O’Keeffe’s black cross, in contrast, is a powerful shape in a stark landscape, recognizable as a Christian symbol but separate from specific events and location. Rather than the literal blood of Christ or the Penitentes, it is nature itself—the red sky—that could stand for the pain and suffering associated with the crucifixion and its reenactments. O’Keeffe said that she saw the crosses often and in unexpected places, “like a thin dark veil of the Catholic Church spread over the New Mexico landscape. . . . Painting the crosses was a way of painting the country.” We may not know that she is referring to the presence of Catholicism in the Hispanic culture of the region, but we do know how she felt about it. Her painting of the object has its roots in her emotional response to those crosses, which she conveys solely through color and shape, manipulated to make a similar