Georgia O'Keeffe's Inter/ Nationalism

Anna C. Chave

"I wonder if your work will ever become 'popular'—Would you like it?"

mused the gallerist and photographer Alfred Stieglitz in a letter to Georgia O'Keeffe on November 16, 1916, when she was yet to have a solo show.[1] Quite improbably—for a woman and a feminist of her era who could work in daring ways—O'Keeffe did attract a popular audience almost from the onset of her career, especially though not only among female viewers. And she commands a popular audience still.[2] Her art's boldly graphic impact and at times decorative aspect have long lent it a commercial appeal. But the persistent reproduction of O'Keeffe's work on, say, calendars and greeting cards, has never enhanced her standing among critics. Critical estimation of O'Keeffe's work has fluctuated over time.[3] But few critics would ever begrudge O'Keeffe her standing as the preeminent female American painter in the first half of the twentieth century; and some have considered her the leading American painter, or even artist, of that era. Such praise has all along concealed a kind of insult or two, however. O'Keeffe aspired to be counted first among her peers, after all, not merely among her relatively scarce female contemporaries. Then, too, the circle of American artists who began to make their mark at mid-twentieth century got to be counted purely as great artists, rather than as notable American artists (let alone as American male artists, the maleness of significant artists always having been presupposed). Only with the advent of Jackson Pollock and his cohort did Europe lose its unquestioned status as the wellspring of important Western art, in other words. Art produced previously by American artists, from the colonial era onward, has tended to be treated as of essentially provincial interest.

Throughout her lifetime, O'Keeffe generally rebuffed efforts to segregate and so in a way to ghettoize her as a "woman artist." But she never similarly resisted efforts to delimit her art as American. The gallerist who launched her career—her longtime champion, Alfred Stieglitz (who became as well her spouse)—touted her Americanness practically from the outset, and she willingly played along. During O'Keeffe's first major solo show, in New York in 1923, Stieglitz explicitly presented his protégée to the public as "Georgia O'Keeffe/ American."[4] Thus he signaled his support for an ambition that proved, for a time, widespread among artists in the United States (including those who tended otherwise not to be of one mind): the ambition to set themselves decisively apart from their European counterparts by devising a somehow endemically American art.[5] That ambition did not keep most of O'Keeffe's peers from making cultural pilgrimages to Europe. But she herself mostly forestalled international travel, once urging instead that "It is necessary to feel America, live America, love America, and then work."[6] When New York City's (notably Europhile) Museum

of Modern Art granted O'Keeffe its first major solo show accorded a female artist, just after World War II, she boasted to curator James Johnson Sweeney that she believed she had proven "one of the few who gives our country any voice of its own" through work that is "rather unique in my time." "It may not be painting," she demurred, with a countervailing, abject humility, "but it is something."[7]

At intervals in the course of her lifetime, O'Keeffe continued to be honored with major shows at museums across the United States; and the National Gallery staged a centennial exhibition in 1987, not long after her death. Curator Jack Cowart then lamented that O'Keeffe's art had long been "boxed...into a limited critical category," by which he meant the outsize focus on the artist's "personality" or biography (notwithstanding that the National Gallery's own publication contained mainly biographical material). The fact that O'Keeffe's artwork had remained "all but unknown outside the United States," as Cowart also noted, might be linked more to the narrowly nationalistic mindset surrounding the artist (with Cowart, for his part, reaffirming the "distinctly New World freedom" of her art, for instance).[8] In his day, Stieglitz boasted of declining offers to show or sell his artists' work in Europe on the grounds that "the Soil was here—the planting was here—the growing where the planting—in the Soil right here."[9] Not until 1993 did the O'Keeffe Foundation help to underwrite the first international retrospective of her work, which traveled to London, Mexico, and Japan.[10] But curator Charles Eldredge then chose to frame the artist, yet again, as ***Georgia O'Keeffe: American and Modern***, citing (for one) Sarah Greenough's view that O'Keeffe "draws not only her subjects but her very artistic being from the American soil."[11] (Numerous shows at European venues followed in the twenty-first century, absent the Americanist organizing theme: in Zurich, Dublin, Munich, Grenoble, and most recently, London's Tate Modern, whose major O'Keeffe exhibition traveled on to Vienna and Toronto.)

Given that we have lately been experiencing some renewed nationalist fervor in the United States, it may be time to revisit the topic of Americanism with respect to O'Keeffe's case. To begin with, there is the inevitable question of what it means at bottom to be an American. Two rudimentary answers may suggest themselves: in the first place, to be an American may mean sharing, however fully, in the bloodlines of the various Indigenous peoples who dwelled on the North American continent before it was colonized, (re-)settled, and named as such. The second answer, which effectively covers all the rest of us United States citizens, is that this country has been, from its inception, a land of, whether voluntary or involuntary, immigrants and their descendants: migrants at first mainly from Europe, but in due course from all around the globe. From this vantage point, to be an American means to dine, figuratively speaking, on a complex cultural stew (more so than the proverbial melting pot) whose flavor combinations

will tend to vary from region to region in accord with past and present immigration patterns. As for Stieglitz, when he touted his own Americanness, he did so as the Hoboken, New Jersey–born son of German Jewish émigrés. In marrying a woman born in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, Stieglitz had "married America," historian Barbara Rose once poetically suggested;[12] and he did seem to regard his wife's life experience—in the Midwest, South, and Southwest, besides the Northeast—as imbuing her with more fully American bona fides than his own. But by the measure of ancestry, O'Keeffe was not much more of a native than her husband. When she crowed to Sweeney about giving "our country" its own "voice" or vision, she was writing to the son of an Irish immigrant as the granddaughter of Irish immigrants on her father's side and of a Hungarian immigrant on her mother's. Only through her maternal grandmother's line, which was of Dutch origin, did O'Keeffe have some deep roots in this country, for a non-Native American.[13]

Before Stieglitz devoted himself fully to a circle of American Modernists—through the gallery he pointedly named An American Place (and ran from 1929 until his death in 1946)—he advocated also for some rising European avant-gardists, such as Constantin Brancusi. When the sculptor saw an O'Keeffe show at Stieglitz's Intimate Gallery in 1926, he praised her work for betraying "no imitation of Europe," and so for being "a liberating free force."[14] As a fellow member of Stieglitz's "stable," Brancusi was likely playing to his gallerist's favored conceits about his wife's art. But as a Romanian man born to a peasant family—and so as a bit of an outlier within the Parisian avant-garde—Brancusi may also have felt some loose sense of kinship to an American dairy-farmer's daughter; a sense of a shared freshness of perspective, say. Far less easily explained, on the other hand, is Americanist Wanda Corn's bold assertion of 1999 that "O'Keeffe had no Europe in her background."[15] The artist's heritage was principally European, as was the history of her preferred media: oil paint on canvas—which became the predominant painting medium in Europe around the late fifteenth century—and pastel. Despite her desire to be seen as "unique" or sui generis as an artist—an ambition commonplace among avant-gardists—various aspects of O'Keeffe's visual languages and tactics may likewise be traced to Europe, as most historians do (however grudgingly) acknowledge. That her art could find a receptive audience throughout Europe, albeit belatedly, likely follows in part from such realities: the myriad ways in which it proves continuous with European aesthetic forms.

And what of a Native American impact on O'Keeffe? As a serious-minded tourist, she showed interest both in Mesoamerican archaeologic sites and in ongoing forms of Indigenous cultures as she was able to experience them from the time she began frequenting areas of the Southwest with significant Native populations. "I dont [sic] care if Europe falls off the map or out of the world...," O'Keeffe could exclaim in 1929; in Taos "I feel like myself."[16] But although she

Georgia O'Keeffe
Taos Pueblo, 1929/1934
Oil on canvas
24 ⅛ x 40 ⅛ in.
Courtesy of the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, Indianapolis

posed for Stieglitz's camera wrapped in a Navajo blanket, O'Keeffe would never herself undertake to weave such textiles or to craft, say, Native-looking jewelry. Instead, she rendered with oil paint on canvas some Native American objects, such as the Kachina figurines used ritually by the Hopi, or structures, such as the ***Taos Pueblo***, in 1929 (while paying, as an outsider, for the privilege to do so); and she recurrently depicted aspects of the region's famously distinctive topography. Besides its Native populations, the Southwest also has a strong Hispanic presence that no less intrigued O'Keeffe, however. Numerous descendants of early Spanish settlers were active in New Mexico in the Penitentes Catholic sect, whose rugged outdoor crosses she adopted as motifs. And in Ranchos de Taos she rendered repeatedly the famed adobe San Francisco de Asis Mission church, with its distinctive Spanish colonial architecture. An utterly different colonial tradition may be glimpsed, however, in the clapboard ***Farmhouse Window and Door*** (1929) that O'Keeffe painted back in the Northeast. And, if the New York City skyscraper that she glorified in, say, the stunning ***Radiator Building—Night, New York*** (1927) may be said to represent a more *de novo* and, in that sense, natively American architectural conceit, its decorative crosses and crenellation nonetheless tell another story.[17]

In an era when the US saw a quest for a "great American novel" or, by extension, a great American artwork, O'Keeffe did at times play up the Americanness of her art, perhaps most unabashedly in her 1931 ***Cow's Skull: Red, White, and Blue***, which loosely evokes the country's flag as well as, Corn argues, a Navajo blanket design. Rightly, Corn does not fail to mention also, however, the obvious European precedents for the motif of the skull in the *vanitas* and *memento mori* pictorial traditions.[18] Still lifes of natural artifacts (bones, flowers, leaves, shells...), landscapes, or a combination of the two—which became a personal specialty, in "Faraway Nearby" formulations, to crib a phrase from a 1937 title—account for most of O'Keeffe's explicit subject matter (and she largely

Georgia O'Keeffe,
Cow's Skull: Red, White, and Blue, 1931
Oil on canvas
39 ⅞ x 35 ⅞ in.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1952 (52.203)

deployed naturalistic-looking forms in her abstract work besides). Within the European fine-art tradition, those genres long factored as minor relative to genres that feature the human figure, with still life especially subject to diminishment, at times as an endemically decorative pursuit beloved of amateurs and "lady painters." Eldredge tried to summon a duly American explanation for O'Keeffe's fixation on such themes by pointing historically to the Transcendentalists' prizing of nature, despite a paucity of evidence for such an interest on her part.[19] Of her own accord, O'Keeffe could be readily, utterly transported by contact with nature, a temperament that likely helped predispose her toward certain non-European cultural biases, namely those historically underpinning East Asian art. There the decorative was not reflexively depreciated.[20] And in Japan, for example, landscapes and flowers were often counted among "the favorite subjects for depiction rather than the human figure, the latter being present in the person of the beholder himself," as Okakura Kakuzo once explained.[21]

Okakura's 1906 *The Book of Tea* illuminated the august tradition of the tea ceremony for Anglophone readers by extrapolating it into an explanation of the underpinnings and the subtleties of Japanese culture more broadly. This path-breaking book, which O'Keeffe specially cherished, devotes a full chapter to the topic of flowers, the motif with which she is perhaps most identified: "In joy or sadness, flowers are our constant friends...How could we live without them?... Their serene tenderness restores to us our waning confidence in the universe," rhapsodized Okakura.[22] Not extravagant bouquets of flowers, such as the Dutch historically rendered, but single blooms or small clusters, such as O'Keeffe preferred—while glorifying those blooms by magnifying them to the very edges of her canvases—were privileged in what Okakura identified at once as a Teaist and a Taoist tradition. "The whole ideal of Teaism is a result of this Zen conception of greatness in the smallest incidents of life," he explained. In Zen thinking, the "mundane" figures "as of equal importance with the spiritual...in the great relation of things there was no distinction of small and great, an atom possessing equal possibilities with the universe."[23] O'Keeffe often assayed to express immensity through details; to convey a sense of infinity through the finite, or of a macrocosm in the microcosmic: so scholars have noted.[24] As she herself once poetically encapsulated her creative process: "I have picked flowers where I found them—Have picked up sea shells and rocks and...bones...I have used these things to say what is to me the wideness and wonder of the world as I live in it."[25]

O'Keeffe did not visit East Asia until 1959, when she was in her seventies. But throughout her career, when she visited art museums in the US and abroad, it tended to be the Asian art she sought out, and she also cultivated the company of curators and private collectors of such art.[26] After visiting Boston's Museum of Fine Arts in 1922, she exulted to Stieglitz, "I could hardly believe my

eyes at the Chinese and Japanese things," artworks that made her "feel that painting can be as exciting as photography—some of them have a breathing quality of color that is almost unbelievable."[27] Historians have acknowledged how various principles of Japanese art—which O'Keeffe absorbed initially through the art theories of Arthur Wesley Dow and his followers, some of whom taught her early on—helped substantially to shape her aesthetic vision. The Japanese artist "loves nature and goes to her for his subjects, but he does not imitate," wrote Dow, in a passage that Eldredge cited, for instance.[28] And Marjorie Welish noted that one of Dow's textbooks uses "schematic drawings derived from a single floral motif" to illustrate Japanese aesthetic principles for handling line and the relation of light and dark: "O'Keeffe's ***Jimson Weed*** realizes this 'grammar of ornament' in painted form," she aptly concludes. "As her floral motifs shift off axis and become cloaked in subtle tonality, Dow's influence is palpable."[29] In Barbara Rose's view, O'Keeffe "appreciated the economy, the elegance, and the mysterious sense of space, at once both infinite and definitely flat," which she often found in Asian painting.[30] Such a description might fit at once, say, ***Sansuizu***, a landscape rendered in ink on paper from the fifteenth- to sixteenth-century Muromachi period in Japan, and O'Keeffe's abstractly landscape-like ***Nature Forms, Gaspe*** of 1932, with its somewhat scroll-like proportions.[31] Even as some elements of her art evoke Asian precedents, however, O'Keeffe's media, and her handling of her media, generally do not. Early on, in her ***Blue Lines*** watercolor of 1916, for instance, she experimented with some calligraphic-looking brushwork, but she swiftly realized that "it would be impossible for me to have the fluency developed by the Orientals who always wrote with the brush."[32]

Though she disdained to make artwork that merely imitated Asian sources, O'Keeffe did incorporate certain Asian objects and customs quite directly into her daily life. The assimilation of various Asian design practices and principles into her home and wardrobe has lately been a topic of discussion by Corn.[33]

Georgia O'Keeffe
Nature Forms, Gaspe, 1932
Oil on canvas, 10 ¼ x 24 in.
Private collection
© Private collection
L.1998.7.4

Kenkō Shōkei
Japanese, active late 15th–early 16th century Landscape
Japanese, Muromachi period, 15th–16th century
Hanging scroll; ink on paper
15 ⅜ x 36 ⅝ in.
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Fenollosa-Weld Collection 11.4127

She and others emphasize the artist's interest in achieving a kind of aesthetic continuity between her everyday life and her art. Such a quest was reinforced also by precepts detailed in the ***The Book of Tea***: "real appreciation of art is only possible to those who make of it a living influence," explained Okakura; thus, "the cut and color of the dress, the poise of the body...could all be made expressions of artistic personality.... for until one has made himself beautiful he has no right to approach beauty..... Perfection is everywhere if we only choose to recognize it."[34] O'Keeffe embraced such notions early on: whilst in her twenties, when she taught art to high school students in Amarillo, Texas, she recalled that she hoped to convey to them "the idea that art is important in everyday life. I wanted them to learn the principle that when you...place a window in the front of a house or address a letter or comb your hair, consider it carefully, so that it looks well."[35]

O'Keeffe did not become an avid global traveler until late in her life, by which time her aesthetic vision was quite fully formed. But various places she visited then had helped already to shape that vision. She acquired what I will call her internationalist perspective partly through dedicated cultural spectatorship and partly through social connection. For a white woman of rural Midwestern and Christian background from her era, O'Keeffe enjoyed an exceptionally wide range of meaningful acquaintance far outside her ethnic kind, including through marriage to a Jew. Within a US art world that tended (even until she died) to be overwhelmingly white, O'Keeffe developed long-term relationships with, for instance, the Japanese American sculptor Isamu Noguchi and the Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias (who lived for intervals in the US).[36] Whilst a newcomer to the Southwest in 1929, O'Keeffe formed a profound affection and respect for Tony Lujan, the Native American husband of her friend Mabel Dodge Luhan, who served as a guide and companion to her during her initial travels through the region.[37] Two decades later, when she settled in the tiny hamlet of Abiquiu, New Mexico, practically all her neighbors were the (impoverished, Spanish-speaking) descendants of early Spanish settlers. And though she could find them eminently foreign, and tensions did arise, she interacted with and supported community members by various means, such as providing part-time employment and funds for community amenities.[38] While still based mainly on the East Coast, in the 1920s and early '30s, O'Keeffe developed a deeply meaningful connection with the African American poet Jean Toomer.[39] When she parceled out the many artworks in Stieglitz's estate to various American museums in the late 1940s, she made the extraordinary, and pointed, choice to give a significant share to the historically black Fisk University, despite its lack of a museum facility. (On a 1949 trip to Nashville to help install the work in a refurbished gym, she touchingly expressed the hope that it would show that "there are many ways of seeing and thinking," and

thereby "give someone confidence in his own way, which may be different, whatever its direction.")[40] That O'Keeffe was capable of absorbing some challenging truths surrounding racial identity is further suggested by her account of meeting in Nashville "a very black girl—who asked me the startling question—Why do you associate the idea of purity with white and not with black—She was...so right down on the earth like a truth—I find myself constantly wondering what she would think and say about what goes on around me... I had no idea before of the many things color of the skin can mean and do."[41]

Then as now, certain privileges came securely attached to pale complexions such as O'Keeffe's, notwithstanding that the Irishness signaled by the maiden name she insisted on keeping (anomalously for the period) could render her less than fully white by the prejudices of the pre–World War II era. O'Keeffe knew full well what it meant to have one's possibilities curtailed on account of the accidents of one's birth, however; she herself had no right to vote until she was in her thirties, after all. "I can't live where I want to—I can't go where I want to—I can't do what I want to—I can't even say what I want to," she recalled having realized as she attempted to live independently in her twenties. "...I decided I was a very stupid fool not to at least paint as I wanted to and say what I wanted to when I painted as that seemed to be the only thing I could do that didn't concern anybody but myself."[42] In time O'Keeffe succeeded in making her work concern plenty of people, of course—initially through her alliance with Stieglitz, though that entailed its own restrictions and forms of diminishment (as I and others have detailed).[43] When he declaimed O'Keeffe's Americanness, Stieglitz clearly meant to exalt her—regardless that his tactic helped to provincialize her also, or instead. If his story of O'Keeffe's indelibly American art is to continue being recited, however, then it is time we consider spinning it differently; for what may be most profoundly American of all about her art is how utterly internationalist or multi-cultural it actually proves to be.

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[1] Sarah Greenough, ed., *My Faraway One: Selected Letters of Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz: Volume 1, 1915–1933* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 75.

[2] By the time of her second solo show, in New York City in 1923, O'Keeffe was a phenomenon; that "jammed" exhibition drew about five hundred people daily. Roxana Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 254.

[3] Regarding the reception of O'Keeffe's art, see Anna C. Chave, "O'Keeffe and the Masculine Gaze," *Art in America* 78, no. 1 (January 1990): 114–25, and Barbara Buhler Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics, 1916–1929* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989).

[4] So read the cover of the brochure for the show, of 100 works, which Stieglitz organized at the Anderson Galleries. See Charles C. Eldredge, *Georgia O'Keeffe: American and Modern* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 158. O'Keeffe's only prior solo show occurred at Stieglitz's own, more modestly scaled "291" gallery in 1917.

[5] See Wanda M. Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915–1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 288–89, and passim.

[6] O'Keeffe, cited in Blanche C. Matthias, "Georgia O'Keeffe and the Intimate Gallery: Stieglitz Showing Seven Americans," *Chicago Evening Post Magazine of the Art World* (March 2, 1926), reprt. in Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics*, 249.

[7] Georgia O'Keeffe, letter to James Johnson Sweeney, June 11, 1945, in Jack Cowart, et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters* (Boston: Little, Brown, and National Gallery of Art, 1987), 241. Even as the MoMA honored O'Keeffe by organizing this show, they dishonored her by failing to

produce a catalog to mark the occasion. Instead they announced a forthcoming monograph on the artist by Sweeney, which failed to materialize. Twenty years later Sweeney made the same promise, when organizing an O'Keeffe show at Houston's Museum of Fine Arts, and again he failed to deliver. See Wanda M. Corn, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Living Modern* (Munich: Prestel, and Brooklyn Museum, 2017), 224.

[8] Jack Cowart, "Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Artist," in Cowart, et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 1, 6, 3. Regarding the longtime overemphasis on O'Keeffe's biography, see Chave, "O'Keeffe and the Masculine Gaze."

[9] Concerning his refusal to sell American artwork in Europe, see the statement from a letter by Stieglitz (of December 10, 1925, to Sherwood Anderson), cited in Corn, *The Great American Thing*, 32. As for the prospect of showing O'Keeffe's work abroad: "I have been asked to let this work go to Europe," Stieglitz said, of a solo exhibition in which her paintings of New York City debuted; "But they do not take the Woolworth Tower to Europe. And this work here is as American as the Woolworth Tower." (O'Keeffe did not paint that elaborate, neo-Gothic tower, however, but some more austere skyscrapers from a somewhat later moment.) See Anna C. Chave, "'Who Will Paint New York?' 'The World's New Art Center' and the New York Paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe," *American Art* 5: 1–2 (Winter/Spring 1991), 86–107, where this statement by Stieglitz is cited on page 102.

[10] Tokyo's Seibu Museum had already staged a show of her work, however, in 1988.

[11] Cited in Eldredge, *O'Keeffe*, 187.

[12] "'I was born in Hoboken. I am an American,' [Stieglitz] exclaimed in his most famous biographical statement," cited, as is Rose's statement, in Eldredge, *O'Keeffe*, 187.

[13] Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 1–13.

[14] Brancusi, cited in Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 285.

[15] Corn, *The Great American Thing*, 272.

[16] Georgia O'Keeffe, letter to Henry McBride, Summer 1929, in Cowart, et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 189.

[17] The larger drive toward a uniquely American Modernist aesthetic would come to be attached—by various European and American avant-gardists—to the advent of the skyscraper. Regarding the role of O'Keeffe's New York City paintings in this drive, see Chave, "'Who Will Paint New York?'."

[18] Corn, *The Great American Thing*, 269–70.

[19] Eldredge, *O'Keeffe*, 192–94. In the more than 700 pages of letters between O'Keeffe and Stieglitz published in Greenough, ed., *My Faraway One*, there is no mention on either side of Henry David Thoreau or Ralph Waldo Emerson (judging from the index), despite plentiful discussion of texts being read by both artists.

[20] Nor, for that matter, does one find replicated in East Asia the West's longstanding hierarchical divide between "fine" and "decorative" art pursuits.

[21] Okakura Kakuzō, *The Book of Tea* (reprt. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1956), 71.

[22] Ibid., 90. Reportedly, this was among the books O'Keeffe most often asked to have read to her once her eyesight failed in old age, and she is believed to have learned of it quite early on through her connection with Arthur Wesley Dow. Numerous of O'Keeffe's longtime favorite texts were from Asian philosophy or literature, including also the ancient Chinese Taoist text *Secret of the Golden Flower*. See Corn, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 263.

[23] Okakura, *The Book of Tea*, 51–52. Taoism he elaborated as the "'art of being in the world'... Taoism accepts the mundane as it is and... tries to find beauty in our world of woe and worry," ibid., 44.

[24] Eldredge, for one, calls O'Keeffe's approach "as traditional, and as radical, as William Blake's famed observation of 'a World in a Grain of Sand,'" and mentions also the artist Marsden Hartley's remarking O'Keeffe's "approach to 'the borderline between finity and infinity'"; Eldredge, *O'Keeffe*, 175, 209.

[25] Georgia O'Keeffe, "About Painting Desert Bones," statement for an exhibition brochure for *An American Place*, 1944, reprt. in Anita Pollitzer, *A Woman on Paper: Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 238.

[26] Numerous people who knew O'Keeffe have generalized that, in the words of Barbara Rose (for one), she "was not as interested in the art of the West as she was in the art of the East"; statement of 1988, cited in Corn, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 199.
To illustrate: when O'Keeffe first traveled to Paris, in 1953, the art objects that she first mentioned as impressing her there (in a letter to Stieglitz's nephew, to whom she was close) were "some of the statues and Chinese bronzes" in the Musée Guimet, a museum of Asian art. She also reported having walked "miles" through the ethnographic Museum of Man before she got around to mentioning the Louvre, where she singled out only a "large Fra Angelico" and a "portrait of some French king." Georgia O'Keeffe, letter to William Howard Schubart, April 2, 1953, in Cowart, et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 264. The one major exception to O'Keeffe's relative indifference to museum collections of Western art was the Prado in Madrid, which she first visited on the same European trip, and which "moved her as no other museum ever has," in the words of one of her oldest friends; Pollitzer, *A Woman on Paper*, 260.

[27] Letters of May 3, 1922 from Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, in Greenough, ed., *My Faraway One*, 319, 320.

[28] Eldredge, *O'Keeffe*, 160.

[29] Marjorie Welish, "House Beautiful," in Christopher Merrill and Ellen Bradbury, eds., *From the Faraway Nearby: Georgia O'Keeffe as Icon* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1992), 128–29.

[30] Rose, statement of 1988, cited in Corn, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 199. For his part, Eldredge acknowledged, in very specific terms, finding some aspects of O'Keeffe's art "reminiscent of southern Song [Chinese] landscape painting, such as Ma Yuan's river views"; Eldredge, *O'Keeffe*, 162–63.

[31] *Sansuizu* is part of the Fenollosa-Weld collection at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (acc. # 11.4127). Through his role as a curator at the MFA during the 1890s, Ernest Fenollosa played a key part in initially interesting Dow in Japanese art; see Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 82–84.

[32] Georgia O'Keeffe, *Some Memories of Drawings*, ed. Doris Bry (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, ca. 1988), n.p.

[33] Corn, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 199–218. Corn makes some problematic generalizations, however, such as the breathtaking oversimplification that "O'Keeffe found in East and Southeast Asia what she valued in her own art and life—a uniformity of style and philosophy that she could attach to every endeavor," 200. Such a claim grossly oversimplifies the cultures of East and Southeast Asia, and O'Keeffe's art besides. Corn does offer some useful information on the artist's adoption of some Asian traditions, however, such as the Japanese gardening practice of using raked gravel (ibid., 201).

[34] Okakura, *The Book of Tea*, 109–10.

[35] Cited in Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 90.

[36] Though the relationship has been largely overlooked in the literature on both artists, Noguchi specialist Bonnie Rychlak confirms that "Noguchi knew O'Keeffe very well, early on through Stieglitz." Noguchi's sister lived in New Mexico, "and whenever Isamu visited his sister he would visit O'Keeffe as well. I remember," Rychlak reminisces, "Noguchi taking me to an opening for Juan Hamilton"—a close companion of the artist's old age; "She was there; they talked endlessly," email message to author, November 3, 2017.

[37] Lujan even taught O'Keeffe to drive a car, which of course brought her tremendous independence. See Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 322, 327-28, 333-34.

[38] See, for example, Mary E. Adams, "The Underside of the Iris: Conversations with Georgia O'Keeffe," in Merrill and Bradbury, eds., *From the Faraway Nearby*, 220–21.

[39] See Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 393–401.

[40] O'Keeffe, cited in Eldredge, *O'Keeffe*, 32. O'Keeffe donated 101 works from Stieglitz's estate to Fisk according to ibid.. That she decided to make this gift partly due to her connection to Toomer is suggested by Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 471.

[41] Georgia O'Keeffe, letter to Daniel Catton Rich, November 13, 1949, in Cowart, et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 250–51.

[42] O'Keeffe, statement of 1923, cited in Eldredge, *O'Keeffe*, 161.

[43] See, for example, Chave, "O'Keeffe and the Masculine Gaze" and Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics*.