

# Alfred Stieglitz and Paul Rosenfeld

## An Aesthetics of Intimacy

Marcia Brennan

While the period 1917 to 1925 may not be the best known phase of Alfred Stieglitz's career, these years were truly reformatory for him and his circle. At that time Stieglitz did nothing less than stage his own comeback after the closing of his first and pioneering art gallery, '291', in 1917. Although he was without a gallery of his own during this eight-year period, Stieglitz continued to be an active presence in the New York art world. In addition to pursuing his own innovative work in photography, Stieglitz maintained his involvement with a number of New York art galleries where he was instrumental in promoting a select but important group of American modernists, including Georgia O'Keeffe, Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, and John Marin. Stieglitz played a central role in establishing their reputations as he aggressively marketed their works among both private and institutional collectors.

Yet Stieglitz could not have managed the success and longevity of his project without the aid of a number of key critics, including Waldo Frank, Louis Kalonyme, Herbert J. Seligmann, Lewis Mumford, and especially Paul Rosenfeld. Under the photographer's guidance, these advocate writers played a crucial role in formulating a coherent aesthetic and ideological identity for the Stieglitz circle while at the same time keeping the artists visible in print. Of all the writers, Rosenfeld was arguably the one closest and most loyal to Stieglitz both personally and professionally through the 1920s.<sup>1</sup> At that time Rosenfeld was one of the most important art, music, and literary critics writing in the New York press, and according to his close friend Edmund Wilson, 'one of the most exciting critics of the "American Renaissance"'.<sup>2</sup> Rosenfeld's collection of essays, *Port of New York* (1924), stands as the single most comprehensive summary of Stieglitz's modernist agenda for the post-291 period.

Rosenfeld and Stieglitz first met around 1915.<sup>3</sup> From the outset, it is easy to see how the young critic would be attracted to the charismatic and paternal presence of the photographer who was twenty-six years his senior. Stieglitz and Rosenfeld both came from cultivated German-Jewish backgrounds. In fact, it probably did not take long for the two men to discover that they were distantly related to one another by marriage.<sup>4</sup>

Rosenfeld's mother was an accomplished pianist who died when Paul was ten years old. Similarly, Rosenfeld lost his father, Julius, around the time of his graduation from Yale in 1912. The following year Rosenfeld earned a graduate degree from the Columbia University School of Journalism, after which he worked briefly as a newspaper reporter in New York. Rosenfeld then shared a Manhattan apartment with his sister Marion until her marriage in February of 1914, at which point Paul was once again left to get along on his own. The critic's early life was thus characterized by patterns of personal disruption and, not surprisingly, an intense longing for affiliation. This sentiment is poignantly expressed in the class 'Prophecy' which Rosenfeld wrote for his high school yearbook. Imagining himself seventy years in the future, Rosenfeld concluded his self-description by noting that, 'He is still searching for his affinity'.<sup>5</sup> Unable to realize a stable bond within his own family, in Stieglitz Rosenfeld may have found the 'affinity' he was searching for.

Rosenfeld was most probably introduced to Stieglitz by the cultural critic and novelist Waldo Frank, another of the photographer's disciples. Frank and Rosenfeld had graduated within a year of one another from Yale, Frank in 1911 and Rosenfeld in 1912. While they may have met in college, their friendship developed shortly after, while both were working as writers in New York. By 1916 Frank had become Associate Editor of the newly founded, avant garde 'little magazine' *The Seven Arts*. Rosenfeld's first article on Stieglitz appeared in the November 1916 issue of the journal under the pseudonym Peter Minuit. This essay clearly marked the beginning of Rosenfeld's 'conversion' to Stieglitz's project.

In this early piece Rosenfeld sketched a portrait of Stieglitz which he would extend and refine over the next decade in his subsequent writings. Rosenfeld asserted that at 291 Stieglitz was leading a generative, spiritual campaign to promote American 'self-consciousness'. As Rosenfeld put it:

Stieglitz' ideas are not what makes him Stieglitz. It is rathermore his spirit, that splendid desire to give himself to whosoever needs him — to America. It is his lofty conception of art, not as a *divertissement*, a refuge from the world, but as a bridge to consciousness of self, to life, and through that, to new life and new creation again.<sup>6</sup>



Figure 1. Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Portrait — with Paul Rosenfeld [right] and Charles Duncan [left]*, silver gelatine print, 1920. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Rosenfeld portrayed Stieglitz as a radiant, almost saintly figure whose gift lay in his ability to inspire spiritual awareness in his gallery's visitors. The critic concluded his article with this almost hyperbolic description of Stieglitz: 'For which of us can tell how far the energy that radiates from him will reach, by what inscrutable processes it will again and again enrich life? That is his immortality. We, who have taken what we could, bow our heads in recognition of the generous spirit that has given itself to us'.<sup>7</sup> As this description suggests, from the first the structure of Rosenfeld's admiration for Stieglitz was clearly self-reflexive. That is, Rosenfeld's essay was not only a tribute to Stieglitz himself, but an account of the feelings which the photographer supposedly inspired in the critic. Indeed, 'reflection' seems an appropriate term to characterize the almost familial bond which eventually existed between Rosenfeld and Stieglitz. The cultural and literary critic Van Wyck Brooks once noted that Rosenfeld looked up to Stieglitz 'as a prophet and almost a father'.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the literary critic Edmund Wilson observed that Rosenfeld's 'strongest tie was undoubtedly with Stieglitz, toward whom he stood in something like a filial relation; and the group around Stieglitz became for him both family and church'.<sup>9</sup>

By 1920 Rosenfeld was in frequent contact with Stieglitz after having completed a term in the Army. That June Rosenfeld invited Stieglitz and O'Keeffe to spend a weekend at his suburban home in Westport, Connecticut. In October the photographer returned the invitation, and the critic passed two weeks at the Stieglitz family home in Lake George, New York. A photograph taken during this visit (figure 1) shows, from left to right, the artists Charles Duncan, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Rosenfeld himself seated at a table having lunch.<sup>10</sup> Stieglitz's presence is indicated by the used china at the empty place setting nearest the

viewer. As in his gallery, Stieglitz manages in this photograph to be in two places at once. He is both a part of the scene, eating and walking among his guests, and at the same time he stands apart from them, making arrangements, orchestrating details, and taking life around him as the material for his art and the basis for his professional practice. In this manner Stieglitz is able to be symbolically present in a photograph of his intimate friends while remaining physically absent from the scene he represented. Stieglitz's ability to establish this sense of his symbolic presence would be crucial to the strategy he adopted to represent himself professionally in the New York art world during the early 1920s.

After returning from Lake George, O'Keeffe mailed Rosenfeld a copy of the luncheon photograph as well as other shots Stieglitz had taken during the visit. Shortly after receiving the images, Rosenfeld told Stieglitz: 'I enjoyed very much the [prints] Georgia mailed me. They brought back my happy days with you vividly. The one of the three of us at table is charming'.<sup>11</sup> These were but the first of Stieglitz's photographs to enter Rosenfeld's collection. Later that autumn, Stieglitz made four photographic portraits of Rosenfeld himself (figure 2), images which astonished the critic.<sup>12</sup> Upon first viewing the prints, Rosenfeld was reportedly so impressed and moved that he was beyond speech. Rosenfeld told Stieglitz that he:

... was in the condition any one would be in to whom a wizard had just given the book of themselves, and bidden them read. I wanted to be alone with the pictures in order to begin to take out of them what you had placed there. I have been looking much at them, and feeling strange. I feel, especially before the laughing one, as though the Idea of myself which I have been having has begun a little to relax its grip, and as though I were wavering dimly toward another Idea which your wonderful photograph is commencing to



Figure 2. Alfred Stieglitz, *Paul Rosenfeld*, silver gelatine photograph, 1920. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

show me. All four are remarkable things — I am no longer ashamed to look at one questioning one. I begin to see that they do the wonderful thing — express a spiritual concept through material form.<sup>13</sup>

Rosenfeld's remarks to Stieglitz recalled his earlier *Seven Arts essay* in which he related how his contact with the photographer had been a personally and spiritually transformative experience. Yet what is striking in 1920 is the degree to which Rosenfeld was aware that Stieglitz was 'authoring' him in the photographs, or, to paraphrase the critic, how he was being handed the book of himself and bidden to read. In these images Stieglitz represented Rosenfeld as a man of letters seated in his study, surrounded by his professional attributes. Visible on Rosenfeld's desk are a typewriter, a crumpled pack of cigarettes, some galley proofs, and four recent volumes on American art and culture, one of which is Rosenfeld's own *Musical Portraits* (1920).<sup>14</sup> While the photographs retain the poses and conventions of formal

portraiture, Stieglitz had introduced a psychological element in the critic's upturned gaze and thoughtful, questioning expression. As a result of this intersubjective exchange, Rosenfeld could look into the pictures of himself to find traces of Stieglitz's presence, to internalize and take out of them what the photographer had placed there. Moreover, the images represented the blurring of bodily and subjective boundaries between Rosenfeld and Stieglitz. That is, the portraits provided Stieglitz with the opportunity to construct Rosenfeld photographically, and Rosenfeld with the supposed ability to see himself through Stieglitz's eyes, or at least through the surrogate eye of Stieglitz's camera lens.

Stieglitz's largesse with the photographs elicited Rosenfeld's gratitude and his desire to reciprocate. As the critic told Stieglitz, 'You have been sweet and generous to have given me these, and I wish I might give you as much of a "chance" with something as you have given me with your camera'.<sup>15</sup> In yet another mutually reflective exchange,



Figure 3. Alfred Stieglitz, *Breasts and Hand*, 1919. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs Alma Wertheim, 1928.

Rosenfeld wished to return Stieglitz's gift of the portraits — of having Stieglitz represent him photographically — by representing Stieglitz in the critical press.

The opportunity came almost immediately. The first major event marking Stieglitz's return to the New York art world after the closing of 291 was a retrospective exhibition of Stieglitz's photographs which was held at the Anderson Galleries from 7 to 14 February 1921. In a flyer which accompanied the event, Stieglitz wrote: 'This exhibition is the sharp focusing of an idea. The one hundred and forty-five prints constituting it represent my photographic development covering nearly forty years. They are the quintessence of that development'.<sup>16</sup> As these remarks suggest, the Anderson Galleries exhibition provided Stieglitz with the opportunity to present a kind of extended self-portrait through photography. In a review of the show for the *New York Herald*, the critic Henry McBride explicitly stated that the real subject of the exhibition was none other than Stieglitz himself. McBride described the atmosphere at this landmark event:

... greater than the photographs was Alfred, and greater than Alfred was his talk — as copious, continuous and revolutionary as ever — and no sooner was this recognized than the well remembered look — a look compounded of comfort and exaltation — began to appear on the faces of [his followers], for to them it seemed that '291' was operating as usual and that this long hiatus had been a dream. There was a slight change of background, considerable red plush instead of the inconsiderable gray paint, but the main thing, Alfred, was there and they were happy.<sup>17</sup>

As McBride's comments suggest, at the Anderson Galleries Stieglitz was surrounded by his followers while he filled the gallery's walls with their photographs. Of those photographically present, Rosenfeld's portrait appeared among the

images of Stieglitz's family members and close friends. Arguably, however, no single group of images was more central to Stieglitz's public self-construction than his composite portrait of Georgia O'Keeffe (figures 3–5). O'Keeffe herself later commented on the self-reflexive nature of Stieglitz's photographs. She frankly observed that, in such images, Stieglitz 'was always photographing himself'.<sup>18</sup>

Stieglitz's representations of O'Keeffe are, above all, portraits of a relationship, depicting a relationship between two lovers and two artists — between the photographer and his model, between the body and its surroundings, and between formal arrangements of light, pattern, and shape. In several images O'Keeffe's hands appear almost creature-like as Stieglitz portrays them as complex, interacting forms. In one photograph O'Keeffe is shown holding her own breasts. In another she is peeling apples, a fruit which grew abundantly on the grounds of the Stieglitz family property at Lake George and which ultimately became a symbol of American organicism for the entire Stieglitz circle.<sup>19</sup> Through this conflation of sensuous corporeal and still-life elements, Stieglitz's photographs combined tactile and visual appeal as the interlace of O'Keeffe's long fingers is shown in contact with lush fabric, peeled apples, or the rounded curves of her exposed breasts.

In the glowing review which Rosenfeld published in *The Dial*, the critic noted the profound sensory allure of Stieglitz's photographs. Echoing Stieglitz's own aesthetic rhetoric, Rosenfeld observed that, 'Indeed, the prints of Stieglitz are among the very sensitive records of human existence. So vivid and delicate are they that one wants to touch them'.<sup>20</sup> The critic further stated that Stieglitz 'has arrested apparently insignificant motions of the hands, motions of hands sewing, gestures of hands poised fitfully



Figure 4. Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Portrait — Hands and Thimble*, solarized palladium, 1919. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



Figure 5. Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Portrait — Hands*, palladium, 1918. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

on the breast, motions of hands peeling apples. And in each of them, he has found a symbol of himself'.<sup>21</sup> Thus according to Rosenfeld, the aestheticized fragments of O'Keeffe's body were made to function as symbols of Stieglitz, as agents of his sight and touch.<sup>22</sup>

Stieglitz's presentation of the 'portrait' helped to facilitate Rosenfeld's interpretation. Stieglitz divided his images of O'Keeffe into six categories, each of which was presented as 'a demonstration of portraiture'. The groupings included twenty-seven images entitled 'A Woman', eight images of 'Hands', three images of 'Feet', three images of 'Hands and Breasts', three images of 'Torsos', and two prints simply entitled 'Interpretations'. Stieglitz's portrait groupings seemed to raise such questions as: What does it mean to present a 'portrait' of 'hands'? In Stieglitz's case it meant that a whole subject, 'a woman' (and not just *any* woman, but O'Keeffe no less), could be subdivided into her body parts, yet the symbolic fragments of her body could simultaneously function as a portrait of her, *and at the same time*, be read as a symbol of Stieglitz himself. Because each of the groups was considered a portrait in its own right, the 'part' was thus made to signify the 'whole' subject, which in this case denoted both Stieglitz and O'Keeffe. Stieglitz's radical approach to portraiture resulted in a highly individuated *and* an inherently dialogical conception of identity. That is, the photographs exemplified in aestheticized visual form the ways in which a unique identity is itself constituted through an elaborate negotiation between self and others, a negotiation of parts and wholes.

For Rosenfeld, the significance of the images transcended both Stieglitz and O'Keeffe to encompass the wider audience for whom the artworks were intended. Rosenfeld wrote that in these photographs 'we see — not Stieglitz, but America, New York, ourselves'.<sup>23</sup> Rosenfeld's ability to 'see himself' in Stieglitz's photographs, including in the nude portraits of O'Keeffe, influenced not only his critical writings but his own personal art purchases.<sup>24</sup> Shortly after the 1921 show Rosenfeld acquired a copy of Stieglitz's *Breasts and Hand* (see figure 3), one of the images from the composite portrait of O'Keeffe. After studying the artwork, Rosenfeld described the photograph to Stieglitz in highly animated terms: 'I have been watching it much, and find that it possesses remarkable "pushing from within", and has a movement extremely powerful, especially noteworthy in so small a thing'.<sup>25</sup> Thus the photograph, which was at once a work of art *and* a symbol of both O'Keeffe and Stieglitz, was an object which Rosenfeld lived with and which was alive for him. Given the profound psychic investments which informed Stieglitz's production of the photograph as well as Rosenfeld's response to it, it is no wonder that the critic perceived the artwork as highly cathetic, as so powerfully charged as to be 'pushing from within'.<sup>26</sup> Thus in yet another blurring of corporeal and subjective boundaries, Rosenfeld seemed to be informing Stieglitz that the sight and feel of O'Keeffe's body had become known to him by 'watching' the portrait and feeling its powerful push. And as a result of their shared bodily knowledge of O'Keeffe, Rosenfeld was further able to identify with Stieglitz himself.

Rosenfeld published an analogous discussion of *Breasts*

*and Hand* in a contemporary account of O'Keeffe's paintings. In a lengthy article on American art which appeared in the December 1921 issue of *The Dial*, Rosenfeld asserted that O'Keeffe's sexuality was transparently expressed in the aesthetic structures of her artworks.<sup>27</sup> As a result of this corporeal transparency, the boundaries between male and female bodies symbolically dissolved. As Rosenfeld himself put it, O'Keeffe's art 'is gloriously female. Her great painful and ecstatic climaxes make us at last to know something that man has always wanted to know. For here, in this painting, there is registered the manner of perception anchored in the constitution of the woman. The organs that differentiate the sex speak'.<sup>28</sup> Rosenfeld's description of O'Keeffe's artworks thus implied a kind of unmediated access to her living body, an eroticized content which was supposedly manifest in both O'Keeffe's painterly structures and in her iconographic subjects: 'There is no appetite that cannot burst forth in flowers and electric colour', Rosenfeld wrote, 'A little red flower with pistil of flame is in paradise'.<sup>29</sup> These last two phrases are particularly significant since Rosenfeld himself owned artworks by O'Keeffe which may initially have inspired them. The works include one of O'Keeffe's 'flaming' cannalilies and one of the 'electrically colored' paintings from her *Black Spot* series.

In addition to these pictures, Rosenfeld also owned several other paintings by O'Keeffe as well as works by Marin, Hartley, and Dove.<sup>30</sup> And Rosenfeld not only filled *his* home with Stieglitz circle artworks; he brought the paintings along when he visited his friends. During the 1920s various members of the New York avant garde, including Rosenfeld, Arthur Dove, Edmund Wilson, and Van Wyck Brooks, lived in Westport, Connecticut. In this crowd Rosenfeld was more than a personal ambassador of the Stieglitz circle painters. He was their proselytizer, and Brooks recalled Rosenfeld's extended loans of artworks to his friends:

A true apostle of all art, Paul would appear from time to time with a picture of Marsden Hartley's under his arm, or one by our fellow-Westporter Arthur Dove which he called 'a sort of *Leaves of Grass* through pigment', covering our dining-room walls with them for a few weeks or months so that the new sun would also dawn for us. He was all for what he called 'the dream growing out of reality'.<sup>31</sup>

After moving out of his Westport home in late 1923, Rosenfeld took an apartment on the west side of Irving Place, where Brooks remembered 'the mantel and the walls were covered with Marins, Doves, Hartleys and O'Keeffes'.<sup>32</sup> As the music critic for *The Dial*, Rosenfeld entertained many important artists, musicians, and writers in his apartment. Thus in Rosenfeld's salon a highly influential group of people could routinely be found conversing, playing music, and reading poetry while surrounded by a collection of Stieglitz circle artworks. Moreover, these images had been carefully chosen by Rosenfeld himself to create an ambiance in which the critic's own identity merged with that of the other members of the Stieglitz group.

As all of this suggests, Rosenfeld had both an intimate knowledge of and considerable access to the subjects about whom he wrote. Herbert J. Seligmann, another writer close to Stieglitz, attempted to express this arrangement in positive

terms: '[Rosenfeld] wrote and sought to write, not as an external interrogator merely, but as a close participant in the lives of his subjects'.<sup>33</sup> Edmund Wilson, however, felt that this degree of intimacy greatly hampered Rosenfeld's judgments as an art critic. Wilson asserted that Rosenfeld's:

... range as a writer on the plastic arts was limited by the exclusiveness of his interest in the work of the Stieglitz group. It was difficult, if not impossible, to persuade him to pay attention to any contemporary American painter who was not a protégé of Stieglitz', and if Stieglitz had excommunicated a refractory or competitive disciple, Paul, following the official directive, would condemn him, not merely as an artist but as a reprobate who had somehow committed an unpardonable moral treason.<sup>34</sup>

In a sense, Wilson's critique seems inevitable given that Rosenfeld's identity as an art critic would likely have broken down had he devoted substantial attention to painters outside of the Stieglitz group. Yet while Wilson was sharply critical of Stieglitz's ostensibly overbearing influence, Rosenfeld himself considered Stieglitz's guidance to be a sustaining bond that linked him with the larger aesthetic and spiritual enterprise that the photographer represented. Along these lines, in September 1922 Rosenfeld told Stieglitz, 'My guess is that something has happened to me partly because of the presence around me of certain people. Something has interplayed, back and forth, in my consciousness'. The critic felt that this 'something' was part of a larger movement 'on which I as well as the others have been floated'.<sup>35</sup> Rosenfeld's comments again suggest a fluidity of boundaries between himself and Stieglitz, one so strong that the two men became merged both bodily and spiritually.

As I have noted, Rosenfeld's single most powerful contribution to Stieglitz's modernist project was his book of critical essays, *Port of New York* (1924).<sup>36</sup> While based on articles which had previously been published in periodicals such as *The Bookman*, *The Dial*, and *Vanity Fair*, *Port of New York* represents less a disparate collection of essays than a work unified by a common theme. It was Rosenfeld's desire to illuminate what he considered to be the most promising new developments in American art and culture. The genesis for the essays on the Stieglitz circle artists came from Rosenfeld's lengthy article on American painting which had first appeared in the December 1921 issue of *The Dial*. Over the course of the next year Rosenfeld published individual essays on Marin, Hartley, and O'Keeffe in the widely popular magazine *Vanity Fair*.<sup>37</sup> It is of considerable interest that when Rosenfeld went to revise these essays for a book-length study, he consulted extensively with Stieglitz throughout the entire process. Thus the writing of *Port of New York* represents yet another instance in which Stieglitz and Rosenfeld came to share a single 'body', the corpus of this text.

In August 1922 Rosenfeld first told Stieglitz of his intention to dedicate his second book, *Musical Chronicle*, to the photographer. The following month the critic informed Stieglitz of his plan to produce a new book on American art and literature. Stieglitz immediately offered to supply Rosenfeld with photographs. During the summer and fall of 1923 Rosenfeld sent Stieglitz drafts of the chapters on O'Keeffe, Hartley, Dove, Marin, and the photographer

himself for Stieglitz's revision and commentary.<sup>38</sup> In turn, Stieglitz furnished Rosenfeld with portrait photographs of the four painters as well as of the novelist Sherwood Anderson to accompany the text.<sup>39</sup> Through these numerous exchanges, *Port of New York* ultimately represented a double portrait of the Stieglitz circle artists as Rosenfeld characterized them in prose and as Stieglitz constructed them in photography.<sup>40</sup>

Understandably, Stieglitz was highly invested in the publication of *Port of New York* and encouraged Rosenfeld throughout its writing. In July 1923 Stieglitz urged Rosenfeld to trust his own instincts as a writer. This recommendation was understandable given that Rosenfeld's voice had already come to merge with Stieglitz's own by that time. A few months later Rosenfeld responded by placing the significance of his book within the larger framework of American cultural identity. Rosenfeld told Stieglitz:

... I still believe the fight against provincialism in America is the crucial one. We do all sorts of stupid things principally because we have no respect for ourselves as Americans. I am sick of foreign reputations and France-worship. France and her good taste has been the bane of every European country. This reminds me I ought to go to work on my book. It has a purpose, I suddenly see.<sup>41</sup>

The following month Stieglitz emphasized to Rosenfeld that the book must be completed because its success was crucial to achieving 'America without that damned French flavor!' Stieglitz cited this as the reason why he continued the fight he had begun at 291, that he was fighting for Georgia and Marin and himself, all of whom are 'American'. To bolster his self-confidence, Stieglitz asked Rosenfeld: 'Are we only a marked down bargain day remnant of Europe? Haven't we any of our own courage in matters "aesthetic"?' Stieglitz concluded by assuring Rosenfeld that he was on the 'true track'.<sup>42</sup> By November 1923 the manuscript was fully completed, and the book itself appeared the following April.

Due to Rosenfeld's and Stieglitz's intense level of collaboration, *Port of New York* stands as the single best example of an 'official' period account of the Stieglitz circle. While the author of the study was nominally Paul Rosenfeld, the book itself came into being through Stieglitz's and Rosenfeld's creative symbiosis. In many respects their arrangement was a highly practical one. As a critic, Rosenfeld could speak publicly for the Stieglitz group in a way in which the photographer himself could not. Yet at the same time, Stieglitz's extensive input enabled Rosenfeld to produce a text which he could never have formulated so powerfully on his own. It is no wonder that Stieglitz was so pleased with *Port of New York*, since, ultimately, the study was his own self-representation. For several years after the book first made its appearance, Stieglitz continued to refer individuals to *Port of New York* for background information on himself and his artists.<sup>43</sup>

*Port of New York* did nothing less than establish the rhetorical conditions necessary for the Stieglitz circle's full-scale comeback, since the text announced that the group's theoretical apparatus was fully in place and operating relationally. As we have seen, the methodological structures of Stieglitz circle aesthetics were themselves based on the

symbolic merger of bodies. This theorization tended to produce a highly eroticized conception of aesthetics, one which was associated both with the Stieglitz circle's artworks and with the critical discourses which accompanied them. *Port of New York* represented a mirroring of theory and practice since the book at once reflected the content of Stieglitz circle artworks and the intimate structures of relationships through which these meanings were produced. That is, *Port of New York* was itself the result of the elaborate, almost ritualistic bonding process which Stieglitz and Rosenfeld had experienced between 1916 and 1923, a process which encompassed their literary collaboration, their art acquisitions, the cultivation of an almost familial personal relationship, and the making of numerous conversive images of one another and of the other members of their circle. These activities gradually led to the dissolution of boundaries between Rosenfeld and Stieglitz, and ultimately, to the two men's symbolic spiritual and even quasi-corporeal merger.

#### Notes

1. The critic Waldo Frank was also extremely close to Stieglitz during this period. Yet Frank was ultimately less consistent in his attentions to Stieglitz and less compliant with his mentor's demands than Rosenfeld. Regarding the often emotionally charged relationships between the three men, see Richard Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz: A Biography*, Boston: Little, Brown 1995; and Wanda M. Corn, 'Apostles of the New American Art: Waldo Frank and Paul Rosenfeld', *Arts Magazine* 54 (February 1980), 159–63. On this topic see also Sherman Paul's introductory essay to Paul Rosenfeld, *Port of New York*, Urbana and London: University of Illinois Press 1966, vii–lvi; Hugh M. Potter, *False Dawn: Paul Rosenfeld and Art in America, 1916–1946*, Ann Arbor: UMI Press for the University of New Hampshire 1980; and Charles L. P. Silet, *The Writings of Paul Rosenfeld*, New York and London: Garland 1981. In addition, several writers have provided period accounts of Stieglitz's and Rosenfeld's relationship in the festschrift which was compiled after Rosenfeld's death. See Jerome Mellquist and Lucie Wiese, eds, *Paul Rosenfeld: Voyager in the Arts*, New York: Creative Age Press 1948. Finally, I discuss this subject at length in Chapters 1 and 6 of my PhD Dissertation, 'Abstract Passion: Images of Embodiment and Abstraction in the Art and Criticism of the Alfred Stieglitz Circle', Brown University 1997, 8–32, 207–47.
2. Edmund Wilson, 'Paul Rosenfeld: Three Phases', *Paul Rosenfeld: Voyager in the Arts*, New York: Creative Age Press 1948, 3.
3. The earliest existing piece of correspondence which Rosenfeld sent to Stieglitz is dated 29 December 1915 and is housed in the Collection of American Literature at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (hereafter cited as YCAL).
4. Rosenfeld's maternal great-uncle, Joseph Obermeyer, was Stieglitz's father-in-law. See Potter, 12.
5. Paul Rosenfeld, 'The Prophecy', *The Riverview Orbit*, Poughkeepsie, NY: Riverview Military Academy 1908, 12, quoted in Silet, xxi.
6. Peter Minuit, '291 Fifth Avenue', *Seven Arts* 1 (November 1916), 64.
7. Minuit, '291', 65.
8. Van Wyck Brooks, *Days of the Phoenix: The Nineteen-Twenties I Remember*, New York: E. P. Dutton 1957, 7.
9. Wilson, 'Rosenfeld: Three Phases', 507.
10. Charles Duncan was one of the two painters who, along with Rene Lafferty, O'Keeffe shared her first exhibition at 291, 'Georgia O'Keeffe–C. Duncan–Rene Lafferty', 23 May–5 July 1916.
11. Rosenfeld to Stieglitz, 3 November 1920, YCAL.
12. Regarding this portrait group, see also Benita Eisler, *O'Keeffe & Stieglitz: An American Romance*, New York: Penguin Books 1991, 231–32.
13. Rosenfeld to Stieglitz, 16 December 1920, YCAL.
14. The other three books are Waldo Frank's *Our America* (1919), Van Wyck Brooks's *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* (1920), and Carl Sandburg's collection of poems *Smoke and Steel* (1920).
15. Rosenfeld to Stieglitz, 16 December 1920, YCAL. As partial recompense, Rosenfeld sent Stieglitz a book by D. H. Lawrence which the photographer had expressed an interest in.
16. Alfred Stieglitz, 'A Statement', *145 Photographs*, New York: The Anderson Galleries, 7–14 February 1921. A copy of this flyer can be found in the Forbes Watson Papers, Archives of American Art–Smithsonian Institution, reel D57, frames 92–94.
17. Henry McBride, 'Art News and Reviews — Stieglitz's Life Work in Photography', *The New York Herald* (13 February 1921), 5.
18. Georgia O'Keeffe, 'Introduction', *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Portrait by Alfred Stieglitz*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art 1978.
19. During the later teens and early twenties Stieglitz and his in-house critics developed a common set of symbols through which to express their shared vision of American modernism. One of the most frequently cited images is that of apples and apple trees. For the Stieglitz circle, apples were a metaphor for indigenous artistic generativity. Rooted in the soil, the tree bears fruit and thus embodies the qualities of nativeness and fecundity. Rosenfeld himself owned one of O'Keeffe's paintings of apples. Apple imagery is also found in Charles Demuth's poster portrait of Georgia O'Keeffe (1923, Collection of American Literature, Yale University). For a discussion of the symbolism of apples in Stieglitz circle artworks, see Charles C. Eldredge, *Georgia O'Keeffe: American and Modern*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1993, 180–87.
20. Paul Rosenfeld, 'Stieglitz', *The Dial* 70 (April 1921), 398.
21. Rosenfeld, 'Stieglitz', 399.
22. Rosenfeld further discussed his perception of Stieglitz as 'a symbol animated from way down within' in a letter dated 14 September 1922 to the photographer (YCAL).
23. Rosenfeld, 'Stieglitz', 407.
24. Rosenfeld had inherited a substantial independent income which, until the crash of 1929, had enabled him to live quite comfortably in Westport and New York.
25. Rosenfeld to Stieglitz, 10 September 1921, YCAL.
26. Rosenfeld's purchase of *Breasts and Hand* clearly raises the issue of desire within the Stieglitz circle. Regarding O'Keeffe's complex relationship with Rosenfeld, see Chapter 3 of my PhD Dissertation, 'Abstract Passion', 128–42. Despite, and perhaps because of, their almost filial relations, pronounced rivalries existed between Stieglitz and the younger critics. Richard Whelan recounts that during the summer of 1924 Stieglitz effectively prevented Rosenfeld's marriage to O'Keeffe's sister Ida, with whom Stieglitz himself had flirted. Whelan, 463.
27. Paul Rosenfeld, 'American Painting', *The Dial* 71 (December 1921), 649–70.
28. Rosenfeld, 'American Painting', 666.
29. Rosenfeld, 'American Painting', 667.
30. Rosenfeld's art collection also included O'Keeffe's painting *Pears* as well as her blue pastel of a mountain and a group of apples. In a 1926 letter to Stieglitz, Rosenfeld mentions acquiring two small red O'Keeffe paintings with gilt borders. In addition, Rosenfeld owned two watercolours from John Marin's Deer Isle, Maine series, *Island, Sun and Ships* and *Movement, Boats and Sea*, one of Marsden Hartley's lily still lifes, and Hartley's *Deserted Farm*. Rosenfeld also attempted to purchase Arthur Dove's painting *Waterfall* (1925), now in the Phillips Collection. However, in early 1926 Stieglitz insisted that Rosenfeld relinquish the painting to Duncan Phillips after the collector had expressed interest in the work. On this subject, see Stieglitz's letter to Arthur Dove of 6 March 1926 in Ann Lee Morgan, ed., *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, Cranbury, NJ and London: Associated University Presses 1988, 125; and the letters Stieglitz and Phillips exchanged between 22 January and 8 February 1926 in Elizabeth Hutton Turner, *In the American Grain: The Stieglitz Circle at the Phillips Collection*, Washington, DC: Counterpoint and the Phillips Collection 1995, 111–15.
31. Brooks, 10. In August 1922 Rosenfeld loaned the novelist Sherwood Anderson a painting by Marsden Hartley, an artist whom Anderson greatly admired. (Rosenfeld to Stieglitz, 29 August 1922, YCAL). Waldo Frank had established a relationship with Anderson late in 1916 through contacts at the journal *Seven Arts*, where Frank was an editor. By December 1918 Anderson had become friends with Rosenfeld, and in the spring of 1921 Rosenfeld invited Anderson and his partner, the sculptress Tennessee Mitchell, to accompany him on a trip to Europe, courtesy of Rosenfeld. Stieglitz made portrait photographs of Anderson during the spring of 1923, one of which appeared opposite the essay on Anderson in *Port of New York*. Shortly after the photographs were taken, Anderson wrote to Stieglitz, emphasizing his influence on the circle and counting himself a member, 'I really think, man, you have registered more deeply than you know on Marin, O'Keeffe, Rosenfeld, myself, and others'. (Anderson to Stieglitz, 30 June 1923, YCAL.) Later that summer Anderson decided to dedicate *A Story Teller's Story* to Stieglitz.
32. Brooks, 67.
33. Herbert J. Seligmann, 'Plowman of the Future', *Paul Rosenfeld: Voyager in the Arts*, New York: Creative Age Press 1948, 239.



34. Wilson, 'Rosenfeld: Three Phases', 7.
35. Rosenfeld to Stieglitz, 30 September 1922, YCAL.
36. Paul Rosenfeld, *Port of New York: Essays on Fourteen American Moderns*, New York: Harcourt, Brace 1924.
37. Paul Rosenfeld, 'Water-Colours of John Marin: A Note on the Work of the First American Painter of the Day', *Vanity Fair* 18 (April 1922), 48, 88, 92, 110; 'Marsden Hartley: Characteristics of the Work of One of the Very Great Talents Among Present Day American Artists', *Vanity Fair* 18 (August 1922), 47, 84, 94, 96; and 'Georgia O'Keeffe: The Work of the Young Artist Whose Canvases Are to be Exhibited in Bulk for the First Time This Winter', *Vanity Fair* 19 (October 1922), 56, 112, 114.
38. The letters Stieglitz and Rosenfeld exchanged between July and November 1923 suggest that Stieglitz read and edited, if not actually wrote portions of, the essays on O'Keeffe, Hartley, Dove, Marin, and Stieglitz himself. By 1935 Rosenfeld was revising some of his essays, and he told Stieglitz that he was in a quandary as to giving permission for reprinting the essay on O'Keeffe which had appeared in *Port of New York*. Rosenfeld reported that he felt dissatisfied with the piece and unsure as to whether it could 'either represent its subject today or myself'. (Rosenfeld to Stieglitz, 18 July 1935, YCAL.)
39. Stieglitz's own portrait was taken by Paul Strand, another of the photographer's followers.
40. In addition to the Stieglitz circle artists, the other subjects treated in *Port of New York* include Albert P. Ryder, Van Wyck Brooks, Carl Sandburg, William Carlos Williams, Margaret Naumburg, Kenneth Hayes Miller, Roger H. Sessions, and Randolph Bourne.
41. Rosenfeld to Stieglitz, 1 September 1923, YCAL.
42. Stieglitz to Rosenfeld, 5 October 1923, YCAL.
43. See for example Stieglitz's letter dated 4 February 1932 to Elizabeth McCausland, art critic for the *Springfield Republican*, in which Stieglitz refers her to *Port of New York* for biographical information. (Elizabeth McCausland Papers, Archives of American Art—Smithsonian Institution, reel D384B, frame 19.)