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The Whitewashing of John Marin

James Denison

Please note that language and images in this article may be disturbing to readers.

John Marin (1870–1953) is comfortably ensconced in the canon of American art. Though scholarship on the artist has been relatively scant in recent decades, and his preference for watercolor painting ensures that most of his works are only shown intermittently, his fame and status are indisputable. In the mid-twentieth century his renown saw him voted by museum directors and painters in a *Look* magazine poll as "America's Artist No. 1."¹ Many of the United States' most esteemed museums collect his work, and his paintings have sold for seven figures in recent years.² He is widely viewed as an uncontroversial figure whose works constitute a significant contribution to American modernism.

Marin is also often noted for his association with the so-called second Stieglitz Circle, the loose group of modernists that assembled around Manhattan photographer and gallerist Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946) beginning in the late 1910s. Stieglitz and Marin met in 1909 and developed a close and lasting personal and professional relationship that endured until Stieglitz's death in 1946. Despite the lack of new scholarship on Marin, in recent decades research on some of the other artists associated with the Circle has remained more active. Among other topics, the connections between the works of several artists in the group and early twentieth-century racism have attracted increased attention in the last twenty years. Donna Cassidy pioneered this scholarship with her investigation of Marsden Hartley's (1877–1943) White supremacist interests,³ and subsequent studies have focused on Hartley, Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986), Arthur Dove (1880–1946), and Stieglitz himself, although most of these investigations have focused on particular artworks or segments in the careers of individual artists rather than the social contexts and ideologies that they shared.⁴ By contrast, next to nothing has been written that connects Marin to such concerns.

A goal of my doctoral dissertation was to rethink the connections between the Stieglitz artists and racism in the early to mid-twentieth-century United States by exploring new contexts for their art and thinking about how the social and cultural milieus that they shared led them to work in parallel ways. As part of my research, I discovered a group of erasures in the published versions of Marin's writings that might change scholars' perceptions of the relevance of race to his life and work. Publicizing these erasures also adds to the growing evidence of alterations made to primary source collections by sympathetic compilers whose interventions have misled generations of art-historical researchers.⁵

Dorothy Norman's 1949 collection of Marin's writings, *The Selected Writings of John Marin*, repeatedly sanitized Marin's use of the N-word in letters with his close friend Stieglitz, evidence of which remains in the originals preserved in the Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive at the Beinecke Library at Yale University.⁶ In a 1924 letter, after telling Stieglitz about an unusually successful recent fishing trip during which he and two friends caught many more mackerel than the other anglers fishing in the same area, Marin compares their luck to a story of "the powerful swimming n****r with the Shark ahind him and the terrible roarin Lion on shore a waiting him—he put his trust in the Lord + swam for the shore—The Lion jumped right over that n****r's head into the shark's mouth but—the Lord aint agoin to provide a Lion for every n****r."⁷

As Marin implies, by suggesting that Stieglitz might already be familiar with the story in his letter, this was not an anecdote of his own invention but rather one in circulation in the United States since at least the 1880s. Often called "A Darkey's Sermon," longer examples of the story can be found in several newspapers from the mid-1880s, often crediting the *St. Louis Republican* newspaper as the tale's origin.⁸ Versions of the story with the title "The Ship of Faith" can also be found in manuals from the 1890s containing stories, poems, and plays intended as fodder for oratorical performances.⁹ In all cases, the account is told at least partially in an offensive imitation of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and ends with some version of the assertion that "de Lord ain't a-gwine to furnish a lion for every n****r!" One of the oratorical manuals suggests that the speaker might wish to perform a form of minstrelsy by wearing a wig and clothes to imitate a stereotype of an African American minister, from whose perspective the story is told. Indeed, the instructions tell the performer to consider wearing ill-fitting and worn-out yet ostentatious clothes that resemble the sort of costume worn when enacting the popular "Zip Coon" minstrel show character, which was designed to mock the supposed ignorance and inelegance of socially aspirational Black Americans.¹⁰ The story also paints African American religious activity as sincere yet unsophisticated and crude. Given its circulation in such manuals, it is possible that Marin heard the story as part of a minstrel show or other public performance, or through more casual conversations with friends.¹¹

Marin's intention in telling this story in the letter to Stieglitz seems to have been to comedically emphasize his good fortune in comparison to that of other fishermen. There may be some humility (or perhaps faux humility) in this decision to convey his fishing success while attributing it to fortune rather than skill. However, it seems strange that he leapt at the opportunity to express his luck by telling a folksy tale featuring racial slurs in which he compares himself to a Black man saved from a grisly demise by divine intervention. There is a shared nautical context between the two stories, but the metaphor is not a very apt one; in fact, the lion and shark story features a much more complicated scenario than what happened in Marin's real-life tale and seems focused on discouraging complacency or reliance on divine intervention to fix one's problems while also making its audience laugh and reinforcing anti-Black stereotypes. Within the context of Marin's letter, the inclusion of the story actually leaves me more confused about what he was trying to say rather than less. It is, in short, a baffling and deeply racist narrative flourish.

Understanding Marin's deep interest in the state of Maine and its people and culture may help to explain why he wanted to include this strained metaphor. The language in Marin's letter reflects, on one hand, an affectation of Black Americans' speech patterns that seems to have been fundamental to the story he was citing. However, the informal vernacular

speech in the letter also resembles the homespun speech habits that Marin, though born and raised in New Jersey, developed and used liberally in letters he wrote in Maine to many correspondents. Marin spent his summer months in Maine almost every year beginning in 1914 until his death there in 1953, and it was during one of these visits that he undertook the fishing trip discussed in his letter to Stieglitz. Across the decades when he visited the state, Marin changed his behavior to adopt what he felt was a Down East Mainer way of life, which included avid participation in activities like hunting, fishing, lobstering, and berry picking.¹² This effort included affecting a Yankee identity in his writing. Review of his correspondence with friends and family reveals consistent attempts to adopt a rural Mainer vernacular. Even if Marin first heard the "swimmer" anecdote when it was told by someone stereotypically imitating African American speech, his practice of emulating unschooled Mainers' speech patterns is an equally relevant context for how he recounted the tale in his letter.

In a 1920 letter, Marin mocked the peculiarities of the Maine locals' speech: "The people up here are certainly a funny bunch. They call Tamarac, Ramatac. They call a bush with berries on it wild raisins and a lot of other silly names."¹³ Yet later that same fall, he adopted Mainer speech patterns for his own purposes in a letter to Stieglitz: "Just a word before ye leave . . . Just a word my de-as (Maine pronunciation), I shed te-as for ye."¹⁴ Soon, his habitual use of the valediction "Your friend, Marin" in letters to Stieglitz was being replaced by "Yer friend" or "Your dogoned," and eventually by the appellations "the Ancient Mariner" or "Aged Marin the Ancient Mariner."¹⁵ This shift was partially characterized by Marin's growing use of nautical terminology and metaphors in his writing, as when he suggested that a recently married couple were newly "spliced" or declared that he was back "on deck" after recovering from an illness.¹⁶ Another part of this affectation were Marin's persistent attempts at what some termed "Yankee humor," a dry wit that was a common feature of his letters.

Though the swimmer anecdote was not particular to Maine, I believe that it reflected Marin's growing adoption of Mainer lifeways and speech patterns. This affectation is seen in Marin's attempts at nautical-themed New England humor and, most important, his imitation of supposedly unsophisticated speech patterns among the people he met there. These Mainer speech habits were an especially frequent feature in his letters to Stieglitz, who was both Marin's confidant and the foremost promoter of his work. Though the racist story was not one of Marin's invention, it fit into the unrefined Mainer persona that he sought in friends he made in the state and worked to imitate. Terms like "aint" and "agoin" were featured in other letters that Marin sent from Maine, but the terms were normally written slightly more correctly (as "ain't" and "agoing"), while the truncation of "roarin" and the incorporation of terms like "ahind" and "a waiting" in the swimmer anecdote may hint at subtle differences between Marin's typical invocation of an unlearned Mainer dialect and this version that combines that dialect with an affectation of AAVE.

Other potentially relevant contexts for the swimmer story are period tropes that connect African Americans with violence at the hands of marine animals. In the early twentieth century, a common racist trope cast Black Americans as "alligator bait," with ephemera like postcards, print advertisements, and newspapers showing Black people—and especially children—being chased or devoured by the creatures (fig. 1).¹⁷ Though these narratives differ from the story Marin recounts, they similarly concoct an improbable scenario in which a Black person is being chased or eaten by a wild animal and frame the



Fig. 1. "Free Lunch in the Jungle," 1930s. Postcard, likely 3.5 x 5.5 in. Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, Big Rapids, MI

event as humorous, rather than tragic or disturbing. Like many other Jim Crow-era cultural archetypes, the trope normalized and trivialized violence suffered by Black people and played into period notions that Black people's racial inferiority made them too unintelligent to avoid a violent death.¹⁸ Marin's story is guided by a similar message.

Just as much as the details of Marin's tale, however, I am interested in his choice to use the N-word as he retold it to Stieglitz. The slurs were likely a

part of the story as he had heard it; the versions of it in newspapers and oratory guides also include the N-word. Still, this was not a word that Marin used in most of his letters. His willingness to employ it in this letter not only speaks to his closeness with Stieglitz but also suggests a willingness to express the sort of contempt for and/or dehumanization of Black people that that word, when used casually by a White person, typically implies.¹⁹

The topic of Marin's racial bigotry was relevant to me because my dissertation included a chapter on Marin's racialized self-understanding and how his views drew him to celebrate and fetishize the state of Maine and its people for nearly forty years. I argue that he, like many other tourists, perceived Maine as a sort of ethnic Eden—what the author of a state tourism guide called "the last stronghold of the Puritan."²⁰ As the rest of New England became increasingly industrialized and diverse in the early twentieth century, Maine's perceived ethnic purity began to be celebrated with greater frequency.

Rethinking the enduring fascination with Maine that led Marin to return there year after year to paint while integrating himself into the small lobstering community where he bought a home offers a new way of understanding this artist and the broader Stieglitz Circle movement of which he was a part.

Tellingly, a small number of pictures that he made in the state, like *Young Man of the Sea, Maine* (fig. 2), highlight racialized physical traits (in this case, bright blue eyes) and even imply that certain Mainers possess an inherent connection to the sea. In my dissertation, I suggest that this picture and a handful of similar portraits are the clearest manifestation in Marin's work of the racialization of the state of Maine and its citizens. I argue that this racialization was fundamental to the state's appeal to Marin and other outsiders in the early twentieth century and played a key role in its tremendous growth in popularity as a tourist destination during the period.



Fig. 2. John Marin, *Young Man of the Sea, Maine*, 1934. Watercolor and crayon on paper, 15 1/2 x 20 5/8 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 49.70.149; © 2025 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Figs. 3, 4. Left: John Marin, *Pertaining to Stonington Harbor, Maine*, 1926. Watercolor with scraping and charcoal on paper mounted on board, 18 3/8 x 23 1/4 in. Image © Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949, 49.70.134. Image source: Art Resource, New York; right: John Marin, *Lobster Smack Passing Through*, 1923. Watercolor and black chalk with traces of blue pastel on cream wove paper, 13 3/8 x 16 3/4 in. Image © Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ, Gift of Frank Jewett Mather Jr., x1941.157. Image source: Art Resource, New York

Marin's watercolors from Maine often picture small towns; various (often racialized and fetishized) forms of working-class labor, such as fishing and lobstering; and representative environmental hallmarks, including evergreen flora, granite coasts, and choppy seas (figs. 3–5). Frequently praised for their expressiveness and unique insights into the state's character, Marin's paintings recreate the kinds of scenic views that made Maine an attractive destination.²¹ However, when I look at them now, I see in them the ghost of the racial anxieties that drove him and other tourists to the state time and again in the twentieth century—the same anxieties that led Marin to use anti-Black slurs as he wrote to Stieglitz.



Fig. 5. John Marin, *Little Tree, Maine*, 1914. Watercolor and graphite on paper, 14 1/8 x 16 1/4 in. Image © Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949, 49.70.112. Image source: Art Resource, New York

Most if not all scholars who have studied Marin's life and work have been unaware of his use of the N-word in his correspondence. In Norman's published version of the letters, the slurs included in this passage have been removed and replaced by the word "swimmer," along with several other changes: "The powerful swimmer with the shark ahind him—and the terrible roarin Lion on shore awaiting him—well he—this powerful swimmer—put his trust in the Lord and swam for the shore—the lion jumped right over that swimmer's head into the shark's mouth—but—said the preacher—the Lord ain't agoin to provide a Lion for every swimmer."²² Among the edits is the reinsertion of a preacher into the story to whom the parable is attributed instead of the artist. This decision not only shifts responsibility for the tale away from Marin but also arguably gives the perception that he was interacting with characters who offered him rustic wisdom that he merely passed along to his urbanite friends. In the original version, the threat of physical harm to this fictional Black man is made into a joke, and his luck in finding his two predators attacking one another is a humorous punchline. Marin's slip into vernacular language also loses much of its context in Norman's version, in which the identity of the swimmer is sanitized, among other changes. These alterations are particularly important because Marin was reluctant to speak publicly about his artistic practice but was an enthusiastic private correspondent. Scholars have often relied on Norman's compilation not only because it was more convenient than viewing Marin's letters to Stieglitz at the Beinecke in person but also because there are not many other primary sources to rely on when interpreting his work.²³

In another letter to Stieglitz, Marin uses the N-word in a similar circumstance as he recounts a parable told to him by art collector Duncan Phillips. In Norman's edition, she similarly edited this letter, cutting out Marin's characterization of Phillips's anecdote entirely.²⁴ Norman also did not include any of these letters when she published some of Marin's writings in her journal, *Twice a Year*.²⁵ The Phillips letter was written too late to have been included in Herbert Seligmann's earlier, less-comprehensive published collection of Marin's letters, from 1931. However, the 1924 letter featuring the "swimmer" was not included.²⁶

It is notable that the compilers and editors of these volumes were both close with Marin and other members of Stieglitz's cadre. Seligmann was a friend and ardent supporter of the Circle and the editor of multiple books about its members. The opening words of the introduction to his 1931 collection of Marin's letters makes his admiration for Marin clear, while also celebrating the supposedly American nature of Marin's paintings: "John Marin's world in water color is part of his country's heritage. To the native spirit of the land he has shown unwavering fidelity. He has been masterful in its interpretation."²⁷ Norman is best remembered for her association with Stieglitz's group, having become an ardent advocate for their activities soon after meeting (and commencing an affair with) the photographer in 1927. In the following decades, she regularly helped Stieglitz run his gallery An American Place; was one of the coeditors of the 1934 paean to him, *America and Alfred Stieglitz*; and published a biography, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer*, in 1973, in addition to the Marin book and other writings in *Twice a Year*.²⁸ She was also fond of Marin, telling him in letters that "I miss you greatly," "You are constantly in my thoughts," and "You are so much in my mind. . . . I am glad again that we talked."²⁹ Marin reciprocated these feelings, inviting her to visit him in Maine in 1948.³⁰ Stieglitz and the artists in his orbit fiercely resisted interpretation by chroniclers that they did not choose themselves, so the fact that Marin's letters were published by such close associates is unsurprising.³¹

As she proselytized for Marin, Stieglitz, and others, Norman's intention was closer to glorification than documentation. According to art historian Susan Noyes Platt, Norman and Stieglitz collaborated on Stieglitz's mythologization: "Stieglitz and Norman created . . . anecdotes through a complex process of dictation and editing. . . . These stories became a mythology."³² Norman's work on *The Selected Writings of John Marin* was a similar collaboration, and her intention to celebrate Marin as an artist and author are made plain in the book's introduction: "That John Marin should be widely acclaimed as one of America's foremost painters is scarcely surprising. With the publication of this volume it is to be hoped that his writings may well come into their own."³³ Comments in the book suggest that she reviewed at least some of the letters with Marin, and we can therefore surmise that Marin may have played a role in the published edits. Norman's papers include lists of questions that she asked Marin while working on the book, including queries about the possibility of excising sensitive comments and topics, though these questions focus on topics other than the slurs mentioned above. There is also correspondence that demonstrates his cooperation on the project, including Norman's invitation to cut out any material that he was not keen to see published.³⁴ In her correspondence with O'Keeffe's assistant Doris Bry, Norman also mentions her interest in reviewing Stieglitz's letters before they were handed off to the Beinecke to see if any of them should be "withheld"—a request that O'Keeffe rebuffed.³⁵ Clearly, censorship was a strategy that Norman was not afraid to employ, though her reasons for wishing to do so were not always clear.

Norman and Seligmann chose to preserve their friends' public standing (and by extension that of the greater Stieglitz Circle) rather than accurately document what Marin's letters actually included. We have little direct evidence that might inform us about the extent to which their decisions to alter the letters were inspired by personal affection for Marin, some sense of editorial duty, or even self-interest, given that both compilers had closely linked their own reputations with that of the Circle. Indeed, the best evidence is likely offered by Norman herself in the front matter of her book, in which she thanks both Marin "for his cooperation in the preparation of this volume and for extending permission to use his . . . writings" and Seligmann for allowing her to reproduce material from his earlier collection. She then calls the book "an act of cooperation with the artist . . . an opportunity to be heard in his own right . . . and in as comprehensive a manner as possible" in response to "some of the manifold misconceptions that have been held about his pictures."³⁶ For Norman, offering Marin the platform to speak for himself was part of a bigger project to defend the Circle artists against an ongoing onslaught of supposed mischaracterization by outsiders—a project to discourage others' interpretations that was helmed by Stieglitz for years and then carried on by Norman and O'Keeffe after his death.³⁷

We can only speculate about what omissions or edits may have been made to other collections of artists' writings and remembrances for which there is less extant documentation or how the omissions of compilers like Norman and Seligmann have affected how the Circle has been perceived and written about in the time since these books were published. In the case of the Stieglitz group, another notable collection assembled by Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking* has, to my knowledge, no extant documentation, which is not surprising given that it is based on notes that Seligmann took while observing Stieglitz in his gallery. However, the book notably defends Stieglitz from potential accusations of racism for his insistence on using the original title for Arthur

Dove's assemblage, *N****r Goes A' Fishin'* (now normally titled *Goin' Fishin'*) (fig. 6).³⁸ Given Seligmann's close affiliation with Stieglitz, it seems likely that he made editorial choices as he constructed the book—which focuses on conversations documented in the mid-1920s but was not published until 1966, twenty years after Stieglitz's death—that prioritized loyalty to his friends over accuracy or objectivity.



Fig. 6. Arthur Dove, *Goin' Fishin'* [formerly known as *N****r Goes A' Fishin'*, among several other similar titles], 1925. Bamboo, buttons, denim shirtsleeves, wood, and oil paint on wood panel, 21 1/4 x 25 1/2 in. Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, 0552

I discovered the discrepancies discussed here because I spent time carefully reading Marin's original letters and then comparing them to published versions. Finding these differences made me wonder how many artists similarly employed offensive terms in writings that were sanitized for publication—or harbored hateful beliefs and shared them only aloud or in hidden or nonextant documents. The evidence that does still exist within archives of the racist (or otherwise offensive) views of certain artists, even if much of it has long gone undiscovered, undiscussed, and unconsidered, may only be the tip of an iceberg—albeit one that seems likely to remain largely submerged.

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Notes

¹ "Are These Men the Best Painters in America Today?," *Look*, February 3, 1948, 44.

² See, for example, Marin's *Lobster Boat, Cape Split, Maine*, sold at Christie's, New York, April 21, 2023, lot 4, <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6419579>.

³ In part because it emphasizes the artificiality of Whiteness and challenges its historical invisibility, I prefer to capitalize "White" (as well as the more commonly capitalized "Black") when referring to racial groups.

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- ⁴ A list of scholars who have contributed to this effort would include Donna Cassidy, Randall Griffey, Camara Holloway, Tara Kohn, Lauren Kroiz, Nancy Scott, and Sascha Scott.
- ⁵ See, for example, Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, "The Decolonization of John Sloan," in "When and Where Does Colonial America End?," Colloquium, ed. Emily Casey, *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2021), <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.12714>.
- ⁶ I have chosen to use the euphemism "N-word" in this article because I prefer not to use this term, even in censored form, when speaking in my own voice. As you will note, censored versions of the actual term are included here as part of quotations.
- ⁷ Marin to Stieglitz, October 19, 1924, box 34, folder 783, Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive [hereafter Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive], Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Archive, Yale University, New Haven, CT. To be clear, none of the slurs included in this message were actually censored in the original documents. In keeping with current *Panorama* editorial policy, and given that it is likely not necessary to include the full slurs here to convey what terms were used, I have chosen to censor them in this essay.
- ⁸ See, for example, "A Darkey's Sermon," *Goldsboro Messenger* (Goldsboro, NC), July 24, 1884, 8; and "A Darkey's Sermon," *Orleans County Monitor* (Barton, VT), June 28, 1886, 1, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/824638992>.
- ⁹ "The Ship of Faith," in *The Speaker's Garland and Literary Bouquet for Public and Parlor Reading* (1881; P. Garrett, 1892), 86–87.
- ¹⁰ "The Ship of Faith," in Henry M. Soper, *Soper's Select Speaker* (Soper School of Oratory, 1901), 342; David Pilgrim, "The Coon Caricature," Jim Crow Museum, October 2000, edited 2024, <https://jimcrowmuseum.ferris.edu/coon/homepage.htm>.
- ¹¹ Given its religious invocation, the anecdote recalls the biblical story of Jonah and the whale, in which a man is similarly saved from being devoured by a marine animal through divine intervention.
- ¹² This is also a clear example of the broader trend of modern artists engaging in self-primitivization.
- ¹³ John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, October 7–12, 1920, in *The Selected Writings of John Marin*, ed. Dorothy Norman (Pellegrini and Cudahy, 1949), 62.
- ¹⁴ Marin to Stieglitz, November 16, 1920, in Norman, *Selected Writings*, 64.
- ¹⁵ See letters from Marin to Stieglitz, August 26, 1921; July 9, 1927; August 18, 1935, in Norman, *Selected Writings*, 70, 114, 168, respectively.
- ¹⁶ John Marin to John Marin, Jr., May 18, 1939, section 1, part 2, group 1, folder 3, Marin Family Papers, National Gallery of Art Library; Marin to Stieglitz, September 16, 1925, in Norman, *Selected Writings*, 103.
- ¹⁷ David Pilgrim, *Understanding Jim Crow: Using Racist Memorabilia to Teach Tolerance and Promote Social Justice* (PM Press, 2015), 18–19, 87, 89, 92–94. See also Steven C. Dubin, "Symbolic Slavery: Black Representations in Popular Culture," *Social Problems* 34, no. 2 (1987), 122–40; and Carolyn Dean, "Boys and Girls and 'Boys': Popular Depictions of African-American Children and Childlike Adults in the United States, 1850–1930," *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures* 23, no. 3 (2000), 17–35. This trope also connects to the broader notion that water was dangerous for Black people in the United States, in part because of significant racial disparities in access to swimming training and facilities in the early twentieth century; see Jeff Wiltse, *Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America* (UNC Press, 2007).
- ¹⁸ Pilgrim, *Understanding Jim Crow*, 92–94.
- ¹⁹ Psychologists have argued that language is often a fundamental basis of stereotyping. See Charles Stangor and Mark Schaller, "Stereotypes as Individual and Collective Representations," in *Stereotypes and Stereotyping*, ed. C. Neil Macrae, Charles Stangor, and Miles Hewstone (Guilford, 1996), 11–12. For more on the history and the implications of the N-word, see Randall Kennedy, *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word* (Vintage: 2002).
- ²⁰ Robert Herrick, "The State of Maine: 'Down East,'" in *These United States: A Symposium*, ed. Ernest Gruening (Boni and Liveright, 1923), 119. See also James W. Denison, "Stieglitz Groups: Race, Place, and the Essentializing Logics of American Modernism" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2023), 77–130.

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- ²¹ For examples of contemporaneous praise for Marin's Maine paintings, see Jerome Mellquist, *The Emergence of an American Art* (Scribner's, 1942), 360; and E. M. Benson, *John Marin: The Man and His Work* (American Federation of Arts, 1935).
- ²² Marin to Stieglitz, October 19, 1924, in Norman, *Selected Writings*, 102.
- ²³ This was doubly true before the donation of the Marin Family Papers to the National Gallery of Art Library in 1986 and their cataloguing in 1992: John Marin Family Papers, National Gallery of Art Library, accessed March 4, 2025, https://libraryimage.nga.gov/doc/pdf/john_marin_family_papers.pdf.
- ²⁴ Marin to Stieglitz, August 20–September 3, 1933, box 34, folder 786, Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive. Compare to Marin to Stieglitz, August 20–September 3, 1933, in Norman, *Selected Writings*, 152–53. In the original, Marin writes, "Duncan tells the story of two n****rs[:] One to the other [']Kin yer run['] [The] other[: '] yes[.'] [The] 1st [one: ']well then–proceed to begin[.]"]
- ²⁵ John Marin, "John Marin: Writings," ed. Dorothy Norman, *Twice a Year* 14/15 (1946/47): 235–66.
- ²⁶ Herbert J. Seligmann, ed., *Letters of John Marin* (1931; Greenwood, 1970).
- ²⁷ Seligmann, *Letters of John Marin*, n.p.
- ²⁸ Waldo Frank, Lewis Mumford, Dorothy Norman, Paul Rosenfeld, and Harold Rugg, eds., *America and Alfred Stieglitz: A Collective Portrait* (Literary Guild, 1934); Dorothy Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer* (Random House, 1973).
- ²⁹ See, among others, Dorothy Norman to John Marin, July 29, 1946; August 20, 1947; October 17, 1947; August 22, 1950; August 10, 1951, box 130, "Marin, John, 1905–1984, undated" folders, folder 1, Dorothy Norman Papers [hereafter Norman Papers], Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Archive, Yale University New Haven, CT.
- ³⁰ Marin to Norman, August 26, 1948, box 75, "Marin, John, 1937–1951" folder, Norman Papers.
- ³¹ See Denison, "Stieglitz Groups," 287–331.
- ³² Susan Noyes Platt, *Art and Politics in the 1930s: Modernism, Marxism, Americanism—A History of Cultural Activism During the Depression Years* (Midmarch, 1999), 4.
- ³³ Norman, *Selected Writings*, v.
- ³⁴ See box 156, "Marin—Notes & Material used in earlier (long) version of Introduction" folder, Norman Papers, especially Norman to Marin, March 10, 1949. Some questions were factual (like asking for the dates of photographs), while others sought to clarify if Marin wanted potentially sensitive images or comments included (like a photo of him sitting alongside beer bottles). Norman also thanks O'Keeffe (Stieglitz's wife and, by 1949, the executor of his estate) for lending her permission to publish the Marin/Stieglitz correspondence, and it is therefore possible (albeit unlikely) that O'Keeffe was also involved in the removal of offensive portions. Norman, *Selected Writings*, iv, 133.
- ³⁵ Dorothy Norman to Doris Bry, August 4, 1949, and Georgia O'Keeffe to Dorothy Norman, August 6, 1949, box 131, "O'Keeffe, Georgia & Doris, Bry, 1931–1950" folder, Norman Papers.
- ³⁶ Norman, *Selected Writings*, iv–v. Norman quotes Marin's complaints about "those who write upon things about which they sense very little" in this passage.
- ³⁷ In my dissertation, I analyze this pattern in greater detail, arguing that these artists consistently resisted interpretation by critics or scholars whom they did not know well and trust; favored interpretations that foregrounded national, mystical, and modernist meanings for their artworks; and showed particular hostility to interpretations that sought to historicize their works. See Denison, "Stieglitz Groups," 287–331.
- ³⁸ See Seligmann, *Letters of John Marin*, n.p. Seligmann writes that "the title . . . was given in accordance with the colloquial use at the time. . . . Both Dove and Stieglitz were entirely free of color prejudice."