the Spanish Colonial past more generally, continued to play a deeply influential role in society. Though the paintings themselves do not make any direct allusions to the role of the Penitentes in erecting the crosses they picture, the popularity of the Brotherhood and their activities and buildings within fictionalized accounts and tourist industry representations of the state guaranteed that many would have instantly made the association between the group, or at least the clandestine and idiosyncratic Catholicism for which they were known, and O'Keeffe's subject matter. Wrote one critic about the cross pictures, "O'Keeffe has discovered the underlying pulse of life in the small Mexican towns, a fanaticism of blood and darkness which is constantly made manifest in the prevailing cult of the Penitentes."[110] The implied role of the Penitentes in the pictures, in combination with the dark, commanding dominance of the black

[108] Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*, 136, 139.
[109] In *Death Comes for the Archbishop* the main characters spend the novel desperately fighting against the secretive but resilient forces of fiercely independent provincial Catholicism, while in *Starry Adventure* Austin represents Penitente activities through the eyes of a protagonist whose upbringing at the hands of his grandfather, a defrocked Methodist preacher, has led him to view the local Catholics with both suspicion and fascination. See Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*; and Austin, *Starry Adventure*, 14, 117-19. For more on Cather's interest in Southwestern Indigenous groups, see David Harrell, *From Mesa Verde to the Professor's House* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992). Harrell's book focuses on Cather's *The Professor's House*, which includes a lengthy reminiscence about one character's visit to Mesa Verde. See Willa Cather, *The Professor's House* (1925; repub., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).
[110] Mann, "Through the Galleries", 92.

crosses themselves, casts a somber and mysterious pall over the landscape. After all, though she perceived crosses elsewhere to have a "feeling of gaiety", there is a reason why O'Keeffe felt that in New Mexico they cast a "dark veil". She made clear the sorrowful fascination with which she viewed Penitente activities in a 1950 letter, in which she casts the Brotherhood as the last vestiges of a time gone by: "the songs are… being repeated again and again as the procession comes down from the hills and goes to the church…It is oddly moving with the… long dark mesa back of it all – Sad – a remnant of an old faith."[111]

There is more than a hint, here, in this attitude towards Hispanic cultures in the Southwest, of a notion that had frequently populated representations of *Native* peoples in Anglo narratives for at least a century before O'Keeffe came to New Mexico in 1929: the idea that Native-Americans were less evolved than Europeans, and that they were therefore doomed to disappear from the earth due to the constant diminishment of their previously pure state through contact with whites.[112] Although this idea was typically associated with Indigenous cultures, it also jibes well with the ways in which the Hispanic Southwest was often depicted. In addition to conveying an elegiac sentiment, these narratives, at the very least in the case of Southwestern Hispanic culture, also tend to underline their quiet resilience in the face of such doom.[113] This

[111] Georgia O'Keeffe to William Howard Schubart, April 6, 1950, in Cowart and Hamilton, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters*, 252.

[112] For more on the history of this attitude, see Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982). Notably, this belief propelled a great deal of anthropological research and artistic recording of Native traditions in the early twentieth century (though it had a long history stretching back to at least the early nineteenth century).

[113] For example, both Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and Austin's *Starry Adventure* represent the Penitentes as the faithful but eccentric practitioners of age-old local traditions that persisted in the face of mounting Euro-American dominance. See, for example, Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, 167; and Austin, *Starry Adventure*, 117-19. Though the two groups were not always seen in the same light by Anglo cultural interpreters or government officials, that the two should share the same representational fate in Anglo-American mass culture in certain respects should not be surprising given the longstanding syncretic relationship that they shared and the similar roles that they could play in relation to the political and economic dominance of Anglo forces in New Mexico (as well as the falsity inherent in constructing a clear divide between "Hispanic" and "Native" peoples given the significant history of intermarriage between peoples of Spanish and Indigenous descent in the region and the diversity within these groups).

sentiment is echoed in O'Keeffe's crosses – though they stand solemnly before northern New Mexico's hills and valleys, they are also undeniably present, confronting the viewer in the foreground as testaments to the Brotherhood's ongoing power and presence.

O'Keeffe conveys a similar set of notions about the Penitentes in another 1929 painting, *The Wooden Virgin* (Figure 3.5). In a mistake indicative of the degree to which New Mexican Catholicism drew upon Native traditions and the confusion between the two (and, perhaps, also between the region's people and its material cultures) that frequently reigned within U.S. society during the era, this picture was misnamed *Indian Woman* when it was purchased from O'Keeffe's 1930 New York show.[114] Even more closely cropped than the cross pictures, it features a bulto, a painted wooden santo statuette used in Penitente rituals, at near-life size (in the picture it is nearly 60cm tall) with a mountain landscape and clouds rising behind it.[115]

Even more so than the cross paintings, *The Wooden Virgin* evinces the types of attitudes that many Anglo visitors held towards the Penitentes – a fascination with their unfamiliar practices and material culture and a tendency to perceive them as innately spiritual and attuned with the natural world. Art historian Sharyn Udall has written that *The Wooden Virgin* is an example of an artist mythologizing an object and the society that produced it by "naturalizing the cultural" – that is, by stripping a cultural object of its historical context and associating it with the natural world (something that she also did in her cross pictures, among many others). She describes it as a painting in which "Nature and spirituality merge", and the spiritual succor that O'Keeffe found in the naivete of New Mexico's Hispanic peoples is made plain.[116]

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[114] Nancy J. Scott, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (London: Reaktion, 2015), 135-36.
[115] This sculpture may be the object that O'Keeffe referred to as the "dark Mexican virgin" that she used alongside a cow skull, leaves, stones, and other objects to decorate her room at the Stieglitz estate on Lake George in the winter of 1933-34. Georgia O'Keeffe to Vernon Russell Hunter, Winter 1934, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 196, Folder 3351.
[116] Sharyn Rohlfsen Udall, *Carr, O'Keeffe, Kahlo: Places of Their Own* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 238-39.

Though the bulto in O'Keeffe's painting was one that she herself owned, it seems likely that she was inspired to purchase and depict it by Luhan, whose substantial collection of bultos decorated her home and been displayed in New York in 1919. Indeed, Luhan played a central role in establishing the Anglo market for bultos in the late 1910s.[117] While crosses invoked New Mexico's Hispanic history and population in a more abstract sense, bultos were the rare non-Indigenous object that could capture the imagination of Anglo audiences both near and far who were interested in New Mexico's unique and unfamiliar material culture.[118]

In most respects, the Anglo hunger for experiences of Indigenous religions was far greater than that for Hispanic Catholicism, and more so than most Anglos, O'Keeffe's interest in Catholicism seems to have endured throughout her decades in the Southwest, which included regular exposure to Abiquiu's Penitentes.[119] However, her appetite for experiencing Indigenous religions also seemingly never waned throughout the nearly 60 years in which she regularly visited or lived in New Mexico. This interest often manifested itself through her interest in attending Indigenous dance ceremonies, an activity that she "loved", and an affinity for which

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[117] Notably, when Luhan's bultos were shown in New York in 1919, they were displayed alongside work by children from the Santa Fe Indian School. For more on the influence of Anglo women on the market for Southwestern Indigenous-American art in the early twentieth century, see Molly H. Mullin, *Culture in the Marketplace: Gender, Art, and Value in the American Southwest* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001). It is noteworthy that *The Wooden Virgin* closely resembles and was likely produced at roughly the same time as the paintings O'Keeffe did of the porcelain roosters that decorated Mabel Luhan's estate, Los Gallos, and gave the property its name (Figure 3.20). Though O'Keeffe's paintings of Luhan's porcelain roosters also represent objects of the type that Luhan had collected and displayed as part of her assumption of a New Mexican identity, and are therefore testaments to the influence of the Los Gallos environment on O'Keeffe's early New Mexican painting practice, *The Wooden Virgin* speaks more directly to her fascination with the area's non-white cultures and, in particular, her recognition of the role that their supposed spirituality and connection to nature played in the sense of regional feeling in which she and other Anglo visitors reveled. Ironically, though she displayed them at her Southwestern-themed ranch, these roosters were made in Italy and brought west by Luhan.

[118] Padilla, "Whose History? Anglo Patronage and the Reframing of Hispano Art and Culture", 153-54. It is mentioned that O'Keeffe bought and painted the wooden virgin figure featured in her painting in Lynes, "Introduction", in Lynes and Kastner, eds., *Georgia O'Keeffe in New Mexico*, 15. Unfortunately, despite being included in the exhibition, the bulto itself is not listed in the catalogue, so I am not sure of its actual height.

[119] This general circumstance is attributable in large part to the supposed greater exoticism of Southwestern Indigenous cultures vis-à-vis Hispanic ones. See Padilla, "Whose History? Anglo Patronage and the Reframing of Hispano Art and Culture", 154, and Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest*, 101-103. For more on Abiquiu's Penitente groups, see Richard Eighme Ahlborn, *The Penitente Moradas of Abiquiu* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1986).

was seemingly sparked during that very first dance she attended in 1929.[120]

"So Beautiful – So Terribly Alive": O'Keeffe and Indigenous Ceremonials

Over the decades she spent in New Mexico, O'Keeffe attended Indigenous religious ceremonies on a regular basis.[121] In many cases, these dances were public spectacles attended by many tourists, and were therefore ceremonies whose significance to the community enacting them was financial as well as cultural and spiritual. However, particularly after her first few visits to the region, O'Keeffe preferred to attend ceremonies in remote communities at which she was (or the small party she went with were) the only non-Native guest(s) in attendance, and secret sacred knowledge was doubtless communicated at many of these ceremonies.[122] Sometimes, attending dances in remote locations involved making arrangements in advance with members of the Indigenous community for accommodations.[123] Though she attended dances with lessening frequency as she aged, her great interest in ceremonials is made clear by her frequent discussion of them in correspondence with many friends and acquaintances. These letters often discuss logistical concerns about attending dances, hopes for and reminiscences about them, and generally convey the unflagging enthusiasm that O'Keeffe held for them throughout her long

[120] For mention of O'Keeffe's "love" of Indigenous dances, see Maria Chabot, July 29, 2000 oral history interview, O'Keeffe Research Center.

[121] No full account of O'Keeffe's many visits to these dances has ever been made. O'Keeffe scholar Barbara Buhler Lynes notes that, in addition to the several dances that she eagerly attended during her 1929 visit, O'Keeffe also attended "Dances at Cochiti and Santo Domingo Pueblo in 1930; at Taos Pueblo in 1931; at Cochiti, Picuris, and Santa Clara pueblos in 1934; at Hopi Second Mesa in 1935; at Cochiti Pueblo and at the Gallup Intertribal Indian Ceremonial in 1936; at Santo Domingo Pueblo in 1940; at Cochiti Pueblo in 1941; and at Santo Domingo (Kewa) Pueblo in 1942", among countless other such visits, including numerous visits to Diné and Intertribal dances. On at least one occasion, in 1945, O'Keeffe hosted a party to which Dorothy Brett brought an "Indian" to sing and dance as entertainment. Lynes, "Introduction", in Lynes and Kastner, eds., *Georgia O'Keeffe in New Mexico*, 130n9. Georgia O'Keeffe to Henwar Rodakiewicz, September 1945, Library of Congress, Box 2, Folder 2. Mention of O'Keeffe's attendance at a Diné ceremonial is made in: Barbara Buhler Lynes, "Introduction", in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, xxi (though this was far from the only one she attended).

[122] For more on the ethics of observing and recording sacred Indigenous knowledge, see discussion of the topic later in this chapter.

[123] See, for example, Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, June 13, 1962, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 186, Folder 3105; Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, August 17, 1962, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 186, Folder 3105.

tenure in the Southwest.[124] Even more so than Penitente ceremonies, a desire to attend Indigenous ceremonials was often a key consideration when O'Keeffe was deciding when to return to New Mexico from New York.[125]

Some of O'Keeffe's comments about and paintings of dances suggest that she had a particular exotic and sexual interest in viewing male dancers at these ceremonies. However, her interest in Indigenous dance ceremonies reflects the broader early to mid-twentieth century Anglo fascination with them among both Anglo-Taoseño and short-term tourist audiences. This interest was clearly evinced in the work of many of O'Keeffe's modernist colleagues, including Marin and Brett, as well as that of countless other artists, writers, and anthropologists.[126] Writes dance scholar Jacqueline Shea Murphy: "Watching authentic Indian dancing was a (if not the) primary activity of… Southwest tourists in the 1920s and 1930s, a highlight of the authentic Southwest they expected to encounter."[127]

O'Keeffe wrote in just her second letter to Stieglitz after arriving in New Mexico in 1929: "It is no use to try to tell about an Indian dance – it can't be told any more than I can tell what the country feels like".[128] In her eyes, these ceremonies were capable of evincing the innate bond that Puebloans held with New Mexico's natural world. Given that the state's appeal for many Anglos was rooted in the supposed connection between its spiritual and cultural character and the land itself, that such ceremonies appealed to her is unsurprising, and her interest directly

[124] See, for example, Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, June 13, 1962; Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, August 13, 1962, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 186, Folder 3105; and Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, August 17, 1962; Georgia O'Keeffe to Henwar Rodakiewicz, November 11, 1946, Library of Congress, Box 2, Folder 4; transcript of Georgia O'Keeffe to Daniel Catton Rich, January 30, 1950, Cramer Papers, Box 1, Folder 4; Georgia O'Keeffe to Blanche Matthias, n.d., Matthias Papers, Box 3, Folder 82.
[125] See, for example, Georgia O'Keeffe to Maria Chabot, February 8, 1946, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 311.
[126] Scott, *A Strange Mixture*, 185.
[127] Jacqueline Shea Murphy, *People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 81-82.
[128] Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [May 2, 1929], 411-12.

manifested itself in at least two paintings from 1929 (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7).[129] In their swirling evocation of the experience of witnessing such ceremonies, these pictures allude to the ineffable, integrative spirituality that she sensed within their practitioners and throughout New Mexico.

More so than most of the work she produced during this part of her career, these paintings seem to directly evoke the character of Anglo tourists' relationships with the Indigenous communities whose presence had drawn them to New Mexico. Sascha Scott's investigation of one these pictures, *At the Rodeo*, which O'Keeffe painted after seeing Tony Luhan and other Puebloans dance in several performances, describes it as O'Keeffe's attempt to convey her emotional-visual experience of the ceremonies' spectacle (an approach on O'Keeffe's part that allows the work to sidestep the now-thorny ethical issue of documenting the secret Indigenous knowledge sometimes revealed through these dances). Scott writes: "*At the Rodeo*… speaks to her desire to convey her pleasure [in the evening's events]… and the dance's transformative power. The whirling colors suggest a dizzying euphoric feeling… The burning red of the painting abstracts Tony's 'burning red' blanket and the 'red and black blue' blanket of

[129] A third painting from 1929, *Pink Abstraction* (Figure 3.21), so closely resembles these other two that it may well have also been intended to represent O'Keeffe's memories of the dances she saw on the Las Vegas trip or elsewhere that summer, though its (and the others') resemblance to many of O'Keeffe's closely-cropped flower paintings is also suggestive of the degree to which her dance pictures drew upon the visual language of her earlier work outside New Mexico. To be clear, this is an interpretation I tentatively offer principally based on visual evidence. According to a now-lost file at the Whitney Museum mentioned in the O'Keeffe catalogue raisonné, there was once a now-lost inscription on the back of the picture that labelled it "Pink Abstraction – Lake George, 1929". The same inscription is also mentioned in the account of the picture published by the Phoenix Art Museum, which owns it. However, O'Keeffe's paintings were regularly mistitled or improperly described by others, particularly during periods like the late 1920s and early '30s during which she was spending much of the year away from New York City either on Lake George or in New Mexico, and the situation was further complicated by O'Keeffe's frequent practice of working on particular paintings while in several locations – for example, beginning a canvas in New Mexico and then completing it after returning East. The descriptive accuracy of this supposed inscription is therefore highly questionable. Indeed, as an example, *Grey Blue & Black – Pink Circle* was mislabeled as a "katchina" by numerous sources, though this confusion was evidently due to a mistake O'Keeffe herself made, possibly indicating her knowledge of the relationships between katsinam and Pueblo dances (katsinam and katsina tithu play a role in the preparations for some dances), but more likely indicating her confusion at the difference between katsinam and the roles embodied in Pueblo dances and/or suggesting the degree to which her dance paintings are subjective renderings of her experience of Pueblo cultures and performances rather than any sort of careful document of Pueblo practices. See Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, 18-20, 389-90, Michael K. Komanecky, ed., *Phoenix Art Museum: Collection Highlights* (New York: Abrams, 2002), 287, and Lynes, "Introduction", in Lynes and Kastner, eds., *Georgia O'Keeffe in New Mexico*, 11-12, 130n8.

his partner, as well as the movement of the dancers." She quotes O'Keeffe's words to Stieglitz: "it was very perfect – Those Indians with their drums – like a heart beat from the center of the earth".[130] In another letter O'Keeffe wrote that the "Dance was so beautiful – so terribly alive… the human thing that happened to them all."[131] More so even than the many other ways in which O'Keeffe consumed Pueblo cultures during her early visits, her attendance at dance ceremonies such as these seemed to afford her the mystical and romantic experiences of the place and its non-Anglo cultures that had drawn her there and inspired her after her arrival.

Though, to her frequent consternation, O'Keeffe's work has long been the subject of overwrought gendered and sexualized analysis, one might compellingly interpret *Grey Blue & Black – Pink Circle* (Figure 3.7), especially, through the lens of O'Keeffe's fawning descriptions of the bodies of certain of the Pueblo performers whom she met. She wrote to Stieglitz of her amazement when confronted with one particularly "beautiful" performer, John Marcos: "The finest one… I had thought of him before as beautiful like a beautiful woman – very fine long hair – and a very beautiful face… beautiful from the inside – and such a beautiful body… every fiber seemed to go off like fire… I just almost died".[132] In another letter she said that he was "one of the most beautiful creatures I ever saw – and one can't talk with him – but what a smile – It is like a rich beautiful woman – pure and innocent and male – very male… It seems like a beautiful thing that just naturally grew".[133] This was not just the product of the novelty of such performances to O'Keeffe – she often couched her interpretation of ceremonial performances

[130] These dances took place during a Fourth of July trip that O'Keeffe took alongside Luhan and others to a rodeo in Las Vegas, New Mexico. Scott, *A Strange Mixture,* 184-85. Scott quotes here from Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [July 4, 1929], in Greenough, *My Faraway One*, 453, and Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [July 6, 1929], in Greenough, *My Faraway One*, 463.
[131] Georgia O'Keeffe to Mabel Dodge Luhan, n.d., 1929, Luhan Papers, Box 27, Folder 782.
[132] O'Keeffe to Stieglitz, [July 4, 1929], 454. Notably, O'Keeffe does not refer to this man by name in her letters to Stieglitz.
[133] O'Keeffe to Stieglitz, [July 6, 1929], 463. For another fawning description of Marcos, see Georgia O'Keeffe to Mabel Dodge Luhan, n.d., 1929.

through the lens of gender, as she noted of a 1942 dance that, "The maleness [was] very strong – The femaleness very gentle – It is a very handsome spectacle".[134] While Scott has interpreted *At the Rodeo* as a "subjective, emotional reaction" to the dancers' movements and the colors of their blankets, the oblong shapes in *Grey Blue & Black – Pink Circle* may be focusing more explicitly on the form and movement of the bodies that performed the dance.[135]

The suggestion of male anatomy that these shapes provide might also, in light of O'Keeffe's written remarks about the performers, encourage one to consider the painting as a (perhaps unconscious) manifestation of her sexual excitement during the dance spectacle. Regardless of how one interprets the picture itself, at the very least O'Keeffe's remarks about these dances seem to sexualize the performers through an exotic lens. In this sense O'Keeffe was arguably an archetypal Anglo-New Mexican – though her pictures eschewed obvious titillation (as the Taos Society artists' had), there nonetheless remained an element of eroticism in the way that she regarded many of the Puebloans with whom she interacted. During this period eroticism was especially frequently attributed to Pueblo dances, which were under attack from moral reformers for their supposed unconscionable licentiousness at the same time that Pueblo sexual practices were being celebrated by some New Mexican "new women".[136] Though it seems unlikely that O'Keeffe sought to comment on this debate in her written or painted descriptions of the dances she saw in 1929, she may have been encouraged to view the performers through an erotic lens because of this ongoing discourse about the sexuality of Pueblo dances. However, O'Keeffe's captivation with Native-American dances was also simply an important part of how

[134] Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, August 5, 1942, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 93, Folder 1830.
[135] Quote from Scott, *A Strange Mixture*, 187.
[136] This controversy was notably part of a larger ongoing campaign against Native-American dances (which frequently targeted them as subversive, anti-assimilatory, and/or immoral) that had raged since the nineteenth century. For more on the various interpretations of sexuality in Pueblo dances in the 1920s, see Jacobs, "Making Savages of Us All: White Women, Pueblo Indians, and the Controversy Over Indian Dances in the 1920s".

she indulged her fascination with the region's Indigenous cultures. This fascination may have been flamed by her experiences in 1929, but it carried on throughout her decades in the Southwest, even as her work no longer directly represented Native performance cultures.

"Funny Indian" Things: O'Keeffe's Native-American Still Lifes

Instead, as her time in New Mexico went on, O'Keeffe's fascination with local non-white cultures visually manifested itself principally through the lens of *objects* in some way associated with those cultures, like the earlier *Wooden Virgin*. Paintings that reveal this trend feature things that run the gamut from animal parts such as feathers, horns, and bones to finished cultural products like pots, necklaces, and Pueblo "spirit dolls" (see Figures 3.22-30).[137] More so than any other segment of her work, her still life depictions of these objects reveal O'Keeffe's engagement with subjects of clear spiritual relevance to Indigenous and Hispanic groups and her willingness to appropriate holy objects for her own modernist purposes.

Among these paintings, O'Keeffe's representations of dried animal bones have received by far the most attention – they are among her best-known works. Corn has suggested that, on one hand, these pictures demonstrate the nationalist stakes of O'Keeffe's New Mexican project by offering scenes that, as they picture desert bones, local material culture, and high desert landscape scenes, celebrate one of the nation's unique and distinctive regional identities. In the case of the 1931 painting *Cow's Skull: Red, White, and Blue* (Figure 3.26), she famously even employed a red, white, and blue color scheme.[138] However, Corn also suggests that these paintings show O'Keeffe's desire to dig deeply into the spirit of the place, to fashion "a poetics for a region" in a practice that "embraces and references… the landscape of the Southwest as

[137] For a more broadly conceived study of O'Keeffe's still-life work, see Elizabeth Hutton Turner, ed. *Georgia O'Keeffe: The Poetry of Things* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999).
[138] Corn, *Great American Thing*, 289-91.

well as the artifacts and rituals of its three populations". She describes *Cow's Skull: Red, White, and Blue* as a picture that signifies "the desert and its diverse subcultures of Indian, cowboy, priest, and artist… its associations building on one another to offer a deep reading of place."[139]

Lauren Kroiz has suggested that O'Keeffe's New Mexican still-life paintings were attempts to get to, in O'Keeffe's words, "the real meaning of things", the "material thingness" of objects that could help her "Self-consciously… [construct] an American modernism in an era when anthropologists and avant-gardists agreed that regional and racial meanings inhered in objects."[140] According to Rushing, in the 1920s Native-American art was frequently praised by modernists for its distillation of things to their "essential form".[141] We can wonder whether O'Keeffe was attempting to recreate the artful simplicity and spiritual connection many perceived in Native designs when she sought "the real meaning of things" in her pictures.

Regardless, these paintings trade upon associations between the objects that they picture and the mystique of the Southwest's non-white cultures, principally either through allusion to the significance (or presumed significance) of various animals in those cultures and/or direct but decontextualized representation of objects made by those groups.[142] In the case of made objects, especially, O'Keeffe again has a tendency towards, in Udall's words, "naturalizing the cultural", or erasing historical and cultural contexts in favor of making these things seem natural, timeless,

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[139] Ibid., 280.

[140] Kroiz quotes from: "'I Can't Sing, So I Paint' Says Ultra Realistic Artist; 'Art Is Not Photography – It is the Expression of Inner Life!' Miss O'Keeffe Explains Subjective Aspect of Her Work," *New York Sun*, December 5, 1922, 22, repub. in Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz, and the Critics*, 180. Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 178-84, 240.

[141] Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde*, 29.

[142] It is worth noting that by the late 1920s white Americans were really only just beginning to truly perceive Indigenous religions *as* religions rather than as the rituals and myths of less-sophisticated peoples. See Philip Jenkins, *Dream Catchers: How Mainstream American Discovered Native Spirituality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 113-34. As someone who was largely a religious outsider, it seems unlikely that O'Keeffe looked down on Indigenous religions in the same way that many other white Americans did in the 1920s and '30s. However, her interest in what she perceived to be the mystical spiritual character of Indigenous and Hispanic objects and buildings suggests that she viewed both Indigenous religions and Hispanic Catholicism through a mythic lens rather than as coherent belief systems.

and unchanging, like Native-Americans themselves supposedly were.[143] In the case of both natural and man-made things, as they divorce these objects from their cultural significances, these pictures (like many of her architectural and cross paintings) frequently reveal much more about what was fascinating about the Southwest to O'Keeffe and other white Americans than they do about the cultures to which they allude. Instead, they are yet more efforts on O'Keeffe's part "to create an equivalent for what I felt about what I was looking at".[144]

At the same time, as they demonstrate her move away from painting well-worn sites, these pictures also show the maturation of O'Keeffe's perspective on New Mexico as she moved away from a conventional tourist posture towards New Mexico's non-white cultures and towards the more knowing but no less essentializing attitude adopted by many Anglo-New Mexicans. Ironically, until moving to Abiquiu in 1949, O'Keeffe continued to execute much of her "New Mexican" still-life work while back East during the winter and spring, a strategy that sometimes helped her cope with pangs of "hogan-mindedness". In some cases, she would use props shipped from New Mexico, like the bones in *Cow's Skull: Red, White, and Blue* in 1931 (Figure 3.26).[145] O'Keeffe writes in her memoir: "I had to go home – what could I take with me of the country to keep me working on it?... the best thing I could take… was a barrel of bones".[146]

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[143] That this was untrue seems obvious now – katsina tithu, for example (including both those made for sale and those intended for ritual use), had changed substantially during the few decades since they had first begun to be collected by Anglos, with "a trend toward naturalism and away from the iconic" perhaps signaling a shift towards representation of katsina "impersonators" rather than the spirits themselves, and thereby conforming better to Anglo experiences of katsinam in ceremonials rather than the true religious significance of the spirits. J.J. Brody, "Kachina Images in American Art: The Way of the Doll", in Polly Schaafsma, ed., *Kachinas in the Pueblo World* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico), 147-60, 153-54. For more on the evolution of katsinam and their representations over time, see Barton Wright, "The Changing Kachina", in Schaafsma, *Kachinas in the Pueblo World*, 139-45; and Barton Wright, "The Drift from Tradition", in Zena Pearlstone, *Katsina: Commodified and Appropriated Images of Hopi Supernaturals* (Los Angeles: UCLA Glower Museum of Cultural History, 2001), 146-57.

[144] Georgia O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, n.p.

[145] O'Keeffe discusses this episode in *Georgia O'Keeffe*, n.p.

[146] O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, n.p. However, in a letter telling Stieglitz to expect packages that included these bones and a Native-American blanket, O'Keeffe called the contents "Nothing but trash I suppose". Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [July 10, 1931], in Greenough, *My Faraway One*, 596. This package also included

"Playing Indian" and the Southwestern Curio Market

Indeed, O'Keeffe's avid and longstanding participation in Southwestern curio exchange networks is an underappreciated context for her New Mexican life and work, and reveals the breadth of her connections to Anglo tourist and collector forces and the depth of her obsession with literally as well as figuratively and artistically possessing totems of "Indianness".[147] The very first day of her 1929 trip included a visit to a Santa Fe market to peruse "Indian pottery".[148] She also sometimes purchased Indigenous objects in New York, as when she bought a Diné blanket from a store window in 1942.[149] In a 1948 letter she describes being tempted by the wares of "a man in a cowboy outfit selling Indian trinkets".[150] Her involvement in the industry was also propelled by her relationships with some of its most influential figures. Chabot had first come to Santa Fe to work on a WPA project documenting Spanish Colonial art and became the driving force behind the reorganization of Santa Fe's "Indian Markets" in the mid-1930s.[151] Candelario was the owner of a Santa Fe shop known as the "Original Old Curio Store", and Stephanie Lewthwaite suggests that "Through the curio store Candelario facilitated O'Keeffe's representation of local artifacts… and used O'Keeffe as an intermediary for selling goods".[152]

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some Calico cloth flowers of the type used by Hispano-New Mexican women as hair ornaments and to decorate graves. Corn, *Great American Thing*, 265. O'Keeffe also took at least one "Indian pot" home with her that year – see Georgia O'Keeffe to Rebecca Strand, August 9, 1931, James Papers, Box 1a, Folder 29.

[147] Notably, the ethical state of this market in the 1930s and '40s was quite troubling – looting of Native-American burial sites in the region was rampant and served as a significant source for both shops and private sellers. In many cases the remains themselves were carelessly strewn about by the robbers, a circumstance that casts into further question the origin of the skull that Candelario gifted to O'Keeffe. Andrew Gulliford, "Bones of Contention: The Repatriation of Native American Human Remains", *The Public Historian* 18, no. 4 (1996), 127.

[148] Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [April 30, 1929], 411.

[149] See Georgia O'Keeffe to Maria Chabot, May 22, 1942, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 40-41.

[150] See Georgia O'Keeffe to Maria Chabot, March 11, 1948, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 446.

[151] Chabot also wrote several articles on Native-American Art for *New Mexico Magazine*. Jennifer McLerran, *A New Deal for Native Art: Indian Arts and Federal Policy, 1933-1943* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009), 57-62.

[152] Lewthwaite notably refers to Candelario as a part of Santa Fe's "Hispano elite", which meant that he had significant class privilege in comparison to most of the poor Hispanic people whom O'Keeffe encountered in Abiquiu. She also mentions that Candelario's store, under his grandfather's stewardship, had used the "vanishing-

However, in part because of her self-imposed isolation from the hubs of the Native artifact trade in Taos and Santa Fe, as time went on she eschewed opportunities to patronize the region's best-known shops and markets. Instead, her connections with industry players like Chabot, Candelario, Mabel Luhan, and wealthy collector and museum founder Mary Wheelwright and continued visits to Indigenous settlements and smaller towns closer to Abiquiu gave her ample purchasing opportunities. Until their late 1940s estrangement, Chabot, especially, frequently arranged for O'Keeffe to purchase blankets and other Indigenous objects, often from traders in Santa Fe.[153] Trips to ceremonials also offered opportunities to purchase objects.[154]

As with Candelario's skull, she often received such objects as gifts – for example, Chabot sent O'Keeffe potsherds from a visit to Acoma Pueblo in 1946 and a "fetish" of a water serpent from Zuni Pueblo in 1961, and in 1941 she received a fossilized buffalo skull.[155] In 1943 a Santa

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race theme" as part of its marketing in the past. See Lewthwaite, *A Contested Art*, 133-36, 149. For more on the development of markets for Indigenous-American art in the early-twentieth-century Southwest, see Erika Marie Bsumek, *Indian Made: Navajo Culture in the Marketplace, 1868-1940* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008); and Bruce Bernstein, "The Marketing of Culture: Pottery and Santa Fe's Indian Market" (PhD. diss., University of New Mexico, 1993).

[153] See Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, April 9, 1945, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 271; Georgia O'Keeffe to Maria Chabot, April 14, 1945, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 277; Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, March 17, 1948, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 453. O'Keeffe also frequently entrusted Chabot to have such objects repaired or cleaned, ostensibly to restore their authenticity – for example, in 1945 she had Chabot have a farmhand who was working for her, Charlies Cata, restore missing turkey feathers to a "kachina" doll that she had recently purchased. See Maria Chabot to Alfred Stieglitz, November 18, 1945, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 295. Wheelwright was a notable collector of Indigenous material culture and the founder of the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian.

[154] For example, in 1935, she excitedly wrote Stieglitz of having "got four more funny indian dolls and a lovely rams head" during such a visit. Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, August 29, 1935, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 89, Folder 1776.

[155] Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, May 3, 1946, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 357; Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, n.d., 1961, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 186, Folder 3104; Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, August 17, 1961, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 186, Folder 3104; Georgia O'Keeffe to Maria Chabot, November 24, 1941, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 17. Even before O'Keeffe's 1929 visit, Dorothy Brett sent O'Keeffe a New Mexican blanket as a gift. See Georgia O'Keeffe to Dorothy Brett, April 17, 1929, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 181, Folder 3021. Alan Priest once sent O'Keeffe a Diné blanket (see Alan Priest to Georgia O'Keeffe, May 26, 1960, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 210, Folder 3670) and another friend gave her a cow's skull in the 1930s that she featured in several paintings – see Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, July 25, 1946, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 368. As another example, when I took a tour of the home in spring 2019, our guide suggested that the large elk skull that looms just beyond the building's main entrance was purchased by O'Keeffe from a man from Ohkay Owingeh

Clara Puebloan whom O'Keeffe had met years earlier sent her a plate, while Chabot offered her an old shawl from Candelario.[156] Visiting or perusing old photographs of O'Keeffe's home in Abiquiu confirms the ardor of her collecting instinct – it is adorned with a mixture of animal skulls, bones, and pelts, rocks, stumps, and Native blankets and ceramics alongside modernist sculptures and furniture.[157] Her passion for such things endured, and in 1979, aged 91, she wrote exuberantly about walking around the Santa Fe plaza "looking at Indian treasures".[158]

Like most other Anglos in New Mexico, O'Keeffe's interest in these objects was fundamentally driven by a desire to acquire and display them as part of an affectation of Southwestern identity rooted in the region's exotic cultures.[159] Kroiz has described the New Mexican things that O'Keeffe regularly brought with her or purchased while out East before her permanent move West in 1949 as "souvenirs", that indulged "O'Keeffe's nostalgic desire to have access to something material from the region even after leaving it".[160] Though she did not make a habit of dressing up or dancing in "Indian" clothes or redface as the Taos Society artists

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Pueblo whom she met in Espanola. I have not been able to confirm this account elsewhere, though photographs of the skull abound in photographs of O'Keeffe's Abiquiu home, i.e. Lynes and Lopez, *Georgia O'Keeffe and Her Houses*, 136, 139-41. In a 1977 interview, O'Keeffe bragged about having "boxes of bones". Amei Wallach, "Under a Western Sky", *Horizon* 20, no. 4 (1977), 24. Her friend Henwar Rodakiewicz sent her some skulls in 1937 – see Georgia O'Keeffe to Henwar Rodakiewicz, September 1937, Library of Congress Box 1, Folder 10. Another friend sent her a bull's skull in 1933 – see Georgia O'Keeffe to Vernon Russell Hunter, Winter 1934. O'Keeffe also collected bones herself at times (see Georgia O'Keeffe to Henwar Rodakiewicz, Summer 1936, Library of Congress, Box 1, Folder 8), though she also seemed inclined to exaggerate such gathering and fail to mention that much of her bone collection had been bought or received as gifts. See Georgia O'Keeffe, "About Painting Desert Bones", in *Georgia O'Keeffe: Painting – 1943* (New York: An American Place, 1944), n.p.

[156] However, Chabot felt that the plate was not of sufficient quality to keep and recommended that it be thrown away. Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, November 3, 1943, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 129.

[157] African masks and trinkets that showcase O'Keeffe's longstanding interest in East Asia also number among the decorations. For more on the Abiquiu house, see Lynes and Lopez, *Georgia O'Keeffe and Her Houses*, 111-249. O'Keeffe's penchant for decorating her home with objects with a variety of international cultural origins echoes the decorating practices that Mabel Luhan enacted at Los Gallos, where she combined French and Buddhist decorations with Mexican and Native-American objects. Rudnick, *Utopian Vistas*, 39.

[158] Georgia O'Keeffe to Blanche Matthias, May 18, 1979, Matthias Papers, Box 3, Folder 81.

[159] A relevant context here might be "Indian Corners", arrangements of Native-American objects in discrete areas of the early twentieth century homes of white Americans. Elizabeth Hutchinson, *Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890–1915* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 11-50.

[160] Lauren Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 179.

sometimes did, she may nonetheless have been interested in "playing Indian".[161] At the very least, she was able to convince Herbert Seligmann that "something of the aboriginal Indian soul" had come over her.[162] Wanda Corn suggests as much about a series of 1930-31 photographs by Stieglitz in which she wraps herself in a blanket and caresses some of the animal skulls she had sent East as props (Figures 3.32 and 3.33), and of later photographs (i.e. Figure 3.34) in which landscape views, Western clothes like blue jeans, bandanas, and *vqquero* hats, and Indian-made jewelry including Diné necklaces and silver buttons helped her "reinvent herself as a denizen of the high desert" as she projected an image to the public.[163] Meanwhile, whereas images like Ansel Adams' (Figure 3.34) seem, on the surface at least, like relatively innocuous forms of self-fashioning through photographs posing with bones, John Candelario's images of her posing and playing with a human skull that he brought her do not (Figures 3.35 and 3.36).[164] Others have argued that O'Keeffe sought to imitate the appearance of Native Americans through suntanning, such that by the 1940s, "O'Keeffe's skin became so tanned… that people often believed that she was herself Indian. O'Keeffe enjoyed her aboriginal appearance, which intensified as her face aged… and was enhanced by her… clothing and… long hair".[165] If O'Keeffe did in fact work to

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[161] See John Ott, "Reform in Redface: The Taos Society of Artists Plays Indian", *American Art* 23, no. 2 (2009), 80-107. O'Keeffe did notably write Stieglitz in 1929 of wanting "to wear a sheet like Tony – and ride like the Indian men that came tearing through the Pueblo gate in a body – all riding like mad". Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [June 13, 1929], 433.

[162] Seligmann, quoted in Eldredge, *Georgia O'Keeffe: American and Modern*, 180, no date.

[163] Corn, *Great American Thing*, 266, Corn, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Living Modern*, 126, 170, 194-95. Corn also discusses O'Keeffe's wearing white Indian beads in a 1929 photograph in *Georgia O'Keeffe: Living Modern*, 120.

[164] Norby points out that even O'Keeffe's use of animal bones was in some sense problematic – in the 1930s, the federal government had shot hundreds of stock animals in Abiquiu (as well as many other Southwestern Indigenous and Hispanic communities), despite many townspeople's reliance on them and their significance to local traditional lifeways, littering the area with animal carcasses. This connection is made all the more clear by O'Keeffe's depiction of an equine skull with a bullet hole in it in a 1936 painting. See Norby, "Visual Violence in the Land of Enchantment", 111-14.

[165] Lesley Poling-Kempes, *Valley of Shining Stone: The Story of Abiquiu* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 201. See also Corn, *Great American Thing*, 284 and, for a more in-depth investigation, Patricia Lee Daigle "American Tan: Modernism, Eugenics, and the Transformation of Whiteness" (PhD. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2015), 197-213. Also, in 1934 Stieglitz called her "brown as an Indian", while in 1931 Beck Strand said she was "black as a Mexican". Alfred Stieglitz to Henwar Rodakiewicz, May 10, 1934, Library of Congress, Box 2, Folder 6. Rebecca Strand to John Marin, July 8, 1931, Marin Family Papers, Section 1, Part 1, Group 1,

portray herself as semi-Native or otherwise in tune with Indigenous peoples and cultures, then she was at least partially successful – as suggested, for example, in a 1992 appreciation in which writer Terry Tempest Williams casts her as "Trickster" character who strikes a deal with "Coyoté" to provide her with bones for her painting in return for her not exposing him as a "scoundrel".[166] Regardless, the vision of herself and her relationship with Indigenous and Hispanic cultures that O'Keeffe broadcasted in her paintings and in photographs of her person and home not only coopted things from those cultures, but also relied upon and perpetuated many of the dominant stereotypes about them as they spoke to various audiences, from visitors to her home, to readers of popular magazines, to even herself as she imagined her own identity and whether a portion of it might be rooted in "Indianness".

O'Keeffe's efforts to "reinvent herself as a denizen of the high desert" are suggestive of the degree of similarity between her life and work in New Mexico and those of the Canadian artist Emily Carr in the Canadian Pacific Northwest, who similarly dedicated much of her professional life to living among Indigenous peoples and representing a distorted version of them and their material cultures and lands (see Figure 3.37) and did so in part by "playing Indian".[167] Though her style differed, like O'Keeffe, Carr was dedicated to interpreting these exotic cultures through a lens of modernist mysticism, and this work helped her to become a national and feminist icon.[168]

Folder 2. Admittedly, such was the strength of the nationalist interpretation of the Circle's artists that O'Keeffe's was being compared to Native Americans well before 1929, as when Rosenfeld praised her work for "An austerity, a fibrousness which is most closely kin to the Amerind's pervades the paint [of her pictures]" in 1924. Rosenfeld, *Port of New York*, 205.

[166] "Coyoté" is presumably a reference by Williams to Coyote characters in the mythologies of several Southwestern tribes, including the Diné and the Jicarilla Apache. Terry Tempest Williams, "In Cahoots with Coyoté", in Merrill and Bradbury, eds., *From the Faraway Nearby: Georgia O'Keeffe as Icon*, 181-85.

[167] I should note that despite their similarities, Carr spent much more time among Indigenous peoples than O'Keeffe did, visiting remote Indigenous communities on extended work trips from the 1890s through the 1930s.

[168] Perhaps even more so than O'Keeffe, Carr believed that the First Peoples whom she encountered were part of a "dying race", and was inspired to spend time among Indigenous groups and adopt an Indigenous persona (including

What drove artists like Carr and O'Keeffe to try to "play Indian", and what effect did the widespread celebration of their works and personae have on Indigenous peoples? As historian Philip Deloria writes in his influential history of the phenomenon, "playing Indian" "represented, evaded, and perpetuated" "asymmetrical relations of power" between white actors and the Native groups being imitated – indeed, "it was… one of the foundations… for imagining and performing domination and power in America".[169] Imitating Native-Americans reinforced the unequal footing on which whites and Indigenous peoples in the United States stood – whereas the former group was powerful and normalized, the other was subjugated, exoticized, and totemized, and "playing Indian" reinforced that relationship by casting Indigenous identities as white playthings. In O'Keeffe's case, appropriating Native (and Hispanic) cultures in her artmaking and self-fashioning was to a certain extent part and parcel of living in Anglo-New Mexico, but it was also a symptom of her personal fascination with those peoples, which had been fundamental to her interest in the Southwest from the start. It also served her purposes by allow her to perform an unconventional, identifiably Southwestern persona to white visitors to

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a name "Klee Wyck", that she also used for a later story collection about her time among Indigenous groups). Carr also saw her involvement with Indigenous peoples as an effort to combat prevailing prejudices against them, though she also reinforced subtler forms of prejudice through her often-romanticizing images of their societies. However, in a major difference, Carr has also been repeatedly criticized for the troubling character of her artistic and personal appropriation of Indigenous subjects and motifs. This difference is perhaps attributable to the lesser subtlety of Carr's appropriative representations of Indigenous people, places, and things and Canadian society's greater willingness to interrogate the character of its own nationalism and the sins of the past committed against First Peoples. Carr and O'Keeffe briefly met at an exhibition of O'Keeffe's work at An American Place in 1930, where they discussed O'Keeffe's painting *The Lawrence Tree* at some length. Somewhat like O'Keeffe, Carr's work first gained public recognition in the 1920s and '30s, before reaching wider audiences in the postwar era, For writing on Carr's involvement with and representations of Indigenous cultures, see Douglas Cole, "The Invented Indian/The Imagined Emily", *BC Studies* 125/126 (2000), 147-62; Crosby, "Construction of the Imaginary Indian"; Leslie Dawn, *National Visions, National Blindness: Canadian Art and Identities in the 1920s* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 293-309; Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, 1992), 30-38; Gerta Moray, *Unsettling Encounters: First Nations Imagery in the Art of Emily Carr* (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2006); Janice Stewart, "Cultural Appropriations and Identificatory Practices in Emily Carr's 'Indian Stories'", *Frontier: A Journal of Women Studies* 26, no. 2 (2005), 59-72. For some connections between Carr and O'Keeffe and further interpretation of Carr's representations of Indigenous people, places, and things, see Udall, *Carr, O'Keeffe, Kahlo*, especially p. 147, on which Udall mentions their meeting and their shared interest in searching for artistic "equivalents" for what they observed in nature.

[169] Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 186.

her home and readers of media features about her and her work. As her fame rose, both her paintings and photographs of her helped her play a key role in determining how other Euro-Americans saw New Mexico's various non-white cultures. In many cases, and often through their inclusion of Indigenous and Hispanic things that O'Keeffe had collected, those images perpetuate stereotypes about and encourage appropriation of those cultures still today. Ultimately, collecting, playing with, displaying, and wearing Native-American goods was fundamental to the appeal of living in the region, for O'Keeffe and for so many others. In some sense the entire allure of the Southwest was grounded in the exotic appeal of "playing Indian".

Picturing Katsina Tithu

Painting the things that she collected was an important component of O'Keeffe's personal affectation and creative interpretation and expression of Southwestern identity, and she produced a vast and diverse array of pictures of still-life subjects that had resonance with Southwestern Indigenous cultures. Without delving too deeply into each of the many types of still-lifes that O'Keeffe made in New Mexico, I will suggest that when she painted Native-American jewelry and pots, whether made for Indigenous use or for the Anglo market, she revealed her connections to the Anglo commodification and distortion of Native material cultures.[170] When she depicted turkey feathers, eagle claws, or sheep horns, she ignored the symbolic and spiritual roles that these animals and their body parts played in Pueblo religious traditions, including the ceremonials that she so revered.[171] When she was photographed with and painted the human

[170] Like many Anglo collectors of Southwestern Indigenous material objects, O'Keeffe did notably have a preference for historical artifacts not originally intended for Euro-American consumption, as reflected in the many historical objects that she collected and displayed in her homes.

[171] An overview of the use and significance of these materials in Pueblo costume can be found in Virginia More Roediger, *Ceremonial Costumes of the Pueblo Indians: Their Evolution, Fabrication, and Significance in the Prayer Drama* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991). As Norby points out, like so many aspects of O'Keeffe's Southwestern work, photographs of her collecting bones and her subsequent paintings of those remains were typically described in the mainstream press through the lens of formalism or romantic fantasy,

skull that Candelario brought her, she showcased a callousness not only towards the life of the skull's original owner, but also, though its origin is unclear, likely the sanctity of local Hispanic or Indigenous burial traditions (an association that O'Keeffe suggests by painting the skull within a shattered pot (Figures 3.28 and 3.29)).[172] Lewthwaite has suggested that Candelario's photographs "evoke nostalgia for a 'vanishing' New Mexico", and O'Keeffe's paintings of the skull also allude to the state's supposedly diminishing racial and cultural heritage.[173]

However, if there was one aspect of Native-American material culture that seems to have most interested O'Keeffe, and that she featured repeatedly as her decades in New Mexico passed, it was katsina tithu. Katsinam, though they play a prominent role in the religious traditions of several Pueblo groups, are principally known as "the Spirit Beings of the Hopi world". They are often described as "intermediaries" or "messengers" and are "beings to whom all Hopi look for direction, heed, and give their prayers for the continuation of life". Residing with the Hopi for half the year, they participate in a variety of ceremonies in which they are embodied by Hopi men in costume. The katsinam (which include several hundred distinct spirits) also carve the katsina tithu during this time, and during certain ceremonies give the tithu as gifts, mainly to female children. The tithu are not meant to be played with or worshipped, but are instead typically "hung on the wall of the family room, where they remain… as blessings to the girl to

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with "no historical or cultural context for the subject matter: dead animals", though in many cases these skeletons were the product of government crackdowns on traditional grazing practices. Norby, "Visual Violence in the Land of Enchantment", 86, 100.

[172] In so doing, O'Keeffe also contributes further to the popular notion that the region's Hispanic and Indigenous population were dying out – see discussion of this trope earlier in the chapter. When Candelario brought the skull to Ghost Ranch as a gift, O'Keeffe suggested that it at first gave her "the creeps" but was nonetheless "very handsome". Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, August 8, 1942, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 93, Folder 1830. However, O'Keeffe later claimed that she had "found the skull in an arroyo where it had probably washed down some distance from the hills". See Corinne Geeting, "Nature, Broken and Dead, is Still Art", *Sacramento Union,* September 7, 1974, cited in "It Was a Man and Pot, 1942", Crocker Art Museum, accessed February 28, 2020, https://www.crockerart.org/collections/american-art-before-1945/artworks/it-was-a-man-and-a-pot-1942. A 1966 letter referring to a skull O'Keeffe owned as an "Indian skull" may suggest more about what O'Keeffe knew or suspected about its origins. See Vivian Robinson to Georgia O'Keeffe, June 30, 1966, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 211, Folder 3699.

[173] Lewthwaite, *A Contested Art,* 149.

whom it was given and her family." The tithu are personifications of the katsinam, often awarded in honor of virtuous behavior or in recognition of special achievements.[174]

These carved figures have a special significance that those without a detailed understanding of Hopi belief systems would be unlikely to grasp because of the inherent differences between Hopi and Euro-American worldviews. Notably, "To the Hopi, all things are imbued with life. Like people, animals and plants have spirits, but so do rocks, clouds, water, and earth."[175] In Hopi eyes katsina tithu are not just physical objects or commodities, but animate things with spiritual significance. Writes Hopi scholar Alph Secakuku: "…there is a special sacred spiritual connection to Katsina dolls that have been carved by one… initiated in the Katsina tradition… [they are not] simply carved figurines or brightly decorated objects".[176] However, like most Anglo-New Mexicans of her era, though she was interested in the spiritual reverence with which the figures were treated, there is relatively little evidence that O'Keeffe had any detailed knowledge of Hopi belief, including restrictions around Hopi religious knowledge, when she became interested in katsina tithu.[177]

O'Keeffe's interest in representing katsina tithu lingered from 1931 (see Figures 3.31 and

[174] The information on katsinam and quotes included in this paragraph are drawn from Helga Teiwes, *Kachina Dolls: The Art of Hopi Carvers* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991), 6-10, 33, and Pearlstone, *Katsina*, 44-47. For more information on katsinam and katsina tithu, see Lowell John Bean, ed., *Seasons of the Kachina: Proceedings of the California State University Hayward Conferences on the Western Pueblos, 1987-1988* (Novato, CA: Ballena Press/California State University, Hayward, 1989); Neil David, *Kachinas: Spirit Beings of the Hopi* (Albuquerque: Avanyu Publishing, 1993); and Alph H. Secakuku, *Following the Sun and Moon: Hopi Kachina Tradition* (Flagstaff: Northland Publishing and the Heard Museum, 1995), among many others. For an overview of Hopi religion, see John D. Loftin, *Religion and Hopi Life* (1991; reis., Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003).
[175] Teiwes, *Kachina Dolls*, 6-7.
[176] Alph Secakuku, "Authentic Hopi Katsina Dolls", in Pearlstone, *Katsina*, 162-65, 163.
[177] See Elsie Clews Parsons, *Hopi and Zuñi Ceremonialism* (Menasha, WI: Collegiate Press, 1933); and Parsons, *Pueblo Indian Religion*, especially vol. 1, 315-19. For information on the insensitive methods, including reliance on Indigenous "informants", used and imperfect conclusions drawn by early twentieth-century Southwesternist anthropologists, see Adam Fulton Johnson, "Secretsharers: Intersecting Systems of Knowledge and the Politics of Documentation in Southwesternist Anthropology, 1880-1930", (PhD. diss., University of Michigan, 2018).

3.38) all the way into the 1960s (Figure 3.39).[178] The longevity of this interest also speaks directly to the significance of tourist contexts for O'Keeffe's work in the long term. Unlike her dance pictures' indistinct allusions to the movements of Puebloan celebrants, these "kachina" pictures typically feature clear detail, with the figures' decoration in distinct fields of color playing into her simplifying style, while the intricacy of materials like feathers and string forces her towards greater attentiveness. The figures are often backgrounded by neutral color fields, but in other instances desert landscapes or closely cropped still-life scenes float behind the objects, which are invariably shown close-up, arguably monumentally, and at times so close that only a portion of the full tihu is visible. The result of these choices is often to make the figures seem wondrous yet strange, potent and materially, decoratively, and spiritually complex and yet inexplicable, elusively allusive, offering as they do little way for an Anglo audience to make sense of the feathers and string, colors and shapes, wide-set eyes and gentle hands of the now-giant figures.[179]

Corn has suggested that, in these and her other New Mexican still-life paintings, O'Keeffe did something relatively radical: in contrast to the prevailing practice of "Arranging a number of indigenous objects together on a table" (i.e. Figure 3.40), "when O'Keeffe chose to paint… a single kachina doll against a draped blanket, she was moving toward… her own way of

[178] Indeed, especially given that O'Keeffe confused the dance picture *Grey Blue & Black* with a painting of a tihu and mislabeled it as a "katchina", it is plausible to assert that her pictures of katsina tithu essentially replaced her earlier images of Pueblo ceremonials as efforts to convey her interest in and impressions of the visual and spiritual character of Indigenous New Mexican religious culture. Lynes describes the *Grey Blue & Black – Pink Circle* title mix-up in *Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, 389. As I have already suggested, other of her pictures from this era also convey her interest in and impressions of Pueblo religious belief and culture, but typically do so in less direct ways. I will also note that, alhough detailed anthropological research on Pueblo religious beliefs were being published during O'Keeffe's era in New Mexico and its possible that she may have been exposed to some of the thinking of the anthropologists working in the region, these studies seem more concerned with the intricacies of rituals and practices than the character of Pueblo belief systems.

[179] Wrote critic Edward Alden Jewell: "With the O'Keeffe magnified flowers, the O'Keeffe simplified landscape, the… skulls and bones strewn upon our… deserts – with these symbols we are familiar. That for which one cannot have been prepared is the curious manner in which they are now assembled… There may be those… who will pronounce it a mystic apotheosis". Edward Alden Jewell, "Georgia O'Keeffe Gives an Art Show", *New York Times*, January 7, 1936.

making a southwestern still life".[180] O'Keeffe isolated these figures, pulling them from the real contexts in which they might normally have been seen or used – in the hands or home of a Puebloan child whom they were supposed to help learn about their community's traditions or, more likely for O'Keeffe, arranged alongside other souvenirs within her or another collector's home, where they had already been stripped of their intended contextual meaning.

These paintings constitute a newly damaging element in O'Keeffe's New Mexican painting practice. Many of her pictures from the state might be said to encourage views of its Indigenous and Hispanic peoples that misunderstand and exoticize them and play into a tourist industry that has long been fueled by and in turn fueled the romanticization of these peoples in U.S. culture. However, in picturing (and often misconstruing) holy objects not intended for external dissemination in her *katsina tithu* pictures, she more directly inflicted damage on the spiritual wellbeing of her adoptive home's Native peoples and encouraged others to treat their religious and cultural traditions with similar callousness.

O'Keeffe's earliest depictions of katsina tithu, *Paul's Kachina* and *Kachina* from 1931 (Figures 3.31 and 3.38), both show the same figure, a Yellow A'hote katsina tihu that had been given to her by her friend Paul Jones.[181] In *Kachina* the tihu is framed by a red vertical border, while behind it is an ambiguous shape that may be a bleached animal scapula.[182] Meanwhile, in *Paul's Kachina* a circular closeup of the figure with the same bone behind it is installed in a chrome headlight frame, a decision that seems to reference drives through rural New Mexico that

[180] Corn, *Great American Thing*, 264.
[181] The Yellow A'hote is believed to represent Plains Indians because of its eagle feather headdress and is known as a good hunter who typically appears in "mixed dances", ceremonials that incorporate a variety of katsinam at once. Barton Wright, *Hopi Kachinas: The Complete Guide to Collecting Kachina Dolls* (Flagstaff: Northland, 1977), 114.
[182] Ramona Sakiestewa, "Katsinam: Memories and Reflections", in Lynes and Kastner, eds., *Georgia O'Keeffe in New Mexico*, 129.

O'Keeffe and Jones went on with other friends in the summer of 1931.[183] In this juxtaposition between headlight frame and tihu the impact of the circumstances by which O'Keeffe typically saw and acquired katsina figures (often from friends and acquaintances, but also generally through an Anglo commodity market) and her persistent tendency to interpret the places and things that interested her through a personal lens is laid bare. For O'Keeffe, "Paul's kachina" was less a living embodiment of the Yellow A'hote kachina spirit than a symbol of friendship and of shared personal history and interest in the mysteries of Southwestern Native cultures.

Though she used a variety of backdrops for her paintings of katsina tithu and never again represented her personal experience of the objects quite as openly as she did in *Paul's Kachina*, in terms of their attentiveness to detail and their recontextualization of the katsina figures from their roles in Hopi society to the contexts of O'Keeffe's aesthetics and personal experience of the Southwest, these paintings lay the groundwork for her later depictions of other tithu. Although a pair of her subsequent paintings (see Figure 3.41) label a carving of a "Kokopelli" by name, her other paintings and drawings of katsina tithu use generic names like *Kachina* or *Blue-Headed Indian Doll* (Figures 3.42 and 3.43). Even "Kokopelli" is an incorrect term, though it remains in common use – "Kookopölö" is more correct.[184] Apparently, like so many others, O'Keeffe

[183] Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [May 21, 1931], in Greenough, *My Faraway One*, 566-67. Jackson Rushing points out that these paintings were, like so many of O'Keeffe's other "New Mexican" still lifes, made while in New York and during "a year in which Manhattan was in thrall with the "Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts," staged in the Grand Central Galleries", an exhibition that was celebrated for the "Americanness" of its subject matter (an interpretation that serves as a reminder of the nationalist stakes and motivations underlying O'Keeffe's interest in New Mexico and the second Stieglitz Circle's project more generally). Rushing, "Pictures of Katsina Tithu: Georgia O'Keeffe and Southwest Modernism", 34-35. Indeed, seeing these first katsina tithu pictures through the lens of O'Keeffe's nationalist search for the "Great American Thing" has become the predominant interpretation of them, in large part because they were made in the same year as her *Cow's Skull – Red, White, and Blue* (Figure 3.26), a picture whose combination of American national symbolism and has often led to it being heralded as a quintessential expression of the nationalist stakes of O'Keeffe's regionalist artistic endeavor. See Rushing, "Pictures of Katsina Tithu: Georgia O'Keeffe and Southwest Modernism", 34-35, and Udall, *Carr, O'Keeffe, Kahlo*, 56-57.

[184] The "kokopelli" is likely the best-known Southwestern religious/spiritual symbol, and oftentimes a commercialized symbol of Southwestern culture. The commercialization of the kokopelli figure is described in Ekkehart Malotki, *Kokopelli: The Making of an Icon* (Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 1-4. O'Keeffe's interest in "Kokopelli" is also worth considering in light of her sexualization of Pueblo

believed that the Kookopölö katsina and the so-called "Kokopelli" figure, a common motif in ancient Southwestern rock art and ceramics, are one and the same, when in truth "Kokopelli" is a term that, though borrowed from the Hopi katsina name, is often applied to a similar-looking but hardly identical figure of unknown significance.[185] In correspondence she used neither term, instead calling the tihu "the little Indian snow man", "the little white man" or "a 'Snow God'".[186]

Though Rushing helpfully suggests that O'Keeffe's katsina pictures principally evince her "private experience" of these objects, and O'Keeffe's retention of museum bulletins focused on Indigenous material culture suggests that she did have an interest in the topic at the time, much of the evidence that he relies upon to suggest that O'Keeffe understood katsina tithu well is reflective of the state of her library upon her death rather than that of her understanding in the 1930s and '40s, when she produced the majority of her katsina tithu paintings. Though, even by 1931, O'Keeffe's attitude had shifted somewhat from the wide-eyed wonder of 1929, there is little evidence that even the ongoing exposure to Indigenous cultures from her visits across the next two decades led her to develop the sort of detailed understanding of Pueblo religious practices in general, or the role of katsinam in particular, that Rushing suggests she did.[187]

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dancers – both the ancient "Kokopelli" figure and the Hopi Kookopölö are known for possessing a large erect phallus. However, though the phallus was phased out of the Hopi figure at sometime around the turn of the twentieth century, Kookopölö katsina remained revered as fertility deities and were known for simulating intercourse as part of their ritual performances. See Malotki, *Kokopelli*, 34-48.

[185] Notably, the "Kokopelli" featured in ancient rock art is a fluteplayer, whereas the Hopi katsina is not.

[186] Georgia O'Keeffe to Maria Chabot, around December 14, 1942, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 51; and Georgia O'Keeffe to Maria Chabot, December 21, 1942, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 53.

[187] However, as mentioned earlier, some evidence of O'Keeffe's period consumption of information about New Mexican history and culture does exist. Furthermore, even if she bought and read the books on Indigenous cultures from the 1930s and '40s in her library as soon as they were published, there is little reason to believe that her outlook towards these peoples would have fundamentally changed – the authors of the texts, whether art scholars or anthropologists, were principally Euro-American elites, too, and though in some cases these texts fight against longstanding stereotypes about Native Americans, they also perpetuate others. The authors of texts on Indigenous art from the 1930s and '40s whom Rushing lists are: Edward A. Kennard, Frederick H. Douglas, René d'Harnoncourt, Ruth Underhill, and Wolfgang Paalen (note that Paalen was Austrian rather than Euro-American). Rushing, "Pictures of Katsina Tithu: Georgia O'Keeffe and Southwest Modernism", 34. Useful among these might be the 1941 catalogue *Indian Art of the United States* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1941), by Douglas and d'Harnoncourt, which, though it gave a newly prominent platform to Indigenous culture and decried the impact of

Through their representations of sacred Pueblo objects and events, both artists like O'Keeffe and contemporaneous scholars of Pueblo culture risked exposing knowledge that was not intended for external dissemination and that, when revealed to the uninitiated, could drain certain Indigenous traditions of their potency.[188] Regardless of what she did or did not know about katsina, the evidence of her correspondence and her pictures of katsina tithu suggest quite strongly that she viewed them principally through the romantic lens of her Anglo-modernist understanding of the region and its peoples. Though she had earlier stated that she hoped that her pictures would get to "the real meaning of things", her representations of katsina tithu seem quite far from that mark.

Hopi artist Ramona Sakiestewa suggests that in lieu of offering "a didactic interpretation of a katsina doll," O'Keeffe "Instead… explored them visually through line, shape, scale, and in a variety of settings."[189] Udall agrees, noting that O'Keeffe's "kachina" pictures evolved towards highlighting their abstract and geometrical elements with increasing frequency as time went on.[190] In focusing on the aesthetic qualities of katsina tithu, O'Keeffe was not alone. Interest in tithu within the Anglo community grew rapidly in the 1920s, and historian of Native-American art J.J. Brody has suggested that that growth was linked to a growing tendency to appreciate the figures as art objects, which was "primarily a response to their formal, aesthetic qualities".[191]

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the "white invader" on Indigenous life, also encouraged viewing of Indigenous material culture through a modernist lens and used it to nationalist ends (among other issues). O'Keeffe was in New York during the exhibition's run in early 1941, so it is possible that she was inspired to buy the catalogue because she attended it.

[188] As *A Man from the Desert* attests, fake katsina tithu, in particular, were often produced by Hopi carvers as efforts to respond to Anglo tourist demand for Pueblo religious artifacts while avoiding spreading sacred information. Sascha Scott tackles the issue of Pueblo secrecy and the alteration of objects made for Anglo consumption in *A Strange Mixture*, 156-68. See also Elizabeth Brandt, "On Secrecy and the Control of Knowledge: Taos Pueblo", in Stanton K. Tefft, ed., *Secrecy: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Human Sciences, 1980), 123-46; and Karen Lucic and Bruce Bernstein, "In Pursuit of the Ceremonial: The Laboratory of Anthropology's 'Master Collection' of Zuni Pottery", *Journal of Southwest Research* 50, no. 1 (2008), 1-102.

[189] Ramona Sakiestewa, "Katsinam: Memories and Reflections", 129.

[190] Udall, *Carr, O'Keeffe, Kahlo*, 60.

[191] According to Brody, this was in contrast to the collecting propelled primarily by ethnographic interest that had earlier driven katsina tithu into prominence as "a generic kind of southwestern souvenir". During the interwar period

In their attentiveness to form, these pictures illustrate O'Keeffe's admiration for Native-American craftsmanship – according to Chabot, O'Keeffe once remarked that she wished she could paint as well as a Diné sand painter: "Loving precision and detail as she does, she reveres Navajo sand painting".[192] However, in a 1931 letter O'Keeffe also made clear her fascination with the spiritual character of katsina tithu:

> at the end of my studio is a large pile of bones – a horses head – a cows head – a calfs head… A beautiful rams head… with a stone with a cross on it and an extra curly horn[.] And then I wonder what painting is all about[.] What will I do with those bones and sticks and stones – and the big pink sea shell that I got from an Indian… and the small katchina – Indian doll – with the funny flat feather on its head and its eyes popping out[?] – it has a curious kind of live stillness… When I leave the landscape it seems I am going to work with these funny things that I now think feel so much like it[.][193]

This passage on one hand illustrates the singular lens through which O'Keeffe viewed the "funny things" that she featured in her New Mexican still lifes, and the degree to which she linked animal remains, local material cultures, and the New Mexican landscape together in her mind. However, it also suggests the mysteriousness and unfamiliarity that she felt when encountering the katsina tihu, whose brief description suggests it may be the same one depicted in her 1931 pictures. In describing the "live stillness" that she felt in the object, she seems to signal her personal interest in and recognition of the spiritual power of such objects, one that echoes the spiritual power she found in the bones that she acquired and painted, which she had said "cut sharply to the center of something… keenly alive on the desert."[194] Ultimately, as this passage suggests, her pictures of katsina tithu are not just images of "simply carved figurines or brightly decorated objects" – they are attempts to capture the "material thingness" of the figures in order

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katsina tithu were valued as ethnic and regional curios as well as for their aesthetic qualities. Brody, "Kachina Images in American Art: The Way of the Doll", 148-51.

[192] See Maria Chabot, "Georgia O'Keeffe: Portrait of the Artist at Home", unpublished essay, Chabot Papers, Box 68, Folder 5.

[193] Georgia O'Keeffe to Henry McBride, July 1931, in Cowart and Hamilton, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters*, 203.

[194] Georgia O'Keeffe, January 1939, quoted in Doris Bry and Nicholas Callaway, *Georgia O'Keeffe: In The West* (New York: Knopf and Callaway, 1989), n.p.

to convey their regionally specific spiritual potency. But they are not much engaged with what these objects or the spirits they represent meant to Puebloans. Instead, they reflect an outsider's (lack of) understanding of what such objects were or meant.

O'Keeffe's knowledge of and perspective on Southwestern Native cultures were, in short, heavily influenced by mainstream Anglo-New Mexican understandings of those cultures.[195] The pictures that convey O'Keeffe's perceptions of the spiritual power of such curios, from *Cow's Skull* to *Kokopelli with Snow*, are therefore more than just efforts to construct a "Great American" painting practice through Regionalist evocation – they are also documents of the attitudes towards the interrelationships between race, nation, spirituality, and culture in that region that circulated within the artist's social spheres. Though we might therefore describe them as in some sense derivative, these representations nonetheless eventually exerted a substantial influence on how others saw the region and its Indigenous peoples. For some in the 1930s and '40s and many later, her pictures of Indigenous objects may even have assuaged latent guilt about the fate of America's Indigenous peoples. Writing about contemporaneous Canadian artists, historian Daniel Francis suggests that, "To the extent that they suffered any guilt over what had happened to the Native people, Whites relieved it by preserving evidence of the supposedly dying culture."[196] Though O'Keeffe's pictures were not purely documentary, one cannot help but wonder if there has not been a certain element of self-congratulation for taking an interest in and (supposedly) helping to preserve threatened cultures inherent in their appeal to many of her white supporters. As works that capture her own interest in affecting an Indigenous identity, offer viewers the opportunity to try their own hand at imaginatively "playing Indian"

[195] I should note that the false equivalence between the ancient "Kokopelli" figure and the modern Hopi Kookopölö was already being made by anthropologists beginning at least by 1937, several years before O'Keeffe did her paintings. Malotki, *Kokopelli*, 1-13.
[196] Francis, *The Imaginary Indian*, 36.

still today, and, arguably, even assuaged white guilt over destruction of Indigenous lifeways, these paintings are both a testament to historical practices that preserved and exacerbated the "asymmetrical relations of power" between Indigenous groups and Euro-Americans and active players in the perpetuation of such inequalities today.

"My Private Mountain": The Land in O'Keeffe's Landscapes

Though O'Keeffe's paintings of katsina tithu carried on from her earlier dance paintings in the role of directly portraying her personal understanding of New Mexican Indigenous religions, the group of paintings for which she may be best known, her Southwestern landscapes, also evince her developing understanding of the region's fundamental essence in a way that reveals the typicality of some of her attitudes towards its Native communities. However, more so than any other portion of her Southwestern oeuvre, these pictures of New Mexican land have negatively impacted Indigenous and Hispanic peoples in the state by declaring, naturalizing, and encouraging their dispossession at the hands of O'Keeffe and other Anglo settlers.

Countless critics and scholars have noted the spiritual character of O'Keeffe's relationship with New Mexico's natural world. As early as 1932, Vernon Hunter wrote that her "regard for nature seems virtually pantheistic. She… loves the sky, the wind, the solitary places and what grows therein, as she might love a person."[197] Wrote critic Alice Graeme in 1938: "Deeply absorbed in the whole mood and spirit of this mysterious, and still unspoiled frontier, Miss O'Keeffe seems to have gone to the very essence of the desert."[198] O'Keeffe herself often expressed similar sentiments – in a 1930 letter written after a car trip to Espanola, she wrote that

[197] Vernon Hunter, "A Note on Georgia O'Keeffe", *Contemporary Arts of the South and Southwest* 19 (1932), 7, quoted in Udall, *Carr, O'Keeffe, Kahlo*, 238.
[198] Alice Graeme, "Miss O'Keeffe's Desert Scenes Evoke Careful, Critical Study", *Washington Post*, January 16, 1938.

"It all seems like the heart of something… oh – so big – But God only knows what".[199]

O'Keeffe herself frequently suggested that she was looking for personal spiritual and aesthetic evolution and discovery in the New Mexican landscape rather than augmented understanding of the non-white peoples who inhabited it. Though the land stirred something spiritual within her, she did not seem much interested in Indigenous beliefs about the land's animate power. In 1930 she wrote that "watching the light and shadow over the desert and mountains… all interests me much more than the people – they seem almost not to exist".[200] The year before she wrote while looking out over a mountainous landscape, "I seem to be hunting for something of myself out there… that will give me a symbol for… the sense of life I get out here."[201] That she felt she had a personal connection to the New Mexican natural world is reinforced by her frequent exhortation to correspondents to greet it on her behalf, as when she asked Brett to give her "greetings to the sky and the Mountains – and the desert and the rising sun."[202] However, the notion that O'Keeffe's landscape painting practice was divorced from her interest in New Mexico's Indigenous and Hispanic communities and cultures is belied by her frequent placement of racially and culturally charged objects in front of landscape scenes. Furthermore, O'Keeffe seems to have been largely unaware of the extent to which her perspective on New Mexico as a whole, including and especially its natural features, was affected by her fascination with the state's non-white cultures and peoples.

O'Keeffe did notably demonstrate some sympathy towards the plight of Native Americans, as when, in an undated letter, she somewhat cryptically discusses "Our fair land

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[199] Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [August 3, 1930], in Greenough, *My Faraway One*, 547-48. In 1949 she described coming over a mountain and finding "a wide view that makes hundreds of miles of country look as if God had carved it out". Photocopy of Georgia O'Keeffe to "John and Rusty", November 14, 1949, Cramer Papers, Box 1, "Research – Fisk, AS Collection general" Folder.
[200] Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, June 16, 1930, in Greenough, *My Faraway One*, 534.
[201] Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [May 30, 1929], in Greenough, *My Faraway One*, 430.
[202] Georgia O'Keeffe to Dorothy Brett, April 7, 1931, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 181, Folder 3025.

where we have almost wiped out a whole people" and wonders about "our right to be here".[203] In 1943 she wrote to an acquaintance who was married to the editor of *Life* when she grew concerned about a dam project that threatened several Pueblos, and, though she does not seem to have ever engaged in sustained activism related to such issues, she did occasionally make further interventions on the behalf of Native Americans throughout the remainder of her life.[204]

She also evidently had some limited knowledge of the spiritual significance of certain land features to local Indigenous communities even from her earliest days in New Mexico – in a 1929 letter, she mentioned Taos Mountain, a sacred site to Taos Puebloans, by referring to it as "the Holy Mountain".[205] However, the evidence of her paintings and writings suggests that she had no qualms about using the New Mexican land to her own ends. Instead, she had significant success in encouraging the idea that her favorite painting sites in some sense "belonged" to her. In a typical remark, O'Keeffe's friend Alan Priest noted of her relationship with the Chama Valley in which Ghost Ranch and Abiquiu sit that, "You belong to it and it to you."[206] In 1977 O'Keeffe herself remarked while discussing the New Mexican landscape: "When I got to New Mexico that was mine".[207]

Among the painting sites that O'Keeffe most frequently featured in her work was one that

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[203] Georgia O'Keeffe to Rebecca Salsbury James, n.d., James Papers, Box 1a, Folder 33.
[204] See Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 152-53. A possible exception to the apparent lack of sustained activism on Native-American issues may be O'Keeffe's advocacy for the preservation of the De-Na-Zin region from coal mining, though this is debatable (see earlier note on this topic). As Norby notes, though Chabot praised O'Keeffe for her intervention regarding the dam, it was an initiative that the denizens of the threatened Pueblos had been fighting against for years and would continue long after. Their fight was ultimately unsuccessful, as a massive dam was built on Pueblo de Cochiti land in the late 1960s. Norby, "Visual Violence in the Land of Enchantment", 114-15. For example, in 1971 she met with a photographer and activist, Dan Budnik, who was concerned about the status of Taos Pueblo and Hopi and Diné land use. See Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 182, Folder 3042. O'Keeffe may have been encouraged to take a sympathetic stance towards Native Americans from even before her 1929 trip – an April, 1929 letter from Dorothy Brett to O'Keeffe marvels at their resilience in the face of white encroachment. See Dorothy Brett to Georgia O'Keeffe, May 6, 1929, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 181, Folder 3021.
[205] Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, [May 30, 1929], 429-30.
[206] Alan Priest to Georgia O'Keeffe, February 16, 1953, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 210, Folder 3669.
[207] *Georgia O'Keeffe*, VHS, directed by Perry Miller Adato (New York, NY: WNET, 1977), quoted in Norby, "Visual Violence in the Land of Enchantment", 95.

she referred to as the "Black Place", a group of dark hills in northwest New Mexico about 125 miles from Ghost Ranch and Abiquiu that are now mostly administered as the Bisti/De-Na-Zin Wilderness Area. O'Keeffe had first visited the site in the 1930s before beginning to work there more regularly in 1940, and between 1936 and 1949 she made more than two dozen pictures there (see Figures 3.44 and 3.45).[208] Letters sent after these visits demonstrate her great admiration for the site, as when she wrote Stieglitz in 1941 waxing lyrical about "those wonderful grey and black hills – stretching for miles".[209]

However, O'Keeffe knew from the outset that the land that she was painting on while visiting the "Black Place" was part of Diné territory – her initial exposure to the site in 1935, her second visit in 1936, and her rediscovery of it in 1940 all took place on trips during which she also attended Diné ceremonials.[210] O'Keeffe and Chabot would often evoke the possibility of visiting the "Black Place" by referring to potential trips to "the Navajo Country", and on the way there the two passed numerous Diné hogans.[211] Writes scholar Alicia Inez Guzmán, "O'Keeffe's

[208] Sascha Scott has compellingly connected this suite of paintings to O'Keeffe's interest in atomic-age nuclear desolation. She also includes a listing of the letters O'Keeffe wrote Stieglitz discussing visits to the "Black Place". Scott, "Georgia O'Keeffe's Black Place". Charles Eldredge mistakenly suggests that the site of the "Black Place" is on the Jicarilla Apache Reservation in *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 114.

[209] Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, September 29, 1941, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 92, Folder 1821. See also Georgia O'Keeffe to Henwar Rodakiewicz, ca. August 15, 1943, Library of Congress, Box 1, Folder 22; and Georgia O'Keeffe to Henwar Rodakiewicz, September 1945. A 1950 letter suggests that even after her many painting trips to Bisti, O'Keeffe's understanding of Diné culture remained quite limited, as she described attending a "wonderful" "Navajo ceremony that has to do with curing the sick and also something to do with a kind of adoration of fire that I don't understand". Georgia O'Keeffe to William Howard Schubart, December 23, 1950, in Cowart and Hamilton, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters*, 257.

[210] Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, August 28, 1935; and Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, September 1, 1936, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 90, Folder 1785; Lynes, "Introduction", in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, xxi. O'Keeffe referred to it as "a place where no one but Navajo Indians can live" in a 1940 letter. See Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, November 4, 1940, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 91, Folder 1812. In 1936 O'Keeffe also visited Monument Valley and Rainbow Bridge. Monument Valley is a part of Diné territory, while Rainbow Bridge is an important religious site for the Diné, among other Indigenous groups. See Georgia O'Keeffe to Henwar Rodakiewicz, July 1936, Library of Congress, Box 1, Folder 8.

[211] See Maria Chabot to Georgia O'Keeffe, March 28, 1941, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 4, Georgia O'Keeffe to Maria Chabot, March 2, 1941, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 5, Georgia O'Keeffe to Maria Chabot, March 25, 1941, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 6. See also Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, August 16-18, 1936, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe

Black Place… was not truly hers, then, but historically part of Diné ancestral lands", the region extending across parts of New Mexico, Utah, and Arizona defined by the four mountains through which the culture's first sacred beings emerged into the current world.[212] The Bisti has been occupied by Indigenous peoples for thousands of years, and by the Diné since at least the seventeenth century.[213] According to scholars Klara Kelley and Harris Francis, "Many Navajos believe that the whole earth is alive with socially interacting mortals and natural forces animated by… immortal 'inner forms'." Consequently, "Navajos may not rank places by their sacred significance", because all the world and the things within it are sacred. However, the ancestral region nonetheless retains a particular significance because it is the site of the Nation's beginnings, and living there allows the Diné to retain a unique connection to the past and to benefit from the "powers of blessing and protection" that the sacred mountains provide.[214]

A 1984 study of the De-Na-Zin region noted, in addition to Diné homes, several sites of particular religious and cultural significance in the area, including the site of an important past ceremonial, a location where a rare material used in ceremonial practices was gathered, a nineteenth-century battleground where several Diné were killed, and a site featuring ancient

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Archive, Box 90, Folder 1784, in which O'Keeffe notes after her first painting trip that the site "is on the edge of the Navajo reservation."

[212] Alicia Inez Guzmán, "Placing O'Keeffe", in Theresa Papanikolas and Joanna L. Groarke, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Visions of Hawaii* (Munich, London, and New York: Delmonico/Prestel, 2018), 47-59, 52. Chabot mentions passing trading posts and hogans in Maria Chabot to Alfred Stieglitz, June 10, 1944, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 193.

[213] For a history of the Bisti region, including its Diné inhabitants, their contact with and changes at the hand of Euro-American society, and the many attempts at economic development of the area (especially coal mining and oil drilling, which have been ongoing since the early twentieth century, and occurring alongside uranium mining on a major scale since roughly mid-century), see Garrick Bailey, "People of the Bisti", in David Scheinbaum, *Bisti* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 19-44. Diné occupation of the region was notably interrupted between 1863 and 1868, when the U.S. government attempted to ethnically cleanse and forcibly and traumatically relocated much of the population to eastern New Mexico in what became known as the "Long Walk of the Navajo".

[214] Klara Bonsack Kelley and Harris Francis, *Navajo Sacred Places* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 1-2, 92, Robert S. McPherson, *Navajo Land, Navajo Culture: The Utah Experience in the Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 5, Peter Iverson and Monty Roessel, *Diné: A History of the Navajos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 36, Klara Kelley and Harris Francis, *A Diné History of Navajoland* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2019).

petroglyphs.[215] Beginning in the late 1970s, O'Keeffe donated to the Environmental Defense Fund in part in order to fight against coal mining in the area, though whether she was motivated by sensitivity to Indigenous land rights or a desire to preserve it for her own use is unclear.[216]

It is more clear that O'Keeffe felt that she shared a special, somewhat proprietary relationship with the area. In 1944 Chabot wrote Stieglitz describing the "Black Place" as "Georgia's country", and in a 1941 essay she noted that O'Keeffe called it "my Black Place".[217] O'Keeffe remarked in her memoir that it was "Such a beautiful, untouched lonely-feeling place – part of what I call the Far Away."[218] In her many vivid written descriptions of its desolate beauty, and in her insistence on incorporating the area into her own language for New Mexico with terms like the "Far Away" and the "Black Place" in lieu of Diné-derived names of Bisti and De-Na-Zin (or even other terms in common use for the area or nearby landmarks), O'Keeffe incorporated the site into her highly personal understanding of New Mexico. When she completed a pair of paintings of the site from memory in 1949, she distorted its colors red and green, further incorporating it into that personal language (Figure 3.46). Lynes has pointed out how, though O'Keeffe's paintings of the Badlands from the early 1940s were "a relatively faithful record of what can be seen at the site[,]… later in the 1940s, she increasingly used them as a framework for abstraction, often making… V- and zigzag shapes… the dominant elements

[215] Frederick F. York, *Historic Cultural Resources in the Arch Joint Venture Project Area Along the De-Na-Zin Wash* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Office of Contract Archaeology, 1984). See esp. 22-25, 39-43. De-Na-Zin is a corrupted version of the Diné phrase for "standing crane", and it draws its name from these petroglyphs, which depict cranes.
[216] See Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 190, Folder 3218.
[217] Maria Chabot to Alfred Stieglitz, June 10, 1944, 193; Chabot, "Georgia O'Keeffe: Portrait of the Artist at Home", 7.
[218] O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, n.p. O'Keeffe had used the same phrase in a 1943 letter to Stieglitz. Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, October 20, 1943, Stieglitz O'Keeffe Archive, Box 94, Folder 1845. In 1936 O'Keeffe described her longing for the "Far Away" as her "wishing for something in myself that seems to get lost in the town". Georgia O'Keeffe to Henwar Rodakiewicz, January 1936, Library of Congress, Box 1, Folder 7.

in her compositions."[219] In so doing she incorporated the "Black Place" into her broader practice of "'possessing' a motif through distillation to its barest essentials".[220] If it was, as Guzmán suggests, "not truly hers", one would never know it from her paintings.

Even more striking is the relationship that O'Keeffe felt she shared with Cerro Pedernal (known as "Tsiping" in local Indian languages), a large mesa that overlooks the Piedra Lumbre Valley, in which Abiquiu and Ghost Ranch both sit. Starting in 1936 she made dozens of pictures of the mountain, works that typically show it either looming above the valley or alongside floating, monumentalized bones or flowers (see Figures 3.47-49). In addition to admiring and painting the mesa from her homes below, she sometimes hiked on it, picking flowers or taking in the view.[221] As with "the Black Place", O'Keeffe described her relationship with Pedernal in terms of possession – in 1973, she stated that "That is my private mountain… It belongs to me. God told me if I painted it enough, I could have it.[222] In 1937 she painted the mountain behind her Ghost Ranch home in a painting called *The House I Live In* (perhaps implying that the mountain was part of that "house"), and in 1941 she titled a picture of the mountain and the valley below *My Front Yard* (Figures 3.50 and 3.48) (a painting whose title and perspective also invite the viewer to imagine themselves in her shoes, perhaps as possessors of the yard or the mountain in their own right). In 1943 Chabot called it "her mountain", and in 1949 Hunter agreed, calling it "your Pedernal".[223] After O'Keeffe's death in 1986, her ashes were scattered on its summit.[224] Eventually, its association with O'Keeffe made it "among the most recognized

[219] Lynes, "Georgia O'Keeffe and New Mexico: A Sense of Place", 46.
[220] Eldredge, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 116.
[221] Georgia O'Keeffe to Henwar Rodakiewicz, July 1940, Library of Congress, Box 1, Folder 15.
[222] Wallach, "Under a Western Sky", 26. O'Keeffe frequently referred to it as "my mountain" – see, for example, Georgia O'Keeffe to Henwar Rodakiewicz, Fall 1944, Library of Congress, Box 1, Folder 23.
[223] Maria Chabot to Alfred Stieglitz, May 4, 1943, in Lynes and Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*, 122; Vernon Russell Hunter to Georgia O'Keeffe, February 1949, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 196, Folder 3352.
[224] Poling-Kempes, *Valley of Shining Stone*, 203.

landforms in the world."[225] Near the end of her life, the U.S. government considered renaming the mesa "O'Keeffe Mountain", though she rejected the idea after a public outcry.[226]

However, though it is popularly associated with O'Keeffe, Cerro Pedernal is also a site of great significance to several Native groups. Writes one historian, it "has become sacred ground to several… tribes. Like… all of the region of Abiquiu, Pedernal is part of the ancestral lands of the Rio Grande Tewa, who have ceremonial sites on… [its] sides." Some believe that a key figure in the Diné creation story, Changing Woman, was found there, and it also figures prominently in the Jicarilla Apache origin tale. Artifacts from 7000 BCE have been discovered there, and its rock has likely been used by Native groups far and wide for at least 10000 years.[227]

However, there is no hint of these historical and cultural significances in O'Keeffe's depopulated, mystical landscapes. In an early 1940s letter, she suggested that "My world here is a world almost untouched by man".[228] From 1982: "I have seen this extraordinary… country

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[225] Lesley Poling-Kempes, "A Call to Place", in Lynes, Poling-Kempes, and Turner, *Georgia O'Keeffe and New Mexico*, 79.

[226] Norby, "Visual Violence in the Land of Enchantment", 119, 121-24. The proposal was revived after O'Keeffe's death, as well.

[227] The Tewa are a subgroup of the Pueblo people, and include the Hopi, among other groups. Poling-Kempes, *Valley of Shining Stone*, 10-11. For more on the history of the significance of the land to Pueblo peoples, see James E. Snead, *Ancestral Landscapes of the Pueblo World* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2008); Malcolm Ebright, Richard W. Hughes, and Rick Hendricks, *Four Square Leagues: Pueblo Indian Land in New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014); and Malcolm Ebright and Rick Hendricks, *Pueblo Sovereignty: Indian Land and Water in New Mexico and Texas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019). For more on the history of the Jicarilla Apache, see Veronica E. Velarde Tiller, *The Jicarilla Apache Tribe: A History* (1983; reis., Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992). See also Morris Edward Opler, *Myths and Tales of the Jicarilla Apache Indians* (New York: American Folk-Lore Society, 1938). For more on Cerro Pedernal among Pre-Columbian peoples, see A. Helene Warren, "The Ancient Mineral Industries of Cerro Pedernal, Rio Arriba County, New Mexico", in Charles T. Siemers, *Guidebook of Central-Northern New Mexico* (Albuquerque: New Mexico Geological Society, 1974), 87-93. Undated notes in the Chabot Papers, Box 98, Folder 6, possibly from the 1940s, indicate that Chabot, at least, knew about the mountain's long history and significance, from ancient groups to the Diné, so O'Keeffe may have also known about that history or learned about it from Chabot.

[228] Note that this letter was written from Abiquiu. Georgia O'Keeffe to Cady Wells, early 1940s, in Cowart and Hamilton, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters*, 243. This is one of many letters in which O'Keeffe refers to the area as "my world" – see Georgia O'Keeffe to Henwar Rodakiewicz, Summer 1944, Library of Congress, Box 1, Folder 23; and Georgia O'Keeffe to Rebecca Salsbury James, October 12, 1962, James Papers, Box 1a, Folder 34. In a 1971 profile she said that "This is my world… There is my mesa." Janis, "Georgia O'Keeffe at Eighty-Four", 114. She also called it "my country" – see Georgia O'Keeffe to John Marin, August 12, 1947, Marin Family Papers, Section 1, Part 1, Group 1, Folder 16; and Georgia O'Keeffe to John Marin, n.d., Marin Family Papers, Section 1, Part 1, Group 1, Folder 16.

before anyone was living in it."[229] Indeed, her approach towards not just beloved sites like the "Black Place" and Pedernal but northern New Mexico more broadly indicates that she felt that the region was an empty virgin land that she could not only evoke as no previous artist could but that was also literally and spiritually available to her to discover and interpret to her own ends.

As Norby points out, O'Keeffe emphasized the region's supposed "wonderful emptiness" in interviews as well, and, as mentioned earlier, that interpretation "conveniently omitted centuries of Abiqueño peoples' presence, … histories, and perspectives" (as well as those of many other local communities) as it fetishized, as Anglo visitors had for decades, the area's rusticity and underdevelopment.[230] Adds scholar Michelle Bae-Dimitriadis, "When place is backgrounded, it functions as an unimportant element and forecloses acknowledging land in terms of Indigenous sovereignty. In works of art, place is generally portrayed as static--a container that holds objects or dwellers."[231] Though it often goes unmentioned in interpretations of her work, O'Keeffe's consistent effort to conjure the sense of certain places, and especially northern New Mexico, without representing the people who lived there or the encroachments of modernity happening there frequently lends her pictures a sort of timelessness, an ethereal character that, appealing though it may be to many, also effaces people and perspectives that failed to jibe with her own. Indeed, these other perspectives seem to have been beside the point. This approach echoes what art historian Albert Boime called the "magisterial gaze" in American landscape painting, whereby white settler artists and writers gave form to the doctrine of Manifest Destiny by painting the land as open and available for exploration and use, often from

[229] Georgia O'Keeffe to James Hall, February 1, 1982, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 190, Folder 3256.
[230] Norby, "Visual Violence in the Land of Enchantment", 95, 125. Norby quotes from Amei Wallach, "Georgia O'Keeffe", *Newsday*, October 30, 1977. Sylvia Rodriguez writes about how "rusticity" and "underdevelopment" were key to the region's appeal from the late nineteenth century onward in "Art, Tourism, and Race Relations in Taos: Toward a Sociology of the Art Colony", 80.
[231] Michelle Bae-Dimitriadis, "Land-Based Art Criticism: (Un)learning Land Through Art", *Visual Arts Research* 47, no. 2 (2021), 102-114.

the perspective of a grand vista – an element of O'Keeffe and other landscape painters' works that surely played into the celebration of the region's natural beauty and supposed quasi-emptiness that helped make it so attractive and exciting to both regular tourists and modernists alike.[232] A similar idea has been voiced by scholar Macarena Gómez-Barris, who identifies "the extractive view" whereby Indigenous presence on the land is rendered invisible amidst focus on the potential for settler exploitation.[233] Similarly, O'Keeffe's many grand paintings of vast, empty, beautiful, undeveloped land reinforce the region's availability to her and others who might visit it in person or imaginatively through her paintings. Though the Bisti Badlands and Cerro Pedernal were not densely crowded places when O'Keeffe visited them, from the evidence of her pictures we would never know of the hogans or trading posts she passed by as she moved through Diné land to the "Black Place", or the Abiquiu buildings that she looked over as she gazed at Pedernal, let alone the region's Native peoples' long histories with these places. In her vision, these sites are untouched, serene, ever available for the consumption of the Anglo visitor.

To be clear, it seems all but certain that O'Keeffe chose to paint the "Black Place" and Cerro Pedernal again and again principally for aesthetic and personal reasons, as she herself suggested. However, we might justifiably wonder whether part of the appeal of these paintings was their construction of a world that seemed inviting, peaceful, and beautiful to white viewers. Likewise, part of these works' appeal was the sense that they seemed inherently spiritual, not just because O'Keeffe found them beautiful or visually interesting, but because of her feeling that they, like virtually all of New Mexico, had a special spiritual meaning as well, a spirituality that she perceived (at least in part) because of a hazy notion of a connection between land and

[232] Albert Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting, c. 1830-1865* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991).
[233] See Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

religion among Hispanic and Indigenous groups in the region.[234] Despite perceiving many of the places she painted (and New Mexico more broadly) through a spiritual lens, hers was an imprecise, distinctively Anglo understanding of the spiritual significance of the land rather than an acknowledgement of Native beliefs in the animate power of the natural world or a recognition of the spiritual significances of particular sites like Cerro Pedernal or the Bisti area. The actual spiritual importance of these places to Native peoples was less important than their potential for incorporation into O'Keeffe's Anglo-modernist investigation and embrace of the region's supposed grander spiritual character in both her life and her painting practice.

We know relatively little about if or when O'Keeffe learned about Abiquiu's rich history, or of the meaning of Cerro Pedernal to the Diné, Jicarilla Apache, or Tewa peoples, or of the Diné homeland to that people, or of the religious and cultural significance of other northern New Mexican sites that she pictured.[235] Regardless, it seems clear that she was able to walk the tightrope of seeing the region simultaneously as deeply informed by the presence and history of

[234] Not all agreed with O'Keeffe that the "Black Place" was beautiful or worth visiting – friends mocked her for visiting it after her 1936 visits. See Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, September 2, 1936, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 194, Folder 1785.

[235] Of course, the "Black Place" and Pedernal were not the only northern New Mexican sites that O'Keeffe was interested in or painted repeatedly, or that had substantial historical, cultural, or spiritual significance to local Indigenous and Hispanic communities. As Norby points out, the Piedra Lumbre Valley in which Abiquiu (or, in Tewa, Avéshu) sits "was… the site of a number of events important to American Indian and Hispano histories", having, at various points since the town was settled in 1742, served as a Tewa settlement, a regional trading post and nexus in the Native-American slave trade, the site of witch hunt trials prompted by efforts to forcibly Christianize the local population, and the home of an U.S. federal Indian agency, a complex history that affected the ancestors of 20th-century Abiqueños and in many cases prominently featured the structure that would later become O'Keeffe's home there. Meanwhile, the slopes of Taos Mountain (Figure 3.51) hold Blue Lake, which is believed to be the origin of all Taos Puebloans and the spiritual home of their ancestors and is their principal water source and their religion's most holy site. Marcia Keegan, *The Taos Pueblo and Its Sacred Blue Lake* (Santa Fe: Clear Light, 1991), 47-52. U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Subcommittee on Indian Affairs, *Taos Indians – Blue Lake Amendments: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*. 91st Cong., 2nd sess., July 9 and 10, 1970, 285-86. Bear Lake, which O'Keeffe pictured several times in the early 1930s after being introduced to it by Tony Luhan (Figures 3.52-53), is also a holy site among Taos Puebloans as part of the broader network of sacred waters in the region. John J. Bodine, "The Taos Pueblo Blue Lake Ceremony", *American Indian Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (1988), 91-105, 94, *Taos Indians – Blue Lake Amendments*, 221, Hunter Drohojowska-Philip, *Full Bloom: The Art and Life of Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York and London: Norton, 2004), 305. One imagines that, upon further investigation, the significance to local Native communities of other northern New Mexican sites that O'Keeffe found inspirational might likewise be identified and described.

its non-white peoples and as open, empty, and ripe for claiming, as so many Anglos had before.[236] If O'Keeffe was indeed troubled by corporate and government exploitation of the northern New Mexican landscape out of genuine concern for the rights of the region's Indigenous peoples, she seems to have been quite unaware of the rather different sort of exploitation that she was enacting as she sought out the beauty of grand vistas, the excitement of the unfamiliar, and a sense of personal and professional independence through her life and work in the Southwest. Ultimately, when she turned the Bisti Badlands into "Georgia's country", or Cerro Pedernal into her "private mountain", she became, in a sense, just another settler, dissolving Indigenous sovereignty and agency to her own ends.

…

It seems likely that the reason why O'Keeffe so often featured places and things of religious significance to Hispanic and Indigenous communities in her work is that she felt that they had a foreign spiritual power, the mystical resonance to which she referred when ascribing "a curious kind of live stillness" to one of her katsina tithu. However, if channeling that spiritual feeling through the lens of Indigenous- and Hispanic-related objects and sites was key to her own understanding of the Southwest, it was also fundamental to the way in which she conveyed that sense of place in her pictures. Whether they included obvious markers of local religious traditions like katsina tithu or Penitente crosses or not, virtually all of her New Mexican

[236] This attitude seems directly related to the notion that America's Indigenous peoples were "vanishing" out of existence. Sylvia Rodriguez has noted the critical role that the perceived combination of underdevelopment and exoticism had on the development of the Taos art colony. She writes, "Several local features are credited with having waves of artists and writers to northern New Mexico. These include the 'spectacular' natural scenery and the longstanding presence of American Indians and Hispanics… Another important feature was the region's isolation and rusticity, … its underdevelopment… In comparison to the industrial East and Midwest whence the painters came, the place was arid, empty, rugged, and foreign." Rodriguez, "Art, Tourism, and Race Relations in Taos: Toward a Sociology of the Art Colony", 80. The notion that New Mexico's natural world was both empty/ripe for Anglo discovery and deeply informed by Native presence is well-illustrated in a series of passages from Lawrence's "The Woman Who Rode Away", which describe "her adobe house among those eternal green or pinky-brown hills, void as only the undiscovered is void", but suggest that amidst these "eternal" "blank hills" the protagonist still harbors a "peculiar vague enthusiasm for unknown Indians", hoping to find the "secret haunts of these timeless, mysterious, marvellous Indians of the mountains." Lawrence, "The Woman Who Rode Away", 49-51.

paintings rely upon the invocation of a mysticism that was fundamentally tied to the ostensibly exotic character of the state's non-white peoples and that deeply informed perceptions of the region from Taos to Manhattan. Though the regionalist projects of the other members of the second Stieglitz Circle also sought to capture the "spirit" of particular people, locations, and things, O'Keeffe's Southwestern work seems to distinguish itself by its commitment to conveying her perception of the exotic *spiritual* element inherent in the perceived "spirit" of that region.

What this attitude towards New Mexico reinforced, however, was an outlook that was not only informed by, but also replicated and encouraged, and still replicated and encourages, an Anglo gaze that was both shaped by and still perpetuates settler colonialism in northern New Mexico. Anthropologist Barbara Babcock offers a reminder that "a colonialist gaze entails domination and mastery, representation and hierarchy, and requires such representations to reiterate its control."[237] Sylvia Rodriguez adds that "Mystification is… a… process which perpetuates the social order by suffusing it with a shared sense of awesome, transcendent meaning."[238] Writes Daniel Francis: "By appropriating elements of Native culture, non-Natives have tried to establish a relationship with the country that pre-dates their arrival and validates their occupation of the land."[239] In O'Keeffe's assertions of possession and ownership over not just sites like the Bisti Badlands and Cerro Pedernal, but the portion of northern New Mexico now often labelled "O'Keeffe country" more generally, she demonstrated a feeling of mastery over that land that was typical of the Anglo-New Mexican community of which she was a part, and has significant appeal for those seeking to root American national cultural identity in

[237] Barbara A. Babcock, "First Families: Gender, Reproduction, and the Mythic Southwest", in Weigle and Babcock, eds., *The Great Southwest of the Harvey Company and the Santa Fe Railway*, 207.
[238] Rodriguez, "Art, Tourism, and Race Relations in Taos: Toward a Sociology of the Art Colony", 94.
[239] Francis, *The Imaginary Indian*, 190.

modernist works that engaged with supposedly antimodern regional cultures.[240] In her mystifying paintings of the region she offered a vision that still today encourages viewers to consider it through the lens of her personal understanding rather than those of the other cultures that had declared the significance of sites like Bisti and Pedernal long before she did (and that she only vaguely and partially understood).

O'Keeffe began to contribute to the broader American current of romanticization of the Southwest almost as soon as she displayed her first canvases of the area in New York in early 1930. Even these earliest paintings offered an implicit narrative about her exploration of the region's exotic climes and cultures, and the myth of O'Keeffe as a reclusive, mystical, and wise denizen and interpreter of the northern New Mexican high desert, as what some have called the "Sage of Abiquiu", began to take hold even in the 1930s, well before she moved there permanently in 1949.[241] In the catalogue for her 1943 retrospective at the Art Institute of Chicago, Daniel Catton Rich notes "her increasing absorption with a motif which she sees daily from her… studio. These hills have come to mean to O'Keeffe what Mont Ste. Victoire meant to Cézanne."[242] As O'Keeffe morphed into perhaps the nation's best-known artist, the connection that she supposedly shared with the area came to be celebrated more frequently and openly. By 1976, a *Newsweek* article could apparently be entitled "O'Keeffe Country" without a second thought.[243] In these comments we see the success of her efforts to claim the New Mexican high desert for her own.

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[240] Writes Norby of the "O'Keeffe country" nickname: "this seemingly harmless slogan falsely renders this geographical area historically and physically – as though it were empty beyond the artist's presence." Norby, "Visual Violence in the Land of Enchantment", 87.
[241] Wanda Corn notably refers to O'Keeffe as "The Sage of Abiquiu" in her 2006 article about a 1980 interview with the artist – see Wanda Corn, "The Sage of Abiquiu", *American Art* 20, no. 3 (2006), 26-31.
[242] Daniel Catton Rich, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1943), 35. From 1946: "she paints the mountains of New Mexico as though they answered when she spoke." James Thrall Soby, "To the Ladies", *Saturday Review*, July 6, 1946, 14-15.
[243] Douglas Davis, "O'Keeffe Country", *Newsweek*, Nov. 22, 1976, 76-78.

The thousands of tourists from all around the world who visit (and often retire to) Santa Fe, Taos, and Abiquiu to consume the O'Keeffe legend today are proof that her paintings continue to do the work of colonialism by encouraging those visitors to occupy the Southwest as they revel in its exotic mystery.[244] Though the reductive, romantic attitudes towards the region that her work encouraged were also celebrated by many other Anglo denizens of and visitors to the state long before and after her tenure there, we might well wonder what the region might look like now had O'Keeffe never travelled there. Ultimately, the singular power of her work in shaping Santa Fe, Taos, and Abiquiu into the tourist centers they are today, where her work and that of other Anglo artists are a central attraction, engagement with local Indigenous and Hispanic cultures and communities often exists on a reductive and romantic plane that echoes her own, and the wants and needs of those non-Anglo communities often remain secondary concerns, is undeniable. Her works are likely the most influential and prominent examples of what Michael Riley called the "carpeting of the [Southwestern] cultural landscape with alluring but shallow images of ethnic identity". However, that her images still serve as such a powerful colonialist force is more a testament to the unusual subtlety and seductiveness of her pictures and the attitudes they convey, as well as the remarkable endurance of the notion that they reflected harmless national, regional, mystical, and modernist messages, than the atypicality within her time and milieux of the ideologies towards Indigenous and Hispanic cultures that they reinforce.[245] In that sense, O'Keeffe's work was utterly typical.

[244] As Wanda Corn points out, though many in New York and New Mexico may have bought into and perpetuated uncomplicated, positive, even reverent views of O'Keeffe's place within Southwestern culture and memory, not all have – for some New Mexicans, and perhaps especially those in the arts, O'Keeffe's fame and omnipresence are, in Corn's words, "oppressive". She points to David Bradley and Elizabeth A. Kay as two artists whose works have looked askance at O'Keeffe's legacy. Corn, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Living Modern*, 269-71.

[245] Even setting aside the particular potency and influence of O'Keeffe's works, Bae-Dimitriadis reminds us of the power of landscape paintings of the American West to do the work of colonialism: "As settlers continued to set their eyes westward, American landscape painting continued to document and celebrate the presence of modern (or White

European) civilization in the Western United States, recording progress and exalting industrial development... Such symbolism served to commemorate European settlers' monumental achievements over land and ultimately supported the settlers' territorial project by replacing Indigenous presence and sovereignty with settlers' desires, occupations, and enterprise, all of which visually reinforce sovereignty. This visual narrative justifies White settlers' emplacement by portraying the land as empty in origin, and European discovery and expansion as worthy of historic commemoration." Bae-Dimitriadis, "Land-Based Art Criticism: (Un)learning Land Through Art".

CHAPTER IV

"A Truly Primitive Pantheism": Arthur Dove and the Mystical Art of Racialized Abstraction

…Dove is different. His art exists for its own sake. Its roots are in the irresponsible play-instincts of children no less than in the fetishes of savages and their use of shapes and colors for emotional expression. His pictographs… reveal a truly primitive pantheism, a worship of the sun, an awareness of the cycles of life and death in nature, of decaying tree trunks returning to the soil while the wind blows and new life begins.

- Duncan Phillips, "The Art of Arthur G. Dove", 1938[1]

If Georgia O'Keeffe and John Marin's careers reflected certain larger trends in how Americans of a certain social background, and especially U.S. artists of a certain disposition and status, sought out, perceived, and depicted racial difference in the early to mid-twentieth century, Arthur Dove's life and work represented another. While other artists devoted significant segments of their lives and careers to joining swells of vacationers and long-term visitors to exotic American regions, for Dove, a combination of health issues, family concerns, and financial precarity born of inconsistent commercial success likely made purchasing a home in New Mexico, Maine, or elsewhere an unrealistic prospect even if he had wished to do so. Aside from a yearlong trip to Europe in 1908-9, Dove spent his entire adult life living in Connecticut and New York state.[2] Instead, his exposures to and visual reflections on racial difference

[1] Duncan Phillips, "The Art of Arthur G. Dove", in *Arthur G. Dove: Exhibition of Recent Paintings, 1938* (New York: An American Place, 1938), n.p. A copy of the essay can be found in the Dove Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.
[2] A handy timeline of Dove's life written by his brother Paul can be found in the Dove Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, and a more organized accounting can be found in Barbara Haskell, *Arthur Dove* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1974), 124-31. Another useful overview can be found in Ann Lee Morgan, *Arthur Dove: Life and Work, With a Catalogue Raisonné* (Newark, London, and Toronto: University of Delaware Press and Associated University Presses, 1984), 11-37.

typically occurred through the more relatable lenses of everyday experience and cultural media. In contrast to most of his peers, Dove's adult life was in many respects that of an ordinary middle-class white man living a quiet life in the New York City exurbs.

However, his longstanding interest in radical abstraction made Dove a very different artist from most of his confreres in Stieglitz' Circle on a stylistic level.[3] Indeed, beginning with his earliest collaborations with Stieglitz (whom he first met in New York City in 1909 or 1910) Dove was often singled out as a pioneering, and, eventually, highly influential American abstractionist. Though the interwar-period works of Marin, O'Keeffe, Hartley, and Strand all blurred lines between representation and expressionism or formal experimentation, and Dove's did too, his pictures seemed to approach that boundary from the other direction, with allusion to and direct depiction of subjects often subservient to distillation of feelings about them through the jumbled collage ingredients or undulating fields of color that constituted his lyrical, expressionist semi-abstractionism (see, for example, Figures 4.1 and 4.2). According to Dove's patron Duncan Phillips, his were "symbolical image[s]" and "sensuous and lyrical pictographs" that were "abstracted equivalents to the character of his immediate environment and his everyday experience."[4] By contrast, his fellow Circle members typically presented much more recognizable scenes. Dove was a more intuitive and, arguably, expressive artist than his Circle counterparts, which may have led him to greater depths of abstraction in his work. While Marin splintered spaces *around* recognizable people, objects, and places and rendered details with calligraphic flourishes, Dove often sacrificed legibility for expression, shattering subjects wholesale as he fashioned compositions focused on the visual rhythm of subjects and elusive

[3] Though Stieglitz' own work in the 1920s and '30s grew increasingly concerned with pure form, as a photographer his work remained rooted in direct representation in a way that Dove's did not need to be.
[4] Duncan Phillips, "Foreword", in Frederick S. Wight, *Arthur G. Dove* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958), 13-17, 13.

half-allusions to real things. Quite often, his priorities seem to have been expressive experimentation and accurate depiction of the essential character of a subject rather than direct visual representation. To call Dove's pictures "equivalents" may have undersold how he perceived them – as truer versions of the things than the things themselves.

A major consequence of Dove's stylistic tendencies was, then, that his pictures often expressed feelings about racialized subjects in less obvious ways than did those of some of his colleagues – while these others typically presented easily recognizable people, places, and objects from their encounters with other racial groups, in Dove's case the influence of such encounters is often shrouded by his tendencies towards abstractionism and a deeply personal expressive idiom. Consequently, the role of racial thinking in Dove's artmaking has often gone unnoticed in commentaries on his work. However, the central contention of this chapter is that his work, along with many of the historical and critical writings about that work over the last century, was deeply influenced by his understanding of his own (white, elite) identity and his stereotypical thinking about non-white people and groups.

In focusing on the influence of cultural sources on Dove's beliefs and actions and the commonness or normalcy of his life on Long Island, this chapter perhaps risks implying that he was less to blame for his racial attitudes than were his Circle counterparts or other primitivizing modernists. Though Long Island does not have the same sort of racialized regional reputation that New England or the Southwest do, Dove nonetheless found in it his own sort of Xanadu – an exotic excitement and comfort in part born of the opportunity to construe the area's non-white peoples as others. By highlighting Dove's connections to broader paradigms within interwar American society and culture in what follows here, I hope not to absolve him of guilt for participating in and helping to propel racist social and cultural systems through his life and

artistic work, nor to downplay the important and influential platform that his career offered him, but rather to implicate him alongside many others (including and especially many other artists and other creatives) as culpable participants in the work of American racism.

Dove and Stieglitz: A Philosophy of Essentialization

Dove's work was arguably the purest distillation of Stieglitz' artistic precepts that, by foregrounding the importance of articulating fundamental essences through a modernist visual language, led many of his admirers to introduce monolithic and stereotypical thinking about race and other forms of identity into their work. To a greater extent than that of the other Circle artists, Dove's work seems to be everywhere and always concerned with intuitive feeling – including feelings about people. When asked "What constitutes American painting?", Dove responded "it's what is in the artist that counts… What do we call 'American' outside of painting? Inventiveness, restlessness, speed, change. Well then a painter may put all these qualities in a still life or an abstraction, and be going more native than another who sits quietly copying a skyscraper."[5]

In a letter to art dealer and champion of abstractionism Samuel Kootz, Dove wrote of his approach towards abstraction: "…one day I made a drawing of a hillside… I chose three forms from the planes on the sides of the trees, and three colors, and black and white. From these was made a rhythmic painting which expressed the spirit of the whole thing. The colors were chosen to express the substance of those objects and the sky."[6] Dove's pictures often constituted abstraction in the more literal sense, abstracted visions of a real thing or experience that he found noteworthy and wanted to distill into its fundamental "spirit" – ideas perhaps inspired in part by

[5] Arthur Dove, conversation with Alfred Maurer and Helen Torr Dove, recorded in Suzanne Mullett, "Arthur G. Dove (1880-), A Study in Contemporary Art" (M.A. thesis, American University, Washington D.C., 1944), 20. It is implied though not completely clear that Dove is the one speaking in this quote.
[6] Samuel M. Kootz, *Modern American Painters* (New York: Brewer & Warren, 1930), 36.

Dove's readings in the mid-1920s in ancient Chinese and Indian philosophy as well as writings by Plato and Spinoza and works by Bergson purchased from a bookstore. Whereas his earlier abstract and semi-abstract pictures were arguably more purely visual experiments, beginning in the mid-'20s we might construe them more so as metaphysical experiments. After all, the shared interest among Plato, Spinoza, and Bergson in metaphysics – the study of the fundamental nature of reality – resonates strongly with Stieglitz and Dove's ambitions to understand and interpret the "real" character of things in their works. Spinoza's notion that there is a fundamental "substance" that he calls "God" or "Nature" pervading the world (and that that substance may be considered fundamentally spiritual) seems particularly relevant to Dove's artistic philosophy. In the wake of these readings, Dove described one of his works as a "philosophic experiment" and compared some of his paintings to pictures of the natural world that preceded human presence.[7]

All this focus on abstraction and metaphysical realities not only meant that Dove's work (especially from the mid-1920s on) was a very effective visual invocation of Stieglitz' modernist and spiritual principles, but also that his was an artistic practice that was especially vulnerable to offering reductive visions of people or groups based on the intuitive impressions that he had formed about them. Part of the appeal was that abstraction could speak in a universal language, or at least get to the fundamental truth of certain objects and places. In this respect Dove's approach connects with the work of the Russian modernist Wassily Kandinsky, whose writings Dove read, and whose interest in connections between art, color, and music and belief in the potential for universality in abstraction connected well with Dove's ideology and interests.[8]

[7] Cohn, *Arthur Dove: Nature as Symbol*, 50-51.
[8] Rachel Z. DeLue mentions Dove's interest in and reading of Kandinsky at numerous points in *Arthur Dove: Always Connect* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

Unsurprisingly, even more so than the other artists that Stieglitz was close with, Dove was an intense admirer of Stieglitz' philosophy and taste. Dove's support of Stieglitz in writing was unstinting but rarely specified what actually brought the two men together. Wrote Dove in a 1934 appreciation, "When asked what Stieglitz means to me as an artist, I answer: everything."[9] In 1938 he called Stieglitz "the finest soul" he had ever known, and in a letter draft to Dorothy Norman likely written in the months after his friend's death in 1946 he wrote: "Stieglitz was more than many parents to me. His counsel was the best I ever had and I honoured it most because he knew the most about the things I came to be interested in of any of the people I knew. His choice was the essence of perfection as he knew it and he had made a long lifetime study of it so I was very glad… to have had him as a friend."[10] Though Stieglitz was less effusive in his affection for Dove, his praise for his friend's artistic production was unflagging, and he told him in 1922 that "I often think of your work. – And it always gives me pleasure thinking of it. You know there are but very few artists in this country whose work means anything to me."[11] In remarks during a 1926 Dove show, Stieglitz opined that one of Dove's greatest artistic merits was that "was bringing us back to our sensibility, which we had lost in civilization".[12] In a pamphlet produced for a 1931-32 Dove exhibition at An American Place, Stieglitz boldly asserted that Dove's new work "Marks an addition in the art of painting".[13] As a gallerist, most of the time Stieglitz simply adopted the attitude that the merits of Dove's work were self-evident, and that anyone who might question them was not worthy of serious engagement, though he often printed praiseful analyses of the work by Dove and critics, patrons, and fellow artists in the

[9] Admittedly, this glowing remark is in a book dedicated to such encomiums – see Arthur G. Dove, "A Different One", in the Stieglitz paean Frank et al., eds., *America and Alfred Stieglitz*, 245.
[10] Alfred Stieglitz to Arthur Dove, March 25, 1938, in Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, 399; Arthur Dove to Dorothy Norman (draft), n.d., Dove Papers, Box 1, Folder 23.
[11] Alfred Stieglitz to Arthur Dove, August 30, 1922, in Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, 83.
[12] Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 19.
[13] A copy of the pamphlet can be found in the Dove Papers, Box 3, Folder 22.

gallery brochures he had made for each show. The correspondence between the two is notable for its friendliness, candor, and persistent sense of mutual admiration and appreciation, including frequent engagement on issues of mutual professional interest – that is, discussions of artistic philosophy.[14] Though Stieglitz had many regular correspondents, he and Dove may have been one another's closest friends aside from their wives across the final several decades of their lives, despite the fact that they were often separated by the infrequency of Dove's visits to New York because of his financial problems.[15]

As the careers of several of Stieglitz' other friends and proteges, including Hartley, Marin, O'Keeffe, and Strand, prospered through the 1910s, '20s and '30s, Stieglitz' faith in and support of Dove's work never wavered despite sometime public indifference (and even disdain) that continually drove Dove back towards commercial illustration work throughout the 1920s.[16] Though Dove had gone from a leading young American avant-gardist in the early 1910s to a somewhat obscure and forgotten figure by the mid-1920s, Stieglitz continued to feature Dove's work regularly and prominently after opening the Intimate Gallery in 1925.[17] Dove's appearance in Stieglitz' milestone "Seven Americans" show that year marked a return to prominence that largely endured until his 1946 death, though he still at times struggled financially.[18]

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[14] The pair's correspondence is collected in Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*. For unedited correspondence see Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Boxes 13-15.

[15] It is notable that one reason that the two corresponded so much, especially after Dove's commercial illustration assignments dried up around 1925, was likely that Dove often could not afford to speak by phone or visit Manhattan. Morgan mentions this in *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, 183.

[16] Dove had earlier prospered as a commercial illustrator but came to view such work as a compromise of his artistic integrity, and consequently despised it from the 1920s on.

[17] This precipitous decline in prestige perhaps less-than-coincidentally coincided with the term between 1917 and 1925 during which Stieglitz did not operate a gallery.

[18] Dove notably had no one-man exhibitions between 1912 and 1926, when he was featured by Stieglitz at the Intimate Gallery once again (he continued to feature in annual exhibitions in Stieglitz' galleries thereafter). For an accounting of Dove's exhibitions see Morgan, *Arthur Dove*, 320-59. Regarding Dove's finances, it is clear that for long periods of his career he sold fewer pictures at lower prices than his Circle peers and struggled with alimony payments, at times relying on loans, Stieglitz' generosity, Phillips' support as his sole major patron, and taking on other work like commercial illustration, trying to sell cartoons to magazines as a freelancer, attempts at farming, and working alongside his wife as caretakers of the Ketewomoke Yacht Club. See Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*,

Indeed, Dove was, alongside Marin and O'Keeffe, one of the three artists whom Stieglitz championed most consistently and aggressively across the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. That he achieved this status despite never finding the remarkable fame or critical success of the other two artists is a testament to the intimate and long-lasting personal and professional relationship that the two men shared and the longstanding and profound sympathy of their artistic philosophies.[19]

This mutual admiration emerged despite their quite different backgrounds. Dove, sixteen years Stieglitz' junior, was born in 1881 in the small upstate town of Geneva, New York (which was recorded as more than 96% white in the 1880 U.S. Census) to wealthy parents who were, in the words of an early biographer, "Calvinist Presbyterians from respectable and well-to-do families… of old-English stock", eventually attending local private schools and then Hobart College and Cornell University, where he studied art and law.[20] Though documentation of Dove's early years is sparse, growing up as the son of a successful businessman and farmer in Geneva and attending a pair of elite colleges not only meant that Dove was afforded significant financial and professional privilege as a young person, but also would have offered him significant exposure to everyday racial othering and stereotyping in turn-of-the-century America,

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121-24; and Ann Lee Morgan, "An Encounter and Its Consequences: Arthur Dove and Alfred Stieglitz, 1910—1925", *Biography* 2, no. 1 (1979), 43-45 for partial descriptions of Dove's financial struggles. According to Stieglitz, Dove tried to sell his entire life's work in 1925 for only $1700. Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 91.

[19] There is something of a chicken-and-egg problem here that is worth noting – did Dove and Stieglitz get along so famously because Dove shaped his work in reaction to Stieglitz' philosophies, or because Stieglitz swiftly recognized in Dove a kindred spirit whose work might exemplify his ideas? At the time the pair met Stieglitz was far more deeply steeped in the cultures of transatlantic modernism than was the much younger Dove. However, Stieglitz had not yet fully developed his aesthetic philosophy, and his relationships with and frequent exposure to the work of artists like Dove, Marin, and O'Keeffe in the 1910s not only led to their selection as members of his inner circle but also the formation of the more coherent course for U.S. modernism for which he advocated with increasing conviction in the interwar period.

[20] Mullett, "Arthur G. Dove (1880-), A Study in Contemporary Art", 4. For Census statistics see *Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census, Volume 1, Table VI: Population, by Race, of Cities and Towns of 4,000 Inhabitants and Upwards: 1880 and 1870*, United States Bureau of the Census, 1883, 422. Dove was born in nearby Canandaigua, New York, but the family moved to Geneva in 1885.

as the prevalence of minstrel shows on college campuses (including Cornell's) at the time attests.[21]

By contrast, Stieglitz was raised mainly in Hoboken, in the midst of a New York metropolitan area that was exploding in diversity, as the son of successful areligious German Jewish immigrants, and studied engineering and chemistry at university in Germany – a background that afforded him similar economic advantages but quite different social ones given his growth within something of a German Jewish social bubble, the need to contend with anti-Semitism and, more broadly, the persistent feeling that his whiteness and Americanness were in constant question.[22] Despite these differences, Dove was likely the artist in Stieglitz' stable who engaged most thoroughly and regularly with the minutiae of artistic technique and process in which Stieglitz loved to revel. Though the men did not philosophize much by letter, in their decades-long correspondence they often discussed news and concerns about colleagues, friends, and family members, current events and ideas, and the financial and organizational details of their work, including Stieglitz' efforts to promote, sell, and display Dove's artworks. Within these words a singular intimacy born of their mutual admiration and Dove's persistent affability and devotion to his artmaking grew.

Though he did not seek out exotic cultures within the U.S. in the way that some others did, the exemplification of Stieglitz' principles in Dove's work nonetheless extended quite clearly to the process of defining the identity of a place through representations of supposed racial essences, as well as other attempts largely unmoored from nationalist aspirations at giving visual form to the spirit of subjects that Dove identified with particular racial and ethnic

[21] See, for example, mention of a minstrel show in *Cornell Alumni News* 7, no. 31 (1905), 515, and *Cornell Alumni News* 7, no. 33 (1905), 545.
[22] Rose's *Alfred Stieglitz: Taking Pictures, Making Painters* is a useful source on/analysis of Stieglitz' early years and includes some discussion of the role of anti-Semitism in his life.

identities. That Dove may not have seen these two types of work as fundamentally different in kind speaks to the simple and intuitive character of his approach towards his subject matter, which led him wrestle far more often with questions of artistic process and visual expression than those of nation, region, or identity. He simply seemed content to interpret the things in his life that interested him, which ranged from the commonplace objects and natural worlds of rural and coastal New York and Connecticut to the mainstream of U.S. popular culture to foreign philosophical and cultural traditions to memories of everyday encounters. Though this approach was less rooted in the protracted investigation of the character of a particular region or people than were those of other Stieglitz artists, it nonetheless frequently allowed for Dove's interest in the supposed exoticism of various non-white groups to make itself plain, especially when he chose to depict people of color whom he encountered in everyday life or racialized cultural sources that he discovered in popular media or through friends and colleagues.

However, quite little has been written about the impact of Dove's racism on his artmaking, and until relatively recently almost nothing had. The lack of attention paid to the influence of period racial ideologies on Dove's work, and the influence of American society and culture on his work more generally, can in part be attributed to the long-popular notion that, even more so than peers living in rural retreats like Marin and O'Keeffe, Dove was an isolated and intensely individualistic creator – a reputation perhaps born of his reserved manner. In addition to the broader idea that Stieglitz successfully spread that he and his followers were exceptionally original artists whose creative impulses sprung naturally from their minds, souls, and the American environment that had nurtured them, he also, as Dove scholar Sherrye Cohn puts it, enjoyed perpetuating the idea of "Dove's hermitlike existence". Even as he moved between domiciles in various towns on Long Island and in Connecticut and upstate New York, Dove "was

in easy and frequent access to cultural stimuli" throughout his adult life, as the extensive discussion of cultural and art historical developments and artistic philosophies that he and Stieglitz carried on for decades in person and by mail amply demonstrates.[23] The idea that Dove was an especially isolated and individualistic artist aligned conveniently with the notion that his work was principally rooted in his experiences of nature and, in particular, the "American soil" from whence he had sprung, and therefore free from any influence from European analytic modernism. Writes Phillips in a 1938 essay, "Isolated on his farm, far from the city's art movements and art politics, he is intimate with the sun and the soil and the rough hewn objects of his daily use… All his inspiration as an artist is drawn from his simple life".[24] Though Dove did spend most of his life outside of Manhattan and other metropolises, and some have directly compared his work to nineteenth-century American unschooled artists, he was a far cry from an uneducated folk or naïve artist.[25] Instead, somewhat like Marin and O'Keeffe, it is probably more accurate to say that he was something of a faux-primitivist.

The tendency of early critics and scholars to ignore social and cultural influences on his work was amplified by the fact that, even more so than others in Stieglitz' orbit, Dove was often held up as an artist's artist whose work was almost exclusively concerned with relatively timeless formal and spiritual issues and natural phenomena, a supposed trait that sometimes led

[23] Cohn, *Arthur Dove: Nature as Symbol*, 8.
[24] Phillips, "The Art of Arthur G. Dove".
[25] Dorothy Rylander Johnson notably suggests important affinities between Dove's collages and nineteenth-century American folk art in *Arthur Dove: The Years of Collage* (College Park: University of Maryland Art Gallery, 1967), 9-13. She writes, "The relationship of Dove's collage to 19th century mixed-media works merits exploration. Folk artists were often associational in approach, often blended paint and such extraneous articles as paper, textile material or dried plants, and often accented the most expressive of representation characteristics while eliminating irrelevancies… Dove's collages are relates to these characteristics… Similarities are indirect and seem to stem from a natural predisposition toward salient motifs and materials from the intimate environment… American settlers and their descendants shared a joy in the physical act of making… Dove's background as the son of an energetic brick contractor… would have prepared him… for the imaginative effect he achieved with things… there is in Dove's collages a puritan prudence of materials."

interpreters to compare him to other primitivist artists or, even to non-European "savages" themselves. Phillips' essay continues:

> Taking no more from Henri Rousseau and Cubism than he needed to rationalize his own instincts in returning the picture into the pattern, he proceeded to make out of the pattern *the symbol*, as in the childhood of the race. Primitive patterns were symbolical but they had their utilitarian tribal functions.
>
> At this point Dove is different. His art exists for its own sake. Its roots are in the irresponsible play-instincts of children no less than in the fetishes of savages and their use of shapes and colors for emotional expression. His pictographs are often only a decorative language meaning nothing, signifying merely his own high spirits and grotesque fantasy… But then again they reveal a truly primitive pantheism, a worship of the sun, an awareness of the cycles of life and death in nature, of decaying tree trunks returning to the soil while the wind blows and new life begins.[26]

Interestingly, Phillips seems to dismiss the connections between Dove's work and that of prominent European modernist primitivist predecessors, instead focusing on Dove's ostensibly original and authentic connection with the spiritual and natural worlds, one that apparently matched that of "tribal" peoples. For interwar American avant-gardist writers who sought to explain the mystical character of an artist's work, a comparison with the supposed numinous power of non-Western peoples was both natural and high praise. Though they did not always match the effusiveness of Phillips' admiration, other interpreters of Dove's work offered similar conclusions. Rosenfeld, for example, felt that "Dove's compositions are built up of abstract shapes that suggest the body's semi-consciousness of itself… forms in nature which doubtlessly had a fascination for the mind unafraid of its own body, and recorded themselves under the lintel of consciousness."[27] Indeed, this notion that Dove had a uniquely powerful connection to the American natural world was an especially common and influential one. Wrote Jerome Mellquist in a chapter on Dove in his 1942 book, "Dove comes all loamy from the American soil. His works do not arise in the European experience, nor from Arcadian fancies which have charmed

[26] Phillips, "The Art of Arthur G. Dove".
[27] Rosenfeld, *Port of New York*, 170.

the mental eye of the painter, nor from observations in the cities… He is fully attached to the soil of America."[28]

The opinion that Dove's art was largely intuitive and unmoored from the historical circumstances in which it was produced (aside from vague perceptions of its "Americanness") was undermined by several scholars beginning in the 1990s, including, notably by Donna Cassidy in her 1997 book *Painting the Musical City*. Cassidy argues that Dove was deeply interested in the changing musical landscape of the so-called "Jazz Age", perhaps because he was, like other American modernists of the era, keen to make reference to contemporaneous U.S. musical inventions in order to further "stamp… [his] works as both modern and native", and music's nonrepresentational character made it an alluring subject for those interested in abstraction.[29] This chapter will, in part, build upon Cassidy's work, thinking more broadly about the ways in which Dove's work drew upon contemporaneous cultural sources and undermining the old notion that it was timelessly connected to nature.

Importantly, Dove also was and remains much less well-known than Marin, O'Keeffe, or Hartley, and, for much of the twentieth century, when his career was mentioned in histories of U.S. art, it was often by way of noting his role as a pioneering abstractionist whose work in the early 1910s preceded many better-known European innovations (like Kandinsky's work) and/or influenced the growth of American Abstract Expressionism in the postwar era.[30] This part in history made him a useful tool for those seeking to assert the significance of U.S. art within broader modernist narratives, but it also meant that what focus there was on him tended to be

[28] Mellquist, *The Emergence of an American Art*, 362. Mellquist admits to being influenced by *Port of New York* in his analysis of Dove – see p. 366.
[29] Donna M. Cassidy, *Painting the Musical City: Jazz and Cultural Identity in American Art, 1910-1940* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 3.
[30] Art historian Robert Goldwater begins a 1953 article: "It is said that Arthur Dove painted an abstraction in 1910. Such a detail is today an historical curiosity: it associated Dove with pioneers like Kandinsky, and is an added bit of evidence of his importance as an early precursor of the dominant artistic direction of the mid-century." Robert Goldwater, *Perspectives U.S.A.* 2 (1953), 78. See also further discussion of this topic later in the chapter.

concentrated on his earliest modernist work (for example, Figure 4.3), before he and Stieglitz had developed the substantial relationship that they would later share and before racial concerns began to enter his modernist work on a more regular basis in the 1920s and '30s.

Furthermore, as art historian Rachael DeLue has rightly noted, the notion that Stieglitz' aesthetic philosophy had an extremely heavy influence on Dove's work has been so dominant in criticism of and scholarship on the artist that it has often stifled interpretations that view him through the lens of other aspects of his life or creative practice.[31] In its emphasis on how their shared focus on abstraction, nationalism, and spiritual essences affected Dove's work, and, more broadly, on the latter decades of his career, during which he was most closely associated with Stieglitz, this chapter perhaps runs the risk of reinforcing this misleading (though hardly entirely incorrect) perception of Dove as an artist whose work was merely an extension of Stieglitz' aesthetics. However, even if racial concerns impacted Dove's work because of the essentializing approach for which Stieglitz advocated, they did so because race entered his life through both everyday encounters and myriad cultural sources, most of which he sought out independent of Stieglitz.

Ultimately, discussing Dove's thoughts about race and considering the ways in which his worldview affected his artmaking must incorporate some consideration of his understanding of himself and how other people in the world related to him. Perhaps most of all, it must include some explanation of how Dove came to view his own identity as raceless and that of marginalized others as inevitable – a naming of the fact that Dove, like so many other white people, was a racialized being himself and yet seemingly totally unaware of it. Equally if not more so than fellow artists like Marin and O'Keeffe, we may construe in much or all of Dove's conversations with Stieglitz and public statements about his work (and indeed others like

[31] DeLue, *Arthur Dove: Always Connect*, 4.

Phillips' statements about it) and its interest in nation or gender a form of implicit thinking about race, including a particular connection between whiteness and American national identity.[32] In Dove's case, given his background, those intertwined definitions of "whiteness" may have been especially specific – i.e. rooted in ideas about "Anglo-Saxon" identity. That Dove would never have lent much thought to his own whiteness and the degree to which it affected his worldview, his interactions or relationships with others, his artistic philosophy, or his artworks that often evinced all these things is utterly typical of whiteness as a phenomenon given its typically normative and frequently invisible character.[33] For someone like Dove living within the realm of whiteness, to fail to notice racial privilege and bias would have been utterly normal. This is, after all, part of what makes talking about someone like Dove so interesting and relevant – the lessons of how race enters into his work are especially relevant when considering the broader scope of racism and white privilege as it operated (and operates) within the realms of modernism, art, and art history.

"The Soul of a Transmigrated Chinaman": Dove, Race, and Culture

Dove apparently saw himself as racially neutral. In a remark that speaks to his blindness to his own racial privilege, lack of interest in actively advocating for social or political change, and the casualness with which many white Americans treated the rise of Nazism in 1930s Germany, he wrote in a 1934 letter to his wife that "I… Have done no standing up for any race –

[32] As scholars Simon Clarke and Steve Garner describe, "white… subjects identify themselves through an often contradictory system of codes, involving evasion of direct references to 'race' with discourses involving culture, nation, class and gender, and combinations of them." Simon Clarke and Steve Garner, *White Identities: A Critical Sociological Approach* (London and New York, Pluto, 2010), 3.
[33] Some useful sources on this phenomenon include: Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997) (among other sources from Mills); and Dyer, *White.*

its too useless and wearing. So when… [someone] splutters against the Germans and the Jews I say nothing."[34] As the rest of this chapter will relate, Dove's pictures tell quite a different story.

Part of what makes the story of Dove's interest in race and the manifestation of that interest in his work interesting is, in part, the degree to which it at times transcends the (frequently racialized) local and regional placemaking that is fundamental to much of not only his work (as discussed later in this chapter), but also most of that of his fellow Stieglitz acolytes. Though, as later portions of this chapter will relate, Dove's representations of racial others he encountered in his own life are worth thinking more about, so, too, are his depictions of racialized cultural sources, which also became an important component of his work in the 1920s and '30s and often suggest Dove's interest in representing and/or alluding to a particular race or ethnicity solely via repeated use of abstract patterns that were considered to be characteristic of those groups' visual cultures.

Among the cultural sources that Dove regularly consumed and that consequently affected his artistic work, music was perhaps the most important. Writes Cassidy, "Dove appreciated a wide range of music from Bach to Bing Crosby and frequently mentioned… Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, George Gershwin, Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, and Paul Whiteman in his diaries. Music was a regular component of his life, from singing and dancing to playing the mandolin, piano and drums in impromptu bands" to listening to the radio and phonographs to watching music-filled films.[35] According to his brother, Dove's passion for music existed from childhood.[36] Given the degree to which popular music, and jazz especially, was seen through the

[34] Arthur Dove to Helen Torr Dove, November 17, 1934, Dove Papers, Box 1, Folder 34. Dove's perspective on Nazi anti-Semitism seems to have evolved by 1936, when he wrote that, "The anti-Jewishers ought to be circumcised + deported to the middle of Germany." Arthur Dove to Helen Torr Dove, n.d., 1936, Dove Papers, Box 1, Folder 31.
[35] Cassidy, *Painting the Musical City*, 80.
[36] Paul Dove, "Facts Relative to Arthur G. Dove", Dove Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

lens of race and pioneered and produced by non-white musicians in the interwar period, it is perhaps unsurprising that race often plays a fundamental role in Dove's music pictures. Still, it is telling that Dove's work frequently connects music and the senses with race because connecting them to "primitive" peoples (or, really, suggesting that such peoples had a natural affinity and intuition for music and other sensorial creations and experiences) had long been a common trope in white Western societies.[37] Indeed, the notion that "Negroes", in particular, were "musical" was the most common stereotype about them in a 1969 study of U.S. college students.[38]

On one hand, music likely had an impact on Dove's work that transcended any individual musical subject. According to Jerome Mellquist, Dove referred to his own work as "music of the eye".[39] It is easy to see why – Dove's frequently sinuous, abstract fields of color have often been cited as "lyrical" over the last century, and if we set aside titles and any other information we have about them, it is easy to imagine that many of his works could have been informed by the loose expressionism that characterized much of the popular music of the interwar era, the so-called Jazz Age.[40] Though he had already made a pair of abstract paintings that refer to music in their titles in the early 1910s (see Figure 4.4), Dove's interest in representing music in his work accelerated in the interwar years, as did that of many other artists as music became more

[37] Wrote musicologist Richard Wallaschek in the first sentences of his 1893 book *Primitive Music: An Inquiry Into the Origin and Development of Music, Songs, Instruments, Dances, and Pantomimes of Savage Races* (London and New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1893), "among races of the very lowest order of civilisation there are frequently to be found some which have more musical capacity than many of a higher order".
[38] Marvin Karlins, Thomas L. Coffman, and Gary Walters, "On the fading of social stereotypes: Studies in three generations of college students", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 13 (1969), 5. Notably, "musical" had replaced other stereotypes as the leading preconceptions among (predominately white) Princeton students about African Americans, including that notions they were "lazy" and "superstitious" voiced in the original 1933 study that was being recreated in 1967. A useful analysis of African Americans' relationship with music, including stereotypes about the connection, is: Ronald Radano, *Lying Up a Nation: Race and Black Music* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
[39] Mellquist, *The Emergence of an American Art*, 364.
[40] See Hilton Kramer, "The Lyricism of Arthur G. Dove", *New York Times*, April 4, 1970; or Duncan Phillips, "The Art of Arthur G. Dove", n.p., among many other examples.

accessible with the popularization of radios, phonographs, and movie musicals.[41] By focusing on jazz music, a distinctively American genre and a style and medium that lend themselves to abstraction with relative ease, Dove may have been working to fulfill the Stieglitzian mission of articulating a uniquely American identity through a distinctively modernist idiom.[42] When we consider the frequent "lyricism" of Dove's style in concert with the racial fascination evidently inherent in much of his interest in music, we can glimpse the possibility that his recurrent interest in experiencing and appropriating the cultural forms of racial others may have affected his work on a scale that far exceeds the scope of the pictures whose titles allude to music made by non-white musicians.

Still, it is clear that no genre affected Dove's work as substantially as jazz music. As Cassidy notes, Dove became interested in jazz in the mid-1920s, and Dove felt that these pictures were not merely "abstractions" but "illustrations" of the musics that they depicted – perhaps something akin to Stieglitz' pictorial "equivalents" of real-world things. By featuring jazz, a new and distinctively American musical form (and one that was marketed in the interwar era as a uniquely American commercial and cultural product), Dove helped to mark his work as both native and modern.[43]

What Dove thought of as jazz was probably a mixture of a) a sanitized and commercialized version of jazz principally intended for white audiences and advanced in large part by white appropriators and popularizers of African-American musics and b) other popular music that cannot really be categorized as jazz on a musical level but was nonetheless termed "jazz" as that label came to encompass much of the popular music of the interwar era. Despite

[41] Cassidy, *Painting the Musical City*, 6.
[42] Ibid., 81.
[43] Ibid., 85-91. Arthur and Helen Torr Dove to Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz, n.d. [October 30, 1926?], in Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, 128-29.

his relative proximity to Harlem, one of the national centers for African-American cultural creativity during the period, Dove's exposure to these strands of American popular musical culture was typically mediated by American commercial culture, as he principally discovered new music through widely available records, on the radio, and in popular films. He did not go "slumming" in Harlem jazz clubs as other white New Yorkers like Van Vechten did, but instead listened to a mixture of jazz and jazz-inflected musics as he moved about the (less diverse) spaces that were encompassed within his everyday life – whether at the movies, while walking through town or visiting with friends, or from the comfort of home.[44]

Looking closely at some of Dove's jazz paintings can tell us more. Yes, Dove principally consumed music that bastardized or whitewashed African-American jazz – but how did race enter into his music-inspired pictures (i.e. Figures 4.5 and 4.6)? These pictures seem focused on the details of music rather than the resonances of the medium within society, taking the visual character of music and musical performance quite literally through allusion to the symbolic language of sheet music, with sinuous lines perhaps tracing the imagined movement of a conductor's baton. Often, the focus seems to be on conveying the feeling of the music, at times frenetic and at times peaceful, through line and color, a tactic that aligns Dove with the synesthetic approach connecting color and music employed in compositions like Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue", one of the subjects of a spate of musical paintings that Dove made in 1927 (Figure 4.5). In other cases Dove's approach represented the lyrics of a song more directly, as when he depicted a view of a shining moon in a 1937 painting named after the popular song "Me and the Moon" (Figure 4.6).

[44] As Cassidy points out, Dove's favorite musician Paul Whiteman not only drew from black musical inventions but erased the contributions of African-American pioneers in the development of jazz in his 1930 film *King of Jazz*, which depicts Whiteman travelling to Africa in order to take "control and possession of jazz at its primitive source and… [civilize] it" directly, with no mention of African-American contributions to the genre's development. Cassidy, *Painting the Musical City*, 95-103.

Still, we can consider the possibility that, even if Dove did consume jazz and other popular music forms through the prism of commercialization, and did not patronize African-American music clubs as some of his peers did, he nonetheless considered listening to jazz as an exciting exploration of an exotic strand of American culture. In other words, there remains the possibility that part of the allure of "jazz" (even when the jazz they consumed was made by white musicians and/or was less than authentic or groundbreaking) for Dove and other upper- and middle-class white consumers was the excitement of "slumming it" by experiencing African-American culture, even if they were doing it in a context outside of a music club in a black neighborhood.[45] Jazz in the 1920s and '30s (and quite often still today) was a complicated cultural phenomenon in which authenticity and/vs. the performance of identity are not always easy to pin down. Even if jazz was inevitably tied up with white appropriation and commodification of black culture, it need not follow that every jazz listener was necessarily a fount of racial bias. However, in Dove's case, in combination with what else we know about him, it does seem to be one of several cultural avenues he explored in search of the exotic.

If jazz did indeed help Dove in his efforts to stamp his work as both native and modern, then it may be that part of the "native" part of that equation was rooted in the special appeal that African Americans had to those seeking to define what made American identity and culture stand out (which Lauren Kroiz has usefully identified as a relevant context for Dove's racist caricatures and later abstract and semi-abstract representations of black people) and the special role that jazz played for many whites in exposing them to African Americans and African-American culture in the early twentieth century.[46]

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[45] For an in-depth consideration of the phenomenon of "slumming" in early twentieth-century Harlem and elsewhere, see Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
[46] Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 166-67.

Though these ideas offer broader possibilities for how race and jazz might have intersected in Dove's work, they connect more clearly in the 1938 painting *Swing Music (Louis Armstrong)* (Figure 4.7). Much like some of his other interwar music paintings, the picture is largely abstract, filled with loosely drawn, tightly defined zones of paint that abut one another and swoop across the canvas, though the colors used are noticeably darker than they are in most of Dove's other music pictures, perhaps in allusion to the dim atmosphere of a jazz nightclub or the pigmented skin of its subject. The painting is likely a semi-subjective visual interpretation of what Dove felt that swing music was (or maybe how a particular song made him feel), with the intersecting lines and color zones in the painting possibly suggesting baton movements once again. However, it may also, perhaps, be a portrait of Armstrong, the iconic trumpeter, singer, and swing pioneer whom Dove had seen featured in the film *Artists and Models* the year before.[47]

If the painting is in some sense a portrait, it may not be a wholly abstract one – there is a suggestion of a dark brown face with black eyes and lips in the top right corner.[48] It is interesting that Dove may have chosen this painting, out of all his music pictures, to incorporate a portrait element, as other, similar pictures inspired by music made by white musicians like Gershwin do not feature such representations. There is a sense in this picture, both in terms of its formal elements and its title, *Swing Music (Louis Armstrong)* that musician and song are being melded together, and perhaps, by extension, that Armstrong and swing music itself were one and the same. Cassidy argues that Dove's jazz paintings "are sanitized and decorative" and masked "the

[47] Cassidy, *Painting the Musical City*, 92-94; Helen Torr Dove Diary, October 24, 1937, Dove Papers, Box 2, Folder 9.

[48] The possible presence of this face is apparently mentioned Ibid., though Cassidy writes that "At top right, a black shape seems to form a facial profile of Armstrong himself". I am uncertain about whether she is referring to the same face that I see – it seems as though she is interpreting the same shape as Armstrong's head in profile rather than facing the viewer.

black influence on American music and identity", but it is notable that, in this somewhat exceptional picture, the opposite is true.[49] If Dove did indeed internalize and re-present a whitewashed version of what jazz was all about in his interwar music pictures, it is remarkable just how much *Swing Music (Louis Armstrong)* defies that trend by reinforcing the association between African-Americans and the modern music that Dove and so many other upper- and middle-class white consumers had recently come to enjoy. One interpretation of these facts is that Dove had a more nuanced understanding of the connections between race and American popular music than some past interpreters of his work have given him credit for. However, in light of what we know about how Dove consumed music and thought about race and identity, a more likely interpretation is that Dove was participating in the public dilution of the scope of African-American contributions to American popular music even as he suggested an innate connection between black people and music as so many other white cultural interpreters had before and would after him. This was, effectively, a semi-whitewashing of jazz that celebrated white musicians while retaining the exotic allure of black culture, absorbing some of jazz' verve but discarding its swing and improvisatory elements.[50] Though Dove's paintings do not address issues of race and the American jazz and urban nightlife scenes as directly as did those of some of his contemporaries such as Reginald Marsh, Archibald Motley, or Stuart Davis, his pictures, including *Swing Music* and others, nonetheless reveal some of the racial complexities of the popular American interwar music scene and of Dove's own racialized consumption of popular culture sources.

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[49] Cassidy, *Painting the Musical City*, 103. Notably, a similar argument could also be made about what is arguably the closest thing to the Armstrong portrait within Dove's oeuvre, the 1932 painting *Bessie of New York* (Figure 4.28), which many believe was intended to be an anthropomorphic representation of African-American jazz singer Bessie Smith, in which the singer is transformed into an implement of everyday American transportation and labor (this picture is discussed at greater length later in this chapter).
[50] Ibid., 97.

Cassidy's analysis offers a welcome entry point into the study of the role of cultural influences that Dove perceived through a racial lens on his work, and jazz music offers a particularly compelling example given the potential for correlation with Dove's other representations and invocations of African Americans in his caricatures and representations of Long Island locals. However, jazz was just one of several cultural media that significantly impacted Dove's work.

Notably, in some other instances, Dove connected race and music quite clearly, as in his paintings *Chinese Music* (which Cassidy suggests was like inspired by a wave of popularity for Eastern music in 1910s and '20s America), *Primitive Music*, and *Primitive Jazz* (Figures 4.8 and 4.9).[51] These paintings incorporate elements that subtly hint at stereotypes that Dove had evidently internalized about what it meant for something to be "Chinese" or "Primitive". For example, looking at the tumbling metallic forms pictured in *Chinese Music* almost invites viewers ensconced in (or at least familiar with) stereotypes of East Asian societies in the West to play metallic chimes or the cascading notes of the infamous so-called "Oriental riff" in their head as they contemplate the painting.[52] In its vague central reference to "Chinese music" the painting likely reveals not only Dove's passion for music but also the presence and relevance of Chinese culture in Dove's life and that of most Americans in the 1920s. During this period Chinese and other East Asian cultures were enjoying an ongoing vogue in the form of fiction, film, and live performance. This growing interest signaled the rising significance of China and Japan as world powers in the era, and, even, despite the ongoing immigration restrictions enforced under the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the growth of the Chinese-American population by over 20% in the

[51] Ibid., 83. The location of *Primitive Jazz* is unknown.
[52] Writes Cassidy, the forms of the shapes, including the sawtoothed one on the right emanating outwards like a sound wave, "and the red, gold, and metallic green in *Chinese Music* evoked Oriental music". Ibid. See also DeLue's description of the painting in *Arthur Dove: Always Connect*, 168-71. She stresses caution in interpreting Dove's intention in giving the painting this name.

1920s decade. Of course, visiting New York City would have meant further exposure not only to representations of China and Chinese people in films and performances, but also potential interactions with Chinese Americans given the city's relatively large historical population.[53]

We can also detect in these (and many other) paintings the evidence of Dove's profound interest in mysticism, and especially the strand of mysticism he associated with Chinese and Indian spirituality. According to Dove scholar Sherrye Cohn, during the 1920s and '30s Dove learned about Asian cultures through a highbriw lens as he read extensively about Chinese and Indian religions, consuming numerous books on the topics from the local library in Huntington. Dove's close friend Donald Davidson, Stieglitz' nephew and a passionate student of Eastern religions and spirituality, sent numerous books on Hinduism to Dove, introduced him to a Hindu religious teacher several times, eventually lent his friend his (supposed) talent for crystal ball gazing, and may have involved him in further, "Chinese"-themed mystical rituals.[54] In the early 1940s Dove also corresponded with a budding scholar of Tibetan Buddhism and other Asian religions, Edna "Teddy" Bryner, who wrote him with great enthusiasm about her studies in Sanskrit, Persian, and Tibetan texts.[55] According to an interview with his son, Dove believed that he had "the soul of a transmigrated Chinaman", and this belief in his connectedness to China and its people seems to have informed his confidence in conveying a general impression of "Chinese

[53] A useful history of representations of Asian peoples and identities in Hollywood is Gina Marchetti's *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). We might make particular note of the career of Anna May Wong, the first Chinese-American movie star, who had starred in the major motion picture *The Toll of the Sea* in 1922, the year before Dove painted his picture. One particularly popular example of performance in New York City was the Peking Opera's tour visit there in 1930, which, interestingly, presented a version of traditional Chinese opera adapted to cater to American tastes, which led to the tour attracting major attention and patronage from members of U.S. high society – see Nancy Guy, "Brokering Glory for the Chinese Nation: Peking Opera's 1930 American Tour", *Comparative Drama* 35, no. 3/4 (2001), 377–92.

[54] Cohn, *Arthur Dove: Nature as Symbol*, 50-51.

[55] See Teddy Bryner to Arthur Dove, February 28, 1943, Dove Papers, Box 1, Folder 14, and other letters from Bryner in Box 13.

music" (whatever a term that expansive might mean) in a single, largely abstract painting.[56] Dove's interest in East and South Asian religions and cultures is redolent of the attitude that T.J. Jackson Lears, writing about a slightly earlier period, called a fascination with East Asian art and religion that "symbolized the spreading dilettantism of elite culture". Like many other white male elites in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Dove's high-minded passion for Asian cultures may have been propelled in part by the perception that they were serene and spiritual, as well as disconnected from the pressures of capitalist society, under which Dove had chafed mightily as a young person working to avoid involvement in his father's businesses and as a struggling artist forced into commercial work.[57] While some elite Sinophiles might have rejected affiliation with the growing popular interest in Chinese and other East Asian cultures in the early twentieth century, Dove seems to have combined the popular and elite strands of interest – or, to be more accurate, to have subsumed elements of Chinese culture present in mainstream American society (i.e. popular music and performances) into his high-minded interest in Asian spirituality and philosophy.

When he declared that he possessed "the soul of a transmigrated Chinaman", pursued relationships and readings revolving around Asian religions, and painted *Chinese Music*, Dove demonstrated his involvement in the pattern of elite white male fetishization of Asian cultures that Lears describes. Ultimately, though Dove's confidence in conveying an impression or an internalized feeling about a person, place, thing, or feeling is familiar to those versed in his artmaking, when he attempts to depict what it means to be "Chinese" or "Primitive" in a series of abstract shapes or patterns, he conveys an impression of not just a farm animal or a natural scene,

[56] William Dove, interview with Sherrye Cohn, October 14, 1980, in Cohn, *Arthur Dove: Nature as Symbol*, 51, 211n27.
[57] Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 225-41. See also Christopher Benfey, *The Great Wave: Gilded Age Misfits, Japanese Eccentrics, and the Opening of Old Japan* (New York: Random House, 2004).

but of a person, and thereby reveals the effects of early twentieth century racial and ethnic stereotypes on the ways in which he saw and interacted with the world around him.

…

As his longstanding interest in jazz might suggest, Dove was, notably, more invested in contemporary popular culture than were most of his Stieglitz Circle peers, some of whom seemed content to spend their free time fishing or hiking or reveling in the grandeur of dramatic natural scenes rather than going to the movies or writing friends to discuss a new book. In addition to commenting (and often complaining) about the opinions of Manhattan art critics, Dove letters often mention his enthusiasm about music or movies or books that he has happened upon.[58] Contemporary American popular culture was, in short, a major part of his life, and examples thereof affected his work both by providing subject matter and by influencing the character of his abstract patterns.

Much as tourist forces connected Marin and O'Keeffe to banal commercialized versions of mainstream white American middle-class racism, popular cultural representations of exotic types offered an avenue whereby Dove's work could be influenced by the racial realities of the cultural mainstream in ways that undermine the supposed high-mindedness and spiritual transcendence of the Circle's rhetoric. Among the other popular cultural sources that substantially affected Dove's work were Native-American textiles. Like O'Keeffe and many other interwar white Americans within and without the avant-garde, Dove was also deeply interested in Indigenous-American cultures, an interest that (like that of many others) manifested itself in a recurrent interest in Native blankets and rugs, which were *en vogue* on the interwar East Coast. This interest dates from at least the mid-1930s (in a 1936 letter, Dove talks about a

[58] One interesting tidbit is Dove's friendship with silent film actor Bill Hart, mentioned in Mullett, "Arthur G. Dove (1880-), A Study in Contemporary Art", 12-13.

"swell" painting he has been working on: "Don't know whether it feels more like a beautiful Indian rug or sunrise sky…"), but seems to have grown in the early 1940s, when he ordered "rug illustrations" from L.L. Bean and, separately, acquired "a new rug and Navaho blanket."[59] Though he did not travel to the Southwest, Dove had ample opportunity to be exposed to blankets and other Indigenous material culture from the region, not only through his friends like O'Keeffe who brought such things back as keepsakes or props, but also through the branches of Indigenous commodity exchange networks that reached New York City and through exhibitions of Native art and culture in New York museums during the interwar era.[60] Dove's interest in Southwestern Indigenous material culture may have inspired several artworks, including *Indian Spring*, *Silver Chief*, *Indian One*, and *Indian Summer* (see Figures 4.10-12), among other possibilities.[61] The latter two, in particular, seem as though they may have been inspired by the aesthetics of Southwestern Indigenous blankets, much as some of O'Keeffe's paintings were (though Dove apparently favored using them to inspire elements of his abstractionism rather than representing them as directly as O'Keeffe did). *Indian One*, for example, though it largely defies easy interpretation, may well, given its slight rounding of sharp-edged polygonal shapes and the clear delineation between fields of color, have been directly or indirectly inspired by such blankets, and/or other elements of the material culture of Southwestern Indigenous peoples, such as pottery and basketry, which often incorporated similar visual motifs. Admittedly, the textiles and other patterned objects produced by the Southwest's Indigenous peoples (see, for example,

[59] Arthur Dove to Helen Torr Dove, October 9, 1936, Dove Papers, Box 1, Folder 37. Arthur Dove Diary, July 8, 1940, Dove Papers, Box 2, Folder 11. He also mentions "fur moccasin[s]" from L.L. Bean in the entry for July 26. Cohn mentions the "rug illustrations" comment as coming from the July 1940 diary entries, although I could not find them myself (though I will note that the diaries are at times indecipherable). The comment may be from a different month. Cohn, *Arthur Dove: Nature as Symbol*, 104.

[60] See Chapter Three for more on these phenomena.

[61] Cassidy suggests, for example, that Dove's 1944 painting *Primitive Music* was likely about either jazz or Native-American music. Donna Cassidy, "Arthur Dove's Music Paintings of the Jazz Age", *American Art* 20, no. 1 (1988), 21n17.

Figure 4.13, a late nineteenth-century Diné blanket) were never as irregular or seemingly improvisational as Dove's abstract paintings – but then again, almost no place or thing that Dove chose to depict ended up represented in his work with unfettered verisimilitude.

We can glimpse, too, in other paintings with names that do not suggest a connection to Indigenous American cultures, hints of these blanket motifs. For example, in *The Moon* (Figure 4.14, made in 1941, the same year as *Indian Summer*) the moonlight on the water casts a pattern that could be viewed as a simplified rendering of light shining over rippling water, but the serrated shape of this pattern (and the shapes of the water around it that the moonlight cuts through and delineates in negative), like a series of stacked trapezoids, is also redolent of the angular repetitions and distinct fields of color present in many Diné textiles.[62] But when we consider an example like this, one can begin to see such patterns in many of Dove's works, especially from the late 1930s and 1940s. Might the angular patterns (which represented a departure from Dove's earlier predilection for looser, arguably more expressive abstract elements) or the juxtapositions between bright fields of color and zones of black in *Square on the Pond* (Figure 4.15, another 1941 painting) or *Space Divided by Line Motive* (Figure 4.16, from the same year as *Indian One*) have been directly or indirectly influenced by Dove's exposure to Southwestern Indigenous blankets?[63] Interestingly, perhaps because of the textile-like use of colored zones in his work, Dove was invited by modernist gallerist Samuel Kootz to produce some textile designs intended for women's dresses in 1937.[64] As is so often the case with his

[62] Sherrye Cohn offers an analysis of the connection between Dove's work of this period and Indigenous material culture in *Arthur Dove*, 104. Perhaps most usefully, she points out that Dove's work was not a direct translation of Native motifs, but instead a transposition of them onto his favored landscape subjects.
[63] Sherrye Cohn mentions *Square on the Pond*, *The Inn*, *Primitive Music*, and *The Brothers* as works that may reveal the influence of "Indian motifs" on Dove's work. Cohn, *Arthur Dove: Nature as Symbol*, 104. There are numerous other paintings from the early 1940s that offer similar possibilities.
[64] Samuel Kootz to Arthur Dove, August 30, 1937, Dove Papers, Box 1, Folder 8. In 1941 Dove was also invited by the Museum of Modern Art to submit a rug design for exhibition and sale. See Eliot F. Noyes to Arthur Dove, December 5, 1941, Dove Papers, Box 1, Folder 12.

work, it is difficult to say just how far the appropriation of Indigenous visual motifs (and indeed the inspiration he drew from specific Native-American sources and his grander ideas about what an "Indian" or "Indian" culture were) actually impacted his paintings. Regardless, it is clear that Dove harbored an unsophisticated, evidently monolithic understanding of "Indianness" that led him towards not only the titles and concepts for artworks like *Indian One* and *Indian Spring*, but also a broader incorporation of "Indian" motifs into his late abstract and semi-abstract work.[65] Under Dove's brush, the cultural significance of Indigenous patterns was cheapened and appropriated. While many speculate that diamond motifs in Diné blankets are intended to represent the Dinétah, the tribe's ancestral homelands in the area between by four sacred peaks, in *Square on the Pond* they are just a shape in a nature study intended to subtly invoke the exotic (Figures 4.13 and 4.15).

What is true about music, film, the market for Indigenous blankets, and most every other mainstream medium in U.S. culture in the interwar era is that each of these cultural realms (along with the criticism and interpretation thereof… and much of American "high" culture) frequently reflected the widespread racism of U.S. society.[66] A relevant example springs from a 1936 letter from Dove to his wife, Helen "Reds" Torr Dove, that notes with excitement the arrival of a new Fred Astaire movie the next day.[67] That movie, *Swing Time*, was rife with racial caricature, including an infamous ode to African-American performer Bill "Bojangles" Robinson performed by Astaire in blackface. The eugenic texts by J.B.S. Haldane and Bertrand Russell that Dove and Stieglitz corresponded about in 1924 were reflective of the popularity of scientific racism within

[65] *Indian Spring* was likely earlier known as *Indian Shrine* – see Morgan, *Arthur Dove*, 139. It should also be mentioned that whether *Indian Summer* is likely a reference to the formerly common phrase alluding to unseasonably warm autumn weather. Whether Dove considered the painting to be any sort of depiction of or meditation on Native-American peoples or cultures is unclear.
[66] A relevant context here might be the elite taste for Native-themed classical music and dance in the early twentieth century – see Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 184-223.
[67] Arthur Dove to Helen Torr Dove, September 9, 1936, Dove Papers, Box 1, Folder 35.

mainstream American culture at the time. Dove's use of racial caricature in his illustrations of African Americans were often (though, we can note, not always) paired with the invocation of demeaning stereotypes in the stories they accompanied. From the visceral racism of blackface minstrelsy and caricature to the cold logic of eugenic thought, racism pervaded both popular and high culture in the interwar U.S., and so when Dove found inspiration from cultural sources, they often brought with them the baggage of discriminatory attitudes already embedded within them. Dove was not party to the militant white racism of the KKK or the organized eugenic movement that was growing in popularity in the interwar era, and his racial attitudes are, rather, evidence of the growing infringement of such racial extremism on the political mainstream and the commonness during that period of forms of racism that now seem shocking.

Still, Dove, as with any other creative figure, had the option of choosing which sources to engage with, and (well, at least within the bounds of his fine art career) the freedom to interpret and represent them as he wished. However, Dove's representation of cultural sources was typically far from neutral – instead, he not only chose sources that were often already rife with troubling racial associations, but also frequently focused on race as a key component of his paintings and assemblages and revealed his tendency to fall into common racial and ethnic stereotypes as he sought to convey the fundamental character of certain places and groups, from African-Americans to the "Chinese" to Southwestern Indigenous peoples.

"Goin' Fishin'": Dove, Race, and the Long Island Scene

These examples in which cultural media and race intersect in Dove's work are hardly the only examples of race affecting his artmaking. Indeed, though Cassidy touches upon racial connections in her work on the links between Dove's work and music, most of the attention paid by other scholars to the subject of his work's relationship to racism has concentrated on the 1925

assemblage *Goin' Fishin*' (Figure 4.17), which represents a larger segment of Dove's work – his indefatigable chronicling of the often rather unremarkable world that he found around him as he lived out a relatively quiet existence in a series of small towns in New York and Connecticut.[68] As *Goin' Fishin'* suggests, this segment of Dove's artmaking also at times revealed the artist's casual racism, including his tendency to essentialize and exoticize ostensibly foreign racial groups as he represented them in his work.

Tellingly, *Goin' Fishin'* was earlier labelled by Dove as *Fishin' Nigger* and *Nigger Goes A-Fishin'* (and at least once referred to by Stieglitz as "the 'Nigger'"), among various other, similar names (all likely rather lazy efforts on Dove's part to mimic African-American Vernacular English), until the epithet was removed around the time of his death.[69] An abstract collection of pieces of bamboo fishing pole, denim shirtsleeves, and pier wood alongside buttons and oil paint, the picture is a portrait of an African-American man whom Dove supposedly saw fishing from a pier in Huntington Harbor on Long Island, where he was then living on a houseboat.[70]

The picture was immediately viewed by some as a monstrosity, both because of its offensive title, which led Dove's wife to make up the less objectionable "Negro Goes Fishing" as a title for use in her diary, and a rumor that its subject was actually a drowned man, which led

[68] To be fair, it seems likely that Dove did not feel the things he represented to be unremarkable – rather, he seemed to revel in the joy, deeper meaning, and capacity for visual experimentation that he was able to find in everyday life *despite* its seeming banality.

[69] Stieglitz uses this nickname in Alfred Stieglitz to Arthur Dove, April 12, 1937, in Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, 376.

[70] This origin story for the assemblage has been a point of confusion because of the persistent rumor (notably disseminated in print by author and Circle familiar Herbert Seligmann) that it in fact represented a drowned black man whom Dove had suddenly encountered floating in the harbor, a tale that Dove categorically denied in 1937. This origin story may have been a conflation of Dove's picture with events in Waldo Frank's 1923 novel *Holiday*, in which a black man does indeed drown by a dock. Scott, "Submerged: Arthur Dove's *Goin' Fishin'* and its hidden history", 141-42, 146. See Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 46. Alan Pensler offers an alternative reading of this situation, suggesting that the inspiration was indeed a drowned black man, but that he obscured that information since he didn't think that Duncan Phillips would like it. See Alan Pensler, *Arthur Dove: A Reassessment* (Seattle: Lucia/Marquand, 2018), 63-67. I am not convinced by Pensler's interpretation – he also, rather bizarrely, tries to link the picture to Christian theology and suggests that the drowned man was intended as a Christ-like figure.

some observers to label it "sinister" and "intensely unpleasant".[71] This interpretation may have been propelled in part by Dove's use of bamboo, which somewhat resemble bare bones and joints that, alongside the "head" of wood with a button as an eye, are arranged as though a body had been contorted and mangled. However, others quickly began to celebrate it as the apotheosis of Dove's artistic talents and project. Said Stieglitz of his 1926 exhibition of Dove's work, "I am not sure that if I had to keep just one of the Dove's, it would not be 'Fishing Nigger'… the picture is a unity, it is one in spirit".[72] Many of the critics who praised the assemblage (as well as later interpreters) were anxious to defend Dove's use of an epithet in the title as part of his evocation of an American folk idiom, and to suggest that neither he nor Stieglitz were at all racist.[73]

Art historian Nancy Scott writes that the picture has long been cited as an example of "American art's adaptation of folkloric and native themes to the visual language of Cubism", and glimpses in its subject matter an artist who is wrestling with a simultaneous racist disdain for African-Americans and a sympathy for their plight in modern America (a sympathy perhaps driven in part by the considerable extent of Ku Klux Klan activity on Long Island in the

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[71] Kroiz suggests that Helen Torr changed the title to "Negro Goes Fishing" in her diary because she objected to the more vulgar term. Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 169, 237n83. Wrote Herbert Seligmann, "living with 'Fishing Nigger'… taught me to overcome my first impulse to withdraw from it. For when Dove brought it in, it shocked me. Others called it sinister and found it intensely unpleasant." Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 46.

[72] Alfred Stieglitz quoted in Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking,* 35.

[73] See, for example, Herbert Seligmann's explanation in *Alfred Stieglitz Talking,* 18, or Elizabeth McCausland's in her *Parnassus* article on Dove, in which she declared that "The word Nigger, fraught with history, does not imply race discrimination; it is in the American language for good reasons; Dove uses it as naturally as he calls his father "my old man." This is the cadence of Huck Finn, the cadence which makes Dove's written word peculiarly Indigenous". Elizabeth McCausland, "Arthur Dove: Man and Painter", *Parnassus* 9, no. 7 (1937), 6. However, the objection to the title implied by Helen Torr's refusal to use the "n word" in her diary hints at the reality that Dove was living within a sociocultural environment in which the idea that using the term was inappropriate was shared by many people, though many other upper-class whites used the term either freely or with similar justifications, as the photographer and writer Carl van Vechten, a close friend to several members of the Stieglitz Circle, did in the aftermath of publishing his Harlem-set 1926 novel *Nigger Heaven,* whose title similarly led to controversy. A useful recent account and analysis of Van Vechten and the publication of *Nigger Heaven* is Emily Bernard, *Carl Van Vechten and the Harlem Renaissance: A Portrait in Black and White* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010).

1920s).[74] Lauren Kroiz has linked the work to Toni Morrison's identification of a larger trend of white American authors who have relied on black presence to help define their sense of national identity, and less as a "racist joke" so much as "evidence of… [a] modernist regionalism in which racial meaning inheres in stuff" – which is to say in the buttons and shirtsleeves of the assemblage itself, which she interprets as an entry in the Stieglitzian practice of fetishizing things (and people) as ripe with inherent racial traits and meanings.[75] In Kroiz' estimation, the assemblage is Dove's attempt to capture the connection that he felt existed between the clothes and fishing pole and the essence of blackness as an identity.

Kroiz also links *Goin' Fishin*' to the several illustrations and cartoon jokes (for example, Figures 4.18 and 4.19) that Dove produced in the early 1920s that traffic in much more clear and obvious ways in racial stereotypes about African Americans. Similar to Dove's use of such terms in *Goin' Fishin"*s various titles, some of these illustrations (i.e. Figure 4.18) present distortions of African-American vernacular dialects pulled from the stories being illustrated as captions, while others, intended as humorous standalone cartoons (i.e. Figure 4.19), feature captions of Dove's own invention. These titles and captions invite consideration of whether titles like *Nigger Goes A-Fishin'* were not also attempts at lowbrow humor. In all these cases words, phrases, grammatical constructions, and implied pronunciations inaccurately and demeaningly mimic the speech patterns of uneducated (and, in the case of the illustrations and cartoons, entirely fictional) black characters. Likewise, in the cartoons themselves Dove leaned into period visual stereotypes about poor, rural, Southern African-Americans, often casting them as dim-witted, lazy, and buffoonish caricatures and frequently depicting them with exaggerated features,

[74] Scott, "Submerged: Arthur Dove's *Goin' Fishin'* and its hidden history", 138, 154-55.
[75] Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 144, 167.

including large, miscolored lips.[76] In the instance of at least one illustrational commission this practice extended to representing African subjects (Figure 4.20). *Goin' Fishin'*, abstract though it is, also seems to play into such tropes by presenting several pieces of wood and bamboo that have been charred black, invoking common exaggerations of the darkness of "black" persons' skin tones in U.S. visual culture and even recreating the use of burnt cork as stage makeup in minstrel shows that lampooned African Americans in part by incorporating such visual exaggerations.

Sociologists Simon Clarke and Steve Garner argue that much racism today is, though inevitably affected by larger events and trends (like, for example, immigration on a national level), nonetheless locally contingent – that is, what background or appearance is deemed to be "other" and what is considered the unmentioned "normal" is often dependent on not just the individual perspectives of those doing the judging, but also the norms of an area or a community.[77] With this idea in mind it is worth thinking hard about the circumstances in which Dove lived while on Long Island, including both the attitudes towards racial belonging and otherness popular among the area's white elite and the exposure to racial "others" that Dove would have experienced while living there.

Indeed, Dove's distorted representation of the man he found on the Huntington docks in *Goin' Fishin'* is ultimately all the more remarkable when one considers that encounters with working-class African Americans would have been a regular occurrence in Huntington in a way that they might not have been in his hometown of Geneva, at the elite colleges he attended, or even in a frequently racially divided Manhattan. A substantial African-American population had lived in the area for nearly a century by 1925, as the founding of the Bethel A.M.E Church in the

[76] Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 164-67.
[77] Clarke and Garner, *White Identities*, 7.

town in 1843 attests. The growth of the "Gold Coast" (of which Huntington was a part) on the north shore of Long Island as a haven for wealthy elites and the related industrialization of the area in the early twentieth century led to newfound accessibility and work opportunities for African Americans there, and a significant growth in the area's population, especially during the 1920s. According to the 1930 U.S. census, between 1920 and 1930 the African-American population of Suffolk County, in which Huntington sits, nearly doubled, from 2814 to 5502.[78] Given the demographics of the area during this period and that, as Cassidy points out, Dove did not spend much time in minority enclaves when visiting New York City, it seems likely that encounters with local African-Americans in and around Huntington were Dove's principal means of in-person exposure to racial others.[79] What is remarkable, then, about the presence and representation of this black fisherman is not his existence in the fabric of Dove's life (or indeed the life of any Gold Coast denizen in the mid-1920s) but rather the artist's reaction to the seemingly unremarkable encounter, which seems to suggest that Dove felt an ongoing sense of fascination with local African-Americans despite their omnipresence – a reaction perhaps attributable to his upbringing in a provincial, predominately white upstate New York town but also to the norms of the wealthy and exclusive community in which he lived on the Gold Coast.

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[78] Lynda R. Day, *Making a Way to Freedom: A History of African Americans on Long Island* (Interlaken, NY: Empire State Books, 1997), 107. See *Fifteenth Census of the United States: Population - Volume 3, Part 2, Reports By States…, Montana-Wyoming*, United States Bureau of the Census, 1932, 283. For more on the history of African Americans in Huntington, see Town of Huntington African American Historical Designation Council (AAHDC), *African Americans and Historic Sites*, published February 2019, https://www.huntingtonny.gov/filestorage/13747/99540/16487/16501/AAHDC_Volume_I-IV_plus_newsletter_2016_compilation.pdf. For more on the history of African Americans on Long Island, see also Natalie A. Naylor, ed., *Exploring African-American History: Long Island and Beyond* (Hempstead, NY: Long Island Studies Institute, Hofstra University, 1995); or Grania Bolton Marcus, *A Forgotten People: Discovering the Black Experience in Suffolk County* (Setauket, NY: Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities, 1988). The growing population in the area during the 1920s was likely at least in part due to the Great Migration of African Americans to the urban and suburban north during the period.

[79] Donna Cassidy, *Painting the Musical City*, 4. We can note here the existence of a small number of non-white people within the Stieglitz orbit and the larger New York avant-garde scene, including luminaries such as Jean Toomer, Sadakichi Hartmann, and Marius de Zayas.

Tellingly, Dove's many letters and other writings from throughout the 1920s and '30s make only sparing references to encounters with African Americans. Though these absences clearly suggest that African Americans were not a part of his Long Island social circle, we know that encounters with black people must have happened all the time. However, it seems that, like most other upper-class Americans living in New York and Connecticut at this time, for Dove, the divides of race and class made those encounters often seem unremarkable. It is notable, then, that he chose to focus on African Americans, and indeed on the supposed racial attributes of African Americans, in a number of his paintings. This interest is noteworthy not because it was unusual for an artist to memorialize an everyday moment or encounter with a stranger (though it was not something that the other Stieglitz artists did much of), but because there is not much evidence outside of his art that he paid much (direct) attention to African Americans (instead, as his passion for jazz and swing might suggest, the interest was more often indirect), and because most of his modernist peers studiously ignored representing African Americans in their work. Interestingly, when he focused on white people in other pictures, those people tended to be particular people he knew or, as I will discuss later, satirical send-ups of a particular profession or social type. *Goin' Fishin'* and some other representations of African Americans in his work are quite different.

In other abstract works, Dove represents the subject as an individual – consider his depiction of a friend and neighbor in Huntington, *Portrait of Ralph Dusenberry*, which, though abstract, identifies its subject by name and incorporates objects that allude to elements of Dusenberry's persona and life on a Long Island houseboat (Figure 4.21)). *Goin' Fishin'*, by contrast, casts its subject as the essence of fisherman-liness, an abstracted, deindividuated presence conjured of nothing more than denim shirt and bamboo pole – perhaps even a very

particular type of fisherman, as Kroiz suggests when she notes that "Nigger Fishing" was a period term used to demeaningly describe the practices of poor fishermen who used bamboo poles and fished for food rather than sport.[80] At the same time, through its use casual employment of the offensive epithet and crude approximation of African-American Vernacular English in the painting's title, the picture not only casts its subject as just another poor, uneducated black man incapable of proper speech among many, but also as a "Nigger", as an inferior being put down in the harshest of terms, regardless of whatever excuses the artist chose to offer to justify his use of the word.[81] While some of Marin's Down East paintings depicted people with whom he had become close, and many of O'Keeffe's New Mexican pictures depict locales and objects with which she was at least familiar (though typically none too knowledgeable), Dove's picture reflects a certain meld of ignorance and condescension, albeit a blend shared by many white people of his era and social station, as it depicts a stereotypical and anonymous fisherman. Indeed, much as his more openly offensive commercial cartoons did, the picture is arguably even enacting a sort of blackface minstrelsy through its artless imitation of African-American speech, a notion that might encourage one to think again about the character of and intentions underlying some of Dove's music-based works. The idea that the picture, like his cartoons, or even some of the jazz-like music that he so enjoyed, is a minstrel-like over-the-top *performance* of blackness or temporary *assumption* of a black identity is supported by the fact that, despite his unwavering commitment to using the original title for *Goin' Fishin'* and his use of other racist language in the titles and captions for other cartoons and paintings, he

[80] Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 166.
[81] Crucially, psychologists have often argued that language is often a fundamental basis of stereotyping. For more on the history and the implications of this word, see Randall Kennedy, *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word* (New York: Vintage: 2002). Regarding language and stereotypes, see Charles Stangor and Mark Schaller, "Stereotypes as Individual and Collective Representations", in C. Neil Macrae, Charles Stangor, and Miles Hewstone, eds., *Stereotypes and Stereotyping* (New York and London: Guilford, 1996), 11-12.

refrained from using the n-word in his correspondence. Though Stieglitz notably made mention of "Negro savages" in a letter to Dove in reference to his landmark 1914 exhibition of African Art at 291, Dove seemed to favor the less offensive term "colored" on the rare occasion that he made mention of actual African-American people in his writings.[82]

From Dove's story, we can surmise than he likely never even spoke to the man he claimed to represent in *Goin' Fishin',* and instead chose to ventriloquize a sort of stock black character that he had internalized in the absence of actual substantive attempts to speak to or understand the African-American people he encountered in his everyday life (though the degree to which Dove believed in the authenticity of that stereotypical character is unclear). The contrast with the representations and relationships with local people the Marin pursued in Maine is striking – while Marin viewed the (white) Mainers with intense admiration and eventually became close friends with many of his Down East neighbors, it seems as though friendship was never even a consideration for Dove. Instead, African-American people he depicted were more purely *subjects* – subjects of pictures, subjects of exotic interest, subjects and tools of an artistic philosophy that leveraged their supposed otherness to try to express the identities of a nation and a place within it.

Dove himself said in a 1930 letter to Stieglitz that, "self-portraiture… after all is what painting is."[83] *Goin' Fishin'* is something closer to a self-portrait of Dove and the evolving character of his artistic practice and his views on race than it is a representation of any individual African-American angler.[84] Like Dove's other assemblages, the picture is a sort of ordered

[82] See Alfred Stieglitz to Arthur Dove, November 5, 1914, in Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, 42; and Arthur Dove to Alfred Stieglitz, March 23, 1936, in Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, 346.
[83] Arthur Dove to Alfred Stieglitz, July 11, 1930, in Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, 194.
[84] This point can serve as a parallel to Circle familiar William Carlos Williams' famous poem *The Red Wheelbarrow*, which, according to Williams, "sprang from affection for an old Negro named Marshall" who lived near Williams' childhood home in New Jersey and had formerly been a fisherman. Williams similarly seems to emphasize the character of everyday life outside of the city in his poem and via his fracturing of the scene through

shattering and reassembling of objects from the scene as he saw it. The main difference from a picture like *Portrait of Ralph Dusenberry* is that it shows little interest in the individual (*Ralph Dusenberry,* after all, is a true portrait of someone whom Dove knew, and includes specific allusions to the traits of its subject). However, equally relevant is the character of Dove's artistic practice more generally. Whereas Marin, O'Keeffe, and Hartley's pictures all tended to represent subjects with relative clarity (instead typically introducing stereotypes through the subject matter itself), Dove's more abstract pictures lent themselves all the more easily to abstracted, deindividuated depictions of people. What is left are Dove's visual experiments and his feelings about a class of people whom he viewed through the lens of damaging stereotypes, thoughts invoked by the presence of a person to whom he likely never spoke. Though other artists outside the Circle took similar approaches towards abstraction, they typically did not share the group members' interest in exotic and semi-exotic American places, things, and populations. Dove's method was a potent mix.

This logic of self-portraiture doubtless extended to many of the white elites who saw the picture in Stieglitz or Phillips' galleries in the 1920s or '30s, which is to say before the backstories (true and false) about the African-American man who inspired it and the offensive title had been erased from the picture's public presence in museums and books. What made the picture noteworthy or interesting was not what it represented *per se* (a seemingly unremarkable encounter between the artist and a local African-American fisherman) but rather their reaction to it. In most cases that reaction reflected either an interest in Dove's picture as an evocation of the everyday lives of a folk culture that they found somewhat exotic and unfamiliar (i.e. a recreation of the attitudes that seem to have informed Dove's own interest in and representation of this

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modernist form distortion, while also focusing on a local African-American person he found to be interesting. See Sergio Rizzo, "Remembering Race: Extra-poetical Contexts and the Racial Other in "The Red Wheelbarrow", *Journal of Modern Literature* 29, no. 1 (2005), 34-54.

man), a feeling of unease or disgust at the object's name and the implications thereof, or a combination of the two.[85]

In some sense then the picture is evidence of Dove's belief in one or more collective stereotypes, including stereotypes shared by many white Americans about African Americans (i.e. that black people were often unemployed/did not have regular jobs, or that they spoke in a certain dialect reflective of their lack of sophistication) and, potentially, also, other stereotypes shared within a Long Island social microclimate (i.e. that unemployed black men often hung around the docks).[86] In taking a relatively quotidian everyday encounter and scrambling its ingredients, Dove held it up for scrutiny and contemplation, much as he held up countless other elements of his everyday life in myriad pictures throughout his career. However, in this case we

[85] For a list of exhibitions up to the early 1980s, see Morgan, *Arthur Dove*, 137. More information on the history of its display can be found in the object's curatorial file at The Phillips Collection. Scott discusses the erasure of the backstory and title for the assemblage in "Submerged: Arthur Dove's *Goin' Fishin'* and its hidden history", 148. Ann Lee Morgan's *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, has since its 1988 publication remained the principal way to read the Stieglitz-Dove correspondence aside from visiting Yale to view the originals, and one would assume it to be be duplicative of the original versions. However, in a circumstance somewhat similar to the erasure of racial epithets in Norman's *The Selected Writings of John Marin* (see Chapter 5 of this dissertation), use of the "n word" and other outdated and offensive racial terminology has in some of the many instances in which Dove's offensive titles are mentioned in the correspondence been excised with little hint. In the book's preface Morgan mentions editing out "Conventional greetings and conclusions to letters", "Weather reports", "Financial information", "Exhibition information", and "Repetitious material". These deletions (which are signaled with ellipses) include mention of *Nigger Barge* and *Nigger Goes A' Fishin'* (see Arthur Dove to Alfred Stieglitz, March 8, 1933, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 14, April 16, 1934, Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, 266, Arthur Dove to Alfred Stieglitz, April 16, 1934, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 14, and Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, 304, among other examples). Because of their removal the reader is left with an incomplete picture of the frequency with which these terms were used by these men, especially as debates over the display, status, and ownership of *Nigger Goes A' Fishing* carried on for well over a decade. In other cases offensive, racially charged language is featured in the book, as in the discussion of whether to sell *Nigger Goes A' Fishing* to Duncan Phillips in Alfred Stieglitz to Arthur Dove, May 21, 1936, in Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, 352, and Arthur Dove to Alfred Stieglitz, May 25, 1936, in Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, 353. Notably, as mentioned earlier, Stieglitz' mention of "a wonderful show on now by Negro savages" in reference to his exhibition of African Art at 291 is preserved in the book – see p. 42. Dove's passing reference to a "colored man" is also preserved – see p. 346. Ultimately, these erasures are a far cry from those in Norman's collection of Marin's writings. For a recent analysis of a somewhat similar instance of erasure of the "n word" from an roughly contemporaneous artist's published writings, see Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, "The Decolonization of John Sloan", *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 7, no. 2 (2021), https://journalpanorama.org/article/decolonization-of-john-sloan/.

[86] Some useful discussion of collective stereotypes (that is, stereotypes propelled by social factors) is included in Stangor and Schaller, "Stereotypes as Individual and Collective Representations". As they summarize (p. 10), "because cultural stereotypes represent one part of an individual's social knowledge, and because these beliefs have important effects on social behavior, their consideration is essential for a full understanding of stereotypes and stereotyping." See also Henri Tajfel, "Social stereotypes and social groups", in John C. Turner and Howard Giles, eds., *Intergroup Behavior* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 144-67.

can glimpse a bit of how non-white people and period racial attitudes entered into that everyday life. In the invocation of racial stereotypes in the picture itself and its early titles, Dove not only showed some of his own perspective on African Americans but doubtless informed how many others interpreted the representation of a black man in his picture.

Importantly, though *Goin' Fishin'* may be the example that has commanded the most critical and scholarly attention in recent decades, it conforms to a larger set of practices within Dove's work that regularly reiterated Stieglitz' interest in defining the identity of a place and advancing modernist principles through expressive representation of spiritual essences, and often, in doing so, invoked and perpetuated racial and ethnic stereotypes. Though later portions of this chapter will address Dove's representations and invocations of other racial and ethnic groups, there are also several works that align closely with the intentions apparent in *Goin' Fishin*'.

Perhaps most similar is the 1929 picture first known as *Barge Nigger* or *Nigger Barge* (Figure 4.22), whose title was swiftly sanitized as *Colored Bargeman* for the purposes of a 1930 Museum of Modern Art exhibition (though this alternate title also uses antiquated racial terminology, to my knowledge it has not been changed in the decades since beyond the addition of a space, spelling *Colored Barge Man*, perhaps in part because the picture has never endured the scrutiny that comes with belonging to a major museum's permanent collection like *Goin' Fishin'* has). However, *Barge Nigger* and *Nigger Barge* were the titles used in 1930 and 1933 at a pair of shows at An American Place, a circumstance that suggests that there were sharply differing opinions about the appropriateness of the use of the "n word" within the New York art scene even at the moment of these works' creation.[87] Though it might otherwise be easy to

[87] The three titles are mentioned in Morgan, *Arthur Dove*, 167. Morgan does not mention the 1930 Museum of Modern Art exhibition – see *Painting and Sculpture By Living Americans – Ninth Loan Exhibition, December 2,*

dismiss this picture as a pure abstraction, or at the very least as a painting whose representational elements are indecipherable or mysterious (to this twenty-first-century observer it has always looked something like a swooping space rocket), its titles and the analogous example of *Goin' Fishin*' spark the imagination. With the title in mind, one can begin to glimpse in the black lines and shapes at the center of the painting the possible form of an African-American bargeman athletically contorting his body as he pulls his pole out of the water in preparation for another propulsive thrust into the harbor bed. A pair of lines beneath the form perhaps legs, the parallel, angled lines above perhaps the pole in action. Beneath this form is a foreshortened deck, behind it a rectangular cabin, around it a white blur of motion lines.

The example and past interpretations of *Goin' Fishin'* offer potential insight into what motivated Dove to paint *Colored Barge Man*. On one hand, Dove's (and perhaps Stieglitz') insistence on using the "n word" in titles for the work even after the controversy that had earlier embroiled *Goin' Fishin'*, Helen Torr Dove's refusal to use the term, and the Museum of Modern Art's alteration of the title lends strength to the suggestions that Dove and his promoter and friend considered the use of the term to be pivotal to these pictures' meaning and power. Though the briefer and admittedly more straightforward (given its lack of performative apostrophes or added elements like the "a" in *Nigger Goes A-Fishin'*) title of the 1929 painting offers less insight into Dove's intentions, we can again entertain the possibility that he was hoping to affect some ill-informed and overly simplistic version of African-American Vernacular English, and perhaps especially a Southern dialect thereof, and that he felt that using that term lent his picture a greater truthfulness than a more neutral title might have. Perhaps most of all, this second

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1930 – January 20, 1931 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1930), 12. Kroiz notes that Torr referred to the painting as *Negro on Barge*. Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 237 n83; August 30, 1929, Helen Torr Dove Diary, Dove Papers, Box 2, Folder 3.

picture signals Dove's simultaneous fascination with and lack of real empathy for the working class African-American people that he saw around him.

Though we do not know what role Dove had in the change from the original title of *Barge Nigger* to the 1933 title, *Nigger Barge*, it is worth noting the differences between the two – while the former focuses on a man, and defines him by his profession as a bargeman and his place of work upon a barge even as it denigrates him through its use of the epithet, the latter seems to tar the barge itself with the feather of blackness, seemingly suggesting that the entire craft is defined by the race of its pilot.[88] The two titles, in other words, signal slightly different interests – one in the profession and identity of this man and the character of his work and the other in an object, presumably one of many in the sprawling constellation of *things* in the environment around him that Dove endlessly sought to chronicle in his work. In truth, *Barge Nigger*, and the analogous *Colored Barge Man*, are much more interesting titles in that they not only betray Dove's casual racism (as the other title also does), but also a profound (and now recurrent) interest in the nautical work of African Americans in the Huntington area. This is the difference between a picture in which the (supposed) fact of a person's "blackness" is largely incidental and one in which the race and work of that person take center stage.

These two pictures also signal a larger fascination evident within Dove's Long Island oeuvre, and thereby perhaps hint at a larger set of racial dimensions inherent to his work there. As other historians have noticed, one of Dove's central artistic interests while living on Long Island was the nautical life surrounding him. The Doves began living on a houseboat in 1921, and Arthur immediately began chronicling the world around him, much as he already had when living elsewhere (see Figure 4.23). When they moved to the hamlet of Halesite in Huntington,

[88] See Arthur Dove to Martha Cheney, response written on Cheney letter of January 8, 1938, Dove Papers, Box 1, Folder 9. Of course, the possibility also exists that the change of title was merely a mix-up.

where they moored their yawl *Mona* from 1924-1933, this practice not only continued but expanded as Dove's fascination with boats and the nautical commerce around him grew deeper, and he produced pictures with titles like *Huntington Harbor*, *Fog Horns*, *Boats at Night*, and *Outboard Motor* (among many others) (see Figures 4.24 and 4.25). From 1929 to 1933 the Doves spent their winters as caretakers living in Ketewomoke Yacht Club in Huntington, and from their heavily windowed room on the second floor Arthur regularly looked out into harbor and sketched the activity he saw there.[89] Though he sometimes featured pleasure craft and often dwelled on elements of the seaside environment that seem largely disconnected from human activity, including the waves and weather, across his tenure on Long Island he developed a particular interest in local commercial marine activity that manifested itself in roughly two dozen depictions of emblems of such activity in Huntington and other nearby harbors, from brick and sand barges to tugboats to coal shovels to commercial barrels, drums, and tanks (see Figures 4.26 and 4.27).

Notably, according to historian Lynda Day, among African Americans on Long Island, many were "sailors, pilots and even captains of their own boats" and some black cemeteries on the island contain the graves of numerous mariners.[90] In the interwar era Long Island was home to an array of thriving nautical commercial activities, including ferrying, military, fishing, shipping, and Prohibition-era rumrunning industries, as well as the widespread construction and operation of elaborate yachts and powerboats for the Gold Coast's resident millionaires.[91] These nautical industries were not only a substantial component of the island's economy (especially in seaside towns like Huntington), but also constituted a professional arena in which African

[89] Morgan, *Arthur Dove*, 22-23.
[90] Day, *Making a Way to Freedom*, 75-77.
[91] Bill Bleyer, *Long Island and the Sea: A Maritime History* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2019), 53-93, 127-41, 211-31.

Americans could not only find employment, but also, as Day hints, opportunity for advancement and/or self-sufficiency that was not easily discovered elsewhere. It may well be, then, that Dove connected African Americans with Long Island's harbors for the simple reason that he noticed many black people working or otherwise spending time there, and saw them less frequently in other arenas of his life.

The idea that Dove connected African Americans with the maritime activity that surrounded him on Long Island's North Shore may also be suggested in *Bessie of New York* (Figure 4.28 – see also Figure 4.29, a study for the painting), which has been hypothesized by scholars to be an anthropomorphic representation of famed jazz singer Bessie Smith – an idea that might well suggest a connection to the similar distortion of an African-American jazz musician on display in *Swing Music (Louis Armstrong)* (Figure 4.7). This picture is something of a mystery – what might have compelled Dove to meld the visage of a famous black jazz singer (who, one might note, was not from New York, though she did perform there many times, and became an object of obsession for Circle familiar Carl Van Vechten because of her visits there (see Figure 4.30 for a Van Vechten photo portrait of Smith)) with a boat that we can assume was from the harbor in Huntington or another nearby North Coast community?[92] It seems likely that Dove was either inspired to conflate the two either because the boat was indeed named "Bessie", or, more disturbingly, because he looked at it and simply felt that it resembled the singer. Perhaps he was also connecting Smith's powerful voice to the sonorous tones of a boat's horn. Regardless, there seems to be more than a hint of an attempt at humor in this combination, as well as further implication of a connection between African Americans and maritime activities.

[92] Regarding Van Vechten's obsession with Smith, see Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 412-13. For scholars discussing the connection between the painting and Smith, see Scott, "Submerged: Arthur Dove's *Goin' Fishin'* and its hidden history", 151-52; and Matt Adams, "Arthur Dove's Response to Jazz Music", unpublished paper, Clark University, cited in Scott, "Submerged: Arthur Dove's *Goin' Fishin'* and its hidden history", 151.

There also exists a possibility that a greater proportion of Dove's nautical pictures were inspired by the connection he made between African Americans and the sea than is immediately evident from the titles or paintings themselves. Notably, in response to a questionnaire sent by scholar Martha Cheney in 1938, Dove lists a painting he calls *Red Barge Nigger* as one of his "most important" works. Assuming that it refers to the painting later called *Colored Barge Man*, this title suggests not only that he preferred that the picture be known by some permutation of *Barge Nigger* rather than the inverse, and that he viewed this work as a major accomplishment and had no misgivings about its title(s) or content, but also suggests a possible connection between this work and several other pictures that Dove made of red barges two years later, in 1931 (Figure 4.31). Though numerous red barges doubtless passed through Huntington Harbor during this era, the linkage invites speculation – could this be the same barge? Why was one called a "Nigger Barge", and not the others? Then, too, there is the whole array of other pictures of nautical activity in the area that Dove made in the 1920s and '30s – surely many of these other scenes also featured African-American workers when Dove observed them. But why, then, was the race of the mariner in *Colored Barge Man* singled out? Could these be inexplicable exceptions in a practice that at other times was also inspired by Dove's interest in African Americans, but did not always include such obvious clues as the inclusion of the "n word" in the title? Could a picture like *Face on a Bank* (Figure 4.32), for example, be a portrait, perhaps of an African-American person – or is it simply a depiction of shapes on a bank that reminded Dove of a face? These are the types of questions prompted by Dove's frequently inscrutable work, where abstraction and distortion are the rule, people are often absent or unaccounted for, and laconic titles often offer few clues. At the very least, it seems clear that, when Dove did wish to (in one

way or another) represent an African-American person, he would not hesitate to identify that person by way of a racist epithet.

"People" and "Colored People": Dove's Portraits

Though it is fair to think of Dove's representations and invocations of African-Americans local to his home in North-Central Long Island as a trend in and of itself, it is important to contextualize these works within the broader artistic project that Dove was pursuing while living in Huntington in the mid-to-late 1920s. As was the case for much of his career, Dove's work from this period moves back and forth between lyrical, sometimes absurdist and/or total abstraction and an ongoing effort to document the character and appeal of everyday objects and happenings. Within the context of this larger project, the local African Americans that Dove chose to represent (even if we don't know how many of them there really were in Dove's frequently depopulated and abstract pictures) become something akin to props in a broader scheme. Dove did make other works representing people around this time, as in other assemblages including *The Critic* (Figure 4.33), a parody of legendary *New York Herald Tribune* art critic Royal Cortissoz and the other portly anti-modernist writers who sometimes looked down their noses at Dove's work, *Miss Woolworth* (Figure 4.34), a sending-up of wealthy women's excessive shopping habits, and *Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz* and *Portrait of Ralph Dusenberry* (Figures 4.35 and 4.21), symbolic representations of his friend and advocate and a Long Island neighbor.[93] However, it is clear that the men in *Goin' Fishin'* and *Colored Barge Man* are being represented in an altogether different way – whereas in *The Critic* Cortissoz is being lampooned alongside the other members of his profession, *Miss Woolworth* is a more generic work of social satire, and the two *Portraits* are unflinching symbolic representations of

[93] I might also mention the assemblages *The Intellectual* and *Grandmother* (both 1925) here.

particular people whom Dove knew, in his depictions of individual African Americans Dove is representing them as racial types as well as occupational ones, as the titles alluding to both race and job clearly demonstrate.[94] Meanwhile, the men in the other two pictures are instead anonymous, forever immortalized not as they were but rather as Dove perceived them – as fisherman and bargeman, yes, but also, crucially and indelibly, as racially foreign and inferior. In the case of *Goin' Fishin'*, because there is no known person for the objects in the assemblage to refer to, there is instead a conflation of man and thing – whereas in other assemblages things *referred* to a particular person, in *Goin' Fishin'* a man is *made into* an object.

Even in *Bessie of New York* (if we buy the idea that the boat is indeed a representation of Bessie Smith) the approach seems different – she is represented not in an abstract way, or even one that merely touches upon her appearance in the way that *The Critic* prominently features Cortissoz' corpulence, but instead by, it would seem, mocking the singer's size and appearance in a more demonstrative way: by suggesting that she is as large as a boat, and, arguably, by exaggerating her facial features much as Dove had exaggerated African-American subjects' lips in earlier caricatures. If the windows on the boat's main cabin are meant to also represent eyes, the roofline curled hair, and the smaller, closer cabin or the door into it a nose, then the lips of this face are to be found in the massive, curving gunwale and hull.[95] It is hard not to perceive hyperbolic racist caricature akin to that found in Dove's earlier illustrations in this anthropomorphic scheme.

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[94] As a well-known portrait assemblage made during the same year as *Goin' Fishin*', *The Critic* has often been cited as a point of comparison for it. See, for example, Scott, "Submerged: Arthur Dove's *Goin' Fishin'* and its hidden history", 148.

[95] Scott points out that the author and photographer Carl van Vechten, who was close with several members of the Stieglitz Circle, was deeply interested in Smith's work and represented her in a series of 1936 photographs. Ibid., 152-53.

Though these other portraits offer humorous social commentary and, in some cases, winking satire of entire social and professional groups, Dove's portraits of African Americans demonstrate the connection he perceived between black people and the commercial maritime community that he took interest in while living on Long Island. The sort of link between race and place being drawn in these pictures is not exactly the same as those offered by Marin in Maine, O'Keeffe in New Mexico, or Hartley or Strand in these and other places, as it is not predicated on a connection between particular racial or ethnic groups and a U.S. region already constructed and widely disseminated by larger forces in American society (such as the romanticizing forces of a tourism industry). Instead, *Goin' Fishin'*, *Colored Barge Man*, and even *Bessie of New York* draw from Dove's own, much more personal suggestion that there existed a racialized, or perhaps partially racialized, arena within and among the docks and boats that dot the smaller region of coastal northern Long Island that he was inhabiting at that time.

Swinging in the Park (There Were Colored People There) (Figure 4.36), from 1930, brings Dove's interest in African Americans to a different context – a public park.[96] Indeed, the painting stands out as the only example from Dove's many depictions of his Long Island world that explicitly identifies an African-American subject in a non-nautical context, and confirms that, even if Dove made a special association between black people and the sea and docks, he also, inevitably, saw and noticed them elsewhere. However, the work's title also speaks to the very particular way in which Dove saw African Americans – as a group apart, whose mere presence prompted not only comment and identification along racial terms, but perhaps also even

[96] The parenthetical portion of this title has at times been removed, much as the titles for other Dove works using outdated and offensive terminology to refer to African-Americans were sanitized. See, for example, Morgan, *Arthur Dove*, 188. Given that Morgan includes the original, offensive titles for other works, it seems likely that she was not aware of the previous title for this work, and that it had been sanitized by another party, likely Fisk University, the historically-black college to whom O'Keeffe had given the painting from Stieglitz' collection after his 1946 death. Note, also, the possibility of a connection with music inherent in the work's title.

a bit of annoyance and/or surprise, though, especially given the picture's relative indecipherability, it is impossible to truly parse what Dove meant by mentioning "Colored People" in his title. Regardless, by seemingly commenting on his own experience when visiting the park, Dove foregrounds his own perspective and subjectivity much as his peers Marin and O'Keeffe sometimes did, in ways that invite the viewer to step into the artist's shoes, even if the abstraction inherent in *Swinging in the Park* makes that experience require a bit more imagination.

Suffice it to say that several possibilities exist. For one thing, though it seems less likely than the possibility that he was simply representing a playground scene, given Dove's passionate interest in music it is plausible that the "swinging" in question alluded to the playing and communal enjoyment of swing music. Notably, the rhythmic character of the lines and multi-colored spaces of the picture arguably recall other jazz pictures of the era. Regardless, one possibility is that Dove wanted to mention that there were African-American people at the park with a neutral or even a positive connotation, simply out of interest or genuine surprise, without any intention of conveying displeasure. After all, the picture itself is actually quite vibrant and fun, though there is a persistent sense of tension in the criss-crossing lines that stretch across the painting (perhaps the ropes of the swing? Or, more disturbingly, even the ropes of a noose, which might lend an altogether different connotation to the idea of "swinging in the park"). If Dove was bothered by the African-Americans he found in the park, he apparently didn't let it completely ruin his perception and representation of the overall experience.

Interestingly, Dove's earlier study for the painting was an inverted version of the final iteration, in a way that makes the leafy bits of the scene look more like bushes than treetops (Figure 4.37). Like *Bessie of New York* or *Swing Music (Louis Armstrong)*, one can arguably

perceive a face in the patterns created here, perhaps with black eyes, pursed red lips, and dark brown skin. However, it is unclear how a close-up of a face would mesh with the painting's title. The brown tree trunk (?) also seems less like a potential allusion to a black person's body than it does in the final painting, the criss-crossing lines less like the ropes of a swing. All the same, the decision to invert the painting is thought-provoking. Are we to assume that the sketch is closer to Dove's memory of the experience than is the flipped final composition? In a picture as incomprehensible as this one, does it even matter? Regardless, the decision to invert the picture seems like yet another signpost of Dove's willingness to fashion compositions that are both abstract and allusive.

We might also glimpse in this painting some of the segregationist principles that played a powerful role in Long Island society in the interwar era.[97] If Dove was surprised or, possibly, irked by these African Americans' presence at the park, it likely speaks to an ingrained expectation that many of the spaces in which he and other whites (and especially whites of a certain class) would circulate would be free from racial and socioeconomic others, and especially African-Americans. Write scholars Brian Purnell and Jeanne Theoharis, "In the North, black people could get as "uppity" as they want – they could run successful businesses, consume luxury goods, and sit next to white people on the bus – so long as they did not try to get too close to whites, as their neighbors, sexual partners, classmates, or union brothers… Jim Crow… [still]

[97] Though they may not have been enshrined in law to the same extent that they were in much of the South, in 1920s New York discrimination and segregation were a fundamental component of society, even if they "lay more in social practice and prejudicial enforcement of race-neutral laws" rather than openly discriminatory legal codes. Earl Lewis and Heidi Ardizzone, *Love on Trial: An American Scandal in Black and White* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2001), 209. Some of the realities of the situation of African Americans in Northern Long Island in the early to mid-twentieth century, including the substantial socioeconomic/class divide between the white and black communities (with many African Americans working in service jobs for wealthy whites in the area or in New York City) and the degree of segregation to which the area's African Americans were subjected, are described in the oral history collection: Elly Shodell, ed., *It Looks Like Yesterday to Me: Port Washington's Afro-American Heritage* (Port Washington, NY: Port Washington Public Library, 1984).

demanded that black people remain in their "place"."[98] It was around the time of Dove's making of *Swinging in the Park*, in the early 1930s, that northern Long Island, like many other suburban and exurban areas of the United States, began to institute practices of redlining that codified racial segregation into housing and urban development practices, forcing separation in home and leisure spaces for African Americans even as they continued to interact with and serve wealthy whites as workers.[99]

It is telling that in Dove's correspondence and diaries, mention of non-white people is quite rare – not only was there a significant degree of insulation from non-white communities within Dove's world (and that of most others in patrician white America in the early twentieth century), but when non-white people did appear in expected places, they were typically unworthy of substantive attention, mention, or comment.[100] In a cryptic remark from a 1936 letter to Stieglitz written during a trip to Geneva, Dove apparently complains about how his time living small-town life there was a deviation from the more stimulating but insulated atmosphere within an exurban white community to which he had become accustomed: "It seems rather out of the world up here now. Haven't seen a white person for a month and a half."[101] It seems as though when the expectation of insulation was broken by the presence of black people in a typically white space (or type of space, like, for example, an unfamiliar park), then Dove's reaction was evidently to react with some surprise – though, if *Swinging in the Park* is any

[98] Brian Purnell and Jeanne Theoharis, "Introduction: Histories of Racism and Resistance, Seen and Unseen: How and Why to Think about the Jim Crow North", in Brian Purnell, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, eds., *The Strange Careers of the Jim Crow North: Segregation and Struggle Outside of the South* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 1-42, 3-4.
[99] For more on this phenomenon see, for example, Susan Hartigan, "Racism and the Opportunity Divide on Long Island" (Minneapolis: Institute on Race and Poverty, 2002).
[100] The lack of comment on people of color in Dove's writings also arguably makes his decisions to repeatedly highlight the race of non-white subjects in his work all the more interesting and notable, and perhaps signals the differences between a personal life lived largely in isolation from racial others and an artistic practice in which a fascination from a distance could flourish.
[101] Arthur Dove to Alfred Stieglitz, September 8, 1936, in Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, 361.

evidence, apparently he did not let it dissuade him from swinging in the park himself, or perhaps merely chronicling others' swinging, though not without (unnecessarily) remarking upon the possibly unexpected presence of these racial others. Such may have been Dove's reaction to the humdrum of racial encounter from the perspective of the privileged in a racist society – though just how relevant this context is for *Swinging in the Park* remains an open question.

The character of this segment of Dove's racialized regionalist (localist?) primitivism is, then, in keeping with his life and work more generally – it is concerned with, even content with, local goings-on, with the minutiae of everyday life in a small town as Dove observed it around him. That Dove's pictures of African Americans on Long Island principally focus on the realm of the sea and harbor is likely attributable to an observation on his part that many African Americans worked on boats or otherwise passed time by the shore. However, that they exist within a larger body of representations of local maritime activity, as well as a subset of images of commercial maritime activity, signals that, to some extent, the influence of period racism in this work is more incidental than it is in many of the pictures produced by other Circle artists. If, in other cases, race informed the fundamental appeal and perceived character of a place as it was being reveled in and represented, in the case of Dove's pictures we see instead the seepage of racism into the artist's everyday life, and by extension into the placemaking that he was pushing towards in his work there. One of the most remarkable things about Dove's paintings of African Americans is the mundanity of the racism that they portray. Though other artists could hide their bias behind a shield of romance, for Dove there is no such implied justification – every trip outside the house offered the possibility of an encounter with a racial other, and every African American person could not just be a fisherman, or a bargeman, or a parkgoer, or anything else – they were instead "colored", a "barge nigger", a "fishin' nigger".

As mentioned earlier, in some ways Dove's work was the purest distillation of the artistic precepts shared within the Stieglitz Circle, in part because of his greater commitment to modernist visual experimentation and in part because he seemed to make distilling people and things down to their essence and representing that essence as he perceived it, whether that thing or person was a cow or a boat or an African-American fisherman, fundamental to his work (while it was arguably incidental to that of others like O'Keeffe and Marin). Even if Dove's work lacked a widely understood and celebrated regional racial and ethnic context, it was nonetheless fundamentally engaged in a combined modernist, nationalist, and mystical project that was rooted in a continual fascination with the everyday lives of those of other races and classes (indeed, in terms of its commitment to Stieglitz' often racially inflected mystical nationalist modernist project, Dove's artmaking arguably exceeds that of all of the gallerist's other favored disciples). In Dove's case, the ongoing interest in the lives of ostensibly average people, in the existence and character of ostensibly unremarkable things, became its own sort of medium through which the national could be defined through the local, and otherness could be used to help articulate the unique character of a place as the artist felt it.

"American to the Core": Arthur Dove, All-American

Though Dove's caricatures, his representations of people of color he encountered in real life, and his depictions of racialized cultural sources all offer relatively concrete ways by which to link his work to the issues of racial and ethnic bias, his broader oeuvre and the interpretation thereof also offer another. As alluded to earlier, more so than the other members of Stieglitz' Circle, Dove's abstractionism has seen him cast not only as a quintessentially American painter, whose work is rooted in and reflective of a distinctively American spirit, but also, relatedly, as a major native progenitor of Abstract Expressionism, the supposed apotheosis of American

creativity on the world stage according to the logics of many of the mid-twentieth century's most influential critics.[102] This interpretation of Dove as a forerunner of the famous Abstract Expressionists artists of the 1950s was notably advanced in an article discussing Dove in *Perspectives U.S.A.*, a magazine created by the Ford Foundation with the intent of influencing opinion in Europe in favor of the United States as part of the so-called "Cultural Cold War" – a sure sign of the potential for Dove's work to be harnessed in the service of nationalistic narratives.[103]

In the interpretation of Dove as an all-American painter that dates back to even before his celebration as an Abstract Expressionist forerunner, there is an implicit focus on, even a fetishization of, his whiteness. This is in part because of Dove's celebration of place (and especially the rural and small-town sights that he observed around him in Geneva and Huntington), which led numerous interpreters to suggest that he was connected to the American earth. Mellquist begins his chapter on Dove, entitled "The Celebrator of the Soil" with the statement that "Arthur Dove comes all loamy from the American soil… He expands when he sees a stand of wheat, a fungus in the middle of the woods, or a weather-beaten shanty which shelters farm implements." He later states, without much explanation, that "Dove had an earthy

[102] See further discussion of this interpretation of Dove's work and its influence in Chapter Five.
[103] Goldwater article in *Perspectives U.S.A.*, 78. Helen A. Harrison analyzes Goldwater's article and the broader trend of casting Dove as a native precursor to postwar American abstractionists in "Arthur G. Dove and the Origins of Abstract Expressionism", *American Art* 12, no. 1 (1998), 66-83. Harrison also notes Alfred Barr's *The New American Painting* as an important articulation of this interpretation. See Alfred Barr, "Introduction" in *The New American Painting, as shown in eight European countries, 1958-1959* (New York: Museum of Modern Art and Doubleday, 1959), 18. Another example: in a summary of a recent Dove full-career retrospective written by MFA Boston curator Thomas Maytham in 1959, he describes Dove as "an unusually original American painter. He is perhaps the country's earliest abstractionist. His early enthusiasm for French cubist abstraction did much to prepare the way for the contemporary American style. In content, however, his work is singularly personal and emotional." Thomas Maytham, "Department of Paintings", *Annual Report for the Year, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* 84 (1959), 53.

disposition."[104] O'Keeffe stated unequivocally: "Dove is the only American painter who is of the earth."[105]

There were certainly several different ways for an artist and their work to signify Americanness to the pro-modernist literati of the early to mid-twentieth century – including through invocation of white regional identities that encouraged self-identification and recollection of the colonial era, by appropriation and glorification of Indigenous identities, or, in Dove's case, through a focus on the local and quotidian in places largely unmarked by the stamp of a supposed distinctive regional character. In Marin, O'Keeffe, and Dove's cases, the "whiteness" of the artist played a key role in the interpretation of their work as nationally distinctive, as even when non-white groups were invoked, the presence and identities of these others still played into a sense of national identity in which whiteness was central, and other races could only inflect the character of that identity in order to help differentiate it from other white groups in other places. However, this was arguably doubly true for Dove. When writers and peer artists celebrated Dove for his connection to "the American soil", they celebrated his rootedness in place, but also his supposed all-American character, an identity that was constructed around him because of his "Anglo-Saxon" familial background as well as his lifestyle and artistic choices (including his decisions to only briefly ever study in Europe, and to avoid living in a major, cosmopolitan city like New York). Duncan Phillips neatly encapsulated the attitude in his 1937 essay on Dove, writing that "Dove is a nature poet of old American stock."[106]

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[104] Mellquist, *The Emergence of an American Art,* 362-63.
[105] Georgia O'Keeffe, quoted in Mullett, "Arthur G. Dove (1880-), A Study in Contemporary Art", 27.
[106] Phillips, "The Art of Arthur G. Dove", n.p. Phillips calls Dove's work the title of this section, "American to the core", in this same essay. In a 1933 letter Phillips acclaimed Dove's work for being "free from [the] fashionable mannerisms of the hyper aesthetic and cerebral preciosity of Paris." Duncan Phillips to Arthur Dove, May 3, 1933, Dove Papers, Box 1, Folder 24.

Meanwhile, something that Dove's oeuvre shares with many other abstract artists is that it was intended for a predominantly elite white audience. Of course, the makers and appreciators of abstract art are much more diverse today (as are the levels on which abstract art is appreciated), and Dove's work might seem old-fashioned to many twenty-first-century abstract art aficionados. However, due in large part to ongoing racial inequalities (and perhaps, also, to the racist attitudes inherent in pictures ranging from *Goin' Fishin'* to *Indian One* and beyond), Dove's work spoke for decades (and arguably still speaks today) largely to an audience for abstract art that, without discounting the involvement and interest in abstract art movements of makers and audiences of color dating back to Dove's own era, nonetheless skews towards elites schooled in the history of modernist formal experimentation and/or disposed to appreciate abstractionism because of social pressures upon their taste. These audiences typically experience and experienced Dove's work at galleries or major museums with white-dominated audiences, typically in white-dominated neighborhoods, and often with hostile attitudes towards non-white visitors. In a later interview African-American artist Jacob Lawrence spoke of the feelings of unwelcomeness that he felt in museums and galleries as he recalled his conversations with a group of fellow black artists "who would regularly visit the [Metropolitan] museum together and make the rounds of cutting-edge galleries like Alfred Stieglitz's An American Place. 'You felt the same way about going into every art institution or gallery then,' he said. 'It wasn't hospitable but no one would keep you out.'"[107] Though abstraction could seem like a universal language in theory, in reality it was one that only an elite few were allowed or encouraged to speak. And after all, what really was Dove's art – a series of statements of universal truth, or the supposedly

[107] Jacob Lawrence, "In His Own Words: Jacob Lawrence at the Met and MoMA", interviewed by Michael Kimmelman, *New York Times*, 1996, repub., August 27, 2020. Though black artists like Lawrence did see shows like Dove's at An American Place, their presence there was far more exception than rule.

distinctively American offerings of an ostensibly profoundly nationally characteristic interpreter? Surely these were two mutually exclusive lines of interpretation.

There is a sense, then, that despite its relatively frequent focus on racial others, Dove's work was defined by whiteness – the supposed whiteness of the artist, the supposed whiteness of the interpreters who celebrated Dove and his connection to the American soil and identity and his role as a pioneer of abstractionism who preceded and inspired Abstract Expressionism (that supposed apogee of Anglo-American cultural freedom and modernist creativity), and the supposed whiteness of much of the audience for his art, including the white audiences for whom it was intended and the predominantly white audiences who still today likely offer most of the interest in his work.

Part of the story of the connections between racism and Dove's work is to do with the particulars of his own life and artistic practice – where he lived, who he knew, what he thought, how he painted. Another, related part is to do with Stieglitz and the influence of his essentializing and intuitive attitudes and mystical, modernist, and nationalist project on Dove's work. However, a final part is about how people perceived Dove's work and wrote and talked about and understood it – how race, vital though it was to his artmaking and that of his Stieglitz Circle peers and the narratives that were constructed around their careers and lives, came to be ignored in and written out of those narratives. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

"Our America": Stieglitz, O'Keeffe, and the Historiography of Modern American Art

One is astonished in the study of history at the recurrence of the idea that evil must be forgotten, distorted, skimmed over. We must not remember that Daniel Webster got drunk but only remember that he was a splendid constitutional lawyer. We must forget that George Washington was a slave owner, or that Thomas Jefferson had mulatto children, or that Alexander Hamilton had Negro blood, and simply remember the things we regard as creditable and inspiring. The difficulty, of course, with this philosophy is that history loses its value as an incentive and example; it paints perfect men and noble nations, but it does not tell the truth.

- W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction,* 1935[1]

What counts for canons, after all, is how history treats art: what gets entrenched, what gets lost, and what remains but without remembered origins. In the case of American art, what we willingly preserve from the twentieth century tends to be modernism.

- J.M. Mancini, *Pre-Modernism: Art-World Change and American Culture from the Civil War to the Armory Show,* 2005[2]

Though Stieglitz, Marin, O'Keeffe, Dove, Hartley, Strand, and even other, more ancillary group members all have their own identities as canonical figures within the history of U.S. modernism, they all benefitted from a variety of forces (including, most notably, Stieglitz' careful management) that eventually ensured that their own preferred interpretations of their work succeeded to the exclusion of other potential narratives. As I have suggested, this project is an attempt to write a history in which the often limiting, ahistorical, and unduly formalist justifications for modernism are questioned rather than taken for granted and what art historian

[1] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction* (1935; repub., Cleveland: World Meridian, 1964), 722.
[2] J.M. Mancini, *Pre-Modernism: Art-World Change and American Culture from the Civil War to the Armory Show* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 159.

Lisa Tickner called "the reactionary elements of avant-garde posturing" are duly accounted for.[3] The Stieglitz artists have been especially prone to misinterpretation of this sort – hiding behind the shields of mysticism, modernist experimentation, and nationalism that they claimed as the central tenets of their collective and individual projects, these artists offered a special appeal for several generations of critics and historians, including those who were inclined to privilege works that defied the pieties of academicism and those seeking ammunition to bolster America's position on the world art stage. Segments of further generations of interpreters were content to simply recycle the templates offered by earlier writers, further emphasizing these artists' ostensible individuality and greatness, or delve deeper into the group's aesthetics. As a more socio-politically critical strain of inquiry in the field of U.S. art studies grew across the 1970s, '80s, and '90s, its practitioners seemed mostly satisfied with investigating other segments of the nation's art history and focusing on issues other than race.[4]

The twenty-first century has, as American society has grown more race-conscious, seen a slow stream of scholarship focused on white supremacism and eugenics in U.S. art, as well as continued investigation of racial and ethnic caricature in genre painting and popular visual media.[5] However, though at times segments of the work of particular members of the Stieglitz

[3] Lisa Tickner, *Modern Life & Modern Subjects* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 189.
[4] Earlier texts that, more broadly speaking, highlighted the influence of noxious racial attitudes on the work of white artists include: Alexander Nemerov, "'Doing the 'Old America'': The Image of the American West, 1880-1920", in William H. Truettner, ed., *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 285-343; David M. Lubin, *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Kathleen Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life: Painting and Evolutionary Thought in Late Nineteenth-Century America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996); and Ann Eden Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), among others. As these examples demonstrate, attention to such issues was often concentrated upon nineteenth-century figurative art.
[5] Recent scholarship on white supremacism and eugenics in U.S. art includes: Cassidy, *Marsden Hartley*; Griffey, "Marsden Hartley's Aryanism: Eugenics in a Finnish-Yankee Sauna"; Randall Griffey, "Reconsidering 'The Soil': The Stieglitz Circle, the Regionalists, and Cultural Eugenics in the Twenties", in Teresa Carbone, ed., *Youth and Beauty: Art of the American Twenties* (New York: Rizzoli, 2011), 245-276; Lauren Kroiz, "Breeding Modern Art: Criticism, Caricature, and Condoms in New York's Avant-garde Melting Pot", *Oxford Art Journal* 33, no. 3 (2010),

Group have been reexamined under a socially conscious lens (including, most notably, Hartley's late-career work in Maine work for its connections to white supremacist thought), the art-viewing public remains largely oblivious to the handful of recent scholarly investigations that have cast certain of these artists in a less flattering light.[6] Perhaps most crucially, the connection between these artists and U.S. art more broadly to systems of structural racism remains not just unknown to the audiences that still flock to major exhibitions of their work, eagerly buy middlebrow biographies on them, and consume their legends in introductory art history courses, but also largely unconsidered in scholarly circles.

The story of the Stieglitz artists is, then, a sort of palimpsest, one whose layers include more than a century's worth of exhibitions, critical and art historical interpretation, and public interest. Across that period a variety of actors, from the artists themselves to a host of critics and historians to museum curators, donors, and administrators to countless members of the art-viewing public have all contributed to a bundle of ever-evolving narratives that have played into an unquestioning approach towards these artists and the social and political content and impact of their work. If this dissertation is about undermining some of these old patterns and asserting some different interpretations based on new research to stand alongside and inform the wealth of information and interpretation that has been disseminated about these artists in the past, then this chapter aims to understand how this scenario came into being over the course of the last century.

339-63; Alexander Nemerov, "Haunted Supermasculinity: Strength and Death in Carl Rungius's *Wary Game*", *American Art* 13, no. 3 (1999), 2-31. Interest in these topics may have accelerated recently, perhaps in reaction to contemporary political events. Notable recent publications on racial and ethnic caricature in U.S. art and visual culture include: Bridget R. Cooks, "Fixing Race: Visual Representations of African Americans at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893", *Patterns of Prejudice* 41, no. 5 (2007), 435-65; Francis Martin, Jr., "To Ignore is to Deny: E.W. Kemble's Racial Caricature as Popular Art", *Journal of Popular Culture* 40, no. 5 (2007), 655-82; Vanessa Meikle Schulman, "Visualizing Race at the Polling Place: Thomas Waterman Wood's *American Citizens*", *American Art* 33, no. 1 (2019), 24-51; and Tanya Sheehan, *Study in Black and White: Photography, Race, Humor* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018).

[6] The point is less that there are noteworthy elements of these artists careers that have gone uninvestigated (which would be a somewhat fatuous claim for any piece of scholarship to make) but that there is a pattern of uninvestigated elements that reveals numerous noteworthy historiographical pressures.

Perhaps more importantly, it also asks how the stories that have been told about these artists have evinced and contributed to white supremacism and other, related forms of cultural hegemony, including, often, by playing into assumptions about the American character that rooted national identity in whiteness.

...

If the renown that artists like Hartley, Marin, and O'Keeffe eventually enjoyed is in part attributable to the romantic, visual, and exotic appeal of their works, it is also in large part due to Stieglitz' canny and longstanding shepherding of their careers. Careful reputational management was a tightrope act that Stieglitz had already performed during an earlier phase of his career, when he successfully shaped the new photographic canon in favor of modernism and other forms of art photography – that is, in the favor of his followers and sympathizers. The result was that art photography became the highest form of the medium, and Stieglitz its highest priest.[7]

In general, though Stieglitz was in some ways an idiosyncratic gallerist, many of his later strategies for promoting modernism were, like his efforts on behalf of photography, frequently traditional and highly strategic. O'Keeffe's management of her and her husband's papers and art collections in the decades following his death was likewise strategic and had a similarly important impact on the historiography of the Circle's artists. However, what follows here is less a claim that most of their actions were unexpected, exceptional, or inherently objectionable than it is an investigation of how these artists influenced historical narratives through careful influence over artworks, archives, museums, critics, and historians. It reconstructs how they shaped the understanding of the group in ways that emphasized the artists' individuality and their works' supposed timeless qualities and ignored their socio-historical contingency. It

[7] As historian Alan Trachtenberg argues, Stieglitz not only influenced critics and authors of influential books on the history of the medium, but also changed the vocabulary that was used to define and discuss photography. Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 173-75.

demonstrates how Stieglitz, O'Keeffe, and other champions' careful advocacy made them into canonical artists who have largely escaped scrutiny for their sociopolitical beliefs despite their artworks often being enlisted in the work of racialized nationalism. I hope that this work will encourage art historians to seek out similar patterns of influence and control in connection to other artists, and will push the discipline towards a self-questioning mode of inquiry that better reckons with the constructedness of received knowledge and better identifies and examines the connections between the field, its objects of study and institutions, and the norms, values, and worldviews that perpetuate discrimination and inequality in U.S. society.

"The Mesmerist": Alfred Stieglitz, Impresario Extraordinaire

Around the end of the First World War, Stieglitz' focus as a promoter narrowed from a relatively philosophically and culturally diverse set of experimenters to a much smaller group of white artists whose ideologies conformed closely to his own notions of what an American modernism should aspire to be. In the years that followed, this group defined a collective artistic project rooted less in connectedness to international avant-gardes and more in supposed rootedness in American national identity. Though success was neither immediate nor constant, under Stieglitz' astute guidance, this path eventually made the second Stieglitz Circle's members among the nation's most celebrated artists.

Though, by the early 1920s, modernism was still far from widely accepted in U.S. society or even within the art world mainstream, being a part of Stieglitz' stable of artists offered significant advantages, as not only was Stieglitz already well-known from his "291" and *Camera Work* days as a proponent of expanding what art was or could be and convincing others that modernism was a worthwhile creative direction, but he was also an unusually energetic and devoted advocate for those under his wing. In the interwar era his photographic career took a

back seat to gallery work as he offered a financial and promotional platform that allowed artists like Marin and O'Keeffe to command more and more praise from critics and higher sale prices, and an artist like Dove to subsist despite relative a lack of interest from collectors.[8] Though, even in the mid-1920s, the Circle had, as curator Lloyd Goodrich later recalled, "no real standing except in a small audience", being "a little esoteric… [for] the whole American public, or even… the American art world," by the time of Stieglitz' passing some two decades later they were among America's most celebrated modern artists.[9]

Fundamental to Stieglitz' taste and his promotional strategies in this new era was his reformulation of his aesthetic philosophy away from open experimentation and towards advocacy for the intuitive, spiritual, and (supposedly) nationally characteristic versions of modernism that came to epitomize the second Circle's interwar artmaking. As I have argued, prioritizing these simplifying and intuitive approaches precipitated generic and romantic representations of racial, ethnic, and regional identities in these artists' works. However, what has led to the resilience of the original narratives about these artists is above all else Stieglitz' initial advocacy for their work in the 1920s and '30s, which was so successful that it allowed the story that he offered to develop momentum and eventually become largely accepted as true, or at least sufficiently convincing, for several generations of observers.

Much of this work was done in person. Stieglitz' approach to conversing with gallery visitors is demonstrated by a 1926 story recounted by Circle familiar Herbert Seligmann in his book of Stieglitz' conversations at An American Place, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*. Describing a

[8] As a reminder, during this period Stieglitz operated the Intimate Gallery (1925-1929) and An American Place (1929-1950). In between the closure of 291 in 1917 and the opening of the Intimate Gallery 8 years later he also organized shows elsewhere, particularly at the Anderson Galleries.
[9] Lloyd Goodrich, interview by Harlan Phillips, "Oral history interview with Lloyd Goodrich, 1962 June 13 – 1963 March 25", Archives of American Art, https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-lloyd-goodrich-13038, accessed May 17, 2022, interview from June 13, 1962.

visitor who was confused by Dove's *Goin' Fishin'*, the anecdote shows Stieglitz' characteristic tendency to overwhelm visitors with elaborate anecdotes and grand claims that reinforced the national, mystical, modernist claims that he so often repeated about the art he promoted in the post-291 era: "Stieglitz pointed to Dove's 'Nigger Fishing'… and said a man… had asked if [it]… was not a trick" (see Figure 1). He responded:

> "The artist is like an apple. Is there any trick about the tree's taking up sap from the ground and bearing apples? The artist is like that. Fortunately apple trees cannot 'feel' in the human sense, otherwise an apple tree, especially an American one, hearing people praising plums and plum trees, would try to bear plums. What the men shown in this Room are putting down is feeling, life itself, a thing Americans are trying to run away from." Dove, he continued, with his 'Fishing Nigger' was bringing us back to our sensibility, which we had lost in civilization; sensibility was restored in his use of materials.[10]

Stieglitz and his artists were, he contended, natural outgrowths "rooted" in the American soil yet hidden away from mainstream (i.e. possibly European/cosmopolitan) society in their respective rural (or semi-rural) retreats. He saw himself and his followers as soldiers in a fight against foreign influence that had drawn the nation away from what made it unique, combatants who used artworks that channeled intuitive feeling about the American character as their weapons. Meanwhile, Stieglitz' remarks focused not just on a supposed invocation of America's essence in the assemblage, but also, in their emphasis on the materials Dove used, stressed the modernist characteristics of the work. This twin focus on modernism and "Americanism" effectively oriented focus away from the social/racial contexts of the picture, including his and Dove's insistence on using the slur in the work's title. To Stieglitz, the imputation of racial prejudice that had led to some unease about *Goin' Fishin'* and its original title could be dismissed as a mere footnote (literally, in Seligmann's book) in the story of the picture's incredible insight into a

[10] Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 18-19.

certain notion of the American inner character.[11]

At the same time, these sorts of remarks also make clear Stieglitz' tendency to (quite often successfully) attempt to overwhelm those who criticized or otherwise slighted him with an onslaught of philosophical rhetoric. When others were present he seemed committed to keeping up a nonstop verbal offensive, which often resulted in a ring of visitors encircling him, listening silently as they were offered a sort of aesthetic-spiritual sermon.[12] While some visitors left astonished at the powerful experience, many others were unimpressed - critic Edmund Wilson later described Stieglitz' performance as "delivering a monologue, a kind of impalpable net in which visitors and disciples were caught from the moment they came within earshot."[13]

Stieglitz' role within the Circle was already an unusually dominant one in part because of his age, knowledge, and experience. Though he had intimate and longstanding relationships with Dove, Marin, and O'Keeffe, he nonetheless found it relatively easy to cultivate a sort of cult of personality among his followers because, as Sarah Greenough suggests, they often "approached him more as a father figure or revered mentor than as a colleague".[14] Not only was he a force to be reckoned with in conversation, but he was also a generation or more older than the artists and by the mid-1920s had been a famous photographer and art promoter for more than two decades.

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[11] Seligmann says in a footnote about *Nigger Fishing*'s title under the anecdote included above that, "Both Dove and Stieglitz were entirely free of color prejudice." Ibid., 18.

[12] Greenough describes the practice in "Alfred Stieglitz, Facilitator, Financier, and Father, Presents Seven Americans", 316. By the late 1910s Stieglitz was already well-versed in interrogating the pieties of the art-world, and when it benefitted him he used this skill at questioning the supposed fundamentals of art to perpetrate a sort of anti-intellectualist counter-criticism, asking questions like "what do you mean by criticizing art?" or "What's good and what's bad?", or making long statements about how many art observers would be fooled by pictures that seemed good at first glance but wilted under prolonged scrutiny. Alfred Stieglitz, January 25, 1926, quoted in Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 20-22. When this approach failed, those who were unconvinced were often dismissed as too close-minded to see the obvious truth in what Stieglitz and the coterie of sympathizers around him all agreed upon – the quality and importance of the ineffable mystical traits of these artists' works and the philosophy that underpinned them.

[13] In 1926 one young woman declared that her visit "was the greatest thing that ever happened in my life." Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 28. Edmund Wilson, *The American Earthquake: A Documentary of the Twenties and Thirties* (1958; repub., New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979), 101.

[14] Greenough, "Alfred Stieglitz, Facilitator, Financier, and Father, Presents Seven Americans", 294.

This experience and confidence allowed him to not only overwhelm unknowledgeable visitors, but also dominate conversations occurring within a significant segment of the Manhattan avant-garde and hand-pick and mold a cohort of likeminded followers.

Another key component of Stieglitz' promotional scheme was an insistence that he had no ambitions to capitalize financially upon the promotion and sale of the artists featured in his galleries or otherwise under his protection, a principle that was an extension of the discontent shared by Stieglitz and other interwar modernists with an American society that, they believed, had grown so rife with materialism and conformity that creative expression and spirituality were being suppressed.[15] Purchasing a work from the gallery was therefore not just an investment or a marker of the buyer's distinguished taste – it was also a contribution to a greater cause. Said Stieglitz in December 1925, soon after the Intimate Gallery was opened: "The Room is established primarily to sell the work of the men here in order to enable them to go on, not as a business… I am so little a salesman…"[16] He later wrote that, "An American Place represents spirit. Not the false power of ostentation, nor of wealth."[17]

Stieglitz made these sorts of claims about his lack of financial interest frequently, often

[15] This is an appropriate moment to provide a brief history of Stieglitz' several galleries. He began by opening the Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession (typically referred to by its street number on Fifth Avenue, "291") in 1905, which remained open until 1917, when it closed amidst Stieglitz' divorce, which cut him off from supplementary income from his wife. It was followed by the Intimate Gallery (1925-1929) and An American Place (1929-50), which relied far more on selling artworks to survive. A detailed chronology is available in Greenough, et al., *Modern Art and America*, 555-72. Greenough discusses the criticism of modern America inherent in the philosophy shared within the Circle and by a broader set of modernists in the 1910-30s in Greenough, "Alfred Stieglitz, Facilitator, Financier, and Father, Presents Seven Americans", 291-93. By contrast, the Modern Gallery (1915-18), an offshoot of "291" created by Marius de Zayas, Francis Picabia, and Agnes Ernst Meyer, was an openly commercial enterprise. It is not clear why Stieglitz was interested in playing a role in this venture given his many statements that he was not interested in profiting from gallery work.

[16] Alfred Stieglitz, December 21, 1925, quoted in Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 3. Seligmann continues "Stieglitz went on to say that if he were in the Room about to eat a loaf of bread and he saw one hundred hungry faces at the door, he would probably refrain from eating and invite all the hundred in" before giving the loaf to three of the hundred with the idea that those three might become "leaders" who could help to alleviate the problem of hunger entirely: "Then there would need be no charity, no government, no sovietism, no language even." This attitude clashes somewhat with later perceptions of Stieglitz as a leftist – for a discussion of Stieglitz' friends' unhappiness with his cavalier attitude towards poverty, see later in this chapter.

[17] Alfred Stieglitz, Dorothy Norman, ed., "In Memoriam – Alfred Stieglitz: Six Happenings (And a Conversation Recorded by Dorothy Norman)", *Twice a Year* 14/15 (1946-47), 202.

openly sharing his disdain for the commercial side of the art world (as when he compared the art business to "a house of prostitution").[18] He also often publicly related stories in which he dramatically revealed that he had given pictures away for free or for greatly reduced sums to (often anonymous) visitors who genuinely admired but could not afford them, or turned down vast sums from buyers whom he felt were interested for the wrong reasons. As he said, "I prefer to laugh at the people for wanting to buy pictures they don't want."[19]

However, though Stieglitz' performance of gallery stewardship frequently verged upon bluster, it is crucial to emphasize that most of what he did was a part of a complex, dedicated, and highly successful promotional strategy. These stances were useful to him and the others working alongside him in convincing at least some people of his antiestablishment bona fides and of the value and importance of the collective project that he was leading. This impression of the group was fundamental to the later persistence of the notion that the artists were social radicals – or at least not reactionaries.

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[18] In an oft-repeated remark, Stieglitz also compared the suggestion that Marin do work that would sell better to suggesting he become a prostitute. Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 40, 131.

[19] See Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 11, 27, and 68, for example. While he insisted that the only reason the works were sold at all was to support the artists and allow them to continue to work, he also quite openly suggested that prices should vary depending on the would-be buyer's wealth. He wrote to Phillips Memorial Gallery in 1927 to ask that they, "Please remember that I am not in business. I have been acting merely as a friend… to the artists as well as to Mr. Phillips." Alfred Stieglitz to Dwight Clark, May 11, 1927, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 38, Folder 913. Though he ran his galleries unconventionally and did not rely on proceeds from them as his primary means of financial support, he did charge his artists significant fees. The fees constituted 25% for "the painters who could pay it" in 1926, ostensibly to pay for the overhead of the gallery itself, whose importance was also emphasized through his implementation of a "rent fund" (for rent and the "lighting bill"), which he in some cases asked patrons to pay to directly. Surpluses from this fund were used to support "struggling artists", though how the money all added up is difficult to untangle. For the most part this activity is far from unusual – instead, what is unusual is how Stieglitz so loudly and repeatedly presented himself as uninterested in benefitting from his work as a gallerist despite that not really being true, or at least not nearly as true as he suggested that it was. After all, the galleries not only gave him something rewarding to do with his time as his interest in performing his own photography faltered, but also offered him substantial influence on the Manhattan modernist scene and an opportunity to raise modernism's profile within the U.S. artworld, both of which he greatly coveted. See Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 9, Alfred Stieglitz to Duncan Phillips, March 2, 1937, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 38, Folder 915. Stieglitz discusses the purpose of the "rent fund" in Alfred Stieglitz to Duncan Phillips, May 6, 1940, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 38, Folder 916. Duncan Phillips to Alfred Stieglitz, April 10, 1943, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 38, Folder 917, Alfred Stieglitz to Duncan Phillips, March 22, 1943, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 38, Folder 917. Alfred Stieglitz to Duncan Phillips, May 7, 1943, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 38, Folder 917.

Stieglitz and others who viewed his group's works in similar ways were hardly Machiavellian schemers seeking to perpetrate an elaborate deception upon the art world or the American public in order to cover up the intentional biases hidden in their works – rather, they were creatives who were fiercely committed to a set of interrelated ideas and blind to some of the implications and consequences of those ideas and how their callousness and/or lack of awareness might clash with the progressive-minded images that they had of themselves.

Economies of Influence: Stieglitz' Museums, Critics, and Patrons

Art historian J.M. Mancini suggests that Stieglitz was the key figure in a broader movement she terms "organizational modernism", in which the supposed iconoclasts of the American avant-garde were able to find inclusion within mainstream art institutions in part because so much of the infrastructure of the early-to-mid-twentieth century art world was new and therefore relatively "provisional". She writes, "Rather than a revolutionary challenge to the status quo, the result was a pragmatic and highly successful fusion of institutional development, avant-garde language, and modernist aesthetics."[20] Even if the Circle's aesthetic commitments were inspired by modern artists pushing against a more established art world establishment in Western Europe, and though the subject matter and messages of the Stieglitz artists' works were often less than revolutionary, they nonetheless succeeded in developing a strain of modernist artmaking that was *perceived* as antiestablishmentarian (presumably because their work did transgress established stylistic norms, but also because modernism writ large was seen as a uniformly transgressive project) but was still accepted relatively quickly by the powers-that-were in U.S. art. That the Circle could succeed as antiestablishment figures is suggestive of the degree to which their financial and racial privilege both afforded them opportunities to learn the rules of

[20] Mancini, *Pre-Modernism*, 161.

the art world and allowed them to succeed despite hostility to their aesthetics.

Patrons

Perhaps because he was able to convince some buyers of his indifference to making money for himself, Stieglitz was extremely successful in growing the prices that his artists could command, at times building track records and steady incomes for them by convincing patrons to support them in the long-term through a subscription system, and in some instances trying to initiate sudden leaps in how much one of the artists' paintings were worth by making a big sale to a smitten buyer and heavily publicizing the price.[21] He also propelled interest through various sales initiatives and gimmicks, including auctions, displays at various commercial galleries and non-profit venues, a "Painter's Derby" intended as a sort of artistic competition, and a very premature "In Memoriam Sale" of Hartley's work in 1921.[22] In 1932 (amidst the Great Depression) he complained in a newspaper article that An American Place was going to have to close because it had exhausted its "rent fund" and only the poor cared about supporting it while wealthy patrons ignored the gallery's plight – soon thereafter, a group of businessmen, moved by Stieglitz' tirade against "waste" and the "empty overornamented skyscraper across the street, built while artists starve", bailed the gallery out of its troubles.[23] Perhaps most of all, Stieglitz justified prices by reminding patrons of their supposed alliance in a fight for America and its place in the (art) world and their shared (or potentially shared) belief in the importance of Circle

[21] See Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 133.
[22] Greenough, "Alfred Stieglitz, Facilitator, Financier, and Father, Presents Seven Americans", 300.
[23] "Stieglitz, at 70, Facing Loss of His Art Gallery", *New York Herald Tribune,* April 29, 1932. It is possible that this event was covered by the *Herald Tribune* because of Stieglitz' relationship with the paper's esteemed art critic, Royal Cortissoz or because of the efforts of Dorothy Norman, who was leading the charge to raise money to save the gallery (both Cortissoz and Norman are discussed at greater length later in this chapter). See also "Stieglitz Fund Half Raised – 100 Persons Aid Founder of An American Place", *New York Herald Tribune*, May 3, 1932, and "40% of Fund Subscribed to Save Stieglitz Gallery", *New York Herald Tribune,* May 22, 1932. See also Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer*, 197.

artists' works in that struggle.[24]

Stieglitz was often somewhat playful and stubborn when negotiating sales, as, for example, when, in early 1927, he declared that he would no longer set prices because money was immaterial to the content of the works he displayed, only to soon thereafter succeed in selling O'Keeffe paintings for $3,000 and $6,000.[25] The next year he supposedly sold six small O'Keeffe paintings to a French collector for a total of $25,000, using the sale to proclaim the growing influence of American art in Europe, only to subsequently admit that the buyer was in fact an American, Anderson Galleries owner Mitchell Kennerley, who planned to move to France (and in fact never did and eventually returned the paintings to Stieglitz).[26] In 1926 Duncan Phillips agreed to buy a Marin watercolor he admired for the theretofore-unheard-of asking price of $6,000, but only after Stieglitz agreed to keep the price confidential, to give another Marin painting to Phillips' wife Marjorie for free, and to sell him another for $1,000 instead of $2,000 – a clear distortion of the supposed sales price (i.e. the sale of three works for $7,000 rather than one for $6,000).[27] In the days following the sale, Stieglitz used the $6000 price point to convince other collectors of the quality of Marin's latest paintings and the virtues of spending freely to acquire one.[28] By engineering such a high price for a single watercolor and

[24] That is, Stieglitz most frequently invoked the most clearly racialized characteristic of the group's project, its connection to nationalism, as he pitched their works to would-be buyers. See, for example, Alfred Stieglitz to Duncan Phillips, May 7, 1943, in which Stieglitz offers an extended meditation on the importance of these works to America's future on the world stage and praises Phillips' role in that battle just after proposing a number of potential sales prices.

[25] Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 119-20. This decision to move away from explicit prices and instead emphasize the "priceless" nature of Circle works may have been a reaction to the fallout from the "$6,000 Marin" incident described below.

[26] Greenough, "Alfred Stieglitz, Facilitator, Financier, and Father, Presents Seven Americans", 319.

[27] A few days later, perhaps as further recompense, Stieglitz gave Phillips a discount on another Marin watercolor.

[28] See Timothy Robert Rodgers, "Alfred Stieglitz, Duncan Phillips and the '$6000 Marin'", *Oxford Art Journal*, 54-66; and the Stieglitz-Phillips correspondence, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 38, Folder 913. As Rodgers points out, this move was part of a longer campaign by Stieglitz to revolutionize the Circle's critical and financial position in response to the middling success of the subscription plan he had enacted a few years earlier, a renewed effort that also resulted in the "Seven Americans" exhibition. When word of the sales price went public in articles by friendly critics, Phillips was incensed with Stieglitz, having believed that the dealer only intended to tell a few friends or

then making that price public, Stieglitz not only strengthened his ability to demand high prices for future sales but also helped Marin reach a new stratum of art-world prestige. Meanwhile, he also cemented his role as a figure whom all those invested in working to grow the reputation of American art should support – as O'Keeffe later suggested, "The prices he asked for living American artists often outraged the people who wanted to buy, but the prices for all American artists were pushed up by the prices he… got for the group".[29]

Critics

Though, as Greenough notes, Stieglitz "felt compelled to define and control the discourse around him" in the busy and polemical modern art environment of the 1920s, the work of convincing the art world and the broader public of the value and importance of the Circle's collective project could not be done alone, or indeed solely by driving up prices.[30] Sarah Greenough points out that "In the late 1910s and early 1920s, the ideas and work of authors and critics such as Sherwood Anderson, Waldo Frank, or Paul Rosenfeld… dominated the discussions" held by group members.[31] The influence of this group of writers, which included some of the period's leading novelists, essayists, and cultural critics, was crucial. They were often close friends of the group, and in several cases could be considered members of it on a social level – a sign of the importance of privilege and connections to the group's success. Their support of the artists in writing was virtually unstinting (as Goodrich described it, "I don't think

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patrons. The incident precipitated a years-long falling out between the two, a serious issue given that Phillips was one of the group's biggest patrons and the foremost source of support for the struggling Dove. It is unclear whether the gamble of alienating perhaps the Circle's best patron (and especially one so interested in displaying their works in his public gallery) was worth it, but ultimately Stieglitz and his artists did benefit – as Rodgers describes, at the time of the incident, try as he did (quite successfully) to elevate Marin's reputation by praising him to sympathetic critics, in order to win over a broader camp, "What Stieglitz needed was a universally supported and recognized reason that would support his acclamations of Marin's genius. This was provided by the market."

[29] Georgia O'Keeffe, "Stieglitz: His Pictures Collected Him", *New York Times Magazine*, December 11, 1949, 24-30, 29.

[30] Greenough, "Alfred Stieglitz, Facilitator, Financier, and Father, Presents Seven Americans", 315.

[31] Ibid., 278.

any entrepreneur… in the field of art… has ever had the literary following that Stieglitz did"), and, as they expanded upon the rhetoric offered by Stieglitz and some of his artists, they legitimized the Circle's project, gave it cultural resonance and cachet beyond the art world, and offered interpretational templates for other writers.[32]

Perhaps no single work played a bigger role in this respect than Paul Rosenfeld's 1924 book *Port of New York*. Following on the praise heaped upon the artists in Waldo Frank's 1919 book *Our America*, *Port of New York* suggested that the Circle artists were among the key figures in a new, distinctively American cultural movement centered in New York. Edited with Stieglitz' help, Rosenfeld's book was structured to focus each chapter on a different creative figure, casting Stieglitz as the foremost medium in the communal effort of channeling transcendent feeling through a deeply personal, utterly timeless, and uniquely American lens: "If any career in America has demonstrated spirit; if any career has flowed out of a man's complete obedience to the imperative of the unborn stuff of worlds in his bosom, it is Stieglitz'… The man moves in original psychic patterns; for manner of living, manner of working, spiritual gesture, and esthetic process flow from within, produced by inner necessity."[33]

A similar, albeit more directly reverential tone was cast in the 1934 paean *America and Alfred Stieglitz,* a 340-page collection of essays in honor of Stieglitz' seventieth birthday from twenty-five of his greatest admirers, a group that included writers like Rosenfeld, Frank, Elizabeth McCausland, and William Carlos Williams and artists including Dove, Hartley, and Marin that described and celebrated Stieglitz' photography and gallery work and his leadership of a new modern American cultural movement. In a remark characteristic of the worshipful spirit

[32] Goodrich, interview by Harlan Phillips, June 28, 1962.
[33] Rosenfeld, *Port of New York,* 242. For mention of Stieglitz' involvement in the editing of the book, see, among other letters, Alfred Stieglitz to Paul Rosenfeld, November 12, 1923, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 42, Folder 1000.

of the endeavor, Stieglitz' lover and follower Dorothy Norman (who called writing and editing the book "a labor of love") suggested in her entry that, in Stieglitz' presence, "You begin to feel Stieglitz's words become living experiences. They preoccupy you. They beat within you… It becomes a part of you so that if you are cut off from it you are hurt."[34] According to art historian Susan Noyes Platt, Norman and Stieglitz collaborated on his mythologization: "Stieglitz and Norman created… anecdotes through a complex process of dictation and editing… These stories became a mythology – they created a larger-than-life figure of Stieglitz."[35]

Our America and *Port of New York* were published by Boni & Liveright and Harcourt, Brace, respectively, both of which were known for publishing on modernist topics and consequently brought the Stieglitz artists to relatively wide audiences largely consisting of the growing body of Americans with an interest in avant-garde experimentation.[36] Such audiences represented a significant broadening from the earlier coverage of these artists in specialist "little" magazines like *Camera Work*, *The Seven Arts*, and *The Dial*, which mostly circulated within the art and literary worlds. Reviews of both books were published in major newspapers like *The New York Times*, while *Our America* was popular enough to receive several printings in the first few years after its publication.[37] *America and Alfred Stieglitz* reached a far broader audience because it was published as a Christmas offering by the Literary Guild, and therefore was distributed to its more than 30,000 members, legitimizing Stieglitzian modernism as a form of high culture of interest and relevance to not just audiences harboring a special interest in modernist topics, but

[34] Dorothy Norman, "An American Place", in Frank, et al., eds., *America and Alfred Stieglitz,* 130. Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer*, 198.
[35] Platt, *Art and Politics in the 1930s*, 4.
[36] Some background on these presses, which were among a cohort of presses, many run by first- or second-generation Jewish-Americans, that fought against traditional expectations for literary publishing in the 1920s and '30s, can be found in Carl F. Kaestle and Janice A. Radway, eds., *A History of the Book in America, Volume 4 – Print in Motion: The Expansion of Publishing and Reading in the United States, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).
[37] See Rose Lee, "Chanting the Progress of Art in America", *New York Times,* April 20, 1924; Gilbert Cannan, "Mr. Waldo Frank Dramatizes America", *New York Times Book Review*, November 16, 1919.

also the American upper-middlebrow writ large.[38]

Similarly influential were period art critics who worked at mainstream newspapers and magazines, and therefore had platforms that offered further reach beyond modernist circles and towards the American upper-middle class. Critics like *The New York Sun*'s Henry McBride, *Vanity Fair*'s Frank Crowninshield, *The New York Times*' Edward Alden Jewell, *The Brooklyn Eagle*'s Jerome Mellquist, and *The New Yorker*'s Murdock Pemberton, though friendly, tended to maintain more professional distance and a semblance of objectivity while still regularly chronicling and embracing the Circle artists' works through the increasingly familiar lenses of modernist experimentation, mysticism, and Americanism.[39] Wrote McBride in a 1944 appraisal of an O'Keeffe exhibition at An American Place, "Miss O'Keeffe… [has] an urgent, inner leaning toward the abstract; a leaning to which, being 100 per cent American, she had never dared yield… those who… cannot reduce entities to essences may see… that it is a pelvis and a moon… But those few other Americans who apprehend the essences… will notice that the pelvis is a subterfuge".[40] These critics saw fit to construe these artists as standard bearers of a "modern" and "American" movement and their work as reflective of "modern thought", but, in connecting their individual artistic sensibilities to quite general concepts of what was "modern" or "American", left the artists unmoored from the historical circumstances in which they lived and worked. Instead, they often played into interpretations that cast these works as overflowing with timeless meaning.[41] They also maintained correspondences with Stieglitz that were often helpful

[38] A useful early review of the book is E.M. Benson, "Alfred Stieglitz: The Man and the Book", *American Magazine of Art* 28, no. 1 (1935), 36-42.
[39] In some cases this presentation of objectivity was only a mere semblance, as it obscured a close personal relationship – McBride, for example, ended a letter to O'Keeffe that discussed her relationship with Stieglitz with "with love to you both". Henry McBride to Georgia O'Keeffe, July 19, 1927, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 200, Folder 3460. In an undated letter from the same folder, McBride jokes about O'Keeffe bribing him for good reviews after she sends him a gift. Mellquist shared a similar closeness with Stieglitz.
[40] Henry McBride, "Miss O'Keeffe's Bones", *New York Sun*, January 15, 1944.
[41] McBride links O'Keeffe's "simplicity" to a trend he perceived in "all modern thought" in "Georgia O'Keeffe of

to their writerly processes because they offered access to important news and information.[42]

Though Stieglitz was skilled at fomenting excitement and mutual support among modernists, having others write about his artists in newspapers and magazines ensured that those outside of Manhattan's avant-garde bubble had opportunities to grow interested in viewing and purchasing their works.[43] In addition to declaring the quality and importance of the Circle artists' works to readers, these critics' words were often reprinted by Stieglitz in pamphlets for exhibitions. As critic Edmund Wilson later suggested, Stieglitz could significantly influence even those who were supposedly detached observers – he described Stieglitz as "something of a mesmerist", and though Wilson's "admiration for these artists was genuine," he felt that if he "had not been subjected to Stieglitz's spell, I might… have discussed them in different terms."[44]

Though, in general, admiring reviews in this period seemed most focused on the works' mystical or modernist qualities, in some cases friendly critics thought it appropriate to underline the artists' supposed Americanism by focusing on their ancestries or otherwise highlighting their supposed racial characteristics. In so doing these critics played into the prevailing patterns of the interwar era, when racialized conceptions of American nationhood were at the forefront of cultural discourse. Americanism was a particularly important part of how Stieglitz' work, both as a gallerist at "An American Place" and through his photographs of Manhattan and Lake George, was viewed by many champions, among them those (including Frank) who collaborated on *America and Alfred Stieglitz*. The book's editors wrote that, whatever Stieglitz' racial

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Abiquiu", *ARTnews* XLIX, no. 7 (1950), 56.

[42] Stieglitz, notably, expressed surprise in a 1929 letter to Mitchell Kennerley, a former literary publisher and magazine editor and the proprietor of the Anderson Galleries, that Pemberton had featured him in print without contacting him first – "I haven't written to him or to McBride or to any one else about intentions or plans – for there aren't any." Alfred Stieglitz to Mitchell Kennerley, September 9, 1923, Mitchell Kennerley Papers, New York Public Library, Archives & Manuscripts Division, Box 7, Stieglitz Folder.

[43] Stieglitz' journals were *Camera Work* (1902-17) and *291* (1915-16). Norman also published *Twice a Year* (1938-48) as an outgrowth of *An American Place*'s activities.

[44] Wilson, *The American Earthquake*, 101-2.

background, his work was nonetheless a product of the "Pioneer-Puritan culture… from which all creative work in the United States derives".[45] Many scholars have noted how the art of the interwar era has long been enlisted in the work of cultural nationalism, but what often seem to go unmentioned in these accounts are the inextricable connections between feelings of national belonging and issues of race in the period. When people connected these artists to America, theories about the "Puritan" character, and all that that implied about what America was and who Americans were in the twentieth century, were never far away. The focus on nation and spirit in interpretations of their work often played into the prevailing racial system by assuming that the American spirit that they connected to the Circle's artists were connected to whiteness, or even "Anglo-Saxon"-ness, despite the various family backgrounds present among them. This is a major part of how these artists' works played into the American racial status quo.

Writers often focused on the other artists' supposed racial characteristics as well, frequently with a focus on the particularity of their ethnically, racially, and/or regionally inflected identities rather than their connection to a more general "pioneer" and/or "puritan"-connected sort of American identity. For example, Rosenfeld suggested that in Marin's work, "there resides… like a whiff of the Atlantic… the element of race… there is a nervousness, a fine dash and roughness of edge, in him, that is Yankee… None but one American-born could have [made this]… Something Walt Whitmanish abides in its essence."[46] A 1937 Cleveland Museum of Art Bulletin on O'Keeffe interpreted her work through a similar lens, and began,

> Georgia O'Keeffe's racial inheritance is an unusual one. An ancestor on the maternal side came to America in 1638 – a representative of the Dutch who in their stolid integrity laid so vigorous a foundation for the future of New York City… Another ancestor on the same side of the family was of Hungarian birth… The father was of Irish blood, bringing the richness of the imaginative and emotional Celt. But what is most important is that

[45] Waldo Frank, Lewis Mumford, Dorothy Norman, Paul Rosenfeld, and Harold Rugg, "America and Alfred Stieglitz: A Collective Portrait", in Frank et al., eds., *America and Alfred Stieglitz*, 3.
[46] Rosenfeld, *Port of New York,* 161-62.

> because of her inheritance Georgia O'Keeffe is typically American. Her ancestry has enriched her background… But to be American in her thought, American in her outlook, and purely American creatively came to her naturally, instinctively, unquestionably.[47]

This focus underlines both a) the degree to which the artists' whiteness and Western European Christian heritage were viewed as characteristically American and fundamental to their work and b) the extent to which more specific racial and ethnic identities were a part of how many people in the interwar era saw the world and the people and things within it. Though there was less racial focus on Stieglitz given that his Jewish ancestry made him supposedly less "American" than the others, his racial background was still used to help explain his work by some Jewish writers. While *The American Hebrew* suggested that he was "not consciously Jewish… [and] It is doubtful he has ever identified himself with consciously Jewish activities", in *Our America* (written by the Jewish Frank), Stieglitz is offered as the key figure embodying and chronicling New York's unique role as a "frontier" between America and Europe. As part of Frank's argument, Stieglitz is described as a "Jewish mystic. Suffering is his daily bread: sacrifice is his creed: failure is his beloved. A true Jew. To him, art is simply the directest conduit to human consciousness".[48] Among non-Jewish writers, Stieglitz' background was typically ignored, unless it was being used to condemn him. According to anti-modernist critic Thomas Craven, though Stieglitz was "an important factor in modern American art", as a "Hoboken Jew without knowledge of, or interest in, the historical American background", he was poorly qualified to opine on what America or an authentically American form of art were.

There was also a notable tendency within sympathetic criticism to suggest that these artists were left leaning and that their work could help to address social problems. However, this

[47] William M. Milliken, "White Flower by Georgia O'Keeffe", *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 4, no. 1 (1937), 51.
[48] Clarence I. Freed, "Alfred Stieglitz – Genius of the Camera", *The American Hebrew*, 305, January 18, 1924; Frank, *Our America*, 186.

rhetoric was often more grounded in innuendo than specific claims about how the artists would advance egalitarianism or liberty or help the downtrodden. In 1921 a *Christian Science Monitor* critic pointed to the inclusion of Hodge Kirnon in the 1914 "What is 291?" special issue of *Camera Work* as proof of the gallery's "democratic nature".[49] In his entry in *America and Alfred Stieglitz* Rosenfeld wrote that, "the moralist in Stieglitz… will [never] be… separate from the artist…" and described his efforts as "prodigious… campaigns for democracy".[50] Frank highlighted Stieglitz' generosity towards struggling artists when he suggested that the gallerist found "Scattered in New York… men and women: hungry, at times even for bread: all of them spiritually homeless", and through his gallery, he saved them.[51] Though the Circle artists were construed by many as paragons of social consciousness and democratic thinking, what exactly they were doing to advance such causes often remained mysterious.

Detractors

A substantial segment of New York art critics loudly disagreed with Rosenfeld and other champions. Perhaps the most strident critic was Craven, who, in addition to his nasty remarks about Stieglitz' background, described Circle meetings as "seances" whose "hypnotic spell" hid a "vacuum of ambiguous spiritualism".[52] Thomas Hart Benton, one of the artists whom Craven most vigorously defended, was among a chorus of critics who reacted negatively to the over-the-top, quasi-religious tone and content of *America and Alfred Stieglitz*, objecting to the "intellectual idiocy" he found at 291, Stieglitz' humorlessness in the face of criticism, and the

[49] C. Lewis Hind [Q.R., pseud.], "Stieglitz and His Influence", *Christian Science Monitor*, February 21, 1921.
[50] Paul Rosenfeld, "The Boy in the Dark Room", in Frank et al., eds., *America and Alfred Stieglitz*, 82.
[51] Frank, *Our America*, 183.
[52] Craven's line of criticism indicates that the principal philosophical disagreement between the two men was not whether American art should strive to be nationally representative, but instead whether figuration or abstraction was the right medium for doing so. Thomas Craven, *Modern Art: The Men, the Movements, the Meaning* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1934), 311-19.

"linguistic balderdash" and unfettered egos of his followers, comparing him to cult leaders, and decrying his introduction of European modernism into the American art scene in the 1910s.[53]

Though the artists came to be more widely accepted and celebrated as time passed, some prominent interwar critics also disagreed with Rosenfeld and others' unstinting praise of the Circle, often objecting to their worshipful tone, and instead offered more nuanced critiques that acknowledged the promise of particular works or artists but took aim at elements of the group's project and/or rhetoric. In response to the 1925 "Seven Americans" exhibition, one critic found the show "a little foolish" given that the work was "comparatively tame" at that point in modernism's development and complained about the presumptuousness of expecting visitors to understand and agree with the mystical claims the group advanced, writing that though "Alert they are to some vibratory message, …the context is far from plain to those outside the 'know'". Another critic more directly criticized the philosophy that united the artists and the interpretational elements of the exhibition, suggesting that, though it had its merits, "Americanism and emotionalism are self-consciously and unduly emphasized".[54]

Other critics, including Craven and Benton, were more persistently opposed to modernism in general and took aim at the Circle as some of its most prominent American exponents, giving voice to a broader feeling among some members of the art world that, as Goodrich described it, "Stieglitz was… exaggerating the merits of these artists, that there was a

[53] As Greenough notes, critics not only loudly objected to the worshipful tone, vagueness, and presumptuousness of *America and Alfred Stieglitz*' casting of Stieglitz as a sort of prophet who could save America through artistic spiritual renewal, but some even responded by casting him as a sort of "charlatan" or dictator (one compared him to Hitler), at times in anti-Semitic terms. Greenough, "Alfred Stieglitz, Facilitator, Financier, and Father, Presents Seven Americans", 325. Thomas H. Benton, "America and/or Alfred Stieglitz", *Common Sense* 4, no. 1 (1935), 22-24.

[54] See "In New York Galleries", *Christian Science Monitor*, March 20, 1925, and Helen Appleton Read, "News and Views on Current Art", *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 15, 1925, as well as Greenough's discussion of the critical reception of the exhibition in "Alfred Stieglitz, Facilitator, Financier, and Father, Presents Seven Americans", 310.

kind of… snobbism connected with it… that these were the only people that counted."[55] Conservative *New York Herald Tribune* critic Royal Cortissoz, for example, though always cordial, levied many criticisms of the group across his lengthy career, largely because he objected to modernist distortion of form more generally. He described the contents of an O'Keeffe exhibition put on by Stieglitz in 1923 as, "formless oils, water colors and pastels… that… disclose no intelligible elements of design… The painting… leads nowhere".[56]

Philosophical opponents like Cortissoz, Craven, and Benton, though, were often still quite friendly with Stieglitz on a personal level, and we can speculate about whether these relationships may have led the critics to offer tempered criticisms.[57] Though Craven was at times openly racist against Stieglitz and others in his orbit with non-Anglo heritage (and Stieglitz also strongly disliked Craven, once calling him "an ass"), he also openly admired Stieglitz' photographs. In a discussion of Stieglitz in his 1934 book, he wrote that, "I have quarreled with him for many years, but he has never allowed differences of opinion to disrupt friendly relations".[58] Similarly, Benton admits to having "known him for twenty years" and says that, despite his tendency for "self aggrandizement", "Stieglitz is likeable", even "lovable" and suggests that "Though Stieglitz' influence on Art has vanished… he has done things of a substantial nature".[59] Perhaps unsurprisingly given that his quarrel with the Circle was more formal than political, Cortissoz' relationship with Stieglitz was particularly friendly. Ultimately, Stieglitz' ability to develop and maintain longstanding productive relationships with critics that

[55] Goodrich, interview by Harlan Phillips, June 12, 1962.
[56] This was accusation of meaninglessness that he advanced further in other columns. Royal Cortissoz, "Random Impressions in Current Exhibitions", *New York Tribune*, February 11, 1923, reproduced in Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics*, 191. See another Cortissoz column on pp. 231-32 of Lynes' book.
[57] See Stieglitz' correspondence with the three men in the Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 4, Folder 107, Box 10, Folder 257, and Box 11, Folder 268.
[58] Craven, *Modern Art*, 314; Alfred Stieglitz to Paul Rosenfeld, September 6, 1924, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 42, Folder 1001.
[59] Benton, "America and/or Alfred Stieglitz", 22.

opposed him signals the degree to which he succeeded in popularizing his artists by playing the games of the art world in a very genteel and traditional way – through the currying of power via the careful development of courteous and friendly relationships with those in positions of influence.

What is most important is that Stieglitz succeeded in making reputations despite these detractors. In an arts environment as philosophically diverse as interwar Manhattan's, it was inevitable that many, whether they were carefully sidestepping Stieglitz' "mesmerism" to form their own opinions or simply representing a viewpoint that could not bend to accept modernism, would disagree with Rosenfeld, Frank, McCausland, and other advocates for the Circle. Though Stieglitz lost many of the battles that played out across newspaper pages and avant-garde magazines, and many critics and museumgoers still find themselves uncharmed by the group's work today, in achieving canonical, even legendary status for himself and several of his followers, he still won the war.[60] This was possible in part because there *was* a persistent body of critical acclaim that praised the group from its inception, because the gentility of the era and Stieglitz' (substantial) reputation and personal relationships with would-be adversaries tempered criticism, and because criticism was far from the only contributor to an artist's reputation.

Museums

Like his relationships with even seemingly hostile critics, building connections with influential museums and their curators and donors was a crucial way in which Stieglitz worked through the system of the art world. Though most museums were loath to feature photography or

[60] Writes Rodgers: "…art historians continue to dismiss Stieglitz' entanglement with the market. His roles as the prophet of… modern art, the maverick photographer, and the muse of aspiring writers, however, are increasingly documented and aggrandized… by this process, Stieglitz's judgements about the importance of… Dove, Marin, O'Keeffe, and Stieglitz himself… have become increasingly fixed in the histories of American art… Stieglitz, more than any other person, has determined which American artists during the teens and twenties are deemed worthy of current consideration. Rodgers, "Alfred Stieglitz, Duncan Phillips and the '$6000 Marin'", 54.

modernism in the earliest years of the twentieth century, in part because of Stieglitz' advocacy these attitudes began to shift relatively quickly. When institutions became interested in expanding their horizons, Stieglitz, as the foremost name in both photography and modernist art in America for much of the first half of the twentieth century, was often extremely well positioned to fulfill what demand existed through a combination of loans, gifts, and sales.

Stieglitz' relationship with the Metropolitan Museum, perhaps the nation's most august collection and, in the early twentieth century, already among its most conservative, tells the tale quite well. In 1911 Stieglitz offered the Museum deals on Picasso and Rodin drawings that remained unsold from shows at 291, but the Museum was completely uninterested. The Museum's slowness to accept modernism and photography angered him, and in 1916 he wrote that "as I walk through the Metropolitan Museum of Art it seems ridiculous to me. The whole thing. A sham. Trivial… I need bigger, truer, things than are housed… there, in… a cemetery dedicated to the dead rich."[61] Stieglitz nursed this grudge for decades, often badmouthing the Museum to anyone who would hear.[62]

Animosity grew as the Museum became slightly more interested in acquiring works Stieglitz owned in the 1920s and '30s because they continually expected Stieglitz to donate works rather than expect payment for them, even as other museums featured their works in a growing number of group and even individual shows. However, he was canny enough to recognize the opportunity for long-lasting prestige that the Metropolitan Museum could offer, and did anonymously give some of his own photographs, a large and varied collection of other

[61] Alfred Stieglitz to Katherine Rhoades, May 31, 1916, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 40, quoted in Lisa Mintz Messinger, "'The Pictures Collected Him': The Alfred Stieglitz Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art", in Messinger, *Stieglitz and His Artists*, 10.

[62] For example, Stieglitz claimed to Henry McBride to have refused to sell J.P. Morgan an Edward Steichen photograph of the banker unless he agreed to use his powers as Metropolitan Museum President to have it placed it alongside a painted portrait of him in the museum. Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 49-50. Stieglitz also discusses interactions with the Museum and other institutions in "Alfred Stieglitz: Ten Stories". See also Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer*, 66-67, 172-73.

photographs, and some Marin water colors to the Museum in 1928, 1933, and 1936, respectively, as well as offering it an O'Keeffe painting at a cut-rate price.[63] In the early 1940s, O'Keeffe established a relationship with the Museum that would lead to the donation of a large portion of Stieglitz' collection there after his death.[64] Though some other museums grew more open to the Circle's modernist offerings earlier, the case of the Metropolitan is suggestive of the pragmatic approach that Stieglitz took towards his relationships with museums more generally. Hem and haw though he might, as a veteran of an era in which the type of art for which he advocated was utterly unwelcome at major museums, he was reluctant to pass up opportunities to establish himself and his artists within influential collections, even if he had to give works for free.[65]

Though Mancini's analysis concerns an earlier phase in Stieglitz' career, it is nonetheless relevant to his later promotional work, and not only because he continued to fight for the inclusion of photography in museums in later decades. By the interwar era, Stieglitz already had both a) a long history of working to expand art institutions' collecting policies and otherwise promote official acceptance of his (at least ostensibly) radical movements both directly and by shaping art world perception of the movement via galleries and publications and b) preexisting relationships with important institutions and individual stakeholders that he could rely on. Even if Metropolitan Museum trustees and curators were often at first uninterested in the work that Stieglitz was promoting, these relationships offered avenues to win them over, or at least take

[63] Some information on these transactions can be found in the Stieglitz-Metropolitan Museum correspondence, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 35, Folder 814, and the Metropolitan Museum Archives, Office of the Secretary Records, Alfred Stieglitz 1875-1950 Folder.
[64] A useful synthesis of Stieglitz' relationship with the Metropolitan Museum can be found in Messinger, "'The Pictures Collected Him': The Alfred Stieglitz Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art", 9-11.
[65] Stieglitz, notably, performed disdain for museums that he felt did not give modern and/or American art and/or photography their proper due, as when he asked Dorothy Norman to publish a story about him refusing "one of the large museums" a group of paintings to display after their main collection had been shipped to the Midwest for safety during World War II, saying "I wondered what the Museum people must think of this American work if they felt it didn't matter whether it was bombed or not." Stieglitz, "In Memoriam – Alfred Stieglitz: Six Happenings (And a Conversation Recorded by Dorothy Norman)", 198.

advantage of the broader growth of acceptance of modernist methods over time.

The Metropolitan was hardly the only museum that showed an increasing interest in the group as time passed in the interwar era. O'Keeffe had a Brooklyn Museum retrospective in 1927, while the Museum of Modern Art organized a Marin retrospective in 1936, and his work was displayed in museums across the country in group shows with increasing frequency, exposing it to audiences in cities like Dallas, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Worcester.[66] The '30s also saw O'Keeffe's work exhibited at a growing number of museums across the nation, as well as acquisitions of her paintings by institutions including the Brooklyn Museum, the Whitney Museum, the Phillips Gallery, and the University of Minnesota Gallery.[67] The "Three Centuries of American Art" exhibition organized by the Museum of Modern Art in 1938 for display in Paris inserted Dove, Marin, and O'Keeffe into narratives of American art stretching back to the early colonial period and shared their works with an international audience.[68] All of these shows were the product of Stieglitz' promotional activities, at least indirectly, and in many cases they were the direct result of his efforts to orchestrate sales and loans to prominent institutions. At the very least, they tended to require his cooperation as the artists' representative and the owner of many of their works.

Stieglitz' dogged efforts to place artists' works in influential museums and to encourage sympathetic criticism of their work combined with his relationships and negotiations with

[66] See the Marin exhibition history in Reich, *John Marin*, vol. II, 831-63. For more on the growing acceptance and "institutionalization" of modern art in the 1920s at museums including the Museum of Modern Art and the Gallery of Living Art (1927-43), see Platt, *Modernism in the 1920s*, 133-44.
[67] Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, vol. 1, 253, 312, 344, 373. The University of Minnesota Gallery is now known as the Weisman Art Museum.
[68] For more on the exhibition, see Caroline M. Riley, *MoMA Goes to Paris in 1938: Building and Politicizing American Art* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2023). Riley's book includes a relevant section analyzing the racialization of U.S. identity inherent in the exhibition's presentation of an American national art history – see pp. 82-96. This includes mention of Dove's *Goin' Fishin*', which was included in the show and illustrated in its catalogue.

patrons to drive up interest in and admiration of these artists' works.[69] In the wake of the $6000 Marin incident Stieglitz redoubled his efforts, but used different tactics – promoting Marin through publication of biographies and catalogues, a collection of his letters, and further attempts to influence the press. He also continued to stage exhibitions at the Intimate Gallery, its successor An American Place, and in museums, bringing the artist's work to new audiences in print and in person.[70] Indeed, Stieglitz remained a capable, inventive, and flexible promoter through the 1920s and early and mid-'30s until his energies began to diminish in the face of persistent health problems. When critics including Benton and Craven came for Stieglitz and his followers after the publication of *America and Alfred Stieglitz* in 1934, a somewhat enfeebled Stieglitz mounted only a weak resistance, a marked departure from his decades-long habit of responding animatedly, at times disproportionately, to any and all criticism, whether perceived or explicit.[71]

America's "Artist No. 1": The Circle Meets the Middle Class

During the Depression, while Hartley and Dove were at times destitute in the face of poor sales, Marin and O'Keeffe's careers soared. Though both had been acclaimed by a large swath of critics and even a select segment of the public for quite some time, largely avoiding much of the suspicion and ill-will that surrounded Stieglitz himself, in the late 1930s and '40s they became even more popular, reaching new middle-class audiences through well-attended exhibitions at prestigious museums and new features in mainstream magazines. Throughout this period

[69] Two years after the "$6,000 Marin" incident, Stieglitz again announced a record-setting Marin sale, but, having been misled about Phillips' purchase, only one outlet, *The Art Digest*, wrote up the sale while the rest of the press ignored it. Still, in the same write-up there is evidence of the overall success of Stieglitz' tactics – a suggestion that Marin is "probably… the leading American modernist." Rodgers, "Alfred Stieglitz, Duncan Phillips and the '$6000 Marin'", 64. "Marin Water Color Breaks $6000 Record", *Art Digest* 3, no. 6 (1928), 9.
[70] Rodgers, "Alfred Stieglitz, Duncan Phillips and the '$6000 Marin'", 64. Some of the early books on Marin include Seligmann, *Letters of John Marin*; Benson, *John Marin: The Man and His Work*; and Ralph Flint, *John Marin* (New York: Raymond and Raymond, 1936).
[71] Greenough, "Alfred Stieglitz, Facilitator, Financier, and Father, Presents Seven Americans", 327.

Stieglitz remained a constant presence at An American Place when he was able, and continued to mount regular exhibitions. Still, the work of stewarding the gallery increasingly fell on Norman as time went on, and O'Keeffe also took on a more important role in promoting the group, at times helping to facilitate sales for other artists and, after Stieglitz' 1946 death, helping to run the gallery through an uneasy détente with Norman until it shuttered its doors in 1950.[72]

Perhaps more so than Stieglitz' ongoing advocacy, however, the growing middle-class interest in consuming exhibitions and magazine stories featuring these artists' works in the 1930s was attributable to the swift increase in popular interest in fine art in general and American art in particular during the decade.[73] As Joan Saab writes, this was an era in which the traditional use of art and taste as a means of implementing cultural hegemony on the part of society's wealthiest members was changing (at least partially), and art was being desacralized and democratized as a much broader segment of the public became involved in the quest to define America as a nation through its art. Saab casts Stieglitz' efforts as a key component of this transformation because he did so much to advocate for nationally distinctive American art and because his gallery approaches allowed "artists rather than dealers to dictate public taste."[74] However, though art was reaching larger audiences, it was still gallerists like Stieglitz and, more importantly, art museum curators and administrators who were controlling the art and interpretations that were

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[72] Ruth E. Fine, "John Marin: An Art Fully Resolved", in Greenough, et al., *Modern Art and America*, 353-54.
[73] This was a decade during which, notably, New Deal funding brought fine art and artists to communities across the country, the fine art world became increasingly commercialized in a variety of ways, and art therefore took on a new level of importance in the public square. In addition to New Deal programs that employed artists and brought their works to government buildings and art centers, art took on new prominence in American life because it began to feature in an increasing number of traveling exhibitions aimed at popular audiences and receive new levels of attention in popular magazines like *Fortune*, *Life*, and *Look*, while mechanical fine art reproductions began to grow in popularity and appear in an increasing number of homes and businesses. Writes art historian Isadora Helfgott, "Monumental changes had occurred in the art world… in the 1930s" and among the most important shifts was "the sheer numbers of average Americans who had begun to take an interest in fine art and the new ways they engaged with visual culture." Isadora Anderson Helfgott, *Framing the Audience: Art and the Politics of Culture in the United States, 1929-1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015), 1.
[74] A. Joan Saab, *For the Millions: American Art and Culture Between the Wars* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 6-7.

reaching new segments of the national populace. Though catering to these new audiences was a new imperative for museums, these changes did not exactly democratize the art world. As art historian Bridget Cooks describes, even as work by black artists began to feature more often in museums (beginning with the first ever art museum exhibition dedicated to such work at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1927), these works were invariably interpreted through the lens of white perspectives. These included elite white perspectives on what kind of art should be made (which often demanded that black artists do traditional academic rather than experimental work) and elite white perspectives on what artworks by African Americans meant or why they were important – that is, as an inferior counterpoint to European and Euro-American art.[75] Moreover, the growth that Saab and others describe was largely an expansion of white audiences. People of color were often excluded entirely from art museums and galleries, especially in the South, or, more often, simply made to feel unwelcome, as Jacob Lawrence related about his experiences at the Metropolitan Museum and An American Place.[76]

Life magazine took a particular interest in O'Keeffe, featuring her in a pair of 1938 articles and photo spreads, one focused on her art and the other on how Stieglitz "Made Her Famous", followed by several more features in the 1940s – a remarkable shift from the earlier environment in which coverage of her and her colleagues' works was typically restricted to small modernist magazines and art critics' columns.[77] The art world, a realm that had always been the province of social elites, was reorienting itself towards far broader audiences, and audiences

[75] See Bridget R. Cooks, *Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 3-8.
[76] In some cases, exhibitions of work by black artists were staged separately to avoid implicit or explicit segregation policies. See discussion of a 1929-30 exhibition of work by black artists and the negotiations around its display at the Smithsonian in "American Negro Artists (National Gallery of Art, 1929-1930), Smithsonian Institution Archives, accessed March 6, 2023, https://siarchives.si.edu/history/featured-topics/African-Americans/american-negro-artists. Lawrence, "In His Own Words: Jacob Lawrence at the Met and MoMA".
[77] "Georgia O'Keeffe Turns Dead Bones to Live Art", *Life*, February 14, 1938, 28-30, "Alfred Stieglitz Made Georgia O'Keeffe Famous", *Life*, February 14, 1938, 31.

were embracing modernism in turn. As some of the biggest names in American art at the time, and as artists whose position between abstraction and figuration could appeal to an upper-middlebrow public whose taste for modernism had been cultivated but for whom pictorial legibility was still desired, the Stieglitz artists stood to substantially benefit.

The consequences of these changes were striking – once disdained or ignored by many museums and critics and unknown to most, starting in the late '30s the artists began to receive accolades from institutions across the country. Marin was honored in retrospective shows at the Museum of Modern Art in 1936 and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 1955, among others, and received honorary degrees from the University of Maine and Yale University in 1950. In 1948, he was voted by museum directors and painters in a *Look* magazine poll as "America's Artist No. 1".[78] Stieglitz' work as both photographer and gallerist was featured in major exhibitions at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1944-46, the Museum of Modern Art in 1947, and the Art Institute of Chicago in 1949. O'Keeffe saw her work displayed in retrospectives at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1943 and at the Museum of Modern Art in 1946 and received an honorary degree from the College of William & Mary in 1938, and after his death Hartley's work was featured in exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and in a 1952 monograph by Elizabeth McCausland. Even Dove began to emerge from relative obscurity, receiving retrospectives not just from The Phillips Collection and the Downtown Gallery (his new dealers) after his death but also the Corcoran Gallery, his alma mater Cornell University, and the Walker Art Center.[79]

[78] Fine, "John Marin: An Art Fully Resolved", 356.

[79] Exhibition histories of these three artists can be found in their respective catalogues raisonnés and in other summative publications – see Reich, *John Marin*, vol. II, 831-63; Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, vol. II, 1150-61; Elizabeth McCausland, *Marsden Hartley* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1952); Barbara Haskell, *Marsden Hartley* (New York and London: Whitney Museum of American Art and NYU Press, 1980), 194-208; Morgan, *Arthur Dove*, 319-59; and Greenough, *Alfred Stieglitz: The Key Set*, vol. II, 949-71. See also Greenough, *Alfred Stieglitz: The Key Set*, vol. II, 982-90, for mention of catalogues from exhibitions after Stieglitz' death.

By the time of his death in 1946 Stieglitz had succeeded in elevating the group from obscurity to singular fame and critical acclaim and had set the stage for the further growth of each artist's reputation in the years to come. His sponsorship of this small group of likeminded artists, along with his earlier promotional efforts, both directly contributed to the growing acceptance of modernism across the interwar period and benefited from that broader rising tide. Though some critics found the art he promoted and the way he promoted it insufferable, others were open to or overtly supportive of the narratives he sought to establish about what the group's art was about and, by extension, what American modernism should be. In the 1940s and '50s, as the deaths of Dove, Hartley, Marin, and Stieglitz prompted commemorative books and exhibitions and as antimodernist critics like Cortissoz and Craven faded into relative obscurity amid modernism's continued triumph, so, too, did much of the opposition to Stieglitz and company's self-narrativization. The group was growing canonical, and, even if some of their claims began to seem less urgent as their heyday faded into the past, the idea that the Circle's works were timeless, deeply individual, and disconnected from social circumstance, let alone racialized nationalism or other forms of bias, was growing canonical along with it. These were the leading lights of a uniquely American and distinctly modern cultural movement, perhaps the first that could rival European art world supremacy – what could race have to do with it?

O'Keeffe: The Capable and Canny Executrix

O'Keeffe had her own substantial role to play in encouraging what came to be the accepted narratives about the Circle and its artists. Upon Stieglitz' death in July 1946, she rushed home to New York from New Mexico, there to be confronted with the administration of his large and messy estate. This work burdened her for several years, but it also offered an opportunity to fill her late husband's shoes as shepherd of the Circle's critical fortunes by restricting access to

artworks and archival materials to those whose interpretations she felt were accurate – an approach that effectively stifled potential for critical (popular or scholarly) writing about the artists for decades.[80] In contrast to the image of O'Keeffe as an unworldly, intuitive artist that had been promulgated by Rosenfeld and others in print, she proved herself to be a deft manager of the Circle artists' reputations. In particular, in the years that followed Stieglitz' death, she developed the habit of fiercely defending her own work from interpretations that gendered or historicized it, and eventually started fighting against most analyses that she or her surrogates did not write or closely manage. Instead, she favored interpretations that allowed the artists to speak for themselves and/or focused on their works' timeless mystical, national, and modernist qualities. When exhibitions and publications explained the artists' works using their own words, they further emphasized their supposed individuality and shielded them from potential criticism.

Stieglitz' will gave O'Keeffe full autonomy to distribute his assets as she saw fit, a responsibility that she took seriously and performed tactically, dividing what she termed the Stieglitz Collections (his massive collections of his and others' work, comprising more than 2500 objects) between several prominent and influential museums, with the largest shares going to the Art Institute of Chicago, the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, Fisk University, the Metropolitan Museum, the National Gallery of Art, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and smaller groups eventually given to the George Eastman House, Library of Congress, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Museum of Modern Art, Japan's National Museum of Modern Art, the Phillips Collection, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Over 500 works went to the Metropolitan Museum, where they became the backbone of the museum's

[80] This was a mantle she had already taken on in a smaller way in the preceding years as Stieglitz' energies diminished. For example, O'Keeffe asked Herbert Seligmann to develop a book featuring Stieglitz' stories in 1941. Herbert Seligmann to Georgia O'Keeffe, March 12, 1941, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 214, Folder 3764. Seligmann refused the project because he felt that he was no longer close enough with Stieglitz, but did publish *Alfred Stieglitz Talking* 25 years later, in 1966.

modern collections, while the "key set" of Stieglitz' photographs was given to the National Gallery.[81] As O'Keeffe described it in a letter to Art Institute of Chicago Director Daniel Catton Rich, she felt a responsibility towards the artists in Stieglitz' collections to distribute their works appropriately, which led her to focus on that rather than donating any of her own works: "A combination of modesty and stinginess makes me put very few of my own paintings with the collection…. at this time… I have to think about the others."[82] When she was concerned about the deterioration of the works she had given to Fisk in light of the conditions at its gallery, she wrote that "I have a feeling of responsibility toward Stieglitz – and also toward the work of my contemporaries… To me it is the equivalent of the burning of the books".[83] Marin was involved in how his career was represented in the gifts, as well, trading works with O'Keeffe "to ensure that strong examples of the whole history of his oeuvre were represented".[84]

These gifts were made with a series of unusually restrictive conditions that allowed O'Keeffe to maintain close control over their use for the rest of her life – that is, for close to forty years. For example, when she offered 55 Stieglitz photographs to the Museum of Modern Art in 1949, the offer was conditional upon an agreement that the works never be loaned or sold, prints representing her could be returned to her at her request at any time, reproductions not be made except for publicity, and their mounting and matting not be altered, among other conditions.[85]

These donations also served as the genesis of several of the late 1940s exhibitions of

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[81] For more information on this collection, see Messinger, ed., *Stieglitz and His Artists*. A manually assembled accounting of the collections and their distribution is available in Jane Cramer to Nancy Reily, May 20, 2000, Cramer Papers, Georgia O'Keeffe Research Center, Box 2, Folder 31.
[82] Georgia O'Keeffe to Daniel Catton Rich, January 25, 1949, photocopy available in the Cramer Papers, Box 2, Folder 32.
[83] O'Keeffe undated letter draft, Cramer Papers, Box 2, Folder 33.
[84] Meredith Ward, "'With Startling Conviction': The John Marin Collection at The Arkansas Arts Center", in Ann Prentice Wagner, ed., *Becoming John Marin: Modernist at Work* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2018), 4.
[85] Georgia O'Keeffe to Edward Steichen, December 11, 1949, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 204, Folder 3545.

Stieglitz' work and collections. Though mounting exhibitions in honor of newly donated collections is a common practice, when the donor was also an artist and gallerist, a conflict of interest so often inherent in museum donations – that is between a) the museum's intention to feature the "best" or "most important" art or to tell compelling, potentially critical stories about art and art history and b) the need to celebrate gifts so as to encourage further donations of money and artwork – becomes all the more pointed. In this case the museums' eagerness to recognize Stieglitz and O'Keeffe's generosity by holding prominent shows featuring the new donations also contributed to the growth of these artists' reputations and the solidification of their canonical status. O'Keeffe was not just a wife dutifully distributing her husband's collections to institutions that could care for them – she was also taking on the mantle from Stieglitz of shepherding not only his reputation, but also those of his followers. As she wrote about the project of distributing the estate as she neared completion with that work in 1949, "As it is mostly contemporary work, public opinion concerning it is still being made. If the material is not seen, opinion is not being formed. Having in mind that the pictures had to be hung, I had to divide it".[86] As the guardian of these works and reputations, including her own, O'Keeffe's aims were not wholly dissimilar from Stieglitz' – she, too, aimed to preserve and elevate the critical and popular standing of Circle members by distributing their works to institutions that afforded cachet, to encourage interpretations of their work that agreed with their professed beliefs about their shared project, and to see their works well preserved and accurately reproduced.

Though she insisted in her announcement of the gifts in *The New York Times Magazine* that the collection had to "make its own way" in its new institutions and that the pictures in it could be sold after 25 years or sent on long-term loans, the reality of these collections' afterlives was, thanks to O'Keeffe's careful ongoing oversight, not to be as straightforward as she initially

[86] O'Keeffe, "Stieglitz: His Pictures Collected Him", 29.

claimed.[87] Because museums were among the primary sources of scholarship about and public exposure to O'Keeffe and the other Stieglitz artists, controlling the use of the works she had donated allowed her to closely manage public narratives about the Circle for decades. O'Keeffe went to great pains even into her last years to pay very close attention to how the collections were used, and frequently denied attempts to loan her works from these institutions, to reproduce them, or even to make study copies out of concern that the works could be damaged, that they would be printed in a manner that did not meet her standards, or that they were being used excessively or unnecessarily, among other reasons. In 1967 she implied that she was turning down the Museum of Modern Art's request to borrow a Dove painting because she was displeased that the museum had never done an exhibition of his work before.[88]

In the decades after Stieglitz' death O'Keeffe regularly gave some of her own works to museums as a mean of reducing her tax bill.[89] In the late '70s she included 52 works as bequests in her will, but she cancelled that request in 1984 (perhaps because she anticipated a museum being erected in her honor) and left the disposition of the hundreds of works that remained in her possession at her death up to her executors. These executors distributed the collection widely, though many were also given to the O'Keeffe Museum, which opened in 1997.[90]

O'Keeffe paid especially close attention to exhibitions of the collections that she had donated, and expected to be consulted and, quite often, intimately involved in the selection of works, the creation of the catalogue, and even the framing and hanging of shows that

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[87] Ibid.
[88] Georgia O'Keeffe to Inez Garson, February 20, 1967, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 204, Folder 3545.
[89] Across this period she gave 23 works to Fisk, the Metropolitan Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
[90] Barbara Buhler Lynes, "O'Keeffe's O'Keeffe's: The Artist's Collection", in Barbara Buhler Lynes with Russell Bowman, *O'Keeffe's O'Keeffe's: The Artist's Collection* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 50, 53, 63, 66. See also pp. 177-78. Earlier, according to Yale curator Donald Gallup, O'Keeffe had planned to give her paintings to Harvard because of her friendship with Peggy Kiskadden and her son, Harvard President Derek Bok, but she changed her mind after falling out with Kiskadden. Gallup, *Pigeons on the Granite*, 233.

incorporated these donations, especially for retrospective shows that synthesized her career. Failure to intimately involve her and decisions that went against her wishes typically drew her ire and led to threats to remove her future support (in the form of consultations, permissions, and/or financial or art donations). Wrote her assistant Juan Hamilton in a 1985 letter, "let me add how foolishly you have acted in purchasing partially with Miss O'Keeffe's donation, a painting which we advised against… Needless to say, Miss O'Keeffe would not be interested in investing her funds or I my advice in any of your future projects."[91] When O'Keeffe found out that National Gallery director John Walker had been uncomplimentary towards some of the museum's Stieglitz photographs, she froze the Gallery out until a new director had been appointed.[92]

At times O'Keeffe even sought to tighten the restrictions she had placed on collections she had given, despite the seemingly universal feeling among the recipient museums that the conditions were already far too onerous.[93] Even in her later years as her health failed, she still sent assistants as surrogates to carefully control these details.[94] On several occasions O'Keeffe objected to a museum's choice of curator or catalogue author and demanded that a replacement

[91] See, for example, Juan Hamilton to David Turner, March 4, 1985, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 204, Folder 3548. This letter was regarding the Museum of New Mexico.
[92] Gallup, *Pigeons on the Granite*, 234.
[93] In 1953 she asked the Metropolitan Museum that, despite having outlined more lenient terms previously, the Collection be kept intact for thirty-five years rather than the previously agreed-upon twenty-five, that pieces in it never be sold to private parties, and that Stieglitz' 1928 gift to the Museum be governed by the same conditions as the 1949 gift. Georgia O'Keeffe to Francis Henry Taylor, November 13, 1953, and Dudley T. Easby, Jr. to Georgia O'Keeffe, January 8, 1954 [mislabeled as 1953], Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, Office of the Registrar Records, General Correspondence, Alfred Stieglitz, Box 84, Folder 3. In 1967 she amended terms again, requesting new rules under which the Stieglitz Collection could only be loaned for a one-man retrospective or a show on Stieglitz, and in either case could only go to a major museum. See John Szarkowski to Georgia O'Keeffe, October 4, 1972, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 204, Folder 3546; Metropolitan Museum Interdepartmental Memorandum, June 9, 1967, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1946-1954 Folder, Office of the Secretary Records, Metropolitan Museum Archives; and Evan H. Turner to Georgia O'Keeffe, July 12, 1973, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 208, Folder 3633.
[94] See, for example, [NGA Director] John Walker to Georgia O'Keeffe, December 18, 1957, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 205, Folder 3558; Sarah Greenough to Juan Hamilton, November 17, 1982, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 205, Folder 3562; and Judy Lopez to Ann Lee Morgan, August 29, 1985, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 204, Folder 3535. Because she insisted on being consulted every time, her correspondence with museums tended to be dominated by endless requests to reproduce her work, most of which she denied. See, for one example among many, her correspondence with the National Gallery of Art in the Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 205, Folder 3558-3565.

be made. For example, in 1956 she asked the Museum of Modern Art for a book on her to be written by former curator James Johnson Sweeney (with whom she had collaborated on her 1946 retrospective, and who had helped her process Stieglitz' collections after his death) instead of another author, and in 1965 she asked that a catalogue introduction written by a collector be replaced for an exhibition of Stieglitz' photographs.[95] For a 1966 exhibition at the Amon Carter Museum, she insisted that Sweeney be hired as a consultant and catalogue author. Though Sweeney's procrastination meant that less substantive plans for the catalogue had to be instituted at the last minute, O'Keeffe continued to insist that Sweeney was "the only person competent to do a book" until it was no longer tenable.[96] The result of this practice was that a portion of the scholarship on O'Keeffe produced during her lifetime was written or at least substantially influenced by scholars whom she hand-chose, including and especially Sweeney and Art Institute of Chicago and Worcester Art Museum Director Daniel Catton Rich.[97] O'Keeffe trusted these men in part because they were familiar with her fastidious standards for gallery displays, but also because she felt she could trust them to write about her work in ways that she found agreeable. These were not just colleagues but friends.[98] This was part of a pattern of O'Keeffe,

[95] Perry T. Rathbone to Georgia O'Keeffe, February 16, 1965, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 204, Folder 3544; Georgia O'Keeffe to Monroe Wheeler, July 26, 1956, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 204, Folder 3545.

[96] Wrote the Museum's director to a potential catalogue publisher: "O'Keeffe has very definite ideas about herself and even more positive ones re any critic or biographer. Sweeney is the only person to whom she will bear [sic] her soul". Mitchell Wilder to Georgia O'Keeffe, September 9, 1965, Amon Carter Museum of American Art Exhibitions Files, Box 20, Artist – O'Keeffe, 1964-1965 Folder; Mitchell Wilder to Alfred Knopf, September 9, 1964, Amon Carter Museum of American Art Exhibitions Files, Box 20, O'Keeffe, Georgia, 1966, Publication, Knopf Folder. All told, in his role as O'Keeffe's preferred interpreter Sweeney was supposed to write two catalogues for O'Keeffe exhibitions and another for a Stieglitz show, but did not complete any of them. O'Keeffe complained about this to a would-be biographer in 1968 – see Georgia O'Keeffe to Charlotte Willard, February 15, 1968, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 219, Folder 3910.

[97] Rich also helped Sweeney with the publicity materials for O'Keeffe's 1946 Museum of Modern Art exhibition – see "Paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe Retrospective Exhibit", Museum of Modern Art, accessed January 12, 2022, https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/1024/releases/MOMA_1946-1947_0007_1946-05-14_46514-25.pdf; James Johnson Sweeney to Georgia O'Keeffe, July 30, 1945, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 204, Folder 3545; Rich, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (1943); Daniel Catton Rich, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (Worcester, MA: Worcester Art Museum, 1960). See more of her correspondence with Rich in O'Keeffe-Worcester Art Museum correspondence, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 220, Folders 3928-29.

[98] Her relationship with Rich eventually grew notably close – in addition to authoring exhibition catalogues for

like Stieglitz before her, befriending influential critics, curators, and museum directors.[99]

Even as a nonagenarian in the late '70s and '80s, O'Keeffe was still weighing in on the contents of museum publications.[100] The upshot of these arrangements was that museums that held parts of the Stieglitz Collection or other O'Keeffe works were beholden to her for decades until her 1986 death. Even after her passing these institutions remained beholden to her estate, which gifted many of the works in her personal collection to museums, and then to the O'Keeffe Foundation, which emerged from her estate and continued to zealously protect her intellectual property rights in the following years.[101]

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retrospectives of her work in Chicago and Worcester and defending her from attacks in the press in the 1950s, the pair remained close friends for decades, often visiting one another, travelling together, and maintaining a steady correspondence. Georgia O'Keeffe to Anita O'Keeffe Young, September 1949, Anita O'Keeffe Young Papers, Box 1. O'Keeffe mentions Rich visiting her again in 1955 – see Georgia O'Keeffe to Caroline Keck, May 29, 1955, Caroline Keck Papers, Box 1, Series 1, Georgia O'Keeffe Research Center. For more on her relationship with Rich, see the Daniel Catton Rich Papers, Art Institute of Chicago Archives.

[99] Critic Murdock Pemberton visited her in New Mexico in 1950, MFA Boston director Perry Rathbone came in 1964, *New Yorker* critic Calvin Tompkins and his wife stayed with her 1975 after he had profiled her the year before, and Art Institute of Chicago curator James Speyer came in 1974, 1977, and 1982. See Georgia O'Keeffe to Anita O'Keeffe Young, June 10, 1964, Anita O'Keeffe Young Papers, Box 4; Calvin Tompkins to Georgia O'Keeffe, March 14, 1975, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 206, Folder 3587 ;and the O'Keeffe-Speyer correspondence, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 214, Folder 3789. When, in 1979, poet Charles Tomlinson wrote a laudatory account of his visit to O'Keeffe's home in Abiquiu sixteen years earlier, O'Keeffe was so pleased that she invited him back. Georgia O'Keeffe to Charles Tomlinson, July 27, 1979, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 216, Folder 3830; Charles Tomlinson, "Georgia O'Keeffe: A Late Greeting", *The Hudson Review* 32, no. 2 (1979), 175-85.

[100] Examples include Whitney Museum catalogues on Hartley (1980) and her own work (1981) and the text for a 1985 Phillips Collection monograph. In the latter case O'Keeffe asked that Stieglitz be referred to as an "agent" rather than a "dealer" and that mention of some of her early emotional and financial troubles be excised. O'Keeffe seems to have played an even more influential role in shaping the National Gallery's major 1983 exhibition on Stieglitz, whose laudatory catalogue essay was co-written by Greenough and O'Keeffe's assistant Hamilton. Notably, the essay begins "A man of many accomplishments, Alfred Stieglitz was a – perhaps the – central figure in the development of early twentieth-century photography" and suggests that his contributions as a photographer had gone very little recognized, while the foreword of the 1999 catalogue reprinting noted that O'Keeffe "lavished… care" on the book and show and made a donation to cover its costs. Barbara Haskell to Georgia O'Keeffe, August 8, 1979, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 219, Folder 3898; Patterson Sims to Georgia O'Keeffe, June 1, 1981, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 219, Folder 3901; Judy Lopez to Judith Lyon, February 1, 1985, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 208, Folder 3635; Sarah Greenough to Georgia O'Keeffe, January 3, 1982, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 205, Folder 3562. See also Earl A. Powell III, "Foreword", in Sarah Greenough and Juan Hamilton, *Alfred Stieglitz, Photographs & Writings* (1999; reis., Washington, DC and Boston: National Gallery of Art and Bulfinch, 1999), 8; and Greenough and Hamilton, *Alfred Stieglitz, Photographs & Writings*, 12.

[101] See, for example, the Estate's insistence that its representatives review Maria Chabot's letters with O'Keeffe before she publish them in Cynthia Lukens to Maria Chabot, May 2, 1988, Chabot Papers, Georgia O'Keeffe Research Collection, Box 55, Folder 2. The O'Keeffe Foundation eventually approved Chabot's request in 1999 – see Agapita Judy Lopez to Maria Chabot, May 28, 1999, Chabot Papers, Box 55, Folder 3 and Lynes and Paden,

To offend O'Keeffe would therefore risk not only a museum's ability to use its O'Keeffe-controlled works as it saw fit (i.e. its ability to reproduce or loan them, or even change things like frames or mats) but also the possibility of receiving further donations from the artist or her estate. In a world in which the Stieglitz artists, and O'Keeffe especially, were increasingly among the most beloved artists in America, museums often were far more focused on currying O'Keeffe's favor than presenting any sort of objective stance on her work or that of her peers in the Stieglitz Circle.[102] The conflict of interest inherent in museums' relationships with O'Keeffe was an enduring problem.

Greenough, who had first started working at the National Gallery in the late '70s, quickly became a trusted figure for O'Keeffe as she shepherded the Stieglitz Collection there, a role she still holds today. While she was keen to avoid further "glorification of the myth of Stieglitz" (as she characterized Norman's work to promote him and his work) and "to strip away the label of prophet" that had often been applied to him, she was also a sympathetic figure, writing in an early letter that "It has been a great honor to know Stieglitz's work as intimately as I now do. The photographs will forever amaze me in their strength of expression and the breadth of ideas which they cover".[103] For a 1983 show Greenough and Hamilton decided to use Stieglitz' own words to help explain the art, an approach that resulted in the exhibition and catalogue *Alfred Stieglitz: Photographs & Writings*, which included an essay by the pair alongside selections from

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eds., *Maria Chabot – Georgia O'Keeffe*. When the Foundation gave eight paintings to the NGA in 1987 as O'Keeffe had directed in her will, it did so with requirements including consulting with the Estate on any loans or commercial reproductions, among other conditions. According to Brooklyn Museum records, though copyrights to works previously donated to the Museum were passed on to it upon the Foundation's dissolution in 2006, all conditions of the original gift remained. Raymond R. Krueger to Arnold Lehman, May 12, 2006, O'Keeffe Artist File, Brooklyn Museum. A partial copy of O'Keeffe's will is available in the *Jack-in-the-Pulpit* series General File at the SAAM.

[102] O'Keeffe's correspondence with the Metropolitan Museum offers examples of many of these dynamics – see the Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 202, Folders 3503-9.

[103] Sarah Greenough to Juan Hamilton, February 3, 1980, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 193, Folder 3288; Acknowledgements Section Draft, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 193, Folder 3291; Sarah Greenough to Georgia O'Keeffe, October 26, 1978, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 193, Folder 3287.

Stieglitz' writings. The autobiographical approach was used again for the Gallery's 1987 exhibition *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters*, in keeping with O'Keeffe's preference to avoid having others interpret her work and the work of Stieglitz and her Circle peers – an approach that protected them from potential criticism and further emphasized the supposed expression of individuality inherent in their works.[104] After these positive early experiences working with her in the late '70s and early '80s, Hamilton wrote the NGA director to mention that he and O'Keeffe wanted to suggest that Greenough be hired as the permanent steward of the Stieglitz Collection (a proposal that was greeted by a request for funds to help sponsor the museum's photographic programming, including Greenough's work).[105] However, Greenough presented herself as a neutral interpreter on several occasions, including when the National Endowment for the Humanities worried in response to a 1985 grant application for a book of O'Keeffe-Stieglitz correspondence that Hamilton and O'Keeffe might try to "suppress valuable information".[106] Though the relationship between the parties changed after O'Keeffe's 1986 death, as oversight of the Gallery's O'Keeffe- and Stieglitz-donated materials diminished until the O'Keeffe Foundation's dissolution in 2006, Greenough's continued presence at the Gallery today, though no doubt attributable to her many accomplishments as a historian and curator of photography in the intervening decades, nonetheless hints at the ongoing impact of O'Keeffe's cultivation and management of her influence even now, nearly forty years after the artist's death.

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[104] See Greenough and Hamilton, *Alfred Stieglitz, Photographs & Writings* and Cowart and Hamilton, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters*.

[105] Juan Hamilton to John Wilmerding, August 22, 1983, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 205, Folder 3564; John Wilmerding to Juan Hamilton, October 4, 1983, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 205, Folder 3564. However, to lay substantial blame for the continued celebratory tone of the writing and public displays of Stieglitz Circle work in the late twentieth century at Greenough's feet would perhaps be unduly uncharitable. For one thing, through her positions at the National Gallery, Greenough has been among the foremost scholars of Stieglitz' photographic and gallery work over the last few decades, and has often offered more even-handed assessments of these artists than one might expect given the character and extent of her relationship with O'Keeffe before her death. Her efforts to publish the Stieglitz-O'Keeffe correspondence have also been a boon that has helped this project and will help others in the future come to fruition. See Greenough, *My Faraway One*, as well as Cowart and Hamilton, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters*.

[106] Sarah Greenough to Juan Hamilton, November 12, 1983, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 193, Folder 3292.

Paper Trail: O'Keeffe and the Circle Archives

The artists' careful control of archival materials similarly allowed them to control the direction of decades of scholarly and popular analyses, and at times repress evidence of their racial attitudes, including casual use of racial epithets. The terms and conditions under which O'Keeffe bequeathed the Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive to the Yale University Library, where it has remained since she first began donating Stieglitz' papers there in 1949, have played a particularly influential role.[107] Upon her initial donation she immediately established restrictions on the papers' use (which she also later amended several times), and until her death, corresponded and visited with curator Donald Gallup regularly in order to review requests to access and quote from the Archive. Quite often, she approved research requests at Gallup's suggestion but then refused to grant publication permission upon reading drafts of the resultant book or article. In general, she approved no requests to access and read her correspondence with Stieglitz.[108] In a 1980 letter she expressed a desire to have Hamilton continue to review requests to view her correspondence with Stieglitz after her death.[109] Like her relationships with museums, Yale may have been especially inclined to accommodate O'Keeffe's requests because of her friendship with Gallup and because she was a major donor (including monetary gifts in

[107] O'Keeffe first met Yale curator Donald Gallup and discussed the possibility of donating Stieglitz' papers at the suggestion of Carl van Vechten and the writer Lincoln Kirstein in early 1949. She transferred the material there over the next few years and gave several more collections in the following decades. The rest of her papers were sent there by the Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation in 1992. "Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive", Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, accessed February 7, 2022, https://beinecke.library.yale.edu/collections/highlights/alfred-stieglitzgeorgia-okeeffe-archive. The collection became a part of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library after it opened in 1963. The origins of O'Keeffe's relationship with Gallup and the Yale Library are documented in Gallup's memoir – see Gallup, *Pigeons on the Granite*, 221-53. Also of interest is Gallup's account of the origins of the Hartley Collection at Yale. See Gallup, *Pigeons on the Granite*, 167-75, as well as mention of other relevant figures including Cortissoz, Gertrude Stein, Van Vechten, and many others.

[108] See O'Keeffe's correspondence with the Yale University Library, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 220, Folder 3936-39.

[109] To my knowledge this did not come to pass. Georgia O'Keeffe to Donald Gallup, June 18, 1980, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 220, Folder 3938. The next year she decided to let Hamilton and Greenough work together on a book of her letters, which seems to have resulted in the 1987 National Gallery exhibition and catalogue, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters*.

support of the collection) and encouraged friends to donate. In what was likely a tactic intended to win the Library's compliance with her requests about the management of the Archive, O'Keeffe also actively encouraged Yale administrators' feelings of uncertainty about her future intentions as a donor by threatening to send her papers elsewhere.[110]

Though the Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive is now fully open to researchers, aftereffects of O'Keeffe's policies remain – the first volume of the (Greenough-edited) Stieglitz/O'Keeffe letters was not published as a collection until 2011, and the second volume still has not come out.[111] Though their letters are available online now, most of the vast Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive is not. On one hand, O'Keeffe's work to have *all* of Stieglitz' (and later her own) then-extant correspondence and ephemera be preserved ensured that investigators of a later generation could (eventually) mine the vast archive for evidence that might change what people thought of the pair. Wrote Doris Bry in a 1951 article about the new Archive,

> O'Keeffe felt that the truest picture of Stieglitz would be made available by including all of the letters he had kept, regardless of their seeming interest at the moment. This policy was adopted partly because of the incapacity of a person of the same era to judge adequately the historical worth of… letters, partly because the very nature and number of the letters in itself contributed to a greater understanding of something in Stieglitz.[112]

In general, O'Keeffe's decision to preserve this material wholesale and to bring it to Yale, where it could be investigated alongside the papers of many other prominent modernist figures, including many of Stieglitz' "contemporaries and friends", demonstrates beneficence towards future researchers. However, her insistence that her correspondence with Stieglitz not be publicly available until twenty years after her death and her careful control of the rest of the

[110] Gallup wrote O'Keeffe in 1975 out of concern that she might give her papers to the Archives of American Art instead – a preference she openly voiced in a subsequent letter. Donald Gallup to Georgia O'Keeffe, July 22, 1975, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 220, Folder 3937 and Georgia O'Keeffe to Donald Gallup, March 16, 1976, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 220, Folder 3937. Gallup, *Pigeons on the Granite*, 242. See also other correspondence in the Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 220, Folders 3936-39.
[111] See Greenough, *My Faraway One*. Hamilton worked on this project alongside Greenough for years but eventually withdrew.
[112] Doris Bry, "The Stieglitz Archive at Yale University", *The Yale University Library Gazette* 35, no. 4 (1951), 124.

archive during her lifetime resulted in the limitation of decades of scholarship, and in many cases the active discouragement of interpretations with which she disagreed.[113] It likely affected scholarship on other figures as well, as O'Keeffe and Stieglitz' correspondence with others was often a key resource for scholars working on other modernists, including Dove and Marin, whose families had to be relied upon for help by scholars of earlier generations.[114]

As time passed O'Keeffe became increasingly exasperated with fame and with what she perceived to be many authors' misinterpretations of her work and life, and grew quite angry in response to some requests for information or access. This attitude seemed to stem from her displeasure with the heavily gendered interpretations of her work that abounded in the late 1910s and 1920s, as well as the negative experience she had when trying to accommodate her friend Anita Pollitzer when she tried to write a book on O'Keeffe in the '40s and '50s, to what O'Keeffe perceived to be wildly misguided results.[115] Certainly, by the time of her settling of the Stieglitz estate in 1949, O'Keeffe had already recognized the effectiveness of playing hardball about access to information and intellectual property with publishers, and she drove a hard bargain when she was unhappy with *New York Times* editors' attempts to make changes to her

[113] O'Keeffe did show an openness towards publishing her letters with Stieglitz (presumably posthumously) towards the end of her life. As Greenough writes, "When she was in her mid-eighties and early nineties, she asked a few people, including me, to compile a selection for publication. She gave me few explicit instructions on the content and character of the book of their letters, except to 'make it beautiful and make it honest'." Sarah Greenough, "Introduction", in Greenough, *My Faraway One*, xiv.

[114] Dove's papers were first microfilmed by the Archives of American Art in the 1970s, while Marin's papers were not donated to the National Gallery until 1986. A notable instance of relying on the assistance of family members is chronicled in the letters between art historian William Innes Homer and Dove's son William and brother Paul, as well as notes that demonstrate that Homer visited with and interviewed them. Homer Papers, Box 11, Folder 8. Suffice it to say that, similar to the situation with O'Keeffe, needing the proactive cooperation of these family members to do new research likely would have made writing critically about Dove a difficult task should a scholar have wished to do so before his papers were donated to a public archive.

[115] She wrote that, "when I read Anita's book I was astonished to find that we are such different… people that she had hardly ever understood what I said… I feel the book has little to do with me". Georgia O'Keeffe to Kay Boyle, July 18, 1973, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 181, Folder 3016. See the O'Keeffe-Anita Pollitzer correspondence, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, especially Box 209, Folders 3657-61. Gendered interpretations of O'Keeffe's work in the interwar era and O'Keeffe's disdain for them are covered at length in Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz, and the Critics*.

article announcing the distribution of Stieglitz' art collections.[116] O'Keeffe's professed intent in denying access to information, archives, and reproduction rights in the following decades was to maintain her privacy and, above all, to prevent others' interpretation of her, Stieglitz, and their peers, as she felt their work should "stand alone". As one of the publishers for her self-titled 1976 book described, "the whole reason she wanted to do a book of her own was to avoid having others interpret her work", a practice that she had come to disdain.[117] However, rather than stymying all scholarship on her and her peers, O'Keeffe instead spent decades carefully picking and choosing which sorts of interpretations she wanted to support. When someone decided to approach the artists' work in a way that she felt was incorrect or insufficiently deferential to the artists' own way of thinking (which was most of the time), she typically swiftly rebuffed them.[118]

At times O'Keeffe's efforts to stymie scholarship that she did not care for took on a more menacing tone. After initially granting Laurie Lisle, the eventual author of an unauthorized O'Keeffe biography, an interview in 1977, she turned hostile, denying Lisle access to letters and claiming that she had only given the interview somewhat unwillingly. One letter contained an implicit threat: "[I do not] like being told that someone is doing a biography of me without ever asking me… I think your unauthorized biography is a mistake and… could lead to legal

[116] Though she ended up softening her tone somewhat in subsequent drafts, she wrote in a draft letter, "Kindly print the article as I wrote it or do not print it at all". Georgia O'Keeffe to Lester Markel, drafts, November 1949, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 206, Folder 3583. O'Keeffe's response sent the editors backtracking, and they invited her to undo the changes they had made.

[117] Barbara Burn to Mr. Fukunaga, May 7, 1981, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 217, Folder 3864.

[118] For example, in 1985 O'Keeffe denied art historian Elizabeth Duvert's request for more information about her paintings of "kachina" dolls, to which O'Keeffe's secretary curtly replied that O'Keeffe was "unable to assist you with your project and is not willing to grant you permission to reproduce any of her paintings in your essay". See the O'Keeffe-Duvert correspondence in the Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 189, Folder 3194. When graduate student Douglas Hyland asked for permission to quote from Stieglitz' letters for an article on arts patron Agnes Ernst Meyer in 1977, O'Keeffe felt that he had not given Stieglitz his proper due and insisted that he include an additional paragraph of her devising about Stieglitz' ongoing activities after his connection with Meyer ended in the late 1910s. See the O'Keeffe-Hyland correspondence in Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 196, Folder 3354. In some cases scholars tried to win her cooperation by reassuring her that they bore no ill intentions. Wrote art historian William Innes Homer when trying to gain her permission to quote from Stieglitz' letters in 1972: "I hope my work on Stieglitz and his associates will be a credit to his memory. I believe it will." William Innes Homer to Georgia O'Keeffe draft, December 1, 1972, Homer Papers, Box 16, Folder 18.

complications… you better give your idea up."[119] According to Lisle, while writing her book she faced complaints from Juan Hamilton about her presence in the Abiquiu area, stolen research notes, and telephone calls from O'Keeffe to many potential interview subjects asking them not to talk to her.[120] O'Keeffe often looked more kindly upon requests from people whom she knew well or who were working on projects about others she knew.[121]

The desire of many authors to speak with or access the letters of the extremely famous O'Keeffe often led to her being allowed to edit manuscripts about her and her work.[122]

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[119] See the O'Keeffe-Lisle correspondence in the Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 200, Folder 3437. See also Laurie Lisle, *Portrait of an Artist: A Biography of Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York: Seaview, 1980).

[120] Laurie Lisle, "On Being Georgia O'Keeffe's First Biographer", in Merrill and Bradbury, eds., *From the Faraway Nearby: Georgia O'Keeffe as Icon*, 213-14.

[121] Examples include when a graduate student interviewed her for a dissertation on Carl van Vechten in 1952 or when she cooperated with other graduate students working on projects on Demuth's work and Stieglitz' connections to the literary world in the late '60s and early '70s. See Edward Lueders to Georgia O'Keeffe, January 13, 1952, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 200, Folder 3450; the O'Keeffe-Robert E. Ned Haines correspondence in the Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 194, Folder 3300; the O'Keeffe-Emily Farnham Correspondence in the Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 190, Folder 3224; and Grace M. Mayer to Georgia O'Keeffe, June 25, 1980, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 204, Folder 3546, among other examples.

[122] Indeed, many of those who contacted her were more than willing to accommodate edits that O'Keeffe suggested, as when she asked graduate student Emily Farnham to avoid calling Stieglitz a "dealer" in 1968, to which Farnham responded by inviting O'Keeffe to make further edits, or when she insisted on reviewing the transcripts of interviews she gave for a television documentary in 1976. Emily Farnham to Georgia O'Keeffe, August 17, 1968, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 190, Folder 3224; Perry Miller Adato to Georgia O'Keeffe, January 21, 1976, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 219, Folder 3918. In 1985, when art historian Ann Lee Morgan was working on publishing a collection of the Dove-Stieglitz correspondence, O'Keeffe still wanted to look things over before giving approval despite Morgan's assurance that there was nothing embarrassing in the letters. Ann Lee Morgan to Georgia O'Keeffe, February 26, 1985, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 204, Folder 3535; Juan Hamilton to Ann Lee Morgan, May 3, 1985, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 204, Folder 3535; Georgia O'Keeffe to Donald Gallup, December 18, 1974, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 204, Folder 3535. In some cases O'Keeffe refused permissions even for projects on others because she felt that she had promised the exclusive right to use archival material to particular individuals. In a 1974 letter O'Keeffe explained to Gallup that she felt that she could not grant Morgan's requests for access to the Dove-Stieglitz correspondence because O'Keeffe's longtime assistant Doris Bry had been working on several books using the correspondence between Stieglitz and his artists, and she deserved the exclusive right to use the material, having once been denied access herself because O'Keeffe had promised Dorothy Norman the exclusive use of the letters for research and writing. O'Keeffe gave Bry exclusive rights for five years, and after that period Morgan published several books on Dove, including a collection of his correspondence with Stieglitz. O'Keeffe also met with Morgan to discuss Dove. See Georgia O'Keeffe to Ann Lee Morgan, October 13, 1975, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 204, Folder 3535. Bry's project never materialized. O'Keeffe's promises to Bry similarly led Donald Gallup to ask William Innes Homer on O'Keeffe's behalf to avoid using some primary material in his writings on the group. Donald Gallup to William Innes Homer, January 4, 1972, Homer Papers, Box 16, Folder 17. Also in 1974, O'Keeffe denied historian of photography Beaumont Newhall permission to do a biography of Stieglitz for the same reason. Georgia O'Keeffe to Beaumont Newhall, September 23, 1974, and Beaumont Newhall to Georgia O'Keeffe, January 19, 1975, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 206, Folder 3588. When Eleanor Munro contacted O'Keeffe in 1977 in the hopes of interviewing her for her book on American women artists, O'Keeffe not only responded that she was "not always very excited when someone writes me and tells me they are

Sometimes, even the promise of editorial powers was not enough to sway her - though Jan Garden Castro offered to allow Sarah Greenough, Juan Hamilton, and O'Keeffe to edit her book manuscript, which she said would show that O'Keeffe was "a major artist whose work is lasting and timeless" in 1983, O'Keeffe nonetheless refused to cooperate with the project.[123]

O'Keeffe was especially vigilant about guarding her correspondence with Stieglitz, which she stipulated was to be kept protected from public eyes until several decades after her death.[124] In some instances when O'Keeffe did give permissions she later regretted doing so, and wrote disparagingly about the resultant interpretations, even when they were friendly. She wrote to art historian William Innes Homer four years after the publication of his book on Stieglitz to say, "I have just reread the section of your book concerning Stieglitz… Your interpretation of Stieglitz has little to do with the man and seems to have more to do with you and your ideas."[125]

O'Keeffe was not the only friendly actor whose efforts to conserve these artists' reputations affected perceptions their work. Notably, Dorothy Norman's 1949 collection of

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doing something on me without asking first", but also took it upon herself to edit much of Munro's manuscript. Ultimately, she concluded that "I think you should not try to write about me". O'Keeffe not only corrected factual errors but also suggested Munro excise content including discussion of her relationship with Stieglitz and his photographs of her, connections between her adult work and her childhood, suggested links to Mary Cassatt, mention of spiritual interpretations of her work, and close readings of her paintings, often with laconic instructions like "unnecessary", "leave out", or "incorrect". O'Keeffe also wrote that "I also do not particularly like being grouped with other women artists who sometimes are further from me than the male artists". Georgia O'Keeffe to Eleanor Munro, August 23, 1977, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 204, Folder 3542; Eleanor Munro to Juan Hamilton, January 5, 1978, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 204, Folder 3542; Georgia O'Keeffe to Eleanor Munro, January 16, 1978, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 204, Folder 3542. See Eleanor Munro, *Originals: American Women Artists* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979).

[123] Jan Garden Castro to Georgia O'Keeffe, March 14, 1983; and Judy Lopez to Margaret Morris, April 12, 1983, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 208, Folder 3630. Even familiar and friendly faces were subjected to O'Keeffe's editing, as Herbert Seligmann was when he sought to publish *Alfred Stieglitz Talking* in 1966 and was met with O'Keeffe's suggestion that he rewrite his manuscript and send her a new 30-page sample before she would give her assent for the project. Herbert Seligmann to Georgia O'Keeffe, June 3, 1965, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 214, Folder 3765. O'Keeffe later offered to pay for half of the cost of the publication of the book. Herbert Seligmann to Georgia O'Keeffe, July 1, 1965, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 214, Folder 3765.

[124] In 1976 O'Keeffe even denied Stieglitz' niece Sue Davidson Lowe when she sought access to the correspondence while working on a book on her uncle. Georgia O'Keeffe to Sue Davidson Lowe, February 8, 1976, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 200, Folder 3447. See also Sue Davidson Lowe, *Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1983).

[125] Georgia O'Keeffe to William Innes Homer, March 11, 1981, Homer Papers, Box 16, Folder 18.

Marin's writings repeatedly sanitized Marin's use of the "n word". Comments in Norman's book suggest that she reviewed at least some of the letters with Marin, and we can therefore surmise that Marin may have played a role in these edits. Norman also thanks O'Keeffe for lending her permission to publish the Marin/Stieglitz correspondence, and it is therefore possible that O'Keeffe was also involved in the editing out of offensive portions.[126] One of the letters featuring a racial slur and derogatory impersonations of an African-American dialect is not included at all in Herbert Seligmann's less-comprehensive published collection of Marin's letters, from 1931.[127] It seems plausible to suggest that the suppression of evidence about these artists' racial beliefs (or, at least, their casual use of racial slurs) contributed to the relative inattention that the connections between their works and issues of race have received for most of the period since their interwar heyday. Art historian Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw reminds us of the stakes of omissions like these:

> Early scholarship that asserted American exceptionalism and colonialist hegemony still forms the center… [of] the canon of American art… Today, it is critical that we return to primary sources to question the veracity of these foundational texts and the narratives that

[126] In a 1924 letter, after telling Stieglitz about an unusually successful recent fishing trip, Marin compares their luck to a story of "the powerful swimming nigger with the Shark ahind him and the terrible roarin Lion on shore a waiting him – he put his trust in the Lord + swam for the shore – The Lion jumped right over that nigger's head into the shark's mouth but – the Lord aint agoin to provide a Lion for every nigger". In the published version of the Marin/Stieglitz letters upon which scholars have relied for decades, that compiled by Dorothy Norman and then published in 1949, the slurs included in this passage have been removed and replaced by "swimmer", along with a few other changes. John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, October 19, 1924, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 34, Folder 783. Compare with John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, October 19, 1924, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 102. In another letter to Stieglitz, Marin uses the same slur in a similar circumstance as he recounts a parable told to him by Duncan Phillips. Norman similarly edited this letter, cutting out Phillips' anecdote entirely. It was written too late to have been included in Seligmann's collection, which was first published in 1931. John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 20-September 3, 1933, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 34, Folder 786. Compare to John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, August 20 – September 3, 1933, in Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, 152-53. Norman also did not publish any of these letters when she published some of Marin's writings in her journal, *Twice a Year*: see John Marin, "John Marin: *From:* Writings", Dorothy Norman, ed., *Twice a Year* 14/15 (1946/47), 235-66. For evidence of Marin's involvement in reviewing letters published in Norman's volume, see Norman, *Selected Writings of John Marin*, iv, 133.

[127] We can only speculate about what omissions or edits may have been made to other relevant collections of writings and remembrances for which there is less extant documentation, like Seligmann's *Alfred Stieglitz Talking* (which notably defends Stieglitz from potential accusations of racism for his insistence on using *Goin' Fishin"*s original title), and how the omissions of compilers like Norman and Seligmann have affected how the Circle has been perceived and written about in the intervening decades. See Seligmann, *Letters of John Marin*.

> they provided for the story of American art. If colonial America and Americanist art-historical coloniality are to finally meet their end, we must also engage the challenging and purposefully obfuscated materials in the archive.[128]

The Stieglitz Circle Comes of Age: U.S. Modernism and Midcentury Histories of American Art

After Stieglitz died and An American Place closed its doors in 1950, Marin, O'Keeffe, and (posthumously) Dove all migrated to Edith Halpert's Downtown Gallery, where Hartley and other prominent American modernists had been represented for years. With Stieglitz' permission, Halpert had already displayed Circle work on-and-off for years, and she was not only a familiar and trusted new representative, but also, as the head of Manhattan's foremost gallery of U.S. modernism and a devoted promoter of contemporary American art's place in the broader art world, likely the most respected and capable possible steward for these artists' careers. Though, by the 1950s, they no longer represented the leading edge of modernist experimentation in America, Halpert understood the unique opportunity that these artists offered to advance the cause of American modernism – their cachet having been established by Stieglitz in part because of his efforts to raise their prices, she worked to popularize it by selling it at more accessible rates and even established a "Marin Room" at the gallery so that his work could remain on continuous display.[129] Under Halpert's watch the artists reached even greater heights and, as increasingly canonical figures, they began to receive more widespread respect, including numerous major one-artist museum exhibitions and representation in an ever-increasing number of group shows highlighting American modernism. Marin became the first American to exhibit

[128] Shaw, "The Decolonization of John Sloan".

[129] O'Keeffe refused to lower her prices despite Halpert's entreaties. She stayed with the Gallery until 1963, when her assistant Doris Bry became her agent, while the Marin estate left in the late 1960s as Halpert's, and Dove's estate remained until after Halpert's death in 1970. Diane Tepfer, "Edith Gregor Halpert and The Downtown Gallery downtown: 1926-1940; a study in American art patronage" (PhD. diss., University of Michigan, 1989), 249-50, 262; Georgia O'Keeffe to Caroline Keck, December 6, 1963, Keck Papers, Box 1, Series 1, O'Keeffe Research Center. For more on the history of the Gallery, see Rebecca Shaykin, ed., *Edith Halpert: The Downtown Gallery and the Rise of American Art* (New York, New Haven, and London: Jewish Museum and Yale University Press, 2019).

at the Venice Biennale in 1950, and the second Circle began to be recognized as a group as well, including with shows at the Pomona College Galleries in 1958 and the Delaware Art Center in 1961.[130]

However, though the direct advocacy of Stieglitz, O'Keeffe, Halpert, and others played a crucial role in shaping narratives about the Circle as they developed across the twentieth century, so, too, did greater forces in the history of the history of American art. Where once sympathetic newspaper and magazine critics had stood as the sole advocates for the cultural significance and aesthetic quality of the artists' works, members of a new generation of historians of U.S. art appeared in the 1940s and '50s to more formally narrativize the Stieglitz artists' place in the history of that emerging discipline, a task that not only helped lead to the growing number of exhibitions in which they were featured but also often took on an implicitly racialized nationalistic bent. Less than coincidentally, this period in scholarship emerged from an era of intense patriotism during World War II, followed by an era characterized by more sustained focus on serving the national interest during the Cold War. Though this was in part the story of the birth of a new subfield of academic study, it was also an extension of the sort of nationalism fundamental to both the young field of American Studies and U.S. society in the postwar era. Writes historian David Noble about a slightly earlier period in American Studies' history,

> when scholars such as Ralph Gabriel, Perry Miller, and F. O. Matthiessen created the new academic discipline of American studies in the 1930s… [they] continued to define American citizens, those who had meaningful agency, as white males. Their story of American exceptionalism would not examine the history of women or Native Americans or African Americans because such an analysis would reveal that power, imperialism,

[130] Among these shows were a Halpert-organized 1953 O'Keeffe retrospective at the Dallas Museum of Art, a Daniel Catton Rich-helmed 1960 Worcester Art Museum O'Keeffe retrospective, Detroit Institute of Arts and Yale University Art Gallery Marin retrospective exhibitions in 1954, a major traveling Marin memorial show in 1956, a Corcoran Gallery and Currier Gallery Marin retrospective in 1962, the previously mentioned 1950s Dove retrospectives at the Walker Art Center and Cornell University and the 1958 travelling show, Hartley exhibitions including a 1952 University of Minnesota show and a 1960-62 American Federation of Arts traveling exhibit. These shows are mentioned in Reich, *John Marin*, vol. II, 847-60, Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, vol. II, 1168-70, Haskell, *Arthur Dove*, n.p., and Haskell, *Marsden Hartley*, 202-4.

and war had not been left behind in the Old World.[131]

The genteel conditions of the university halls where American Studies and Americanist art history were growing in the postwar era were (much like the art museum offices of the period) ripe for reiteration of the prevailing white nationalism of the time, which, though less frequently rooted in scientific justifications or open racial hatred than interwar attitudes, was nonetheless one in which the Jim Crow system and discriminatory immigration practices remained enshrined in law and white supremacism endured in the hearts and minds of many citizens.[132]

Meanwhile, fundamental to the burgeoning mainstream popularity of modernism in the U.S. and the related growing tendency among scholars to work to describe a lineage of American avant-garde experimentation were governmental and sociocultural Cold War imperatives to celebrate modernism as a symbol of American freedom of expression. Writes scholar Werner Sollors, "such praise helped the anti-Communist objective of chastising the way in which modern art was either attacked by state propaganda or banned outright under totalitarian tyranny". As he points out, it was no coincidence that in 1954 President Eisenhower recorded a message that called the Museum of Modern Art a "great museum" that demonstrated the "important principle" that "freedom of the arts is… one of the pillars of liberty in our land".[133]

It is now generally recognized that most of the Americanist art historical scholarship of the postwar era was reflective of the nascent discipline of American art history's fight for respect for both it and the art it investigated within the broader contexts of the Western art world, within

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[131] David W. Noble, *Death of a Nation: American Culture and the End of Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xxiv.

[132] Writes historian Gary Gerstle, "Racial nationalism lost some of its virulence in these years; not only did a civil rights movement gather steam at this time but anti-Semitic sentiment plummeted… If racial nationalism was losing some of its grip on the American imagination, its adherents were not yet ready to see it die. In the South, white southerners were mobilizing to resist civil rights. The same immigration reform measure that opened America up to Asian immigrants kept the odious racial quota system of the 1924 law in place, its supporters still fearful of seeing America overrun by unruly eastern and southern European immigrants." Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 240.

[133] Sollors, *Ethnic Modernism*, 7. Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Freedom of the Arts", *Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* 22, no. 1 (1954), 3.

which art made in the United States, along with the study of that art, still held little cachet. American art studies was a field more or less founded on a historical inferiority complex that led mid-century scholars to hold up the quality, importance, and nationally representative character of U.S. art (and especially U.S. modernism) rather than criticize it. The Stieglitz artists, who so loudly proclaimed the originality and distinctive Americanness of their project while still offering a link to European modernism that proved valuable in an era in which the European avant-garde was being deified above all else, offered a special appeal to these scholars.[134] However, connection to European modernism was something to be valued implicitly rather than openly. The rhetoric that was woven around U.S. art in the postwar era focused above all else on autochthonous qualities rather than international connections. In a 1988 essay on the historiography of American art, Wanda Corn identifies the origins of this trend with the work of fellow Manhattan avant-gardists Van Wyck Brooks, Lewis Mumford, Rosenfeld, and Frank in the years around the First World War "to think about what was inherently national and 'American' about American art and letters".[135] Of course, much as it had been since the interwar era, it was typically the unique prerogative of white artists to have their work interpreted through the lens of nationhood, and the unique prerogative of artists of color to have their work seen as "racial art".[136] According to art historian Rebecca Zurier, in focusing on the nationally characteristic elements of artworks, early historians of U.S. art conformed to a European tradition of art historical interpretation that dated back to the nineteenth century and "linked race and nation… or studied high culture as national culture", while also servicing the impetuses for

[134] Wanda Corn describes this "inferiority problem" in "Coming of Age: Historical Scholarship in American Art", *The Art Bulletin* 70, no. 2 (1988), 188-207, 191. Though Abstract Expressionism was receiving more international attention in the postwar era than any American art movement ever had before, if anything this newfound praise seemed to highlight the lack of international attention for or interest in all the artists who had come before in the nation's history.
[135] Ibid., 192.
[136] Mary Ann Calo, *Distinction and Denial: Race, Nation, and the Critical Construction of the African-American Artist, 1920-1940* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), vii-viii.

nationalism that were unique to the postwar U.S.[137]

The influence of such thinking is readily apparent in many of the broadly focused writings on modern U.S. art published in the '40s and '50s. By implicitly or explicitly celebrating Stieglitzian modernism as the apotheosis of American identity and culture, these texts provided an (also nationalist) alternative to anti-modernist criticism and art historical writing. Critic-turned-historian Jerome Mellquist's 1942 book *Emergence of an American Art* proclaimed a way of thinking about American art that he had declared in a letter to Stieglitz a decade earlier: "Do you feel, as I do, that we are on the verge of a great period in America? That a faith by which men can live again is coming from this place? I believe that… Your work… is one of the few… examples we have yet had in contemporary America."[138] Mellquist made clear his admiration for the group when he later wrote Stieglitz that he didn't want to write about him or Marin "from a 'critical' point of view" and wanted to "question Craven's right to be a spokesman for America… he's just a partisan for a chosen few."[139] The book's final section, "Culmination", ends with six chapters: one on O'Keeffe, another on photography focused on Strand and Stieglitz, individual sections on Hartley ("A Visionary from Maine") and Dove ("The Celebrator of the Soil"), a chapter on sculpture, and a final section on Marin ("The Master of Equilibrium"). Across these chapters the Circle artists are successively treated in increasingly glowing terms. In the final chapter on Marin, Mellquist writes about his involvement with 291 in the 1910s and his pictures of Manhattan, "At last art had become decidedly vital in America. Academicians fled… Yes, here at last was the unbelievable emergence of an American art."[140]

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[137] Rebecca Zurier, "Newness, Flatness, and Other Myths: Looking for National Identity in European (and a few British) Histories of American Art", in Barbara Groseclose and Jochen Wierich, eds., *Internationalizing the History of American Art* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 19-40), 20.
[138] Jerome Mellquist to Alfred Stieglitz, November 7, 1932, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 35, Folder 808.
[139] Jerome Mellquist to Alfred Stieglitz, September 5, 1937 and August 1939, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 35, Folder 808.
[140] Mellquist, *Emergence of an American Art*, 341-402.

Other books, like Brooklyn Museum curator John Baur's 1951 *Revolution and Tradition in Modern American Art*, were not always as singularly focused on the Stieglitz artists, but nonetheless featured them as key contributors to what Baur felt had become "a native art which is more than a pale imitation of European models" – one that was imbued with "native flavor".[141] Perhaps the most objective view of these artists in this era was shared in art historian Milton Brown's *American Painting from the Armory Show to the Great Depression*, in which he looks slightly askance at some of the rhetoric Stieglitz and company spun around their collective enterprise, including the photographer's propensity to "propagandize for modern art".[142]

Emerging alongside these more broadly focused texts were a growing number of monographs and articles about the Stieglitz artists that closely aligned with the preexisting narratives about the content of their work that had cast them as nationally characteristic but wholly original, idiosyncratic yet intuitively comprehensible. A Marin eulogist in 1953 wrote that the artist was, "untamed by these 'isms' of art and continued to follow his own principles that were deeply rooted in the American life."[143] Marin biographer Mackinley Helm first approached the artist by proposing to focus on "accenting the natively American aspect of your experience" and "your complete and independent individuality".[144] Mancini describes the widespread character of the problem: "One figure whose portrayal is typical of modernist biography is Marsden Hartley. Historians have emphasized the artist's genius, his lack of

[141] Baur's stance was notably among the more mild stances articulated in the early to mid-twentieth century – he describes the positions of writers like Sadakichi Hartmann (at the turn of the century) and John Kouwenhoven (in the late '40s), who were among those "who seek a unifying spirit in American art [and] are generally inspired by a prior conviction that our art *should* be wholly indigenous and that its virtue increases in proportion to its American-ness. Their definitions are often accompanied by animadversions against European art". John I.H. Baur, *Revolution and Tradition in American Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 148, 150.
[142] However, even Brown's work foregrounded a pro-modernist sentiment and cast the group as central actors in that movement. Milton W. Brown, *American Painting from the Armory Show to the Depression* (1955; reis., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 42.
[143] Unknown source, "Cliffside Loses Celebrated Artist", 1953, Marin Family Papers, Box 5, Folder 2.
[144] Mackinley Helm to John Marin, May 15, 1948, Marin Family Papers, Box 1, Folder 8; Mackinley Helm to John Marin, December 31, 1946, Marin Family Papers, Box 1, Folder 8.

financial success, and above all his loneliness from both the art world and society at large." She quotes McCausland's 1952 biography, which romanticized his late career return to Maine: "He had scorned the lonely, desolate land of his birth. In it at last he found not only peace and human company but the fulfillment of his need to be himself. In the companionship of drowned fishermen, eroded shells, sea birds dead on the beach after the hurricane, he found that sense of persisting and meaningful life he had not found in art coteries and salons."[145]

These monographs were also hardly independent – the artists' cooperation was often necessary, and their opinions often played a significant role in the final product. For example, for Helm's 1948 biography Marin was shown drafts of the manuscript, and insisted that criticisms of Stieglitz be cut out and information on collectors of his work aside from Stieglitz and Phillips be buried in the footnotes. Wrote Helm: "I hasten to write to you to say that I am acceding to all that you ask".[146] In a subsequent letter Marin referred to the publication as "our book".[147] Perhaps more importantly, for most art historians of the 1940s-70s, objectivity was less of a focus than foregrounding an artist's supposed quality. As Sheldon Reich worked on his Marin catalogue raisonné in 1964, he wrote O'Keeffe of his intention "to clearly define… [Marin's] position as one of the most important painters to have appeared in the United States in this century."[148]

At times the nationalist celebration of the Stieglitz artists was filtered through the nationalist veneration of the more famous Abstract Expressionists, who were viewed as their

[145] Mancini, *Pre-Modernism*, 184. McCausland, like Mellquist, had earlier played a role in articulating the narratives that defined the Stieglitz artists' works as they emerged through her work as a critic. Mancini cites McCausland, *Marsden Hartley*, 3.
[146] Mackinley Helm to John Marin, May 15, 1948; Mackinley Helm to John Marin, August 7, 1947, Marin Family Papers, Box 1, Folder 8. See also Marin's edits included in the Farrar, Straus, & Giroux Records, New York Public Library, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Box 148, Mackinley Helm, *John Marin*, Production 1948-1962 Folder.
[147] John Marin to Giorgio Pelligrini and Sheila Cudahy, October 27, 1948, Farrar, Straus, & Giroux Records, New York Public Library, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Box 148, Mackinley Helm General Correspondence, 1948-1953 Folder.
[148] Sheldon Reich to Georgia O'Keeffe, June 1964, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 210, Folder 3683.

successors as pioneers of American modernism.[149] Encouraging the notion that Dove, especially, was a key predecessor of this new generation had been an important component of Halpert's promotion of him, and the idea became commonplace in the 1960s and '70s, when it seemed to offer a promising avenue for creating a more august national art history by deflecting some of the abundant international praise for contemporary U.S. art towards an earlier period.[150] Famed critic Clement Greenberg followed this trend, but (though he at times offered measured praise for Circle artists) he mainly saw the connections between the two groups as evidence of the Circle's shortcomings as would-be articulators of a truly radical and American art.[151]

The liminal position that much of the work of the Stieglitz artists occupied between figuration and abstraction allowed them to appeal to a diverse set of writers, as well as a public that was still warming to modernism. Wrote Milton Brown about O'Keeffe, "The great popularity which she has enjoyed has probably been due to her ability to make certain features of modernism palatable by combining abstraction with reality and presenting them in pretty colors

[149] Platt notes that Norman encouraged such a connection by juxtaposing a Jackson Pollock drawing with one of Stieglitz *Equivalents* in a 1950 book. Platt, *Art and Politics in the 1930s*, 11.
[150] Tepfer, "Edith Gregor Halpert and The Downtown Gallery downtown: 1926-1940; a study in American art patronage", 256. A 1971 *San Francisco Examiner & Chronicle* article called the Circle's artists "the prime movers of the modern direction in this country when it started" and suggested that "Their role in preparing the way for the modernists of the Fifties has been generally ignored." Alfred Frankenstein, "Flowers, Bones and the Blue", *This World*, March 14, 1971, 31. A 1976 *New York Times* article cast Hartley, O'Keeffe, and especially Dove as the key precursors to the Abstract Expressionists, and Irving Sandler, in his landmark book on the movement, identified Marin as one of the earlier abstractionists that postwar abstractionists were inspired by as young artists. John Russell, "Roots of U.S. Abstract Painting", *New York Times*, September 30, 1976. Irving Sandler, *The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism* (1970; repub., New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 15.
[151] Though postwar Americanists tended to highlight the Stieglitz artists' roles in the histories of modernism and nationally characteristic artmaking in the U.S., modernist critics tended to follow in Greenberg's footsteps in celebrating AbEx as the U.S.' first real contributions to modernism that could compare to European inventions, and casting earlier U.S. modernisms as minor and provincial. See Clement Greenberg, "Study in Stieglitz: Review of *The Emergence of An American Art* by Jerome Mellquist", in John O'Brien, ed., *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 1 (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 106-108, previously published in *The New Republic*, June 15, 1942; Clement Greenberg, "Review of an Exhibition of Georgia O'Keeffe", in O'Brien, *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 2, 85-87 previously published in *The Nation*, June 15, 1946; and Clement Greenberg, "Review of an Exhibition of John Marin", in O'Brien, *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 2, 268-70, previously published in *The Nation*, December 25, 1948.

and polished surfaces."[152] In an era of Abstract Expressionism, what might have once been uncomfortably experimental in the Circle artists' works no longer seemed so radical. Pictures that a few decades earlier had been seen as the cutting edge of experimentation had now been normalized, and in the meantime, as the grievances of the Cortissozs and Cravens of the world faded away, the merits of the group's works were no longer seen as something worth arguing against with much fervor – if anything, for some interpreters, championing them became a nationalist imperative.

The resonance of O'Keeffe and her peers' works as nationally representative is also illustrated by their longstanding use as instruments of cultural diplomacy by the U.S. government, who used them to affirm both America's cultural value and its (subtly racialized) understanding of itself on the world stage. Clearly, by the '60s and '70s, if the Circle's brand of avant-gardism was ever seen as culturally subversive, the notion had long since faded. The 1938 "Three Centuries of American Art" exhibition in Paris in which Dove, Marin, and O'Keeffe were featured was a collaboration between the Museum of Modern Art and the Department of State.[153] In 1953 the U.S. International Information Administration helped facilitate O'Keeffe's donation of sets of *Camera Work* to repositories in Japan, France, and Germany.[154] Ten years later, the U.S. Embassy in France, which already owned an O'Keeffe painting, reached out to O'Keeffe in the hopes of mounting an exhibition of the Metropolitan Museum's Stieglitz Collection at the American Cultural Center in Paris, and in 1974 the State Department arranged a luncheon for Spanish cultural journalists at O'Keeffe's home.[155] In 1977 she was awarded the Presidential

[152] Brown, *American Painting from the Armory Show to the Depression*, 128.
[153] For more on this collaboration see Riley, *MoMA Goes to Paris in 1938*.
[154] See O'Keeffe – U.S. International Information Administration correspondence, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 216, Folder 3844.
[155] Charles Bohlen to Georgia O'Keeffe, December 13, 1963, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 216, Folder 3843. Sean M. Holly to Georgia O'Keeffe, May 9, 1974, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 216, Folder 3845.

Medal of Freedom.[156] Clearly, while scholars had found that the Stieglitz artists' works usefully exemplified their articulation of the ways in which art could be experimental and globally relevant while still representative of their understanding of the American character, the U.S. government took things further by putting that interpretation into diplomatic action.

The Same Old Song? Circle Studies in the Later Twentieth Century and Beyond

Mancini suggests when discussing McCausland's 1952 Hartley book that "McCausland provides an image of an artist that would stick for half a century," pointing to literary scholar Townsend Ludington's fawning 1992 biography, which similarly cast Hartley "as an isolated and misunderstood outsider", as an example of its substantial legacy.[157] This was a pattern that repeated itself time and again. For decades after the heyday of the Circle, scholars often seemed content to work to better articulate what the artists themselves or influential and sympathetic early interpreters like McCausland had already said about their work, resulting in scholarship that focused on biography and stylistic theorization but seemed to have a limited interest in social and cultural contextualization.[158] Scholar Barbara Buhler Lynes suggests that O'Keeffe's longstanding close management of her own public image allowed her to similarly promote herself as "a loner and pioneer, whose success as an artist had been dependent on a commitment to hard work and the self-imposed isolation of her life in the Northern New Mexico desert."[159]

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[156] John O. Marsh, Jr., December 30, 1976, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 217, Folder 3852.
[157] Mancini, *Pre-Modernism,* 184.
[158] Mancini helpfully describes how Ludington's interpretation focuses on elements of Hartley's biography not addressed by McCausland four decades earlier, including his homosexuality and his upbringing amidst the "puritanical codes" of late nineteenth-century New England, but ultimately, alongside Barbara Haskell's in her 1980 Whitney Museum catalogue, paints the same romantic picture of Hartley as an "misunderstood outsider" that McCausland had – a characterization that ignores much of his biography and his existence within vast networks of artistic thought and organization. Ibid., Townsend Ludington, *Marsden Hartley: The Biography of an American Artist* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1992).
[159] Lynes also notes that this was a "characterization… [that] differed dramatically from the way Stieglitz had promoted her from the moment he first saw her work in 1916: as a liberated woman whose art was an unconscious manifestation of her sexuality" and that over time O'Keeffe referred less and less to Stieglitz' role in her career.

Still, as time passed and the discipline of Americanist art history matured, writing about the Stieglitz group grew more analytical and historical, while moving away from the open chauvinism that characterized earlier work. While some scholars sought to establish period intellectual contexts for their works or tried to better understand the character of the Circle's modernisms through visual analysis, others persisted in more purely biographical writing.[160] Regardless, most scholars managed to do this work without overturning the myths about the social and political meanings of the group's works that Stieglitz had originally voiced.

Perhaps no book shows the endurance of Stieglitzian rhetoric in scholarship about the Circle's work better than Bram Dijkstra's 1969 *Hieroglyphics of a New Speech: Cubism, Stieglitz, and the Early Poetry of William Carlos Williams*. As he focused on modernist literary contexts for the Circle, Dijkstra admiringly emphasizes the artists' affinity with nature and, via the Cubism, the modern era. Though he suggests that the artists benefitted from the efforts of "evangelists" like Rosenfeld, Dijkstra also quotes liberally from the artists themselves, following in their footsteps in suggesting that "together they emphasized… for the first time in the history of American culture, a truly American way of looking at things."[161] While the book was focused on intellectual contexts for the artists' works far more so than earlier scholarship had been and incorporated greater visual analysis, it nonetheless praised their work and its purported nationally

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Lynes, "O'Keeffe's O'Keeffe's: The Artist's Collection", 49-50.

[160] Corn suggests that the biographical bent of U.S. art scholarship in the mid-to-late twentieth century was propelled by two main factors: a) the discipline's short history, which meant that basic information had to be researched and shared and interpretations outlined in ways that had often already happened in other areas of art history and b) the influential role of museums in propelling American art scholarship led to an emphasis on "cataloging, describing, and venerating the artist and the work". This second explanation makes more sense in the case of the Stieglitz artists, who had been the subjects of substantial discussion by critics since their own heyday, and whose popularity led to interest from many museums. Corn, "Coming of Age: Historical Scholarship in American Art", 193. We might also ascribe this pattern to the veneration of the group's members as independent and creative modernist "geniuses", which may have led to heightened interest in their biographies rather than external factors influencing their works.

[161] In so doing, the book casts the Circle artists' works as the visual corollaries to and key influences on Williams' poems, cubist abstractions that recall ancient hieroglyphics in their emblematic yet somewhat foreign and mysterious character. Dijkstra's title references a description of Stieglitz' photographs by magazine publisher Egmont Arens. Bram Dijkstra, *The Hieroglyphics of a New Speech: Cubism, Stieglitz, and the Early Poetry of William Carlos Williams* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), especially 82-107, 145-60 (quote from 160).

representative characteristics with largely unbridled enthusiasm. O'Keeffe, the only member of the "inner" Circle still alive upon its publication in 1969, openly admired the book, writing Gallup to ask for Dijkstra's address so that she could contact him, calling it "very good indeed" in an ensuing letter, inviting him to visit several times, and recommending it to Stieglitz' niece as she worked on a book on her uncle.[162] Only a few months before her death she asked Dijkstra, in reference to the book: "Young man, how did you know? How were you able to get it right?"[163]

While scholars like Dijkstra focused on explicating the contributions of the Circle in defining modern America and advancing modernist experimentation, others chose to delve into the connection between their work and American "democratic" principles. A notable example of this trend is Edward Abrahams' 1986 book *The Lyrical Left: Randolph Bourne, Alfred Stieglitz, and the Origins of Cultural Radicalism in America* – a project to which O'Keeffe also, unusually, gave her blessing. Abrahams' book highlighted Bourne and Stieglitz as the foremost exponents of a trend of "cultural radicalism" in pre-World War I Manhattan that also included socialist activists like John Reed, Max Eastman, Floyd Dell, and socially conscious writers like Hutchins Hapgood and Eugene O'Neill.[164] According to Abrahams, these radicals "responded to the increased institutional demands for social and economic conformity by proclaiming the inviolable autonomy of the self" – a definition of radicalism that resonates well with Stieglitz'

[162] See the O'Keeffe-Dijkstra correspondence, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 188, Folder 3180; Georgia O'Keeffe to Donald Gallup, September 23, 1974, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 220, Folder 3937; Georgia O'Keeffe to Sue Davidson Lowe, February 8, 1976. See also Lowe, *Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography*, and Bram Dijkstra to Georgia O'Keeffe, December 7, 1974, Abiquiu Bookroom Archives, Georgia O'Keeffe Research Collection, Folder 07:01:26.

[163] Georgia O'Keeffe to Bram Dijkstra, March 21, 1986, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 188, Folder 3180.

[164] All of these figures also had their own complex political beliefs and were the subjects of substantial criticism for their ideologies and praxes. Regarding O'Keeffe's approval of the book, see Glenda S. Galt to Georgia O'Keeffe, October 4, 1984, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 182, Folder 3028. I might speculate that O'Keeffe saw fit to approve of the project because she felt that it would reflect well on Stieglitz and possibly augment his legacy but also because it conformed to a notion of Stieglitz' radicalism/anti-institutionalism that the man himself would have appreciated, and that O'Keeffe herself aspired to as someone who considered herself a committed supporter of the Democratic Party.

veneration of intuitive self-expression.[165] However, while Stieglitz shared a social milieu with these figures, and counted Hapgood as a close friend, he was far from a social activist and never connected his work or that of the artists he promoted to concrete social problems, as some of his other friends at times lamented with great frustration.

By the mid-'30s, connecting Stieglitz to left-wing politics would probably have irked even some of his closest allies. During the Depression Stieglitz grew apart from many of his more socially conscious friends, including Strand, Frank, and McCausland. The latter two took him to task for his lack of support for Communist causes (and, more generally, his lack of interest in supporting the poor), and McCausland was unhappy with his dismissive attitude towards government murals produced by struggling artists.[166]

Such criticisms of Stieglitz' lack of interest in uplifting the poor seem especially resonant given that, despite his longstanding reputation as a radical of some sort or another, he was not at any point an activist for the plight of the underprivileged. However, there is an extent to which the political ground may have shifted under Stieglitz' feet somewhat between the 1910s period Abrahams focuses on and the Depression era. During these years the real-world stakes of class politics came into starker vision amidst the growing popularity of Communism in the U.S. and abroad and the accompanying rise of social realist art that in some viewers' eyes made modernism seem out of touch. Regardless, much was forgiven by Stieglitz' colleagues as he neared death, as his politically minded friends recognized in him an ally despite past

[165] Edward Abrahams, *The Lyrical Left: Randolph Bourne, Alfred Stieglitz, and the Origins of Cultural Radicalism in America* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986), 6.
[166] McCausland found Stieglitz' callousness especially irksome given that he was himself "a man who lived on unearned income" (a comment made presumably in reference to the money he drew to support his gallery from its artists and/or the comfort he had derived from family funds). See Alfred Stieglitz to Waldo Frank, July 6, 1935, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Collection, Box and Folder not identified, and Elizabeth McCausland, note included with her letters to Stieglitz, Elizabeth McCausland Papers, Archives of American Art, both cited by Greenough as part of her description of McCausland's objections: see Greenough, "Alfred Stieglitz, Facilitator, Financier, and Father, Presents Seven Americans", 322-24, 519 n127-29. See also Platt, *Art and Politics in the 1930s,* 68.

shortcomings. Soon after his passing Strand eulogized him in the communist magazine *The New Masses*, praising him by connecting his fights for photography and modernism with class struggle.[167]

O'Keeffe was notably more committed to leftist causes than was her husband and openly supported the Democratic Party. In the 1910s and '20s she subscribed to the revolutionary magazine *The Masses* (whose editors included Eastman and Dell) and bought numerous books recommended within its pages.[168] In 1944 she criticized a museum that was emphasizing its efforts to "democratize" art for the local community, which she found ironic given that, in her experience, museums seemed to be the province of the wealthy.[169] She also participated in a 1930 debate with Communist activist Michael Gold in which she suggested that she "was interested in [fighting against] the oppression of women of all classes."[170] However, despite O'Keeffe's interest in women's issues, it would be misleading to suggest that any of the Stieglitz artists, with the exception of Strand, who gravitated to Communist causes and away from the Circle during the Depression, were committed leftist activists.

Ultimately, Stieglitz' involvement in a movement that defied the pieties of the conservative New York art world and popularized an American strain of modernism, alongside his social ties to an array of more openly politically motivated cultural figures, was enough to encourage the perception that he and his followers were radicals – or at least deeply invested in radically rethinking how the nation might re-embrace the democratic character from which it had strayed (which, to be clear, is quite different from the sort of radicalism espoused by socialist and anarchist activists like Bourne). Indeed, Abrahams' definition of the "lyrical left" seems as

[167] Paul Strand, "Alfred Stieglitz, 1864-1946", *New Masses,* August 6, 1946, 6-7.
[168] Grasso, *Equal Under the Sky*, 57-58.
[169] Georgia O'Keeffe to Charles Nagel, Jr., March 4, 1945, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, Box 212, Folder 3736. Nagel was writing on behalf of the City Art Museum of St. Louis (now the St. Louis Art Museum).
[170] Grasso, *Equal Under the Sky*, 4.

though it would encompass almost any kind of antiestablishment radicalism. This perception likely played a major role in museums and scholars' longstanding avoidance of interpreting the Circle through a socially conscious, critical lens.

Even in the final years of the century, not only were many of the same stories being told about these artists – they were often still being told by the same people. It is telling that Dijkstra wrote an essay called "America and Georgia O'Keeffe" that emphasized her "unmistakably American sensibility" in a 1991 catalogue co-edited by Doris Bry.[171] Celeste Connor's 2001 book *Democratic Visions: Art and Theory of the Stieglitz Circle* not only ascribed to the group a "specifically American aesthetic and social philosophy", but also argued for the "radically democratic" character of their work, in which she perceived a "sensitivity to the varied audience for art in response to the arrival of immigrants" and "values of transnationalism, cultural pluralism, and collaboration".[172] For Connor, this interpretation revealed her commitment to what she called "the mission of spreading the 'gospel of Stieglitz'".[173] Connor's perspective seems to have been informed by a desire to confirm her belief that the artists were "among the significant art makers of Western tradition", and to argue on their behalf against generations of critics and scholars who had ignored or criticized them. By linking the purported democratic and

[171] Notably, Dijkstra cast O'Keeffe's work as nationally representative because of the more significant role women had held in the fine arts in American history than in Europe. Bram Dijkstra, "America and Georgia O'Keeffe", in Doris Bry and Nicholas Callaway, eds., *Georgia O'Keeffe – The New York Years* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 106. A representative example of academic scholarship from this era might be Sherrye Cohn's 1985 book *Arthur Dove: Nature as Symbol*, in which Dove's work was closely analyzed for its symbolic content and connection to an American "Romantic Tradition" and period interests in modernism and spiritualism. Though Cohn's book was less baldly nationalistic than the scholarship of an earlier generation of writers like Mellquist and Baur, it nonetheless perpetuated many of the same lessons about Circle artists and their works. Cohn, *Arthur Dove: Nature as Symbol*.
[172] Celeste Connor, *Democratic Visions*, 1, 3.
[173] Celeste Connor to William Innes Homer, September 16, 1992, Homer Papers, Box 52, Folder 7. Interestingly, when Connor tried to publish an article on her research, the editor of the *Smithsonian Magazine of American Art* felt that, in Connor's words, "the subjects of Stieglitz in the 20s and 30s is just too 'mainstream' to be of interest to current readers. Multiculturalism is what is wanted." When she submitted her article to *Art History* instead, she complained that she "Received a three-page reader's report that criticized it from the most dogmatic Marxist perspective imaginable. I had viewed the artists as creative agents rather than mouthpieces of institutions, etc., etc." Celeste Connor to William Innes Homer, July 24, 1992, Homer Papers, Box 52, Folder 7.

national characteristics of the Circle's output, her book elucidates the rhetorical power of connecting the group to left-wing politics. In the eyes of sympathetic interpreters, these artists were powerful exponents of a uniquely American tradition of equality and openness to all.

The relative exceptionalism of America's democratic ideals (and/or the relevance of that topic to how we understand or evaluate the Circle) has remained a powerful litmus test for interpreters of the group across decades because of the enduring allure of a potential connection between U.S. art and national identity not just in the postwar era, but throughout the entire history of the study of U.S. art, in America or elsewhere. Writes Zurier, "Once an art historical commonplace, the concept [that U.S. art reveals deep meanings about the American national character] has remained most entrenched, influential, and long-lived in the historiography of writings on the art of the United States by both American and non-American scholars."[174]

When it comes to politics, though, it is worth remembering that although the Circle's artists depicted different U.S. regions and even an immigrant-rich Manhattan in their works, those works evinced their highly privileged perspectives on these subjects – hardly an approach that uplifted the voiceless. While Stieglitz seemed to focus less on profits than did other gallerists, his promotional energies were reserved for a select few likeminded elites. Especially given that these artists thrived at a time when art that was much more directly informed by "radical" left-wing politics *was* being made, and arguably was making some sort of difference, it is not clear why Circle artists merited being associated with "radical" or "democratic" ideals.[175]

Platt has argued that this perception was the direct product of intentional manipulation of

[174] Zurier, "Newness, Flatness, and Other Myths: Looking for National Identity in European (and a Few British) Histories of American Art", 19.
[175] See a note on this topic in Chapter One. Perhaps the closest evidence of leftward action by the group is in Dorothy Norman's Circle-centric journal *Twice a Year*, which included sections on "Discrimination in America", "Labor", and "Civil Liberties" in its 1945 and 1946-47 issues, for example (the section on Civil Liberties was a staple of the publication beginning with its initial issue, published in 1938).

Stieglitz' social and political image on the part of some of his closest associates and champions. She writes that, "Norman's selection and contextualizing of Stieglitz's stories [in publications about the artist] can be connected to specific contemporary political concerns. They fabricated their version of his life in order to exert power and influence within an art world that considered Stieglitz anachronistic." McCausland, meanwhile, adopted the vocabulary of Marxism in a 1932 article that called Stieglitz' life "a class war in which the artist is opposed to bourgeois society, a war in which the weapons have been words". Platt also points to other examples in *America and Alfred Stieglitz* and *Twice a Year*, like critic Ralph Flint's linking of Stieglitz to "proletarian" art and Frank's comparison of the photographer to Marx because of his criticisms of capitalism.[176]

In sum, it seems likely that Stieglitz and company's commitment to new forms of culture, their membership within the avant-garde, the opposition that they encountered from figures like Cortissoz and Craven, their unconventional gallery practices, and museums' early lack of interest in collecting their work collectively led scholars like Abrahams and Connor to assume that their aesthetic radicalism also extended into the political realm. However, though these books put politics front and center, more often the notion that the artists were sympathetic to left-wing causes seeped into scholarship in quieter ways, as a sort of barely acknowledged (or entirely unacknowledged) assumption rather than a point of emphasis. The Stieglitz artists were avant-gardists, members of the cultural anti-establishment – *ipso facto* they were political radicals too. Actually, by and large the appraisals of the Stieglitz artists that emerged in the late twentieth century were remarkable above all else for their lack of attention to the group's political views.

This tendency was in part dictated by larger trends within Americanist art historical

[176] Platt, *Art and Politics in the 1930s*, 4-5. Elizabeth McCausland, "Forty-Years' War for Artists Leaves Stieglitz Still Valiant," *SR*, February 28, 1932, also quoted in Platt, *Art and Politics in the 1930s*, 4. Ralph Flint, "Post-Impressionism", in Frank et al., eds., *America and Alfred Stieglitz*, 176. Waldo Frank, "The New World in Stieglitz", in Frank et al., eds., *America and Alfred Stieglitz*, 213.

practice. As Corn describes, the revisionist art historians that emerged in the 1970s "did not so much reject the artists in the existing canon as they added to it" – an effort that not only meant increased attention on minority and women artists, but also others, including "academic artists, untutored artists, regional artists, mural painters, and genre painters".[177] To some art historians, new scholarship on U.S. modernism was part of these efforts to expand the canon, as it for once and for all put paid to the secondary status *within* the Americanist art historian community that interwar modernism had long held relative to other segments of the history of U.S. art – i.e. Abstract Expressionism (since its '50s heyday), or even nineteenth-century landscape painting (since even earlier). Haskell's Whitney Museum catalogues on Dove (1975) and Hartley (1980) offer representative examples of these tendencies – in their focus on the biographies of these artists and close visual analysis of some of their works, these publications contributed and conformed to the broader trends of their moment, when interest in U.S. modernists was peaking both at museums and among emerging scholars and fitting these artists into longer modernist and American art historical lineages was a priority but sociohistorical contextualization was typically not. A foreword to the Hartley catalogue proudly proclaims that "this is the first major exhibition for Hartley", and while it is true that no major New York museum had featured him with such prominence before, as the catalogue's own bibliography and appendix shows, his work had been a topic of interest to critics and historians since soon after he first displayed at Stieglitz' gallery in 1909, and had been regularly displayed in exhibitions at small and mid-sized museums across the country for decades.[178] The extent to which the supposed resurrection of any of the Stieglitz artists in the 1970s and '80s was really expanding the canon of U.S. art was quite questionable.

There are several significant historiographical pressures that have stymied full

[177] Corn, "Coming of Age: Historical Scholarship in American Art", 197.
[178] Ibid., 198; See also pp. 194-211.; Haskell, *Arthur Dove;* A. James Speyer, "Foreword", in Haskell, *Marsden Hartley*, 7.

reconsideration of the Stieglitz group and other canonical American artists even in the new, more socially conscious and self-aware era of Americanist art history that has grown since the '80s.[179] On one hand, the artists' status as canonical, very well-researched figures of the U.S. modernist canon has long rendered them uninteresting to many scholars, even as a high degree of public interest in their work has endured and as museums featured them in one-person shows with declarations of past neglect. This waning of scholarly attention was connected to at least two important shifts in the field. These included the long overdue expansion of the traditional limits of the discipline to include more artists from historically underrepresented backgrounds, an effort that likewise shifted and expanded the focus of the field's thinkers and writers towards historically ignored strains of modernist artmaking in the U.S. Meanwhile, another contributor was a growing interest in Surrealist, Dada, and other explicitly avant-gardist tendencies in the pre-Abstract Expressionist American art world – that is, an expansion and reorientation of what sorts of modernisms from the 1910s-40s scholars, critics, and curators were focusing on, especially from those trained as "modernist" art historians rather than "Americanists". This second change, attributable in part to the influence of the *October* group and their interest in supposedly more politically and aesthetically radical and philosophically complex avant-gardes, echoed the Circle's dismissal by an earlier generation of avant-garde-focused modernist critics like Greenberg.[180]

[179] William Innes Homer's complimentary and rather traditional and biographical books on the Circle (labelled by one reviewer as "stupefying in… [their] banality" and "a blameless sort of exercise in descriptive history"), including *Alfred Stieglitz and the American Avant-Garde* (1977), also had an enduring influence, inspiring scholars including Connor. Karal Ann Marling, "*Alfred Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession*", *Winterthur Portfolio* 19, no. 1 (1984), 98-100; See William Innes Homer, *Alfred Stieglitz and the American Avant-Garde* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1977); and William Innes Homer, *Alfred Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1983).

[180] For a useful comparison of these two disciplinary camps, including the important role of the journal *October*, see Joshua Shannon and Jason Weems, "A Conversation Missed: Toward a Historical Understanding of the Americanist/Modernist Divide", in John Davis, Jennifer A. Greenhill, and Jason D. LaFountain, eds., *A Companion to American Art* (Chichester, UK: Wiley, 2015), 17-33.

The former set of changes coincided with the growth of critical approaches to issues of power, class, and discrimination in the history of U.S. art, what John Davis described as the "general, Marxian commitment to social history, contextual research, and explorations of power and difference" that had, by the turn of the twenty-first century, come to be one of "the dominant modes of current Americanist practice".[181] Inspired by the new "social art history" that offered Marxian analyses of French Impressionism and seemed to offer a new way to conduct art historical research without playing into the elitism that had historically weighed upon the field, Americanists took note and began levying their own criticisms. However, this wave of left-wing scholarship often focused on American artists and artworks that presented racist, imperialist, and misogynistic views in a clear, figurative style, typically by offering stereotypical representations of historically oppressed groups – including, most famously, artists whose works cast white male cowboys as heroes defending against villainous Native aggression.[182] Though scholarship of the type Davis describes became so widespread in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as to become "pervasive, even dominant", most of the practitioners of such work (Davis, writing in 2003, names Alan Wallach, Michele Bogart, Sarah Burns, Wanda Corn, Patricia Hills, Elizabeth Johns, Roger Stein, and Angela Miller as notable proponents) were focused on eighteenth and nineteenth century art rather than modernism, and on class issues more so than race.[183] Those who did focus on modernism (among the group mentioned above, notably Corn and Hills) largely avoided speaking frankly about issues of power and identity relating to white artists for other reasons – in Hills' case, seemingly because of her interest in African-American

[181] John Davis, "The End of the American Century: Current Scholarship on the Art of the United States", *Art Bulletin* 85, no. 3 (2003), 544-80, 555.
[182] This work followed on from research on Regionalists beginning in the 1970s that had similarly focused revisionist energies on the work of ostensibly reactionary artists. See Corn, "Coming of Age: Historical Scholarship in American Art", 199.
[183] Davis, "The End of the American Century: Current Scholarship on the Art of the United States", 556.

art. Corn's case deserves greater thought.

For many it seemed as though Corn's esteemed 1999 book *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935* signaled something of an end for Stieglitz Circle studies. At the time, it seemed like a defining statement on the Circle artists and their works, receiving the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Eldredge Prize for outstanding scholarship in the field of American Art and garnering praise from scholars for its questioning of the nationalistic character of the rhetoric that the artists spun around their work.[184] Corn did more to question the Circle's nationalism than previous generations of scholars and critics had, and at times touched upon some of the artists' interests in non-white communities and cultures (like O'Keeffe's interest in Southwestern Native peoples). The book asserts that the artists were part of a larger trend whereby interwar U.S. modernists differentiated themselves from their European counterparts and one another through their divergent interpretations of what it meant to be American, thereby applying a useful critical lens to the artists' claims of the exceptional "Americanness" of their work.[185] However, Angela Miller offers a relevant criticism in her review of the book: "*The Great American Thing* reveals a common ground with its subject: the search for a narrative of reconciliation between America and Europe, the polarity that has for so long been central to our cultural history. Her book itself is a tribute to the tradition of *Americanisme* that is its subject."[186] In reiterating nationalism as the principal focus of

[184] See Francis Frascina, "*The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915–1935*", *Archives of American Art Journal* 39, no. 3/4 (1999): 32–41; and Angela Miller, "*The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915–1935*", caareviews.org, published July 14, 2000, http://www.caareviews.org/reviews/137#.Yv2wUXbMLrc. "Eldredge Prize Recipients", Smithsonian American Art Museum, accessed April 15, 2022, https://americanart.si.edu/research/awards/eldredge/recipients.

[185] Corn, *Great American Thing*, xxii-xxiii. I should also highlight a similar publication that incorporates the Stieglitz artists but also has a larger focus: Matthew Baigell, "American Art and National Identity: The 1920s," *Arts* 61 (1987), 48-55.

[186] Angela Miller, "*The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915–1935*". This was a focus, perhaps, born of the scholarly atmosphere that influenced Corn when she was a graduate student in the '60s, a factor that she cites as significant early on in the book and that was fixated upon by some reviewers. Not only was this a

Stieglitz Circle studies, it likely discouraged other scholars from moving beyond that topic in ways that were more than footnotes in investigations of some other aspect of these artists' collective project, including potential consideration of topics like race, let alone the unspoken centrality of whiteness to the perceived "national" character of the artists' works.[187] Though studies of these artists have continued to emerge in the years since its publication, the immense success of *The Great American Thing* seems as though it may have precipitated a slowing of interest in the Circle among many critically minded academics. I suspect that many feel that Corn came close to solving the central problem of Stieglitz Circle studies, the thorny question of the relation of the group and their works to exceptionalistic and nationalistic thinking within U.S. modernism, and that the topic now held less interest than it once had or than the work of other, less-studied artists now did. That Corn implies that she has not substantially addressed issues of race in her narrative because more scholarship on black artists of the 1920s was only then emerging says a great deal about what most scholars thought that studying race in art history meant in 1999, and for the most part before and since – that is, studying non-white artists.[188]

Studies of the Circle did not stop entirely upon the publication of Corn's book. While some in the academy focused on issues of gender, exhibition catalogues produced by national and regional museums at times offered valuable new research on aspects of the artists' careers

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formalism-focused, pre-"social art history" era in the history of art history, it was also a period when the Cold War atmosphere encouraged reiteration of the discipline's traditional interpretational focus on national identity.

[187] The book is organized around two categories of artists – "the transatlantics", who looked abroad for inspiration and further understanding of what "Americanness" meant, and "the rooted" (a rubric that she suggests should include most of the Stieglitz Circle artists' work, and under which she examines O'Keeffe's early New Mexican work), who relied upon domestic sources of inspiration. The book did push forward on connecting certain artists to racialized contexts – for example, by writing quite thoughtfully about O'Keeffe's interest in Indigenous cultures in her early visits to New Mexico in 1929-31. However, this approach not only, in O'Keeffe's case, as I argued in an earlier chapter, somewhat ignored the impact of racial tourism on her work in the decades following her first visits to New Mexico, but also used O'Keeffe's interest in Native cultures as another way of demonstrating her "rootedness" and her principal interest in defining a "sense of place" in her Southwestern work – as another way of understanding the role of national (and by extension, regional) thinking in her work, and the work of the Circle more broadly. Corn, *The Great American Thing*, 244-91.

[188] Corn, *The Great American Thing*, xx-xxi.

but, in Davis' words about the National Gallery's 2000 *Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries* show, typically did so "without turning over the soil of the Stieglitz myth".[189] These exhibitions represent a complacent vein of public scholarship that continues to play a powerful role in the middle-class understandings of these artists, one that accedes to the public interest in their art, often avoids outright praise of that work, and yet tends to dodge (or be entirely ignorant of) social and political criticism of them and the content of their works.

This pattern has endured even during an era in the history of the history of U.S. art (as well as other forms of American studies) that has turned more and more towards the study of racism as the nation's central historical trauma.[190] Many scholars were focusing on connections between nineteenth-century artworks and various forms of racial discrimination, but the (often visually and philosophically complex and less clearly explicable) modernist artworks of the early twentieth century mostly avoided such reconsideration. One explanation may be that the methods for understanding the connections between modern art and racism that were being developed in the '70s, '80s, and '90s focused more on a) European artworks and racial relationships and b) works in which racist thinking entered above all else on a formal level – through "classic"

[189] Marcia Brennan's 2001 book *Painting Gender, Constructing Theory* took a more sustained look at the impact of issues of gender on perceptions of the work of all the members of the group, and especially the history of gendered interpretations of formal elements (like line, color, and composition) within their works. Marcia Brennan, *Painting Gender, Constructing Theory: The Alfred Stieglitz Circle and American Formalist Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001). See also discussion of O'Keeffe and issues of gender later in this chapter. Davis, "The End of the American Century: Current Scholarship on the Art of the United States", 569. See, as examples, Greenough, et al., *Modern Art and America*; Debra Bricker Balken, *Dove/O'Keeffe: Circles of Influence* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009); Haskell, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Abstraction*, Debra Bricker Balken, *John Marin: Modernism at Midcentury* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011). In general, this gender-focused scholarship offered more nuanced portraits of these artists than most that had been written before, albeit with a limited focus. One other exhibition that offered a more critical view of a Circle artist is the Wadsworth Atheneum's 2003 exhibition on Hartley, whose catalogue included essays on his interests in Native America (written by Corn), New England Regionalism (written by Cassidy), and "primitive" Americans. Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser, ed., *Marsden Hartley* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

[190] While focusing on class may make sense for European art historians, in the U.S. better understanding racial distinction is more relevant, at least relatively.

primitivism that appropriated the aesthetics of non-Western cultures.[191] Because American artworks often racialized ostensibly exotic groups in more varied ways, the growing awareness of and methodological toolkit for exploring and explaining classic primitivism had less impact on the study of U.S. modernism.

We might well wonder whether there is not, to varying degrees, a sense of nostalgia that undergirds the projects that lift up Stieglitzian mythology that still dot museums today that is rooted in longing for a previous period in American life, a time when (supposedly) a sense of gentility reigned and the limited worldviews of white people could be celebrated without complication from an America that, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, was with time growing more and more racially self-conscious and less and less interested in propriety. Certainly, this seems to be a major part of the appeal for a segment of the audiences for such shows, but it may also have befallen Americanists in particular given the field's tradition of relative political and methodological conservatism.

"*Great American* Artists": Stieglitz Circle Studies in the Twenty-First Century

It seems implicit in much of the scholarship produced by historians of U.S. art in recent years that the somewhat shameful nationalist history within the field (and more broadly within American history studies) is something of little relevance to current art historical work, the discipline having moved past it. However, it is precisely the contention of this chapter that that is

[191] See, for example, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Going Native: Paul Gauguin and the Invention of Primitivist Modernist," in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, eds., *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History* (Boulder, CO: WestView, 1992), 313–329; or Patricia Leighten, "The White Peril and *L'Art negre*: Picasso, Primitivism, and Anticolonialism", *Art Bulletin* 72 (1990), 609-30, among many other analyses. These developments took place even as some institutions gave prominent platforms to less critically minded perspectives on "primitivism" – see Thomas McEvilley's famous takedown of the Museum of Modern Art's major 1985 Primitivism exhibition, "Doctor Lawyer Indian Chief", *Artforum*, November 1984, 54-61. Gail Levin's essay on American art in the show's catalogue employs a classic, limited view of primitivism by focusing on white artists' engagement with "tribal arts". Gail Levin, "American Art", in William Rubin, ed., *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 453-69.

not so. Rather, in part because work to deconstruct the canon, especially in terms of its frequent engagement with racialized nationalism, has often been neglected, the legacy of that history continues to affect how practitioners within the field treat many artists and how the public sees American art and culture more broadly. To return to an idea offered earlier in this chapter, U.S. art is a palimpsest, and the nationalist layers are still shining through, shaping the current picture. For some segments of the public, it remains the top layer.

On the other hand, at this moment, a few years on from the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, an increasing number of scholars are speaking truth to power about the connections between racism, art, art history, and museums. Kelli Morgan's work through the Darkwater Project and independent scholarship is calling attention to museums' ongoing Eurocentrism and lazy approaches to diversity and equity.[192] Kirsten Pai Buick has recently organized a roundtable in *American Art*, "Seeing the Survey Anew" that focuses attention on the relevance of issues of whiteness to the canon of U.S. art and the introductory courses on the topic in which it is often reiterated.[193] Other scholars like Tanya Sheehan, Camara Holloway, Jacqueline Francis, and Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw also continue to offer trenchant critiques of the racial blind spots in art history today. However, rethinking of the canonical narratives of particular figures like the Stieglitz artists has yet to occur on a large scale, likely because a lot of the critical race work among historians of U.S. art is new, theoretical, and/or focused on holistic problems, and many art world forces and figures continue to resist critical revisionism.

Perhaps in reaction to the complacency of traditional interpretations of the Circle, since the 1990s a segment of the scholarship on the group has begun to focus on how their works

[192] See Kelli Morgan, "To Bear Witness: Real Talk about White Supremacy in Art Museums Today", *Burnaway*, June 24, 2020, https://burnaway.org/magazine/to-bear-witness/. Kelli Morgan, "It's time for museums to take critical race theory seriously", *The Art Newspaper*, January 10, 2022, https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2022/01/10/comment-or-its-time-for-museums-to-take-critical-race-theory-seriously.
[193] See Kirsten Pai Buick, ed., "Seeing the Survey Anew", *American Art* 36, no. 3 (2022), 2-37.

connect to issues of social concern, including race, gender, and the environment, though these efforts have been piecemeal.[194] Notably, as referenced earlier, Susan Noyes Platt's research, including her 1999 book *Art and Politics in the 1930s*, has usefully deconstructed some of the mythology surrounding Stieglitz.[195] Most of the attention to race has been focused on Hartley, the artist affiliated with the group whose interest in white supremacism was by far the clearest. Beginning in the mid-'90s, and culminating in a 2005 book, art historian Donna Cassidy explicated the links between Hartley's late-career work in Maine and white supremacism, and Randall Griffey's work on Hartley and eugenic thought added to the conversation.[196]

While a few U.S. institutions have mounted art exhibitions focused on issues of whiteness, such efforts have principally revolved around contemporary works that address racial issues directly rather than tackling the rather thornier challenge of reinterpreting historical works, and have typically been hosted in small or temporary museums and galleries rather than at major institutions, where the pressures discouraging such reevaluation tend to be greater.[197] Still, some art historians have done work that could point toward a broader view of the role of issues of race in the study of the Stieglitz artists, and in the study of U.S. modernism more generally, though that may not have been the intention of their authors. This scholarship includes pieces mentioned earlier like Nancy Scott's essay on Dove's *Goin' Fishin'*, Lauren Kroiz' book *Creative Composites*, Camara Holloway's essay on Stieglitz' photographs of O'Keeffe posing with

[194] Interesting scholarship connecting the Circle artists to ecological issues includes Sascha Scott, "Georgia O'Keeffe's 'Black Place'"; and DeLue, *Arthur Dove: Always Connect*, especially 83-146.
[195] Platt, *Art and Politics in the 1930s*, 3-11.
[196] See Cassidy, "'On the Subject of Nativeness': Marsden Hartley and New England Regionalism"; Cassidy, "Marsden Hartley's North Atlantic Folk: Constructing the Northern Race and the New America"; Cassidy, *Marsden Hartley: Race, Region, and Nation*; Cassidy, "The Invisibility of Race in Modernist Representation: Marsden Hartley's North Atlantic Folk"; and Griffey, "Marsden Hartley's Aryanism: Eugenics in a Finnish-Yankee Sauna".
[197] Examples could include a 2003 exhibition at the Laguna Art Museum which focused on how contemporary artists had approached the topic, or the Hegemonic Museum and Subaltern Portrait Gallery which were featured in the 2019 Venice Biennale, or the 2018 exhibition "On Whiteness" at The Kitchen in New York City.

African objects, and Tara Kohn's article on Hodge Kirnon.[198] While a couple have tackled whiteness, these publications often suggest a scattershot approach towards thinking about race and art history, in which particular objects, often artworks that directly picture people of color or highly racialized objects, are analyzed for how they reveal individual or societal biases.[199] Of course, these publications are themselves just a subset of the scholarly writing about these artists. While excitement about writing on the Circle may have waned slightly in the twenty-first century, new scholarship continues to emerge that focuses more on visual, psychological, or art historical explanations of these artists' works than socio-political contextualizations, suggesting that interest in these artists continues to unfurl in directions that often include interpretations that still conform or connect to what the artists and sympathetic critics had to say about them nearly a century ago.[200] In glimpsing these limitations it is difficult not to see a field that is not only still in an ongoing state of methodological growth and development, but also plagued by pressures that have limited its horizons of possibility in the past and present. What will it take to think bigger about issues like modernism and whiteness, and to peer towards the issues of social stratification that are fundamental to the modern art world in which the Stieglitz artists and countless others worked, and to which they endeavored to speak?[201] Ultimately, this sort of

[198] Scott, "Submerged: Arthur Dove's *Goin' Fishin'* and its Hidden History"; Kroiz, *Creative Composites*; Holloway, "Lovechild: Stieglitz, O'Keeffe, and the Birth of American Modernism"; Kohn, "Elevated: Along the Fringes of 291 Fifth Avenue".

[199] Kohn and Holloway notably address whiteness in their essays. In *Creative Composites*' case, the focus is less on bias than multiculturalism and shifting definitions of nationhood.

[200] I am thinking here of works like Rachael DeLue's *Arthur Dove: Always Connect*, Alan Pensler's *Arthur Dove: A Reassessment*, and post-*Great American Thing* exhibition catalogues like those mentioned earlier.

[201] There is, too, the concern that critical scholarship is, in some sense, inherently unhelpful to or unhealthy for the artworld because it undermines public interest and support. Wrote Mancini in 2005, "Given the fragile future of public art institutions of any sort, it does not seem to be a good strategy for historians of culture to continue to expend so much effort on the project of unmasking them and deriding their potential supporters." Is attempting to publicly criticize canonical, even beloved artists like O'Keeffe a worthwhile project or is it more likely to shame those who enjoy their work? Is deriding museums' ongoing uncomplicated celebration of these artists merely a recipe for eroding trust and interest in and support for museums and art history as a scholarly discipline? I might ask in riposte: if these institutions are incapable of surviving speaking truth to power, are they so worth preserving? See Mancini, *Pre-Modernism*, 221.

change cannot be achieved just through an innovative new book or article – rather, it demands systemic change in what we think art history is or can or should be, not just in classrooms or museum offices or the pages of influential journals, but in U.S. society. It requires art historians and other sympathetic stakeholders to look towards effecting generational change.

There is an extent to which the case of the Stieglitz artists also reveals the importance of momentum and complacency within art historiography. Canonical artists like these had their status perpetuated by not just friendly actors, but also neutral ones. For example, as a pathbreaking photographer with his own creative agency and output, Stieglitz' promotional habits have, at times, been dismissed as the eccentricities of an artist. Meanwhile, because of the success of his and countless others' efforts to promote photography as a legitimate art form and the virtually universal incorporation of pictures like *The Steerage* into the canon of photographic history, the space Stieglitz occupies within the minds of many producers and consumers of art historical narratives today is primarily that of photographic pioneer – a realm in which his legacy is, if imperfect, nonetheless likely less complicated than his activities as the Circle's chief organizer and philosopher.[202] His reputation therefore also benefits from the ongoing efforts of advocates for photography as an art form. In the '70s and '80s, in particular, his photography was the subject of a surge of scholarly attention, often with the seeming intention of explicating what it had to say and how it connected to the work of other photographers or writers, and at times accompanied by explanations that justified themselves by insisting that Stieglitz' own artistic output had been significantly underexamined in comparison to his work for others or for

[202] Despite whatever problematic limitations we might perceive in the rhetoric Stieglitz wove around the cadre of artists he promoted, his practices as a gallerist, or even his own photographs, I do not mean to imply that such interpretations should obscure or supersede his contributions to photographic and modernist causes. Analyzing the Stieglitz artists' implication in systems of racial formation or other forms of social stratification need not be the end all, be all of studies of their work.

the causes of modernism and photography.[203]

Perceptions of O'Keeffe have similarly been substantially affected by historical circumstance. O'Keeffe grew to be so famous and so beloved (and her work and persona so widely commercialized) that critiquing and/or historicizing her came to involve overcoming a series of significant impediments.[204] Perhaps most famously, having been referred to in the press as a "feminist since at least the late 1920s, she became, beginning in the 1970s, an unmitigated feminist icon, despite the fact that she refused to be associated with the movement." In the latter decade, new museum exhibitions, including and especially Lloyd Goodrich's 1970 Whitney Museum retrospective, as well as O'Keeffe's bestselling 1976 memoir, led to a resurgence of interest in her work that manifested itself in newfound interest from feminist scholars and artists and burgeoning popularity among a growing feminist popular audience.[205] Though she rejected the label, the attempted embrace of O'Keeffe as feminist icon in the '70s is reflective of the broader and longer-standing celebration of her as a confident and independent woman, which has made her an inspiration to women for a century.[206] This reputation not only shaped public

[203] See, for example, Robert E. Haines, "Alfred Stieglitz and the New Order of Consciousness in American Literature", *Pacific Coast Philology* 6 (1971), 26–34; F. Richard Thomas, "Hart Crane, Alfred Stieglitz, and Camera Photography", *The Centennial Review* 21, no. 3 (1977), 294–310; Estelle Jussim, "Icons or Ideology: Stieglitz and Hine", *The Massachusetts Review* 19, no. 4 (1978), 680–92. Dijkstra's *Hieroglyphics of a New Speech* is another example of this trend. Wrote Greenough in the 1999 reprinting of the 1983 catalogue she co-wrote with Hamilton, many of the publications on Stieglitz had "concentrated either on his role in the introduction of modern European art to American and his support of American artists, or his promotion of the art of photography through the work of the Photo-Secession. In the midst of this often adulatory praise, his own photographs were frequently overlooked." Sarah Greenough, "Acknowledgements", in Greenough and Hamilton, *Alfred Stieglitz, Photographs & Writings*, 9. Greenough made a similar claim before the publication of the original catalogue, in "From the American Earth: Alfred Stieglitz's Photographs of Apples", *Art Journal* 41, no. 1 (1981), 46.

[204] This is a problem that writer Melissa Pritchard has described as a "hagiographic mist" enveloping the artist and blurring her in interpreters' eyes. Melissa Pritchard, "A Graven Space", in Merrill and Bradbury, eds., *From the Faraway Nearby: Georgia O'Keeffe as Icon*, 137. An interesting appraisal of the "O'Keeffe industry" in the years after her death can be found in Grace Glueck, "O'Keeffe, Once An Icon, Is Now an Industry", *New York Times*, November 14, 1989.

[205] Grasso, *Equal Under the Sky*, 1, 165-68.

[206] Writes historian Linda Grasso, "is the feminist Georgia O'Keeffe the same artist who allegedly slammed the door in Gloria Steinem's face, made disparaging remarks about women who identified as women artists, and refused to cooperate with feminist artists, critics, and scholars who were creating female-centered artistic theories, practices, and histories in the 1970s?" Scholars have hypothesized that O'Keeffe was uninterested in being associated with

perception of who O'Keeffe was (to many, she remains the "flowers that look like vaginas" artist) but also inspired scholars of her work, which has, since the emergence of feminist art history in the '70s at least, attracted many woman scholars.[207] Especially in the era before mainstream feminism incorporated intersectional thinking beginning in the '90s, we can wonder how many scholars who were aware of the professional trials O'Keeffe endured because of her gender would have even considered that she might have perpetuated other types of bias.

Regardless, it has certainly inspired some scholars to link her work to broader trends among woman artists and feminine modernist creativity - for example, Sharyn Udall's 2000 book *Carr, O'Keeffe, Kahlo: Places of Their Own* casts the three artists as kindred spirits and "cultural heroes", and Anne Middleton Wagner's book *Three Artists, Three Women* likewise encourages readers to focus on O'Keeffe's womanhood and connects her to female peers.[208] Kathleen Pyne's 2007 catalogue for an exhibition co-organized by the O'Keeffe Museum *Modernism and the Feminine Voice: O'Keeffe and the Women of the Stieglitz Circle*, usefully worked in a subtler direction, correcting the androcentrism of most studies of the Circle, and addressing the differing opportunities and reception that O'Keeffe received in comparison to other female Circle affiliates and the archaic, highly gendered rhetoric that Stieglitz and others used to interpret

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feminism because early analyses of her work focused so heavily on the degree to which it was representative of her female identity, leading her to focus on establishing a reputation as an artist whose contributions had little to do with her gender. Ibid., 1. This topic is also well covered by Barbara Buhler Lynes in "Georgia O'Keeffe and Feminism: A Problem of Position", in Broude and Garrard, eds., *The Expanding Discourse*, 436-449. See also Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz, and the Critics*.

[207] O'Keeffe's status as the "vagina flowers" artist is crystallized in the feminist artist Judy Chicago's 1974-79 installation *The Dinner Party*, where O'Keeffe is represented as one of history's great women through a vaginal form.

[208] Udall's book begins: "In an era short on cultural heroes, Emily Carr, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Frida Kahlo testify to the fading belief that painters can convey social and mythic meaning while creating widely memorable images." The book's title not only associates O'Keeffe with two other canonical woman modernist artists but also, in its titular allusion to Virginia Woolf's classic feminist 1929 essay "A Room of One's Own", implies a certain kinship with a longer and broader history of female creativity and fierce social and intellectual independence. Udall, *Carr, O'Keeffe, Kahlo*, 1. As covered in an earlier chapter, Carr has been the subject of far more scrutiny for the connections between her work and regimes of colonialism and anti-Native racism than O'Keeffe has. Anne Middleton Wagner, *Three Artists, Three Women: Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1996), 29-103.

female artists' works.[209]

Equally significant (and equally unique from her peers) was O'Keeffe's role as a state and regional icon for New Mexico and the Southwest more broadly, especially to those outside of the region.[210] The tourism industry that had lured O'Keeffe and so many others there a century ago has now absorbed her work and image and reiterates an uncomplicated form of them as part of an updated version of the romantic mystique upon which it has always thrived. Writes Lynes, "The sobriquet 'O'Keeffe country' is often used to describe the large section of northwestern New Mexico from which the artist drew inspiration… The term implies how thoroughly O'Keeffe's exploration of this landscape made it her own."[211] Since its 1997 opening the O'Keeffe Museum has remained one of Santa Fe's top tourist sites, while the O'Keeffe Home and Studio in Abiquiu continues to drive significant tourist traffic to the small town (often to the annoyance of residents), and other museums across the state also draw in visitors using her work.

A 2021 state tourism campaign incited opposition from Native groups and the O'Keeffe Museum by featuring a woman on horseback exploring the country while wearing clothes (including a broad-brimmed black hat and a denim dress) that are redolent of some of O'Keeffe's signature outfits, with a voiceover of O'Keeffe quotes including "When I got to New Mexico, that was mine" and "As soon as I saw it, that was my country" that slowly merge with a video of O'Keeffe herself saying the words.[212] Clearly, selling O'Keeffe (and her at-times-neocolonial

[209] Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*.
[210] Hartley and Marin have arguably also become regional symbols in New England/Maine, though certainly to a lesser extent. Meanwhile, O'Keeffe's status as a feminist icon has also propelled her reputation as a nationally representative artist. Writes Grasso, "A critical component of O'Keeffe's mass appeal is the way her personal mythologies map into national US mythologies about democracy and freedom," in which she is cast as a symbol of American historical creativity and diversity. O'Keeffe "represents a protean fantasy of women's power that accords with US mythologies of transformation, success, and celebrity. In a society that valorizes youthful female beauty, O'Keeffe is sexually alluring at the same time that she offers a new model of female aging." Grasso, *Equal Under the Sky*, 6-8.
[211] Lynes, "Georgia O'Keeffe and New Mexico: A Sense of Place," 12.
[212] Rachel Knapp, "O'Keeffe Museum, Pueblo Indigenous Groups oppose NM Tourism Dept. video", KRQE News,

approach to the region) to would-be visitors remains big business. Part of what draws people to New Mexico each year is the idea of discovering for and within themselves the sort of creativity, spirituality, and self-actualization and independence in the "Land of Enchantment" that they feel O'Keeffe pioneered there. Might New Mexico become "their country", too?

Though substantial portions of the public may be bemused by O'Keeffe's sheer renown, and though there may be some resentment of that incredible fame and its fallout in some quarters (including among native Santa Feans and Abiqueños), most Americans, including the historically predominantly white Americanist art history community, have demonstrated a very positive view toward O'Keeffe and her work over the last century. Her works today not only garner remarkable auction prices and hold places of prominence in many of the world's most esteemed museums, but also inspire interest that spills into the U.S. cultural mainstream via reproductions, popular biographies, children's books, cookbooks, novels, films and documentaries, magnets, apparel, and more. She was a model of female independence, but sidestepped potential scorn from anti-feminists by avoiding public advocacy. She was a symbol of a beloved and distinctively American region, a paragon of American creativity and soulfulness. What was not to admire?

Perhaps even more so than O'Keeffe's policing of use of her works and letters, a major issue preventing the reinterpretation of her work came to be how much various segments of the art world came to invest in the whole array of Stieglitz Circle artists, both individually and collectively.[213] Each of them has long been celebrated for their individual artistic sensibility, an

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published April 20, 2021, https://www.krqe.com/news/new-mexico/okeeffe-museum-pueblo-indigenous-groups-oppose-nm-tourism-dept-video/. At the time of writing a copy of the video can still be found at: "'New Mexico True' campaign features Georgia O'Keeffe", Las Cruces Sun News, published April 14, 2021, https://www.lcsun-news.com/videos/life/2021/04/14/heres-how-other-states-view-new-mexico-true-campaign/7214234002/. There remains today an O'Keeffe-centric tourism company, O'Keeffe Country Media, that operates okeeffecountry.com (which claims to attract about 40,000 unique visitors per month) and produces an accompanying magazine and social media content. See "O'Keeffe Country", O'Keeffe Country, accessed April 4, 2022, okeeffecountry.com.

[213] It is unrealistic to expect that art historians (let alone the public at large) of previous generations would

approach that strips their works of social and cultural contexts and makes them ripe for uncomplicated celebration as artistic "geniuses". Not only are canonical art historical narratives powerful and difficult to undermine, but for many scholars, the reputations of the artists on whom they are working or have worked in the past are important to their professional reputations and even identities, and examining canonical figures and their works for racial bias can therefore be unpalatable. By contrast, expanding the canon to include more artists from traditionally underrepresented groups or, even, critiquing the historical conditions that led to their exclusion, though promising in other respects, largely avoids confronting the connections between canonical histories of art and cultural hegemony. In short, in part because of problems within the academy and in part because of a disconnect between scholarly and popular understandings of artists and art history, altering canonical narratives and the longstanding inequalities, racial and otherwise, that undergird them remains quite difficult. Part of the problem can be attributed to the particular pressures that affect the narratives presented by art museums, which remain the principal venue for educating the public about art history. Museums have not only played an important role in influencing the Stieglitz artists' reputations since their own heyday, but have also taken on an outsized role in the study of the group as academic interest in them has waned in the twenty-first century.

Museums, Whiteness, and the Canon Today

Hartley's legacy provides an example of the pressures that affect art historical writing on these artists today. Along with another curator, in 2017 Cassidy and Griffey teamed together on

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reexamine O'Keeffe's or any other artist's work through the lens of theories or methodologies that had not yet been pioneered or popularized within art history. However, I would argue that one need not be exposed to major texts from whiteness studies or critical race art history to question or be unnerved by the many allusions to Indigenous and Hispanic cultures in O'Keeffe's paintings, or the content and character of Dove's or Marin's or Hartley's own racially inflected works (though living in an increasingly socially and politically conscious society certain helps).

an exhibition, *Marsden Hartley's Maine*, that was shown at the Met Breuer and the Colby College Museum of Art. However, this exhibition and the resultant catalogue made very little reference to these scholars' previous writings on race in Hartley's work. Awareness of the omission and its significance, as well as the disconnects between the different audiences for U.S. modernism, are illustrated in reviews of the show – whereas an assessment by historian of U.S. art Margarita Karasoulas in the scholarly journal *Panorama* seemed surprised and confused as to why the show only briefly alluded to racial issues, the many reviews written by journalists without specialist training in the history of modern American art failed to mention race at all.[214]

It is possible that the reasons for omitting the curators' earlier interpretations of the racial aspects of Hartley's work included a desire to highlight new research and/or a concern that the topic of Hartley's interest in white supremacism would be unappealing to the two museums' principal audiences.[215] However, this omission not only represents a missed opportunity to use the museums' platforms to convey the racial elements of Hartley's Maine work to popular audiences, but also contradicts the important earlier scholarship in which the curators themselves had persuasively argued that whiteness and white supremacism were contexts that are

[214] See Margarita Karasoulas, "Marsden Hartley's Maine", *Panorama* 3, no. 2 (2017), https://editions.lib.umn.edu/panorama/article/marsden-hartleys-maine/. Jessica Skwire Routhier, also a trained art historian, also comments on race in her review. See "Marsden Hartley's Maine", *Antiques and the Arts*, published April 25, 2017, https://www.antiquesandthearts.com/marsden-hartleys-maine/. Examples of reviews which make no mention of include those published in the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Brooklyn Rail, and Portland Press Herald.

[215] The Metropolitan Museum's audience is a diverse mix of a) locals hoping for an afternoon diversion in the form of the work of an iconic modernist and gay artist and b) global tourists wishing to see the greatness on hand at America's most esteemed museum, while the Colby's summer audience is largely a older, wealthy, and culturally conservative "Vacationland" tourist audience – not only because of a desire among many to view culture and politics as separate spheres or because of distaste for the supposed leftist slant of critical race studies, but also because of eagerness among these audiences (and many others) to see works already stamped with the imprimatur of canonicity and to have that supposed greatness reiterated for them as an experience and marker of their own distinguished taste as visitors. On this topic a useful theoretical text is the classic: Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1979; repub., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987). It is worth noting that part of the resurgent interest in Hartley's work in the 1980s and '90s may have been a growing interest in homosexuality within U.S. art studies, as well as a growing interest in figurative and expressionist modernism (rather than abstraction and formal experimentation).

fundamental to understanding the professed topic of their exhibition.

As sources of art historical knowledge production, museums offer both opportunities and limitations. On one hand, museum exhibitions can allow art historical narratives to reach a mass audience, and therefore offer the possibility of ever-so-slightly shifting the public's expectations for what is worth learning about art and artists. However, the present state of public expectations for art exhibitions presents some serious issues. Most relevantly, audiences generally expect art museums to present laudatory rather than critical narratives (that is, narratives that reinforce their privileged and complacent worldviews), and have often met efforts to "criticize and deheroize the artist" with anger.[216] Part of the museum-going experience remains paying homage to the ostensible greatness of the objects on display, whose worthiness of attention, praise, and study is rarely questioned. As art historian Alan Wallach points out, "From the beginning the sacralization of art was the art museum's chief function. Demystification requires the thoroughgoing critique of its transcendental status, of the idea that art is somehow exempt from the mundane realities of history and contemporary life."[217] Suffice it to say that deconstruction of the mystical aura surrounding museums, and indeed of Stieglitz and his followers, seems far off.

Furthermore, the reality that art museum audiences are often more interested in learning and entertainment in a relaxing atmosphere than being challenged with difficult ideas makes the notion of broaching critical race theory or similar frameworks somewhat unattractive to curators.[218] Though some other institutions, including museums featuring histories of

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[216] Davis, "The End of the American Century: Current Scholarship on the Art of the United States," 551.
[217] Alan Wallach, *Exhibiting Contradiction : Essays on the Art Museum in the United States* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 6. Wallach is drawing on Lawrence W. Levine's work, which describes "sacralization" of art and other forms of high culture beginning in the Gilded Age – see *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (1990; reis., Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002).
[218] Certainly, the literature on this topic supports a conclusion that museums, including art museums, attract visitors with a variety of motivations. However, studies have shown that entertainment, relaxation, and low-pressure learning opportunities are more popular among audiences than more challenging learning opportunities. See, for

marginalized groups, genocides, or other widely recognized historical injustices, have managed to reorient audience expectations towards more somber and reflective modes, the diversity of the narratives that art museums might want to present may stymie such rebranding.

Many museum professionals and other stakeholders share this preference for acclamatory narratives, including curators, educators, administrators, board members, donors, and artists. Museums are deeply, resiliently conservative institutions with cultures that are often oriented towards finances rather than scholarly principle.[219] Years into the Black Lives Matter era, new, often isolated exhibitions that take aim at regimes of oppression and bias are emerging in surprisingly decorous places, such as the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Metropolitan Museum.[220] Still, diversity and equity initiatives, whether trained upon museum's staffs, cultures, or walls, remain often just another calculated tactic cynically and/or lazily employed to resist institutional change or avoid professional inconvenience. To reinterpret a canonical artist's work through the lens of whiteness or, worse still, white supremacism can constitute a significant professional risk for a curator or educator. For a major museum to criticize the politics of an artist like O'Keeffe might be to risk millions of dollars of investment by causing a downturn in that artist's reputation, as well as to endanger future gifts of funds or artworks not just from the donors of the objects that are being reinterpreted but also from others who might be fearful of their gifts suffering the same fate or who simply disagree with the interpretation. Museums that

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example, Clare Murray, "Functions of art museums: what visitors and museum staff believe", *The Museum Review* 5, no. 1 (2020), https://themuseumreviewjournal.wordpress.com/2020/12/06/tmr_vol5no1_murray/. An interesting conclusion from this study is that while both staff and visitors believe that a key function of museums is to offer and inspire more high-minded or challenging modes of reflection, when they actually do visit a museum most people are less interested in being challenged than they are in being entertained or otherwise learning.

[219] For a trenchant analysis of the finances of contemporary art museums, including their connections to racial capitalism, see Nizan Shaked, *Museums and Wealth: The Politics of Contemporary Art Collections* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022).

[220] I am referring here to exhibitions including "Fictions of Emancipation: Carpeaux Recast" (Metropolitan Museum, 2022-23) and "Hear Me Now: The Black Potters of Old Edgefield, South Carolina" (MFA Boston and Metropolitan Museum, 2022-23). The MFA Boston has also been undertaking reevaluations of its permanent collection – see, for example, "Cyrus Dallin's 'Appeal to the Great Spirit'", MFA Boston, accessed March 8, 2023, https://www.mfa.org/collections/art-americas/appeal-to-the-great-spirit.

are funded by public monies or private grants risk similar pitfalls, while the possibility of defamation lawsuits levied by artists or their estates is also a concern. Writes Wallach,

> Larger museums, such as the National Gallery and the Metropolitan Museum, take no chances with their corporate and government backers. With these institutions, caution long ago became a virtue and a way of life, and a critical or scholarly reassessment is usually the last reason for mounting a fullscale retrospective exhibition of an artist's oeuvre. Instead, retrospectives are frequently communal rites, occasions for reaffirming traditional beliefs about artists and the histories they represent.[221]

In the U.S., the risks are especially significant for canonical American artists like the members of the Stieglitz group, and especially potent for institutions and exhibitions that rely on governmental funding. A relevant example is offered by the controversy that embroiled the infamous revisionist 1991 NMAA exhibition *The West as America*, which undermined longstanding myths about the history of the American West but ultimately had a chilling effect on museum scholarship because it led to threats from Republican leaders to cut the Smithsonian's funding. Wrote John Davis in reference to the show, "Americanists, thanks to a range of content that is closer to home and more easily subject to claims of ownership by its audience, find themselves increasingly liable to run afoul of the forces that control funding of the arts."[222] In other words, given the significant financial and ideological commitment to the Stieglitz artists, public reconsideration of their work seems relatively improbable in the near term – that is, unless people of principle are willing to take social and professional risks and jeopardize a small portion of their privilege to affect change. For many, focusing on artists from historically disenfranchised groups has proven a far easier path, as the ongoing proliferation of that work alongside the relative stagnation of efforts to reevaluate canonical (i.e. especially white, male, elite) artists would seem to demonstrate. Some scholars (especially outside of museums) have focused on clear instances of racism on the part of white artists – but what about

[221] Wallach, *Exhibiting Contradiction*, 92.
[222] Davis, "The End of the American Century: Current Scholarship on the Art of the United States," 552-55.

all the cases that, for whatever reason, are not so obvious?[223]

Part of the reason why a broad critique like that offered here has not been made before is because it is itself a product of its times, and it would be unrealistic to expect interpreters from decades past to think of things the same way we do/can now. Is this project just a drop in yet another wave of revisionism, itself doubtless to be superseded by a coming generation that will deem its own contributions limited and historically contingent? Despite these doubts, offering this critique is, I think, nonetheless useful for two reasons: 1) in highlighting the limits of past scholarship, it encourages reevaluation of received narratives about the Stieglitz artists and, hopefully, inspires similarly historiographically engaged reflection about other artists, works, periods, and movements and 2) it is a story that is directly and indirectly relevant to many of the scholarly and popular interpretations of these artists today.

It does not take much effort to find evidence of these problems when visiting museums today. When I visited the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe in spring 2019, a banner by the entrance proclaimed in massive letters what visitors could expect to find inside: "A Great **American Artist** / A Great **American Story**". Until sometime in 2020 or 2021, The Phillips Collection's website and wall labels contained, to my knowledge, no reference whatsoever to the past titles of *Goin' Fishin'* and neglected to educate online or in-person visitors about the work's fraught history. As the museum site now states:

> Only recently have scholars pulled back the curtain on the suppressed racist history of *Goin' Fishin'*. Although the Phillips has been aware of these re-assessments, it has neglected to change its manner of looking at this work on its public platforms, including… labels and website texts. In that regard, the Phillips has been complicit in the

[223] Of course, what counts as "obvious" is a matter of perspective. To many the wide relevance of whiteness and white privilege within art history would be obvious, but to many others it evidently is not. In his 2003 state-of-the-field essay, Davis suggested that the Americanists who came of age in the late '80s and '90s were especially concerned with revising the work of their predecessors: "to question the validity of received the narratives, to overturn the hierarchy of valorized or unacceptable genres and periods, to fill in absences and interrogate silences." Clearly, this work is as yet unfinished, thirty-some-odd years later. Ibid.

> decades-long effort to ignore the racist origins of *Goin' Fishin'*. These institutional omissions have effectively erased the fraught nature of this work's history. The early titles are part of the historical documentation of this work and inform its original context.

Obviously, the changing social conditions of the early 2020s have changed the Collection's approach towards this erasure.[224]

The cases of Marin and Stieglitz, which are even less known to both popular and scholarly audiences, might well offer similar opportunities for education and reconsideration. However, individually and collectively, these cases attest to larger blind spots in our efforts to address the relationships between art and visual culture and the history of racial ideology in the United States, some of which can be corrected by learning and borrowing from those who have brought critical whiteness studies to bear on other disciplines and subjects. However, more than anything, we can benefit from these examples by learning to more frequently center whiteness in our analysis of artworks, artists, and the systems they live and work within. In other words, Americanist art historians' greatest collective failure may have been neglecting to search for race in all the nooks and crannies of art history where we know it must exist. As Tanya Sheehan writes, "Where do we look for race? [Among] Historians of American art… if race can be seen at all, it is in images that depict non-white bodies and/or that were created by non-white artists."[225] Surely these are not the only places where race plays an important role in the history of U.S. art –

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[224] "Goin' Fishin'", The Phillips Collection, published April 2021, https://www.phillipscollection.org/collection/goin-fishin. This explanation suggests that the museum was helpless to do anything until scholars like Nancy Scott came along. However, if the curtain had to be pulled back on *Goin' Fishin'*, it was because the Museum itself had, decades earlier, erected a rod, hung that curtain, and pulled it into place. We might wonder if the Metropolitan and Colby College Museums would likewise have approached Hartley's work in Maine through a more socially conscious lens if they were offering their exhibition in 2023 instead of 2017. Then again, we might also wonder just how long it will take for the public to be exposed to and internalize new understandings about the entanglements between systems of bias and canonical artworks and artists if the only works that get reinterpreted are by artists who held an open interest in white supremacism and/or used racial epithets in their works' titles.

[225] Tanya Sheehan, "A Time and a Place: Rethinking Race in American Art History", in Davis, Greenhill, and LaFountain, eds., *A Companion to American Art*, 49. I might add that it is also less often seen in modernist art, at least in part because the relative indecipherability of modernist works and explications and justifications thereof often obscure evidence of racial ideologies.

they are just where we spend most of our time looking.

At times in recent years it has seemed as though many scholars are looking towards something like a post-racial art history. Some are turning back towards objects, focusing on how they move in space, how they trace connections across borders, how new, non-traditional things might be subjected to some of the modes of analysis practiced within "art history". However, if the role or direction of engagement with race within the broader practice of U.S. art studies, or art history more generally, are in question, we might well ask why. This dissertation is an effort to suggest that one of the field's central concerns should be interrogating whiteness as part of a broader ongoing investigation of the role of art and the art world in forming and propelling systems of social stratification and bias. Failing to do so risks becoming the very thing many humanists outside the field often perceive us to be: navel-gazing dilletantes more interested in antiquarianism and ahistorical sacralization of art objects than in asking and answering difficult questions about art – questions about things like identity, power, society, culture, the past, and its relevance to today, and how we can help the public to think about art differently, too.

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FIGURES



Figure 1.1. Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe* [with Ivorian spoon], 1919. Platinum palladium print, 9 ½ x 7 5/8 in. Private collection.

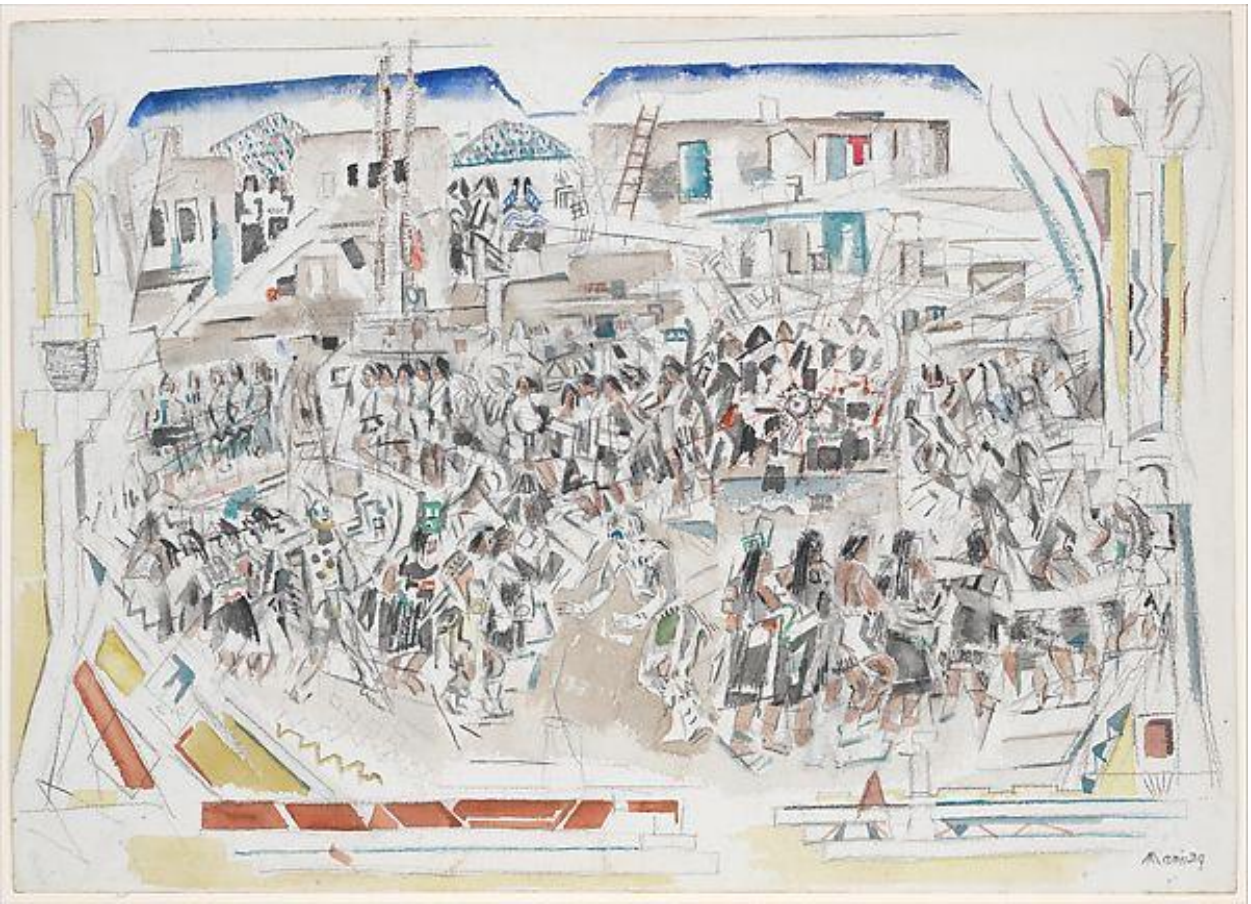


Figure 1.2. John Marin, *Dance of the Santo Domingo Indians*, 1929. Watercolor and crayon on paper, 22 1/8 x 30 ¼ in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.



Figure 1.3. Unknown maker, Diné peoples, Chief Blanket (Third Phase), c. 1860-65. Wool, 58 7/8 x 68 ½ in. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL.



Figure 1.4. Maria Martinez, Bowl, n.d. Blackware, 6 ¾ x 9 ½ in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.



Figure 1.5. Alfred Stieglitz, *291 – Picasso-Braque Exhibition*, 1915. Platinum print, 7 5/16 x 9 5/16 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



Figure 1.6. Baule or Guro peoples (Côte d'Ivoire), Portrait Mask, 19th-early 20th century (before 1914). Wood, 16 3/8 x 6 ½ x 4 ½ in. Collection of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton.



Figure 1.7. Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 1918. Palladium print, 9 5/16 x 7 3/8 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



Figure 1.8. Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 1922. Gelatin silver print, 7 3/8 x 9 1/4 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

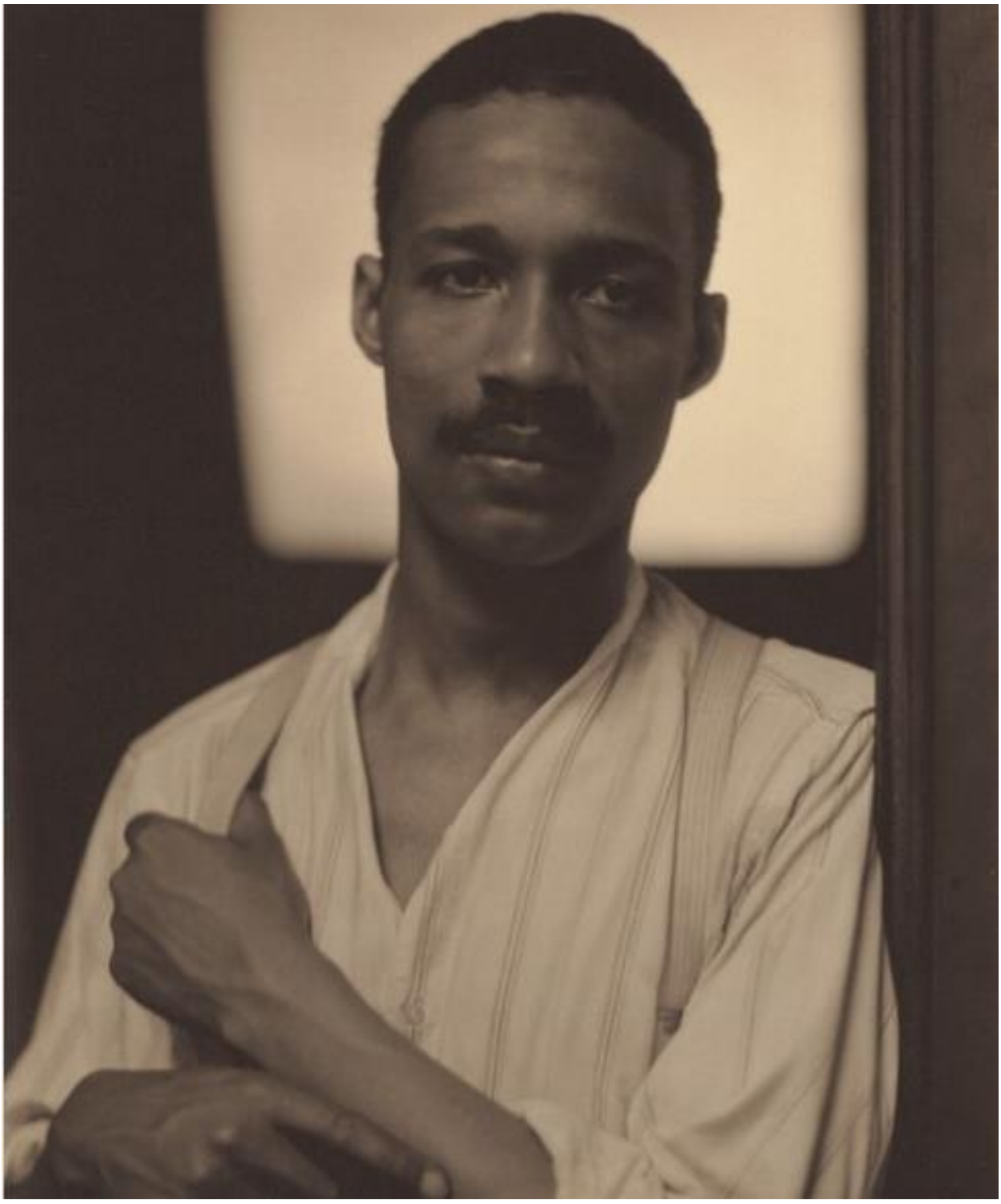


Figure 1.9. Alfred Stieglitz, *Hodge Kirnon*, 1917. Palladium print, 9 7/16 x 7 ¾ in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

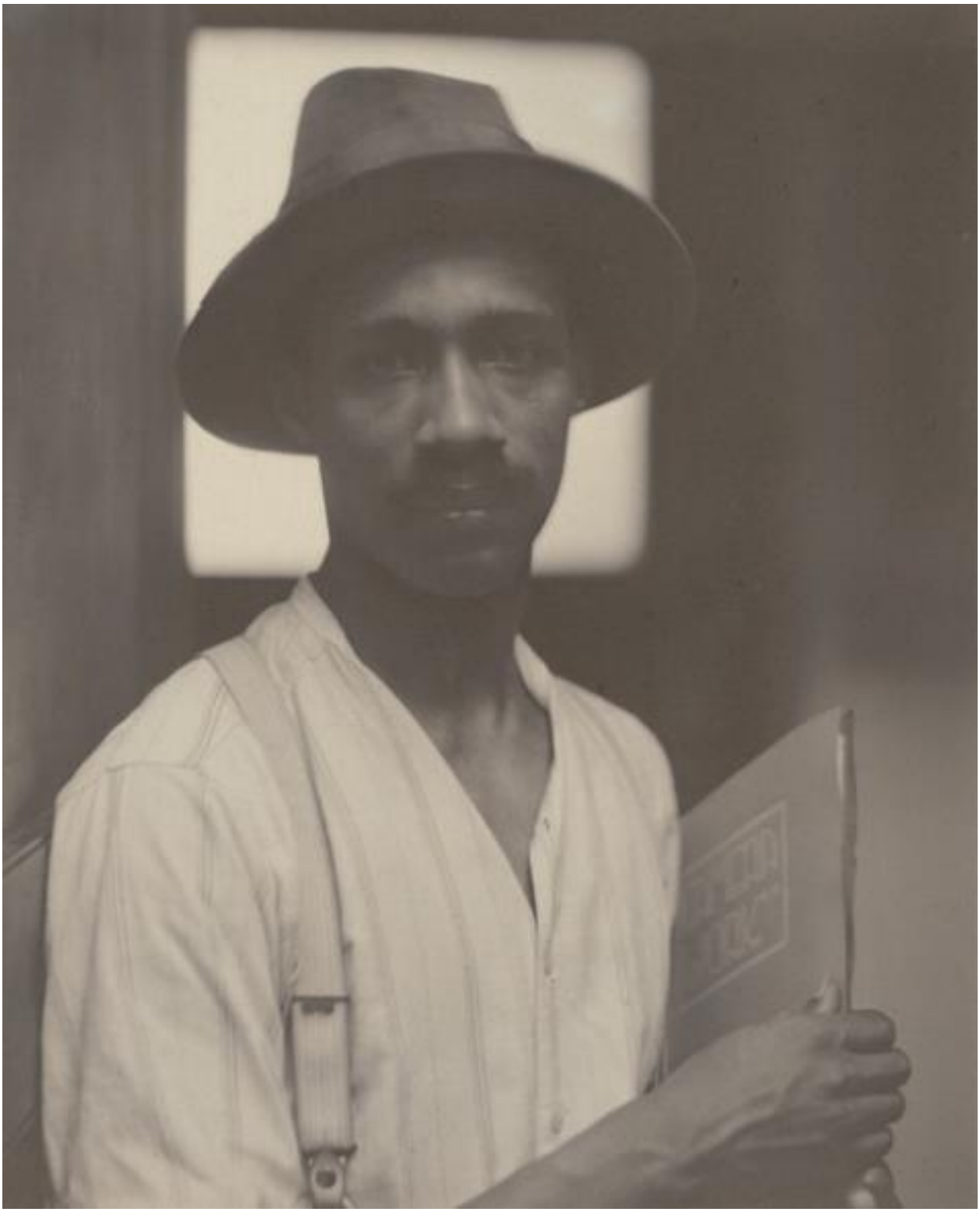


Figure 1.10. Alfred Stieglitz, *Hodge Kirnon*, 1917. Silver-platinum print, 9 ¼ x 7 ½ in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

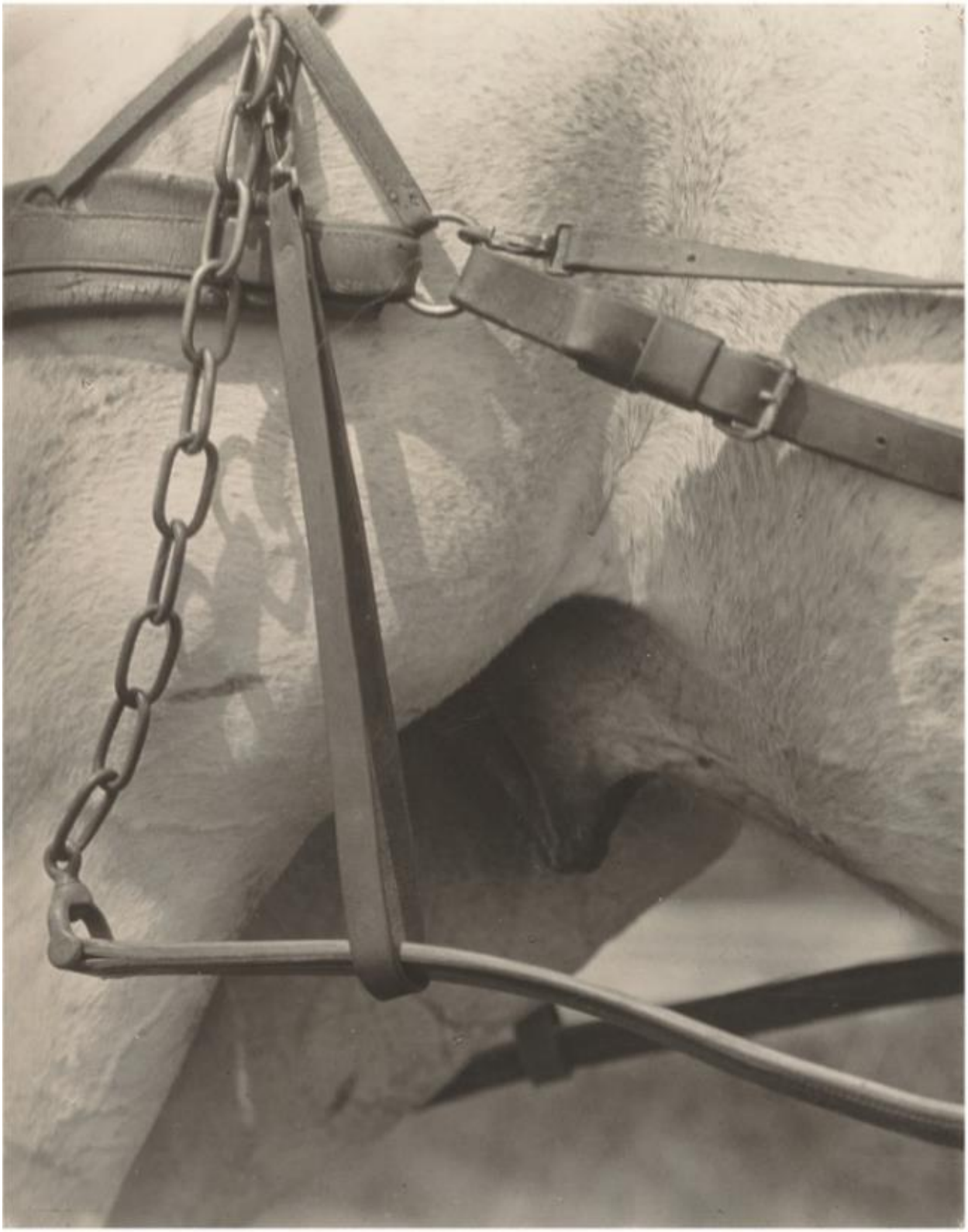


Figure 1.11. Alfred Stieglitz, *Spiritual America*, 1923. Gelatin silver print, 4 9/16 x 3 5/8 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.

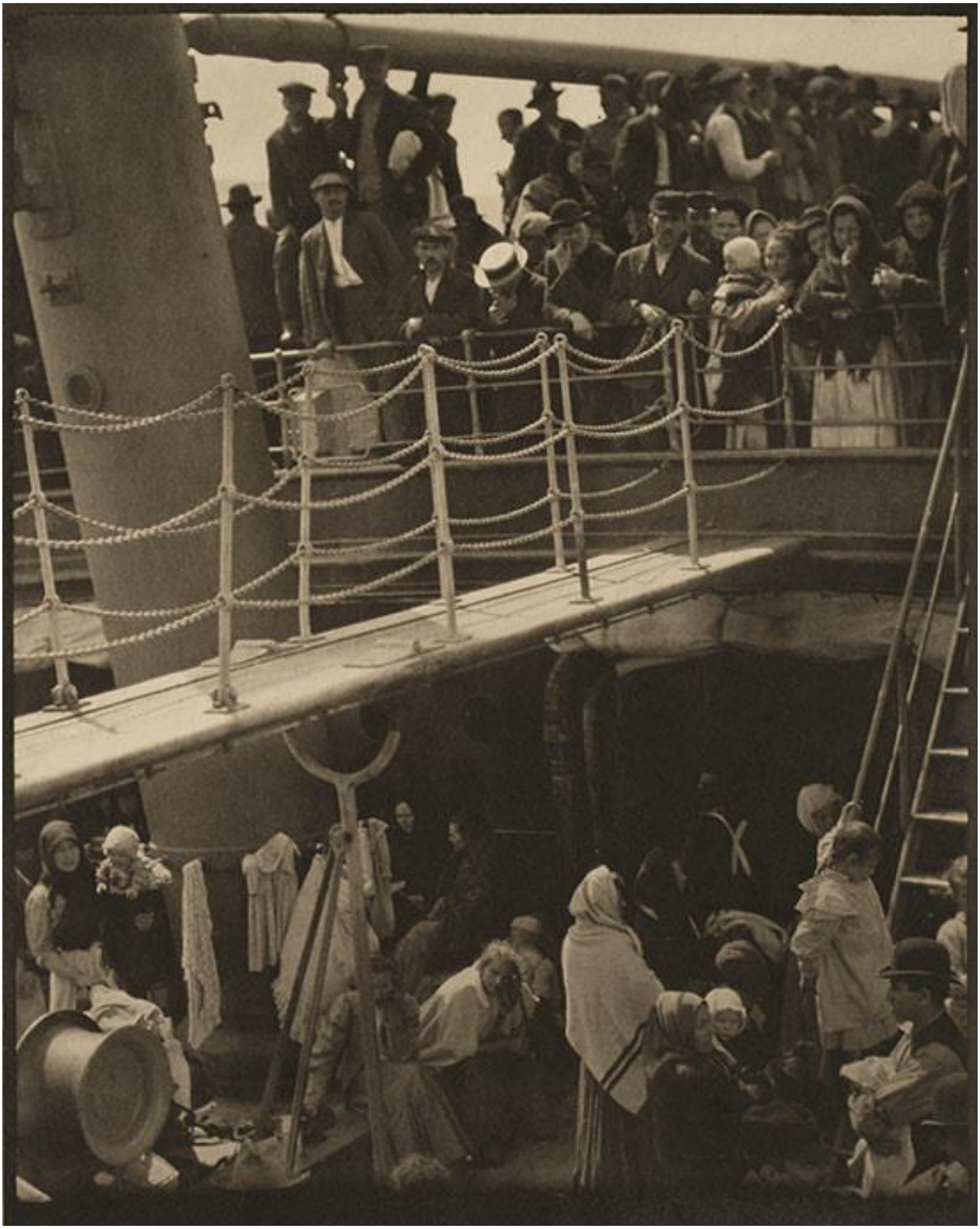


Figure 1.12. Alfred Stieglitz, *The Steerage*, 1907, printed in or about 1913. Photogravure, 12 11/16 x 10 3/16 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.



Figure 1.13. Alfred Stieglitz, *Five Points, New York*, probably 1893. Gelatin silver print, 3 5/8 x 4 11/16 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



Figure 1.14. Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe - Hands*, 1919. Palladium print, 9 5/16 x 7 5/8 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

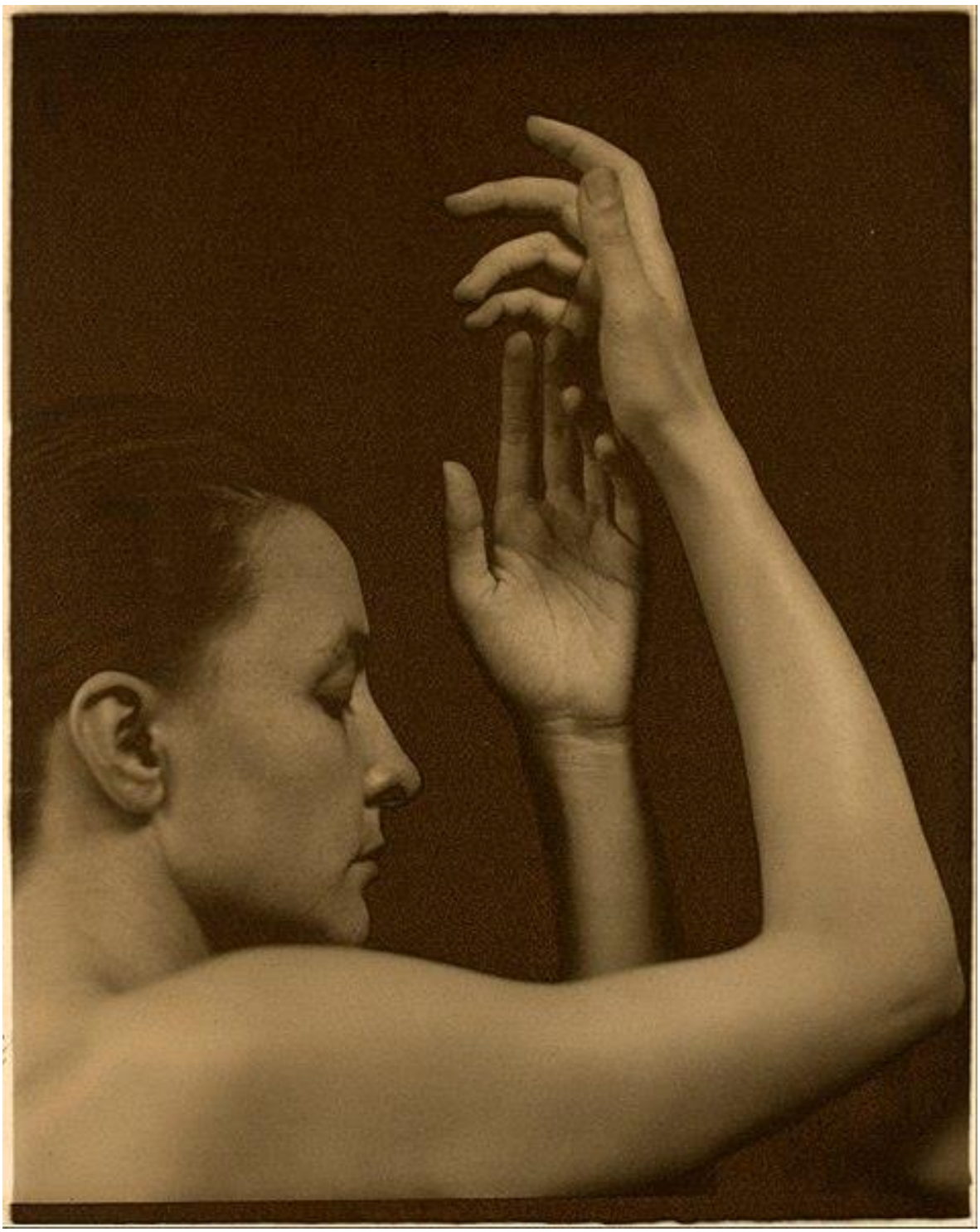


Figure 1.15. Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 1920. Platinum print, 7 11/16 x 9 5/8 in. George Eastman House, Rochester, NY.



Figure 1.16. Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia Englehard*, 1920. Palladium print, 9 1/8 x 7 3/8 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



Figure 1.17. Ananda Coomaraswamy. “Finger and toe postures in ancient and medieval Indian sculptures”, undated. Photographs. Published in Coomaraswamy, “Hands and Feet in Indian Art.”



9–12. Hands of a dancing-girl: 9, A deer; 10, Raising of Mt. Govardhan; 11, Garuda (a bird); 12, A bed with four legs

Figure 1.18. Ananda Coomaraswamy, “Hands of a Dancing Girl” et al., c. 1912. Published in Coomaraswamy, *The Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*. Reproduced in Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 112.



Figure 1.19. Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Untitled (Hand and Breast)*, c. 1930. Gelatin silver print, 6 1/8 x 4 1/8 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA.

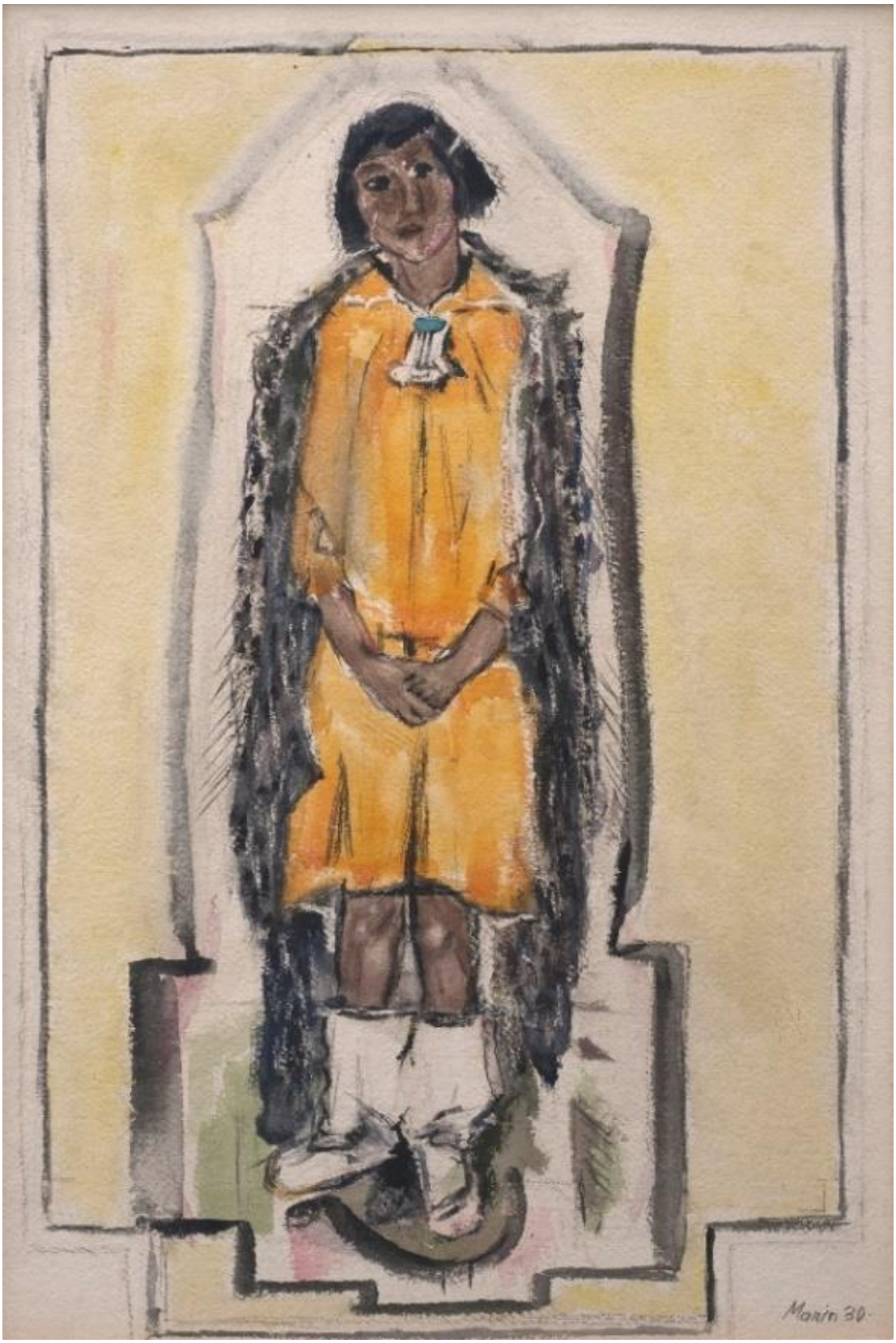


Figure 1.20. John Marin, *Taos Indian Girl,* 1930. Watercolor on paper, 27 x 20 in. Private collection, Santa Fe, NM.



Figure 2.1. John Marin, *Lobster Boat, Cape Split, Maine,* 1938. Oil on canvas, 22 x 28 in. Private collection.


Quebec
New Brunswick
New Hampshire
The MAINE HIGHLANDS
KENNEBEC AND MOOSE RIVER VALLEYS
WESTERN LAKES & MOUNTAINS
BANGOR / ACADIA
DOWNEAST
MID COAST
SOUTH COAST
ACADIA NATIONAL PARK
Cape Split
Stonington
Small Point
Portland to Yarmouth, NS
Atlantic Ocean
Augusta
Lewiston
Auburn
Brunswick
Portland
Bangor
Waterville
Winterport
Belfast
Rockland
Camden
Boothbay Harbor
Freeport
Saco
Biddeford
Kennebunkport
Ogunquit
Kittery
Rangeley Lake
Sugarloaf
Saddleback
Farmington
Rumford
Sunday River
Jackman
Rockwood
Greenville
Millinocket
Lincoln
Old Town
Orono
Calais
St. Stephen
St. Andrews
Eastport
Lubec
Machias
Ellsworth
Bucksport
Searsport
Belgrade Lakes
Sebago Lake
Bridgton
Fryeburg
Gorham
Berlin
Errol
Jackson
Rochester
Sanford
Old Orchard
Scarborough
Westbrook
Gardiner
Camden
Rockport
Thomaston
Wiscasset
Damariscotta
Pemaquid
Pemaquid Point
Pemaquid Harbor
Pemaquid Point
Pemaquid Harbor
Pemaquid Point
Pemaquid Harbor



Figure 2.3. John Marin, *The Little Boat*, 1914. Watercolor and graphite on paper, 16 ½ x 19 2/4 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.



Figure 2.4. John Marin, *Little Tree, Maine*, 1914. Watercolor and graphite on paper, 14 1/8 x 16 ¼ in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.



Figure 2.5. John Marin, *Lobster Smack Passing Through*, 1923. Watercolor and black chalk with traces of blue pastel on cream wove paper, 13 3/8 x 16 ¾ in. Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ.



Figure 2.6. John Marin, *Fishing Smack*, 1928. Watercolor on paper, 14 ¼ x 18 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC.



Figure 2.7. John Marin, *The Old Salt*, 1922. Watercolor and charcoal on paper, 17 ¼ x 20 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.

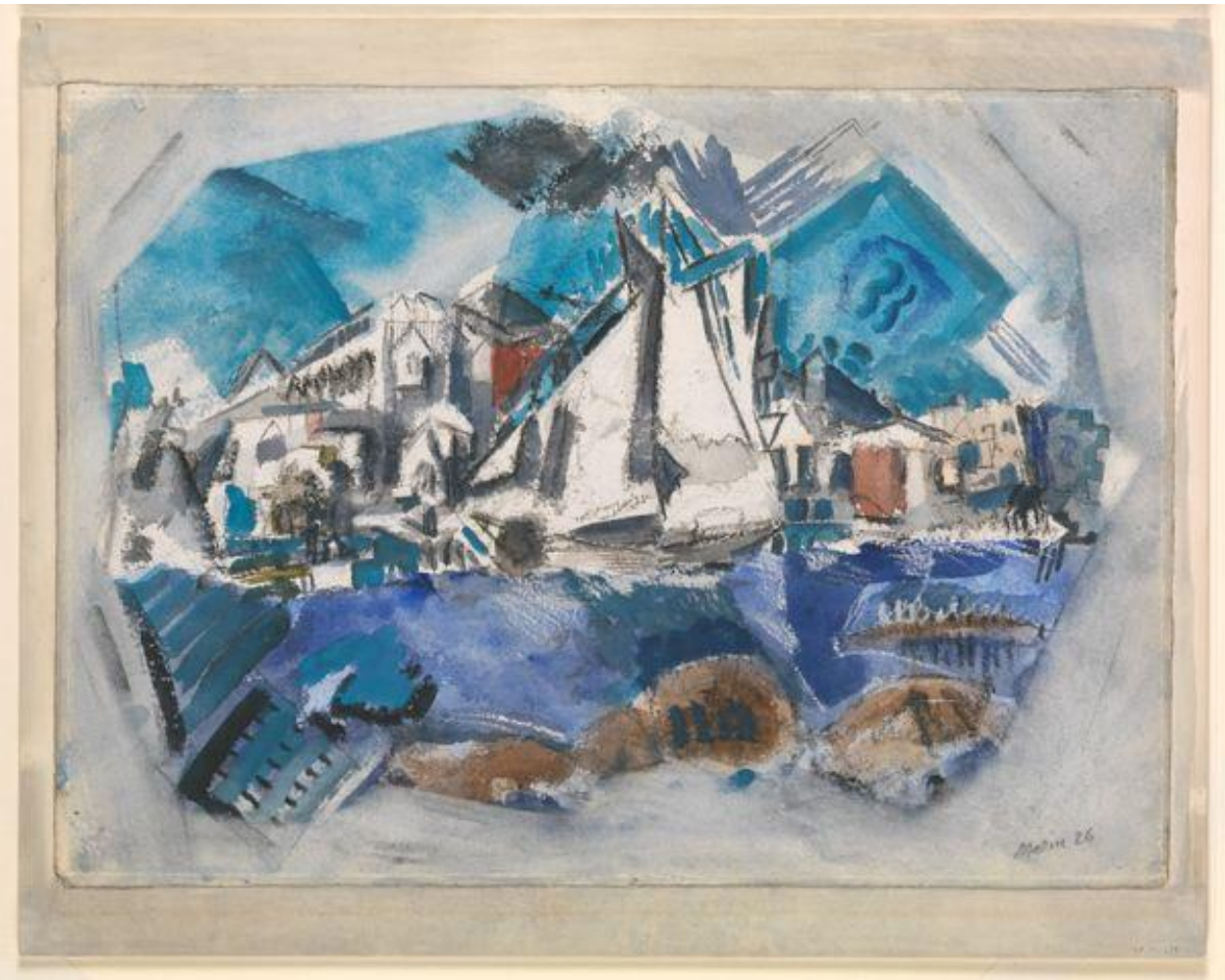


Figure 2.8. John Marin, *Pertaining to Stonington Harbor, Maine*, 1926. Watercolor and crayon on paper, mounted on painted paper, 18 3/8 x 23 ¼ in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.



Figure 2.9. John Marin, *Fishboat No. 1 at Eastport, Maine Coast*, 1933. Watercolor and graphite on paper, 13 ½ x 13 1/8 in. Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, ME.

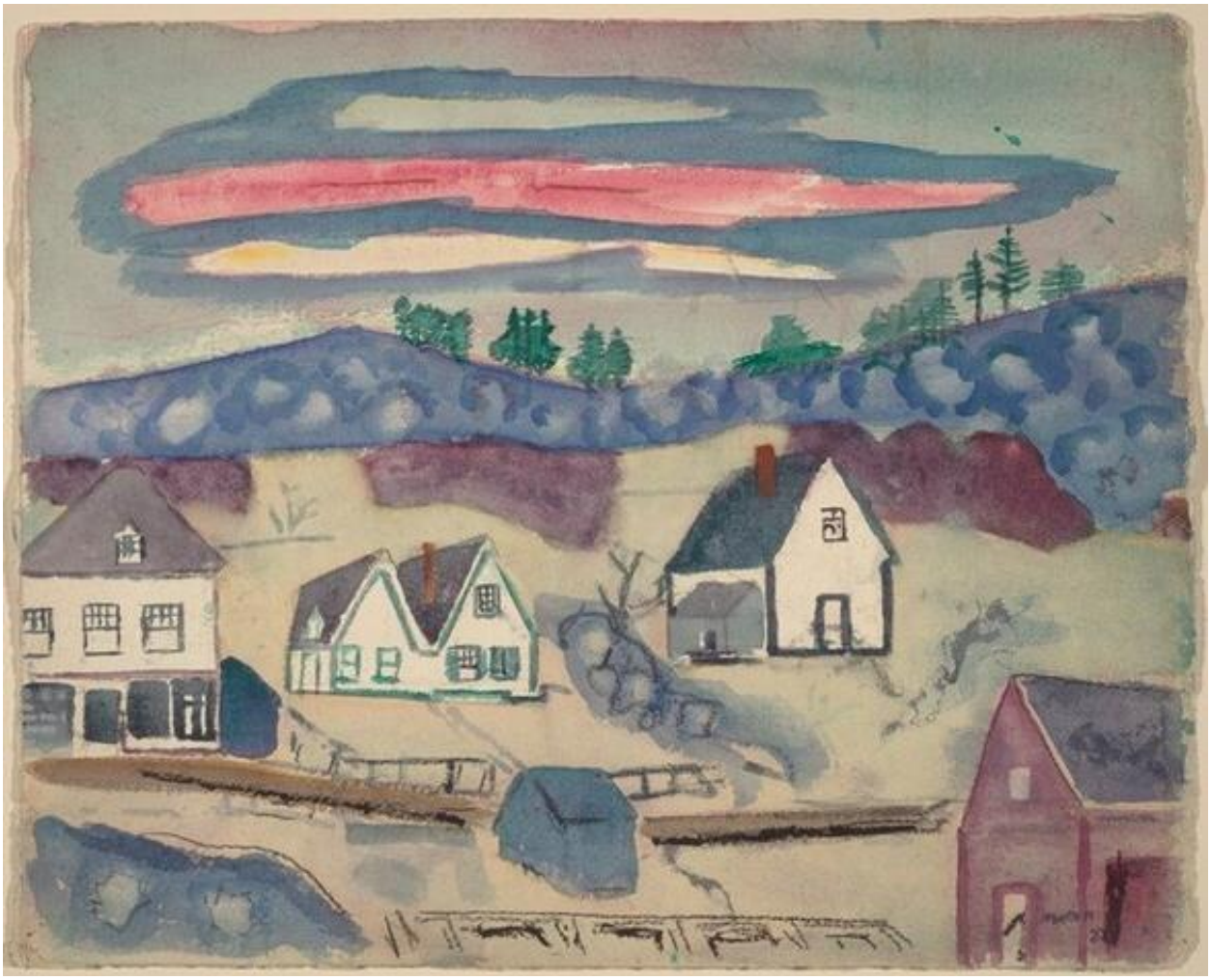


Figure 2.10. John Marin, *Three Houses, Barn and Chicken Coop, Stonington, Deer Isle, Maine*, 1922. Watercolor and charcoal on wove paper, 15 7/16 x 19 3/16 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



Figure 2.11. John Marin, *Stonington, Maine*, 1923. Watercolor and charcoal on paper, 21 ¾ x 26 ¼ in. Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, ME.



Figure 2.12. Gerrit Benneker, *The Pageant of Cape Cod*, 1914. Lithograph, 22 ¼ x 13 7/8 in. The William Chauncy Langdon Papers, Brown University Library, Providence, RI.



Figure 2.13. Gifford Beal, *Lobster Boat*, n.d. Etching on paper, 4 ¾ x 11 7/8 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC.



Figure 2.14. Marsden Hartley, *Madawaska-Acadian Light-Heavy*, 1940. Oil on hardboard, 40 x 30 in. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL.



Figure 2.15. Marsden Hartley, *Lobster Fisherman,* 1940-41. Oil on hardboard (Masonite), 29 ¾ x 40 7/8 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.

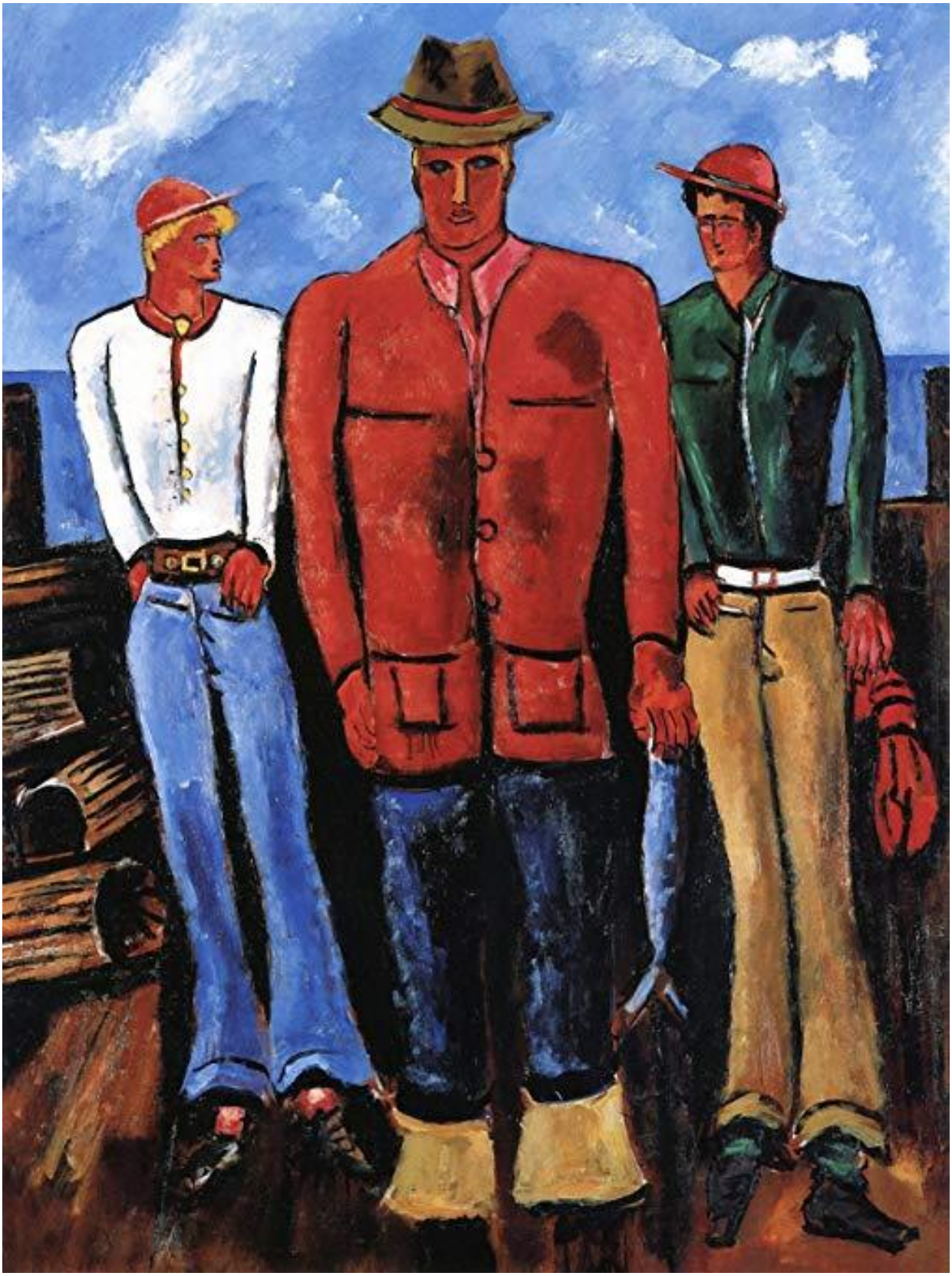


Figure 2.16. Marsden Hartley, *Down East Young Blades,* 1940. Oil on Masonite, 40 x 30 in. Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT.

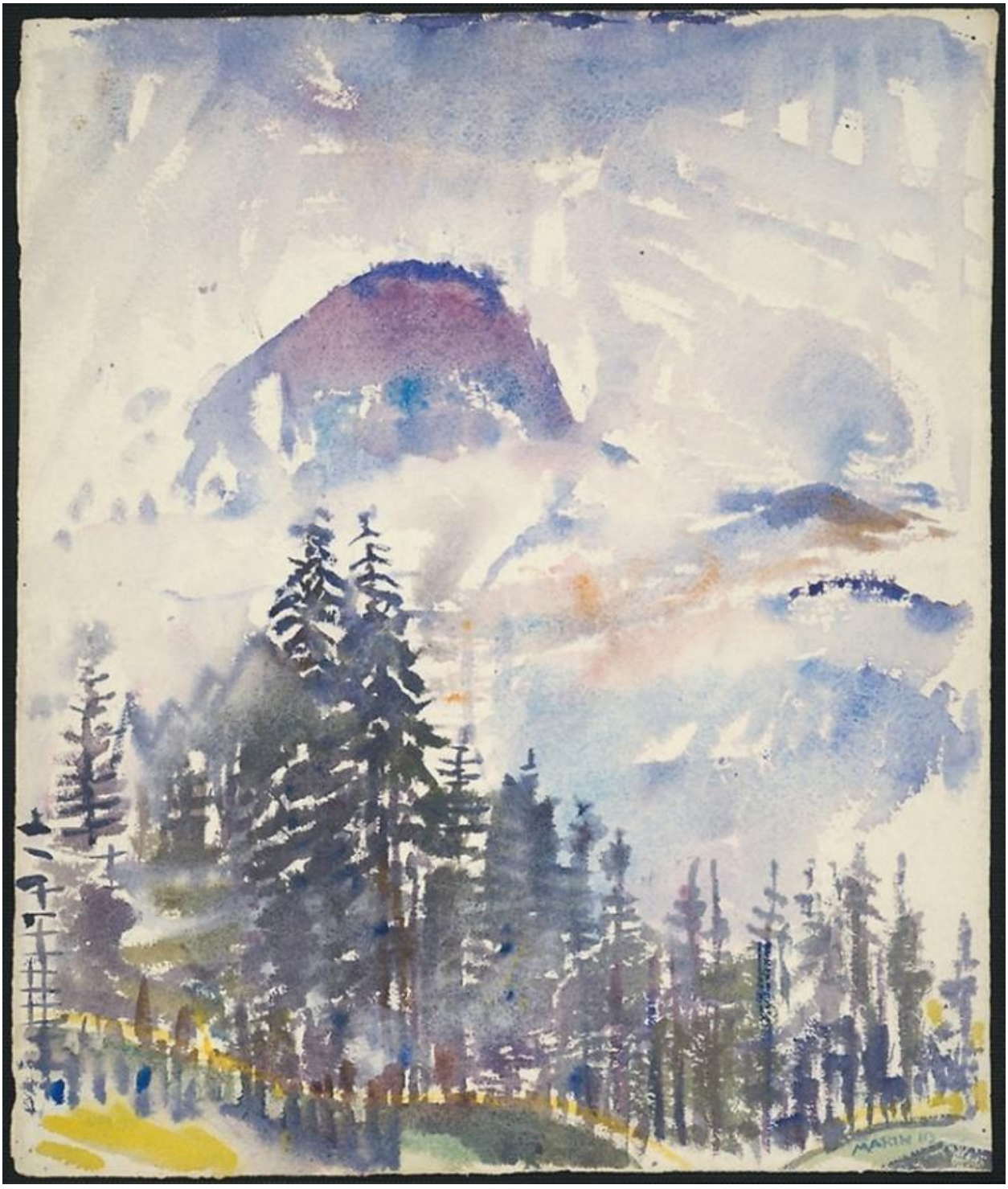


Figure 2.17. John Marin, *Austrian Tyrol,* 1910. Watercolor with blotting on thick, rough-textured, off-white wove paper, 18 3/8 x 15 ½ in. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL.



Figure 2.18. John Marin, *Echo Lake District, Pennsylvania*, 1916. Watercolor on wove paper, 14 x 16 5/8 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



Figure 2.19. John Marin, *Young Man of the Sea, Maine*, 1934. Watercolor and crayon on paper, 15 ½ x 20 5/8 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.



Figure 2.20. John Marin, *The Spirit of the Cape: Susie Thompson*, 1949. Oil on canvas, 28 x 22 in. Formerly in the collection of Lisa Marin, New York, NY. Reproduced in Fine, *John Marin*, 206.



Figure 2.21. John Marin, *Susie Thompson, The Spirit of the Cape, Maine*, 1945. Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 in. Formerly in the collection of John C. Marin, Jr., New York, NY. Reproduced in Reich, *John Marin: A Stylistic Analysis and Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. II, 742.



Figure 2.22. John Marin, *Susie Thompson*, c. 1946. Oil on canvas, 32 x 25 in. Collection of Norma B. Marin, New York, NY. Reproduced in Reich, *John Marin: A Stylistic Analysis and Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. II, 749.



Figure 2.23. Kosti Ruohomaa, *New England Matriarch* (*Maine Matriarch*), 1950. Medium and size unknown. A print may now be held by the Penobscot Marine Museum, Searsport, ME. Reproduced in Troy R. Bennett, "Kosto Ruohomaa: Rediscovering a once-famed photographer who captured the true character of Maine", *Bangor Daily News*, published March 2016, http://external.bangordailynews.com/projects/2016/03/kosti-ruohomaa/#.XZa5TEZKi00.



Figure 2.24. Paul Strand, *Susan Thompson, Cape Split, Maine,* 1945. Gelatin silver print, 5 7/8 x 4 5/8 in. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH.



Figure 2.25. John Marin, *Leo Wass and His Boat*, 1941. Oil on canvas, 22 x 28 in. Formerly in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. John C. Marin, New York, NY. Reproduced in Reich, *John Marin: A Stylistic Analysis and Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. II, 716.



Figure 2.26. John Marin, *Portrait of Roy Wass with Apologies*, 1949. Oil on canvas, 28 x 22 in. Formerly in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. John C. Marin, Jr., New York, NY. Reproduced in Reich, *John Marin: A Stylistic Analysis and Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. II, 774.

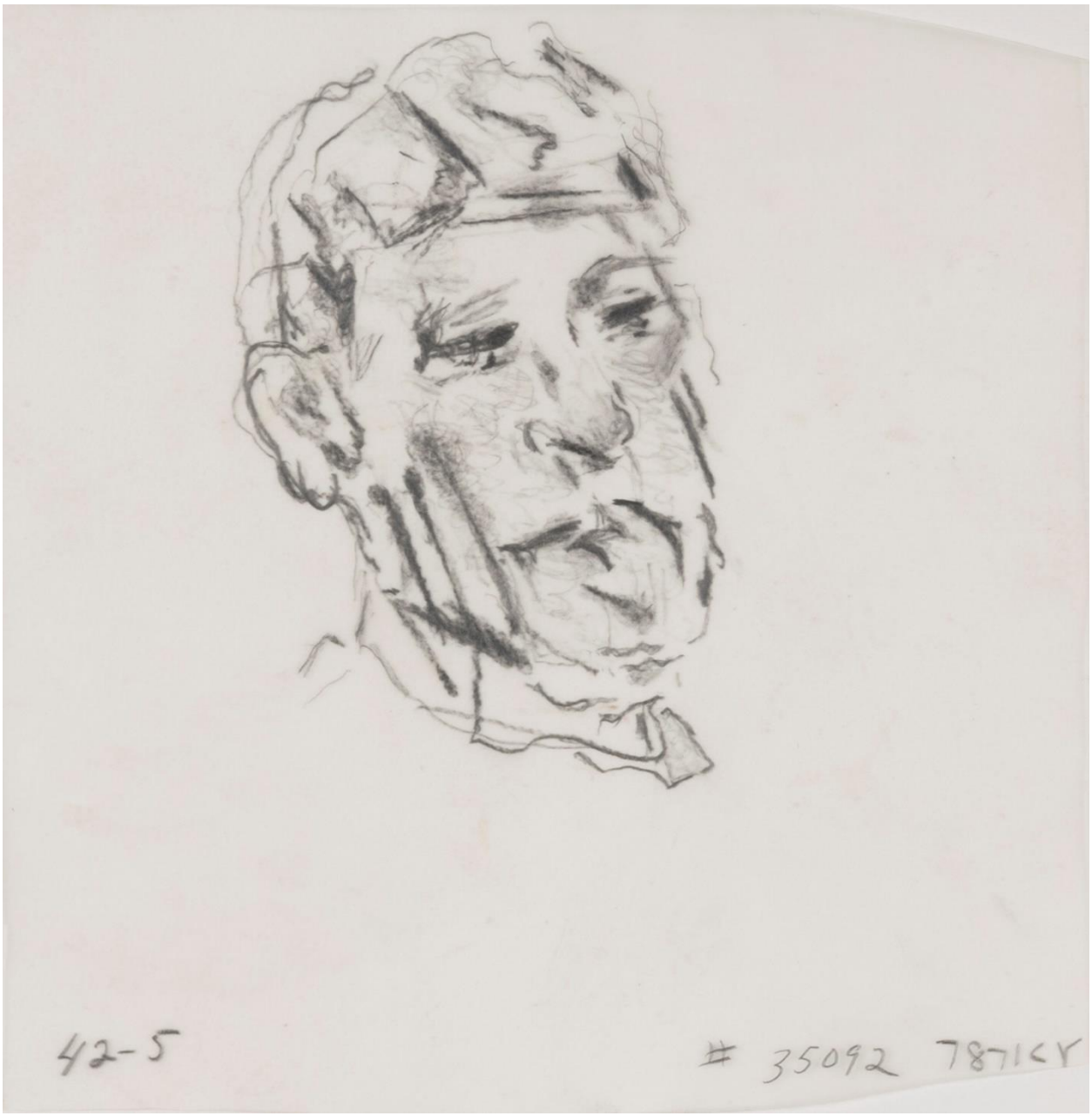


Figure 2.27. John Marin, *Portrait Sketch, Roy Wass*, c. 1949. Graphite on cellulose acetate, 4 ¼ x 4 ¼ in. Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts Little Rock, AR. Gift of Norma B. Marin.



Figure 2.28. John Marin, *Portrait, Susie Thompson*, 1951. Graphite and black chalk on paper dry mounted to board, 5 x 7 7/8 in. Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts, Little Rock, AR. Gift of Norma B. Marin.



Figure 2.29. John Marin, *A Looking Back – The Marin Family*, 1953. Oil and graphite on canvas, 22 x 18 in. Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, ME.



Figure 2.30. John Marin, *From Deer Isle, Maine No. 1*, 1919. Watercolor and charcoal over graphite on wove paper., 16 ¼ x 19 5/16 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

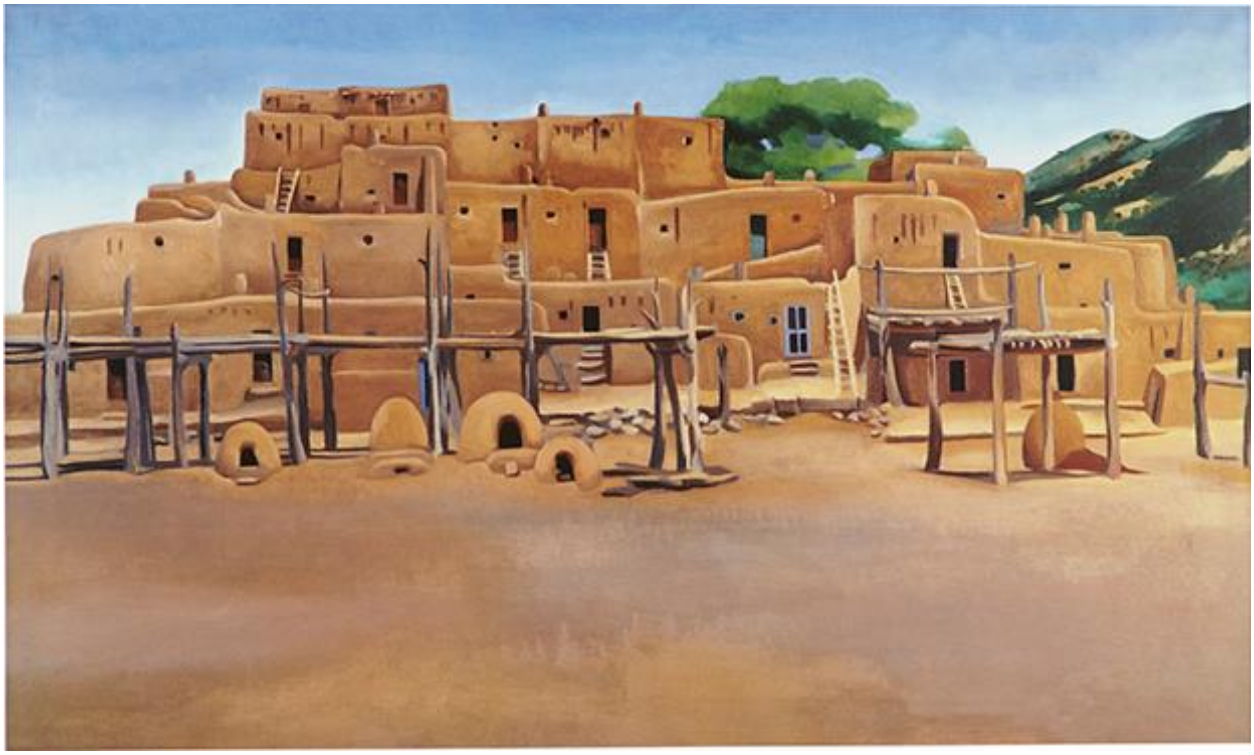


Figure 3.1. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Taos Pueblo*, 1929-1934. Oil on canvas, 24 x 40 in. Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, Indianapolis, IN.

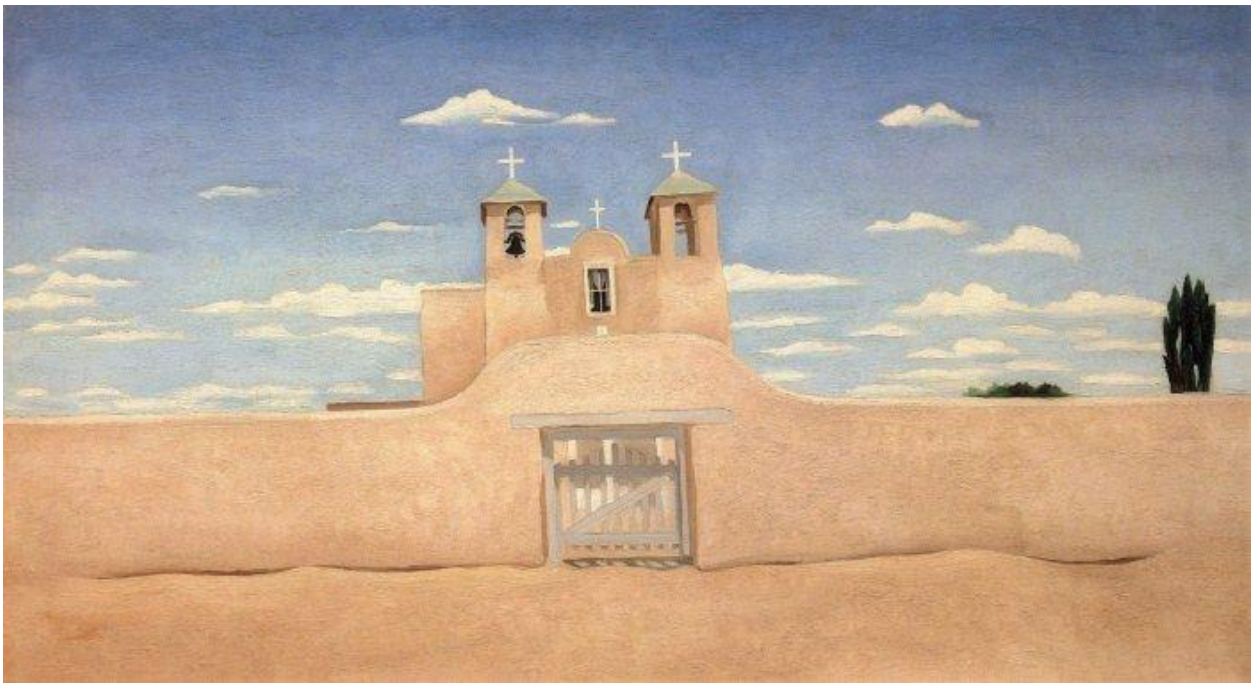


Figure 3.2. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Front of Ranchos Church,* 1930. Oil on canvas, 20 x 36 in. Private collection.



Figure 3.3. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Ranchos Church, No. II, NM*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 24 1/8 x 36 1/8 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC.



Figure 3.4. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Gate of Adobe Church*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 20 x 16 in. Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA.



Figure 3.5. Georgia O'Keeffe, *The Wooden Virgin*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 23 ¼ x 10 1/8 in. Private collection.



Figure 3.6. Georgia O'Keeffe, *At the Rodeo*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 in. Fukuoka Cultural Center, Fukuoka, Japan.



Figure 3.7. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Grey, Blue, & Black – Pink Circle*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 in. Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX.



Figure 3.8. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Black Cross, New Mexico*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 39 x 30 in. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL.

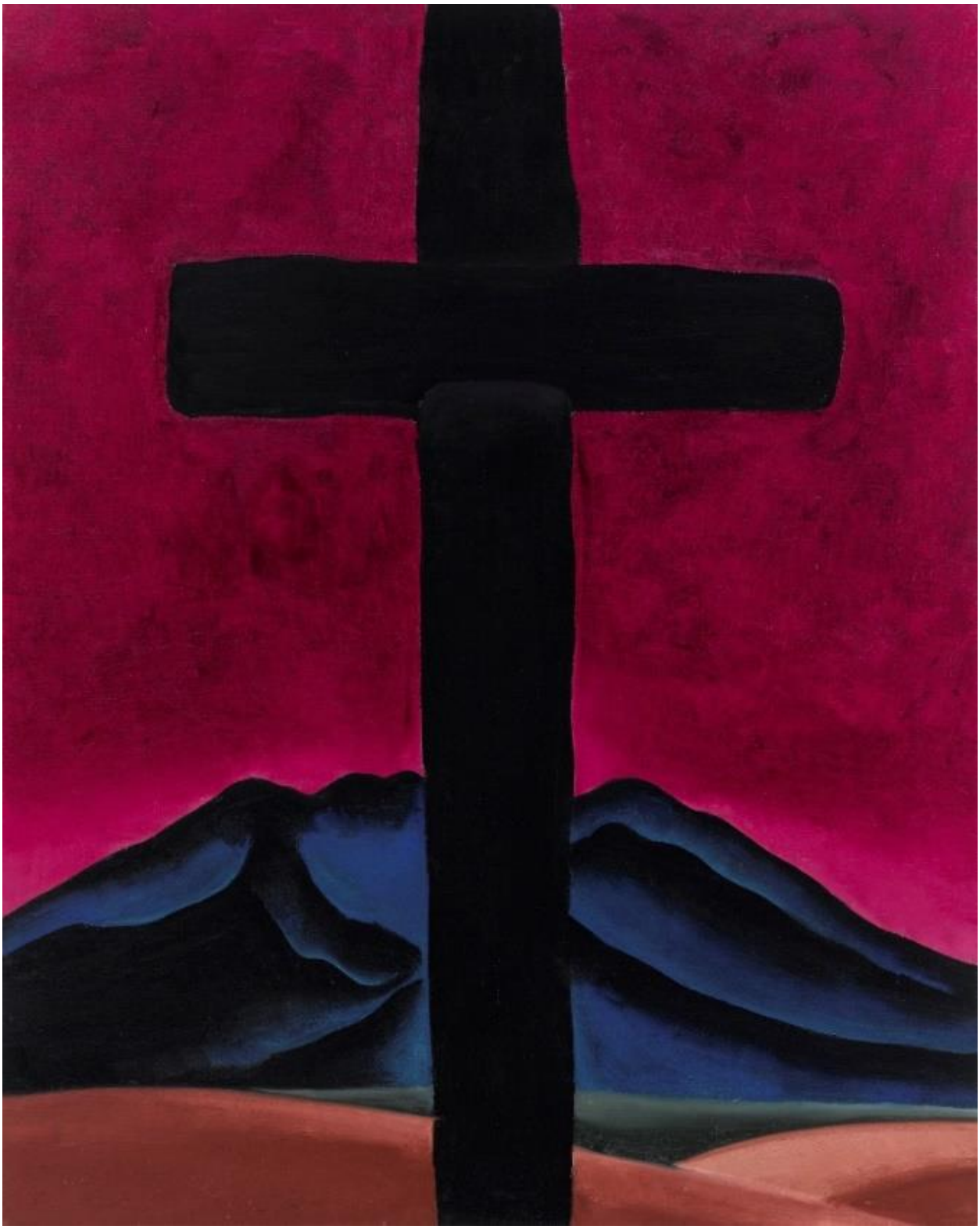


Figure 3.9. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Cross with Red Sky*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 40 x 32 in. Private collection.

U. S. Highway 64

The Highway of the Immortals

U. S. 64 starts its route in New Mexico at the northeast corner of the state, just three miles from Kenton, Oklahoma. Then for 109 miles it winds through the painted valley of the Dry Cimarron, which is not dry by the way, and past the most widely known extinct volcano in the United States, Mount Capulin, into **Raton** (see page 3, U. S. 85).

This route drains the vast basin of the lower Mississippi of its westward bound tourists, together with an ever growing number from farther east. It forms a main gateway route to the wonders of the Cimarron region of the Rockies, the Taos country, and the pueblo life and prehistoric ruins found adjacent to its western reaches and on U. S. 85 with which it connects at Santa Fe.



Pueblo of Taos

Fifteen miles southwest of Raton, U. S. 64 branches from U. S. 85, taking a westward course through a beautiful region of canyons and wooded hills (see picture page 17).

To **Cimarron** and through the Cimarron Canyon, the road follows a winding course at the base of towering mountains. Cimarron Canyon, in itself, is spectacular with great rock formations, known as the palisades, towering hundreds of feet above the canyon floor. From here the road leads over McAvoy Hill into the Moreno Valley and to Eagles' Nest Lake and Dam where the noisy waters of the Cimarron become peaceful and quiet. Nests of great eagles are found in the summits of the lofty hills which surround the lake and dam, which give rise to the name. The lake and nearby streams offer fine fishing. Numerous hotels, cabins and camps provide comforts vacationists.

From **Therma,** State Road 38 affords a very plea side trip through murmuring forests and over silent mo tains into the steep-walled canyon of Red River. F the colors of nature are in their glory. The view from top of Red River Pass is unexcelled anywhere in United States. There is fine trout fishing all along and neighboring canyons. One of the few molybde mines in the United States is located east of Questa wild part of the Carson Forest.

Continuing along U. S. 64, one travels over 1 Flechado Pass descending into the scenic Taos Can



Deer Dance at San Juan Pueblo

Figure 3.10. *Roads to Cibola: What to See in New Mexico and How to Get There* (Santa Fe: New Mexico State Highway Commission, 1929), p. 18. Image from Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM.

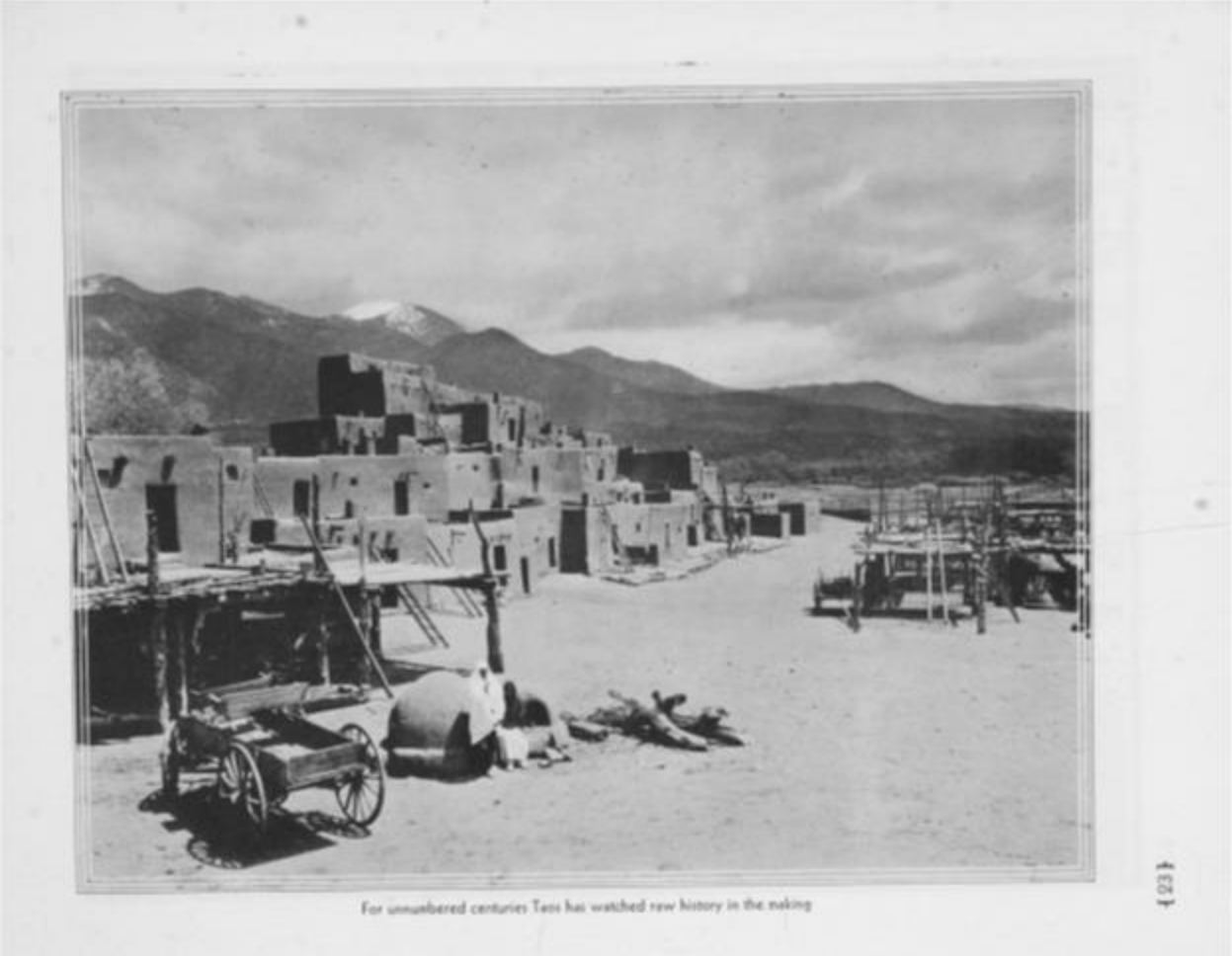


Figure 3.11. “For unnumbered centuries Taos has watched raw history in the making.” Published in *Indian-detours – Most distinctive motor cruise service in the world* (Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1930), 23.



Figure 3.12. Ernest L. Blumenschein, *Church at Ranchos de Taos*, before 1917. Oil on canvas, 45.5 x 47.5 in. American Museum of Western Art – The Anschutz Collection, Denver, CO.



Figure 3.13. E. Irving Couse, *Taos Pueblo – Moonlight*, 1914. Oil on canvas, 60 x 60 in. New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe, NM.



Figure 3.14. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Ranchos Church, No. 3,* 1929. Oil on canvas mounted to Masonite, 15 x 11 in. Private collection.



Figure 3.15. Georgia O'Keeffe, *In the Patio I*, 1945. Oil on paper attached to board, 29 ¾ x 23 ¾ in. San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, CA.

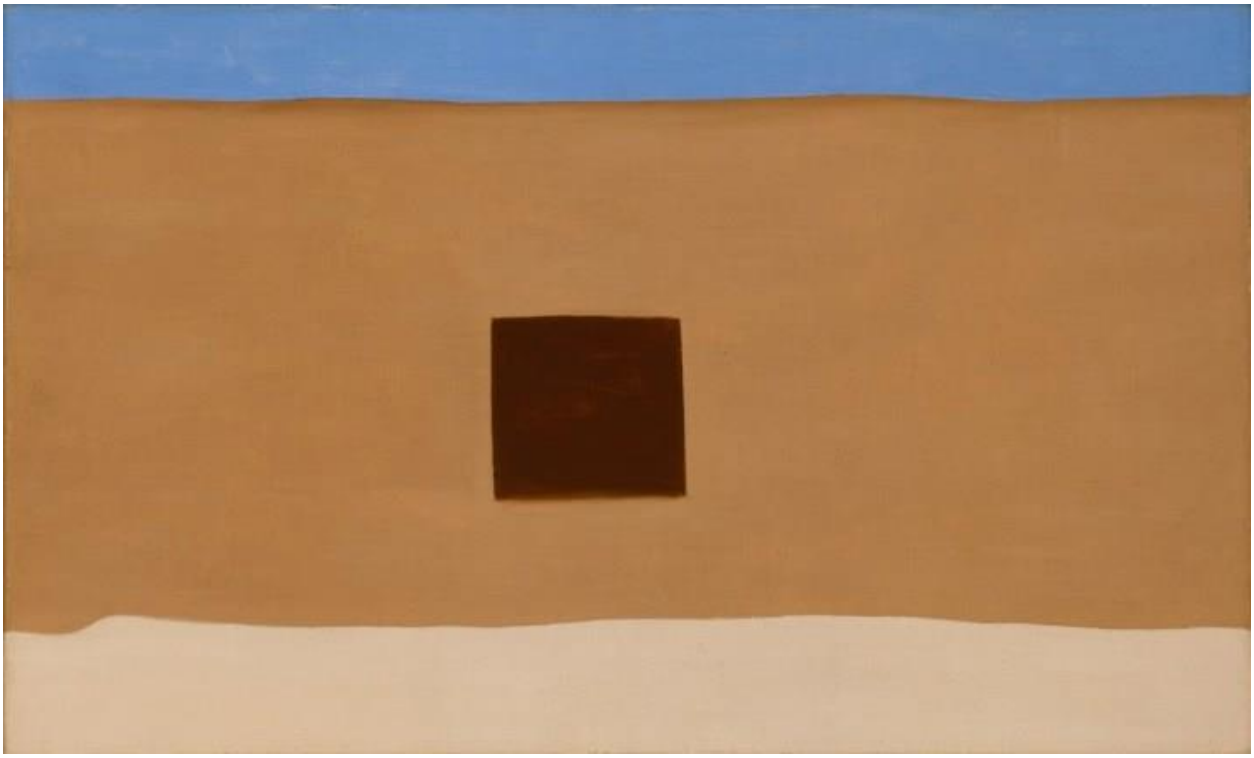


Figure 3.16. Georgia O'Keeffe, *In the Patio III*, 1948. Oil on canvas, 18 x 30 in. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, NM.



Figure 3.17. Balthazar Korab, O'Keeffe Abiquiu home, interior view, 1965. Archival inkjet print, size unknown. Published in "Inside Georgia O'Keeffe's Handsome New Mexico Home", AnOther, published April 19, 2017, https://www.anothermag.com/design-living/gallery/8727/georgia-okeeffe/0. Photo from Rizzoli.

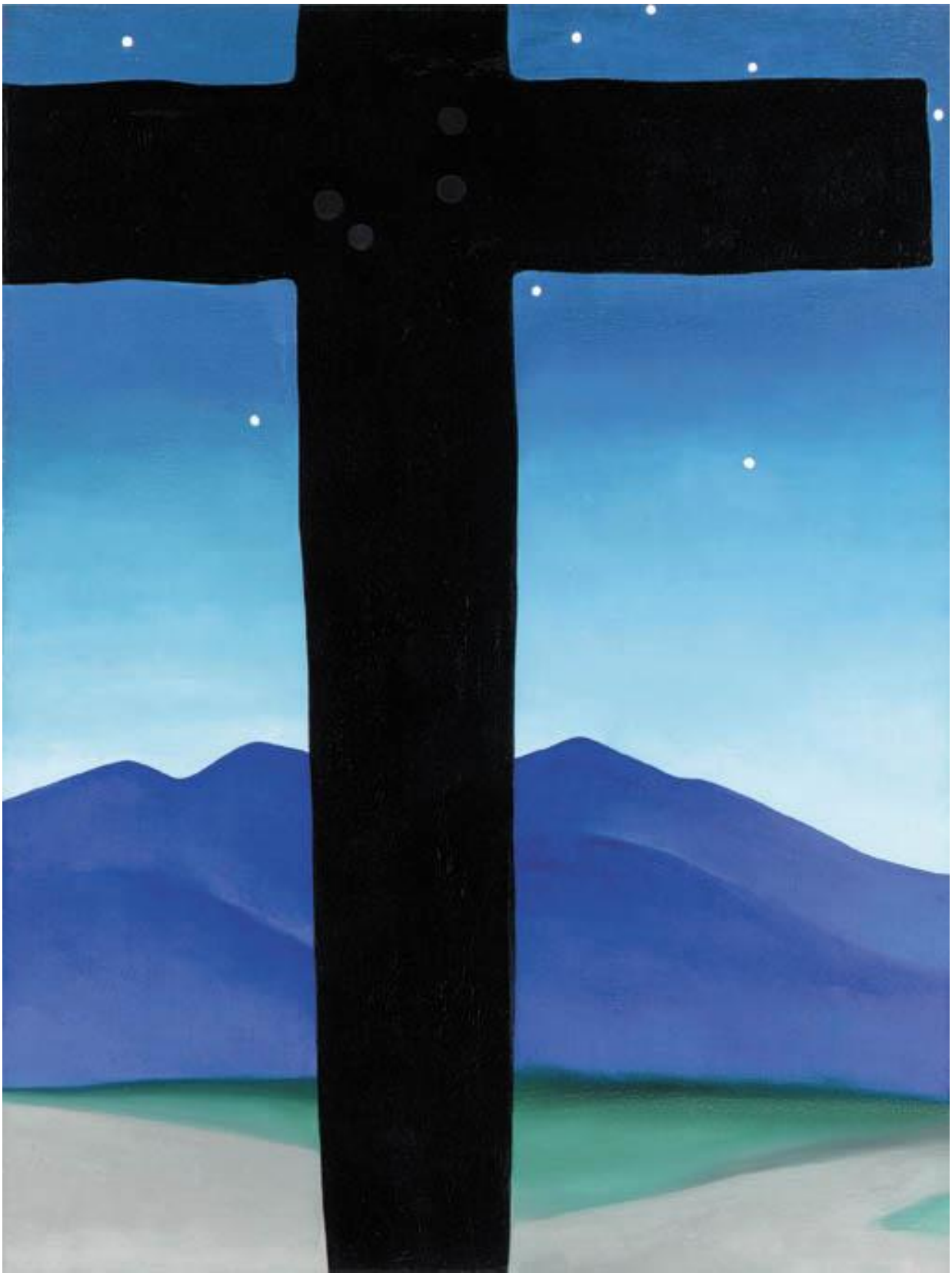


Figure 3.18. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Black Cross with Stars and Blue*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in. Private collection.

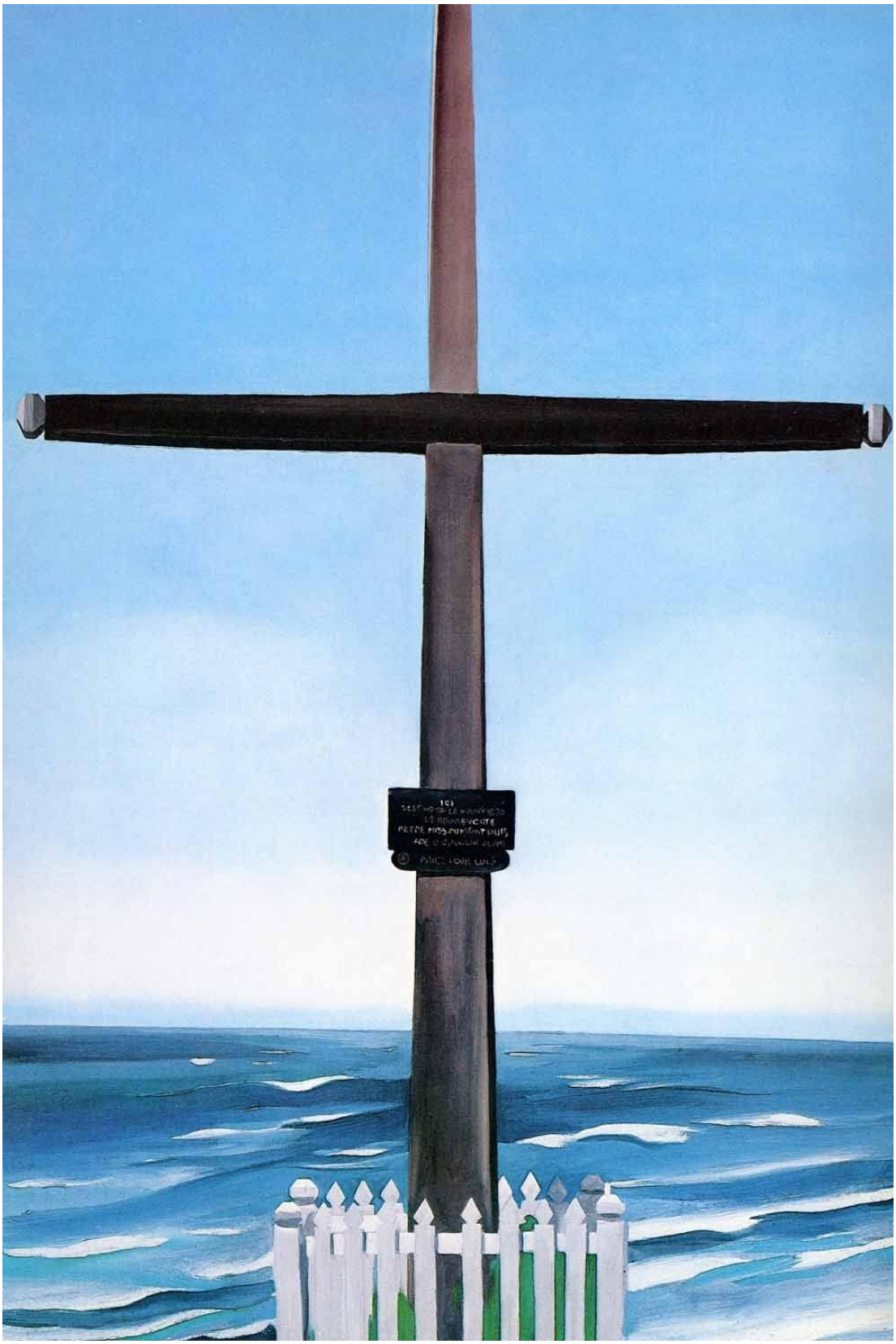


Figure 3.19. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Cross by the Sea, Canada*, 1932. Oil on canvas, 36 x 24 in. Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, NH.



Figure 3.20. Georgia O’Keeffe, *Porcelain Rooster*, 1929. Pastel on paper, 15 x 8 in. Private collection.



Figure 3.21. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Pink Abstraction,* 1929. Oil on canvas, 36 x 30 in. Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, AZ.



Figure 3.22. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Horn and Feathers*, 1937. Oil on canvas, 20 x 24 in. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, NM.



Figure 3.23. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Feather and Brown Leaf*, 1935. Oil on canvas, 16 x 20 in. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AK.



Figure 3.24. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Summer Days*, 1936. Oil on canvas, 36 1/8 x 30 1/8 in. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

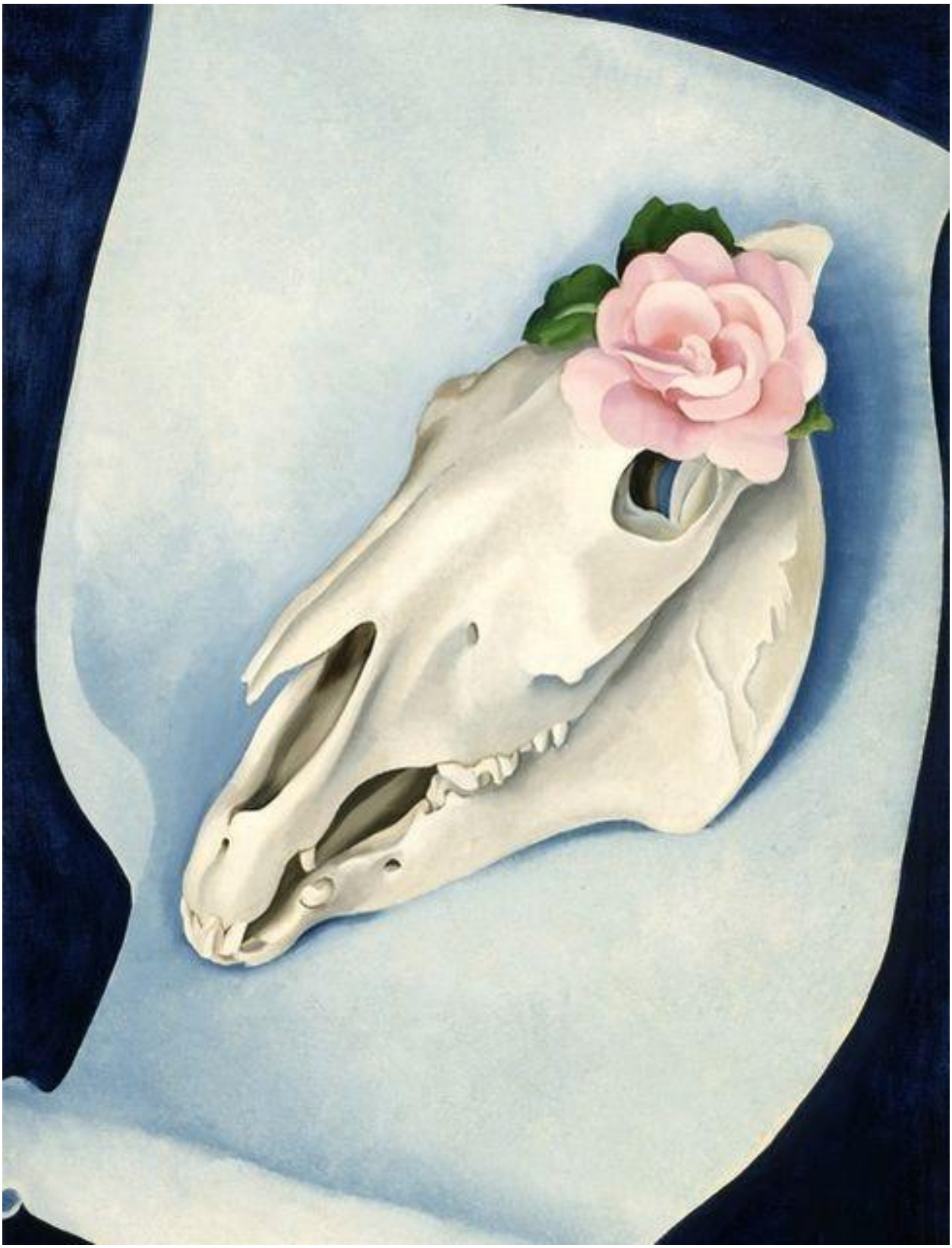


Figure 3.25. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Horse's Skull with Pink Rose*, 1931. Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 in. Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL.



Figure 3.26. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Cow's Skull: Red, White, and Blue*, 1931. Oil on canvas, 39 7/8 x 35 7/8 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.



Figure 3.27. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Turkey Feathers and Indian Pot,* 1941. Oil on canvas, 20 x 16 in. Private collection.

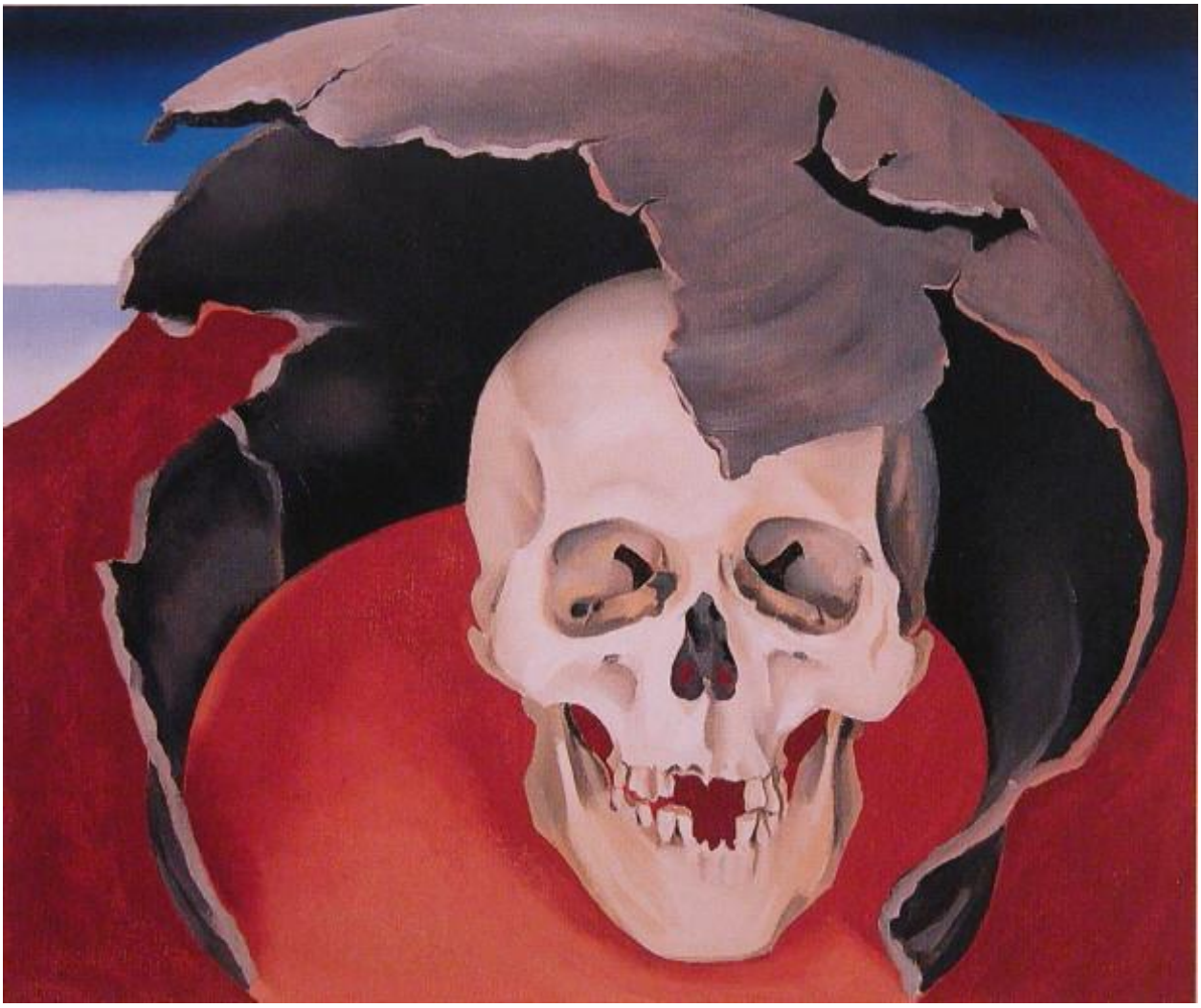


Figure 3.28. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Head with Broken Pot*, 1943. Oil on canvas, 16 x 19 in. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, NM.

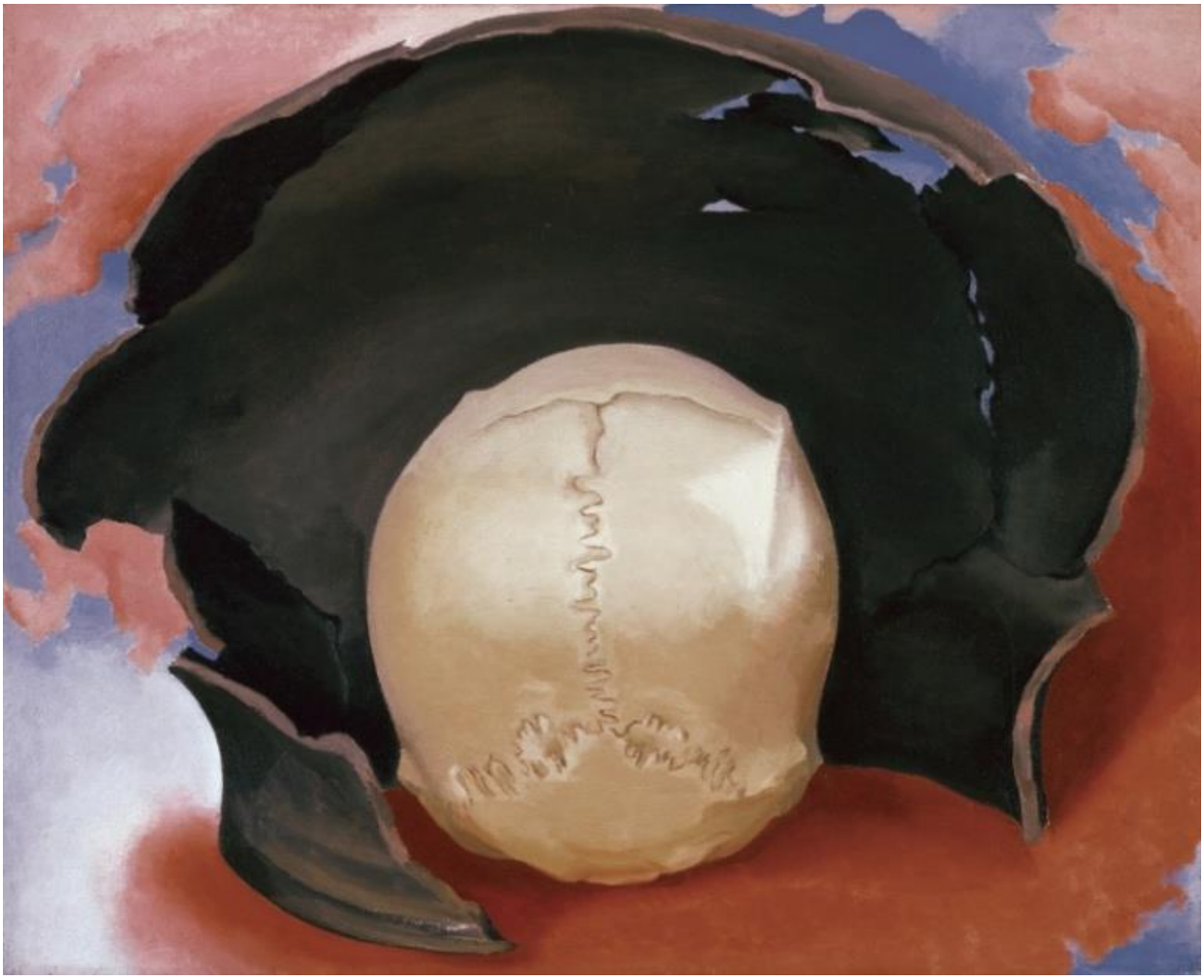


Figure 3.29. Georgia O'Keeffe, *It Was a Man and Pot*, 1942. Oil on canvas, 15 7/8 x 20 in. Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA.

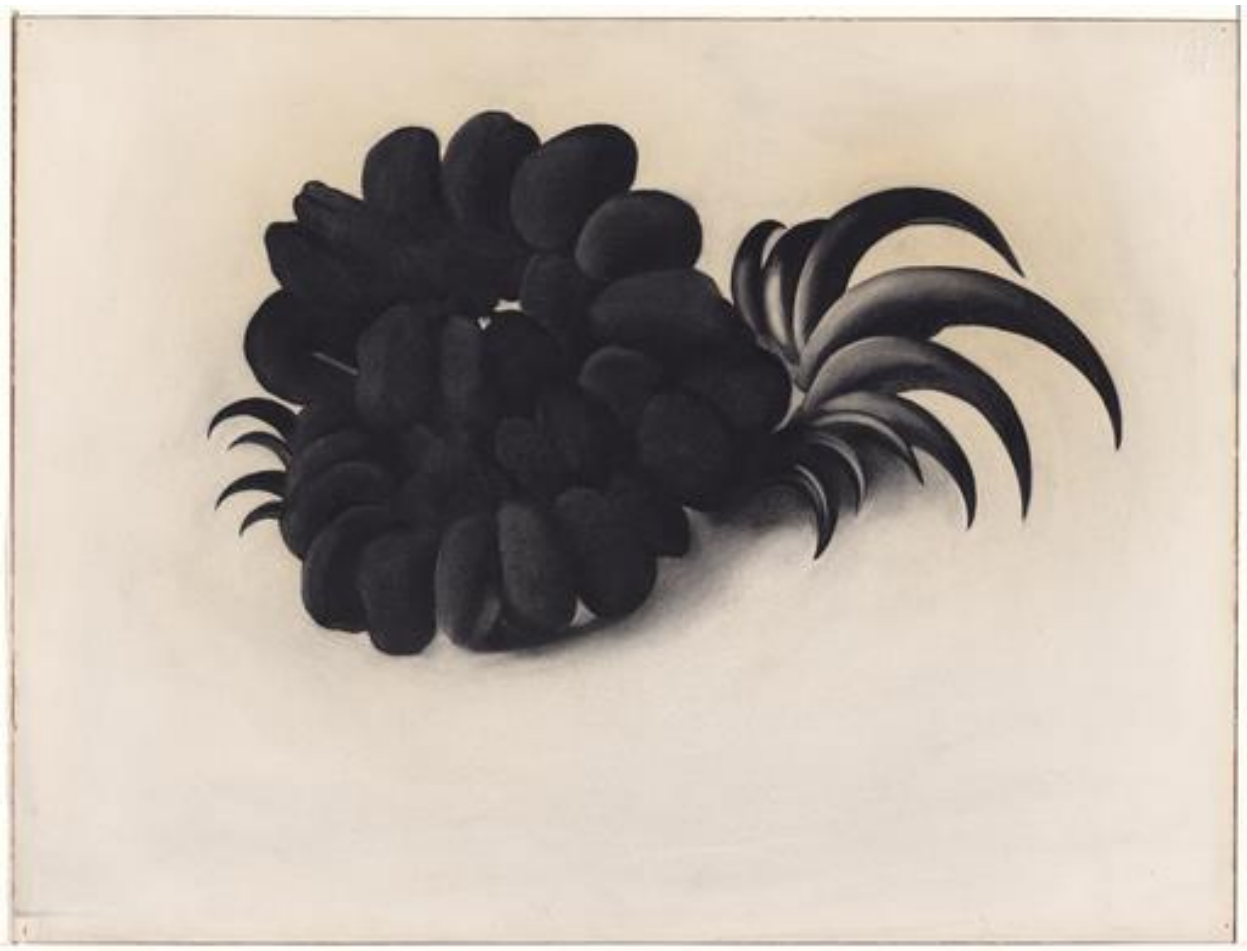


Figure 3.30. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Eagle Claw and Bean Necklace*, 1934. Charcoal on paper, 19 x 25 1/8 in. Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Figure 3.31. Georgia O’Keeffe, *Kachina*, 1931. Oil on wood panel, 20 5/8 x 16 in. Vilcek Foundation, New York, NY.
Note: This image has not been reproduced here for cultural sensitivity reasons.



Figure 3.32. Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Portrait*, 1931. Gelatin silver print, 9 3/8 x 7 5/16 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

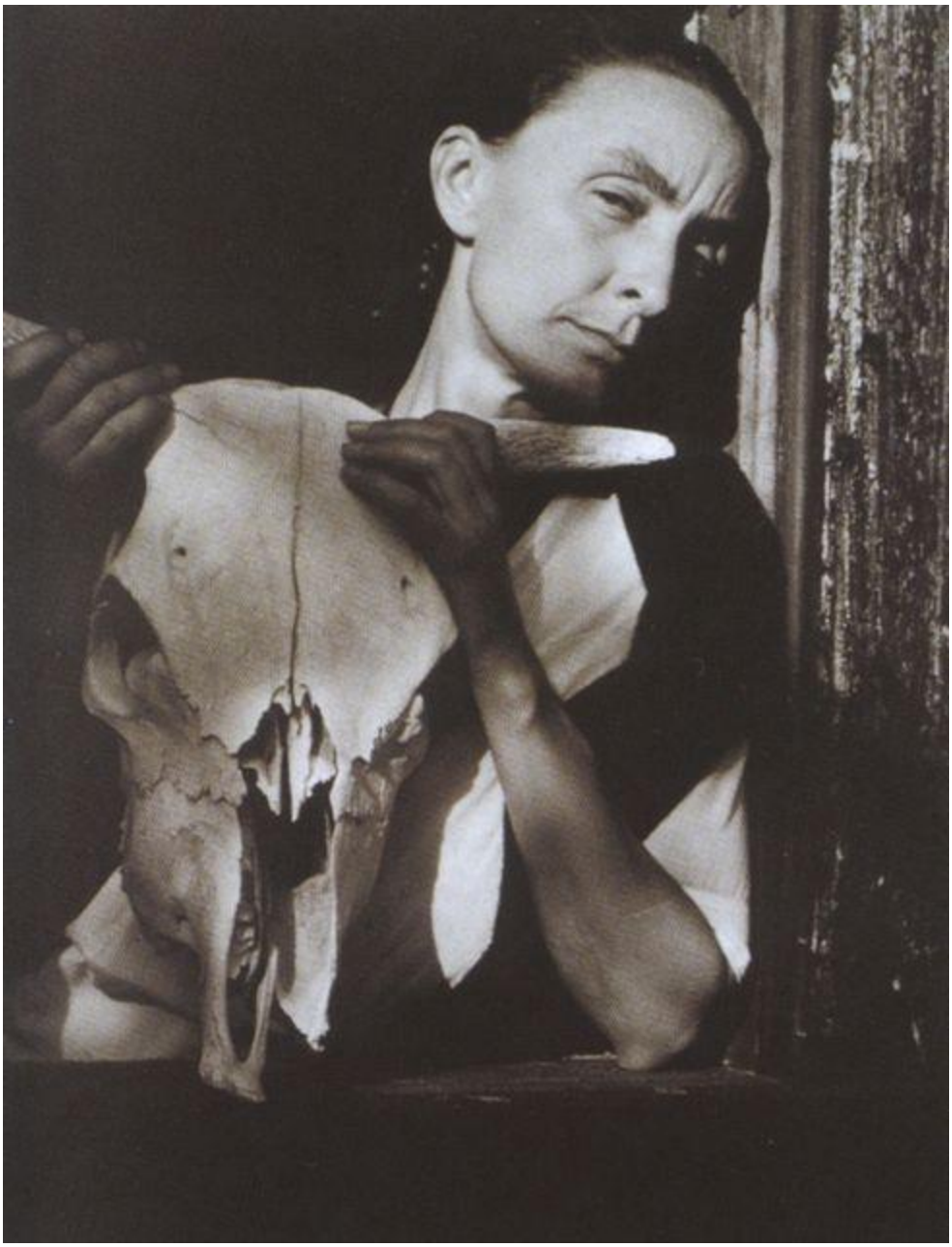


Figure 3.33. Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Portrait*, 1931. Gelatin silver print, 9 5/16 x 7 3/8 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

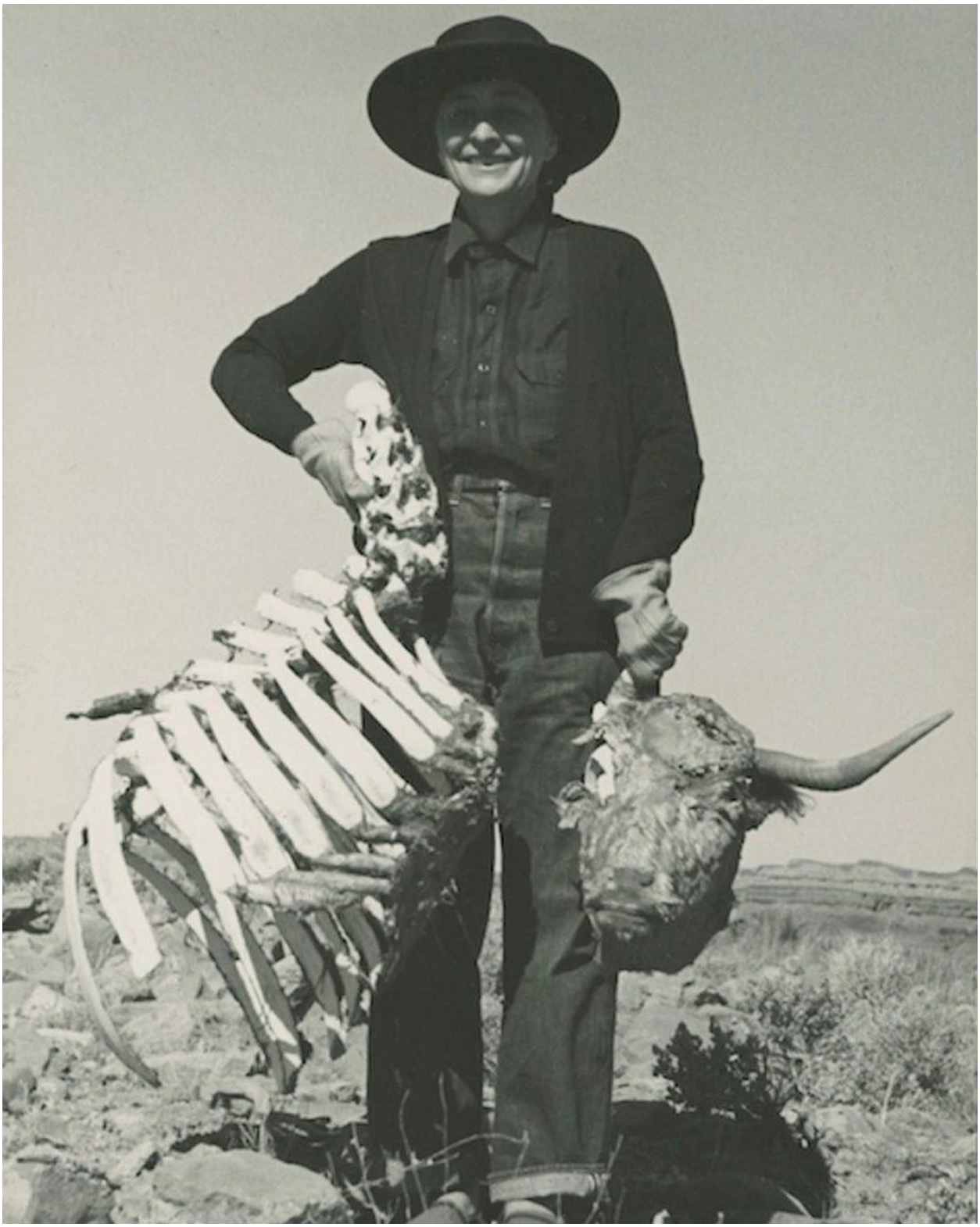


Figure 3.34. Ansel Adams, *Georgia O'Keeffe, Abiquiu, N.M.*, 1937. Gelatin silver print, 5 5/8 x 3 ¾ in. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, NM.



Figure 3.35. John Candelario, *Georgia and Skull*, 1942 (printed 1993). Gelatin silver print, 8 3/8 x 7 in. New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe, NM.



Figure 3.36. John Candelario, *Georgia O'Keeffe and Skull, Ghost Ranch Patio*, 1942. Gelatin silver print, size unknown. Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe, NM.



Figure 3.37. Emily Carr, *Thunderbird*, 1931. Oil on canvas, 27 3/16 x 21 5/16 in. Thomson Collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON.



Figure 3.38. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Paul's Kachina*, 1931. Oil on board, 8 in. d. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, NM.
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Figure 3.39. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Idol's Head*, 1960s. Oil on canvas, 7 x 7 in. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, NM.
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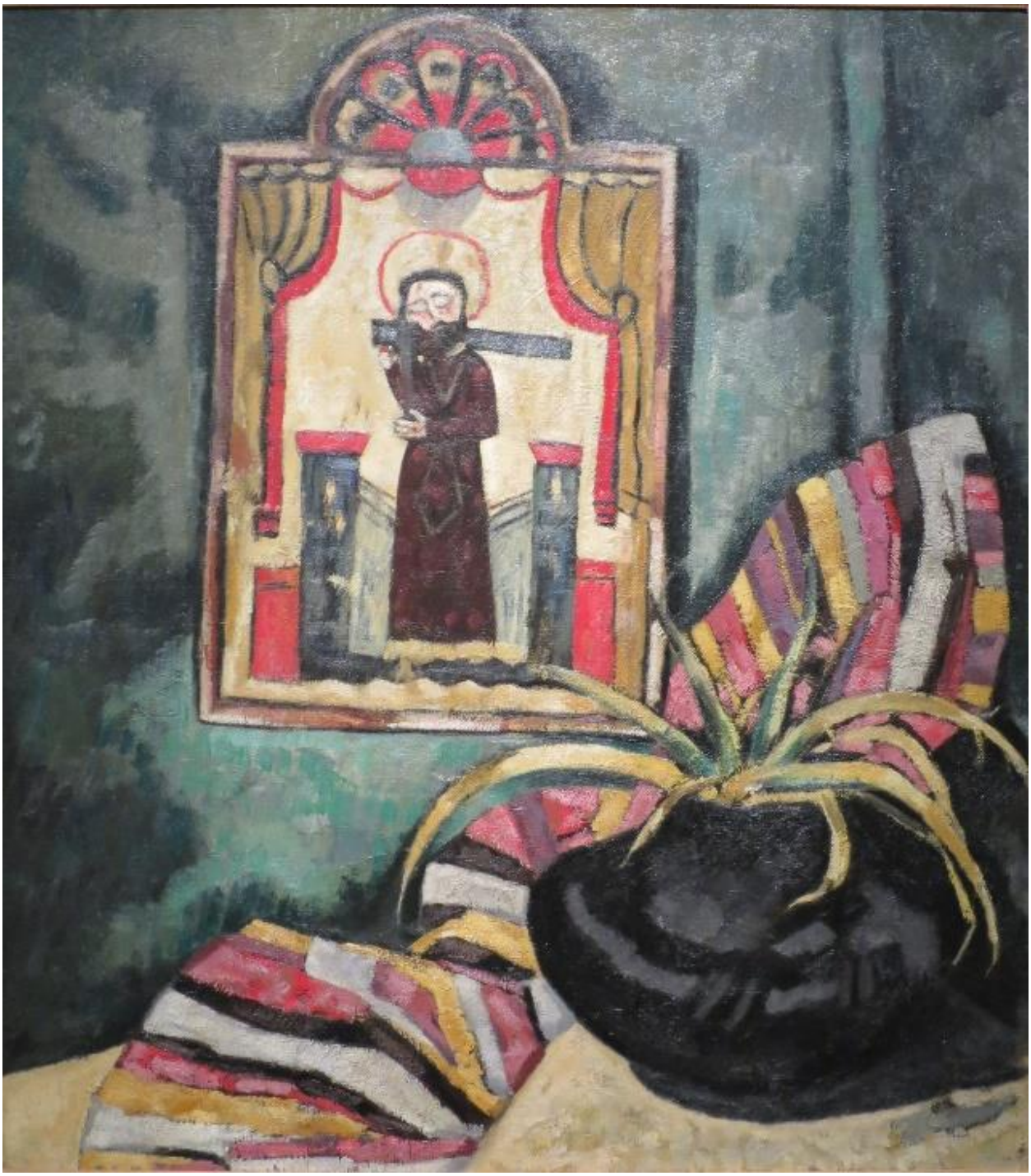


Figure 3.40. Marsden Hartley, *El Santo*, 1919. Oil on canvas, 36 x 32 in. New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe, NM.



Figure 3.41. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Kokopelli with Snow*, 1942. Oil on board, 15 x 9 15/16 in. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, NM.
Note: This image has not been reproduced here for cultural sensitivity reasons.



Figure 3.42. Georgia O’Keeffe, *Kachina*, 1938. Oil on canvas, 7 x 7 in. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA.
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Figure 3.43. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Blue-Headed Indian Doll,* 1935. Watercolor and graphite on paper, 21 1/16 x 12 1/8 in. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, NM.
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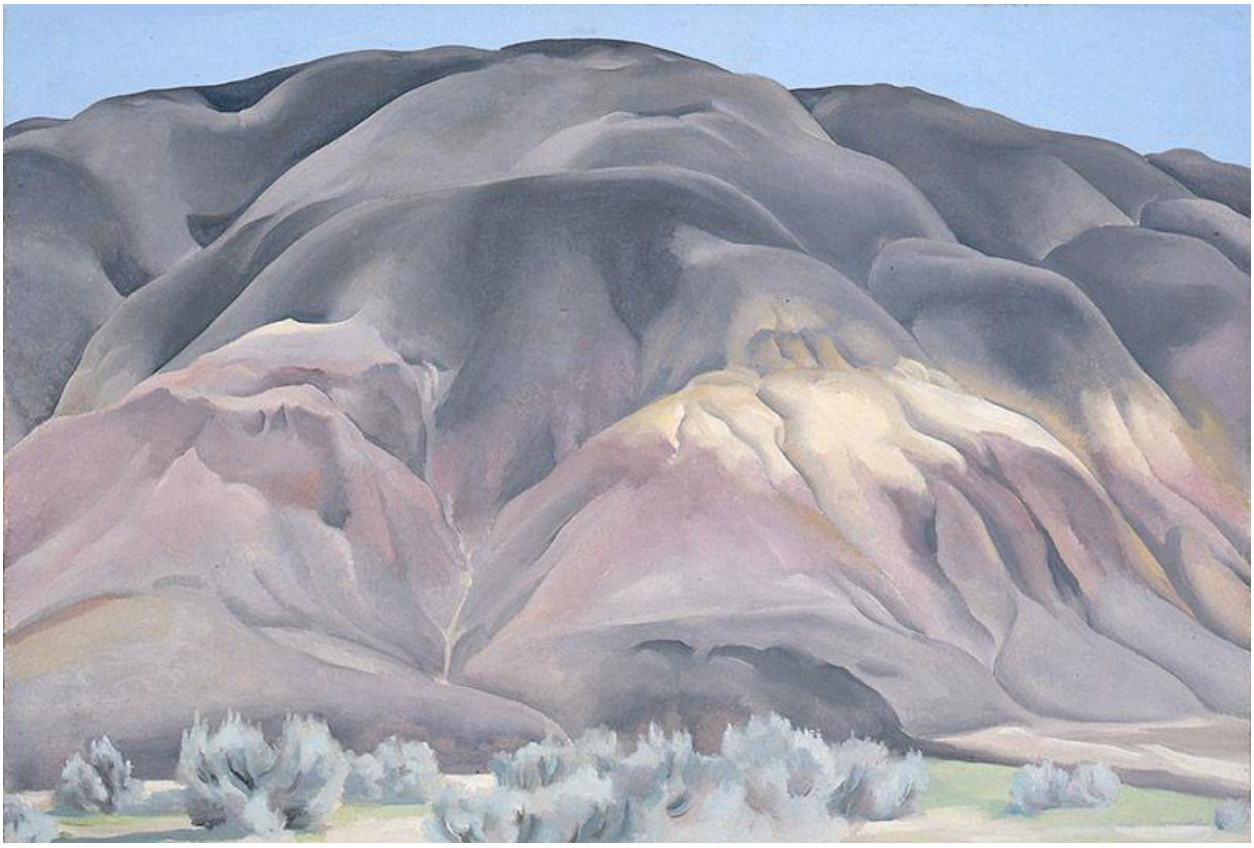


Figure 3.44. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Grey Hill Forms*, 1936. Oil on canvas, 20 x 30 in. New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe, NM.



Figure 3.45. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Black Place II*, 1944. Oil on canvas, 23 7/8 x 30 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.



Figure 3.46. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Black Place Green,* 1949. Oil on canvas, 37 ¼ x 47 ¼ in. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

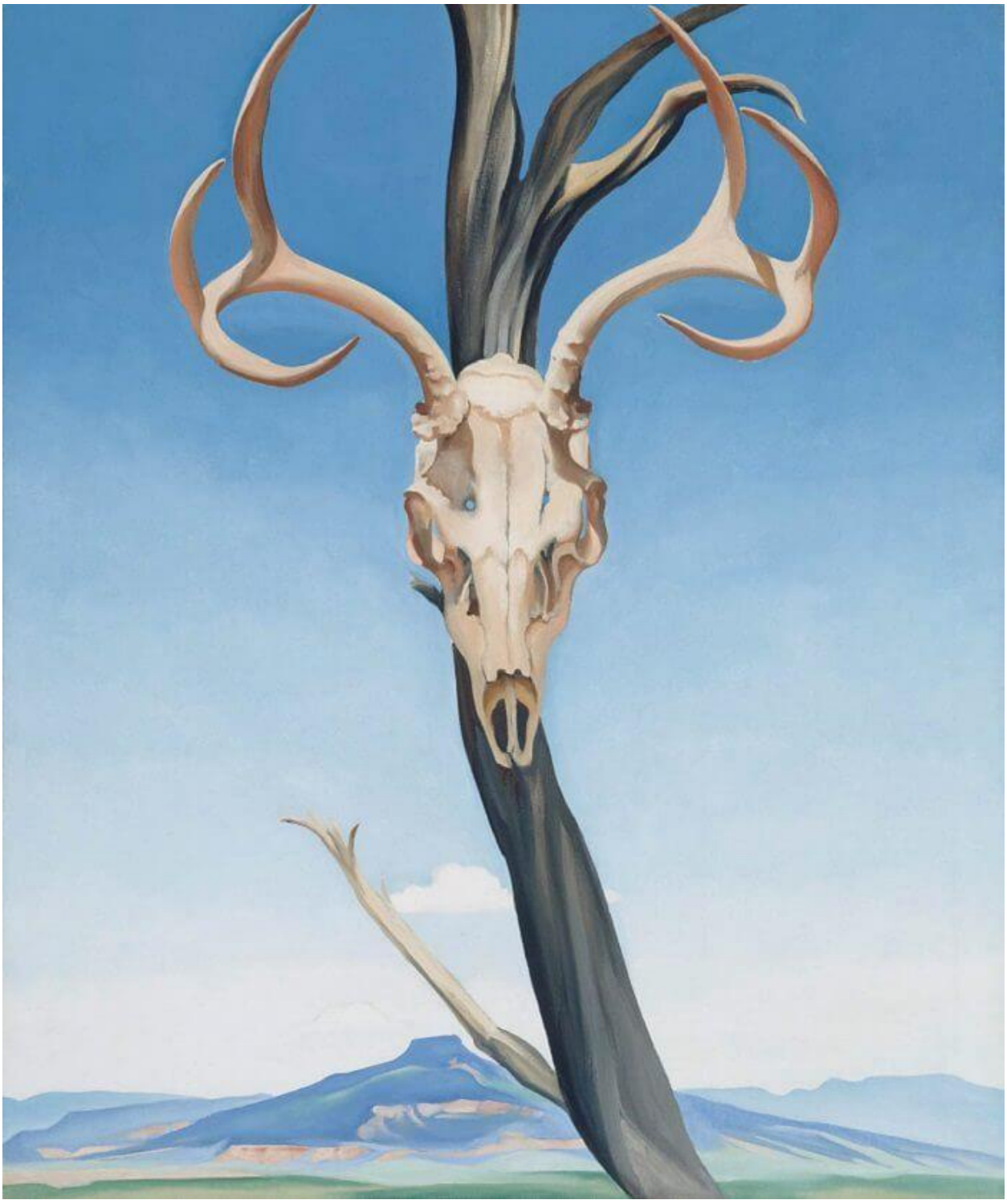


Figure 3.47. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Deer's Skull with Pedernal*, 1936. Oil on canvas, 36 x 30 in. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA.

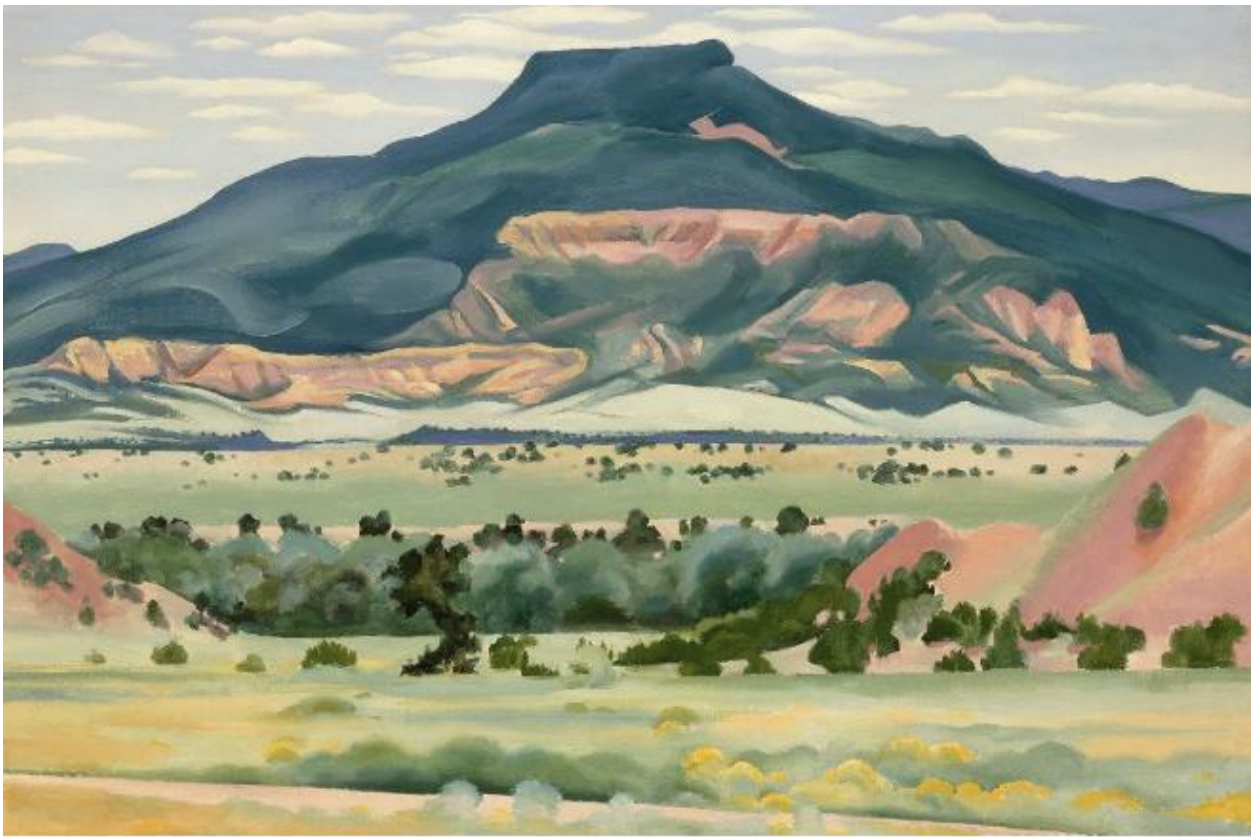


Figure 3.48. Georgia O'Keeffe, *My Front Yard, Summer,* 1941. Oil on canvas, 20 1/16 x 30 1/8 in. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, NM.



Figure 3.49. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Pedernal*, 1945. Pastel on paper, 21 ½ x 43 ¼ in. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, NM.



Figure 3.50. Georgia O'Keeffe, *The House I Live In*, 1937. Oil on canvas, 14 x 30 in. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

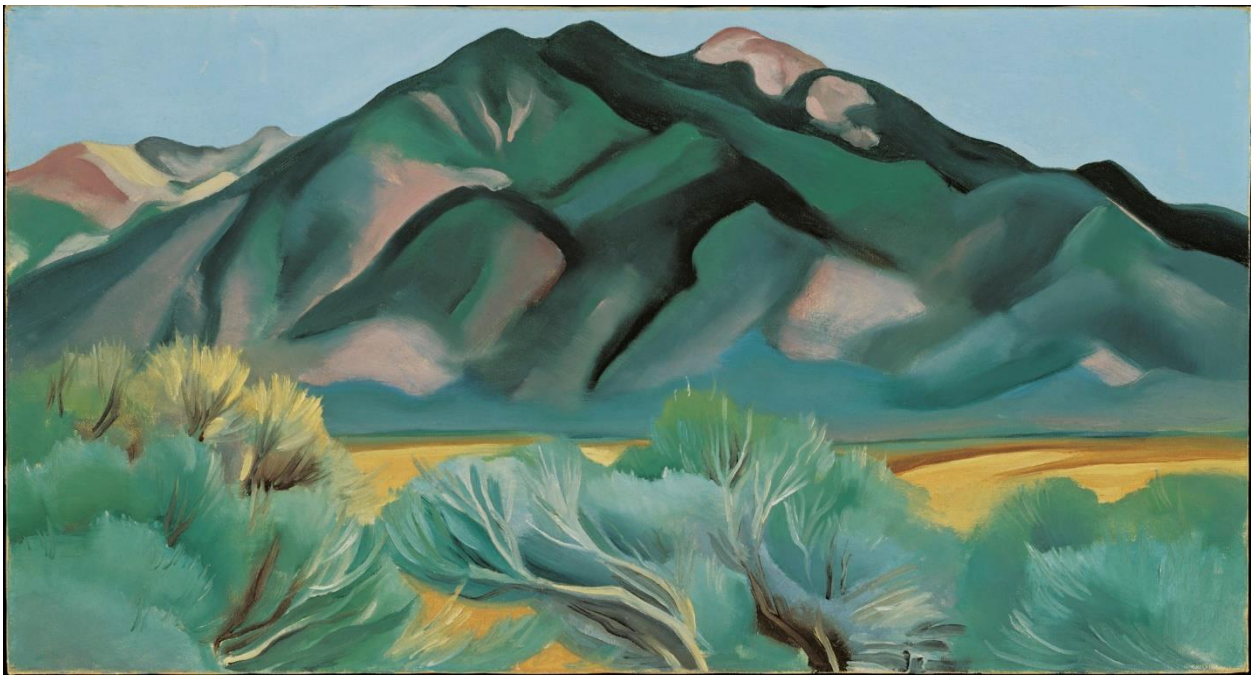


Figure 3.51. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Taos Mountain, New Mexico,* 1930. Oil on canvas, 16 x 30 in. Hood Museum, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH.



Figure 3.52. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Mountain at Bear Lake, Taos*, 1930. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in. The White House, Washington, DC.



Figure 3.53. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Desert Abstraction (Bear Lake)*, 1931. Oil on canvas, 15 ¾ x 35 2/4 in. Museum of New Mexico Foundation, Santa Fe, NM.



Figure 4.1. Arthur Dove, *Shore Road*, 1942. Wax emulsion on canvas, 27 7/8 x 20 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.



Figure 4.2. Arthur Dove, *Rain*, 1924. Twigs and rubber cement on metal and glass, 19 ½ x 15 5/8 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



Figure 4.3. Arthur Dove, *Nature Symbolized No. 2*, c. 1911. Pastel on paper on masonite, 18 x 31 21/32 in. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL.

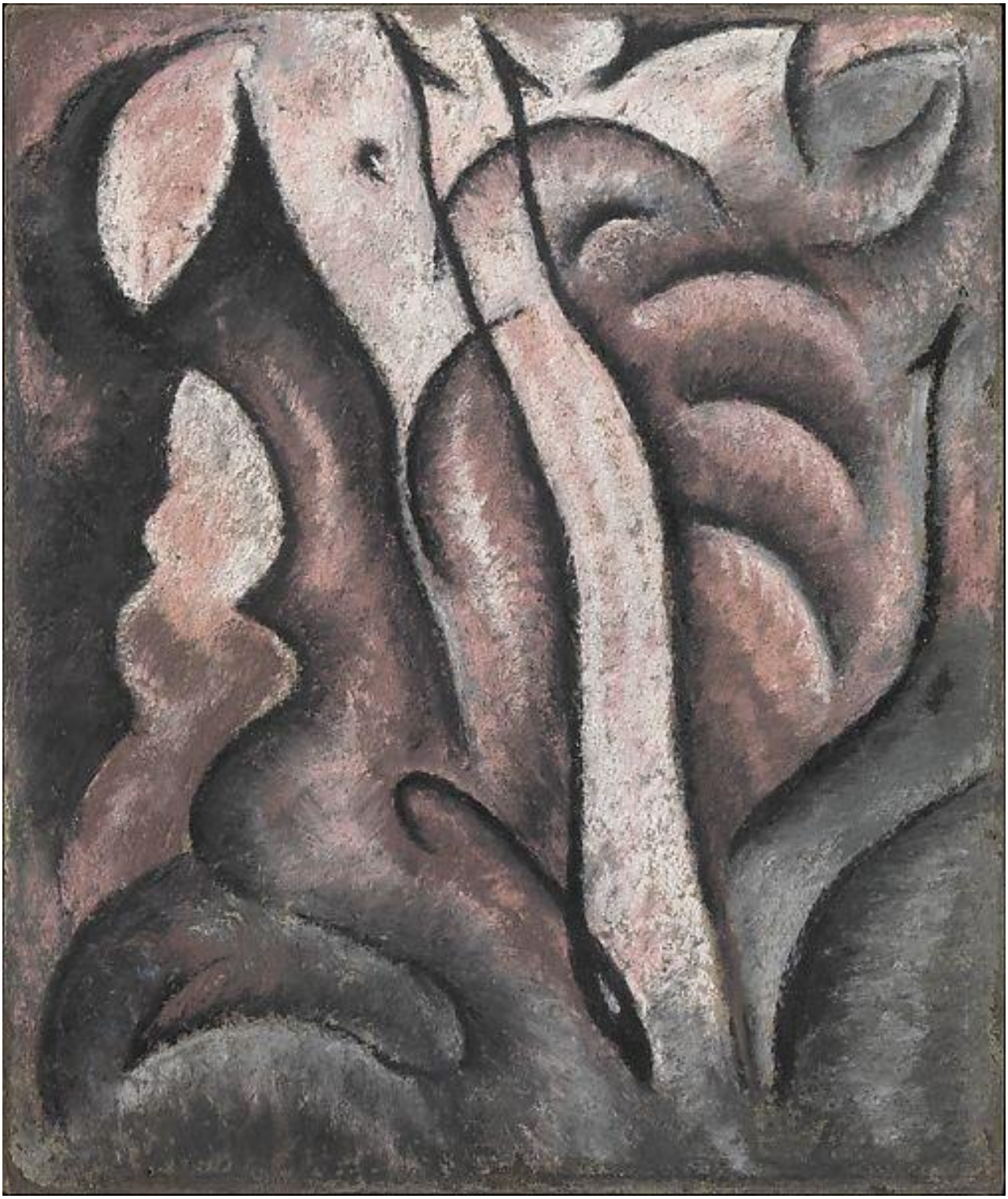


Figure 4.4. Arthur Dove, *Sentimental Music*, c. 1913. Pastel on paperboard, 21 5/8 x 18 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.



Figure 4.5. Arthur Dove, *George Gershwin – Rhapsody in Blue, Part 1*, 1927. Oil and metallic paint with clock spring on aluminium support, 11 ¾ x 9 ¾ in. Private collection.



Figure 4.6. Arthur Dove, *Me and the Moon*, 1937. Wax emulsion on canvas, 18 x 26 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC.



Figure 4.7. Arthur Dove, *Swing Music (Louis Armstrong)*, 1938. Emulsion, oil, and wax on canvas, 17 5/8 x 25 7/8 in. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL.



Figure 4.8. Arthur Dove, *Chinese Music*, 1923. Oil on wood, 21 5/8 x 18 1/8 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA.



Figure 4.9. Arthur Dove, *Primitive Music*, 1944. Tempera on canvas, 18 x 24 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC.



Figure 4.10. Arthur Dove, *Silver Chief*, 1942. Wax emulsion on canvas, 21 x 15 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC.



Figure 4.11. Arthur Dove, *Indian One*, 1943. Oil and wax emulsion on canvas, 18 x 24 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC.



Figure 4.12. Arthur Dove, *Indian Summer*, 1941. Oil on canvas, 20 x 28 in. Heckscher Museum of Art, Huntington, New York.



Figure 4.13. Diné people, wearing blanket, 1865-75. Wool, 65 ½ x 53 ½ in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.

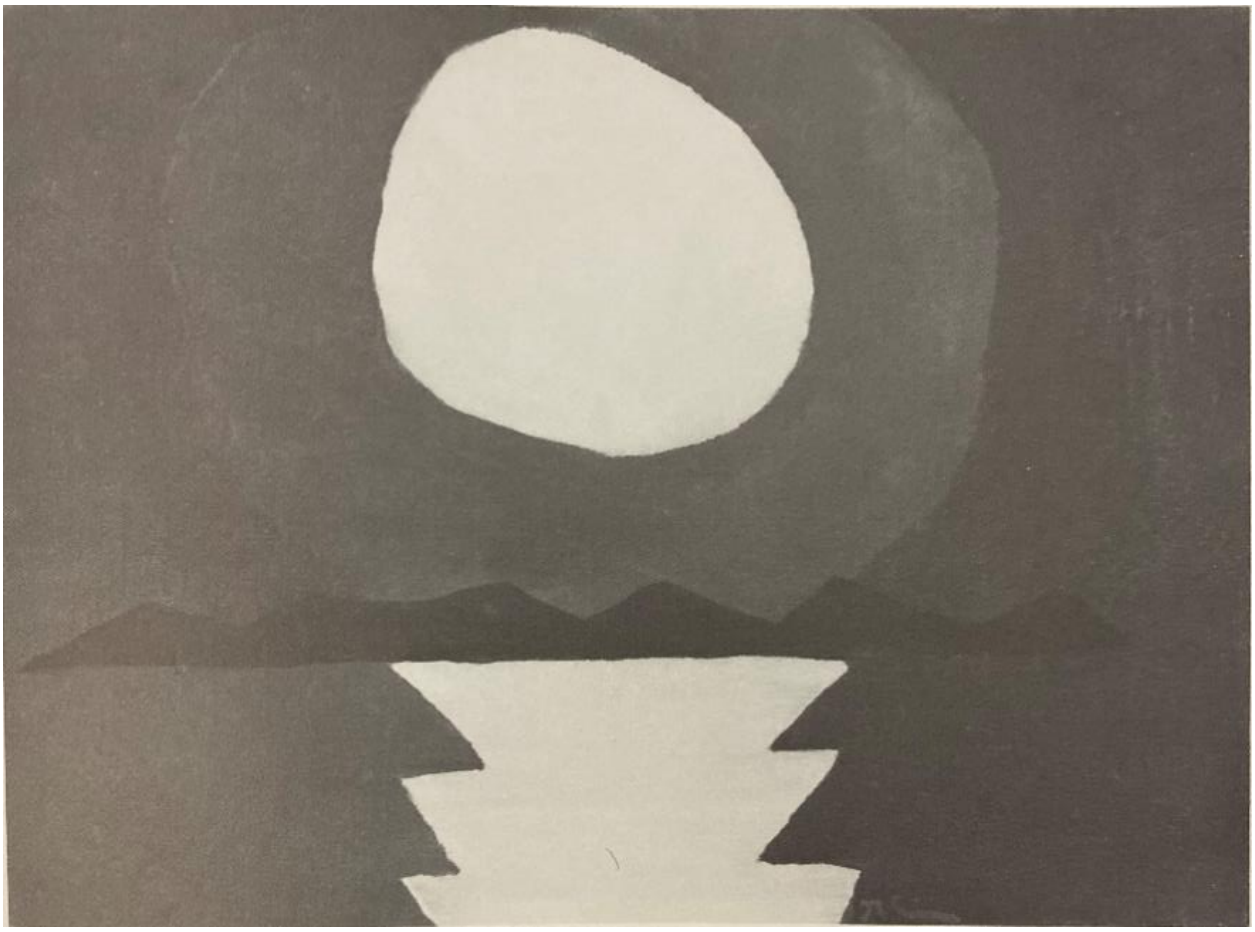


Figure 4.14. Arthur Dove, *The Moon*, 1941. Medium unknown, 12 x 16 in. Regis Collection, Minneapolis, MN. Reproduced in Morgan, *Arthur Dove: Life and Work*, 279.



Figure 4.15. Arthur Dove, *Square on the Pond*, 1942. Wax-based paint on canvas, 20 x 28 in. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA.



Figure 4.16. Arthur Dove, *Space Divided by Line Motive*, 1943. Oil on canvas, 24 x 32 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



Figure 4.17. Arthur Dove, *Goin' Fishin'* [formerly known as *Nigger Goes A' Fishin'*, among several other similar names], 1925. Bamboo, buttons, denim shirtsleeves, wood, and oil paint on wood panel, 21 ¼ x 25 ½ in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC.



Figure 4.18. Arthur Dove, illustration for Ellis Parker Butler, “Beloved humans: It’s Going to Be a Great Life,” *Success Magazine*, December 1923. Reproduced in Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 165.



Figure 4.19. Arthur Dove, "Decorated", illustration. *Life*, August 30, 1923. Reproduced in Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 146.



Figure 4.20. Arthur Dove, "'Chief,' said Bailman, tapping the ebony chest with his walking-stick", illustration for Edgar Wallace, "The Education of King Peter", *McClure's Magazine*, May 1910, 91. Image from "McClure's Magazine, Vol. 35, No. 1 (May 910)", Modernist Journals Project, accessed April 16, 2023, https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:554010/PDF/.



Figure 4.21. Arthur Dove, *Portrait of Ralph Dusenberry*, 1924. Oil, folding wooden rulers, wood, and cut-and-pasted print paper on canvas, 22 x 18 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.



Figure 4.22. Arthur Dove, *Colored Barge Man* (also known as *Colored Bargeman*, *Barge Nigger*, *Nigger Barge*, and *Negro on Barge*), 1929. Oil on canvas, 22 x 30 in. Location unknown.



Figure 4.23. Arthur Dove, *Harlem River Boats,* c. 1921. Oil on canvas, 16 ¼ x 10 ¾ in. Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY.



Figure 4.24. Arthur Dove, *Huntington Harbor I*, 1926. Canvas, oil paint, and sand on metal panel, 12 x 9 ½ in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC.



Figure 4.25. Arthur Dove, *Fog Horns*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 17 ¾ x 25 ½ in. Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, Colorado Springs, CO.



Figure 4.26. Arthur Dove, *Sand Barge*, 1930. Oil on cardboard, 20 x 30 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC.



Figure 4.27. Arthur Dove, *Silver Tanks and Moon*, 1930. Oil and metallic paint on canvas, 28 3/16 x 18 1/16 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA.



Figure 4.28. Arthur Dove, *Bessie of New York*, 1932. Oil on canvas, 28 x 40 in. Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD.

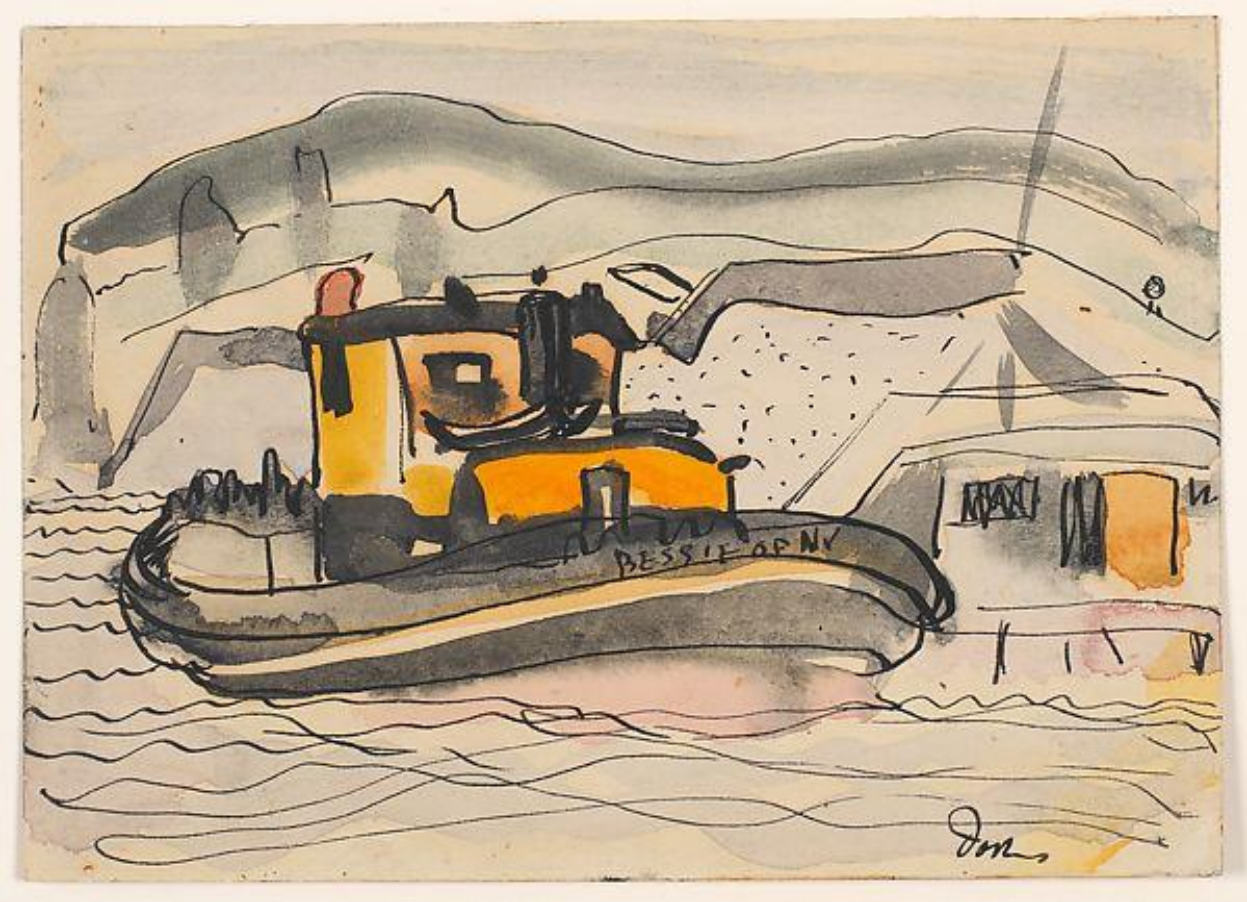


Figure 4.29. Arthur Dove, study for *Bessie of New York*, 1932. Ink and watercolor on paper, 5 x 7 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.



Figure 4.30. Carl Van Vechten, *Bessie Smith*, 1936. Gelatin silver print, 13 7/8 x 10 7/8 in. National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC.



Figure 4.31. Arthur Dove, *Red Barge*, 1931. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC.



Figure 4.32. Arthur Dove, *Face on a Bank*, 1940. Watercolor and ink on paper, 5 x 7 in. The Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, TX.



Figure 4.33. Arthur Dove, *The Critic*, 1925. Paper, newspaper, fabric, cord, broken glass, watercolor, and graphite pencil on board, 19 ½ x 13 x 2 ¼ in. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.



Figure 4.34. Arthur Dove, *Miss Woolworth*, 1924. Artificial flowers, stockings, mask, earrings, cork-and-felt insoles, purse, garden gloves, watch, ring, brooch, and bead necklace on unverified support, dimensions unknown. No longer extant.



Figure 4.35. Arthur Dove, *Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz*, 1924. Assemblage of lens, mirrored glass plate, springs, steel wool, glue, and nails on board, 15 7/8 x 12 1/8 in. Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.



Figure 4.36. Arthur Dove, *Swinging in the Park (There Were Colored People There)*, 1930. Oil on board, 23 ¼ x 32 in. Crystal Bridges Museum of Art, Bentonville, AR, and Fisk University, Nashville, TN.



Figure 4.37. Arthur Dove, *Swinging in the Park*, 1930. Watercolor on paper, 4 5/8 x 6 7/8 in. Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, ME.