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Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 1918, palladium print, $9\frac{1}{8} \times 7\frac{3}{8}$ in.

Modernism and the Feminine Voice

O'Keeffe and the Women of the Stieglitz Circle

Kathleen Pyne

University of California Press

Berkeley | Los Angeles | London

Georgia O'Keeffe Museum | Santa Fe

High Museum of Art | Atlanta

This book serves as the companion to the exhibition *Georgia O'Keeffe and the Women of the Stieglitz Circle*, organized by the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum and the High Museum of Art:

Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe
September 21, 2007–January 13, 2008

High Museum of Art, Atlanta
February 9–May 4, 2008

San Diego Museum of Art
May 24–September 28, 2008

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University of California Press
Berkeley and Los Angeles, California

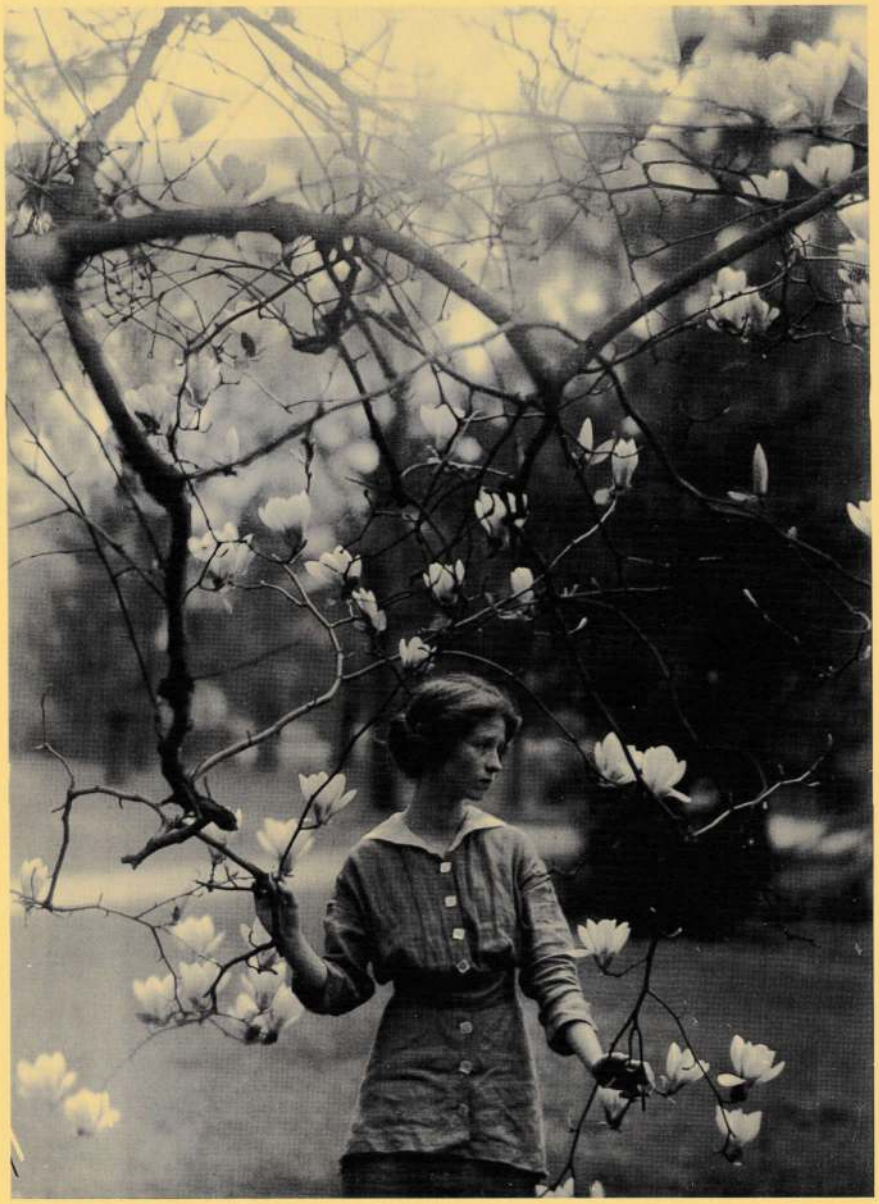
University of California Press, Ltd.
London, England

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Pyne, Kathleen A.
Modernism and the feminine voice : O'Keeffe and the women of the Stieglitz circle / Kathleen Pyne.
p. cm.
Companion book to an exhibition that will open at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in fall 2007.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN-13: 978-0-520-24189-3 (cloth : alk. paper)
ISBN-13: 978-0-520-24190-9 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Modernism (Art)— United States. 2. Women artists— United States. 3. Stieglitz, Alfred, 1864–1946—Art patronage. 4. O'Keeffe, Georgia, 1887–1986. I. O'Keeffe, Georgia, 1887–1986. II. Title.
N6512.5.M63P96 2007
704'.042097309041—dc22 2005034482

Manufactured in Canada

16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48–1992 (R 1997) (*Permanence of Paper*).



108

Arnold Genthe, *Edna St. Vincent Millay*, 1913, gelatin silver print(?)

The Burden and the Promise of the Woman-Child

O'Keeffe in the 1920s

In the spring of 1917 Stieglitz presented O'Keeffe's drawings in a one-person show, giving the feminine voice the final statement in his modernist program. At the end of that same year, 1917, the feminine voice of literary modernism established its presence in New York when Edna St. Vincent Millay took up residence in the Village. She was already famous as the author of "Renascence," a poem that captured the mood of the youth movement underway in 1912 when it was first published. Stieglitz's colleague Mitchell Kennerley had recently reprinted her masterwork in a volume with several of her other poems. Arnold Genthe's photograph of Millay for the dust jacket (Fig. 108) was taken in the spring of 1913 at Kennerley's Mamaroneck, New York, estate, where she was frequently a guest. This image of the "girl-poet" standing amid a bower of flowering branches visualized her in a manner fitted to her future place in the youth movement. Millay's life in Village bohemia from 1917 to 1921 established her as a legend in New York modernism,[1] and her poetic voice mythologized the Village as a romance of free love. More than simply observing and eulogizing that life, her poetry celebrated the life—her life—of the free libido.

Millay lived her image in a very public manner, and her art embodied her life, as it was well known. These facts were instrumental to her transformation into an iconic feminine figure of modernism. As a petite, luminous beauty, she was cast by the press in the image of a woman-child. These lessons were not lost on Stieglitz. Kennerley was the American publisher of D. H. Lawrence's works, which at the end of World War I became Stieglitz's new ur-text for feminine sexuality, one

he would enlist in developing a master narrative for O'Keeffe's artistry. Stieglitz

would make Kennerley's Anderson Galleries his own turf in the 1920s as the setting for his and O'Keeffe's exhibitions, which together composed the platform from which he established her image. Millay was the first to inhabit publicly the phantasmal figure of modernism's woman-child, whose work spoke the free life of the body. The woman-child was Stieglitz's creation but also at the same time a collective modernist fantasy. Had Millay not existed, Village radicals would have invented another feminine icon in some form, for they required this figure to clarify for themselves their own utopian desires.[2] In the modernist world of images, Stieglitz would follow suit in molding O'Keeffe, employing similar strategies to bring her to the same iconic status in the world of the visual arts. Each of these two women in her own field was to have no peers; each was the woman-child singular to her own audience. The child metaphor for the feminine was peculiar for both women, given their maturity in 1917: O'Keeffe was thirty years old, Millay, twenty-five. That metaphor provided the mechanism of collective fantasy that transformed them into icons; it responded serendipitously to the psychological conditions that allowed both women to accept the identity of the woman-child and to inhabit that role both privately and publicly.

The Language of the Woman-Child

It is important to consider how O'Keeffe, on her own, at first willingly took on the figure of the child in her identity until Stieglitz's subtext for her and her art fully emerged. O'Keeffe's acceptance of the "Great Child" identity was entangled with her desire to find a modernist visual vocabulary that would allow her inner self to speak, unprocessed through consciousness or intellect. These self-reflexive forms externalized her mood or feeling; moreover, they came to her mysteriously, as forms transferred directly from her unconscious mind to her page, she said, deploying Kandinsky's and Bergson's intuitional models for the artist familiar to her from *Camera Work*. More than anything, O'Keeffe told her friend Anita Pollitzer, she wanted to gain Stieglitz's approval, presumably by shaping herself and her art according to his prescriptions.[3] In late 1916, Stieglitz installed O'Keeffe's

works, along with those of Marin, Walkowitz, Macdonald-Wright, and Hartley, at 291 at the same time that he hung the watercolors of his niece Georgia Engelhard there. O'Keeffe's activities in 1917 following the show reveal the power of Engelhard the child artist as a model for her. The child model was doubly impressed on O'Keeffe in 1917 because she actually taught first- and second-grade children in Canyon in January of that year. Moreover, she had taught children from 1912 to 1914 in the Amarillo public schools. She now went on to explore the language of children's art (Fig. 109). In a watercolor of a house she adopted the very sign for a child's drawing, playfully aping the child's way of making an image, with its seemingly spontaneous quality, its rudimentary gestures and shapes, and its schematic disposition across the surface, almost to the point of symmetry.

Although O'Keeffe did not see the Engelhard exhibition, she would have read the reviews of it in *Camera Work*, which she followed closely, sometimes with Stieglitz's help as he sent her reviews of the shows at 291. O'Keeffe visited Stieglitz in late May 1917. During this visit Stieglitz rehung for her her recent show, which she had not been able to see. He was also closing 291 for good and sorting through the accumulated works there. Among these were Engelhard's watercolors from her exhibition (Fig. 110), which Stieglitz and Walkowitz, who had arranged the first children's exhibition, had preserved. After O'Keeffe returned to Texas, Stieglitz wrote her that 291 was in effect to be gutted because he could not "bear to think that its walls which held your drawings & the children's should be in charge of any one else but myself." It was as if he wished to prevent the defiling of a sacred space that had attained its purity through association with her drawings and those of the children.[4] Implied here too is their discussion of the special significance of her drawings in relation to the children's drawings—a twinning of her artistic identity with that of the child vision.

O'Keeffe experimented with the child vision during this formative period as she tested different styles.[5] She tried them on to see how easily they fit—and whether they would allow her a natural fluency of movement in projecting intuitive motifs, as signs for her moods, directly onto the blank surface. After sending Pollitzer her first set of charcoal abstractions, which Pollitzer, in February 1916, turned directly over to Stieglitz, O'Keeffe continued to experiment, producing works from ideas

109

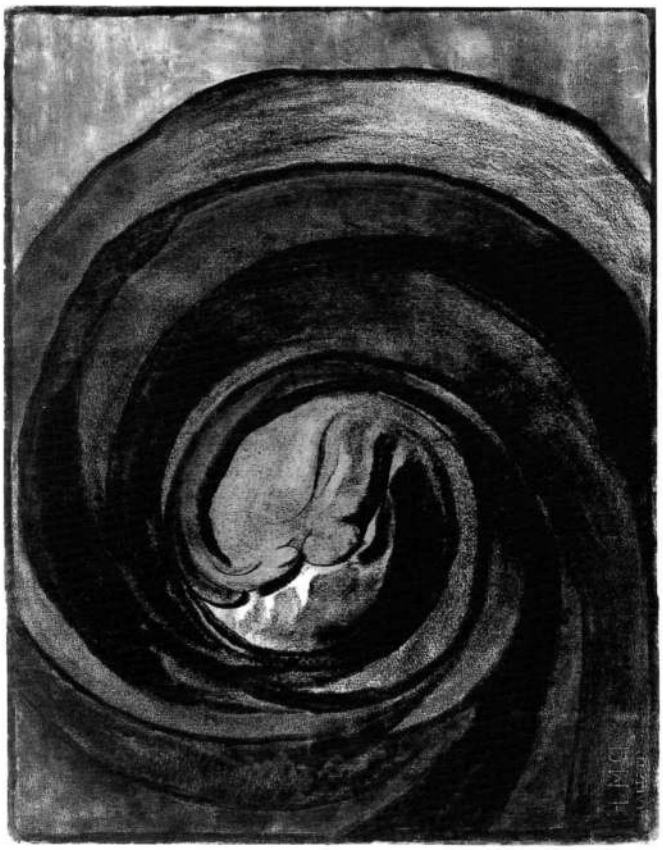
Georgia O'Keeffe, *Yellow House*, 1917, watercolor on paper, $8\frac{7}{8} \times 11\frac{7}{8}$ in.

110

Georgia Engelhard, *The Doll's Bungalow, Lake George*, 1916, watercolor on paper, $11\frac{15}{16} \times 17\frac{5}{16}$ in.

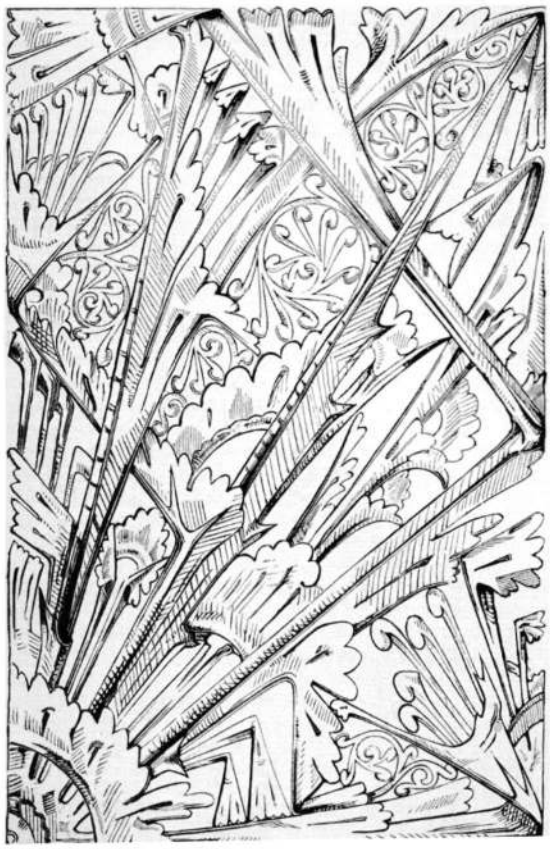
that she termed "near insanity."[6] With this phrase she attempted to link her efforts to the advanced art that was thought to be drawn from the depths of the unconscious, just as Stieglitz would do in presenting her work with the "psychopathic" drawings of Duncan and Lafferty. So O'Keeffe's early language of abstraction was nurtured by the high modernist paintings and theories proliferating in and outward from New York. This experimentation in abstraction was also facilitated by her own immersion in the field of design, which had pioneered a method of simplifying and abstracting from nature. While teaching at Columbia College in South Carolina in the fall of 1915, O'Keeffe taught "four big classes in Design." At West Texas State Normal College during her first term in the fall of 1916, O'Keeffe taught design exclusively: beginning classes in the principles of design as well as the applications of design to costume, textiles, and interior decoration.[7] In fact, there is a considerable resonance between O'Keeffe's early spiraling drawings of forms that can be seen to fold in, or unfold, like fern fronds (Fig. 111) and the abstracted natural motifs of modern designers such as Christopher Dresser (Fig. 112) or Charles Leland.[8] The spiral, certainly, is ubiquitous in the culture of art nouveau and Arts and Crafts design—the matrix of design languages in which she was immersed in her classroom teaching.

These spirals appeared in some of her first charcoal drawings that attempt to project her interior states through an abstract calligraphy. The *Specials*, as she dubbed these experiments, were produced during a breakthrough period in 1915, when O'Keeffe was still in Columbia, South Carolina, and were offered to the public at her first 291 exhibition in 1916. She returned to the spiral throughout her career as a signature motif, a form she insisted was so deeply buried in her unconscious that she did not know where it came from or even that she constantly repeated it. In December 1915 she told Pollitzer that she was unsure what these and other abstract forms meant; and to both Pollitzer and Stieglitz she said she could not put their meaning into words. They just appeared in her head, O'Keeffe said, and using Kandinsky's synesthesia to describe them, she explained that she liked her "songs" because they embodied her unique way of feeling and seeing.[9] Even if she was unaware of the sources of her imagery, her immersion in advanced design sustained the process by which she produced her early abstractions.



111
Georgia O'Keeffe,
No. 8–Special, 1916, charcoal
on white paper, 24¼ × 18⅞ in.

O'Keeffe's appreciation of the costume designs of Léon Bakst during this period of her breakthrough is especially significant for her development of a highly personalized language of abstract motifs. In February 1916 O'Keeffe thanked Pollitzer profusely for sending her a folio of Bakst's costume designs: "I never enjoyed anything any more. . . . I looked at it all the spare time I had the day I got it—I had read a good deal about them—and never was so curious to see anything in my life—Were the costumes as great in reality as they are on paper?" And she continued, "Again I must say—it was great of you to send it to me. Dorothy [True] and I just pored over the Bakst book last year," indicating that she had studied his work earlier, during her first tenure at Columbia University's Teachers College (New York) in late 1914 or early 1915.[10]



112
Christopher Dresser, "Lines Suggesting Power, Energy, Force or Vigor," 1873.

Among the costumes in the folio O'Keeffe studied would have been Bakst's designs (Figs. 113 and 114) for the infamous *Prelude à "L'après-midi d'un faune"* ballet (1894), composed by Claude Debussy and performed by the Ballets Russes with Nijinsky in the title role in Paris and London (1912), and those for the *Firebird* (Fig. 115), with music by Igor Stravinsky. Two recurring motifs in these costumes predominate in O'Keeffe's early abstractions of 1915–16 (Figs. 116 to 119), as well as in the commercial illustrations she executed (e.g., Fig. 120) after her second period of self-tutoring in Bakst's designs. One is a series of parallel lines that undulate rhythmically along the tunic of the nymph (see Fig. 114); the other is the spiral on the nymph's costume (again, Fig. 114) and the nymph's scarf that has enraptured the faun and entwines his body in a serpentine movement (Fig. 113). In

113
Léon Bakst,
Design for the Faun,
1912.

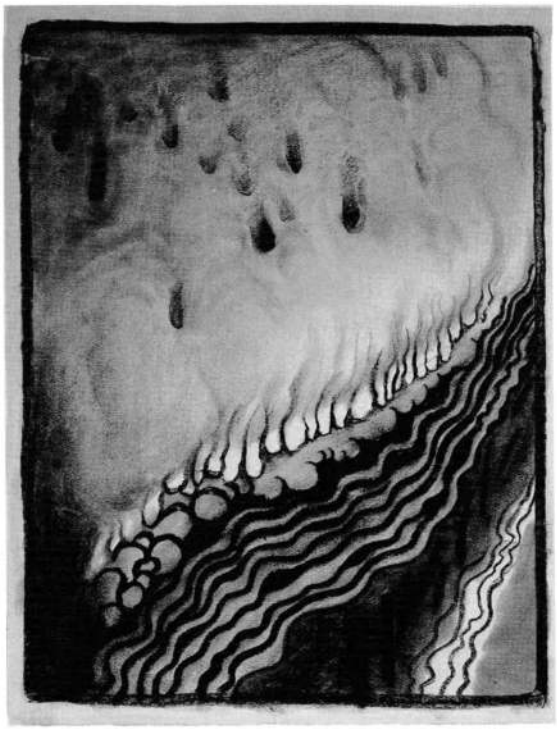
114
Léon Bakst,
Design for a Nymph,
1912.

115
Léon Bakst,
Design for the Firebird,
1909.

116
Georgia O'Keeffe, *No. 32–Special,* 1915, pastel on black paper, 14½ × 20 in.

117
Georgia O'Keeffe,
No. 20–From Music–Special, 1915, charcoal on cream paper, 13½ × 11 in.

118
Georgia O'Keeffe,
Untitled, 1915,
charcoal on cream paper, 24¼ × 18¾ in.



119
Georgia O'Keeffe,
No. 9 Special, 1915,
charcoal on cream
paper, 25 × 19 in.

120
Georgia O'Keeffe,
The Frightened Horses
and the Inquisitive Fish,
ca. 1916/1917.

THE FRIGHTENED HORSES AND THE INQUISITIVE FISH

the drawings O'Keeffe made while she was in South Carolina, *No. 20—From Music—Special* (Fig. 117) and *No. 9 Special* (see Fig. 119), her undulating lines have the effect of conveying a momentary frisson, whether that rippling feeling is pain (in the case of a headache in *No. 9*) or pleasure (on hearing music in *No. 20*). The spiral forms, in contrast, suggest her abstracting from forms in nature—for example, from plants (in *Untitled*, Fig. 118) or from water (in *No. 32—Special* and *No. 33—Special*; see Fig. 116). At times, as in *No. 32* or *Blue I*, her spirals and colors suggest the motifs and blues or oranges of the Firebird and the faun.[11] O'Keeffe found in Bakst a lexicon of abstract motifs through which she could externalize her moods and her experience of nature. During this period of studying Bakst and teaching design in Texas, her self-identification with the form of the spiral, which she used to speak her deepest feelings, appears regularly even in her cursive letter "I" (Fig. 121). Writing of her intent to make the drawings speak for her, she confided to Pollitzer, "I have been just trying to express myself—Words and I are not good friends at all. . . . I have to say it someway. . . . Ive [*sic*] been slaving on the violin—trying to make that talk—I wish I could tell you some of the things Ive wanted to say as I felt them."[12] After tutoring herself in Bakst, O'Keeffe was armed with an abstract language and fresh color that she thought would allow her to bypass words altogether and speak directly to the viewer's intuition.

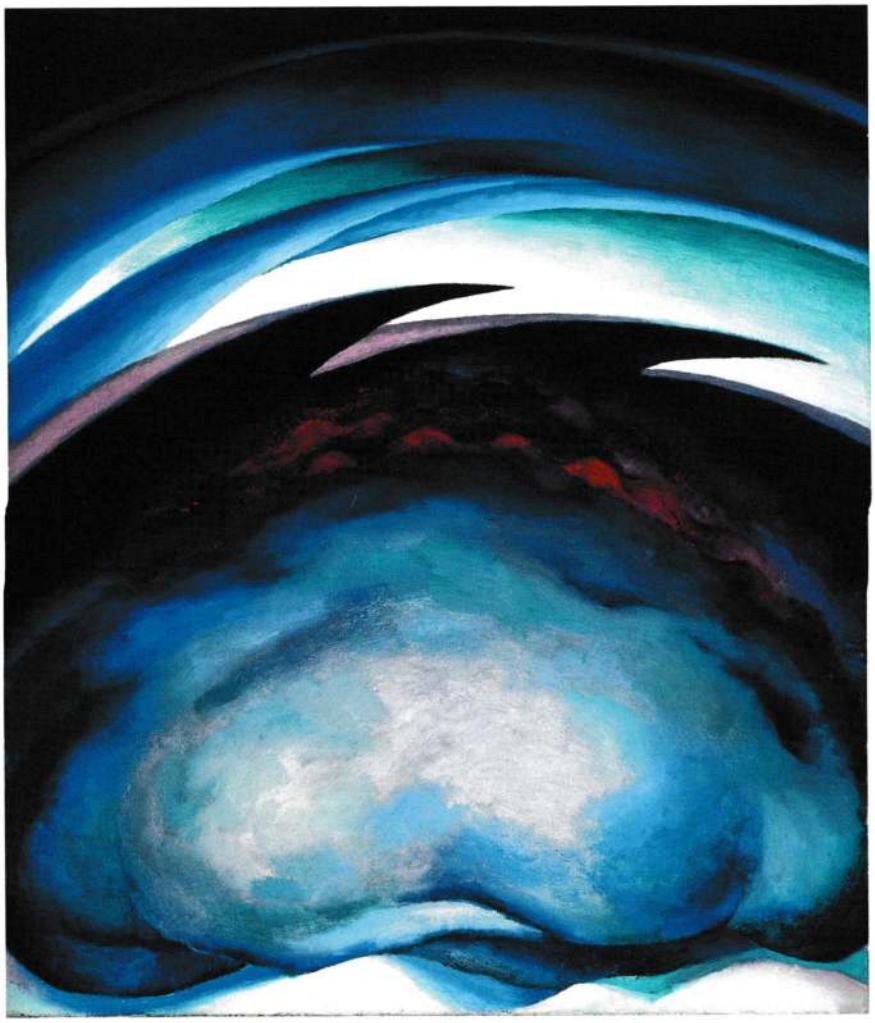
O'Keeffe's claims for the musical source of her abstractions—her interdependent labors to make the violin and the blank page into instruments of her mental state—must also be taken seriously. When she began to produce the first *Specials*, she was explicit about their relation to the music of her mood, her experience of the world, to which she could only allude in the rhythms and softly gradated forms in charcoal.[13] As is well known, O'Keeffe's teachers Alon Bement and Arthur Wesley Dow encouraged her to listen to music while composing her drawings and to visualize music. O'Keeffe continued to call her abstractions from the Texas plains her "songs" and to practice composing them as a musical process through 1919 (Fig. 122). To some extent, her musical rhythms, constructed through somewhat parallel lines in motion, approached Marin's lines of force in his dancing forms.[14] This formal device also resembled Dresser's suggestion (Fig. 112) for isolating the essential movements of nature in terms of their energies, which Dresser envisioned

121 ▶

Georgia O'Keeffe, The letter "I," from a letter to Anita Pollitzer, dated September 1915.

122 ▼

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Series I– From the Plains,* 1919, oil on canvas, 27 × 23 in.



as alternately whirling and striking rays of light. O'Keeffe's idiom of musicality—her flowing movements that suggest the polyphonic lines of song as released and contained within a spiral—was highly personal to her and therefore effective as a translation of her feelings. These smooth, elongated curves undoubtedly led O'Keeffe as well as her contemporaries to think of her style as a feminine lyricism.

O'Keeffe had other sources for visualizing the energies of nature as song. In the May 1915 issue of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's journal the *Forerunner*, acquired by O'Keeffe in 1916 in Texas, she would have read a review of *Color Music* (1911), a book by Wallace Rinington of Queen's College, London, and in that same review a description of a new invention called a "Chromola," which translated musical notes into projected color effects across a screen of gauze curtains. The sound of a piano, the writer suggested, could be translated into "rippling showers, like the fall of rocket lights," while the organ might evoke "soft rushing waves, as of lit wind-driven clouds."[15] These suggestions are echoed in O'Keeffe's motifs of rhythmic wavy or jagged lines that can be read as cloud, rain, and wind, or as musical chord progressions and variations, in the early *Specials* and in later oil paintings such as *Series I—From the Plains* (see Fig. 122), *Music: Pink and Blue* (1918), and *Blue and Green Music* (1921).

Stieglitz's first presentation of O'Keeffe's work in 1916, as we have seen in chapter 3, framed her abstractions as disclosures of a woman's unconscious. Shortly thereafter, he similarly labeled Paul Strand's work "something from within" that was "pure" and "direct."[16] But he also embraced O'Keeffe's early abstractions as musical compositions, their musical language as evidence of her "pure" vision—an outward manifestation of the evolved condition of the person. According to the theories Stieglitz promoted at 291, such "plastic" (i.e., abstract) expressions displayed the artist's "inner force awakened by the stimulation of intellect and emotions by outside forces."[17] Having read and reread issues of *Camera Work* and 291 as well as Kandinsky's book, O'Keeffe emphasized in her letters to Stieglitz, as she had to Pollitzer, that the *Specials* projected her deepest feelings, which she could not verbally articulate. Hence she deliberately attached to her abstractions the 291 rhetoric that invested artistic creativity in the unconscious.[18] Stieglitz responded that the drawings were "living" because he could see her in them, but also "part

of myself." O'Keeffe grasped Stieglitz's notion of the artist's spirit as a musical voice visualized in the work of art. She told Strand a year later, for example, that she saw his inner musical self in his photographs: in his prints O'Keeffe heard his "sad songs," she said, "his wonderful music," just as she had recently sung him three songs in paint.[19]

So O'Keeffe's descriptions of her early works recognized them as musical, psychosynesthetic abstractions. In their rhythmic movements and colors they offered visual equivalents of vocalese—songs of herself without words. Her inability or unwillingness to provide any interpretive clues other than the musical metaphor for her work, however, left the field open for others, especially Stieglitz. In 1916 O'Keeffe completely trusted him to guide her career and ceded control over her work to him. Confident of the symmetry of their friendship, she was emphatic on this point: "I wouldn't mind if you wrote me that you had torn them all up. . . . You understand—they are all as much yours as mine."[20] At the beginning of their relationship, then, O'Keeffe's attitude toward her artistic identity was paradoxical: she would assert her own image as a modernist, but she would do this by placing her career in Stieglitz's hands. O'Keeffe was no starry-eyed ingenue simply playing to a powerful man. In 1915–16 she had schooled herself in every aspect of New York modernism, studying its theories, languages, sexual politics, and personalities. Isolated in Charlottesville, Virginia, and then Columbia, South Carolina, she read *Camera Work* alongside Dell's *Women as World Builders* and the *Masses*. Pollitzer and O'Keeffe were curious about Katharine Rhoades after the publication of Rhoades's poetry in 291 in 1915, admiring her verse and envying her position in the Stieglitz fold. Who was Rhoades? O'Keeffe inquired of Pollitzer in Manhattan, who served there as her eyes and ears, and she confided how intrigued she was with Rhoades's ability to express herself in words.[21] O'Keeffe not only wanted to paint as a modernist—she wanted to *be* a modernist at the center of things. She had seen the unstoppable Stieglitz operating at 291 on several occasions, and she knew that he, more than any other, shaped the field of modern art in New York. Pollitzer had made O'Keeffe's wish come true, to have Stieglitz see and admire her work.

O'Keeffe and Stieglitz's tacit agreement on modernism's substance and style allowed him to take over her public identity, freely creating O'Keeffe, *the* woman

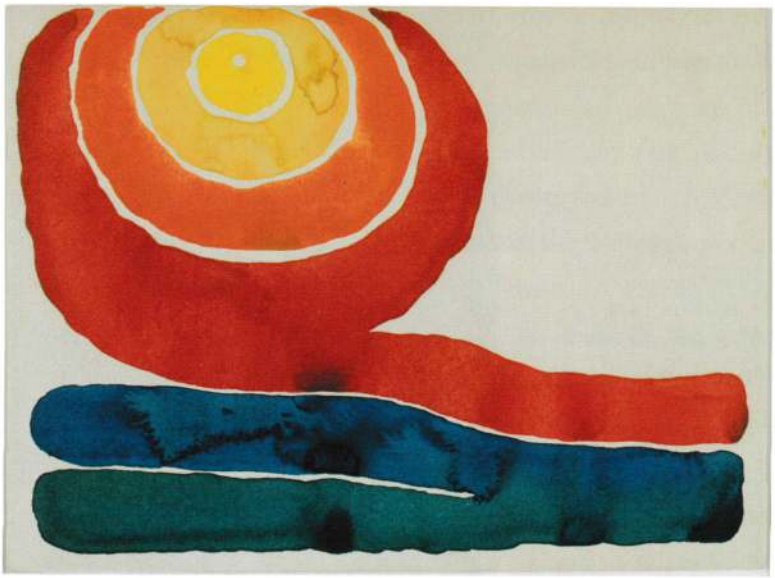
modernist. This agreement crystallized further when, in late May 1917, she visited him at 291 and they became better acquainted, beyond what had been accomplished in their correspondence. After looking at her work in the gallery and the art collection he had assembled over the years, and then making a trip to Coney Island with him and a few others, O'Keeffe returned to Texas, leaving Stieglitz astonished by her simplicity and directness. According to Pollitzer, "He talked on and on about her. Again and again I heard him say, 'She is innocent.'" Finally, following this visit, Stieglitz felt empowered to cast her in the image of the woman-child. Speaking directly to O'Keeffe in a letter of March 1918, he named her "The Great Child pouring out some more of her Woman self on paper—purely—truly—unspoiled."[22]

Over the year she spent in Texas from June 1917 until she went back to New York in June 1918, O'Keeffe, who had recently taught six- and seven-year-olds, now explored the child's mode of expression to see what it allowed her to do visually. It clearly necessitated a shift from the monochromatic range of the *Specials* to the affective primary colors characteristic of the child's palette. The array of representational watercolors she produced during this time represents a dramatic shift from her previous abstract mode, which had so pleased Stieglitz because it exposed the depths of her woman self.[23] On the train trip back to Canyon from New York in June 1917, she read a book called *Childhood* that Strand had given her. This gift suggests that Strand and O'Keeffe, and possibly Stieglitz as well, had been discussing a philosophy of child rearing and appropriate systems of education for children.[24]

At several points she took up the sign of the child's art—the house surrounded with trees. *Tree and Picket Fence* (Fig. 123), like *Yellow House* (Fig. 109), explores the primitivizing effects of a symmetrical, planar composition, in which a tree form is centered and flattened as an irregular mass between a house with doorway, behind, and a fence, in front. In *House with Tree—Green* (Fig. 124), objects are rendered as silhouetted masses, haloed in the moonlight. Their wavering contours give the illusion of childlike animation and unsteadiness in the gesture of the hand holding the brush. These effects are enhanced by the way in which O'Keeffe illuminates the forms' surfaces, using flickering points of light that she has imaginatively fabricated by leaving the white paper bare. The skill and control with which she

123
Georgia O'Keeffe,
Tree and Picket Fence, 1918,
watercolor on cream paper,
17⅞ × 11⅞ in.

124
Georgia O'Keeffe,
House with Tree–Green,
1918, watercolor and graphite
on cream paper, 19 x 13⅛ in.



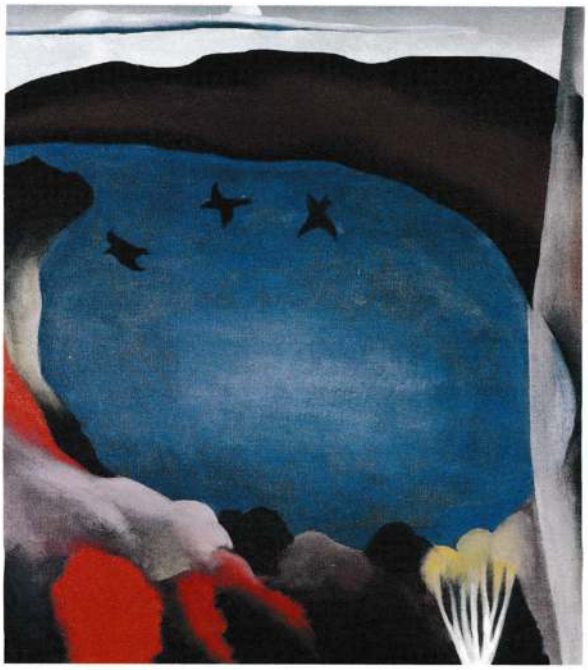
▲ **125**
Georgia O'Keeffe,
Evening Star No. III, 1917,
watercolor on cream, smooth
wove paper, $8\frac{7}{8} \times 12$ in.

◀ **126**
Georgia O'Keeffe,
Light Coming on the Plains
No. 1, 1917, watercolor on
beige, smooth wove paper,
newsprint, $11\frac{7}{8} \times 8\frac{7}{8}$ in.

executes such maneuvers, however, belie the naiveté and spontaneity implied in her process. With few exceptions, nearly all the watercolors O'Keeffe made in her child mode at this time were worked out as motifs explored in a series. Thus the design of the surface was both premeditated and refined in the movement from one work to the next so that O'Keeffe could create variations on a particular formal attack, to stretch each motif into a number of affective permutations.

"Why does she paint like a child?" an eight-year-old girl asked me, as I held up an illustration of O'Keeffe's *Evening Star No. III* (Fig. 125) while presenting *O'Keeffe's work to my son Nicholas's elementary school class in Santa Fe. Without* any prompting on my part, this girl had recognized her own gestures, the way O'Keeffe had mimicked the child's language of selective form and simplified movement. Moving away from such obvious children's motifs as houses and chickens, O'Keeffe internalized the child's schematizing system into a method suited to express her own childlike wonder as she faced the expansive Texas landscape alone on many a starlit night.[25] Her use of the spiral motif again in the *Evening Star* watercolors, as in the *Light Coming on the Plains* series from the same year (Fig. 126), is performed with a child's wavering unsteadiness of hand. The ordered, sequential movements of O'Keeffe's brush, recalling the child's drawing of a rainbow, are meant to approximate a direct translation of brilliant cosmic energies, rendered here as the rhythmic cadences of a song.[26] Her application of paint to the surface replicates the child's mastery of simplified, consolidated forms attained in the first school years, yet it preserves the sense of dynamism and motion characteristic of early childhood drawing.[27] The selection of this specific model of the child's vision contrasts with that of Kandinsky (see Fig. 76), who set his sights on the more chaotic aesthetic of the preschool child, at an age before the mastery of schematic forms. O'Keeffe preferred to simplify enough so that her work bears the sign of the child and, at the same time, to opt for an aesthetic of controlled form deploying Dow's Japanese method—already ingrained in her—of decoratively filling the space.

O'Keeffe's watercolors of 1917–18 in this child mode opened up a path to the essential devices of looking and composing that she would seize on when she returned to representation, after another interlude of abstraction, during her first

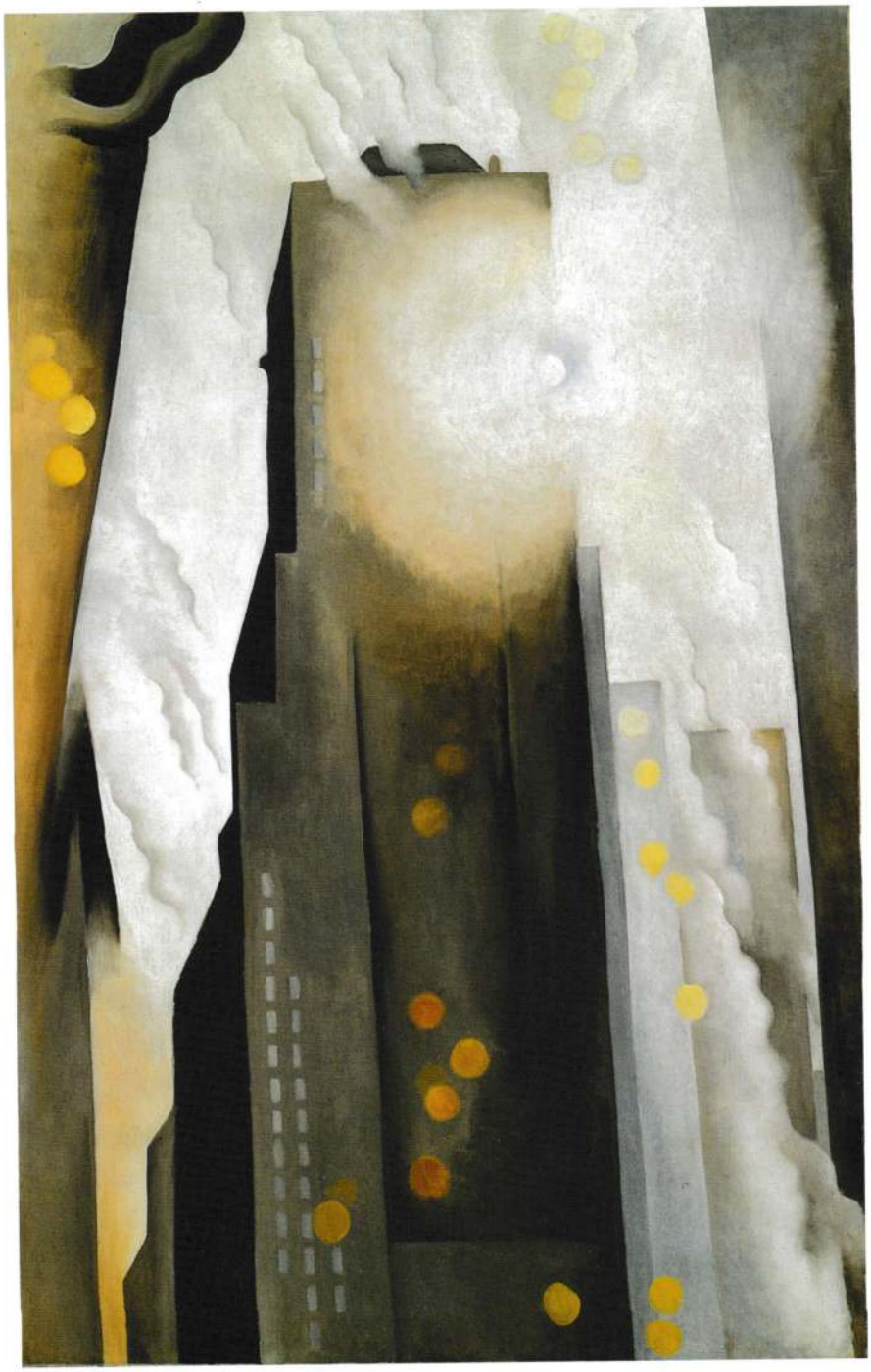


◀ **127**
Georgia O'Keeffe, *Lake George with Crows*, 1921, oil on canvas, 28½ × 25 in.

128 ▶
Georgia O'Keeffe, *Canyon with Crows*, 1917, watercolor and graphite on cream paper, 8⅞ × 12 in.

year of living with Stieglitz. After he generated Freudian interpretations for her abstractions, O'Keeffe, now working in oil at Lake George and Maine, revisited the representational strategies of the Texas watercolors. *Lake George with Crows* (Fig. 127) is a refined and simplified version of her 1917 watercolor *Canyon with Crows* (Fig. 128), a work O'Keeffe kept in her own collection until her death. Both images in turn recall their prototype, *The Doll's Bungalow, Lake George* (Fig. 110), a watercolor by the ten-year-old Georgia Engelhard exhibited at 291 in the same room where O'Keeffe's work had been hung in late 1916. As a member of the Stieglitz family in the 1920s, O'Keeffe adopted "Georgia Two" or "Georgia Minor," as the younger Georgia was called, as a painting partner in the summers at Lake George, thus keeping in her range of vision the child—the prescribed model of feminine creativity.[28] In her later works, Engelhard herself seemed to adopt the abstract, rhythmic manner as well as the modernist topos O'Keeffe had explored in the mid-1920s (Figs. 129 and 130). To be sure, the fluency of their interchange makes any primacy of vision of either problematic.

Like Rhoades, Engelhard served Stieglitz well in his search for the woman artist as woman-child. If the male artists of Stieglitz's group, such as Weber and Walkowitz, or even Marin, had earlier aspired to the innocence of the child, their move aimed to secure the authenticity of their vision, to establish a vision seemingly produced out of an essential, interior, primitivizing, natural self—in contrast to the sham self constructed from the worn-out, dead conventions of civilization. Within Stieglitz's critical circle in the 1920s, however, the rhetoric of innocence that created authority and value for the works of Dove, Hartley, and Marin became obsolete. Although Stieglitz privately at times still referred to his male modernists as his children, for them his critical machinery replaced the figure of the child with a rhetoric of masculine virility and feminine receptivity as the source of their creativity.[29] It would be O'Keeffe in the 1920s who was chosen to exemplify the modernist vision as the true, pure vision of the child. Hers was a special power of sight complicated and enriched by her womanly eroticism, a pure, natural sexuality opposed to bourgeois repression.[30]



129

Georgia O'Keeffe, *The Shelton with Sunspots, N.Y.*, 1926, oil on canvas,
48½ × 30¼ in.

130

Georgia Engelhard, *New York Skyscrapers,* 1928, oil on canvas on board, 25⅝ × 22½ in.

Visualizing the Woman-Child

In 1919 Stieglitz penned "Woman in Art," his seminal statement on the feminine voice in art. Published only posthumously, it lays out his master narrative for the presentation of O'Keeffe as the woman-child. This was a narrative Stieglitz was also following in his contemporaneous photographic portrait of her (Fig. 131) and in the criticism he encouraged around the work she exhibited from 1917 through the 1920s. It is worth revisiting this essay to understand how the woman-child is at the center of his vision of O'Keeffe, the *woman* artist. He wrote: "Woman *feels* the World *differently* than Man feels it. The Woman receives the World through her Womb. That is the seat of her deepest feeling. Mind comes second." In the past, Stieglitz continued, woman had been relegated to childbearing as a "creative sphere. . . . With her the child was the Universe—the All." But now

> [the] Social Order is changing. The potential child brings about its equivalent in other forms. It may be in Color and Line—Form—Painting. A need. Woman finding an outlet—Herself. Her Vision of the World—intimately related to Man's—nearly identical—yet different. . . .
>
> In the past a few women may have attempted to express themselves in painting. . . . But somehow all the attempts I had seen, until O'Keeffe, were weak because the elemental force and vision back of them were never overpowering enough to throw off the Male Shackles. Woman was afraid. She had her secret. Man's Sphinx!!
>
> In O'Keeffe's work we have the Woman unafraid—the child—finally actually producing Art![31]

For Stieglitz woman's true self was definitively a child self, buried and veiled in obscurity at the site of her sexuality. Here he restated Ellis's description of woman as a being closer to a child than an adult man but dominated by her womb. It is important to note in this passage how Stieglitz has shifted the source of creativity away from the unconscious as a storehouse of motivating emotions—as O'Keeffe had explained her *Specials* to him—to the unconscious as the body. In Stieglitz's account it is this unconscious sexual life of the body that gives woman her identity, and it is because this creative life is hidden and must be searched out that it

131
Alfred Stieglitz,
Georgia O'Keeffe, 1918,
palladium print, 7⅛ × 9 in.

attains its allure. Like Freud in his essay on feminine narcissism (1914), Stieglitz sees woman's sexuality as silenced by self-repression, inhibited by civilization, and powerful because she withholds it from man.[32] In this picture of woman, then, feminine sexuality is articulated not in terms of lack but in terms of plenitude. The secret, interior life of the woman-child fascinates in its potential to restore the blissful childhood paradise lost to man.

Stieglitz's yearning for this woman-child recalls the nineteenth-century literary tradition of the child as an emblem of the adult condition. From Goethe's Mignon at the beginning of the century, to Trilby at the end, the girl-child was called on to represent the deep past in the adult psyche. The feminine or feminized child who is wanted responds to the child self within the adult male artist or writer, personifying his creative interiority and making apparent his power and its source.[33] Stieglitz, in locating and developing O'Keeffe as woman-child, fabricated what he hoped was his mirror image. They were nearly twins: she was a reflection of his purer self, he declared at the time he was making this image of her.[34] We see Stieglitz here looking with envy across the divide of gender. Such was the pattern of

dislocated identity male modernists exhibited. Overwhelmed by their own lack, they cast a desiring gaze toward women, children, and primitives, whom they imagined as enjoying the rich inner life that modernity denied to men.[35]

We have already seen in chapter 3 how Stieglitz believed that O'Keeffe's self-narrative was available as a psychoanalytic self-representation that located the child in the woman and disclosed its essence as a pure, natural sexual energy. The story of Katharine Rhoades and her female predecessors in the life of 291 shows how Stieglitz had already formed his figure of the woman-child before meeting O'Keeffe in 1916. With O'Keeffe's appearance as the woman willing to assume the role of this fantasy figure in public, Stieglitz found his modernist partner and began with her a creative collaboration that would reestablish his modernism on even more sensational grounds. There can be no doubt that O'Keeffe's dramatization of the woman-child was a collaborative venture. But the terms of their partnership that bound her to him are complex.[36] Paul Strand's report on O'Keeffe to Stieglitz from Waring, Texas, in May 1918, predicted the conditions of their agreement. Stieglitz had dispatched Strand to fetch an ailing O'Keeffe to him in New York from her friend's Waring farm. Strand told Stieglitz that when he observed O'Keeffe at close range he saw that Stieglitz's initial perception of O'Keeffe as "a child and yet a woman" was correct. His language describing O'Keeffe bears a striking similarity to Rhoades's criticism of herself when Stieglitz pressed her to become the woman-child. Strand described O'Keeffe as "not clearly crystallized. . . . 'Georgia hasn't found herself yet.'"[37] Here was Rhoades's double, a beguilingly unformed woman of great potential but one who was cut loose from all familial ties and thus was a free agent to create her own life. Stieglitz responded that he was willing to make O'Keeffe his "responsibility."[38]

Stieglitz described himself and O'Keeffe in the first throes of their joy together "as children, 'either intensely sane or mad.'"[39] He wrote to Strand a few months after O'Keeffe went to New York, in 1918, that he and O'Keeffe responded to each another "more like kids than grown-ups."[40] This notion too of the modernist couple becoming children again in the bliss of free love was a standard conceit among Village bohemians. Stieglitz now assumed full status as a radical who had broken all domestic constraints to enter a paradise of love, art, and poverty. After they be-

came lovers in August 1918 and Stieglitz left his wife, he turned to his generous family for support of himself and O'Keeffe, often taking advantage of his brother's hospitality in housing and feeding them. Randolph Bourne had already set into place the image of the new guard (a generation younger than Stieglitz) as children perpetually seeking to renew their creativity to keep the modernist revolution alive. The paradigmatic couple of the Village, combining work and love, stayed youthful and artistically vital because of their childlike lack of sexual inhibitions. Louise Bryant, for example, wrote glowingly of her love relationship with John Reed that each was a "supplement" to the other: "Life is very lovely to us," she remarked, "we feel like children who will never grow up."[41]

Although the feminist men of the Village believed that the equality of women would free them as well, young feminist women used their partnerships with men as a way of achieving professional aspirations.[42] In like fashion, Stieglitz and O'Keeffe's partnership was formed to enhance both their personal and their professional lives. Stieglitz was certain that his discovery of this woman-child would restore his own potency, his own source of creativity. As he implies in "Woman in Art," the power of the unrepressed sexuality of the woman-child promises the power of male vitality. O'Keeffe, he believed, liberated his child self, showing him how to play, how to re-create himself.

Partnership with Stieglitz offered O'Keeffe a visible presence in modernist New York. It also required a trade-off, one that she was surely aware of: she would gain his protection (becoming his "responsibility") and obtain a career as an artist at the center of modernism while sacrificing her autonomy, at least for a time. In May 1918, as Strand was negotiating this new life for her and O'Keeffe was languishing, physically and emotionally, he and Stieglitz agreed that for O'Keeffe the change would mean the "death" of some things. "I think before she could go with you—there would be many things to be given up—very many. That is what you meant by death," Strand mused to Stieglitz. O'Keeffe had put it similarly to Strand when he had asked her, during their dalliance the preceding summer, why she would not commit to him (Strand) or to any one man. She responded that in marriage her freedom would come to an end: "As a woman it means willingness to give life—not only her life but other life—to give up life or give other life." In her letters to

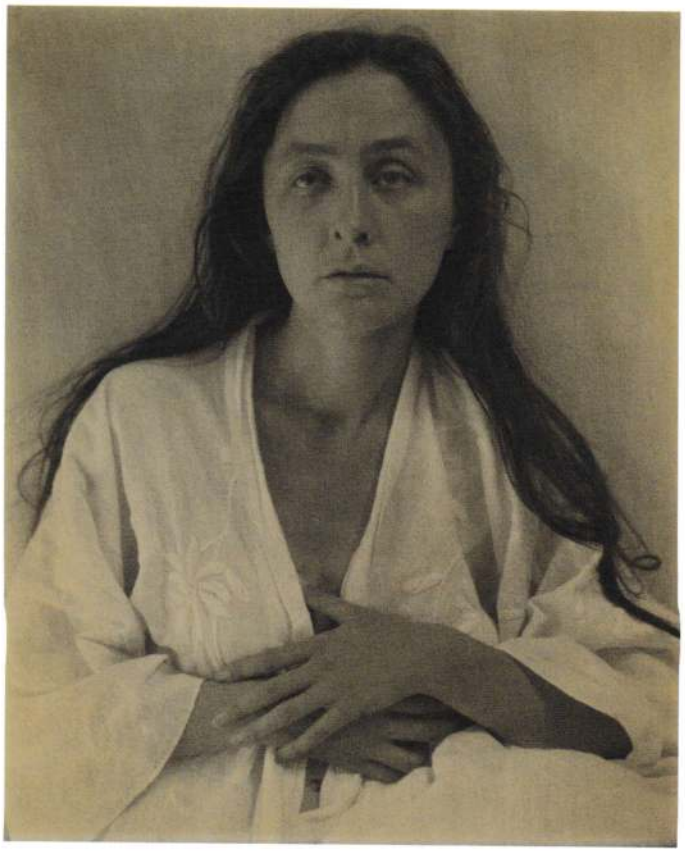
132
Alfred Stieglitz,
Georgia O'Keeffe,
1917, platinum print,
9½ × 7½ in.

Strand from this period O'Keeffe frankly told him of her intention to defer the forming of all ties so that she could continue her life of freedom in Texas, of nights floating through space, as she portrayed herself, fueled by an elixir of flirting and lovemaking without commitment. She said that she saw herself alone for years to come. She may have thought she could maintain this freedom with Stieglitz as well, for in September 1918, a few months after they had come together, Stieglitz confided to Strand that O'Keeffe was leading him in a "merry dance," as she had Strand.[43]

Stieglitz's multifaceted portrait of O'Keeffe provides ample illustration of how the modernist partnership worked to advance both personally and professionally, with the art feeding off the life and the life lived to nurture the art. Although Stieg-

133
Alfred Stieglitz,
Arthur Dove, 1923,
gelatin silver print.

litz had photographed O'Keeffe in 1917, the project began in earnest after her arrival in New York during the summer of 1918. More than any other vehicle, it was this portrait of O'Keeffe that cast her as modernism's woman-child. In May 1917, however, his first portraits of her (e.g., Fig. 132), standing before one of her abstractions in the gallery, began rather tamely in picturing her as the female version of his male modernist—for example, Arthur Dove (Fig. 133). Forging a public image for the artists of 291 was a regular part of Stieglitz's photographic practice—one that followed the pattern set when Käsebier undertook professional studio portraits of the Eight at the time of their debut as a Secessionist group in 1908.[44] Wearing her hair pinned up and a dress appropriate to a schoolteacher, O'Keeffe's identity emerges from her relation to her creation behind her. O'Keeffe and Dove



134
Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe,* 1918, palladium print, 9 1/8 × 7 3/8 in.

display the serious expressions of professional producers and in their rational demeanors elude the bourgeois suspicion of the modernist as deviant. Neither would be mistaken for the Village radical with flowing tie and hair or an eccentric peasant- or Cubist-inspired frock. O'Keeffe's prim white collar and sobriety align her with Stieglitz's own bourgeois identity. In photographic portraits by Brigman (1910), Steichen (1915), and others, he always appears in his workplace in proper business attire, with the loden cape from his student days abroad reserved for the street.

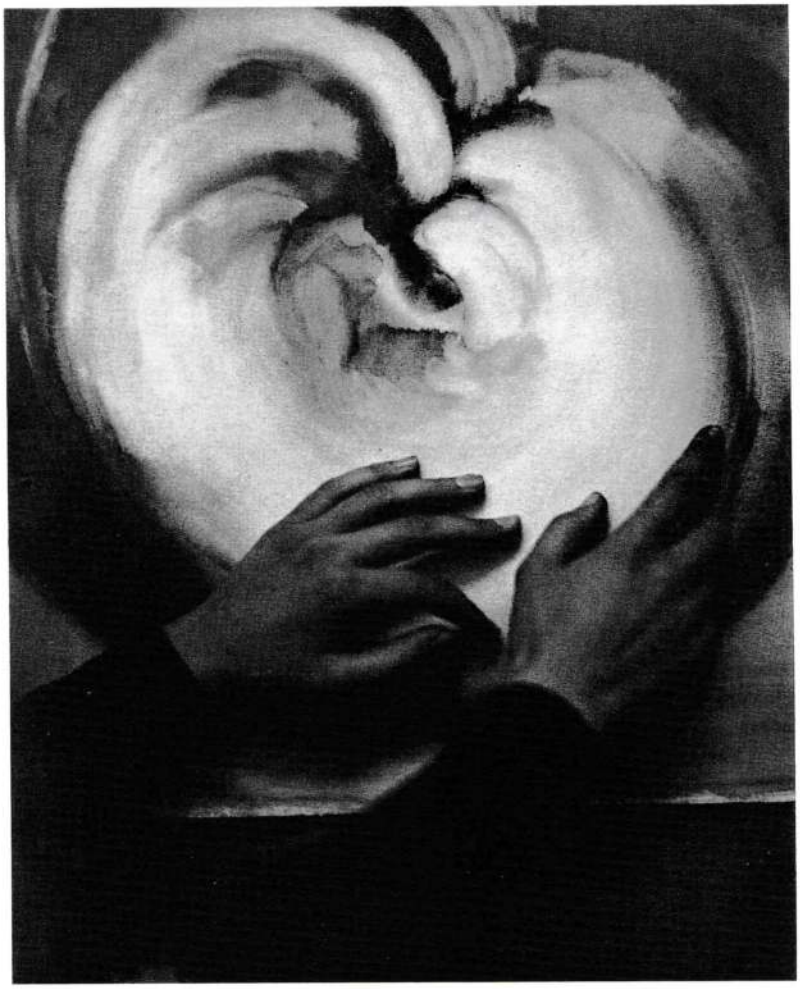
A year later, in the summer of 1918, after Stieglitz and O'Keeffe had just become lovers, he felt freer to compose her performing in order to expose her hidden self. With this sitting, Stieglitz fashioned a myth for the last but most important player in his modernist program. Able now to give full visual form to his woman-child,

Stieglitz possessed a formidable tool in making his arguments for the nature of feminine creativity in general, and her works in particular, by suggesting how woman was embodied in O'Keeffe's art. To visualize O'Keeffe as both an innocent child and a desiring woman, he adopted a poetics of whiteness that he had first explored in images of his daughter, Kitty, as a girl of six (see Fig. 21), which in turn reverberated with Käsebier's mothers and children. O'Keeffe displays herself to Stieglitz's camera in a white kimono, her long hair let down, recalling the informal style of girl children (Fig. 134), and so uncovers her private self to the viewer, who must stand in a relation of some intimacy to her. In these images of O'Keeffe as "white girl" Stieglitz plays on the eroticized narratives of Whistler's white girls. With her eyes half-closed and staring, her mouth somewhat open but mute as she awakens to her own sensual nature, O'Keeffe here recalls especially Whistler's first white girl, a figure often described as acting out her confusion at the sexual consummation that has transformed her from virgin to wife. This white and girlish O'Keeffe also reimagines the quintessential femme fatale of a decade earlier, the adolescent Evelyn Nesbit (see Fig. 28), whom Käsebier posed ingeniously for her camera. Boldly confronting the viewer with Nesbit's self-conscious sexuality, Käsebier makes a mockery of what should be Nesbit's purity. Though a well-known public figure in New York, Nesbit represented the guilty pleasure available to men of means. The sensation of the portrait was that it offered the secret so openly for public viewing. Captivated by this corrupted innocent, Stieglitz kept an alternate photograph of Nesbit in his private collection, and in 1906 he followed the trial of Nesbit's husband, Harry Thaw, for the murder of her lover, Stanford White, pasting up the newspaper accounts of her lurid escapades with White in a billboard format, as if for display.[45] In O'Keeffe's figure Stieglitz invokes both of these paradoxical constructions, the spiritual bride and the knowing virgin—a woman who simultaneously inhabits antithetical states of being. Here he reworks the traditional Judeo-Christian trope of marriage as a process of possessing the other and giving up the self, of marriage as a kind of death, so that his spiritual wedding to O'Keeffe transfigures both her and him. She comes to the viewer as white and pure—a redeemed newfound body as emblem of their transformation.

◀ **135**
Alfred Stieglitz,
Georgia O'Keeffe,
1918, gelatin silver
print, $9\frac{1}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{16}$ in.

136 ▶
Alfred Stieglitz,
Georgia O'Keeffe
at 291, 1917, satista
print, $9\frac{3}{8} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ in.

In 1918, as Stieglitz began to mold O'Keeffe's woman-child image in his photographs, the nudes of Anne Brigman were foremost in his mind. Early in that year, while he was still cleaning up the remains of 291, he wrote to Brigman that, looking with new eyes at her photographic nudes in his possession, he found them "a real pleasure" and was "showing them too to people" (see Fig. 58).[46] Directing O'Keeffe to stand in front of one of her abstract spirals (Fig. 135), Stieglitz seemed especially to be thinking of Brigman's liberated, universal woman. O'Keeffe, her long hair loosened over her bare shoulders, stretches her arms above her head to



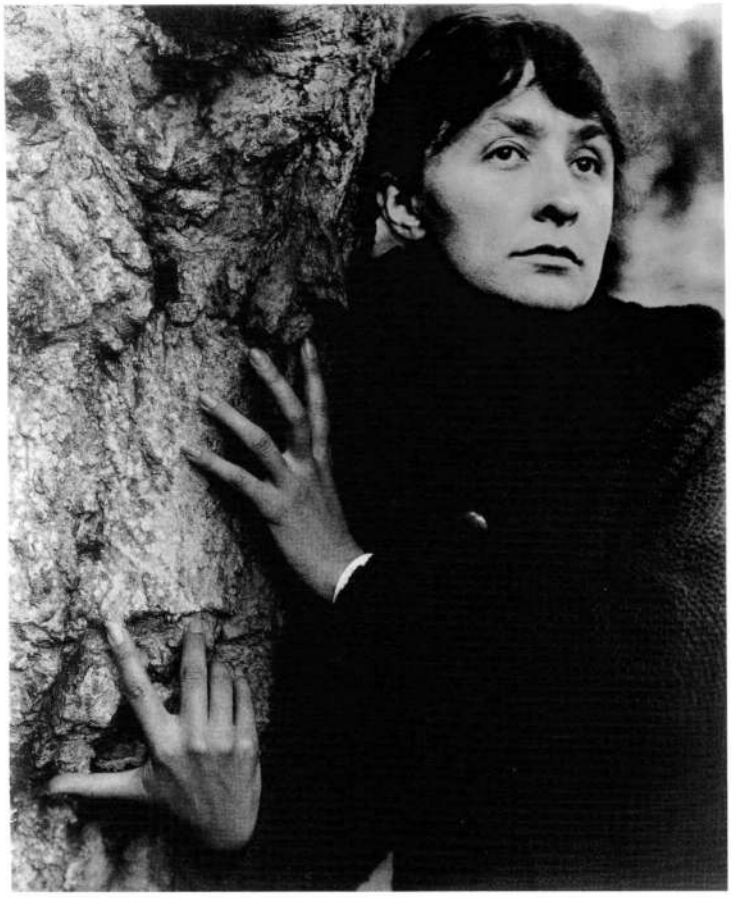
connect her fingers to the elongated lines spiraling rhythmically upward. Brigman's dancing nudes, choreographed to flow with the wild forms of nature that have given birth to her women, taught Stieglitz how to make O'Keeffe's body speak its hidden truths of sexuality. In earlier portraits of 1917 and 1918 O'Keeffe's hands, with their long curling fingers, were arranged against her images, as if to suggest that she conjured her images into existence (Fig. 136). But now O'Keeffe the Lover is directed to dance her maternal relation to her works. In extending the lines of her arms and fingers into the flow of the paper, Stieglitz envisions O'Keeffe's paint-

babies, as he thought of them, as emanating from deep within the unconscious body. From her dancing body a somnambulistic O'Keeffe is shown as transferring her musical rhythms to the white surface.[47]

O'Keeffe's reminiscences of the sessions for these photographs make clear that Stieglitz directed her, posing and arranging her body against her works, telling her how to move her hands and head and to "turn this way and that."[48] The image of Stieglitz commanding her has suggested comparisons with Pygmalion (in Stieglitz's creation of the woman-child) or Svengali (in Stieglitz's exercise of power over O'Keeffe), who hypnotized his woman-child, Trilby, so that she would perform her mysterious feminine nature.[49] Stieglitz encouraged such mythmaking; he was delighted, for example, with his friend Waldo Frank's claim for Stieglitz's personal magnetism, which asserted that Stieglitz got extraordinary photographs of his sitters because he "hypnotized" them.[50]

Mabel Dodge Luhan's essay on O'Keeffe's painting, written at O'Keeffe's request, sets down just such a picture of Stieglitz the "showman," manipulating his "somnolent" automaton-woman who speaks from her unconscious mind, making a sensational spectacle of herself to the public, to demonstrate his powers, his sexuality. "This woman's sex, Stieglitz, it becomes yours upon these canvases," Luhan wrote. "Sleeping, then, this woman is your thing. You are the showman, here, boasting of her faculty. More—you are the watchman standing with a club before the gate of her life, guarding and prolonging so long as you may endure, the unconsciousness within her."[51] But even in condemning Stieglitz's public production of O'Keeffe, and suggesting that he exploited her in his art, Luhan stays within the parameters of the eroticized discourse Stieglitz established to render O'Keeffe's creative process as that of a preverbal woman who mobilizes her artistic voice from the depths of her unconscious life.

Stieglitz's photographs of O'Keeffe in 1918, like his image of her in "Woman in Art" the following year, borrows from norms of bourgeois femininity to portray O'Keeffe's creative, "maternal" sexuality as natural. In the portrait of O'Keeffe standing against an ancient gnarled tree at Lake George, also from 1918 (Fig. 137), Stieglitz had her twist one hand uncomfortably around to press fingers, splayed out into fan shapes, against the craggy surface. Here Stieglitz recapitulates Brig-



137
Alfred Stieglitz,
Georgia O'Keeffe,
1918, gelatin silver
print, 9¼ × 7½ in.

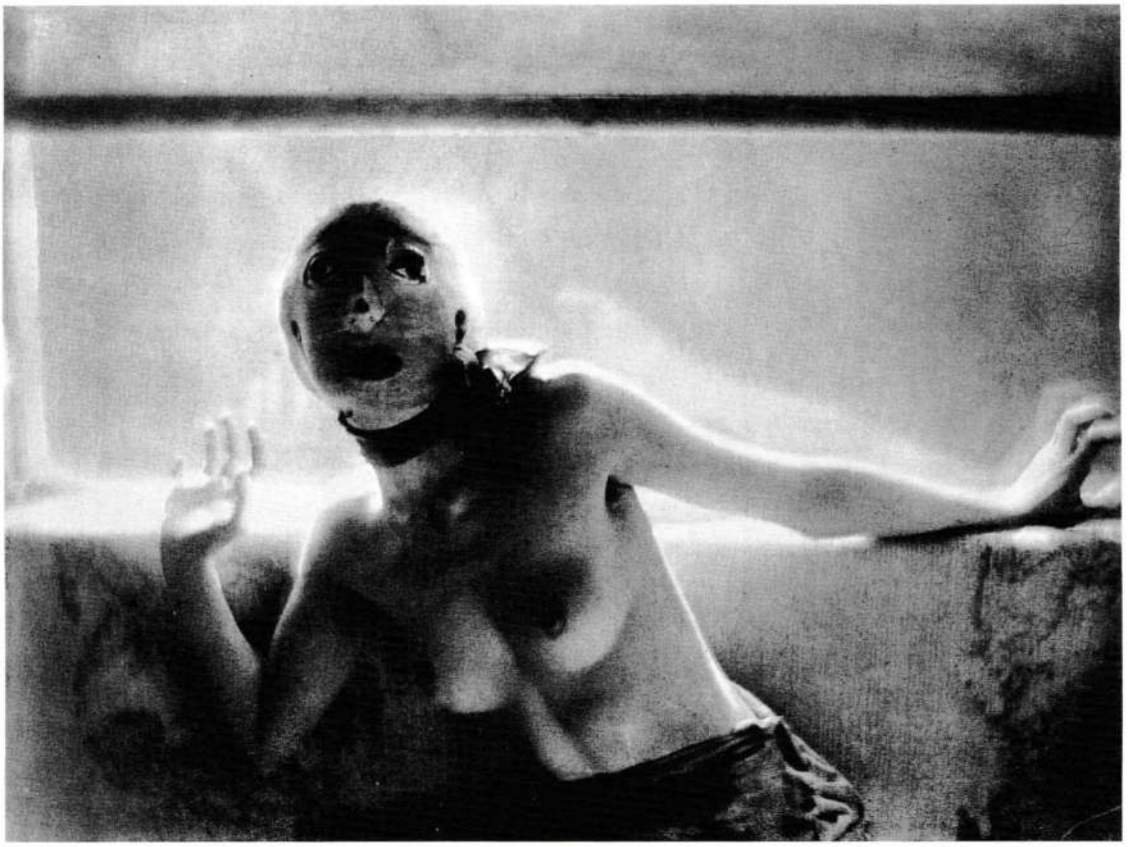
man's conceit in *Soul of the Blasted Pine* (see Fig. 40) to establish the consonance of woman and nature, even if that association—grounded in the body—is as limiting as it is empowering, binding woman to an affective and aestheticized sphere of influence in human culture. Both the twisted motion of Brigman's nude and the gravity of O'Keeffe's face register the troubled dimension of this feminine dynamic. In the years to come Stieglitz would make O'Keeffe's pain a public aspect of her image as universal woman-child.

A year later, Stieglitz folded his representation of O'Keeffe as woman-child—with her essential childlike purity—into the profile of the savage to figure a transgressively erotic feminine creativity. In a unique palladium print (Fig. 138) O'Keeffe

◀ **138**
Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 1919, palladium print, 10 × 8 in.

139 ▶
Baron Adolph de Meyer, *Dance Study*, ca. 1912, platinum print, 12⅞ × 17⅛ in.

is made to incorporate both light and darkness—that is, the Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy in which the primitive is conventionally visualized in Western discourse. The darkness of O'Keeffe's body and face here is not simply keyed to this rhetoric; it also relates to Stieglitz's initial impression of O'Keeffe as exotic and strange, his sense that she had "some Indian blood."[52] Stieglitz imaginatively engaged Adolph de Meyer's photograph of a Ballets Russes dancer in a mask (Fig. 139), shaping O'Keeffe into a figure who might have stepped out of the Bakst costume designs she had admired. This de Meyer image was one that Stieglitz kept in his private collection. As in the photograph of the dancer, O'Keeffe's exposed torso—belly and breasts uncovered by the parted kimono—foregrounds her femininity. In de Meyer's photograph the mask distances the figure, precluding a relation-



ship of sameness; in effect, the mask is layered over the dancer as if to place her in a category apart from the viewer—that of woman. Stieglitz's remarkable image similarly estranges the female body, but her embrace of the phallic African spoon here also renders her as Stieglitz's twin. He related his sense of this identity to Dove during the first days with O'Keeffe in 1918: "O'Keeffe is truly magnificent. And a child at that. We are at least 90% alike—she a purer form of myself. The 10% difference is really perhaps a too liberal estimate—but the difference is really negligible."

This summer of his rebirth, through his twinning with O'Keeffe, he spoke of as a period of "sane madness" in which "each moment is a happy eternity—sometimes—rarely— . . . of intensest pain," but also "intensely real."[53] The "sane

madness," infused with pain and pleasure that brought Stieglitz to life, he made the imaginary landscape of this photograph. O'Keeffe, her face severe, her hair pulled back, stares longingly, desiringly, at the African carving, which she holds up in profile so that it resembles a knife or a phallus, as if she is recognizing some part of herself in the fetish object. At the same time, she is made to pinch her breast. Her gesture dramatizes Havelock Ellis's observation that the sensation of pain is intrinsic to arousing strong emotions, especially fear, and is connected to the sexual impulse.[54] The phallic spoon that Stieglitz exhibited in his 1914 show of West African sculpture serves as his self-projection in this image.[55] He is the instrument of O'Keeffe's pain, but she also finds herself mirrored in this displaced Stieglitz. Rather than look away in fear, she gazes directly at the dreadful object, the secret truth of the self. The photograph functions in effect as a double portrait: it witnesses O'Keeffe and Stieglitz each finding the uncanny, the obverse sexuality of the other, in the self. Thus O'Keeffe the woman-child is represented as self-inventing and self-empowered from the core of her eroticized creativity; her artistic process is disclosed as a maternal, painful experience of giving birth to art, which is invested in a masculinized sublime of pain and truth as much as in modes of feminine mystery, beauty, and silence. In its multiplicity Stieglitz's photographic portrait asserts, however, that O'Keeffe is not to be contained within any dichotomies: light and dark, warm blood and purity, pain and pleasure. As a polymorphous figure, and especially as his double, she occupies both the masculine and the feminine positions.[56] The universality of her voice was to be central to the critical accounts he arranged for her work in the 1920s. As we will see, it described her as a mysterious new being transcending all these categories, and her art, as Stieglitz himself put it, as "the beginning of a new religion," while he portrayed himself as the prophet of that art.[57]

Two years later, Stieglitz produced a related image of O'Keeffe (Fig. 140), holding a figure sculpted by Matisse (which Stieglitz had shown at 291 in 1910). Matisse's figurine—based on his own study of African sculpture—now replaces the spoon as the sign of O'Keeffe's primitive identity. There are significant differences between the earlier image, however, and this later staging of a similar scenario. In this later print a sullen O'Keeffe, brow furrowed, looks away from the bronze statuette, which

she holds somewhat unwillingly, its presence a burden. Instead of exhibiting her nude body as the foundation of her identity, she is dressed in a plain, white tunic that sets up the dark and light dichotomy of the earlier image but without the shock and intensity of the earlier photograph's confessional drama.

By this time these modernist myths had been codified, and in the Village such self-mystifications were becoming tiresome even to the radicals. In about 1918–19, Sinclair Lewis's play *Hobohemia* allowed the Villagers to mock the dramatics of Stieglitz's modernism, as well as their own, by laughing at the extravagant claims for their art, their dress, and their obsession with sex, mysticism, psychoanalysis, socialism, free love, and the new and ephemeral in every cultural form. One moment in the play comments pointedly on Stieglitz's worship of the primitive as exposing the deep truth of the psyche: the eccentric artists and writers who are the main characters gather around a wooden sculpture that strongly resembles Matisse's Africanized statue to fawn over its "purity" and praise its rejection of degenerate capitalist modes of commodified representation (Fig. 141). Significantly, although O'Keeffe included the 1921 photograph in the "Key Set" of Stieglitz's prints that she assembled for the National Gallery of Art in 1946–49 and 1980, she omitted the primitivizing image of 1919, perhaps feeling that such theatrics were not simply passé but clearly over the top.[58]

In other images of O'Keeffe from 1919, Stieglitz fixed her as his perfect woman by reinventing the genre of the nude. He took O'Keeffe apart piece by piece in the photographs to adore and mystify her at the same time—giving the forms of hands, feet, neck, and torso an aura of perfection. Even as Brigman's nudes informed his prints of O'Keeffe's dancing body transmitting her song directly into her works, Stieglitz also must have been remembering Käsebier's experimental studies of expressive hands and feet, which he had seen in her studio in 1902. He described his new work to Brigman as "No tricks—No fuzzyism—No diffusion—No enlargements—Clean cut sharp heartfelt mentally digested bits of universality in the shape of Woman—head—torso—feet—hands—Even some trees too."[59] Despite Stieglitz's assertions of "no fuzzyism," many of his images of O'Keeffe's nude torso (Fig. 142) are highly aestheticized, distanced from the viewer. These effects, beloved by the Photo-Secessionists, were partly secured by the veiling inherent in

140
Alfred Stieglitz,
Georgia O'Keeffe
with Matisse Sculpture,
1921, palladium print,
$9\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ in.

141
Unknown photographer, *Scene from Act I of Hobohemia,* 1919. Players (l. to r.): standing, Grace Morse, Geoffrey Stein, Beatrice Prentice, Theodore Doucci; seated, Noel Tearle and Helen Westley.

his platinum and palladium papers, whose smooth, intermediate tones produce velvety, subtly gradated surfaces. Stieglitz went to even greater lengths in his nudes, however, to achieve the sense of a form floating weightless on a luminous surface. By using an umbrella to filter and diffuse the light in the studio room he produced a darkened body mass that generates a soft incandescent haloing all around it. Looking at this photograph, we recall his words on the body of the mother as "the place whence we came and where we desire when we are tired and unhappy to return, the womb of our mother, where we are quiet and without responsibility and protected. That is what men desire." It is Stieglitz the modernist child who gazes here at O'Keeffe's radiant torso as if to reclaim the mother's transcendent body.[60]

By personally possessing that maternal body, Stieglitz bridged the distance between the ideal and the lived experience. The nudes present his story of an inner void filled, the childhood paradise he had been seeking in his woman-child now regained.[61] For Stieglitz, O'Keeffe's full woman's body in the photographs represented this utopian state of being—the perfect immutable maternal object, which, through its distancing and veiling, supplied the fantasy of childhood. In O'Keeffe, the shape-shifter, his double, Stieglitz recognized a figure of desire who redeemed him from the purgatory of a deathlike bourgeois existence and restored him to the origins of self and creativity.

It is possible that O'Keeffe's own nude self-portraits of 1917 (Fig. 143) had suggested to Stieglitz the abstracting of her body into a shape to express the new freedom of the body in the life of sexuality.[62] There is a certain reciprocity between the formal presentation of O'Keeffe's shape as a dark blue simplified mass against a white ground and several of Stieglitz's nude portraits of her. But while her body was veiled in Stieglitz's images and staged as the body of universal woman, O'Keeffe's actual identity in the photographs was not hidden. Everyone knew to whom that body belonged, knew that she was a real, living woman, ambitious to be more than a body and to be a player in her own right in the field of modernism. Stieglitz had found his universal woman in one individual, and he made it known that her name was Georgia O'Keeffe. As is well known, Stieglitz exhibited the photographic portrait of O'Keeffe in two retrospective shows of his own work that he mounted at the Anderson Galleries in 1921 and 1923. Stieglitz's *Portrait* of O'Keeffe,

142
Alfred Stieglitz,
Georgia O'Keeffe–Torso,
1918, palladium print,
$9^{3}/_{16} \times 7^{3}/_{8}$ in.

143
Georgia O'Keeffe,
Nude Series, VIII, 1917,
watercolor on cream
paper, $18 \times 13^{1}/_{2}$ in.

exhibited at the Anderson Galleries in 1921, preceded the presentation of her work to the public at her first major exhibition in 1923.[63] Although Stieglitz's own statement "Woman in Art," written in 1919, illuminates his thinking about O'Keeffe to us now, that text was not published until after his death. Here, then, is the quintessential modernist relation of the artist to the work, in which her image was fixed in the consciousness of the intellectual elite even before her work was fully known to the public.

Significantly, Stieglitz all but ceased producing these nude portraits of O'Keeffe after 1919. After their 1921 exhibition they were virtually unseen until 1978, when O'Keeffe chose several for a Stieglitz retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Following the nudes, the portraits in the 1920s show O'Keeffe most often swathed in dark clothing, often divested of the signs of her femininity, her hair hidden under a hat, her face often registering sadness, pain, or melancholy (Fig. 144). But running counter to these new images of a severe O'Keeffe, Stieglitz continued throughout the decade to push the eroticizing, Freudian frame for O'Keeffe and her work that had made her into a sensational, even notorious, figure at his 1921 exhibition. Possibly Stieglitz had simply exhausted his inventiveness in photographing O'Keeffe as a nude and changed his tactics.[64] There is also a strong probability that O'Keeffe responded less than enthusiastically to being photographed as a nude once she realized the consequences for her critical reception. Instead, O'Keeffe attempted to control her own image by portraying herself as disciplined, sober, and ascetic. By refusing to let Stieglitz exhibit the nudes again, O'Keeffe herself was complicit in his darkening of her image. This strategy was similar to the public relations efforts of Edna St. Vincent Millay, who in the 1920s reformed herself from the "It" girl of the Village into a serious professional poet who dressed in tailored suits.[65]

The effect of reverting to an image of O'Keeffe as a dark lady was that Stieglitz confounded the sensational public figure he had just manufactured. His new approach denied the erotic life that the nude photographs and the critical writing declared for her paintings. So Stieglitz first bared O'Keeffe to the world and then, after 1921, veiled her. He alone possessed access to the secret life of the woman-child. This last maneuver of refashioning her in a nearly unrecognizable, unfem-

inine form would continue, through the 1920s and after, to mystify O'Keeffe and to encourage erotic interpretations of her work.

Thereafter, when Stieglitz chose to photograph the female nude, for the most part he substituted others, as O'Keeffe professed illness and opted out. He turned to O'Keeffe's youthful friends Rebecca Strand and Frances O'Brien or "Georgia Minor," his now fourteen-year-old niece, Georgia Engelhard (Fig. 145). In a caricature of the woman-child as an adolescent Eve, Stieglitz posed the bright shape of Engelhard's body against the dark plane of a shed, balancing the angles of knees, shoulders, elbows, and buttocks. These self-conscious manipulations recall not only Brigman's nude *Finis* (see Fig. 51) but also O'Keeffe's earlier calligraphic rendering of her own body in blue watercolor strokes against a planar background.

◀ **144**
Alfred Stieglitz,
Georgia O'Keeffe: A Portrait, 1922,
palladium print,
$7\frac{7}{16} \times 9\frac{7}{16}$ in.

145 ▶
Alfred Stieglitz,
Georgia Engelhard,
1920, palladium print,
$9\frac{1}{8} \times 7\frac{3}{8}$ in.

The junior woman-child here folds her body over, oblivious to the viewer, as an exemplary display of feminine narcissism. In posing Engelhard clutching Eve's apples of secret knowledge to herself, Stieglitz once again gave form to his obsession with woman's sexuality, but now with a humor foreign to the images of O'Keeffe.

The criticism of O'Keeffe's work in the 1920s took its primary cues from Stieglitz's photographs of her. Paul Rosenfeld's writings served as Stieglitz's second vehicle in creating a popular image of O'Keeffe as a fantasy figure. Rosenfeld's article on O'Keeffe, "American Painting," published in the *Dial* in 1921, following the first major exhibition of her *Portrait*, was a collaborative work, completely informed by Stieglitz's talk. Rosenfeld revised his basic text on O'Keeffe twice, once

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Georgia O'Keeffe, *Red Canna*, 1919, oil on board, 13 × 9½ in.

for *Vanity Fair* (1922) and a second time for his book *Port of New York* (1924), rewriting the O'Keeffe chapter under Stieglitz's direction at Lake George in the summer of 1923. Rebecca Strand, who witnessed the collaboration of the two men and typed the manuscript, aptly observed that "the article [contained] much that Stieglitz has found out about her [O'Keeffe] and much about her as a person that derives from his photographs rather than directly from her paintings."[66]

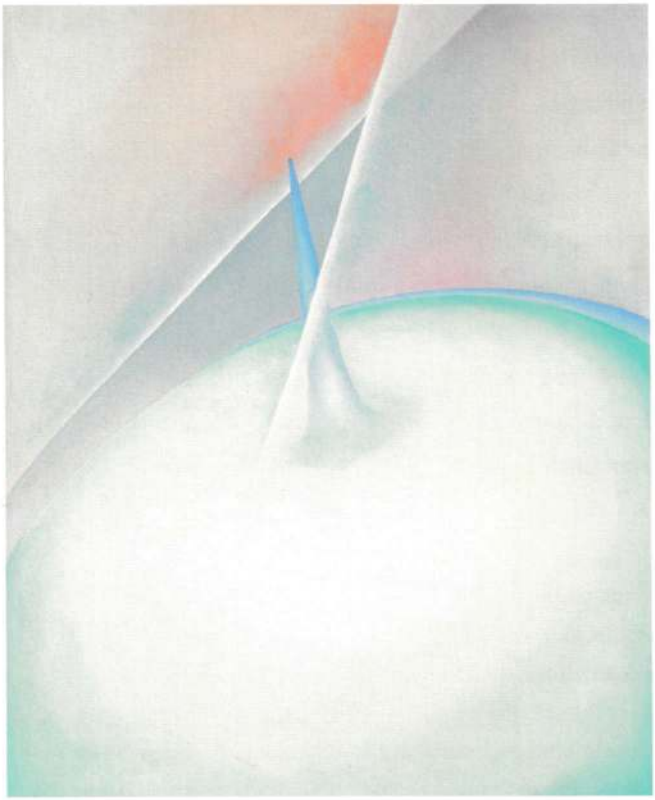
Rosenfeld translated O'Keeffe's paintings into a language inspired by D. H. Lawrence's sagas of modern sexuality. Stieglitz, Rosenfeld, and others of their circle had been poring over Lawrence's novels *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* since 1915, shortly after they began to be published in the United States. Rosenfeld identified Lawrence's lovers with Stieglitz and O'Keeffe. In 1920 he gave them a copy of Lawrence's poem "Look! We Have Come Through!" (1919), his inscription implying that the story was also Stieglitz and O'Keeffe's.[67]

Lawrence's belief in human sexuality as mystically tied to nature can be traced in part to his admiration for Edward Carpenter's views.[68] Reading Lawrence, Stieglitz was in effect returning to his own roots in Carpenter. But where Carpenter had treated modern woman's sexuality only in the most cursory manner, *Lawrence now vividly uncovered that hidden life. It was Lawrence's sense of nature pulsing and throbbing with an energy both mystical and sexual that* Rosenfeld reinvested in O'Keeffe's paintings. The movements Rosenfeld imagined as characterizing her surfaces he variously phrased as thrusting, counterthrusting, fiery, piercing, throbbing, trembling, unfurling, singing, and undulating. In Lawrence's vision of a fecund natural world, he found a vocabulary and an imagery that suited Stieglitz's notion of how O'Keeffe's forms and colors parsed the world of feminine sexuality—writing passages often bordering on purple prose:

> Rigid, hard-edged forms traverse her canvases like swords through cringing flesh. Great rectangular menhirs plow through veil-like textures; lie stone-like in the midst of diaphanous color. Sharp lines, hard as though they had been ruled, divide swimming hue from hue. . . . But, intertwined with these naked spires thrusting upward like Alp-pinnacles, there lie strangest, unfurling, blossom-delicate forms. Shapes as tender and sensitive as trembling lips make slowly, ecstatically to unfold before the eye. Lines as sinuous and softly breathed as Lydian tunes for the chromatic flute climb tendril-like. It is as though one had been given to see the mysterious parting movement of petals under the rays of sudden fierce heat; or the scarcely perceptible twist of a leaf in a breath of air; or the tremulous throbbing of a diminutive bird-breast.[69]

As he shaped his fantastic account of O'Keeffe's painted world, Rosenfeld had before him four paintings, borrowed or purchased from O'Keeffe: an apple composition, a canna flower study (similar to the one in Fig. 146), a "musical blue mountain," and an abstraction from 1919 (probably the same painting as that in Fig. 147).[70]

But Rosenfeld, of course, took as much from Stieglitz—his photographs, his talk—as from Lawrence. His writing approaches Stieglitz's mystifying in the portrait of the woman-child: it turns on an impossible construction in which contrary elements synergize to compose a creature wondrous and never-before-seen. For



147
Georgia O'Keeffe,
Series I, No. 7,
1919, oil on canvas,
20 × 16 in.

Rosenfeld, O'Keeffe's feminine vision—as produced by her unconscious mind—offers a revelatory experience that breaks upon the viewer in the dizzying pyrotechnics of color forms across her surfaces. In its intensity the vision approaches Lawrence's "insight into the facts of life." O'Keeffe's psyche, as Rosenfeld represents it, produces a whirling panoramic vision that ceaselessly astonishes the viewer with its raw newness, the mysteries it discovers in the natural world. O'Keeffe's visual maneuvers, in the end, mirror, so as to uncover, her own secret life. "She feels in . . . [natural forms] the secret life. She feels in them the thing that is the same with something within herself." As in the flower form of the red canna, at the center of her structures there is often something mysterious, veiled, or glowing, which Rosenfeld designates as the secret of her being. He verbally manufactures an effect of astonishment for O'Keeffe's nature dramas by describing her im-

ages in contrasting terms (passion and purity, ecstasy and pain, whiteness and flame, power and delicacy) and by imagining her abstract forms as acting out masculine and feminine roles in the dramatizing of a woman's sexuality. O'Keeffe's art is thus endowed with a power founded in life's paradoxical essence; her art can never be understood logically but can be appreciated only as an experience of the sublime: "The greatest extremes lie close in her burning vision one upon the other; far upon near, hot upon cold, bitter upon sweet; two halves of truth." In short, her art encompasses the entire range of sensuous and spiritual experience: the "mysterious cycles of birth and reproduction and death expressed through the terms of a woman's body."[71]

The Woman-Child and O'Keeffe's Ambivalence

According to Rosenfeld, then, O'Keeffe's body and, pointedly, her sex were in her paintings:

> Essence of very womanhood permeates her pictures. . . . It is always as though the quality of the forms of a woman's body, the essence of the grand white surfaces had been approached to the eye, and the elusive scent of unbound hair. Yet, it is female, this art, only as is the person of a woman when dense, quivering, endless life is felt through her body; when long tresses exhale the aromatic warmth of unknown primaeval submarine forests, and the dawn and the planets glint in the spaces between cheeks and brows. It speaks to one ever as do those high moments when the very stuff of external nature in mountain-sides and full-breasted clouds, in blue expanse of roving water and rolling treetops, seems enveloped, as by a membrane, by the mysterious brooding principle of woman's being.[72]

O'Keeffe's response to the first of Rosenfeld's essays was "fury," a term she used over the next several years to express her deep anger at the interpretations of her work that were based on Rosenfeld's writings. Taking up Stieglitz's tropes for the woman-child as "whiteness," an image of "white radiance," Rosenfeld pictured her as "a girl," an "innocent one," whose art spoke through her womb: "She feels

clearly where she is woman most; because she decides in life as though her consciousness were seated beneath her heart where the race begins." Recalling Stieglitz's portraits of O'Keeffe as strangely bewildered at times or pinching her breast, he wrote of her creativity as born of the ecstasy of pain, extending Stieglitz's metaphor of her body giving birth to her images. Rosenfeld argued that O'Keeffe's art, as a product of the unconscious body, augured a new, higher state of being and that she exemplified the natural intuitive creativity of the child. These refrains provided critics through the end of the 1920s with what would become the mythology of O'Keeffe and her art.[73]

The fact that O'Keeffe privately anguished over this presentation of her work in the framework of this myth raises questions about her cooperation with Stieglitz and his critics. A close examination of the conditions under which the *Portrait* of O'Keeffe was made casts doubt on whether it can legitimately be termed a "collaboration." Over the years O'Keeffe admitted to friends that her relationship to Stieglitz was not that of an equal. As is well known, Stieglitz was a domineering personality. O'Keeffe put it this way: "There was such a power when he spoke—people seemed to believe what he said, even when they knew it wasn't their truth. He molded his hearer. They were often speechless. If they crossed him in any way, his power to destroy was as destructive as his power to build—the extremes went together. I have experienced both and survived, but I think I only crossed him when I had to—to survive."[74]

In posing for the early photographs in the *Portrait*, O'Keeffe without reservation gave herself to Stieglitz, just as she entrusted him with the caretaking and presentation of her art at her first 291 exhibition in 1916. She had told Stieglitz then that she considered her drawings rightfully his as much as hers, even to the point where he could do with them whatever he wished. This total unquestioning deference to Stieglitz's judgment was characteristic for O'Keeffe in her relation to men with whom she was infatuated.[75] That she understood her own vulnerability is made clear in her statement to Strand in 1917 that being emotionally involved with a man made her "feel like a sort of slave" when she really wanted to be "gloriously free" to develop a "mastery" of herself.[76] In 1918–19, when Stieglitz made the nudes, O'Keeffe was recovering from the mental and physical exhaustion pre-

cipitated by her conflict with the administration and other teachers at West Texas State Normal over her position on the war. Her mother was dead, and she was estranged from her father; she had no family to support her financially or emotionally. In Stieglitz, O'Keeffe found a supportive father who, in offering to bring her to New York to take care of her, promised an end to her troubles; moreover, as the patriarch of artistic modernism, he gave her the opportunity to achieve the things she wanted most in life—to paint, but also to be recognized in the field of modernism, and ultimately to be "on top."[77]

During the 1920s she asserted herself with Stieglitz either by turning inward, staging emotional scenes, or running away from him and the family compound at Lake George. When O'Keeffe battled with Stieglitz to have a child in 1922–23, she lost. According to Stieglitz, her paintings would have to serve as her "children." In modernist circles, where the ability of artists to create depended on their release from responsibility and their own childlike freedom, there was no place for real children, although from a distance those of others were often admired.[78] In the exhibitions that put O'Keeffe on the map of modernism in the early 1920s, Stieglitz presented her paintings not as her work alone but as work she produced in association with him.[79] Forthrightly admitting his nurturing guidance of her, and her public image, she told Blanche Matthias in the 1920s that she felt "like a little plant that . . . [Stieglitz] has watered and weeded and dug around."[80]

There is no question that O'Keeffe greatly admired Stieglitz as an artist and trusted him to orchestrate her career. Stieglitz's statement to Paul Strand in 1918, that "whenever she looks at the proofs [of the *Portrait*]," O'Keeffe "falls in love with herself—or rather her Selves," suggests how the photographs offered her the ability to think of herself in a way that supported her wish to be a beautiful woman as well as an important figure in modern art.[81] She was enraged, however, by the repercussions she personally had to bear from the notoriety he brought her. Stieglitz's great-niece, Sue Davidson Lowe, for example, recounts the sensational 1921 exhibition of Stieglitz's portrait of O'Keeffe as "profoundly upsetting [to O'Keeffe], one whose pain she would relive . . . with each of her own annual shows after 1923." With each exhibition she had to endure the "voyeurism of the press" and the "ordeal of exposure."[82]

From 1921 through the early 1930s O'Keeffe was plagued with illness and a series of breakdowns, as she and Stieglitz lived in a delicate balance, a constant state of tension.[83] In the early days of their partnership, when Stieglitz had imagined them as children at play, he told friends that he was approaching a "state of Nirvana" and that O'Keeffe was truly contented, feeling as she had when she was "happiest as a kid."[84] The turning point in what proved to be a fragile relationship occurred in 1923–24: it was the year of their marriage, of his daughter Kitty's depressive illness and institutionalization, and of O'Keeffe's first breaking point in their partnership. Rebecca Strand witnessed O'Keeffe's unhappiness with Stieglitz in the summers of 1923 and 1924 and related to her husband that O'Keeffe was "beside herself." Stieglitz was "at the root of it. . . . Inside the house [is] so much suffering between two people who really care so much for one another that they hurt one another." O'Keeffe had been "pushed pretty far and is pretty ragged, spiritually."[85] In September 1923 Rebecca Strand had reported, regarding O'Keeffe's abrupt departure from the Stieglitz family compound at Lake George, that "Stieglitz wants his own way of living and his passion for trying to make other people see it in the face of their own inherent qualities really gets things into such a state of pressure that you sometimes feel as though you were suffocating."[86]

At Stieglitz and O'Keeffe's joint 1924 exhibition, he showed a new portrait of Rhoades, which expressed his continued pining for her. Composed the preceding summer during Rhoades's visit to him at Lake George, this serial portrait consisted of sky and tree images, from which his *Songs of the Sky* project directly followed. Stieglitz continued to regret his missed opportunities with Rhoades, bringing her up several times during interviews in the early 1940s when Nancy Newhall attempted to record his recollections of his life. He told Newhall that "if he had been a real man, which, he said, he wasn't—if he had been six feet tall, all strength and sinew, he would have carried Rhoades off to some mountaintop, built them a little house, given her children, and let her paint." But instead, he had "never touched her: held her hand once for perhaps five seconds."[87]

Although O'Keeffe chose to continue the partnership, she made small spaces for herself, periodically escaping from New York and from personal and professional pressures. Her unspoken pact with Stieglitz—her trade-off of her own in-

dependence for his investment in her, his managing of her career and mentoring of her creativity—amounted to his control over the rhythm of their life together as well as the presentation of her work and her identity. O'Keeffe later reflected, "He was the leader or he didn't play. It was his game and we all played along or left the game."[88] In their first five years together (1918–22), O'Keeffe did not realize what the cost of playing his game would be; instead, she allowed him to craft his *Portrait* of her in a "heat and excitement" that seemed "clear and bright and wonderful."[89] O'Keeffe well knew that her viability in modernism would depend on the success of her and Stieglitz as creative partners. To their public, their working partnership was the "reciprocal sexual performance of the heterosexual couple,"[90] as Marcia Brennan has termed it, and at that time her image depended on this perceived reciprocity—on her very dependence on him—as well as her willingness to allow it to exist in the public realm.

As O'Keeffe endured recurring illnesses in the 1920s, anticipating critical scrutiny at each new exhibition of her work, she suffered in silence much of the time, hoping the unwanted erotic talk would die away. But Barbara Lynes has shown that O'Keeffe took some measures to refashion her identity as a committed and trained professional to counter the picture of Stieglitz's naïf whose paintings emanated spontaneously from a brush attached to her body. O'Keeffe in fact wrote short essays for her exhibition pamphlets to redirect the interpretation of her works and granted interviews, presenting herself as she wanted to be seen. By 1929, O'Keeffe had succeeded in tempering her image as a woman obsessed with her own sexuality with a greater sense of her hardworking professionalism.[91] Finally, *after Stieglitz's death, as O'Keeffe removed herself entirely to New Mexico, she* engineered an image that radically countered Stieglitz's woman-child and placed her painting in a less gendered framework. Ultimately, for herself, she erased from her life both Stieglitz and the myth he had generated about her creativity.[92] Stieglitz in effect admitted O'Keeffe's hatred for his eroticizing of her work when he told Nancy Newhall in 1942 that he feared O'Keeffe, after his death, would destroy his nude images of her and her early abstract works on which this eroticized image had been constructed.[93]

O'Keeffe came to terms with this body of work, however, by rejecting any rela-

tion between Stieglitz's photographs of her and her personal identity. She maintained that her paintings had nothing to do with Stieglitz or with the Freudian interpretations—his insistence that her work revealed her unconscious drives. Away from Stieglitz during her first summer in New Mexico, in 1929, O'Keeffe told Rebecca Strand that she "resents tremendously the way most of the people around Stieglitz swallow whole whatever he says, particularly about her. She knows his mechanism very well and knows when a mechanism is at work . . . , and she feels that others don't penetrate this but accept everything en bloc."[94] By 1978, when she stated that she could not recognize herself in his eroticized woman-child images of 1918–19, she had dissociated the photographs from herself and read them as Stieglitz's mirror reflection of himself, not of her.[95]

O'Keeffe despised the characterization of her images as works painted with her body—from her womb. That, she emphasized, was purely Stieglitz's fantasy. But, interestingly enough, she accepted the intuitive child part of Stieglitz's woman-child figure as her alter ego. She responded warmly to Matthias's description of her in 1926 as an "intuitive woman" who possessed the "candor of a child" and told Waldo Frank that she was an intuitive type.[96] That a child figure was at the center of her self-identity, instrumental to her own imaginative space and creative process, is important to the story of her remarkable capacity to reinvent her visual language and to control her iconic status as the feminine voice of modernism.

The Dreamspace of the Child

Stieglitz's *Portrait* of O'Keeffe, after 1921, exposed her darkness and suffering. The ascetic now veiled the child in the only image of O'Keeffe the woman and artist that was available to the public. O'Keeffe's will regarding her own identity was also asserted in this new darkness as she tried to modulate her image into that of a serious professional. At the same time, she felt a constant pressure to produce so that Stieglitz could mount the annual shows of her latest work, beginning in 1923. Her impossible task was to speak in the mythic voice of the feminine but in a new way every year, so as to create the effect of discovery and surprise in her exhibitions. Ex-

hausted by these demands by the end of the decade, she admitted the difficulty of meeting them. O'Keeffe believed that her art incorporated something of herself, her femininity, but her idea of how she might be articulating this feminine essence did not agree with Stieglitz's definition of her femininity as her sexuality. Her constant reinventions of her painterly vocabulary from 1923 to 1933 provided the requisite shock, the novelty of feminine vision, but her restlessness also represents her quiet efforts to subvert the critical reading of eroticized scenarios into her forms.[97] In these formal shifts we can see O'Keeffe attempting to remove any nuance of sexual performance from her identity as the woman-child of modernism. What is left of the figure, we might ask, once Stieglitz's Freudian approach to O'Keeffe as a woman artist is discarded? By O'Keeffe's own account, her ability to enter a private dreamspace at her core where she retained a secret child self nurtured her creative process, enabling her to speak her inner self in her own language.

The visual modes O'Keeffe developed in the mid-1920s relate her sense of her art as feminine without eroticism. After 1923 O'Keeffe returned to representational forms, abandoning her earlier abstractions that had permitted critics to supply an erotic story for her work.[98] She found new tropes for her femininity in her sensuous response to forms and effects in nature. While all her modes of composition engage a process of abstraction, some have the scope of the landscape panorama, some invoke the preciosity of the miniature, and still others show her looking up at forms above her or down at them on the ground below.

As is well known, O'Keeffe's methods were founded on Arthur Wesley Dow's lessons in *Composition* (1899; Figs. 148 and 150). O'Keeffe knew Dow's text by heart, from her student days with Dow's lieutenant Alon Bement and "Pa Dow" himself, and from teaching Dow's method to her design students in Texas. Dow's design process emphasizes the framing of a motif—its placement on the surface and its relation to the whole space—and the study of *notan*, or the relation between light and dark tonalities. O'Keeffe's work over the course of the 1920s shows her exploring the possibilities of framing as visualized in Dow's plates. Based on the lessons of the Japanese print, Dow's illustrations taught the Photo-Secessionists as well as O'Keeffe's generation of modernists how to pull out the frame vertically or horizontally and arrange the motif on the surface for surprisingly intimate effects.

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Arthur Wesley Dow, *Schemes of Dark and Light in Two Values Using Boats and Houses*, 1899.

His small sketches of trees or flowers, laid out in serial fashion, shifted the viewing position of the observer, clearly demonstrating variables of proximity and distance, moving in on and out from the object, to capture different rhythmic movements of the form or to control the intensity of experience. Using this system since 1916, O'Keeffe developed her motifs, often serially, to explore a range of expressive possibilities as she manipulated the color and form of each motif. The adjustment of the pictorial frame to delimit the artist's vision mimics the framing action of the camera lens, opening out or closing in on the object or repositioning the object within the space of the frame (see Fig. 148).[99] O'Keeffe realized how to make this visual mobility yield dynamic surfaces where the edges and interior lines of forms move dramatically, with a velocity, in rhythmic relation to one another. As Frances O'Brien, her student in the 1920s, observed, O'Keeffe was a restless per-

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Georgia O'Keeffe, *Little House*, 1921/1922, oil on canvas, 18¼ × 10 in.

fectionist in her work: "She was always searching, experimenting, trying new methods and colors and pigments. Nothing satisfied her." She was also secretive, said O'Brien, and at this time allowed no one to watch her paint except O'Brien.[100]

At times O'Keeffe returned to the child vision she had explored in 1917, flattening space and tipping up the ground toward the surface (Fig. 149) to produce the effect of a fresh, intuitive way of seeing the world, although her design is obviously reminiscent of Dow's plates (Fig. 150). In her abstracted landscapes and floral forms, as well as pure abstractions, the musical mode of the late 1910s became her intuitive method of composing. O'Brien noted that O'Keeffe's method focused on filling a blank space decoratively with abstracted shapes. She first saw the blank space in her mind and then filled it with shapes that became familiar to her over time. Sometimes she would make postage stamp–size preparatory drawings for

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Arthur Wesley Dow, *Schemes of Dark and Light in Two Values Using Flowers of Different Shapes*, 1899.

her oils that laid out the forms across the white surface. Her sense of asymmetrical balance, acquired from Dow's Japanese aesthetic, had become an ingrained resource for her design sense, so that it functioned for her like automatic writing, an automatic way of organizing and playing with form on surface. While she returned again and again to certain arrangements of the surface, she also employed highly personal motifs—shapes that she saw in her head—and certain modes of focus to produce magnified and simplified shapes, or close studies of complexity.[101] Her numerous statements, made over decades, that she thought in colored form rather than words, illuminate the nature of her creativity. We know that she had difficulty expressing her feelings in words, so that Stieglitz characterized her as "not a talker or a questioner." Perhaps we can see a serendipity at work in the meeting of Stieglitz, the designer of the woman artist as child, and O'Keeffe as a woman who actually possessed the child's proclivity toward visual expression of thought. According to Howard Gardner's scheme of artistic development, O'Keeffe's insistence on her art as her natural intuitive form of speech suggests the latent prelinguistic phase usually manifested in the right-brained dominance of very young chil-

dren at a time when their visual and spatial senses (right brain) still outweigh the linguistic ability of the left brain.[102] In some crucial way, O'Keeffe might have actually preserved the artistically talented young child's ease of movement between brain hemispheres and between linguistic and visual intelligences.

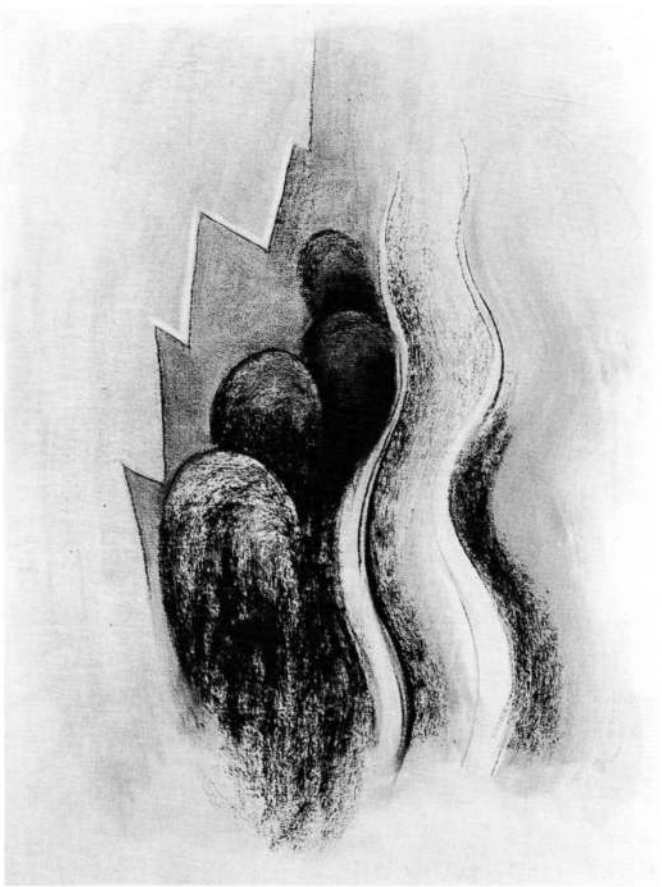
Other psychic resources from her childhood were also at work in her ability to produce the sensation of surprise in her paintings. The tendency to pull the gaze in toward the form to produce the private world of the miniature or to pull out the frame, expanding it, to capture the sense of the self alone in the macrocosm can be traced to times when O'Keeffe played by herself in nature, crystallizing what was to become her essential creative vision. Although O'Keeffe projected herself as a hardworking professional artist, rooted in disciplined studio practice, she thought of her process privately as a recovery of and escape into her child self, so that her experimentation was for her like playing. She spoke to Mitchell Kennerley of how her creative moments released her into an interior world: "I see my little world—as something that I am in—something that I play in—it is inevitable to me." This dreamspace released her from the pressures of the Stieglitz compound, with its bourgeois rituals and congested rooms, which she found oppressive.[103]

O'Keeffe had to have silence in order to find her inner voice speaking to her; in her account of her intuitive process of working, she had to locate again the imaginative world she inhabited as a child in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, where she first formed the habit of playing and sketching freely as she wandered alone through the woods behind the family home. As a small child one summer she had experienced the formative moment of her creative practice when she made a dollhouse for herself, partly from natural objects. She moved this miniature structure to different sites on her parents' farm, reshaping the landscape around the toy house to create a complete fantasy world. For the mature O'Keeffe, entering the world of the miniature—seeing her "little world"—was the essential creative mechanism allowing her to translate her internal vision into colored shapes and lines. Replicated in the form of the miniature, the world can be ordered, aestheticized, and controlled at will, even if one feels oneself a captive in the larger world. This wandering through the landscape and playing in nature provided a refuge from her overbearing, strict mother, with whom she strongly disagreed. Growing "more and

more satisfied to live within herself" in silence, she withdrew from the grown-up world to make a world entirely her own.[104] O'Keeffe as an adult could reenter this space, releasing herself into the remembered sensation of solitude and freedom that she associated with her childhood experience in Wisconsin. This private ritual of exploring nature would serve her well in South Carolina, Texas, and New Mexico, and especially at Lake George in the 1920s.

O'Keeffe, in her key compositional modes in the 1920s, returned to the dream-space of her child self, exploiting it for startling effects, picturing what she, Stieglitz's wonder-child, could see. In the Stieglitz-Rosenfeld criticism, the revelation of nature's mysteries by a woman who is at her center a child—that is, nature revealing itself—justified the pronouncements about the singularity of her vision. In that mythic origin of her art she privately believed the vision of herself producing her art in an intuitive act of play, and she kept quiet about her way of designing her canvases from preparatory sketches. Her own process resembled a game of discovering the new, in the sense of recalling the child's freely moving body and imagination. This mobility resonates in the enormous variety of her compositions from the 1920s: her canvases show her at times looking up the sky and trees, at others moving down to the ground, and often turning herself from side to side as if spinning around. These novel spatial experiences produced effects that must have seemed bizarre for contemporary audiences in the way they subvert the viewer's expectation of a steady, level gaze out toward the landscape, with a horizontality conforming to the contours of earth, sky, and bodies of water at the horizon.

Although O'Keeffe's abstractions and abstracted landscapes of the 1920s both originated in her experience in nature, their strangeness proceeds as much from her visual dynamism as from her extreme simplification. In these works, form is approached as movement, active, alive, and undulating in rhyming and rolling lines. Her practice of abstracting from nature can be seen in the series from Palo Duro Canyon of 1916–17, in which O'Keeffe simplified and compressed a few definitive landscape forms, the small rounded shrubs and the zigzagging cliffs, until she arrived at a stripped-down balance of these two elements (*Fig. 151*). Framing the expansion of sky, water, and earth in parallel rolling lines, this approach allowed her to render Lake George as a panorama of sheer energies (Fig. 152). The formal con-



151
Georgia O'Keeffe,
No. 13 Special,
1916/1917,
charcoal on cream
paper, 24½ × 18¾ in.

gruity of her abstractions and abstracted landscapes can be seen by turning one of these abstractions (Fig. 153) ninety degrees so that it rests on its side.

This consonance of O'Keeffe's abstraction and representation underlines her dependence on the same formal process: a layering of long, undulating lines in parallel motion to compose an event on the canvas, the undulation propelled by the modulation of color and tone along the line. While O'Keeffe thought of herself as a colorist first and foremost, her artistry in producing musical effects on the surface hinges on the edges of things, their contours, and the rhythmic movement of line. From 1919 on, her orchestration of rippling lines, in emulation of the fugal counterpoint of her favorite composer, J. S. Bach, recurs as the compelling

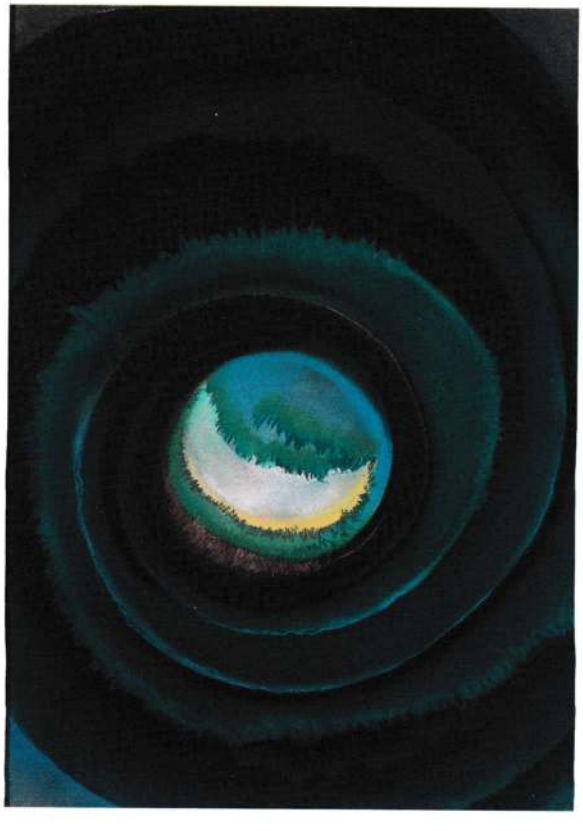
visual structure of her musical abstractions, landscapes, and floral and plant studies.[105] O'Keeffe now systematized the wavering child's hand with which she had applied watercolor strokes to the page in 1917 into an edge animating the exterior world, playing with forms in nature, making them her own. It is significant that O'Keeffe did not engage this mode when she turned to manufactured objects or urban structures, preferring instead to limn their contours through the method of

◀ **152**
Georgia O'Keeffe, *Red, Yellow and Black Streak*, 1924, oil on canvas, 39⅜ × 31 in.

153 ▶
Georgia O'Keeffe, *Grey Line with Lavender and Yellow*, 1923/1924, oil on canvas, 48 × 30 in.

precisionist streamlining. Rather, it was in the multiple rippling edges of natural forms, moving horizontally or vertically across the surface, that she now projected her personal voice. By the end of the 1920s, she had increased and accelerated her edges into a myriad of fluttering floral movements, eventually exhausting the lyrical line as a language of her femininity.

At times O'Keeffe combined lateral undulations with a centered form. She



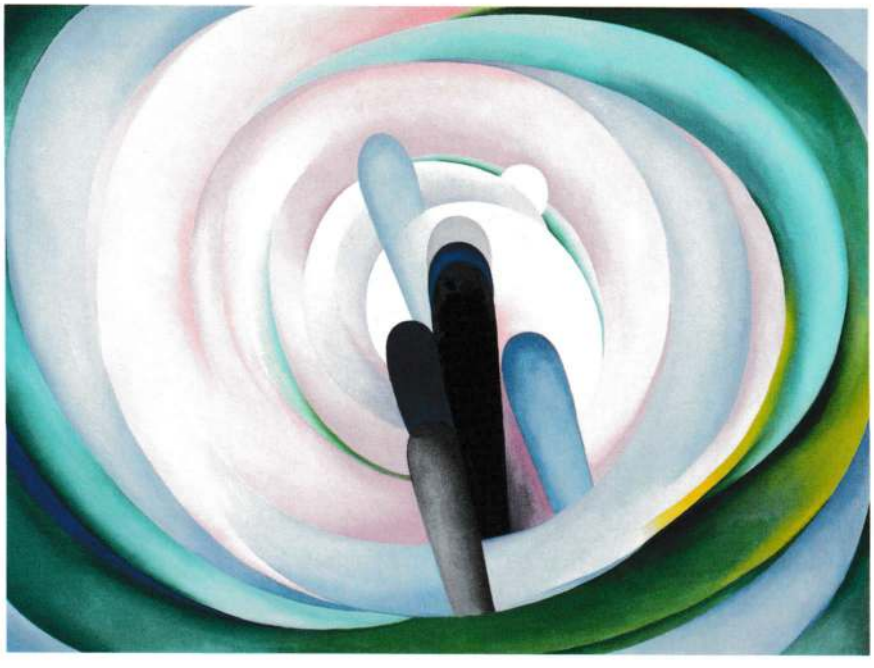
154 ▲
Georgia O'Keeffe,
Pool in the Woods,
Lake George, 1922,
pastel on paper
24 × 18 in.

◀ **155**
Georgia O'Keeffe,
Pond in the Woods,
1922, pastel on paper,
24 × 18 in.

organized *Pool in the Woods, Lake George* (Fig. 154), for example, around a vortex or a nebula that generates its energies outward from the center across the surface in rhythmic lines. Edges and lines on her surfaces, whether evoking a still-life form or the surge of wind, water, or earth, she conceived in terms of velocity—movement—that was always unpredictable. As O'Brien noted, the edge that moves with certain velocity became instrumental to O'Keeffe in the 1920s. In a related pastel, *Pond in the Woods* (Fig. 155), O'Keeffe tightens her focus so that we now see only the eye at the center, the nebula of water that spirals mystically around successive radiating rings of color vibrations. *Pink Moon and Blue Lines*, which was titled *The Ocean and the Pink Moon* at O'Keeffe's 1924 exhibition, is composed similarly to *Pool in the Woods* but on a vertical axis, so that the parallel rhythmic lines climb up the sides of the space to spiral over in greeting to the centered moon. These undulating lines here and elsewhere in her imagery signify her sense of watery movement she had learned from the wave motif of the nymph's costume in Bakst's drawings for "*L'après-midi d'une faune*."

The abstract spirals of 1915 that O'Keeffe continually reinvented as her interior voice, her inexplicable feelings, she now recognized everywhere in nature. As late as *Grey Blue and Black—Pink Circle* (Fig. 156), the form appears to signal her affinity to the magic of a kachina doll. This identity is suggested in her placement of the viewer to look directly into the center of the spiraling vortex of color. The whirling color and the dancing rhythm of the projectile, bobbing up and down, relates our own dizzy sense of the swirling movement. This relation of the viewer's body to the enlarged rhythmic forces of space on the surface of her works is crucial to the experience of these works. In the swirling and spiraling, in the restless flow of movement across the surface, the viewer's eye is captured and the viewer's body engulfed in the flow. By magnifying the forms on the surface, the hypnotic, repetitive movements overwhelm and in effect force the viewer into the trancelike rhythms of the dance at hand. We do not simply witness the drama; we feel swept into it, in a way that Brigman's miniaturized nature dramas fail to engage us.

The mysteries O'Keeffe found in the small and in the cosmic she also relates through the same process of magnification. Her treatment of the miniature in nature makes us feel as if we have been suddenly reduced to the scale of a Lilliputian



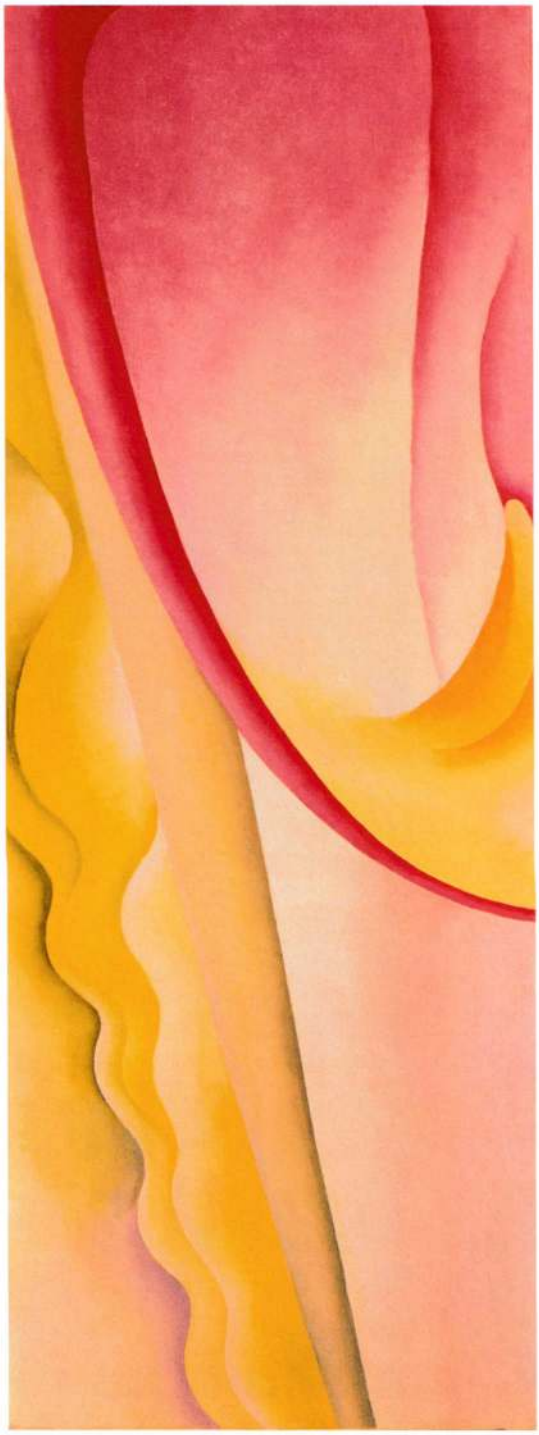
156

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Grey Blue and Black–Pink Circle,* 1929,
oil on canvas, 36 × 48 in.

world. Exploding the proportions of the form and focusing in on its parts to isolate the abstract beauty of its movements allow O'Keeffe to tell of a silent world and its pure music. Whether that motif is the humble, unassuming skunk cabbage (Fig. 157) or the blatant lusciousness of a pink tulip (Fig. 158), O'Keeffe forces our faces down to the level of the object, often just as she has encountered it on the ground, to confront its undulating rhythms, eerie haloings, or spiraling and vector-like movements of color. Often this magnification of the microcosmic engages us in a game of seeking out what is hidden or only partly apparent to the eye. All of O'Keeffe's flower paintings render the microcosm of the flower world as a macrocosm, making the convex lens of the eye an instrument of magnification. In these compositions, the flowers open out, letting us glimpse the source of life at the center. Often, in compositional complexity—in the multiplying parts in her studies of leaves and seaweed—O'Keeffe finds in this microscopic and therefore

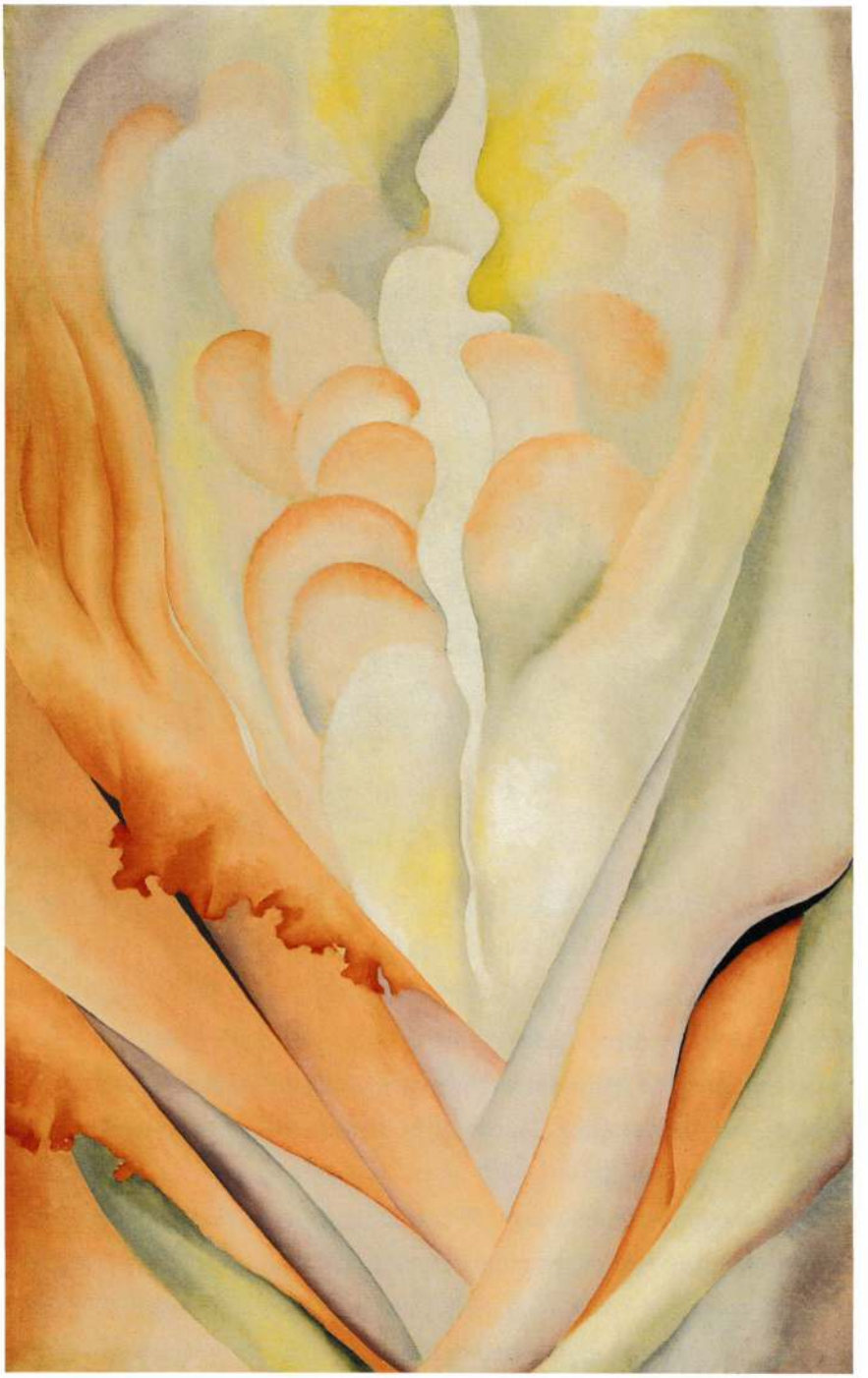
157 ▲
Georgia O'Keeffe,
Skunk Cabbage, 1922,
oil on canvas, 18 × 14 in.

158 ►
Georgia O'Keeffe,
Pink Tulip, 1925, oil on
canvas, 31¾ × 12 in.



159
Georgia O'Keeffe, *Seaweed,* 1927, oil on canvas, 9 × 7 in.

secret world a chaos she seems to relish discovering. This tiny sampling of seaweed (Fig. 159), a mere 9 by 7 inches, presents a multiplicity that defies comprehension. A closer look, we feel, would not bring this fairy world into better focus but only continue to make apparent a bewildering number of parts unseen from a more distant view. The enlarged forms of *Flower Abstraction* (Fig. 160), a canvas four feet high, dissolve into a series of rhythms, the flower pushed so close that the eye cannot comprehend it as a separate, remote thing. Instead, we see only a part of it, which, in filling our entire frame of vision, enfolds our whole being. The numerous parts of the flower now become gigantic, their amplitude on the surface defined by their contours. We follow the edges of stems, leaves, and petals,



160

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Flower Abstraction,* 1924, oil on canvas, 48 × 30 in.

161
Georgia O'Keeffe,
The Black Iris, 1926,
oil on canvas, 9 × 7 in.

successively pulling back in smooth, then frilled, and finally fluttering movements, as the eye tracks the forms upward from the bottom of the frame. The center of the flower remains hidden and veiled by the multitude of translucent membranes that block it from our sight.

In the iris compositions from 1926 to 1927 (Fig. 161), O'Keeffe similarly veiled the center with diaphanous petals that ripple into a frisson at their edges, permitting half-glimpses of the flower's core, partly revealed, partly concealed in darkness. It was precisely this type of construction, built around the act of veiling, that allowed critics like Rosenfeld (earlier, in the abstractions) to assert that O'Keeffe's

images dramatically uncovered the mystery of feminine sexuality or that led McBride to call O'Keeffe in 1927 a "priestess of mystery," or Louis Kalonyme to write in 1928 that O'Keeffe's vision cut through civilization's mask of femininity to unveil the true, natural feminine essence.[106] The structuring of her forms replicates the experience of seeing through an outer shell into a deep place of glowing life forms. From the first mystical flower forms of 1919 to the later jack-in-the-pulpit images of the early 1930s, she employed this same floral anatomy as the structure of feminine mystery. She insinuated the importance of interiority to the practice of her painting, including her floral imagery, when she wrote of her vision as a private space, as her "little world—as something that I am in—something that I play in—it is inevitable to me."[107] It is likely that her game of hide-and-seek on the canvas corresponded to her own need to escape into a psychological free zone, protected from the outside world. But the sense of interiority, of a space within that reverberates with indescribable sensations, opened up this imagery to Freudian interpretations of hidden feminine sexuality—that in her work we look into a private space, the body's inner space, crossing a boundary in art previously untraversed. From the first spiraling forms of the 1915 charcoals to the abstractions and florals of the 1920s, this narrative described O'Keeffe's core self as a taboo image, a bodily interior space that could be visualized only in terms of metaphorical abstractions.[108]

While O'Keeffe remained acutely aware of the sexualized framework that Stieglitz's critics generated for her art and did not welcome it, she believed in the essential femininity of her art. She surely exploited the floral composition as a sign of her femininity, for these paintings became her signature works by 1929. Throughout the 1920s she explored several approaches to still-life objects: trompe l'oeil, enlarged forms of leaves and flowers, such as morning glories and poppies; simplified tabletop compositions of fruit on a plate or eggs in a dish; yin-yang oppositions of natural forms such as skunk cabbages; and vertical, thrusting images of heavy phallic calla lilies. There was also the series of New York skyscrapers, received—recently and contemporaneously—as a gender-bending project expressing O'Keeffe's self-empowerment.[109] In 1927 especially her surfaces exploded with swirling roses, poppies, petunias with huge flaring skirts, and the frilli-

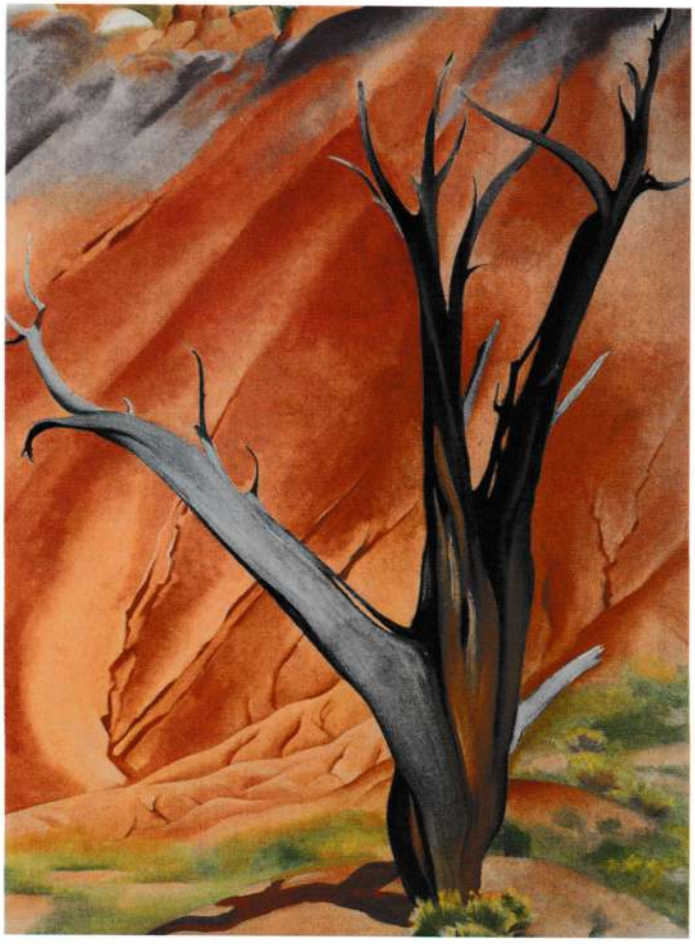
162
Georgia O'Keeffe,
White Rose with Larkspur No. II,
1927, oil on canvas,
40 × 30 in.

est of sweet peas. The penultimate composition in which these floral forms flutter their delicate membranes in the viewer's face, suggesting that they waft their fragrance in the same direction, came in two images of a large white rose, accompanied by a spray of diaphanous blue larkspur (Fig. 162).

If O'Keeffe did not herself wear the conventional frilly costumes and florid cosmetics considered feminine in these years, it is clear that in her works she was quite willing to engage the conventions for femininity. The repetition of floral forms on the walls of her annual exhibition in 1928 elicited the appropriate response from

the critics: Kalonyme, for example, called her display a "woman's art," "innocent . . . of all aesthetic categories of masculine approach in painting." No wonder the critic McBride would joke the following year that respectable old ladies from Iowa were traveling to New York to commune with O'Keeffe's works at the Intimate Gallery.[110] O'Keeffe in these works had availed herself of a recognizably feminine mode that modernist women writers were also employing at that moment. Like her, these writers self-consciously constructed a feminine voice out of an aesthetic of intricacy, craft, and preciosity and suggestions of a confined and silent space.[111] If O'Keeffe reasoned that she could obscure herself in the concreteness of the still-life subject, critics nonetheless found her buried in the delicate surfaces and intricate rhythmic movements of her image, the paradigm of a true, natural femininity.

By the end of the 1920s the game of hide-and-seek had become tiresome to her. O'Keeffe faced considerable difficulties in maintaining her production level and, even more problematic, the inventiveness that had so stunned Stieglitz in 1916–19. He and O'Keeffe continued to provide the public with the annual shock of the self-renewing woman-child. The yearly performance her exhibitions required drained her as she generated for each show enough canvases that satisfied her and then submitted herself to the hateful circus of interviews. The speculative essays continued to read bared sexuality in her canvases. From year to year in the 1920s, however, she repeated herself in her modes of experiencing nature and the resulting forms in her paintings. One can understand why at the end of the decade she needed to get herself away from Manhattan and Lake George into a new environment if she were going to be able to "evolve" in her work, as required by Stieglitz's vitalist doctrine of the creative mind's perpetual youth. By 1927–28, when, following a period of hospitalizations and recovery, O'Keeffe was burned out, she told Stieglitz of her need to get back to the West—to "'her' America"—a proposal he rejected, unwilling that either of them venture out of modernist New York.[112] To Ettie Stettheimer, O'Keeffe wrote in 1929, "I knew I must get back to some of my own ways or quit—it was mostly all dead for me." A few months earlier O'Keeffe had complained to Rebecca Strand that Stieglitz's steady pressure on her to produce was making it difficult for her to go on.[113] In 1929 two critics noted signs in her work that she had stopped growing, hinting also that she would soon occupy the title of Old Master,



163
Georgia O'Keeffe,
Gerald's Tree I,
1937, oil on canvas,
40 × 30⅛ in.

a category antithetical to modernism. And in 1930 O'Keeffe again commented on the difficulty of reinventing the wonder of the essential feminine voice in visual form.[114]

O'Keeffe, on her first getaway with Rebecca Strand to New Mexico in 1929, underwent a transformation. Before Strand's eyes, she grew from the seemingly "frail" child Stieglitz had projected to a woman as "tough as a hickory root . . . [now] finding what she knew she needed."[115] Although O'Keeffe did return to Stieglitz from this excursion to the Southwest, as she would nearly every year thereafter until his death, the permanent change in her was represented in the shifting of her

work into an imaginary panorama of heat, dryness, scarcity, pain, sublime immensity and darkness, and sometimes mystical hallucination. This landscape automatically disabled the Freudian scenario of the woman-child that had circulated around her renderings of the lush, green paradisiacal forms and colors she found at Lake George. The time she spent in New Mexico distancing herself from Stieglitz's critical machinery even gave her the strength to taunt the critics in her self-consciously eroticized jack-in-the-pulpits, begun the year after her return to New York from Taos.[116] O'Keeffe recovered her freedom to do as she wished and to reinvent herself in her work. From New Mexico she wrote to Seligmann, "I feel like myself again and I like it."[117] She was not, in 1929, the same woman she had been in 1919. It is not too much to state that her exhaustion and despair at the required annual performances of her paintings were also linked to her own maturation, to her physical aging and emotional growth. Plunging herself into the desert world of northern New Mexico, O'Keeffe transformed her imagery and her identity in modernism; she would less and less often reprise the distinctive feminine lyricism that had characterized her nature studies and abstractions of the 1920s. O'Keeffe found now that modes of disjunction, irony, and the surreal fit her, and she developed surprising juxtapositions of static objects or landscape formations invoking acute experiences of body and mind. Occasionally, her desiccated tree forms—for example, in *Gerald's Tree I* (Fig. 163), with their twisting movements with limbs lifted, pleading toward the sky—recall Anne Brigman's evocation of suffering in *The Dying Cedar* and *Soul of the Blasted Pine*—photographs that O'Keeffe certainly knew from the days in 1918 when Stieglitz was studying them as he prepared to photograph her. Like Brigman in the High Sierra, O'Keeffe in the New Mexico desert traced a history of struggle in solitary trees and rocks that suggests a pathos appropriate to stories of human striving and endurance, a theme particularly reverberant of her own experience.

In July 1931, shortly after O'Keeffe's return to Lake George from New Mexico, Edna St. Vincent Millay drove to the Stieglitz compound, a few hours away from her farm at Austerlitz, New York. The two feminine icons of New York's modernism

finally faced one another, undoubtedly with great curiosity. They were distantly acquainted through Mitchell Kennerley, who had been Millay's publisher and the owner of Anderson Galleries, where Stieglitz had staged his and O'Keeffe's exhibitions during the previous decade. A petite, flaming-haired beauty, Millay had long since abandoned her amorous life in the Village and had settled down, more or less, at her country estate, where under the watchful eye of her husband she could turn all her energies to the composition of her verse. The meeting of the two women was edgy. Little was spoken as the poet and painter shyly admired one another. Later, O'Keeffe attempted, in a letter to Millay, to explain her bewildered and awed behavior. In Millay, a luminous "wonder child"[118] of a woman, O'Keeffe seemed to recognize herself.

O'Keeffe wrote that she found Millay to be like a tiny hummingbird she had once wished to catch hold of for a few moments but whose fluttering evanescence forbade capture. "You were like the hummingbird to me," O'Keeffe told Millay, perhaps enraptured by the myth as much as the person of Millay, as modernism's great lyric girl-poet. "It is a very sweet memory to me—And I am rather inclined to feel that you and I know the best part of one another without spending much time together—It is not that I fear the knowing—It is that I am at this moment willing to let you be what you are to me—it is beautiful and pure and very intensely alive—."[119] In her imagining of Millay as bird, it was the freedom to fly away at will that O'Keeffe coveted—in fact, she recognized the necessity of flight to the bird's essence. She ended her letter with the hope that they would come together again someday when both were sure of their absolute freedom. Her tone was intense and private, as if she were revealing herself to herself in a diary. O'Keeffe's response to Millay suggests a fashioning of Millay as a soul mate—a woman artist and a free individual. Her words from New Mexico resonate with this moment, that feeling like herself again, O'Keeffe would again pursue a "mastery" of herself, as she put it, and the voice she had known in South Carolina and Texas so many years ago.

in *The Expanding Discourse*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 437–50; Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*.

150. KNR to AS, Aug. 9, 1915, Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL. Rhoades continues in a vein of self-loathing, "But perhaps she found herself and didn't like what she found—and in her grumbling lost the whole d __ thing! Scatterbrained! And somewhat of a fake, because she seems to fool her friends with thinking she's got poise—and is quite a fine sort of woman."

151. KNR to AS, Sept. 7, 1914, Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL.

152. KNR to AS, Nov. 5 and Dec. 5, 1914, Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL. Rudnick, *Mabel Dodge Luhan*, 89–91, 104–5, discusses the disillusionment of women radicals such as Dodge, Boyce, and others with the ideology of free love.

153. Lasch, *New Radicalism*, 101–9.

154. O'Keeffe had dabbled in commercial illustration in 1916–17 and had considered that career path, but her correspondence with Paul Strand (CCP, University of Arizona) in 1917 also reveals her discouragement and temptation to marry in that year.

155. Perry Miller Adato, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, WNET/New York, 1977. O'Keeffe told Adato that she could have been "much better as a painter and nobody would have noticed it" and that she was "luckier than others" and especially lucky that she was "in touch with her times." As Barbara Lynes has pointed out to me, it is significant that O'Keeffe in this statement erases Stieglitz as the causal factor in her success. Lynes shows that this erasure was O'Keeffe's strategic rewriting of her career after Stieglitz's death in 1946; see Barbara Buhler Lynes, "O'Keeffe's O'Keeffes: The Artist's Collection," in Barbara Buhler Lynes with Russell Bowman, *O'Keeffe's O'Keeffes: The Artist's Collection* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2001), 29–70.

156. See Nancy Newhall interview with Stieglitz, in her "Notes for a Biography of Alfred Stieglitz," MS in the Beaumont and Nancy Newhall Papers, Special Collections and Visual Resources in the Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, entry for Mar. 13, 1942, 28.

The Burden and the Promise

1. Nancy Milford, *Savage Beauty: The Life of Edna St. Vincent Millay* (New York: Random House, 2001); Nina Miller, *Making Love Modern: The Intimate Public Worlds of New York's Literary Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), chap. 1, "Edna St. Vincent Millay," 16–40.

2. Stieglitz and Kennerley had exchanged publications from 1912 on. Milford, *Sav-*

age Beauty, 331–33, establishes Millay's identity in the press as that of a child. See also Miller, *Making Love Modern*, 18.

3. Barbara Buhler Lynes, "1916 and 1917: My Own Tune," in Sarah Greenough et al., *Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art; Boston: Bulfinch Press, 2000), 261–69, notes O'Keeffe's self-conscious production of work that could be related to the modernism Stieglitz was showcasing.

4. O'Keeffe had her first formal meeting with Stieglitz at 291 in May 1916 at the time of her show with Duncan and Lafferty. For the Engelhard drawings that Walkowitz preserved, see *Abraham Walkowitz and Alfred Stieglitz: The "291" Years—1912–17* (New York: Zabriskie Gallery, 1976). Alfred Stieglitz (hereafter AS) to Georgia O'Keeffe (hereafter GOK), May 31, 1917, excerpted in Sarah Greenough and Juan Hamilton, *Alfred Stieglitz: Photographs and Writings* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1983), 202.

5. For O'Keeffe's study of different design systems, see Charles Eldredge, *Georgia O'Keeffe: American and Modern* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Sarah Whitaker Peters, *Becoming O'Keeffe: The Early Years* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2001); and Elizabeth Turner, *Georgia O'Keeffe: The Poetry of Things* (Washington, DC: Phillips Collection; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

6. GOK to AS, Feb. 1, 1916, from Columbia, SC. In reference to making her drawings "talk," O'Keeffe states that some of her ideas "may be near insanity." In GOK to AP, Feb. 9, 1916, Columbia, SC, O'Keeffe states that she doubted the "soundness" of her "mentality" during the time she made the drawings and asks Pollitzer if in the expression of the drawings she is "completely mad"; in Jack Cowart, Juan Hamilton, and Sarah Greenough, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art; Boston: New York Graphic Society Books, 1987), 150–51.

7. GOK to Anita Pollitzer (hereafter AP), Oct. 1915, and Sept. 18, 1916, Alfred Stieglitz /Georgia O'Keeffe Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (hereafter YCAL).

8. See Christopher Dresser, *Principles of Decorative Design* (London: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, 1873); Charles G. Leland, *Drawing and Designing* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1889).

9. See Georgia O'Keeffe, *Some Memories of Drawings*, ed. Doris Bry (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), n.p., on her sense that the charcoals [illegible] "things in my head . . . shapes and ideas so familiar to me" and [illegible] as a recurring image for her but one she never remembered [illegible]

GOK to AP, Dec. 1915 and Dec. 13, 1915, and GOK to AS, Feb. 1, 1916, all in Anita Pollitzer, *A Woman on Paper: Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 39–40, 123–24. To Paul Strand, O'Keeffe also revealed her distrust of words to assign meaning to feelings, especially those embodied in images; GOK to Strand (hereafter PS), June 25, 1917, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tuscon (hereafter CCP).

10. GOK to AP, Feb. 9, 1916, in Cowart et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 151.

11. Barbara Buhler Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné* (New Haven: Yale University Press; Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art; Santa Fe, NM: Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation, 1999), 1:57, connects O'Keeffe's account to Pollitzer of dangling her feet in a pool of water with *No. 32—Special* and *Special No. 33*; Lynes, "1916 and 1917," 263, relates several of the 1915 pastels to O'Keeffe's fascination with water; see GOK to AP, Oct. 1915, in Pollitzer, *Lovingly, Georgia: The Complete Correspondence of Georgia O'Keeffe and Anita Pollitzer*, ed. Clive Giboire (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 48.

12. GOK to AP, Feb. 1, 1916, in Cowart et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 150.

13. GOK to AP, December 1915, in Pollitzer, *Woman on Paper*, 39.

14. See GOK to AP, Feb. 21, 1916, in Cowart et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 152, for O'Keeffe's enthusiasm for Marin and her study of his works reproduced in *Camera Work* 39 (July 1912).

15. Unsigned review of *Color Music* (1911), by Professor Wallace Rinington, *Forerunner* 6 (May 1915): 140. O'Keeffe's volume of this journal at the Abiquiu Book Room is inscribed inside the front cover, "Georgia O'Keeffe / October 19, 1916."

16. Alfred Stieglitz, "Our Illustrations," *Camera Work* 49–50 (June 1917): 3.

17. Marius de Zayas and Paul Haviland, *The Study of the Modern Evolution of Plastic Expression* (New York: 291, 1913), 12–21.

18. GOK to AP, Aug. 25, 1915, in Pollitzer, *Woman on Paper*, 12–13; GOK to AP, Sept. 1915, Georgia O'Keeffe Papers, YCAL, states that "Kandinsky is reading much better this time than last time," indicating that O'Keeffe was reading Kandinsky for the second time.

19. AS to GOK, June 1916, in Pollitzer, *Woman on Paper*, 139–40; GOK to PS, June 12 and 25, 1917, CCP.

20. GOK to AS, July 27, 1916, in Cowart et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 153–54.

21. On O'Keeffe's and Pollitzer's interest in Rhoades, see AP to GOK, July 26, 1915, GOK to AP, September 1915, in Pollitzer, *Lovingly, Georgia*, 8 and 25. Pollitzer's and O'Keeffe's intense immersion in Stieglitz's publications, as well as journals and books by Greenwich Village radicals, is also detailed in their correspondence for 1915–16, as reprinted in Pollitzer, *Lovingly, Georgia*.

22. In GOK to AP, June 20, 1917, O'Keeffe reported on her experience at 291 and the trip to Coney Island with Stieglitz, Paul Strand, and a man named Gaisman who had invented the Auto-Strop Razor and the Autograph Camera; in Cowart et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 162–63; Pollitzer, *Woman on Paper*, 164; AS to GOK, Mar. 31, 1918, in Pollitzer, *Woman on Paper*, 159.

23. Herbert J. Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking: Notes on Some of His Conversations, 1925–1931* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 117, records Stieglitz as recalling that he was initially opposed to her shift from black and white to color.

24. GOK to AP, Jan. 17, 1917, and GOK to PS, June 3, 1917, in Cowart et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 159–61. The book Strand had given O'Keeffe was probably either a volume on child rearing and child psychology, *Childhood*, by Mrs. Theodore W. Birney, with an introduction by G. Stanley Hall (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1905), or a treatise on the representation of the child in English literature, *Childhood*, by Alice Meynell (New York: Fellowship Books, 1913). Theories of children's education would continue to occupy the Stieglitz circle into the 1920s; as evidence, see the chapter Paul Rosenfeld devoted to Margaret Naumburg, a progressive educator and student of Maria Montessori, in Paul Rosenfeld, *Port of New York: Essays on Fourteen American Moderns* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1924), 117–34. Naumburg ran a class for young children in the Henry Street settlement in 1913–14 and shortly afterward established her own school, the Walden School, on West Sixty-eighth Street. She married Waldo Frank, a Stieglitz circle intimate, and in 1921 exhibited the artworks of her students at the Bourgeois Gallery, New York, that Rosenfeld again viewed as examples of what Stieglitz had earlier framed as the "natural," pure vision of the child. I thank Marcia Brennan for the reference to Naumburg.

25. GOK to AP, Sept. 11 and 18, 1916, confides this practice, in Cowart et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 156–57. For her watercolor of a chicken in the child mode, see Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, no. 175.

26. See GOK to PS, Sept. 12, 1917, CCP, for O'Keeffe's experience of the plains as a song.

27. On the development of children's drawing practices, see Howard Gardner, *Artful Scribbles: The Significance of Children's Drawings* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), especially 137–49.

28. Sue Davidson Lowe, *Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983), 230.

29. See Marcia Brennan, *Painting Gender, Constructing Theory: The Alfred Stieglitz Circle and American Formalist Aesthetics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), chaps. 4–6; Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 16, notes for Jan. 22, 1926, records Stieglitz stating that Marin, Dove, and O'Keeffe possessed a "simplicity" that bespoke their "childlikeness"; and 66, on Mar. 2, 1926, calling Marin's watercolors "innocent, like a child."

30. Barbara Buhler Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz, and the Critics, 1916–1929* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); and Brennan, *Painting Gender*.

31. Alfred Stieglitz, "Woman in Art," in Dorothy Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer* (New York: Aperture, 1973), 136–38.

32. Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, vol. 3, *Analysis of the Sexual Impulse, Love and Pain, The Sexual Impulse in Women* (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1927), 253, states that "in a certain sense, their [women's] brains are in their wombs. . . . [T]hey may appear to be passing through life always in a rather inert or dreamy state; but, when their sexual emotions are touched, then at once they spring into life; they become alert, resourceful, courageous, indefatigable." Havelock Ellis, *Man and Woman: A Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characters* (London: Walter Scott; New York: Scribner's, 1894), 387, describes women as nearer to children than adult men. Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism: An Introduction," (1914), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey, vol. 14, *1914–1916* (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis), 73–104.

33. Carol Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780–1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 10–12, 18, 28–29, 41.

34. AS to GOK, Mar. 31, 1918, reprinted in Pollitzer, *Woman on Paper*, 159; See also text, above, at note 22. See also AS to PS, May 27, 1918, CCP, on O'Keeffe as the "Great Child" and AS to Arthur Dove [July 1918], Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL, on O'Keeffe as a "purer form of myself." Richard Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz: A Biography* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995), 404, cites all the sources given here.

35. Christopher Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America, 1889–1963: The Intellectual as a Social Type* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 59–63.

36. Anne Middleton Wagner, *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), frames Stieglitz's photographic portrait of O'Keeffe, the primary vehicle through which he created her public image and the narrative for her works, as a benign collaboration. As will become apparent in this chapter, my examination of the primary sources has led me to agree with the differing conclusions presented by Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, and Sarah Greenough, *Alfred Stieglitz: The Key Set; The Alfred Stieglitz Collection of Photographs, 1886–1922* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art; New York: Abrams, 2002), 1:xxxvi– xxxvii.

37. PS to AS, May 18, 1918, CCP; Strand actually reports what O'Keeffe's friend, Leah Harris, who owned the Waring ranch, had told him in confidence.

38. AS to PS, Apr. 27, 1919, CCP.

39. Lowe, *Stieglitz*, 217, quotes AS to Arthur Dove, Aug. 15, 1918, Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL.

40. AS to PS, Nov. 17, 1918, CCP.

41. Lowe, *Stieglitz*, 216–27, recounts that the couple lived first at Elizabeth Davidson's Fifty-ninth Street studio (which Stieglitz's brother, Lee, paid for); moved in 1920 to Lee's house, where they lived for the next four years; and "were fed frequently "at Lee's or his sister, Agnes Engelhard's house." Louise Bryant to Sara Bard Field, June 16, 1916, quoted in Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 253.

42. On professional/love partnerships in modernist New York circles in this period, see Stansell, *American Moderns*, 225–27, 249–58. On 249, Stansell cites Stieglitz and O'Keeffe's partnership as one in a long list of bohemian couples—primarily writers and politicos—who combined love and work.

43. PS to AS, May 18, 1918, CCP; AS to PS, Sept. 10, 1918, CCP; and GOK to PS, June 25, Aug. 16, and Sept. 12, 1917, CCP.

44. On Käsebier's portraits of the Eight as promotional material for publication in newspapers on the eve of their inaugural exhibition, see Barbara L. Michaels, *Gertrude Käsebier: The Photographer and Her Photographs* (New York: Abrams, 1992), 117.

45. This posterboard with clippings is still in the Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL. For the erotic dimension of Whistler's "white girls," the reception of Whistler's *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl* (1862, National Gallery of Art), and the mutedness of the figure, see Kathleen Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life: Painting and Evolutionary Thought in Late Nineteenth-Century America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), chap. 3.

46. AS to Anne Brigman, undated letter [early 1918], Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL, written while Stieglitz was working in the attic room above the old gallery, sorting through the works of art and publications he had collected there.

47. Stieglitz referred to the painting procedures of both Rhoades and O'Keeffe as one of making children; see AS to Katharine Nash Rhoades, May 31, 1916, Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL, in which Stieglitz refers to Rhoades's paintings as "babies." Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 73, 134–35, records Stieglitz in 1926 referring to O'Keeffe's paintings as her children; on 78, Stieglitz reports O'Keeffe's postpartum depression after her first painting was "taken away" from her. On O'Keeffe as performing in the tradition of somnabulistic dancers, see Mike Weaver, "Alfred Stieglitz and Ernest Bloch: Art and Hypnosis," *History of Photography* 20 (Winter 1996): 293–303.

48. Georgia O'Keeffe, introduction to *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Portrait by Alfred Stieglitz* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Viking Press, 1978), n.p.

49. For the Pygmalion comparison, see Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz*, 484–85; for Svengali, see Weaver, "Alfred Stieglitz and Ernest Bloch," 293–94.

50. Frank was appropriating for Stieglitz's myth a remark often made about Käsebier's relation to her sitters. See Alfred Stieglitz, "How I Came to Photograph Clouds," *Amateur Photographer and Photography* 56 (Sept. 19, 1923), reprinted in Greenough and Hamilton, *Alfred Stieglitz*, 206–8.

51. Mabel Dodge Luhan, "The Art of Georgia O'Keeffe," undated MS (1926– 27?), Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, YCAL, MSS 196, 1–4. O'Keeffe's letter to Luhan, 1925(?), Georgia O'Keeffe Papers, YCAL, asks Luhan to write about her art from a woman's perspective.

52. Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 67, reports Stieglitz's story of his first impression of O'Keeffe's face, circa 1908, from a portrait head by Eugene Speicher that had been entered in a painting contest judged by Stieglitz's father.

53. AS to Arthur Dove, July and August 1918, Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL.

54. Havelock Ellis, "Love and Pain," in *Studies*, vol. 3, especially 184–88. Marius de Zayas, *African Negro Art: Its Influence on Modern Art* (New York: Modern Gallery, 1916), 14, explores the notion of African sculptures as fetish objects that embody both instinctual drives and a spirit force that speaks to the primitive living in a world of terror.

55. Helen Shannon, "African Art, 1914: The Root of Modern Art," in Greenough et al., *Modern Art and America*, 175, fig. 45, identifies the spoon as the work of Guro or Bete people, Ivory Coast, nineteenth or early twentieth century.

56. Wagner offers a reading of O'Keeffe's art that approaches Stieglitz's projected identity for O'Keeffe in this portrait project: in *Three Artists* she imagines how O'Keeffe's art can be apprehended as the projected sensibility of a being who can claim a universal position, one that speaks for both masculinity and femininity.

57. Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 41, quotes Stieglitz on O'Keeffe's painting as a "new religion" and on 108 recounts Stieglitz's narrative of his own recognition as a messenger of that religion.

58. See Sinclair Lewis, "Hobohemia: A Farce-Comedy in Three Acts," typed MS, ca. 1918, New York Public Library Collections. The play was produced Feb. 8, 1925, at the Greenwich Village Theater. George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell wrote another play in this same genre in 1920 for the Provincetown Players. Titled *Suppressed Desires*, it mocked the Villagers' obsessions with Freud, the practice of "psyching," and sex. See George Cram Cook and Frank Shay, eds., *The Provincetown Plays* (Cincinnati, OH: Stewart Kidd, 1921). O'Keeffe kept the 1919 palladium print in her collection until she sold it to Vivian Horan. On the 1921 photo-

graph, see Greenough, *Alfred Stieglitz*, 402, no. 609, *Georgia O'Keeffe with Matisse Sculpture*, palladium print. On the Matisse bronze, *La Vie (Torso with Head)*, 1906, in the Stieglitz collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, see John Cauman, "Henri Matisse, 1908, 1910, and 1912: New Evidence of Life," in Greenough et al., *Modern Art and America*, 93, fig. 33.

59. Barbara Michaels, "Rediscovering Gertrude Käsebier," *Image* 19 (June 1976): 31, notes that Stieglitz visited Käsebier's studio in 1902 at the time Käsebier was pursuing her experimental work with hands and feet and showing it to visitors. AS to Anne Brigman, Dec. 24, 1919, Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL.

60. AS to Herbert Seligmann, February 22, 1926, quoted in *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 61–62. Nancy Armstrong, "Modernism's Iconophobia and What It Did to Gender," *Modernism/Modernity* 5, no. 2 (1998): 47–75, offers a different interpretation of Stieglitz's nudes of O'Keeffe and other nudes of photographers' lovers in relation to the syntaxes of pornography and modern literature.

61. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 116–17, 125, explains this identification of the subject with the child and the mother as part of the process by which the subject is created: "In the play of identity and difference out of which the subject 'appears' at any given point, the relation between childhood and the present . . . constitutes an imaginary at either end: for the child, the mother as object of desire; for the adult, the image of the past, the dual relation before it was lost, the pure body-within-the-body, which is only approximated in reproduction." The adult's desire for this lost state of childhood manifests itself in the form of a "pure object," which "will remain complete at a distance."

62. Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné*, 1:106, no. 176, confirms that according to the Stieglitz-O'Keeffe correspondence these watercolor nudes were self-portraits.

63. Stieglitz also exhibited two less provocative portraits of O'Keeffe—one of her hands and one of her head—in March 1919 at the Young Women's Hebrew Association, New York, that went relatively unnoticed by critics.

64. Greenough, *Alfred Stieglitz*, xxxvii, lvi n. 144, suggests that most of the nudes were made in the first three years O'Keeffe was with Stieglitz, 1918–20, and that by 1920 Stieglitz had run out of new ways to photograph her; Greenough also states that the "Key Set" contains all but two nudes of O'Keeffe; in that set, nos. 676 (1921), 677 (1921), and 827 (1922) were probably the last nudes Stieglitz made of O'Keeffe until the seven torsos of 1931, nos. 1438–44. Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, 131–33, observes that O'Keeffe's appearance in Stieglitz's photographs of the

1920s ran counter to the narrative frame Stieglitz and the critics gave to her paintings and that this sensuous O'Keeffe portrayed in the criticism was no longer available to the public except in an imaginary way.

65. Lynes, conversation with the author, July 12, 2003. On Millay's attempt to change her public image, see Daniel Mark Epstein, *What Lips My Lips Have Kissed: The Loves and Love Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay* (New York: Holt, 2001), 135, who cites a portrait of herself that Millay commissioned from the photographer Berenice Abbott in which she presents herself in a tailored suit.

66. Rebecca Strand (hereafter RS) to PS, Sept. 20 and 21, 1923, CCP. See Paul Rosenfeld, "American Painting," *Dial* 71 (Dec. 1921): 649–70, reprinted in Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, 171–74; "The Paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe," *Vanity Fair* (Oct. 1922): 56, 112, 114; and *Port of New York*, 198–210.

67. Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 13, states that Stieglitz was still buying first editions of Lawrence's works at auction in 1926. In 1913 Mitchell Kennerley published Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* and *Love Poems and Others*. Stieglitz's volumes of *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* in the Abiquiu Book Room were published in 1915 and 1920 respectively. Rosenfeld's inscription in his gift volume of Lawrence's poems reads, "To Georgia O'Keefe [*sic*] / and Alfred Stieglitz— / To whom this book belongs / Paul Rosenfeld / June 1920." Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, 46–50, also comments on the collaborative nature of Rosenfeld's writing and its investment in Lawrence's language and details Marsden Hartley's and Paul Strand's contributions to propagating Stieglitz's Freudian interpretations of O'Keeffe's work; see also Brennan, *Painting Gender*, 100–105, and Bonnie Grad, "Georgia O'Keeffe's Lawrencean Vision," *Archives of American Art Journal* 38 (2000): 2–19.

68. Sheila Rowbotham, "Edward Carpenter: Prophet of the New Life," in *Socialism and the New Life: The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis*, ed. Sheila Rowbotham and Jeffrey Weeks (London: Pluto Press, 1977).

69. See Paul Rosenfeld, "Georgia O'Keeffe," in *Port of New York*, 202.

70. RS to AS, Aug. 7, 1922, Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL, described four of the O'Keeffe paintings hanging in the bedroom of Rosenfeld's house at Westport, Connecticut, where she was vacationing. Three of them were probably those reproduced in "Paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe," 56: *Apple Family I* (1922, private collection, Santa Fe); *Tree and Mountain near Lake George* (ca. 1921, destroyed by O'Keeffe); and *Series I, No. 7* (1919; see Fig. 147), which Strand mistakenly called one of the "black spot" works. For these three paintings, see Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, nos. 279 and 316, and vol. 2, appendix 2, no. 31.

71. Rosenfeld, "Georgia O'Keeffe," 199; "Paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe," 117.

72. Rosenfeld, "Paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe," 56, 112, 114.

73. On O'Keeffe's "fury," see GOK to Mitchell Kennerley, fall 1922, and GOK to Sherwood Anderson, Sept. 1923, cited in Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, 58 and 70, also reprinted in Cowart et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 170–71, 174. On his conceit of O'Keeffe as a "Whiteness," see AS to Sherwood Anderson, June 22, 1923, Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL. Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 64, records Stieglitz in 1926 as still visualizing O'Keeffe as whiteness. Paul Rosenfeld, "American Painting," reprinted in Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, 171–74. Lynes also recapitulates the eroticized thematics Stieglitz continued to generate in the criticism of O'Keeffe's work; see especially Lewis Mumford, "O'Keefe [sic] and Matisse," *New Republic* 50 (Mar. 2, 1927): 41–42, reprinted in Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, 264–66; Louis Kalonyme, "Georgia O'Keeffe: A Woman in Painting," *Creative Art* 2 (Jan. 1928): xxxiv–xl, reprinted in Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, 278–82; and Blanche Matthias, "Georgia O'Keeffe and the Intimate Gallery: Stieglitz Showing Seven Americans," *Chicago Evening Post Magazine of the Art World*, Mar. 2, 1926, 1, 14, reprinted in Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, 246–50; Matthias foregrounds the image of O'Keeffe as the intuitive child, though she divests that image of its usual eroticism. Brennan, *Painting Gender*, 121, refers to the process of Rosenfeld's criticism as the embodiment of O'Keeffe in her images and describes how O'Keeffe's oscillating response to this criticism makes clear her predicament in going against Stieglitz.

74. O'Keeffe, introduction to *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Portrait by Alfred Stieglitz*.

75. GOK to AS, July 27, 1916, in Cowart et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 154.

76. GOK to PS, Sept. 12, 1917, CCP.

77. O'Keeffe told Pollitzer that she would like to have Stieglitz's approval more than anyone's; GOK to AP, Oct. 11, 1915, Georgia O'Keeffe Papers, YCAL. She had also sought "Pa" Dow's approval of her work after her second exhibition in 1917; see Arthur W. Dow to GOK, Apr. 24, 1917, and GOK to AP, Sept. 18, 1916, both in Georgia O'Keeffe Papers, YCAL. O'Keeffe calls Dow "Pa Dow" in Cowart et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 157–58. O'Keeffe confided her competitive drive and her need to be "on top" to Carol Merrill; see C. S. Merrill, *O'Keeffe: Days in a Life* (Albuquerque, NM: La Alameda Press, 1995), 14. In "Notes on an Interview with Frances O'Brien," typescript of an interview by Nancy Wall, taped Mar. 29, 1986–May 2, 1987, file #OB2300, Library, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum Research Center, on 59 and 80, O'Brien quotes Stieglitz on O'Keeffe's drive toward fame and comments on her competitiveness with her four sisters. O'Brien was on intimate terms with Stieglitz and O'Keeffe; for periods of time she stayed at their homes in New York City and at Lake George and later at Abiquiu.

78. AS to PS, Nov. 10, 1918, CCP, called O'Keeffe "not a talker—nor a questioner." O'Keeffe explained to Carol Merrill that she customarily responded with silence to things printed about her that she felt were untrue, in hopes that they would eventually go away; see Merrill, *O'Keeffe*, 63. On O'Keeffe's battle with Stieglitz to have a child, see Lowe, *Stieglitz*, 247. Stieglitz states that O'Keeffe gives birth to her children in art in his 1919 essay "Woman in Art"; Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 73, 134–35, records Stieglitz in 1926 as still referring to O'Keeffe's works as her children.

79. See the exhibition catalogs for O'Keeffe's shows of 1923, 1924, and 1925 at the Anderson Galleries, all of which were titled to reflect his presentation of her work: "Alfred Stieglitz Presents the Paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe."

80. GOK to Blanche Matthias, Mar. 1926, in Cowart et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 183.

81. Lowe, *Stieglitz*, 260, comments on O'Keeffe's feeling of safety with and dependence on Stieglitz; Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, 56, remarks on the impact of the *Portrait* on O'Keeffe's self-image. In AS to PS, Nov. 17, 1918, CCP, Stieglitz added to the statement about O'Keeffe's selves, "There are very many." Merrill, *O'Keeffe*, 65, reports that O'Keeffe, in March 1977, told her that Stieglitz's photographic *Portrait* made her see her face differently, as long instead of round.

82. Lowe, *Stieglitz*, 242.

83. See, for example, AS to Sherwood Anderson, Sept. 5, 1924, and to Herbert Seligmann, June 19, 1928, Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL, for Stieglitz's complaint that O'Keeffe lets "so many meaningless things upset her." In AS to Paul Rosenfeld, Nov. 20, 1923, Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL, Stieglitz once again invoked the child metaphor for himself and O'Keeffe, this time referring to their helplessness at organizing their lives.

84. AS to Waldo Frank, Nov. 26, 1920, Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL, and AS to PS, Oct. 9, 1920, CCP.

85. RS to PS, Aug. 8 and 10, 1924, CCP.

86. RS to PS, Sept. 27 and 28, 1923, CCP; Strand continues, "Well, it's all terrible. . . . Rosenfeld felt he couldn't work here. Said he had never been in such a hell, but he'll get used to it. It's good for him to see that everything isn't quite so romantic and rosy as it seems."

87. Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 70–71, records Stieglitz's story of one of Rhoades's uncles visiting the 1924 exhibition of Stieglitz and O'Keeffe at Anderson Galleries. Telling this incident from the distance of two years later, in 1926, Stieglitz capitalized on the opportunity to lament Rhoades's failure to develop, in contrast to O'Keeffe's triumph. Nancy Newhall, "Notes for a Biography of Alfred

Stieglitz," Beaumont and Nancy Newhall Papers, Special Collections and Visual Resources, Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 28.

88. Georgia O'Keeffe, "Stieglitz: His Pictures Collected Him," *New York Times Magazine*, Dec. 11, 1949, 24.

89. Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, 159; O'Keeffe, introduction to *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Portrait by Alfred Stieglitz*, n.p.

90. Marcia Brennan to the author, Dec. 11, 1999.

91. Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*. Merrill, *O'Keeffe*, 63, reported O'Keeffe's comments, in Mar. 1977, on the strategy of silence as a response to writing about her work with which she disagreed: "I have found that when something is written which is untrue, it is best not to comment because that only draws attention to it. Otherwise it disappears and fewer people notice it."

92. Barbara Buhler Lynes, "O'Keeffe's O'Keeffe's," seminar presentation, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum Research Center, Sept. 25, 2001; see also Barbara Buhler Lynes, "O'Keeffe's O'Keeffes: The Artist's Collection," in *O'Keeffe's O'Keeffes: The Artist's Collection* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2001), 29–70.

93. Newhall, "Notes," entry for Feb. 18, 1942, 23. In the early 1960s, when the Beinecke Library at Yale University was soliciting manuscripts for its growing Stieglitz Archives, O'Keeffe, concerned to guard both her privacy and the romantic myth of her partnership with Stieglitz, asked Rebecca Strand (then James) not to give the library "anything that had to do with . . . struggle" between her and Stieglitz. Rebecca Strand James to GOK, Sept. 6, 1963, Georgia O'Keeffe Papers, YCAL. James did not heed her friend's plea.

94. RS to PS, June 19, 1929, CCP.

95. O'Keeffe told Pollitzer that the *Portrait* "had nothing to do with me personally," in Pollitzer, *Woman on Paper*, 168. O'Keeffe, introduction to *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Portrait by Alfred Stieglitz*, n.p. Greenough, in *Alfred Stieglitz*, 1:xxxviii, confronts the forced nature of the collaboration, quoting O'Keeffe's statements to Perry Miller Adato and others that the nudes of the *Portrait* were made according to his desire, not hers.

96. Matthias, "Georgia O'Keeffe," reprinted in Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, 247. O'Keeffe's approval of Matthias's review as "one of the best things that have been done on me" is recorded in GOK to Matthias, Mar. 1926, Georgia O'Keeffe Papers, YCAL, reprinted in Cowart et al., *O'Keeffe*, 183; GOK to Waldo Frank, summer 1926, Georgia O'Keeffe Papers, YCAL, reprinted in Cowart et al., *O'Keeffe*, 184.

97. Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, on 61, 73, 97, and 159, remarks on O'Keeffe's efforts to change the direction of her work from abstraction to representation after she re-

alized, in 1923, the impact of Stieglitz's eroticized narrative of her art. On 158, Lynes quotes O'Keeffe's ruminations to Michael Gold, a reporter for the *New Masses*, on the difficulty of producing a distinctly feminine art, a form of "painting that is all of a woman, as well as all of me"; originally printed in Gladys Oaks, "Radical Writer and Woman Artist Clash on Propaganda and Its Uses," *New York World*, Mar. 16, 1930, Women's section, 1, 3.

98. Barbara Buhler Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), n.p., notes that after 1923, even when O'Keeffe worked in an abstract mode, the natural forms inspiring the abstractions are more readily identifiable than in her earlier work; and Barbara Buhler Lynes, "The Language of Criticism: Its Effect on Georgia O'Keeffe's Art in the 1920s," in *From the Faraway Nearby: Georgia O'Keeffe as Icon*, ed. Christopher Merrill and Ellen Bradbury (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1992), 43–54.

99. Peters, *Becoming O'Keeffe*, credits O'Keeffe's formation in Dow's system and explores the photographic vision of O'Keeffe's paintings as a direct dialogue in which she engaged with Stieglitz and several of the Photo-Secessionists. I see Dow's system of composition as one that presented an inherently similar framing system to that of the mobile photographic lens. Thus O'Keeffe and the Photo-Secessionists were already working on the principles of the same system, even before O'Keeffe became aware of their photography and hence the attractiveness—even comfortableness—of their work for her.

100. See "Notes on an Interview with Frances O'Brien," typescript, 26 and 54.

101. Ibid., 20 and 105. O'Keeffe also related to Perry Miller Adato that she first saw shapes in her head and was often unaware of the sources of these shapes or that she was repeating shapes from her earlier works; in Adato's film, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, WNET/New York, 1977.

102. Gardner, *Artful Scribbles*, 150–51.

103. See, for example, the interviews of O'Keeffe in 1927 by Dorothy Adlow and Frances O'Brien, both reprinted in Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, 268– 72. GOK to Mitchell Kennerley, Jan. 20, 1929, no. 41 in Cowart et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 187. In the same letter O'Keeffe speaks of her painting *Red Barn, Wisconsin*, 1928, as projecting the "healthy part of me . . . my childhood," which clearly stands in her mind as a golden period of freedom that she can recapture only fleetingly at Lake George, where everyone and everything seems to conspire against her achieving a creative state. In her letter to Waldo Frank, summer 1926, no. 37 in Cowart et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 184, O'Keeffe speaks of her thought process as intuitive and of her inability to know how she arrives at certain ideas. Decades after her summers at the Lake George compound, O'Keeffe was still lashing out at Stieglitz for

what she viewed as his suffocating regulation of her life there; Georgia O'Keeffe, interview by Charlotte Willard, 1960, tape recording, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum Research Center; and Adato's film, *Georgia O'Keeffe*.

104. Presumably, O'Keeffe recounted these episodes of the dollhouse and her conflict with her mother to Anita Pollitzer, who recapitulated them in *Woman on Paper*, 60–61. In her narrative of her childhood, O'Keeffe emphasized her solitude in nature as her essential condition for happiness.

105. According to O'Brien, O'Keeffe often spent her evenings reclining on a sofa, listening to Bach; and at Lake George in the 1920s O'Keeffe labored to perfect the edges of things; see "Notes on an Interview with Frances O'Brien," 5 and 18.

106. Kalonyme, "Georgia O'Keeffe," xxxiv–xl, and Henry McBride, "Paintings by Georgia O'Keefe [*sic*]: Decorative Art That Is Also Occult at the Intimate Gallery," *New York Sun*, Feb. 9, 1929, 7, both reprinted in Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, 278–82 and 295–96.

107. GOK to Mitchell Kennerley, Jan. 20, 1929, Georgia O'Keeffe Papers, YCAL, reprinted in Cowart et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 187.

108. On the problem of visualizing the body's interior spaces and its erotogenic zones, see Stewart, *On Longing*, 104. Anna C. Chave, "O'Keeffe and the Masculine Gaze," *Art in America* 78 (Jan. 1990): 114–25, 177, continues this critical tradition in articulating O'Keeffe's abstractions and flowers as representations of her "experience of her own body" and as metaphors for her "experience of space and penetrability"—that is, as projections of O'Keeffe's desire.

109. See Vivian Green Fryd, "Georgia O'Keeffe's *Radiator Building*: Gender, Sexuality, Modernism, and Urban Imagery," *Winterthur Portfolio* 35, no. 4 (2000): 269–89.

110. Kalonyme, "Georgia O'Keeffe," xxxiv–xl, and McBride, "Paintings by Georgia O'Keefe," 7, both reprinted in Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, 278–82 and 295–96.

111. Elaine Showalter, *Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 110–11.

112. AS to Herbert Seligmann, June 28, 1928, Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL.

113. GOK to Ettie Stettheimer, Aug. 24, 1929, Georgia O'Keeffe Papers, YCAL, also reprinted in Cowart et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 195; for Strand's testimony on this point, see n. 115 below.

114. O'Keeffe complained to Lilian Sabine, "It is much more difficult to go on now than it was before. Every year I have to carry the thing I do further so that people are surprised again." See Sabine, "Record Price for Living Artist: Canvases of Georgia O'Keeffe Were Kept in Storage for Three Years until Market Was Right for Them,"

Brooklyn Sunday Eagle Magazine, May 27, 1928, 11, Edward Alden Jewell, "Georgia O'Keeffe," *New York Times*, Feb. 10, 1929, sec. 9, 12, and Murdock Pemberton, "Mostly American," *Creative Art* 4 (Mar. 1929): l–li, all reprinted in Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, 288–91, 296–97, and 298–99; see also Gladys Oaks, "Radical Writer," cited in Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz*, 158, for O'Keeffe's comment on her continual search for new forms of purely feminine expression.

115. RS to PS, May 4, 1929, CCP. Strand remarked to her husband that O'Keeffe appeared greatly regenerated immediately after their arrival in Taos and that now O'Keeffe could work at her own pace: "Stieglitz's tempo is certainly too fast for her and is bad for her, when she can't keep up." In a letter of May 5, 1929, CCP, Rebecca reflected to Paul on how Stieglitz would disapprove of O'Keeffe's and Strand's leisurely days and on O'Keeffe's state of exhaustion: "I am sure Stieglitz would feel Georgia is frittering away a lot of time, but she really needs this letdown." RS to AS, May 14, 1929, Alfred Stieglitz Papers, YCAL, describes O'Keeffe's transformation to an irate Stieglitz.

116. In a conversation with the author (Oct. 10, 2000), Sue Davidson Lowe stated that O'Keeffe was playing with the critics in her conception of the jacks; Lowe cited as evidence a letter in her possession from Georgia Engelhard who reported on O'Keeffe's thinking as O'Keeffe was beginning the series.

117. For her statement to Seligmann, see Adato's film *Georgia O'Keeffe*.

118. Milford, in *Savage Beauty*, relates that in 1912 Millay's admirer and friend the poet Arthur Davison Ficke addressed Millay as a "wonder-child," preceding Stieglitz's address of Rhoades and then O'Keeffe as a "wonder-child" by a few years (80).

119. On Millay's perceived childlike persona and her image in the press as a "lovely, fragile child," see Milford, *Savage Beauty*, esp. 331–33; on 340–41, Milford quotes O'Keeffe's undated letter to Millay.