Preserving the Divine:
Anne Brigman's Reverence for the Earth as a Rejection of the Modernist Aesthetic

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For Dylan and Willow

And for my younger self, who would never have believed this.

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Anne Brigman, *Songs of a Pagan*, 1949.

Abstract

Anne W. Brigman (1869–1950), a Hawai'ian born photographer, Pagan, poet, and member of the Photo-Secession Movement, was an influential artist, first-wave feminist, and art writer. Although much of her influence has remained uncredited until recent scholarship, her modernist aesthetic and early ecofeminist ideology can be traced through multiple threads of photographic history. The thesis emphasizes the importance of returning to Brigman's work in the 21st century. Brigman's images carried stories of nymphs, dryads, and pagan gods of the wild, and she regularly spoke of her reverence for the natural world and the spaces that she was photographing. Significantly, Brigman may have been an influence for Stieglitz to look to the natural world for spirituality during his time of personal crisis, resulting in his *Equivalents* (1992) series of cloud photographs. The thesis presents an ecofeminist and ecocritical examination of Brigman's work as a reflection on the natural world during her time, and advocates for Brigman's work to be viewed as a radical celebration of the female natural divine as a creative force in both art and nature.

KEYTERMS: Anne Brigman, Ecocriticism, Ecofeminism, Feminism, Gender, Modernism, New York, Pictorialism, Photography, Alfred Stieglitz.

Chapter One: Introduction

Project Overview

Anne "Annie" Wardrope Brigman (1869–1950) was a Hawai'ian born, California–based photographer, poet, and suffragette who was an active participant in the Photo-Secessionist Movement in the early 1900s. While Brigman was alive she was considered by the American Modernist circles an example of the hyper sexualized, New Woman artist. However, recent scholarship is reviving her work and recognizing her as an underacknowledged artist who played a vital role in photographic history. This thesis views Brigman's work through an ecofeminist lens, placing her original intention of spiritual transcendence at the forefront through her symbolic focus on the body in nature. It addresses Brigman's transcendental spirituality that informed her compositions, influencing Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946), the leader of the Photo-Secessionists in the early 1900s, whose voice determined which photographers would be remembered in the art-historical canon. Brigman's work can be understood through her symbolic use of the body in relation to nature. Her vision presents a contrast to 19th century landscape photography, as well as a rejection of the Modernist aesthetic of her time, both of which promoted man over nature. A study of her work today provides a vital legacy for a contemporary, ecofeminist lens, positioning the feminine divine at the center of natural and artistic creativity.

This thesis focuses on Brigman's oeuvre as seen through a contemporary feminist and ecofeminist lens. Not only did Brigman challenge the Modernist perspective of the role of gender, sexuality, and the body within art, but she succeeded in challenging a larger Modernist assumption—and a deeply ingrained contemporary thought—that Man holds power over Nature. Adopting an ecofeminist mindset, Brigman's work can be seen as paralleling the oppression of

women to the overpowering of the natural world. Wolfe writes, “In nineteenth–century literature it was common for writers to use gendered language when referring to such places—the wilderness was often feminized as a ‘virgin’ place before it was developed or cultivated by predominantly male pioneers.”[1] One of Brigman’s most well–known works, *Soul of the Blasted Pine* (Fig. 1) is a prominent example of both uniting the body within nature and rejecting the sexualization of the nude body as “natural”. Photographed on a slightly skewed angle, the photogravure depicts the shattered remains of a large pine tree, with its hollow stump all that remains lodged in the earth. The corpse of the tree, its leaves still full and dark against the cloudy skies behind it, blends into the background of the image. Rising out of the hollow stump, Brigman has placed a nude form, likely her sister or one of her cousins. However, any defining characteristics that reveal who the woman is are removed. She is no longer a mortal human, but rather the personification of the dying tree itself. She twists and contorts her body as she rises out of the stump, her slender arm reaching up to try to find the trunk that is no longer there. Her gaze is turned up; her face obscured by the angle. It is impossible to tell if she weeps in sorrow over the death of the tree or screams in anger at her own eventual mortality.

Brigman’s male modernist peers who dominated the canon of photographic history made nude imagery but depicted women’s bodies for their own aesthetic and voyeuristic pleasure. In Stieglitz’s case, this objectification of women is documented in this thesis using the series of fragmented portraits of his wife, famous painter Georgia O’Keeffe (1887–1986). In one portrait in 1919 (Fig. 2) Stieglitz photographed her in a thin, unbuttoned blouse, with her breasts exposed. O’Keeffe’s right hand cups her left breast, while her left hand holds up an

[1] Ann Wolfe, "Laid Bare in the Landscape,” in *Anne Brigman: A Visionary in Modern Photography* (Reno: Nevada Museum of Art, 2018), 172.

unidentifiable—but phallic—shape. Her chin is tilted up, gazing at the shape with an intense stare.

Clarence Hudson White (1871–1925) who mentored Brigman during her time at his photographic school in Connecticut, often photographed nude women in the natural world. His work is like Brigman's, but he depicted women as passive observers of the world, the softness of the landscape around them a beautiful frame for the nude form, rather than the natural home in which Brigman places her models. White's model in *Untitled* (Fig. 3) turns her head away from the viewers, with her shoulders and bare breasts square to the camera. Her presence insinuates aesthetic beauty like the landscape surrounding her. Sally Stein writes on the extreme differences between Brigman's nudes in the wild in comparison to her male counterparts, stating that "though many male Pictorialists used naked female models, no male photographer working in the Pictorialist idiom produced work that suggests the (same) dynamic synthesis(.)…Nature in Brigman's work was less a space of retreat than an allegorical setting in which to promote the idea that women would do best to turn their back on most man–made laws."[2] These "man-made laws" not only encompassed society's laws, but the unspoken laws surrounding their own bodies.

Brigman's feminism is not solely understood through her visual representations of empowered, emancipated women in their allegorical setting. Brigman's expression of women's struggle to obtain freedom is paralleled in her photography with the need to preserve and respect the natural world. Her photographs show a direct rejection of the heritage of patriarchal manifest destiny that permeated photography from the end of the Civil War until the beginning of the 1900s. Landscape photography in her home state of California had previously focused on

[2] Sally Stein, "Starting from Pictorialism: Notable Continuities in the Modernization of California Photography," in *Capturing Light: Masterpieces of California Photography, 1850 to the Present* (New York, London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001), 123.

creating images to sell the American West as a rugged terrain fit for conquering, mining, and settlement. In the mid to late 1800s, the military's Army Corps of Topographical Engineers enabled scientists, cartographers, and photographers to traverse the undeveloped terrain with the intention of expanding American cities and dispersing Indigenous peoples from their native lands.[3] As the West became more densely populated after the Gold Rush, a desire for the return to the romanticized, untouched West generated a need for commercial imagery of the landscape to conquer. Photography like Carleton E. Watkin's photograph, *From the "Best General View" Mariposa Trail, Yosemite Valley,* (Fig. 4) was part of many pieces commissioned to show the glory of the mining lands for investors.[4] Mary Warner Marien writes, "*Best General View, Mariposa Trail* typifies the soaring sublime that he contrived to express the expansiveness of the valley" to portray the feeling of power and awe over the space. Instead of photographing the Sierra Mountains' vistas in a macro setting, Brigman focused on the small miracles and manifestations of earth magic within blasted trees and wind–carved rocks. She wrote often about befriending trees and holding the natural growth in the mountains as something sacred. In an article for *Camera Craft* in 1926, Brigman detailed that she came across a juniper, "the most wonderful juniper that I've met in my eighteen years of friendship among them. It had the glorious strength, the uplift, and the wind–kissed motion of the Victory of Samothrace…It was a great character like the Man of Gallilee or Moses the Law-giver [sic.], or the Lord Buddha, or Abraham Lincoln(.)"[5]

Anne Brigman has been cast as a supporting character in photographic history. Scholarship now can reposition her place within the canon. This thesis discusses her work as a

[3] Mary Warner Marien, "Imaging of the Social World: Topographical Surveys of Photography," in *Photography: A Cultural History*. 127–138. 3rd Edition (London: Pearson, 2010), 131–132.
[4] Marien, "Imaging of the Social World," 136.
[5] "Writings," in *Anne Brigman: A Visionary in Modern Photography* (Reno: Nevada Museum of Art, 2018), 338.

deviation of modernist thought, showing her influence on well–known modernist photographers by embracing spiritual ecofeminist themes of free, empowered pagan spirits in the untamed land of the High Sierra Mountains. This symbolic connection and her channeling of the natural world emerges as important for contemporary thought, examining her images as an early, visually powerful, clarion call for harmony between humans and nature, a radical statement during the age of American expansion and conquest of the land.

Methodologies

The three main methodologies informing this thesis are feminism, social and historical context, and ecocriticism. These methodologies intertwine as part of a conversation that expands scholarship on Brigman's work in terms of its deviation from patriarchal and modernist ideology. Discussing Brigman within the context of the dichotomy between California Pictorialist Movement and the New York modernist culture during the first twenty years of the 20th century is vital to understanding her tumultuous relationship with the New York Modernists and Alfred Stieglitz. In comparison, Brigman thrived among like-minded male and female photographers in California, as these photographers broke what was considered "important" rules of making and printing images on the East Coast such as the lessening of importance of platinum palladium printing that the New Yorkers especially prioritized.

The historical context of the landscape photography of the American West has profoundly influenced Western photography. Photographic expeditions of photographers such as Alexander Gardner, Timothy O'Sullivan, and Carleton E. Watkins in the late 1800s highlight, in contrast, Brigman's uniqueness as a photographer who understood Nature as already complete and not as "virgin" territory. Brigman approached the land with reverence, only taking from the

land the lessons of spiritual and feminine empowerment. These photographs of the American West can be understood in contrast to Brigman's intentions with the landscape. Using an ecocritical approach to Brigman's work in contrast to the Western landscapes made between the end of the Civil War and the early 1900s allows readers to best understand the ecological and climatological effects of the mass migration and building during these decades.

Ecocriticism is a relatively new methodology in art history, most often used to critique literature. Ecocriticism was first discussed in an art historical context by Alan Braddock and Christoph Irmscher in their book, *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies of Art History*, published in 2009 after the 2007 United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s issuing of the *Forth Assessment Report* on the destructive capability of climate change.[6] It is defined as "emphasizing issues of environmental interconnectedness, sustainability, and justice in cultural interpretation. When it is historically oriented, ecocritical scholarship may bring attention to neglected evidence of past ecological and quasi ecological sensibility or it may cast canonical works and figures in a new light by revealing their previously unnoticed complexity, ambivalence, or even apathy regarding environmental concerns."[7] This is particularly important in viewing Brigman's photography, as it is influenced by the Western landscape photographers at the end of the 1800s, and considerably less focused on the landscape as a commodity for resources or tourism than her forebearers. Brigman's intimate relationship with the environment and the earth came from a series of influences from her childhood in Hawai'i, her time living in the bohemian, artistic city of San Francisco, and both divine and harrowing experiences in the mountains, which will be elaborated on in Chapter Two. She did

[6] Braddock, Irmscher, *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 1.
[7] Braddock, Irmscher, *A Keener Perception*, 3.

not associate herself with the idea that the land was to be consumed with no regard for the future well–being and consciousness of the planet. Rather, she was focused on the health and alignment of the body with the natural world, while the late 19th to early 20th century landscape photographers sold a culture of consumption that would contribute to severe global warming and the destruction of large swaths of the places they photographed.

Brigman's early feminist belief system is also central to the discussion of modernist aesthetics, and it is with an ecofeminist approach that the thesis is written. Ecofeminism was coined by French writer Françoise D'Eubonne in 1974 who "called upon women to lead an ecological revolution to save the planet…D'Eubonne saw pollution, destruction of the environment, and runaway population growth as problems created by male culture."[8] Ecofeminism did not enter the North American lexicon, however, until a year later, with Rosemary Radford Ruether wrote, "Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this society."[9] These definitions will serve as a backdrop for this overall investigation as they are vital in showing for progressive Brigman was for her time. Brigman died about twenty years before these terms were coined.

In addition, this thesis is rooted in the texts of two primary ecofeminist scholars, Karen Warren (1947–2020) and Carolyn Merchant (b. 1936). Warren's book, *Ecofeminist Philosophy: What it is and Why it Matters,* is a philosophical analysis of ecofeminism specifically grounded

[8] Carolyn Merchant, *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World (Revolutionary Thought and Radical Movements)* (New York: Routledge, 2005), Kindle, 194.
[9] Karen J Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What it is and Why it Matters* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2000), Kindle, Location 84.

in a "Western historical experience and academic feminist perspective as a Euro-American woman living in the United States."[10] Warren introduces the primary goal of ecofeminism as dismantling the domination and Othering of women—and "other human Others"—as well as nature, placing the systemic abuse of both marginalized humans and the environment as correlated. She discusses an overview of the positions of ecofeminists, discusses how both sexism is intrinsically linked to western capitalistic culture, and the social justice background to ecofeminism. Glazebrook writes, "The beauty of Warren's account is that she does not dismiss or refute traditional mainstream theories and values, by rather attempts to include them. She envisions and ecofeminist philosophy as a kind of quilt…within which individual squares cannot be predicted but can be repaired, replaced, or removed as they become old or faulty. Ecofeminism is "always theory-in-process.'"[11] This intersectionality and openness to change is intrinsic to ecofeminism, and in her book *Radical Ecology: Revolutionary Thought and Radical Movements,* Merchant specifically opens ecofeminism to critique, citing the proposed claim of essentialism that the philosophy could suggest. Merchant argues, "Yet, an ethic of care, as elaborated by some feminists, falls prey to an essentialist critique that women's nature is to nurture. Are not women themselves thereby complicit in the assumption that women are 'by nature' more caring, more emotional, and more nurturing than men? If women, by identifying with nature, come to its rescue, do they not by these very actions cement their own oppression in a patriarchal society?"[12] While Brigman does place women within a natural setting, she does so for the bodies to become fused with nature and all its fearsome beauty. The nymphs and dryads

[10] Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy,* Location 93.
[11] Glazebrook, "Karen Warren's Ecofeminism", 22.
[12] Merchant, *Radical Ecology,* 199.

of her photographs are both stewards and manifestations of nature, running contrary to modernist artists essentialism.

Literature on Anne Brigman

The research of two art history scholars and curators, Kathleen Pyne and Anne Wolfe, is foundational for this thesis. Pyne, who is a Professor Emerita of Art History at the University of Notre Dame initially began studying Brigman through the history of Modernism, with her book *Modernism and the Feminine Voice: The Women of the Stieglitz Circle.* The book details the rise and fall of the careers of the women of the Stieglitz Circle, the artistic acolytes of Alfred Stieglitz. Pyne orients them within Stieglitz's quest to find a "woman in art" befitting his specific, toxic Modernist ideals culminating in the creation of the artist that Georgia O'Keeffe became under Stieglitz's control.[13] Gertrude Käsebier (1852–1934), Anne Brigman, Katherine Nash Rhoades (1885–1965), and finally O'Keeffe are discussed within the confines of Stieglitz's obsession with a woman artist and her sexual life documented in her art.

Modernism and the Feminine Voice serves as a cultural contextualization of how women were required to operate within and cooperate with the patriarchal system of Modernist art. Pyne introduces Brigman as the artist who "offered Stieglitz the opportunity to consider the nature of woman's sexuality from a woman's perspective…in Brigman's hands the nude related the struggle of the modern woman giving birth to herself."[14] Pyne does discuss Brigman's early feminist take on her domestic life, or lack thereof, emphasizing Brigman's purposefully childless life and her separation from her husband in 1910. Pyne further contrasts Brigman's photography with Edward Steichen's (1979–1973) nudes made in 1910, which "circle more politely around

[13] Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice,* xxix.
[14] Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice,* 63.

feminine sexuality; they deny the body as body, only to eroticize it by veiling the form as spirit or mood."[15] Stieglitz carefully selected Brigman's images, and marketed her as a wild, exotic artist who "studied Cezanne…on her knees."[16]

In 2018, the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno, Nevada, debuted the largest retrospective of Brigman's work in history, and published a book in conjunction with the exhibition. This was the first published book containing essays on Anne Brigman focusing solely on an analysis of her work, rather than her involvement in other major photographic events in history. The curator of the exhibition, Anne Wolfe, discusses Brigman's work in relationship with second–generation feminist artists that photographed and filmed their nude bodies in the natural world, such as Judy Chicago, Ana Mendieta, and Mary Beth Edelson.[17] Pyne also appears in this collection of essays, documenting Brigman's confrontation with Modernist ideas in New York City, in an abbreviated essay similar to *Modernism and the Feminine Voice.* Susan Ehrens's essay, "Songs of Herself" describes Brigman's relationship with the California Pictorialists, and her exalted standing among photographers such as Imogen Cunningham, Edward Weston (1886–1958), and Laura Adams Armer. The book also contains rarely seen copies of Brigman's wood–block prints and a collection of essays written by Brigman published in various magazines, including *Camera Work*. A collection of letters between Stieglitz and Brigman was also published, showing their close friendship and mentorship.

In 2020, Pyne published the first monograph dedicated to Anne Brigman entitled *Anne Brigman: The Photographer of Enchantment.* In a fresh look on Brigman, Pyne contextualizes Brigman's photography within the spaces that she lived. Pyne writes extensively on Brigman's

[15] Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice,* 75.
[16] Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice,* 77, 85.
[17] Wolfe, "Laid Bare in the Landscape," 163.

childhood in Hawai'i, centering her adolescence around the political and cultural turmoil that took place between the monarchy in Hawai'i, the communities of haoles—non–native Hawai'ians, specifically privileged white people imposing Western Christian culture upon native Hawai'ians—that lived on the island as missionaries. Pyne relates Brigman's upbringing and education as a haole and a *kama'āina,* Hawai'ian for a child of the land, and how Brigman carefully combined these two diametrically different cultures—the "civilized" haole with the "primitive," "savage" Hawai'ian—in her identity as an artist.[18] The first chapter, "Hawai'i: Origins of Enchantment," serves as the very first comprehensive cultural context of Brigman's childhood in Hawai'i.

Pyne grounds Brigman's photography in the theme of the body gaining power and struggling alongside the landscape, but this thesis intends to draw it further, examining Brigman's identity as an early ecofeminist photographer, thereby naming Stieglitz's reason—unknown to Stieglitz himself—why Brigman was one of the most unique and "important photographers of her time." Pyne also begins to allude to, but does not discuss, Brigman as being an inspiration to Stieglitz finding "ancient patriarchs" within the photographs of trees.[19] Because of Pyne's nearly twenty years dedicated to contextualizing, demystifying, and interpretation of Brigman's life and oeuvre, this thesis relies heavily on her literature, citing it often and liberally, but does occasionally run counter to her interpretation, and seeks to expand upon her extremely thorough research and exceptional writing on a photographer so unjustly forgotten from history.

[18] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 14–18.
[19] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 155.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter Two, "Life of a Pagan," is dedicated to a formal biography of Brigman's life. This chapter consists of a brief discussion of Brigman's childhood on the Hawai'ian island of Oahu during the mid to late 1800s. Brigman's childhood spent in a rapidly colonizing island with a mixture of her missionary Calvinist belief systems, as well as her exposure to Indigenous Hawai'ian culture is vital for understanding her dissatisfaction with traditional Christian religious beliefs and her subsequent abandonment of her childhood religion. The chapter continues with a brief discussion of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, resulting in Brigman's retreat into the High Sierra Mountains, which would become the height of her career. The chapter will follow Brigman's brief time in the photographic world, her fall from fashion with the end of Pictorialism, her publication of her book *Songs of a Pagan,* and her death on the coast of California in 1950.

Chapter Three, "Brigman's Lasting Influence on Feminism and Photography," discusses the spiritual feminist methodology that reveals Brigman to be so far ahead of her time. This will also include an analysis of Brigman's processes of not only the capture of her photographs, but also the methods she used in retouching, abrading, and printing finished images. This chapter highlights Brigman's removal of sexual connotations of the female nude form—directly opposing the Modernist views—and using the nude to express the interconnectedness of the body and the natural world. This chapter will include a brief discussion of the cultural differences between California and New York photography during the early 1900s, as well as Brigman's relationship with her peers on both sides of the country. The differences between California and New York styles of Modernist Photography are defined, as California's photographic community tended to be more gender-balanced and spiritually oriented with no

central leader of the community, as opposed to New York, which was under the domineering control of Alfred Stieglitz, and was predominately influenced by anti-Puritanism ideas and a push toward sexual liberation. The chapter further seeks to discuss the socio-cultural context of Brigman's photographs while she was active. This chapter discusses Stieglitz's problematic behavior of grooming women intent upon pursuing careers in the arts as his idealized modernist female artist. This chapter will also discuss Stieglitz's mentorship of Brigman, and how distance, Brigman's separation from her husband, and supposed mutual respect allowed her to escape Stieglitz's voyeuristic and obsessive tendencies, concluding with a hypothesis on Brigman's potential influence on Stieglitz finding patriarchal symbolism in the natural world.

Chapter Four, "An Ecofeminist Approach to Brigman," argues why it is vital to consider Brigman's work as relevant in the continued study of ecofeminist art. While curator Anne Wolfe begins the discussion of Brigman's relevance to feminist artists such as Judy Chicago, Mary Beth Edelson, and Ana Mendieta, further discussion of Brigman through an ecofeminist lens is needed. Brigman not only challenged the Modernists' perspective of the role of gender, sexuality, and the body within art, but also the larger modernist theme of Man as the master of the earth and the landscape. This chapter will discuss the history of American landscape photography from the end of the Civil War until the early 1900s, when Brigman began photographing her nudes. Using Brigman's photography and reverence for the natural world, in complete opposition to her male counterparts, who were intent to conquer the landscape they photographed, this chapter concludes with the ecofeminist and ecocritical nature of Brigman's work.

Chapter Two: Life of a Pagan

Early Life and Work

Anne Brigman was born Anne Nott in on December 3, 1869 in Nu'uanu Pali, an area north of Honolulu on the island of O'ahu.[20] She favored her mother, Mary Ellen Andrews Nott, with a heart–shaped face that ended in a pointed chin. She had prominent, high cheekbones, round eyes, a sharp nose, and thin lips. Her wavy, dark hair was kept long in her younger years, most of her photographs show her hair parted down the middle and gathered up off her shoulders. In the middle of her life, however, Brigman was apt to keep her hair in a bob cut above her chin, keeping in relative fashion with the independent flapper aesthetic. The Nott family were considered one of the most important haole families—white colonizers generally held in high esteem and privilege within the islands—in Hawai'i. Brigman's maternal grandfather was integral to Hawai'i's colonization, establishing Lihainalua Seminary at Lähaina, Maui, the first high school for upper class Hawai'ian young men. Pyne details Lihainalua was "explicitly designed to spread English language and culture among indigenous peoples…among (Lorin Andrews's) undertakings at Lähina were the islands' first newspaper, *The Light of Hawaii (Ke Lama Hawaii),* a series of copper–plate engraved maps and woodcut botanical illustrations, and a translation of the Bible into Hawaiian."[21]

Though Brigman never knew her grandfather, as he died before she was born, she grew up in a deeply colonized Hawai'i. While Brigman's youth was spent both living in two diametrically different worlds; she prided herself in being *kama'āina*, a child of the land in Hawai'i, which was an honorific given to children of the white haole families.[22] Her generation

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[20] Wall text, *Anne Brigman: A Visionary in Modern Photography: Child of the Tropics.* Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, Nevada, 2018.
[21] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 11.
[22] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 13.

of haoles were raised in a hybridized way from their deeply Christian, conservative, parents' Anglicized upbringing. Brigman attained a high education on the islands, studying classical languages and religious instruction at Abigail Smith's Nuuanu School, then the Punahou School in Honolulu, which was established twenty years before Brigman's birth and was strictly for the education and "civilization" of missionary children.[23] In addition to this formal education, it was common for haole children to learn extensive knowledge of the islands' botany by their mothers. Mary Ellen Andrews Nott was no different. Pyne writes, "Mary Ellen was one of those who instilled in her children a love of 'earth beauty' and permitted them to ramble through the wilds."[24] Pyne writes, "As Brigman would later reflect, her early immersion in a natural world animated by spirit forms furnished the primitive ground zero of her later imaginative universe. She saw the strange and grotesque forms of the Sierra 'with the eyes of one who grows up close to the natural things: at home with them and yet always with wonderment.'"[25]

However, the exposure and freedom that children like Brigman were allowed triggered a racist fear in the elder generations of white, settler-colonial families that their children were becoming "savages." The Punahou School, therefore, created a co-educational space for a controlled hybridization, where children could be properly "civilized," but retain what wealthy missionary families deemed acceptable knowledge of Hawai'ian culture. Brigman grew up well–educated up to these standards: she studied English literature, Christianity, painting, chemistry, music, and physics. However, Brigman also retained extensive knowledge of the native flora and fauna of Hawai'i, was fluent in Hawai'ian, and performed Hawai'ian *mele*, all which were considered acceptable "integration" of indigenous Hawai'ian culture into Christian, white Anglo-

[23] Ehrens, "Songs of Herself," 185.
[24] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 16–17.
[25] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 17.

American culture. Pyne writes, "With Brigman and most of her peers, it succeeded in transforming the young 'savages' into civilized representatives of haole culture."[26] Most importantly for Brigman as a photographer, Punahou instilled an importance of physical activity in nature and the health of the body in its students of all genders. The school allowed the female students the freedom to perform physical activities separate from the men, where the women could wear loose, unrestrictive clothing, play sports, and hike in the mountains.

Brigman appeared relatively sheltered from the politics of the colonization of Hawai'i, expressed often in the way she wrote of her childhood. However, her language is still rife with ingrained white supremacist language, referring to indigenous Hawai'ian natives—and herself as a young girl which was a bold assertion against her conservative upbringing—as "savages." [27] Brigman framed her childhood in a purely romantic space, calling herself a child of the tropics, writing about the land with romanticism to rival Thoreau or Whitman:

> From the misty peaks above Nuuanu Valley, clothed in their grey–green forests of koa and kukui, to the smooth, white crescent beach that was Waikiki in those innocent days, was, even in the era of horse–back and the carriage but a few miles…so that odors and sounds were closely related to my young senses…with a difference, the difference of the smell of warm, forest loam and haunting perfume of fern jungles and maile and wild ginger floating n the air…to the sweet, strange, salty redolence of iridescent sea–weeds when the tide was out…and leaves the coral reef where it grows…above water. Between

[26] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 19.

[27] While these were probably not intentionally hateful words, there is still evidence present in Brigman's language of learned spiritual, racial, and intellectual superiority of a white woman of privilege in late Victorian America, which I will discuss in Chapter Four. Brigman's grandfather, Reverend Lorrin Andrews, resigned from his role at the Lihainalua Seminary when he discovered it was being funded by money from plantations in the Southern United States. He was heavily against enslavement, as was Brigman's father, who fought in the Union Army during the Civil War before moving to Hawai'i. This did not, however, mean that institutionalized racism did not permeate their political actions in Hawai'i, or exist in the Andrews/Nott/Brigman household. The Andrews family, as well as other Hawai'ian families of privilege, kept Asian immigrants in Hawai'i from the same education that privileged Hawai'ian and haole children were afforded. It is important to retain the knowledge that while Brigman should be examined in contemporary photographic history, that she is a product of her time and upbringing. She was a progressive woman for her time—though she did retain what would have been considered conservative beliefs on sex and the body in the New York Modernist scene, which I will speak on at length later—but still carried dated ideas on race, and class. We all are similar products of our generations, and it is our responsibility to continuously learn from the past, to change and open our minds, to improve our future.

> those two glories, life was full of adventure for a small group of us, who were into every thing for miles around…vivid young savages, primed to the brim with a zest for living.[28]

At sixteen, Brigman's family left Hawai'i for central California.[29] When she was twenty-four, Brigman married Danish ship captain Martin Brigman, who was about twenty years her senior.[30] Brigman's photographs of her husband depict him as a gruff, but kind-looking man, with a bushy beard and a sea-weathered face. He had hooded eyes with deep wrinkles, and a sparse head of hair. Generally, Martin Brigman was photographed with a pipe, and wrapped in thick clothing, alluding to the harsh environment the man was used to working in on the ship. The Brigmans settled in Oakland, California, just across the San Francisco Bay for Martin to be close to the port of Oakland. In 1897, they moved into a little, brown–shingled bungalow, 674 32nd Street—often known as 683 Brockhurst Street, a site which would become the founding of the f.64 Movement by her former assistant, Willard Van Dyke, and many of her younger friends—where Brigman would set up her studio.[31,32] Anne especially was welcomed in the spiritually driven, bohemian world of Oakland and Berkley. While the was trained as a painter, Brigman picked up photography in the end of the 1890s as well as acting. She became friends with artists and writers such as Jack London (1876–1916), photographers Adelaide Hascomb (1875–1931) and Laura Adams Arner (1874–1963), and naturalist and poet Charles Keeler (1871–1937). During the height of her photographic career in 1908, she starred as Sybil of Nepenthe in Keeler's play *Will O' the Wisp,* organized by the Studio Club in Berkley. Hascomb, a celebrated California photographer, included images of Brigman in her photo illustrations of

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[28] "Writings," in *Anne Brigman: A Visionary in Modern Photography* (Reno: Nevada Museum of Art, 2018), 341.
[29] Wolfe, "Laid Bare in the Landscape," 156.
[30] Wall text, *Anne Brigman: A Visionary in Modern Photography: Wild and Free, Anne and Martin Brigman.*
[31] Pyne, "Photographer of Enchantment, 24.
[32] Ehrens, "Songs of Herself," 185.

The Rubáìyat of Omar Khayyam, which became the first version of the popular book illustrated with photographs.[33,34]

In Brigman's early photographic work, however, her values most closely reflected those of her Victorian upbringing. Brigman photographed herself, her sisters, and cousins clothed in pure white, silky dresses and veils, synonymous with the Victorian standard of women's appearance within art; that of a pretty thing to be viewed in the nature scene, the personification of a flower. These women, depicted as chaste and virginal, were often seated along controlled garden scenes. Annette Scott introduces these floral feminine paintings popular in the Victorian Era, "Floral-feminine paintings encoded a traditional Victorian definition of femininity, and reasserted that women and the activities of women artists belonged properly in the world of flowers" as Wolfe writes, "taken together, these images celebrate and idealize traditional ideas of motherhood, feminine beauty, innocence, and purity, while asserting the constructed social role of women as passive, fragile, and decorative objects."[35]

Gertrude Käsebier, one of the first female members of the Photo-Secession, made her mark in the photographic world by making ethereal portraits of these "white girls." The trope of the White Girl was brought on by early Pictorialist photographer James McNeil Whistler, who created the trope under the narrative of "the spiritualist table rapper, the crystal ball gazer, the occulted female body—a body that was divested of its sexuality, chastened, and invested with the powers of the mystic. Circulated by the early nineteenth–century Protestants reforming a traditional typology of women as Eves and temptresses, this paradigm generated an Anglo-

[33] Ehrens, "Songs of Herself," 186–188.
[34] Michael G. Wilson, "Northern California: The Heart of the Storm" in *Pictorialism in California: Photographs 1900–1940*, J. Paul Getty Museum, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, 1–23, (Los Angeles*:* J. Paul Getty Museum, 1994), 12.
[35] Wolfe, "Laid Bare in the Landscape," 156.

American practice of modeling the middle-class women as an "angel of the house"—that is, as a woman whose sexuality is redeemed through motherhood or effaced and repressed in favor of bodiless purity."[36] Stieglitz, hungry for a female figurehead in the new Photo-Secessionist Movement, established in 1902, first cast Käsebier in the role, as the photographer took Whistler's narrative of women in the late Victorian Era—before Brigman herself picked up a camera—and, in the eyes of the male–dominated art world, confirmed it.

Käsebier's photograph, *Adoration* (Fig. 5) is considered her breakthrough work on motherhood and pure femininity. Using the luminance of gum bichromate and platinum printing, Käsebier used the "blonde on blonde" tones of the printing style to illustrate the almost holy glow created her studio, and this applies especially to this photograph of a young mother and child. The mother, who is not the central focus of the image—that is reserved for the angelic child pushing down their mother to struggle away from the session—is wrapped in a pale, blonde, dress. It obscures her form, as does the gathering of her hair in a modest style. Her attention to the child obscures her eyes, but a delicate nose, fine–boned facial structure, and full lips are visible. The classically beautiful pair, wrapped in fine silken cloth resemble a Victorian Madonna and Child.[37] Stieglitz devoured this portrayal of women by a woman artist. He was influenced by Freud's harmful ideas of the feminine psyche and narcissism, as will be elaborated upon in Chapter Three, and Stieglitz was fascinated with understanding a woman's inner thoughts, sexuality, and intentions through their art. He published Käsebier's work regularly through the first publications of *Camera Work,* which Brigman read with passion and came away inspired and ready to create.

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[36] Pyne, "Modernism and the Feminine Voice," 9–10.
[37] Often, the women photographers of the Victorian Era would name portraits like these "Madonna and Child." Brigman had at least one with this title in her oeuvre.

Brigman's image *Egypt* (Fig. 6) which was published in California's photography magazine, *Camera Craft,* in 1905, shows a young woman seated in an obscurely defined natural space, embodying the floral feminine and White Girl aesthetic. Her hair is gathered up around her face similar to the mother in *Adoration* and framed with sprigs woven into her hair. She is wrapped in thin white fabric and her profile is gently rimmed with light, highlighting her demurely lowered eyes, but, in great Anne Brigman fashion still, her lifted chin, signifying strength and bravery just below her classic Victorian mannerisms. Brigman's early work may have been in fashion with the White Girls, but her wild, feminist spirit was always there, scratching at the surface. Brigman also photographed herself, and was photographed by others, with the narrative of the "crystal ball gazer" and the occult woman. Francis Bruguière (1879–1945) was one of many photographers to made portraits of Brigman (Fig. 7). Bruguière elected to portray Brigman sitting on the floor of an undisclosed room. She is wrapped in the classic pale white cloth, disregarding the lens of the camera in favor of a large glass ball on the floor, viewing the future. Because of her childhood spent in the exotic, faraway land of Hawai'i, she marketed herself as a worldly, "exotic" woman. The shedding of her Christian religion in favor of paganism also increased her repertoire of the magic woman.

Brigman's image, *The Breeze* (Fig. 8), is a representation of her personification of natural occurrences, including the pagan narratives prominent in her work. The silver print is toned in a subtle sepia, infusing a timeless age to the image. There is no concept of time, of exact place. The image, in-keeping with the Pictorialist aesthetic, is softly blurred, looking far more like a painting than a photograph. A silhouette of a woman stands gracefully atop rolling hills that cascade into the background. Her hair looks cropped short, and her arms lift slightly from her body, as if gravity does not bind her. A delicate cloth, perhaps drawn in by Brigman while

manipulating the negative, wraps loosely around her, blown by the breeze. This woman is anonymous, lifted from the material, mortal human world that she as a model is part of, but here, in Brigman's world, she is a pagan spirit, personifying the wind that swirls above the Sierra Mountains. This is not a woman photographed for her nude form to be objectified. This is a beautiful and powerful force of nature.

Photographing the Injured Body

While Martin Brigman was home from sea, Anne was often sequestered to Brockhurst, where she complained of the "domestic drudgery" of being a housewife.[38] Martin captained the *Willie R. Hume,* a barkentine launched in 1890, primarily carrying lumber.[39] Brigman often accompanied her husband on his trips across the globe, often returning to Hawai'i and Samoa.[40] Records indicate that the couple journeyed to Hawai'i at least once in 1897 on the *M.S.S Peru* that Martin likely was the captain of as well.[41] It was on one of these trips when disaster struck. The details of Brigman's accident are not well documented, most of the story coming from fellow photographer and close friend, Imogen Cunningham. Pyne theorizes that it may have happened close to when the couple moved to Brockhurst, as Martin is recorded taking a prolonged period off work to be with his wife.[42] The same year, 1897, was also the recorded trip of the Brigman's trip to Hawai'i on the *M.S.S Peru*. In a bizarre accident, Brigman fell into the hold of her husband's ship. The fall and the damage were so severe, Brigman underwent surgery to remove her left breast.

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[38] Wall text, *Wild and Free.*
[39] "Captain Martin Brigman," *Ship Passengers–Sea Captains: San Francisco 1800s,* The Maritime Heritage Project: San Francisco 1840–1899. Accessed April 4, 2022, https://www.maritimeheritage.org/captains/mBrigman.html.
[40] Ehrens, "Songs of Herself", 185.
[41] "Captain Martin Brigman."
[42] Pyne, "Photographer of Enchantment, 24.

In an unprinted negative, entitled *The Owl* (Fig. 9) the seriousness of the injury and the extent of the scarring is clearly visible. Brigman, the skilled mountaineer, climber, and hiker that she was, sits nude on a makeshift seat on steep rocks around her. Her pale, skinny body is dwarfed by the looming rocks and completely visible without retouching. She holds her hands up to her face, making glasses with her fingers, goofing off with whoever took the image—likely her sister, Elizabeth Nott, who accompanied and modeled for Brigman on many of her hiking endeavors and was the first photographer in the Nott family. Anne's broad smile leads the eye directly to her chest, which without retouching is one of the brightest points on the image. Her left breast is missing, with only old scar tissue where the organ would have been. Her scars are puckered and pinched and circle around where a half circle slice had been made along the bottom left corner of her breast. This puckering and warping of her skin extended in an upward curve to her left side, nearly to her armpit.

It is difficult to view, this young woman bearing signs of horrific bodily and mental trauma from this accident. It is understandable then, why Brigman did not speak of the accident. If the year was in fact 1897 when the accident occurred, then Brigman would have only been twenty–eight. Anne Wolfe writes, "One might assume that such a disfigurement—which threatened the very definition of idealized female beauty—would deter an emerging woman photographer from turning her camera on herself. This was not the case for Brigman, who instead defied social norms and began to make nude self-portraits of her own wounded body outdoors."[43] It is documented that Brigman first began making serious photographs in 1901 and had always included self-portraits mixed in with the ethereal portraits inspired by Käsebier's White Women, perhaps as a way of creating something beautiful with the injured and scarred

[43] Wolfe, "Laid Bare in the Landscape," 160.

body that she had come to accept as her own. In Brigman's her most famous photographs in the High Sierras, she often photographed herself alongside her friends and family. However, her scars never appeared in the final print.

Pictorialists favored metaphor and narrative over what made the camera famous; its commitment to documenting life as it happened. Kodak's marketing for the camera—its slogan was "You Press the Button, We Do the Rest!"—did not lend itself as a medium for fine art, instead was marketed towards wealthy women to document their families and children. As a result, photography had a difficult time emerging within the art world. The blurred prints of the Pictorialist Movement were not the result of poorly manufactured or simple equipment. Cameras during this time had the ability to produce sharp, crisp images on film negatives. In the late 1800s, Carelton Watkins made his name in photographic history with his mammoth plate camera capturing some of the same sights Brigman would visit, capturing every tree, every snow crystal, that the lens could capture. Pictorialists, however, rejected the notion that a camera should be used solely for its honest, documentary purposes, opting for a painterly quality for their images. In purposeful, "artistic" contrast to Kodak, pictures were purposefully soft focused using special lenses, gossamer wrapped around the lens, purposeful mechanical blurring of a lens, or negatives were recreated on glass and etched into using abrasive tools.[44]

Brigman was arguably one of the most talented retouchers not only in California, but in the Photo-Secession. Pictorialists valued the handmade quality of images, and she took this

[44] One particularly creative artist, Arthur F. Kales, used bromide transfer. This involved bleaching a silver bromide print and hardening it. This would essentially create a matrix, like a copper etched plate for a photogravure. Kales would then coat the print in ink and make a print of the coated image. California Pictorialists truly valued the handmade when it came to photographs, divorcing themselves from the Kodak branded ease of the camera in the hopes of proving photography's legitimacy as an art form.
Dennis Reed, "Southern California, Pictorialism: Its Modern Aspects" in *Pictorialism in California: Photographs 1900–1940*, J. Paul Getty Museum, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, 67–88, (Los Angeles*:* J. Paul Getty Museum, 1994), 72.

incredibly seriously, not just using the tools at hand to improve or remove what she deemed unnecessary, but to blur the lines between a drawing and a photograph. She is recorded as saying "Are we not living in an age in which we are free reasonably so to do as we please? Who is going to limit himself to one tool when two or more will make his workmanship more beautiful? I claim the right to run the gamut from a lens to a shoe–brush to gain a desired effect."[45] In her studio at Brockhurst (Fig. 10), she positioned a retouching desk against a window that overlooked her garden.[46] Here, she had plenty of light to see the details of the interpositives and enlarged negatives, all made on thin, glass plates. She used etching tools—like those used to etch copper plates; sharp metallic tools about the size of pencils—to scrape away at the image.[47] She would use opaque liquid or graphite to add in any tree branches, linework, wispy cloth, or trailing hair that she desired. For larger additions to her images, such as clouds, she would use masking techniques still popular in darkroom printing today to add another etched negative over the image.[48] The results were painterly, magical images, with no hint of where edits began and ended.

Brigman's *The Spider's Web* (Fig. 11) is a masterful example of the manipulation she achieved with her abrasion tools. In the image, a thin young woman wedges herself in between the steep rocks behind her, creating a blank canvas for Brigman's drawings. Her gaze is turned down and in shadow with her lips pursed together in concentration. While her gaze does not interact with viewers, her body and struggle does. Her arms are outstretched and pressed against the rocks, baring her nude body. Her right leg looks balanced atop a rock on her tiptoes, while

[45] Wilson, "Northern California: The Heart of the Storm," 19.
[46] Ehrens, "Songs of Herself," 197.
[47] Mark Osterman, George Eastman Museum, "A Photographic Truth" George Eastman Museum, Rochester, NY, YouTube, 37:17 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbOlsqJpGaE.
[48] Ehrens, "Songs of Herself," 197.

her left leg is bent in, maybe to assist in easing her body away from the rocks. Using the strength of her own body, she is precariously suspended in the air. The model has created a canvas for Brigman to work, and she takes advantage of her foresight while in the mountains. Brigman drew around the suspended body a spiderweb, using the lines occurring from the natural structure of the rock, but also abrading them into a glass negative. The spiderweb risks going completely unnoticed, as Brigman continued to abrade the negative further, shrouding the pale model in her signature illusioned fabric used in works like *The Breeze*. Multiple abraded lines are layered on top of each other, not necessarily a shading technique as there are multiple gaps in the linework, to create a semitransparent "cloth" stretching from the model's right hand, running diagonally down the body and across the back, to fall against the rocks in the model's left hand. In the bottom right of the image, Brigman has crosshatched the lines, creating the illusion of depth in the image, and the linework truly become a real cloth, brought to life by her background in painting.

One of Brigman's most well–known photographs has so many subtle and overt edits that it is often mistaken for a drawing. Two women in *The Heart of the Storm* (Fig. 12) shelter under a gnarled, twisted juniper, a species of tree of which Brigman was particularly fond. The silver gelatin paper has a dark glow almost in purple in the corners, like the violent storm raging around the tree and the couple is coming off the page. Due to Brigman's heavy manipulation of the image, the trees and figures are softly blurred, with little detail apparent other than the changes in light. The first woman's face is shrouded in shadow as she looks down, comforting the smaller second woman. Brigman removed the shadows around her head, giving her an implied nimbus created by her spiritual presence, but also the trees themselves. Her right hand is raised in half benediction, blessing the fearful woman as she holds her close to her chest. The

second woman takes most of the light and glows with the blonde tones reminiscent of Käsebier's White Girls. Here, Brigman has created her clothlike linework around her body, falling in a diagonal shape towards the ground, but in the inverse of the linework in *The Spider's Web.* Here, the woman "wears" a bright, shimmering cloth. Around the couple and the shadowed tree, dark clouds swirl around the mountain peak they stand on, likely done using masking and a different glass plate.

Using these painterly techniques of abrading negatives, Brigman would often shroud the left side of her body in shadow or leave it in silhouette. However, these drastic edits were not always necessary. Brigman would also hide her scars in camera with careful posing. While the identity of each model in a specific work is not always clear—Brigman was hesitant to reveal the names of her models—there are occasional images where it is clear self-portraiture. Work like *The Brook* (Fig. 13) and *The Dragon and the Pearl* (Fig. 14) show intentional hiding of the left side of Brigman's body. In *The Brook,* Brigman is crouched, nude, in a rapidly moving stream. Her left leg is raised slightly, to suggest that she is in the process of standing up or with the cold water, but it perfectly obscures the absence of her left breast. *The Dragon and the Pearl* shows Brigman sitting with a large glass orb in her lap—perhaps the same one she used to gaze into in early portraits—sitting on a huge tree. The tree twists out of a dark, rocky cliffside, resembling a dragon. Most importantly, however, is the image of Brigman herself (Fig. 15). The tree branches obscure the leftmost side of her body, either drawn in or positioned precisely to hide her scars.

Brigman's injured body never once inhibited her from photographing herself in the same way she imagined her friends and models. She too emulated the mystical encounters she had on her trips into the mountains. Perhaps even because of her injury, Brigman was able to disassociate herself from not only the Victorian notions of beauty, but also the expectations of

her own body. Brigman's injury was painful, horrifying, and traumatizing, but out of this catastrophe, Brigman found herself able to innovate the display of the female nude. Her skillful retouching paved the way for her removal of Modernist sexual connotations of the female body, and even the abandonment of the earthly body depicted in the camera in favor of photographing consciousness merging completely with the Earth.

The Height

Brigman made her debut as a professional artist in January 1902 at the Second San Francisco Photographic Salon.[49] She caught the eye of Alfred Stieglitz in the next year at the third Salon, where she exhibited a photograph entitled *A Soldier of Fortune*.[50] Stieglitz allowed her membership into the Photo-Secessionists that year, naming Brigman one of only two California photographers allowed in the group and in 1906, Brigman became the only Californian to ever be named a Fellow.[51] This was the same year that Brigman and Stieglitz began writing letters to one another. On January 3, 1903, Brigman wrote to Stieglitz for the first time after obtaining a copy of the inaugural volume of *Camera Work,* listing "the pieces that claim (her) greatest love are (Käsebier's) *The Manger* and (Stieglitz's) *Hand of Man.* Both are so intrinsically human, both so radiant with soul.[52] She wrote with exuberance and excitement at the goals of the Photo-Secession under Stieglitz's leadership, while also expressing her insecurity of the early stages of

[49] Ehrens, "Songs of Herself," 188.
[50] Therese Thau Heyman, *Anne Brigman: Pictorial Photographer/Pagan/Member of the Photo-Secession* (Oakland: The Oakland Museum, 1974), 2.
I could not find a copy of *A Soldier of Fortune* during my research for this thesis. Brigman did retire prints from early in her artistic career that did not fit into her mountain portrait aesthetic. It is possible this image was one of the destroyed prints.
[51] Wilson, "Northern California: The Heart of the Storm," 10.
[52] "Brigman, Anne: Correspondence," Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive, Yale Collection of American Literature. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Object ID: 16227560, Box 8, folder 169–173, Generated March 3, 2022, https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/16227560, 2.

her own art, "I am a stumbler yet, but my soul is afire with enthusiasm. Elbert Hubbard says truly — 'Your own will come to you, if you hold the thought firmly — and hustle!' In the mean time you can depend on me as one of your friends."[53,54] They continued this correspondence off and on until the late 1930s, fifteen years before Stieglitz died.

In early 1906, Pictorialism in San Francisco was at its peak. According to Michael Wilson, the success of Adelaide Hascomb's re–illustration of *The Rubáìyat* had generated positive responses and a great sense of pride within San Francisco's artistic community.[55] Photographers were beginning to move back to California to pursue their craft, like Francis Bruguière, whose family had left the state for New York City. Portrait photographer Arnold Genthe (1869–1942) had become notable for his portrait work, and was regularly sustaining business, and the California Camera Club had recently redesigned their space, claiming that "it now had the best facilities of any camera club in the nation." Brigman herself was also busy preparing a portfolio for publication in *Camera Work.*[56] On March 27, she wrote a brief letter to Stieglitz, letting him know she intended to send him prints for his review.[57]

On the morning of April 18, 1906, a 7.9 magnitude earthquake rocked the city of San Francisco. A foreshock came at about five in the morning with "sufficient force to be felt widely throughout the San Francisco Bay area."[58] The shaking of the earth itself lasted for just one minute, but the violence of the shaking ruptured gas mains, and multiple fires rapidly spread through the predominately wooden city. The military and firefighters resorted to dynamite, blowing up buildings in a desperate attempt to prevent the fire from spreading. Genthe's home

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[53] "Brigman, Anne: Correspondence," 3.
[54] Dashes and spaces in words are kept as originally written.
[55] Wilson, "Heart of the Storm," 12.
[56] Wilson, "Heart of the Storm," 12.
[57] "Brigman, Anne: Correspondence," 52.
[58] "The Great 1906 San Francisco Earthquake," USGS, accessed April 8, 2022, https://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/events/1906calif/18april/.

and studio were one of the buildings that were collapsed by the city, but the fire still raged through the last vestiges of his home.[59] The city burned for three days, with a documented three thousand people dead. Adelaide Hascomb was almost killed in an unsuccessful attempt to retrieve her negatives from the burning Camera Club. Nearly the entirety of her negatives and prints, as well as almost all of the negatives of the four hundred members of the club who stored their work in the building, were lost.[60] Charles Keeler returned from the burning city with new images on his own camera, showing the destruction of the city as the fires happened.[61] He later published this series of photographs in a book entitled *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire.*

Many photographers left San Francisco after the event. Hascomb left not long after for Seattle after marrying, and Genthe left for New York in 1911 after briefly running his own studio in Berkeley. Laura Adams Arner and her studio partner, Emily Pitchford (1878–1956), continued operating their studio in Berkley until Arner married and moved to South America.[62] It is unclear where Brigman was during these three days, but she was the luckiest of the Californian artists: her negatives remained safe from the fires as she kept them in her studio at Brockhurst, which was not documented as damaged. However, she did not make it out of the earthquake unscathed. She, like so many living in San Francisco, was traumatized from the event. Brigman wrote to Stieglitz two months after the fires about needing to leave the city and go up into the mountains.[63] Pyne notes, "Unlike the artists whose exodus was to other cities, hers was to the mountains and to the natural world of her youth. She and her friends were soon hiking the trails

[59] Wilson, "Heart of the Storm," 12–13.
[60] Wilson, "Heart of the Storm," 13.
[61] Pyne, "Photographer of Enchantment," 47, 48.
[62] Wilson, "Heart of the Storm," 13–14.
[63] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 55.

in the High Sierras, in the belief that the quiet and isolation of the wilderness would speed them along in their recovery from the shock. For Brigman, the destruction of the city would mean a reinvention of her creative process."[64] Brigman wrote later, "By the summer, many of us felt the need of a change of scene after the long strain. I went with a small group to the Northern Sierras to make rough camp, packing our mountain fastness by mule."[65] Brigman and her friends had a history of venturing up into the mountains on long hikes prior to the earthquake. She made what she called her first "mountain prints" in 1905, the summer before the earthquake.[66] Later in her life, she branded herself as the woman who made images in the mountains after the apocalyptic earthquake below. While that may not have been entirely accurate, Brigman's "mountain prints" did alter dramatically as she reckoned with the unimaginable power that the earth held that she had perhaps overromanticized and underestimated as a gentle space—reminiscent of the patriarchal view of the earth as the nurturing, life-giving mother. Now, the mountains represented something new for the women; a refuge from the wreckage below, from the pain, stress, and trauma that they had sustained watching the city they loved burn. But at the same time, with a new respect for the land that was capable of such cataclysmic destruction of their man-made city.

Brigman had long since been a naturalist, due to not only her childhood in Hawai'i and her education at the Punahou School, but this love of the natural world was further preserved by the "community of kindred spirits" in San Francisco.[67] Brigman spoke on her mountain voyages later in her career, "Where I go is wild—hard to reach, and I don't go for Alfred Stieglitz…or (to

[64] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 55.
[65] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 58.
[66] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 58.
[67] Wall text, *Anne Brigman: A Visionary in Modern Photography: Oakland and Berkeley, a Community of Kindred Spirits.*

be published in) *Camera Work* or *Vanity Fair*, but because there are things in life to be expressed in these places."[68] Brigman blossomed in the Sierras as she and a regularly rotating party of women from Berkeley climbed altitudes of between 8,000–10,000 feet—the highest peaks in the Sierras range between 14,000–14500 feet.[69] Armed with a small, easy to carry Kodak 1A (Fig. 16) that took 2 ½ x 4 ½ film, and later a 4x5 Korona View Camera (Fig. 17), Brigman came alive on these mountains, and her work did the same as she moved from a picturesque representation of the body within nature to a far more sublime, romantic expression. The change in Brigman's work was shocking to Stieglitz, and he turned his attention to selling and exhibiting her as the token woman artist in his modernist movement. A portfolio of her work was published in *Camera Work*, first in 1909, and again in 1912.[70]

A year after the earthquake, Brigman had begun work on a solo exhibition for Stieglitz's gallery, Gallery 291—more commonly known as "291." She and Stieglitz, though their relationship was a close friendship/mentorship, regularly argued about Brigman's printing ability, as she did not know how to print in platinum. It is likely that she was not confident in her ability to mix chemistry or coat paper. Stieglitz pressured Brigman to learn how to print in platinum and belittled her preferred printing methods using precoated bromide and ozobrome paper, which created matte prints Brigman preferred over shiny prints, which she "disliked."[71] In a letter in 1907 to Stieglitz, Brigman wrote, "I know that platinum is the medium you all use in the east, and in my eager devotion to the cause—I've tried hard to make large negatives that would give me platinum prints—but I bit the dust of defeat every time."[72] She was disappointed

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[68] Heather Waldrop, "Hard to Reach: Anne Brigman and California Mountaineering" in *Anne Brigman: A Visionary in Modern Photography* 222–233 (Reno: Nevada Museum of Art, 2018), 223.
[69] Waldrop, "Hard to Reach," 224.
[70] Images published in 1909; *Soul of the Blasted Pine, The Dying Cedar, The Brook, The Source, The Bubble.* Images published in 1912: *The Cleft of the Rock, Dawn, Finis, The Wondrous Globe, The Pool.*
[71] "Brigman, Anne: Correspondence," 54.
[72] "Brigman, Anne: Correspondence," 54–55.

that Stieglitz wanted to postpone her exhibition, and insisted that she was experimenting with other methods of printing, like Royal Bromide prints, but "I detest it's greasy surface. I don't believe I've ever sent you a print that was not the top work of what I was capable of doing. You'll think I'm getting a chip on my shoulder—I'm not(.)"[73] Pyne writes, "The truth was, however, that Stieglitz was never happy with Brigman's technique…he pushed her to work in the platinum process…Presumably, Stieglitz wanted her to move away from the dark, murky shadow of her bromide prints towards platinum's delicate luminosities and subtle intermediate tones, which were fundamental to the collective identity of the Photo-Secession."[74]

Brigman advocated for herself and her printing techniques and choice of medium—but she ended up always agreeing with Stieglitz judgement, but in her letters, it seems as if this is through gritted teeth. Brigman's tone in her letters comes off as argumentative. She writes that she agrees with Stieglitz in the same 1907 letter about her printing techniques, but then shoots back at him with her confidence that she has never deliberately sent him poor prints. Unlike Pyne's assertion that Brigman was a completely faithful follower of Stieglitz, it seems like she was more of a follower of the cause of photography and the spiritual and artistic power it held, rather than solely Stieglitz. Over the next three years, she regularly implored him to keep her in his mind for solo and group exhibitions but found her work moving slower than she would have hoped.[75] What she did not realize until later, was that the stagnation in her art was rooted in her personal security. Her marriage with Martin Brigman was beginning to crumble, the couple had begun to drift apart as early as 1908.

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[73] "Brigman, Anne: Correspondence," 54–60.
[74] Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*, 104.
[75] "Brigman, Anne: Correspondence," 90.

In 1910, Brigman decided to make the journey across the country to New York. This way, she would be able to work closely with Stieglitz and the other Fellows in the Photo-Secession and at 291 to create a proper portfolio and collection of prints for a solo exhibition. There, she encountered a frightening change in culture between her home on one side of the country to the other. Her work in New York was highly eroticized, removed of the pagan narratives of wild and free dryads and forest spirits. Instead, the predominately male–dominated art scene in New York were only concerned with the nude form in the landscape.[76] This shook Brigman to her core and caused her to retreat from the city. She spent some time in Connecticut to repair her nerves. She defended her escape to Stieglitz, "I've had an overdose of Matisse, Rodin…Steichen, and all the rest…I've simply got to take time to think about it."[77] Time spent away from the eroticization of the female body and the free love movement of Stieglitz and New York did her well, and she returned to attempt to complete her solo exhibition. Pyne details Brigman's emotions in New York:

> Coming to Manhattan, (Brigman) said, had "been like stepping to a new planet with almost absolute changes of food and air." Her Berkley audience had responded sympathetically to her "story of exquisite things in nature," its "deep over soul." Arriving in New York suddenly dropped her into a frenzied, mechanically moving world stripped of any spiritualizing gloss, which for Brigman was both frightening and dislocating. Was she able or willing to put herself through the same transformation, to emerge like a butterfly from a chrysalis, to take a step into a new world?[78]

In short, she did not. Unable to cope with the "mechanical," misinformed culture obsessed with the objectification of the nude female form, Brigman left New York again for the inaugural semester of Clarence White's Senguinland School of Photography in Maine, where she finally was successful at platinum printing. She left New York not only for the school, but also

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[76] See "The Man, the Tyrant" in Chapter Three for more information of the sexualization of women within the New York Modernist Art scene.
[77] "Brigman, Anne: Correspondence," 151.
[78] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 136.

the location. In need of the natural world again, Brigman wrote to Stieglitz, that the "terrain was not as rugged as I had hoped…but we will get some fine fragments yet."[79]

She returned to California in October of 1910, without finishing her solo exhibition, but recognizing that her life needed a profound change. She separated from Martin Brigman that year and threw herself into the suffrage movement in California. The separation of the couple seemed to be mutual, as neither of them felt the need to take their divorce to court. In an interview, Brigman said, "My pictures tell of my freedom of soul, my emancipation from fear. Why should I seek the artificial atmosphere of a court to secure a legal freedom from my husband, when my soul is free without that relief? We have separated, as is well known, but those of my friends who say that I contemplate divorce do not understand me. No court shall make me more free than I am."[80] She was an advocate for a woman's right to separate, as well as vote. Her most famous quote on the matter being, "fear is the great chain that binds women and prevents their development, and fear is the one apparently big thing with has no real foundation in life. Cast fear out of the lives of women and they can and will take their place in the scheme of mankind and in the plan of the universe as the absolute equal to men."[81] This 1913 interview in *The San Francisco Call* described her life living alone in Brockhurst. She surrounded her studio space in nature, filling it with shrubbery and numerous plants. She kept a dozen birds and a little red dog named Rory, who accompanied her on her mountain hikes.[82] No other man with a hope for marriage walked through the doors of Brockhurst.

[79] Ehrens, "Songs of Herself," 201.
[80] Ehrens, "Songs of Herself," 202.
[81] Ehrens, "Songs of Herself," 202.
[82] "Writings," 333.

Southern California and *Songs of a Pagan*

In 1915, Brigman was considered a leader in the San Francisco artistic community.[83] She was an avid art critic and played a large role in the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, organized to, "commemorate the completion of the Panama Canal and to demonstrate that San Francisco had recovered from the devastating 1906 earthquake and fire."[84] However, by this point, Stieglitz had begun to move away from Pictorialism, in favor of the sharpness of works like Paul Strand, who was the last published photographer in *Camera Work.* He closed 291 and ceased *Camera Work*'s printing two years after the Exposition occurred.

In 1927, Anne Brigman moved to the coast of Southern California to be close to her sisters and elderly mother.[85] Brigman left her Brockhurst studio and home to her assistant, Willard Van Dyke, who would use it as the home of the F.64 Movement. Seemingly free from Stieglitz's opinions on her work, Brigman began a highly experimental phase late in her career. Still dedicated to the synchronicities between the natural world and humanity, Brigman turned her camera away from the body and towards the sand, photographing the slow erosion of sand along the shoreline. By doing this, she renewed her childhood connection with the ocean, and began to create introspective self-portraits in her studio, focusing close on her often–downturned face as if in prayer or solemn thought. These works were so closely representing the impending end of her life, which she regarded with peace. Susan Ehrens compared the parallel thought between Brigman's images of sand erosion with Stieglitz *Songs of the Sky,* but states that there is no evidence of discussion between the two on this work together.[86] Stieglitz's correspondence

[83] Wall text, *Anne Brigman: A Visionary in Modern Photography: Inward and Onward.*
[84] Wall text, *Anne Brigman: A Visionary in Modern Photography: Inward and Onward.*
[85] Ehrens, "Songs of Herself," 209.
[86] Ehrens, "Songs of Herself," 212.

with Brigman stopped in 1918 right before his marriage to Georgia O'Keeffe, but did resume in the mid 1920s, after he had begun making his *Equivalents* and *Songs of the Sky.*

In the last decade of her life, Brigman moved away from photography and turned to poetry, continuing her focus on themes of life, death, freedom, rebirth, loss, all surrounding the sea and pared with her Sierra Mountain photographs. She prepared two manuscripts for publication, *Wild Flute Songs,* and *Songs of a Pagan*. While *Wild Flute Songs* remains unpublished, *Songs of a Pagan* was published a year before her death in 1949—after World War II delayed its 1941 publication date—and contained a forward written by Stieglitz before he died in 1945.[87,88] Anne Brigman died in her sister's home in southern California in 1950, but she certainly did not go with fear. She regarded death as yet another wild journey she would embark upon. Her poem, *Pyre Song,* published in *Songs of a Pagan,* offered her final requests upon her death for her body and the celebration of her life.

> …give the fire
> This slender husk
> Wild a wild spray
> Of cedar and musk.
> Clothe it but lightly…
> Let it go free
> Back to the elements,
> Quiet and clean.
> No words or tears
> No vain regrets…
> Glad I have lived in it
> Glad of deliverance
> Vivid and serene…

[87] Wall text, *Anne Brigman: A Visionary in Modern Photography: Inward and Onward.*
[88] Wall text, *Anne Brigman: A Visionary in Modern Photography: Songs of a Pagan.*

Chapter Three: Brigman's Lasting Influence on Feminism and Photography

Before viewing Brigman's work through the lens of contemporary ecofeminism, scholars first should consider her work within the history of feminist photography. Brigman's spiritual feminist ideas merging the feminine body with the earth was a revolutionary act. The descriptive term of "feminist art" was not used until 1970, but according to curator Anne Wolfe, Brigman's proto feminist belief system paved the way for famous feminist earth–focused artists in the 1970s to create their own self–portraits with themes of the feminine primordial divine. When Brigman first began making her images in the High Sierras, "feminism" had initially been used as a definitive quality of a woman, but after the First International Women's Conference in Paris in 1892, the term *féministe* became associated with advocacy for equality between sexes.[89] Brigman would be classified as a first-wave feminist, as she was a vocal advocate of the suffrage movement in the United States and spoke so avidly on a woman's right to separate from her husband.

It was Robert Demachy's image, *Struggle* (Fig. 18) that so inspired Brigman to gravitate toward the nude twisting within the landscape. The image was published in *Camera Work* in 1904, and showed a highly modified negative, similar to what Brigman would pursue. The background has been nearly eliminated from the image, replaced instead by swipes and scratches of charcoal–like abrasions. The only sign of a photograph is the figure in the center, a nude woman viewed from the back as she struggles within the blur of the background. The faded and scratched background consumes her as she desperately grasps the paper with her left hand. Her right hand pushes herself upward, but her downturned gaze suggests that she is close to giving up. Brigman wrote to Stieglitz on Demachy's image, "One hand and knee show how bravely her

[89] Noëlle McAfee, "Feminist Philosophy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Fall 2018, ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/feminist–philosophy/.

will is fighting against the offs—but every curve shows how ill prepared sensitive, high born woman is capable of struggling."[90] But viewers must not confuse Brigman's words as the sole intention of her images within the twisted mountain junipers. She may have initially resonated with the narrative of this struggling, privileged woman, but her time in the mountains changed this. During long hikes and storms, she wrote of the way that this new world revealed itself in the form of spiritual encounters:

> I slowly found my power with the camera among the junipers and the tamrack pines of the high, storm–swept altitudes. Compact, squad Giants are these trees, shaped by the winds of the centuries like wings and flames and torso like forms... Unbelievably beautiful in their rhythms. Here, stored consciousness began its work... not only with the splendor of the strange trees, but in a sense of visualization developed in amazing ways in which the human figure suggested itself as part of their motive dot even before the camera was brought to bear upon the revelation(.)[91]

Brigman was traumatized physically from her fall on her husband's ship, and mentally from her crumbling marriage, her harrowing experience of the San Francisco fires, and the patriarchy itself. But she found solace and comfort in the wildness of the Sierra Mountains. She did not keep this newfound personal power to herself. Instead, she invited other women to feel the empowerment she felt merging with these imperfect trees along the cliffsides. On posing her models, Brigman writes, "Many of (her models) have told me that in the very act of posing they have experienced an exaltation of mind and soul."[92] Wolfe writes, "The figures in Brigman's photographs are not limp or passive observers of nature, but rather participants in nature—they are active, strong, vigorous, engaged, and interconnected with their surroundings."[93] It is through this engagement and the act of mimicking/merging with the branches of the trees and rocks around them that Brigman's merging and expanse of consciousness occurred.

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[90] Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice,* 69.
[91] "Awareness" from "Writings" in *A Visionary in Modern Photography,* 341.
[92] Wolfe, "Laid Bare in the Landscape," 166
[93] Wolfe, "Laid Bare in the Landscape," 166

Kathleen Pyne introduces Brigman's shift in her mountain imagery as grotesque hybridization of nature and humans, her trauma and personal struggle manifesting in dramatic monsters in the mountains. She also places a great deal of Brigman's prolonged influence of her family's Calvinist belief system, that suffering brought her closer to spiritual enlightenment. However, the trauma of leaving behind the burned city of San Francisco was only the beginning of her rich metaphoric and metaphysical pagan narratives. Brigman may have begun the change in her Sierra Mountain imagery in response to the death and destruction she witnessed, but out of this and her own personal trauma grew an artist focused on her sense of freedom and empowerment through the earth. Her photographs were not about the morbidity of death and struggle manifested in the grotesque, but rather a wild—spectacularly feral—liberating beauty where women were free to manifest themselves outside the realm of traditional Victorian standard of beauty and femininity including conduct, as Sally Stein refers to Brigman's work as "shedding clothes and inhibitions" and the demand that women turn their backs on the patriarchy.[94] There was no death or suffering in Brigman's work, especially after her return from New York after experiencing the shock of the New York Modernist culture hiding obsessive, misogynistic consumption of the female body. In photographing the body posing against the wild, she manifested the free, fearless, feminist woman capable of not only transcending patriarchal attitudes and constraints but achieving spiritual enlightenment within the landscape

"The Man," the Tyrant

While Brigman's application was revolutionary, the spiritual, bohemian lifestyle that she brought to her photographs was not extremely unique in her adoptive home state of California. Many

[94] Stein, "Seeing Straight," 123.

scholars credit California's lush and diverse landscape and Mediterranean weather as a cornerstone to keeping the American Romantic ideology alive. Naomi Rosenblum writes, "When coupled with a sense of indivisible character of all organic life—animal, vegetable, and mineral—California's bountiful natural envelope inspired transcendent symbolist approaches."[95]

As stated previously, the artistic scene in California was alight with spiritual, free thinkers who expressed anti-Modernist sentiments across the arts and crafts movement. This anti-Modernist movement stemmed from English philosophers John Ruskin and William Morris, who championed the retreat into the natural world away from the rapidly industrializing city.[96,97] This distrust of the mechanized, fast–paced culture brought on by the Industrial Revolution and commitment to the closeness of nature would influence artists in and outside Brigman's artistic and social circles. Artists in California were also rather progressive in terms of gender equality. In 1850, during the height of the California Gold Rush, the first female Californian photographer, Julia Shannon, was working part-time making daguerreotypes of portraits, and by 1905 twenty percent of California's photographers working for hire were women.[98] Women were welcomed into the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art in San Francisco to study photography. This broadening collective provided Brigman with a circle of not only like-minded people, but a group of women empowered with the freedom that she would inject into her prints. Though their education was readily available, it was often difficult for women to work exclusively as an artist selling prints. Most female photographers like Pitchford, Hascomb, and Arner, worked

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[95] Rosenblum, "Mood and Symbolism," *Capturing Light: Masterpieces of California Photography 1850 to the Present,* 61–75, (Oakland: Oakland Museum of California, 2001), 67.
[96] Ehrens, "Songs of Herself," 186.
[97] This is not to say that Ruskin would have appreciated what I am arguing as Brigman's take on the female sexual body as divine no matter its imperfections. Ruskin should be famously remembered as being disgusted by the *real* female body of his wife Effie Grey.
[98] Palmquist, "The Pioneers," in *Capturing Light: Masterpieces of California Photography 1850 to the Present,* 3–21, (Oakland: Oakland Museum of California, 2001), 7, 18.

predominately commercial portrait artists, but did regularly show work in juried exhibitions.[99] If they made more "fine art" style works, it was in addition to their employment as portrait artists, like Hascomb's illustration of the *Rubáìyat.* Brigman seems to be the only notable exception of these women, having never felt the economic need to venture into commercial portraiture. Rather, she was a well-regarded art critic, writer, and sold her prints in both California and New York through Stieglitz's galleries.

The California Pictorialists seemed to offer a foil to New York. While California's artists had no central figurehead, with the San Francisco Camera Club publishing the west coast version of *Camera Work,* called *Camera Craft* beginning in 1900. On the other side of the U.S., Alfred Stieglitz was well known as the artistic tyrant, defining who would be cemented into the art-historical cannon and how they would be remembered. In fact, Brigman was apt to refer to Stieglitz as simply "The Man," indicative of his power.[100] "The Man's" tyranny proved to be the fatal blow to a woman entering the art world in the city. While there were women allowed to make and exhibit art within the New York modernist scene under Stieglitz, it is often only Georgia O'Keeffe who is remembered as "a lone woman surrounded by Stieglitz's men."[101] In her book, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice,* Pyne shows O'Keeffe as the culmination of Stieglitz's influence by women artists who he attempted to elevate to the idea woman artist within his own changing definition. These women were Käsebier, Brigman, and young painter Katherine Nash Rhoades. However, what Pyne details is not Stieglitz's "male feminism" and his and his peers' "sympath(y) towards feminists…(identifying) themselves and their own creative

[99] Rosenblum, "Mood and Symbolism," 66.
[100] There is a letter that Brigman wrote to him where she told him she didn't believe he was a tyrant, just passionate about the cause (in reference to photography as an art). Even Stieglitz himself described Brigman to O'Keeffe in a letter as loyal, but not to him. He made it clear Brigman was only loyal to photography.
[101] Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice,* xxvii.

processes with a repressed subterranean consciousness, regarded as feminine, primitive, and libidinally charged, a means of subverting the previous regime."[102] Just in this quote, there is an extreme misogynistic tone reflective of Stieglitz's true intentions, and it internalized within the women that Stieglitz controlled during his quest to find the token woman of modernism until they were forced to break away from him. At times, this would mean their permanent erasure from history, specifically in the case of Rhoades, who after repeatedly rejecting Stieglitz's demands for a sexual relationship, burned their letters and her paintings and retreated from the modernist circles.

That was the true intentions of Stieglitz's tokenism, and he should not be granted the honor of being referred to as a feminist. In truth—and this is well documented by his biographers—Stieglitz was a sex–obsessed, voyeuristic man in a position of power in the artistic capital of the world. During Stieglitz's reign, sexologists like Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud were publishing their "scientific findings" on human sexuality and gender. Rooted in Christian teachings on sex and traditional gender roles, Ellis wrote six volumes of his book *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1900) which pushed the idea that sex was biologically determined, and gender roles should be strictly followed within a heterosexual relationship, he wrote that women were as "all body" while men were "all mind":

> We are told that in the East there was once a woman named Moârbeda who was a philosopher and considered to be the wisest woman of her time. When Moârbeda was once asked: "In what part of a woman's body does her mind reside?" she replied: "Between her thighs." To many women,—perhaps, indeed, we might even say to most women,—to a certain extent may be applied—and in no offensive sense—the dictum of the wise woman of the East; in a certain sense their brains are in their wombs. Their mental activity may sometimes seem to be limited; they may appear to be passing through life always in a rather inert or dreamy state; but, when their sexual emotions are

[102] Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*, xxxi, 104.

> touched, then at once they spring into life; they become alert, resourceful, courageous, indefatigable.[103]

Ellis's writing was popularized and part of what was referred to as "The Great American Sexquake" from 1910 until around 1925. It marked a precise turn away from the Puritan/Victorian tradition of sexual repression, in favor of a more sexually liberated lifestyle. Henry Adams wrote frankly on the culture of sexual repression that plagued America, "Anyone brought up among Puritans knew that sex was a sin. In any previous age, sex was strength." Calvinism, Brigman's childhood denomination, which preached about its Puritan roots, was shown as an example of the new modernist enemy.[104] This new push toward unrestrained sexuality placed women in a difficult position. The "Great American Sexquake" only positively impacted men. Women were now expected to simultaneously be faithful to their partners, but also allow their bodies to be regularly used and objectified under the guise of "free love." Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) further crushed any feminist threads within modernist culture as he detailed, among other harmful ideas about women and their sexuality, penis envy:

> The assumption that all human beings have the same (male) form of genital is the first of the many remarkable and momentous sexual theories of children. It is of little use to a child that the science of biology justifies his prejudice and has been obliged to recognize the female clitoris as a true substitute for the penis. Little girls do not resort to denial of this kind when they see that boys' genitals are formed differently from their own. They are ready to recognize them immediately and are over-come by envy for the penis—an envy culminating in the wish, which is so important in its consequences, to be boys themselves.[105]

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[103] Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex,* Vol. 3 of 6, "Analysis of the Sexual Impulse Love and Pain, the Sexual Impulse of Women," 1927. Ebook, The Project Gutenberg eBook, 2004. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/13612/13612–h/13612–h.htm#3_THE_SEXUAL_IMPULSE_IN_WOMEN.
[104] Marcia Brennan, *Painting Gender, Constructing Theory: The Alfred Stieglitz Circle and American Formalist Aesthetics* (Boston: MIT Press, 2001), 27, 30.
[105] Sigmund Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905)" In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume VII (1901–1905): A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works.* 123–246. Accessed April 25, 2022, https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf–library/Freud_SE_Three_Essays_complete.pdf, 195.

Freud also pointed out that sexual desires could manifest as young as childhood and detailed sexual activity in children in "Three Essays." Due to these essays, Stieglitz viewed a successful modernist woman through a lens of sexism, racism, and pedophilia: a childlike, "primitive" being that was somehow also closely in touch with her unrestrained sexuality.[106,107] Consumers of sexologists' readings, like Stieglitz, found their sympathy with feminists' desire for a woman's right to be held at the same level as man at odds with their sexologist–approved viewing of women as infantile but erotic objects to be exploited and controlled.[108] This caught women like Brigman and Rhoades in a storm of unwelcome eroticism, threatening their own bodily sovereignty.

Brigman describes New York and her experience with 291's men as being "one of the great storm centers of my life" and proved to be full of jarring revelations about how her work, her female body, and her narratives were understood.[109] Before her journey to New York City, she had been made aware that Stieglitz had marketed her work differently than she would have preferred. He regularly changed the names of her work, and she had written three years prior, asking if he would no longer do this.[110] She was unhappy that this was occurring, and insisted that he use her original names. In one letter in 1907, Brigman specifically asked, "Request that names of my prints not be changed—last one 'Echo' changed to the Cave which destroys my original significance of picture." This continued even outside of Stieglitz, *Vanity Fair* itself even

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This is frankly the tip of the iceberg. "Three Essays" have to be some of the most upsetting literature I have read. This is saying a lot, considering *The Octopus*, which I mention in Chapter Four, exists.

[106] Freud also pointed out that sexual desires could manifest as young as childhood and detailed sexual activity in children in "Three Essays." Stieglitz had displayed work by children, including his niece at Gallery 291, as well as African sculptures—no specification on *where* in Africa he got them—to hypothesize that the secret to artistic genius and imagination was in the uncivilized, "primitive" mind. (*Modernism and the Feminine Voice*, 150–154.)

[107] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment*, 130.

[108] Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*, 139.

[109] "Writings," 334.

[110] "Brigman, Anne: Correspondence," 61.

renamed one of her prints from *Infinitude* to the incorrect *Confined of Infinitude.*[111] Here in New York, Brigman was able to see firsthand the way her work was misrepresented and misinterpreted by the predominately male photographers on the East Coast. Her "wonderful terrible" experience in New York consisted of her work being overly sexualized. Driven by Stieglitz's obsession with trying to mix Freud's and Ellis's writings of the female sexuality with her own fantastical nudes in the mountains, he marketed Brigman as the woman photographer who "had studied Cezanne…on her knees" as well as a "window into a primitive world, an alternative universe harboring a human vitality long lost to bourgeois Easterners."[112]

This abhorred Brigman, creating a rift between her at Stieglitz. Pyne offers that Brigman was a product of her Victorian upbringing which prevented her from understanding or leaning into Stieglitz and the sexologists' anti-Puritan, free love movement.[113] Rather than see Brigman as a product of her Calvinist, Victorian childhood, Brigman should rather be seen through a far more progressive lens. It was within her own feminism, different writings on sex and the body, and her own brand of pagan beliefs that she viewed her body as divine, and one that was self-controlled. She did not recite any beliefs of sex being a sin, or something grotesque. She herself seemed to believe in a movement where sexuality was a natural part of life and relationships but was also an act of pure love between partners.

Brigman was a staunch follower of Walt Whitman, who was championed during the modernist Sexquake as the first American writer to fully abandon Puritanism. She also regularly carried Edward Carpenter's—an English writer/sexologist who was openly gay and advocated

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[111] "Brigman, Anne: precis of letters," Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Box 8, folder 168, Generated April 28, 2022, https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17105618, 4, 9.
[112] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 128, 132.
[113] Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice,* 81.

for gay rights alongside heterosexual liberation during 1910—book *Towards Democracy* when she traveled through the Sierras and would occasionally accompany her finished photographs with Carpenter quotes. A matted iteration of *The Heart of the Storm* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York bears a quote by Carpenter from his poem, "The Central Calm," written in Brigman's handwriting, "Like one in the calm that is the centre of a cyclone—guarded by the very tornado around(.)"

Carpenter wrote that sex, freeing and welcomed in relationships, was a pure, truthful act between loved ones, and Brigman used Carpenter's writings on sex often to deter Stieglitz from forcing women into the same position of the overtly sexual "free" woman that he attempted to force her into being. She was uncomfortable with the erotic nature of the female body at 291, but not because it affected her Calvinist, Puritan, sensibilities. Rather, it affected her spiritual feminist sovereignty over her own body and by extension over her own prints and their titles and content. She had a complex relationship with her own body but her scars, her traumas, were her own. She advocated Carpenter's and sexologist Ellen Key's idea of sex as a divine act; an act of magic, of trust and acceptance between two people. Most importantly, despite Stieglitz's voyeurism and desperate search for a woman pandering to his erotic wishes, Brigman's art had nothing to do with sex, and she made it clear to him through her abrasions on the negative, her titles, and her dramatic gestures. Her work was about the freedom that she wished to attain not just as a woman, but as a human. The body in any condition, to Brigman, was just a vessel, a way to express empowered consciousness. This was completely out of line with the Modernist aesthetic of focusing solely on the female body and sex.

This was sixty years before Laura Mulvey would write her famous essay "Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema" in which she first coined the term "the male gaze," pointing out

scopophilia inherently present in cinema—and photography. Mulvey continues to uncover the power dynamic between sexes enforced through the cinematic lens, "the determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to be looked at–ness.* Woman displayed as sexual object is the *leitmotif* of erotic spectacle…she holds the look and plays to and signifies male desire."[114] When Anne Brigman did not limit herself solely to this not yet defined male gaze, holding her imperfect body and the bodies of her fellow mountain sisters to a higher state of being, away from the voyeurism of Gallery 291, the true magic of her imagery was lost on Stieglitz and, for a time, lost on the keepers of photographic history.

Ancient Patriarchs

Pyne lays out the awkwardness of Stieglitz's relationship with Brigman:

> At times, Brigman and Stieglitz's relationship ruptured under her sense that the sacred in the human was being lost, and the body as soul was being painfully misunderstood and defiled, in New York modernist culture…Stieglitz could offer Brigman no deeper understanding or penetrating analysis of what made her work special to him, other than to tell her that her vision was "original" and in that respect had contributed "something new" to the field of photography.[115]

Despite Stieglitz's lack of comprehension of the true themes behind Brigman's work, he attempted to use her work as inspiration later in his life, after Pictorialism fell out of style. While creating images of Georgia O'Keefe, Stieglitz was moved to position her arms similarly to Brigman's own models. This was long after Stieglitz had declared Pictorialism over, long after he shuttered Gallery 291 after his breakdown. He had given up on Katherine Nash Rhoades, as she had burned the letters he sent her, along with her paintings, and retreated from New York

[114] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *The Feminism and Visual Cultural Reader*, 44–53. ed. Amelia Jones (New York City: Routledge, 2003), 46–48.
[115] Pyne, "A Tale of Two Coasts," 238.

City with her new mentor, Charles Freer. This presumed failure and shattering of his control and ego, alongside the long–overdue crumbling of his marriage with Emmeline Stieglitz caused an existential crisis. Brigman's work encouraged him to take refuge into the wild. He retreated to his family's Lake George home, where he spent time in the wild, swimming nude, and learning of the healing properties of a *Walden*–like existence, a life in the wilderness, a life that Brigman had long–ago mastered.

This exposure to the elements of healing is not a particularly unique one, having been proposed as a cure for ill or depressed people for decades, specifically for men. "West Cures" were often prescribed by doctors to men which involved them reconnecting with their masculinity by living in the wild.[116] Nevertheless, Stieglitz was inspired by Brigman's commitment to seeking solace and empowerment in nature, as well as his view in the positioning of the female body for photographs, emulating Brigman's "mountain wildcat" aesthetic—the aesthetic he is credited as fashioning for her. Pyne continues, "Stripping Brigman's feminine identity of its grand Romantic antecedents in these images, Stieglitz nevertheless took his strategy from Brigman on how to orchestrate the female body into a revelation of woman's own sexuality, even though that life was imagined by a man."[117]

While Stieglitz continued to misunderstand and use Brigman's work in within his own Freudian fancies, while also considering Brigman's photography as out of fashion, he still used them as influence. He expressed thankfulness to Brigman for his copies of her prints even through the 1920s, when he returned to them while with O'Keeffe, telling her they were a

[116] West cures were never offered to women. women suffering from mental illnesses such as post–partum depression were locked in their homes to encourage a return to her domestic life, called a rest cure. Of course, this exacerbated depression symptoms. Charlotte Perkins Gillman, who I wrote about in an essay written specifically for my graduate school application, describes the effects of her short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper" leading to a decrease in rest cure prescriptions.
[117] Pyne, "A Tale of Two Coasts,'" 259

pleasure to have. But while he mimicked the graceful composition of the body and sought out the mystical incantations of the wild, he lost the impactful, spiritual, passionate connection to the feeling of bodily and spiritual liberation that Brigman captured. During the early stages of his courtship with O'Keeffe, he created a multitude of portraits of the painter. He made enough photographs of her long, delicate hands that a viewer could likely completely and accurately render O'Keeffe's hands in any medium of choice at any angle.

A portrait of O'Keeffe standing in front of one of her paintings (Fig. 19) is frequently compared to Brigman's *The Dying Cedar* (Fig. 20) in which a tired, mournful nymph wrapped in a dark cloth—a real one, this one–shouldered garment appears frequently in images—leans against a gnarled, twisting tree. One forearm is draped dramatically over her face, and the other extends outward in rhythm with the tree's branches. In Stieglitz's portrait, O'Keeffe gazes away from the camera downward toward the bottom–left of the image, in a demure, submissive expression that she would abandon later in her life. Her hands are positioned above her head against the canvas, bend in gracefully angular shapes comparable to *The Dying Cedar.* O'Keeffe, like the portrait discussed in Chapter One, is wearing little clothing, just a simple white camisole, showing her armpit hair and her slim body.[118] She is vulnerable, young, innocent, but also brilliantly talented and openly sexual. The perfect balance of the Woman–Child Stieglitz wanted.

Over three–hundred portraits of O'Keeffe would be made between 1917 and 1937. Many images are fragments of her body, less portraiture and more objective sculpture. A specific one, titled *Georgia O'Keeffe—Torso* (Fig. 21) is just that, O'Keeffe's nude chest, stomach, hips, and

[118] Which is such an interesting thing to think about that never crossed my own mind until I wrote this thesis. Viewers never see a sign of leg, pubic, or armpit hair on Anne Brigman's work. Odd, as women were not really encouraged to shave their armpits of legs until around 1915, with it becoming more of a social requirement in 1945. It doesn't make sense why Brigman's "Slim hearty women" models would shave. Perhaps the expression of O'Keeffe's armpit hair in this photograph further shows her removal from highbrow society that Stieglitz was so enraptured with? Further research and analysis on this should be encouraged.

about half of her thighs. Her face and most of her neck is cropped away from this photograph, and her arms are again raised above her head, giving the illusion of a fully consensual display. Here is the pinnacle of the male gaze upon an artist so historically misunderstood and misrepresented by men, the fragmenting of the body and rendering the subject visually anonymous into objecthood. Stieglitz believed that these portraits made up the true representation of life captured within photography, but Marcia Brennan's analysis opts for these images as not only being associated with a composite portrait of O'Keeffe, but also a reflection of Stieglitz's inner thoughts and emotions, early renderings of *Equivalents* that he would create with his cloud photographs.[119] "At Stieglitz's comeback exhibition in 1921, aestheticized fragments of O'Keeffe's body were made to serve as symbols of Stieglitz himself, as equivalents of the photographer's own sense of sight at touch."[120][121]

The positioning of the female body was not the only way that Stieglitz kept Brigman in mind. Kathleen Pyne has written about Brigman's time in New York City at least three times since 2000. She hints each time that Brigman's symbolism behind landscape photography may have been an inspiration for Stieglitz's series, *Songs of the Sky.* Her latest text reads:

> Beyond her troubling of gender norms, Brigman's bewildering hybrid forms…struck deeply in Stieglitz's imagination. In the 1920s, he made trees at Lake George a central theme in his photography. Following the forms of tall, graceful poplars upward toward the sky, he found their collaboration with cloud forms in "songs of the sky.: Many of these tree portraits relate his sympathy for the spirits of his closest colleagues, seeing them as heroic presences aspiring upwards or as ancient patriarchs teaching life's lessons.[122]

[119] "Georgia O'Keeffe—Torso," The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed April 28, 2022. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/267462.
[120] Brennan, *Painting Gender, Constructing Theory,* 97.
[121] A prime example of the blatant objectification of the sexualized female body.
[122] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 155.

Stieglitz had long–since supported a spiritual approach to art, avidly reading Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art,* in which he describes using patterns, colors, and geometric shapes to communicate emotional and spiritual discourse, of which Kandinsky is a master. Anne Brigman became fascinated with the Theosophy Movement later in her life, which sought spiritual enlightenment through meditation, intuition, occult symbolism, and an investment in the divine nature of the elements.[123] This doctrine of thought was present in Brigman's work since she began her trek into the mountains in 1905, but she did not seem aware of this connection to Theosophy until 1922, when she was admitted membership into the Theosophical Society's Oakland Lodge.[124]

Much of Brigman's unpublished work deals with the reversal of her nudes; finding human figures in the abstract curling branches of junipers and pines whipped raw by the high winds. Her image, *The Wind Harp* (Fig. 22), shot in 1915 four years before Stieglitz sheltered in Lake George, is a blending of the two, with the central focus of the image being a warped tree in the center of the frame. It looks as if it is fabricated of many trunks strung together like a harp. These threads of trunk blend and braid together to create two main branches from the almost straight trunk. One follows this straight line, with a slight deviation to the right side of the frame, while the other jolts to the left, showing generations of shaping by the sculptural winds. Below, almost completely unnoticeable, is a nude woman, who looks up at the tree with a wide smile, her arm stretched out wide as if the emphasize its display. *Harlequin* (Fig. 23) is one of many examples of Brigman's abandonment of the human nude. This soft-focused image was published in *Songs of a Pagan,* as well as mailed to Stieglitz during their correspondence around when she

[123] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 164.
[124] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 166.

first took the picture, which he glued into an album for safekeeping.[125] Heather Waldroup writes that *Harlequin* "The study also points to her interest in the agency contained in nature itself: nature is not merely the object, but the active subject of her work…the tree trunk in *Harlequin* appears to undulate with a living energy."[126] It is possible to see the subtle form that the branches make that Brigman likely saw on her hike. The leftmost cluster of branches of the tree form a skeletal shape of a torso, arms, and head, with the head a cluster of leaves extending into oblivion, the sharp, crossed arms against the shadowed torso. The figure leans out of the tree in a naturally occurring version of *Storm Tree,* where there is no way to tell where the human ends and the tree begins.

Stieglitz liberally borrowed Brigman's themes of shared consciousness between humans and trees without mentioning of her influence except for one letter in 1919. He wrote to Brigman, "I'm photographing—I wish you could see—I know you would greatly enjoy. No tricks, no fuzzyisms…no enlargements—clean but sharp, heartfelt mentally digested bits of universality in the shape of Woman—head, torso, feets [sic.], hands. Even some trees too—just human trees, new ideas all. I wonder will this life ever throw us together again—for a good long chat."[127] As mentioned previously, Brigman and Stieglitz each separately turned to the comforting symbolism of eternity in nature close to the end of their lives. Brigman found her repetitions of patterns through sand erosions which emanated lungs or the circulatory system, while Stieglitz turned upwards to the clouds seeking universally accessible symbolism.[128]

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[125] I unfortunately could not find the date of which she sent this in the Yale Archives.
[126] Waldroup, "Hard to Reach," 288.
[127] "Brigman, Anne: Correspondence," 236.
[128] Alfred Stieglitz, "How I Came to Photograph Clouds," *The Amateur Photographer and Photography,* September 19, 1923, 255.

Ehrens asserts, "While (*Songs of the Sea* and *Songs of the Sky*) were similarly informed in form and spirit, there is no evidence that Brigman's images of sand and sea were informed by Stieglitz's abstract photographs of clouds."[129] While this may be true, there *is* evidence that Brigman's older images could have caused Stieglitz to turn his camera to the trees in search of his ancient patriarchs before either of them looked down to the sand and up to the clouds. This case of parallel thought may not be so parallel, but rather a branching from the original source; Brigman's spiritual experiences among the rocks and trees in the High Sierras. From Stieglitz's trees, he went on to turn his camera up at clouds, looking for a universality and accessibility in his photographs outside of Georgia O'Keeffe's fragmented body, outside of the dying cedars (Fig. 24) or dancing poplars (Fig. 25) representing his *male* colleges. Stieglitz does not seem to consider Brigman as a *matriarch* teaching him, but the influence is clearly present in the symbolism of nature as a spiritual teacher.

Stieglitz's quest for universality in the learned spirituality from Brigman would lead him to *Songs of the Sky*—a nod to Whitman's "Songs of Myself" in his book *Leaves of Grass*, much like Brigman's *Songs of a Pagan*—and *Equivalents. Equivalent* (Fig. 26) is a captivating example of Stieglitz's cloud series. The camera is turned straight into the sky, with no horizon line to ground viewers to the earth, sending the eyes spiraling, defying gravity. The dark skies are punctuated by wispy arches of clouds. The bowed shapes curve from left to right, pulling viewers up and into the stratosphere. The Equivalents are considered to be a crystalizing moment when "straight," unmanipulated photography transcended the physical world into the abstract, where the translation of the viewer could become more personal.[130] John Pultz elaborates, "the

[129] Ehrens, "Songs of Herself," 212.
[130] John Pultz, "Equivalence, Symbolism, and Minor White's Way into the Language of Photography" *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 39, 1980, no. 1/2, 28–39. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3774627, 28, 29.

use of the camera's necessarily realistic images, not for their ostensible content but rather as linguistic elements within…was the means found by Stieglitz and later developed by Minor White, to move photography away from realism."[131]

With *Songs of the Sky,* Stieglitz's intention was initially to conjure the association of music through these images, similarly to Kandinsky's paintings.[132] However, as he began to further these hinting into deeply emotional experiences, creating works more along the lines of thought forms than subjects.[133] So recalled his friend, Herbert Seligman, "his ultimate goal (was) a print the size of a postage stamp which would express everything he had experienced in life."[134] Stieglitz saw his cloud photographs as a way to express spiritual and emotional tension or memory. As Rosalind Krauss translates, "In calling this series *Equivalents* Stieglitz is obviously invoking the language of symbolism in its deepest sense, symbolism as an understanding of language as a form of radial absence—the absence, that is, of the world and its objects, supplanted by the presence of signs."[135]

The *Equivalents* were an esoteric realm of photography, filled with the desire to create a link between photographer and viewer through the captured subject matter. In contemporary scholarship, many of Stieglitz's post–Pictorialist works are considered *Equivalents,* from the fragmented portraits of Georgia O'Keeffe, to the upwardly moving trees on Lake George, to his truly masterful photographs of clouds, all stemming from his trips into nature with Brigman's prints in tow and her passion for the healing of the body in nature in his mind. In grand Stieglitz fashion, while writing a letter on the cloud photographs he said "About six people have seen

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[131] Pultz, "Equivalence," 29.
[132] Stieglitz, "How I Came to Photograph Clouds," 255.
[133] Ironically, Brigman had later referred to *The Bubble* as a thought form in the 1920s.
[134] Judy Annear, "Clouds to Rain—Stieglitz and the Equivalents," *American Art* 25, No. 1, Spring 2011, 16.
[135] Rosalind Krauss, "Stieglitz/'Equivalents'," *October* 11 (Cambridge: The MIT Press 1979), 129–140. https://www.jstor.org/stable/778239, 135.

them—all are affected greatly and forget photography entirely—Several people feel I have photographed God. May be."[136] This is very high self–praise and quite a bold claim, without mentioning the woman that was finding spiritual tension and cathartic release of emotion within the undulating trees and rocks of California before him.

If photo historians see Brigman's images as proto–Equivalents, it is a revolutionary change to an entire strain of photographic history from the patriarch of this realm of photography, Alfred Stieglitz. to the matriarch, Anne Brigman.[137]

The "Body" and the Spirit

Brigman often spoke of the body as a symbol of empowered consciousness. The most famous writing on this is as follows: "One day during the gathering of a thunderstorm, when the air was hot and still, and a strange yellow light was over everything, something happened too deep for me to be able to relate. New dimensions revealed themselves, in the visualization of the human form, as a part of the tree and rock and rhythms."[138] As mentioned before, Brigman abandoned New York in 1910 and shortly separated from her husband without suing him for divorce. It was clear that she had returned from New York with a mix of nostalgia—she was happy to be a part of the bustling art work of the city with Stieglitz—but with a new fire in her belly. It should be argued that a profound and positive feminist change in Brigman's oeuvre can be seen post–New York and her separation. Previously, her work beautifully focused on the pagan narratives of freedom that the landscape created, but after New York there was a profound change. In 1910,

[136] Annear, "Clouds to Rain," 16.
[137] More research is necessary for this theory to be fully developed. Stieglitz's cloud photographs have positively influenced photographic history, affecting legacies of landscape and symbolism–driven photographers, specifically Minor White. This would be best pursued through a potential dissertation or papers in the future.
[138] Wolfe, "Laid Bare in the Landscape," 62–72.

Brigman wrote a note to herself in her copy of *Camera Work, "*And my own group (of prints). They are the partially realized forms that flourished in the golden or thunderous days of two months in a wild part of the Sierras where gnomes and elves and spiritus of the rocks and trees reveal(ed) themselves in under certain mystical incantations."[139] Though Brigman credits Stieglitz often for her successes, it seems here she knew her work was beginning to fully crystalize, in a way that had nothing to do with "the Man".

Brigman's depictions of women became wilder, fiercer, more *dangerously* feminist, displaying a woman who tore herself from the dichotomic storm of what society deemed she should be. But it was not the symbolism of the bruised and battered soul that Brigman came back as after New York, or the woman feeling guilty over her failed marriage, toward which Pyne alludes. Hers was a fiery response to the hurt and misogyny she endured, a stubbornness that shouted, "I will be everything that you wish I was not." It was a return to her joyful childhood savagery which she more fully realized in her own visual embodiment of power. Both earth and spirit had merged wholly, and the bodies photographed in Brigman's imagery was merely a suggestion. She wrote, "In all of my years of work with the lens, I've dreamed of and loved to work with the human figure—to embody it in rocks and trees, to make it part of the elements, not apart from them."[140] She succeeded, photographing these "bodies" as a true manifestation of the earth, as a liminal form in which they existed. These men posed their nude models in what scholar Patricia Simons referred to as display culture, "in which the presentation of the female sitter with 'an averted eye and a face available to scrutiny (,)'" a method of posing women that dates to at least the Renaissance.[141]

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[139] Heyman, *Anne Brigman,* 6.
[140] Elena Martinique, "Why Anne Brigman Photography is Now as Relevant as Ever," *Widewalls,* November 6, 2018. https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/anne–brigman–photography–nevada–museum–art.
[141] Broude, *Introducing Feminist Art History,* 65

When viewing *The Source* (Fig. 27), photographed in 1906, in comparison with later works like Storm Tree (Fig. 28), which was shot in 1911, the women in the images have dramatically changed. In *The Source,* a nude young woman crouches on top of a bed of rocks, with lush leaves in the background. Her hair is gathered up in a soft, modest updo at the nape of her neck and she looks down towards the ground as she holds a small ceramic jug in her hands. It pours a perfectly straight, shimmering white line of water down the center of the frame, bisecting her body as it falls. It crashes down onto the rocks and the light reflecting from it radiates from the splash as the water trickles down to the rocks below, providing sweet water to the parched earth. The woman's downturned gaze and done up hair suggests that she, while powerful enough to provide a source of life to the earth, is still a demure young goddess or nymph. *Storm Tree*, however, imagines the opposite. The nude woman seems to grow out of the tree, like the abstracted form in *Harlequin*, as the viewer is unable to discern where her legs end within the shadows of the layers of bark. Her back arches out and her right arm flails out behind her, riding the current of the wind. Due to the abrasions Brigman made in her studio, the woman's head, torso, hair, and arms blur, but not in the pictorial way. It is especially evident in the curve of her spine that she seems to be dissolving into the wind. The woman's lifted jaw and raised hand suggest a power over the earth below, and she, like the tree, will remain immortal.

Photographic Daughters

Brigman was the beginning of the use of her body to express the symbol of the empowered consciousness, but she was certainly not the last, being about sixty years ahead of second wave feminism, where spiritual feminism would thrive. Spiritual Feminism, which gained popularity in the 1960s and 1970s, is a reawakening of the connection of the feminine divine that Brigman

was so intertwined with. Wolfe cites Mary Beth Edelson, Judy Chicago, Laura Aguilar, and Ana Mendieta as Brigman's spiritual feminist daughters of photography and performance art. Edelson's *Goddess Head* (Fig. 29) as an example of the connection with The Goddess, a Neolithic matriarchal deity that reemerged due to the rise of neopaganism and metaphysical feminism.[142] Spiritual feminist artists, like Chicago, Edelson, and Mendieta often photographed themselves standing, chest bare and straight to the camera, with their arms raised in L–shaped positions. This was referred to as "goddess pose." In *Goddess Head,* Edelson continues the lineage of aligning her body with the natural world. Here, Edelson's face is obscured by an added shell from another image, so it completely obscures her face, rendering her anonymous. Her arms are raised in the traditional goddess pose, and her chest is bare, with circles drawn around her areolas. She has photographed herself in a rocky landscape, and there is not much foliage to obscure her body, but a large boulder covers her body below her chest. Works like Edelson's, as Brigman's did, encourage women to find their inner divinity outside of patriarchal society. Often, according to Robin Morgan, this involved turning away from Abrahamic religions, who viewed women as inferior, despite their godlike ability to hold and create life. [143]

Many of Brigman's photographic daughters opted to completely abandon the visible nude female form, opting to represent it in a primordial, or even inhuman, way. Lynda Nead recalls Kant's notions of the sublime versus the beautiful being inherently gendered, with the beautiful assigned to stereotypically feminine characteristics, and the sublime towards the masculine. "In the light and relationship to between the sublime and the unbounded female body, we arrive at a more subtly nuanced understanding of the gendering of aesthetics. The sublime is not simply a

[142] Charlene Spretnak, *The Politics of Women's Spirituality: Essays by Founding Mothers of the Movement* (New York City: Anchor Press, 1995), 11
[143] Spretnak, *Politics of Women's Spirituality*, 389

site for the definition of masculinity but is also where a certain deviant and transgressive form of femininity is played out."[144] Francesca Woodman (1958–1981) completely abandoned traditional methods of photographing the female sexual body within a setting, opting for the body to exist in a raw, inhuman form. In Woodman's *Angel Series* (Fig. 30), she stands in the front right side of the photograph, her nude chest exposed with her dress unbuttoned into a skirt around her waist. She is in the process of jumping into the hair, her long hair whipping up and over her head. Behind her in her studio, two large, semitransparent sheets fly out behind her, floating without tethers, disembodied wings waiting to join the body in frame.

Woodman has become well-known for her abstraction of her body in space. Brigman's post–New York feral feminist women merged with the twisting roots and branches of the California junipers and pines, and it is possible to see this same wild chaos of women as abstracted shape and anti–body present in Woodman's oeuvre as well. Her body often escapes the eye, blending into the space, or seamlessly merging into wallpaper, doors, plants, or shadows, much like the nymph of *Storm Tree* or *Soul of the Blasted Pine.* Her image, *Untitled, Italy, I.210.1 (A)* (Fig. 31) is a literal blending of the body and space, echoing Brigman's composites and negative manipulation, but with Woodman's own dark, ephemeral nature. Woodman is hidden carefully within a draping of gnarled branches and torn fabric and wallpaper, as if buried beneath her props, or discarded along them. Her body is blurred with movement, and she has lost all features, becoming something strange, a mythical creature of folklore.

Anne Brigman wrote, "In all of my years of work with the lens I've dreamed of and loved to work with the human figure—to embody it in rocks and trees, to make it part of the elements, not apart from them…rare humans, rare in their minds as well as in their slim, fine bodies, have

[144] Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity, and Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 29

given me of their simple beauty and freedom, that I might weave them into these sagas of these wind swept trees on high peaks."[145] Brigman's fierce, feminist images of bodies merging with the natural world has had a profound effect on the way that the female body is depicted in art.

Cultural Appropriation in Spiritual Feminist Photography

Just like Anne Brigman, spiritual feminists are apt to abandon the patriarchal Abrahamic religions that exists as the most dominant religions within their own cultures in favor of less common religions and spiritualities that originated in non-white communities and geographies that were ravaged by Christian settler–colonials. This adaptation of spiritualities without proper education leads to harmful cultural appropriation.[146] Many spiritual feminists, according to Eller's 1995 book, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess,* are majority upper middle class, white, part of the LBGTQ community, and highly educated with at least one college degree.[147] Like Anne Brigman's personal definition of paganism, spiritual feminists specifically borrow from neopaganism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Western occultism, Yoruba, and other polytheistic religious beliefs and icons from Greece and Rome.[148] This leads to a great deal of cultural appropriation within white spiritual feminists, using powerful religious practices without full education and understanding of the gravity of history and culture.

It is important to make clear that Anne Brigman is also an example of privileged white women seeking spiritual enlightenment and empowerment through the appropriation of culture,

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[145] From "Glory of the Open," in "Writings," 338.
[146] There are spiritual feminists and ecofeminists that continue to practice Christianity of Judaism specifically, referring to their practices and religion beliefs as Christian spiritual feminists or Jewish feminists. There is a place for women who are empowered by Christianity, Judaism, and Islam within ecofeminism and spiritual feminism. The abandonment of Christianity specifically among womxn and members of the LGBTQ community are incredibly nuanced and unlimited.
[147] Cynthia Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess: The Feminist Spirituality Movement in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982), 18–22.
[148] Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess*, 64.

specifically Asian symbolism, and using her Hawai'ian birthplace to market herself as an "exotic" woman. As discussed previously, the occult woman was a character often adopted by the California Pictorialists, but Brigman, with her childhood rooted in the white-appropriation and adoption of Hawai'ian life, continued this adoption of eastern Asian fashion, religion, and culture. She decorated Brockhurst in Japanese lanterns and wore silk robes that she had embroidered with a golden dragon. Brigman also posed for photographs in headdresses popular among Chinese opera singers and prostitutes in San Francisco, posing to resemble "Asian goddesses and mystics." [149]

This was during a time of mass immigration eastern Asian people to California, which incited racist hatred against Japanese and Chinese immigrants, with white Californians pushing for segregating schools, preventing Japanese and Chinese immigrants from finding work, and even alluding the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake to a fire-breathing dragon, a symbol assigned to Asian-American culture by Californians.[150] San Francisco was both considered weighed down by the "orientalist deformation" and also a place of spirituality, knowledge, and mysticism, but the latter description was only reserved for white artists and writers like Brigman, and she did appropriate to fashion her artistic persona. Both cultural appropriation and erasure has been an extremely common practice from the late 1800s through 2022, during the writing of this thesis. It is important that this is acknowledged within this argument of Brigman's influence of the modernist aesthetic.

[149] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment,* 121, 165.
[150] Pyne, *Photographer of Enchantment, 79*

Chapter Five: An Ecofeminist Approach to Brigman

Brigman not only rejected the modernist view of the female body, but she approached photographing and inhabiting the landscape in a radical way. The reevaluation of the way that the female body is objectified depicted in art has a direct correlation to the way society views, and photographers capture, the earth. Writer, feminist, and environmental activist Rebecca Solnit lays out the antiquated laws of landscape photography, and how it continues with the addition of a nude woman as the artwork's centerpiece, "By the mid-nineteenth century, an entire vocabulary of virginity, penetration, defloration, and possession was transplanted—or replanted—into the landscape. Images of uninhabited landscapes and solitary nudes promise purity and pleasure(.)"[151] Landscape in photography has been controlled exclusively by the male gaze, and the patriarchal, white-supremacist, capitalism-fueled creation and consumption of the idealized landscape is synonymous with the consumption, objectification, and othering of women. Women are consistently othered alongside nature and equated to nature due to the regressive and essentialist notion that people born with uteruses, the potential to cultivate life inside their bodies, were closer to something animal, or earth, than a person born with a penis who, in Western Culture, felt the need to distance themselves from this primordial notion.[152] The history of a clothed male artist placing nude female models within wilderness or wild spaces further reinforces this imaginary alignment; the man/culture versus women/nature value dualism. Solnit writes:

> The word *landscape* itself becomes problematic: landscape describes the natural world as an aesthetic phenomenon, a department of visual representation. A landscape is scenery, scenery is stage decoration, and stage decorations are backgrounds for human drama. The passive landscape and the supine woman are linked in Western paintings as objects for a

[151] Rebecca Solnit, "Uplift and Separate: The Aesthetics of Nature Calendars." *Art Issues*, November/December 1997, 16.
[152] Deborah Bright, "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry into the Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography," *Exposure* 23. No. 1, 1985, 10.

> subject that identifies women with nature and the body, men with culture and the mind…both are positioned for consumption rather than generation of meaning(.)[153]

A great deal of this women/nature and men/culture hierarchy is rooted in the Abrahamic religions. The ingrained belief that, because Woman was created from the rib of Man and the misinterpretation of the Bible that granted humans dominion and power over the land, rather than *stewardship*, Man/men were the possessors of power over knowledge, resources, the body, and the earth, with women, animals, and nature below them. Of course, this hierarchy is substantially more nuanced. The fall of nature, caused by Eve, the woman, with Adam, the man, as the "innocent bystander," is paralleled by Carolyn Merchant with the aftereffects of Man's attempt to recover/recreate Eden through both the taming of women and wilderness—the soil from which Man was created by God.[154] Merchant describes Christianity as the root of capitalism's origin story, fueling Man/men's need to invent new technologies to strip the land of natural resources, as the quest to tame the earth and recover the lost Eden. This gendered drive for consumption and domination is further explained:

> Nature, in the Edenic recovery story, appears in three forms. As original Eve, nature is virgin, pure, and light—land that is pristine or barren, but that has the potential for development. As fallen Eve, nature is disorderly and chaotic; a wilderness, wasteland, or desert requiring improvement; dark and witchlike, the victim and mouthpiece of Satan as serpent. As mother Eve, nature is an improved garden, a nurturing earth bearing fruit, a ripened ovary, maturity. Original Adam is the image of God as creator, initial agent, activity. Fallen Adam appears as the agent of earthly transformation, the hero who redeems the fallen land. Father Adam is the image of God as patriarch, law, and rule, the model for kingdom and state.[155]

By dramatically altering or entirely abandoning traditional Abrahamic religious beliefs, the way people like Brigman viewed the landscape changed. This hierarchy began to dissolve,

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[153] Rebecca Solnit, *As Eve Said to the Serpent: On Landscape, Gender, and Art* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 45

[154] Carolyn Merchant, "Reinventing Eden: Western Culture as a Recovery Narrative," In *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. 185–227 (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1995), Kindle, 192.

[155] Merchant, "Reinventing Eden," 192

but in Brigman's case, there were still deeply ingrained cultural and racial superiorities that prevented its complete dissolution. While Anne Brigman was depicted by photographers throughout her life as a High Priestess of the elements, it is evident from her exploitation by Modernist thought that she was not held to the ranking of a revolutionary environmental spiritualist.

Brigman's gender identity certainly had something to do with this. By 1914, the famous Scottish mountain mystic John Muir—who is credited with preserving American National Parks in the same spots Anne Brigman made her iconic feminist photographs—had died, having left a forty–year career of writing his "Studies in Sierra" and the founding of the Sierra Club, who Brigman occasionally joined on treks.[156] Just like Brigman after him, Muir had abandoned his family's Calvinist religion in favor of seeking God in the mountains. Solnit speaks of him as having the same passion, the same quest for higher consciousness through a pagan–esque narrative that Brigman had, "What he read in (the Sierras) was a pantheistic message of interconnection and interdependence within cycles of perpetual change and renewal, a message that ran contrary to the linear march towards judgement of (Calvinism)."[157] John Muir himself spoke with Brigman's same fire and of the same mystical experiences that were possible in the wild, "We are now in the mountains and they are in us, kindling enthusiasm, making every nerve quiver, filling every pore and cell of us. Our flesh-and-bone tabernacle seems transparent as glass to the beauty above us, as if truly an inseparable part of it…part of all nature, neither old not young, sick nor well, but immortal."[158] John Muir, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David

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[156] "John Muir: A Brief Biography," Sierra Club, accessed April 30, 2022, https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/life/muir_biography.aspx.
[157] Rebecca Solnit, *Savage Dreams: A Journey into the Hidden Wars of the American West* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 260.
[158] Solnit, *Savage Dreams,* 260.

Thoreau, and Alfred Stieglitz, all were men who sought out enlightenment and interconnection through the wild. All were revered as mystical men of the earth using symbols to communicate a life or a state of being outside our own. But what of Anne Brigman, who deserves to be placed among these mystics, and was depicted casually as one by her friends in California, but is historically remembered as a photographer still unable to distance herself from Calvinism, from the suffering of spirit, or her own feminine sexuality and body with all its societal expectation on appearance and use?

Selling the Land of Plenty: Patriarchy, Eurocentricity, Capitalism, and the West

In the 18th century, the term "wilderness" had the connotation that contemporary language would equate to a "wasteland;" an uninhabitable, dangerous space unfit for "civilized" cultures.[159] That is, white, wealthy, Christians who used the landscape as an allegorical setting. Before photographers like Ansel Adams and his f.64 movement, before Muir's Sierra Club, landscapes allowed in culture and art were vigilantly curated, a place where nature was never allowed to grow outside of Man's control. The garden, according to Douglas Nickel, was a way for the wild to participate within civilization in a way deemed benign; the subdued, tamed shrew of Eve.[160] This curating and cultivating is not unlike the Victorian portraits of women in controlled garden spaces such as Brigman's *Egypt,* or even the reeducation of Brigman's "savagery" in Hawai'i; only suitable earth, and just Hawai'ian enough to be Eurocentric and acceptable. Beautiful, not sublime.

At first, the landscape photography of the American West was neither. Photography existed in the mid-1800s as a purely documentary resource and was not referred to as

[159] Douglas Nickel, "Photography, Perception, and the Landscape," PDF, 17.
[160] Nickel, "Photography, Perception, and the Landscape," 17.

"landscape" connoting human allegory symbolized in nature, but rather as "views" images of what simply existed. Nickel writes, "What gives most 19th century photographs their recognizably 'photographic' appearance is neither a call to function as neutral documents nor the photographers ignorance of artistic conventions, but an ambient desire to make the photograph look like a product of technology—a look that stood for industrial progress…that valued the machine-made over the handmade."[161] Unlike the Pictorialists and Photo-Secessionists that would come seventy years after them, the United States government's topographical survey photographers were only interested in making scientific, documentary images that were destined for government photo albums and filing cabinets.[162,163] In 1938, the first United States Army Corps of Topographical Engineers began to map, explore, and "discover" the American West, with several exhibitions after the Civil War to reunify the country.[164] One of these reunification efforts was the completion of the transcontinental railroad. Photographer Alexander Gardner was appointed chief photographer of the eastern division of the Union Pacific Railway. He made images of settlers' homes, military installations, Indigenous American homes, and the process of laying the tracks for the railroad. All were published in a final book, *Across the Continent on the Kansas Pacific Railway.*[165]

During this time, writing suggests themes of the sublimation of gendered feminine land was used as markers of the successful American Dream. Merchant recalls the 1901 novel *The Octopus,* in which California's landscape is invaded and transformed to accommodate the transcontinental railroad documented by these photographers. The writing paints a violent,

[161] Nickel, "Photography, Perception, and the Landscape," 26.
[162] Nickel, "Photography, Perception, and the Landscape," 26.
[163] Ironically, John Muir himself kept copies of "views" by Carelton Watkins as inspiration for his writing.
[164] Marien, "Imaging of the Social World," 132.
[165] Marien, "Imaging of the Social World," 132.

sexual, pornographic rape–fantasy of the earth as the personification of a sexual, non–white woman, with men brutally digging her up for the railroad and the development of white civilization:

> One could not take a dozen steps upon the ranches without the brusque sensation that underfoot the land was alive…palpitating with the desire for reproduction. Deep down there in the recesses of the soul, the great heart throbbed once more, thrilling with passion, vibrating with desire, offering itself to the caress of the plough, insistent, eager, imperious…It was the long stoking caress, vigorous, male, powerful, for which the Earth seemed panting. The heroic embrace of a multitude of iron hands, gripping deep into the brown, warm flesh of the land that quivered responsive and passionate under this rude advance, so robust as to be almost an assault, so violent as to be veritably brutal. There, under the sun and under the speckless sheen of the sky, the wooing of the Titan began, the vast primal passion, the two world-forces, the elemental Male and Female, locked in a colossal embrace…knowing no law, untamed, savage, natural, sublime.[166]

This personification of the earth as a non–white woman is also indicative of the Indigenous Americans forcibly removed from the American West. Either through mass murder by biological warfare—introducing illnesses like tuberculosis and the flu that their bodies were not used to—and the forced removal of Indigenous people from the land. Deborah Bright writes, "in the late nineteenth–century US, after the 'Indian problem' had been brutally solved and the frontier ceased to exist, a veritable Cult of Wild Nature flourished, having undergone several evolutionary phases since the continent's discovery by white Europeans."[167]

A painting by fellow surveyor Thomas Moran (1837–1926) entitled *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* (Fig 32) recreates the scenic vista of Yellowstone National Park, in which the waterwall in the center background emits a wispy steam and spray into the air through the cliffs and a bright blue stream winds through the yellow-green mountains. Shadowed front and centered is one member of a party of Euro-American explorers. The white man is accompanied by an Indigenous American Man, wrapped in red clothing, and holding a long staff in his hands.

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[166] Merchant, "Recovering Eden," 208.
[167] Bright, "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men," 2.

He turns away from the scenic vista and faces viewers, as the white man faces away from viewers towards the river, pointing towards the river. Alan Braddock points out the politically regressive nature of the painting, "(*Grand Canyon)* celebrated human dislocation—in the form of Indian removal—as an inevitable fact of Manifest Destiny…(the indigenous American) turns his back on the sublime landscape, signifying aesthetic ignorance and justifying his dispossession, while a white man standing next to him points…in a possessive gesture of aesthetic admiration."[168] After the violent removal of Indigenous Americans from the West, the term "wilderness" quickly because less the desolate, savage place "on the margins of civilization where it is all too easy to lose oneself in moral confusion and despair."[169] Instead, this land was a sort of Brave New World, a land of both sublime Arcadian beauty, picturesque locations, and promise of the white man's possession of it all.

Timothy O'Sullivan and Carelton Watkins have become history's most remembered survey photographers of the American West.[170] These two photographers represent artists who mastered the technological aspects of the camera to capture both the natural and technological sublime; the combination of the remarkable, unique beauty of the "virgin" California mountains and forests—what to consume—and industry at the hands of powerful, successful American men that had harvested natural resources for national need—how to consume it.[171] O'Sullivan is representative of the documentary views of the American West to potential prospectors in the

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[168] Alan Braddock, "Ecology > Landscape" *American Art* 31, No. 2, https://0–doi–org.library.scad.edu/10.1086/694065, 59.
[169] William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature,* 90–122 (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1995. Kindle, 92.
[170] Timothy O'Sullivan is often remembered in photographic history as the former Civil War photographer who created *A Harvest of Death* after the battle of Gettysburg.
[171] Elizabeth Hutchinson, "They Might Be Giants: Galen Clark, Carelton Watkins, and the Big Tree," in *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History.* ed. Alan Braddock, Christoph Irmscher, 110–128 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 119.

East, to see what California had to offer for industry.[172] He made images of the landscape, with straightforward, informative titles such as *Black Cañon, Colorado River, Looking Below, Near Camp 7,* and *Lake in Conejos Canon, Colorado, from Wheeler Survey.* The latter (Fig. 33) is a picturesque image showing a perfectly still lake with sharp, straight pines reflected perfectly within it. Behind the rolling hill so sparsely decorated with these thin triangular pines, the mountains begin to rise to unfathomable heights in the misty background. This lake is presented as a peaceful, idyllic place, never one lived in, never once explored, or inhabited until the moment the shutter opened.

Carelton Watkins, unlike O'Sullivan, was not government funded. He made his money from the first people who made fortunes in California, and his images show, as Maika Pollack analyzes, "complex considerations of property, geology, capital, the politics of natural resources, and the ownership of water."[173] Watkins first made images of California's mines like O'Sullivan and used the profits to create survey images across California using multiple cameras, including the aptly named mammoth plate camera. While his career-making image was the previously mentioned *Best General View, Mariposa Trail,* which typified the expansive sublime vistas of the Western mountains, his marriage of the technological and the natural sublime was evident in every one of his mammoth plate images. Watkins's collegian plates were some of the largest negatives in the history of photography, with plates weighing four pounds at seventeen by twenty inches large.[174] These enormous negatives created an exquisite final image devoid of grain and as sharp as the Ansel Adams print that would come about fifty years after. Watkins's view, *No. 856. Half Dome 5000 ft. from Glacier Point, Yosemite, California* (Fig. 34)—again with the

[172] Solnit, *As Eve Said to the Serpent*, 71.
[173] Maika Pollack, "Carelton Watkins and the Image of Manifest Destiny," Aperture, November 13, 2018, https://aperture.org/editorial/carleton–watkins–maika–pollack/.
[174] Pollack, "Carelton Watkins and the Image of Manifest Destiny."

highly scientific names, no spiritual intention here—shows every detail of the iconic vista of Half Dome. The angle is almost exact to a snapshot of the same site Anne Brigman captured in 1939 (Fig 35). In Watkins's image, Half Dome rises proudly in the center of the image, surrounded by the rocky cliffs and mountains around it. Every dark tree growing along these vertical cliffs, the same trees Brigman would befriend—are visible. The albumen print, with its soft, warm brown emulates the haze of the distance. It is entirely possible to become completely encapsulated, swallowed up into the atmospheric beauty of the mountains. It is also possible, and perhaps intentional by Watkins, for viewers to miss the silhouette of a bearded man with a hat standing on an observation deck, holding the rails as he stares at the expanse before him. This male figure blends almost perfectly into the landscape, but still carries this air of royalty, a sovereign surveying his conquered land. Watkins's images also carried more overt representation of the technological sublime. Within his work, *No. 39. Rock Bluffs, Columbia River, Oregon* (Fig. 36) depicts a long train bridge emerging from rocky cliffsides along the Columbia River. While there is no train in the moment, the railroad itself is a triumphant symbol of progress, running along the sandy shoreline from the bottom right of the image to the center, where it disappears into the mountains.

Nineteenth century landscape painting and photography remains the central genre for considering how ecology and the earth is depicted in modernist, postmodernist, and contemporary art.[175] Still, as William Cronon writes, "wilderness stands as the last remaining place where civilization, that all too human disease, has not fully infected the earth. It is an island in the polluted sea of urban–industrial modernity…seen this way, wilderness presents itself as the best antidote to our human selves."[176] Cronon points out that wilderness, just like the myth of

[175] Braddock, "Ecology > Landscape," 59.
[176]William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," 92.

Arcadia, is a uniquely human, a specifically Euro American, concept, disregarding history and methods of changing the history of Indigenous Americans and reliant of the biblical symbolism of Eden, "In the theories of Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant, William Gilpin, and others, sublime landscapes were those rare places on earth where one had more chance than elsewhere to glimpse the face of God…The sublime wilderness had ceased to be a place of satanic temptation and became instead a sacred temple, much as it continues to be for those who love it today."[177]

This, however, was a pilgrimage exclusively for male enlightenment and worship. Man/men had dug inside the ground to create the masculine–gendered civilization from the feminine–gendered Earth, and praised the violent taking of natural resources, according to *The Octopus.* In 1908, at the height of Anne Brigman's career, 69,000 tourists visited the eleven established National Parks.[178] How many of those were women armed with cameras? At least one. As art historians perpetuate the masculine vision of the great artistic, environmental explorer as the single white man in the landscape, female photographers are almost completely omitted from mentions of landscape photography. Instead, male photographers such as Carelton Watkins and Timothy O'Sullivan paved the way for how landscapes in photography, the exact same landscapes that Brigman would later photograph continued this legacy of patriarchal manifest destiny within photography, selling the Land of Plenty to the American people.

The Reclaimed Feminine Landscape

Yosemite was deeded by the United States government to the state of California as the nation's first wildland park in 1864, and Yellowstone was named the first national park in less than a

[177] William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," 92, 100.
[178] Bright, "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men," 3.

decade later in 1872.[179] Deemed "God's gift to the American people," the American West and its "wild" spaces were widely preserved to keep the myth of Arcadia alive in society's consciousness.[180] This reinforcing of the Arcadian myth, a land never before touched by humans, was made possible by canonical landscape photographers and artists. Informed by the scholarship surrounding landscape photography, Deborah Bright lists the lineage of American landscape photography, "Muybridge, Watkins, O'Sullivan, Strand, Weston, Adams, Porter, Caponigro, Clift, Gowin, Klett, Misrach—the list goes on. Where are the women?"[181] It is true that Brigman's work does not necessarily fit perfectly into the tightly defined view of what constitutes landscapes. However, considering her images of empowered women grafted into trees through an ecofeminist lens allows art historians to consider a new realm of thought, shedding Arcadia for a symbiotic relationship between humanity and nature.

Female photographers, especially after the rise of the New Topographics Movement, confronted the masculine heritage of controlling the way the landscape is viewed by inserting their bodies into the images.[182] Women like Ana Mendieta, Laura Aguilar, and Judy Chicago are cited specifically by Anne Wolfe as being part of this feminine counterstrike against masculine domination of the earth.[183] Chicago's *Atmospheres* (Fig. 37) stemmed from her horror by the "macho" Californian land artists' sense of entitlement to the earth. Specifically, the artwork entitled "Sawing" by Richard Serra, which involved the gathering of endangered redwood tree bodies gathered in the center of the Pasadena Art Museum.[184] Chicago said, "I was and am

[179] Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," 93.
[180] Bright, "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men," 3.
[181] Bright, "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men," 10.
[182] Wolfe, "Laid Bare in the Landscape," 174.
[183] Wolfe, "Laid Bare in the Landscape," 174.
[184] Emily Dinsdale, "Pioneering Artist Judy Chicago on Turning her Art to the Climate Crisis," Dazed, November 24th 2020, https://www.dazeddigital.com/art–photography/article/51205/1/pioneering–artist–judy–chicago–turning–her–art–to–the–climate–crisis–atmospheres.

horrified by the *masculine* built environment and the *masculine* gesture of knocking down trees and digging holes in the earth."[185] In protest, she and several women painted their nude bodies in bright colors and released fireworks and brightly colored, environmentally safe smoke into the air in California desert, feminizing the land with color and softness. After a long hiatus, Chicago picked up her series in 2020. In these more recent works, Chicago created *Garden Smoke* series without the body, more suggesting the feminine divine using color and words. *Constrained on the Ground* (Fig 38) shows multicolored pastel smoke surrounding high grasses and wildflowers with a young tree. Surrounding the square image, Chicago wrote in multiple fonts the words, "Cooped up, Entrapped, Constrained, Suppressed, Hampered…" words reminiscent of the feminine within art, society, and the environment, but also the claustrophobic feeling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Brigman was one of the first women in this lineage of creating a space for predominately feminine bodies to merge with the earth and made images that were decades ahead of her time in relationship to the human impact on the land causing the Anthropocene. *Dawn* (Fig. 39) is the most well–regarded ecofeminist image within Brigman oeuvre. The vista over which Brigman has placed her nude body is Donner Lake, home to the infamous consequences of the Donner Party's "shortcut" across the Bonneville Salt Flats west of the Great Salt Lake in Utah in 1846. The site of the Donner Party's camp that would have, under any other circumstances, been treated as hallowed ground and the example of the dangers of western expansion, was instead considered an example of the indominable nature of the American spirit. The most difficult section of the Transcontinental Railroad, documented by O'Sullivan, was completed in Donner Pass by majority Chinese railway workers "in an era without dynamite or heavy

[185] Alexxa Gotthardt, "When Judy Chicago Rejected a Male–Centric Art World with a Puff of Smoke," July 26, 2017, Artsy, https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy–editorial–judy–chicago–rejected–male–centric–art–puff–smoke.

machinery…working 24 hours a day for 16 months...a testament to ingenuity and industry."[186] This railroad, constructed by thousands of the very people that the white population both despised and appropriated, cut straight through Donner Pass to complete the railroad in 1869.

Due to the success of the railroad, Donner Lake continued to be representational of the success of western expansion. Paintings and photographs of Donner Lake, such as Alfred A. Hart (1816–1908)'s stereograph *Donner Lake and Easter Summit, from top of Summit Tunnel, Western Summit* (Fig. 40) depict the lake from the perspective of showing off the vista for the Central Pacific Railroad. One of the tunnels carved through Donner Pass is clearly visible, the celebration of the railroad's power. In *Dawn,* Brigman completely obscures the scenic vista with her body. Her hair is pulled back, and she looks down and away from the camera towards the rest of the view. Her hips obscure the scene photographed by Hart years prior and mimics the curvature of the mountains. As Wolfe writes, "Brigman positioned her nude body in the foreground of her image is if to reclaim the legendary summit as her own."[187]

According to Rebecca Solnit, in the 1970s, landscape imagery ceased to evolve. She spells out the cemented rules that have been followed by landscape artists since: no human presence; no natural history, as in depictions of death or rot; water's main purpose is to mirror the landscape; find patterns and repetitions in nature; colors should be bright; any animals depicted should be imagined as harmless and loveable; and the photograph should be crisp and clean, "as to never call attention to its own creation, but rather to Creation."[188] In every image of Brigman's, she rejects at least one of these rules. *Soul of the Blasted Pine* completely rejects

[186] Shoshi Parks, "The Quest to Protect California's Transcontinental Railroad Tunnels," Smithsonian Magazine, January 12, 2022, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/the–quest–to–protect–californias–transcontinental–tunnels–180979382/.
[187] Wolfe, "Laid Bare in the Landscape," 174.
[188] Solnit, "Uplift and Separate," 15.

these unmovable rules of the landscape. Death—with rot soon to come—destruction, pain, and heavy photographic manipulation is present in this image, but also carries an, ironically, humanizing feel to the earth, a notion that would have been completely alien to most modernist artists and philosophers on the East Coast. This blasted, felled tree due to reasons unknown, is shown as feeling true pain and fear, as shown by this nymph, the deity of this specific tree, or the personification of the tree's consciousness, emerging from its cracked trunk, and clawing up at the empty sky. This fear at the tree's imminent death is palpable, eliciting a profound empathy from viewers. Brigman's tree, expressed through its nymph body, feels pain, feels fear, and understands mortality, and forces consideration of the greater idea of a shared consciousness outside of human life, but if that consciousness is more universal, shared with animals and plants as well.

Brigman communicated the oneness across the natural world and the equality of human life and natural life not only in her writing and photographs, but surprisingly, it is evident in her signature. Brigman always signed her work, even if the images were extremely dark. She bore harshly a pen or pencil into the paper, pressing ink or graphite into the delicate platinum surface of her images. Her signature is similar across each image, her name, "Anne W. Brigman"—sometimes "Annie" in her pre–1910 images, and sometimes missing the middle initial—with three lines running through the signature. The top line slashes through the first third of the largest letters, the A and the B, with the second completely bisecting the signature, and the last a bold underline. In each signature, Brigman drew little birds. They were rough sketches of the animals in flight, just short swipes of ink to suggest the distant flight. There was always at least one, flying on the breeze suggested by these lines. While Brigman created her image *The Breeze* as a personification of the wind in the Sierras, her signature has always been a subtle suggestion of

this narrative, in every one of her images. Perhaps it was her way of communicating her perceived role in the wild, not as the birds in flight, but as the high thermals lifting the birds into the sky, carrying them on to their next destination. Perhaps it was the role she wished to have after she left her current body, carried away by the funeral pyre in *Pyre Song*.

Brigman cared a great deal, as is evident in her writing, about the landscape she inhabited. She wrote vibrantly about her time camping with friends and family in Desolation Valley, "It is primeval; it is austere; it is forbidding; it is sinister; and yet, with all it is most radiant and beautiful. It is not a place for a lawn party, or gold links – it is full of little lakes besides the great artificial one – ghostlike dead trees – and high wild peaks – wind swept and snow mantled, tower above it, but there is a lure like the lure of the desert. Strange junipers and pines have lived in its granite clefts and high spurs for thousands and years and more, while meadows of wild flowers run riot everywhere around the little lakes."[189] This care expressed in her writing and photographs was a revolutionary mindset only present within a few artists and philosophers like John Muir. Brigman saw the unity between earth and humans and held a respect for the land long before the term "Anthropocene" had entered the zeitgeist, though it was used as early as 1800.[190]

Essentialism in Environmental Feminism

Warren writes, "Ecological feminists claim that there are important connections between the unjustified dominations of women, people of color, children, and the poor, and unjustified

[189] From "The Glory of the Open," in "Writings," 338
[190] Timothy Clark, "The Anthropocene—Questions of Definition," in *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept*, 1–27 (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2015), ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/scad–ebook/detail.action?docID+2056898, 1.

domination of nature."[191] It should be argued in this paper, as in previous writings by this author, that this thesis is not written solely from the perspective of a "first generation" ecofeminist, as in, written with the perspective of the 1970s. Ecofeminism does not exist in its ideal state without intersectionality, existing within the movements of radical ecology, race, class, and women's rights. Warren asserts, "All ecofeminists agree that there are important connections between the unjustified dominations of women and nature, but they disagree about both the nature of those connections and whether some of those connections are potentially liberating or grounds for reinforcing harmful stereotypes about women."[192] Contemporary thoughts of race, gender, disability, sexuality, religion, and class are considered while writing this thesis, and should be considered within any discussion on the environment and feminism. As with any worthwhile philosophy to reduce the oppression of marginalized people/land and amplify voices, ecofeminism's "quilt" as described by Warren, should be repaired, or altered.

Related to this reparation is the fact that women have been consistently removed from the cannon of landscape photography. Deborah Bright critiques the 1970s ecofeminist takes on the attempt to feminize landscape photography by borrowing concepts from Merchant and ecofeminist Susan Griffiths and casting the female landscape photographer as emphasizing women's more intimate and emotional connections to the environment to "man the predator" models of masculinity, such as the hypermasculine, brutal writing from *The Octopus* in 1901.[193] This essentializing method aligns women as closer to the natural world due solely to their reproductive organs and nurturing as "mother earth." Bright continues, "The corollary to this posited that men's biological lack of such 'natural' creativity was compensated for the

[191] Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy,* 162.
[192] Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy,* Location 442.
[193] Bright, "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men," 10.

development of symbolic creativity – activities granted a much higher status in most cultures. Men choose to act upon nature and bend it to their will while women simply are nature and cannot separate themselves from it."[194] In keeping with the way Brigman's nudes were treated by her male modernist peers and mentors in New York City, if Woman was inherently tied to the wilderness as a symbol of Eve in any form, domestic or feral, any expression of nudes in the wild must simply be a relationship between her sexual body and the sexual earth. As a result, Brigman's spiritual journey in the mountains mirroring that of John Muir was lost.

But occasionally, Brigman's expression of the body as a vessel of enlightened consciousness that merged with the Earth ranged outside of the female body. Brigman's *Pan* (Fig 41) is one of the few representations of the masculine body, the only adult male body she published, within the landscape. The unnamed model sits on a boulder on the side of a steep mountain range. He is nude, his hips turned away to conceal his genitals, with his left arm supporting his stance and his right reaching away from his body towards the mountain, but his face turns back, eyeing the camera and the audience's view. The earth around him, as well as the name given to him as the god of the wild, seem to swallow his humanity or "civility." This depiction is blatantly out of line with the "man as culture" versus "woman as nature" trope. Unlike the man present in Watkins's *Half Dome,* there is no suggestion of the man in the image bearing sole ownership over the earth or Brigman's other nymphs. Rather, *Pan* imagines a mythic masculine god living in harmony with nature, not taking more than he gives back. Brigman made two iterations of *Pan.* One with the adult man, and the other with a young boy, also in the nude, playing a flute on a rock to the clear, glass orb. *Pan* shows a man as just as intrinsically connected to the natural world as Brigman's female models. Just as the god Pan is a

[194] Bright, "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men," 10.

companion to the nymphs and dryads, so is Brigman's view of man alongside woman, as equals in the wild. However, it is likely that *Pan* was not exhibited often, if at all, as there is no sign of outrage over it.

To have a male model placed in the same position of vulnerability as female models, to be scrutinized like women, especially by a female artist, was considered pornographic in Modernist circles.[195] This double standard greatly impacted Brigman's friend, photographer Imogen Cunningham who, at the same time *Pan* was finished in 1914, published images of her husband, Roi Partridge, frolicking on Mount Rainier in Washington State. She published Partridge's portraits on the mountain twice. One iteration (Fig. 42) shows Partridge crouched in a shallow pool of water. His body is turned away from the camera, and his shaggy hair conceals his face. His muscular arm reaches to graze the water, a gentle gesture reminiscent of Brigman's photograph, *The Bubble* (Fig. 43), in which a young woman creates this same triangular movement, reaching out to a floating, mystical orb on a still, shallow pond. The critical response to the images was that of disgust, calling her images along the lines of pornographic. The criticism was so adamant that Cunningham retired the negatives until much later in her life. One critic wrote: …. An artist takes her career into her own hands when rejecting the strict gender roles of the modernist aesthetic. How dare they as women—nature, the muse, the object—walk behind the camera? How dare they both take men—culture, the artist, the creator—and turn him into subject? How dare they make nudes that were not about their own sexuality? This twisting of the male gaze baffled, outraged, and upset critics because they simply could not look past their manufactured web of sexology and misogyny.

[195] The irony of the writing of a rape–fantasy of violently assaulting a sexually charged earth with metal, man–made tools, or photographically fragmenting the female nude into objecthood and not considering this pornographic was evidently lost on Cunningham's critics.

While there is a shared bond of trauma between women and natural world at the hands of patriarchy, the dichotomy of man as culture versus women as nature is an antiquated notion which rejects the expanse of gender expression and identity. In present day, where Western culture has begun to realize and accept that binary gender is a cultural notion, how does this change the way that art like Brigman's is viewed?[196] Should it be viewed as essentialism? By removing the sexual connotations with her gender and throwing out the traditional gender roles of her models, does it negate the feminine connectedness to nature established through the trauma of patriarchy? Not necessarily. One of the commonly understood truths about lies; when it is repeated enough, when enough people believe it, it does become true. It is true that western capitalism and the patriarchy have pressured men to remove themselves from the "feminine" nature in favor of the "masculine" culture, and it is true that women are indoctrinated with the notion that they are, because of their reproductive organs, less than "culture" and anima-like, aligned more with the natural world than men. What Brigman's *Pan* and Cunningham's *Roi on Mount Rainer* show viewers, is that people born with penises have just as equal connection to the power and mythology of the natural word than people born with uteruses do. It is, rather, the Euro–centric notion of gender as a binary, and the negation of non-white culture is the marker of essentialism, not the works of art discussed within this thesis.

[196] In her book *The Death of Nature,* Merchant cites that early gnostic Christians described God as an androgynous deity, and prayed to both a divine mother and father, interpreting that God created Man and Woman within their own image. What would have happened had this non–binary God remained?

Conclusion: Long Live the Feminine Divine

It is not a large leap to suggest that Anne Brigman is a matriarch of feminine-centric and feminist photography and large influence over canonical photo history. The artistic haven that she cultivated at Brockhurst remained long after her departure from Northern California, as it became the founding site for the f.64 movement. In the mid 1920s, not long before her move to the southern coast, Brigman was photographed at a party (Fig. 44) surrounded by her younger artist friends. These artists were, among others, Imogen Cunningham, Roi Partridge, Dorothea Lange, Edward Weston, Roger Sturtevant, and Johan Hagemeyer.[197] These artists, specifically Lange, Cunningham, and Weston, would become household names in photo history. These young people on the cusp of their fame playfully, dramatically throw themselves at the feet of the costumed Brigman, who is wrapped in a sheet resembling a long robe and a flimsy cardboard corona around her head slightly askew.[198] Stein writes, "…Brigman pursued photography and life with uncommon abandon…Anne of the crooked halo and of equally self-fashioned photography remained (the f.64 movement's) local patron saint, and in other more material ways she figured an enabling patron to the next generation of artistically–committed West Coast photographers."[199] Through her mentorship and leaving Brockhurst to these young artists, Brigman's matriarchal lineage even can be traced to the most famous group of photographers to date, and the most popular photographer whose work decorates almost every nature calendar; Ansel Adams and the f.64 Movement.

What is particularly remarkable about Brigman's work is that, unlike Watkins, or O'Sullivan's marketing and documentary-centered approach to their "views" of the landscape,

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[197] Stein, "Seeing Straight," 122.
[198] A recreation of her character in *The Heart of the Storm* perhaps?
[199] Stein, "Seeing Straight," 123.

and different from Stieglitz's and the modernist view on the landscape, is that Brigman wanted nothing from it. She did not photograph the land as a space to physically possess, or to take resources from. She made images of her body in the wild to show friendship between the emancipated, empowered body, and the divine landscape that she was so passionate to live in. This reverence for the Earth and the display of a sacred, symbiotic bond between body and earth without draining the resources of one for the success of the other rejects the role of patriarchally driven capitalism and manifest destiny on photographic history, and it positively influenced generations of photographers that came after her. Brigman's relentless pursuit of the spiritual unification and feminist liberation through the merging of earth and body can be traced across multiple threads of photographic history. Anne Brigman's story is not finished, and neither is tracing the lineage of women and other historically marginalized people who have been purposefully excluded from art history. The feminine divine manifesting through female artists are scattered throughout art history, and their effects in their entirety are yet to be uncovered.

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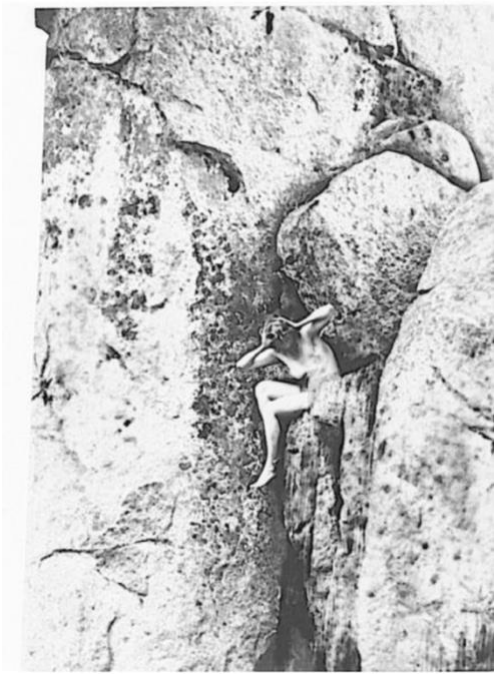

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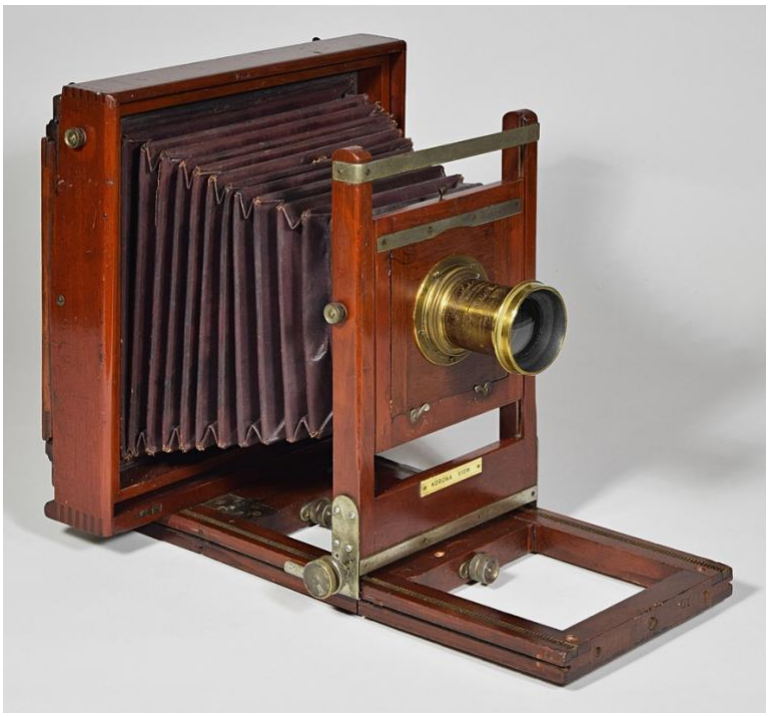

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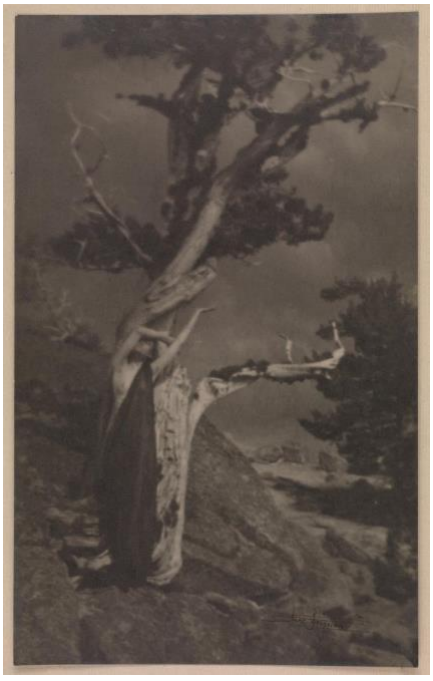

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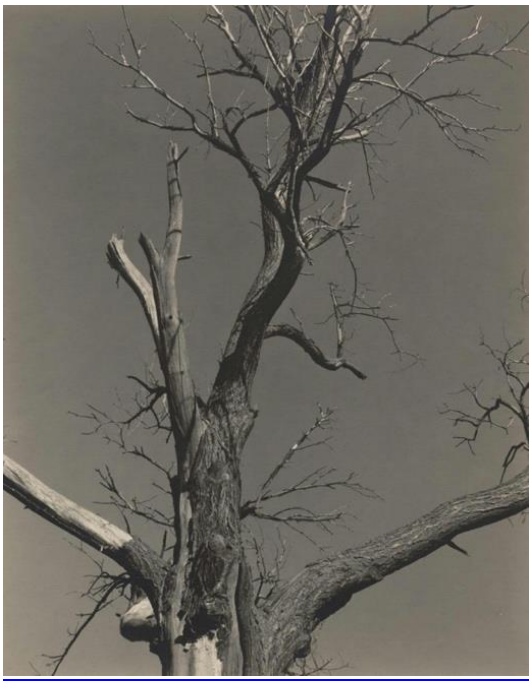

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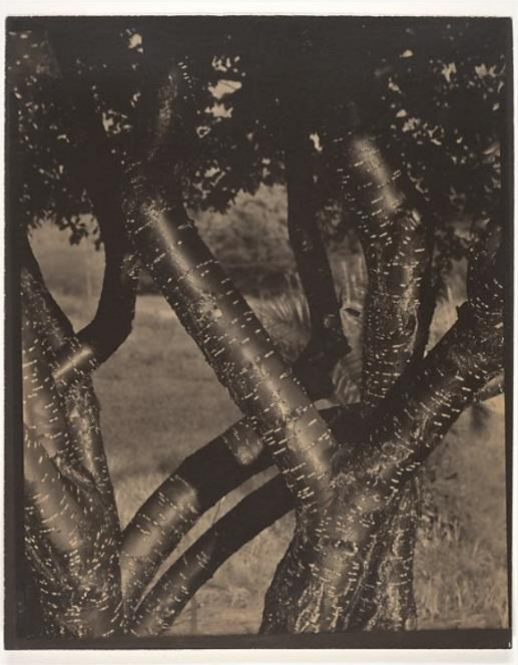

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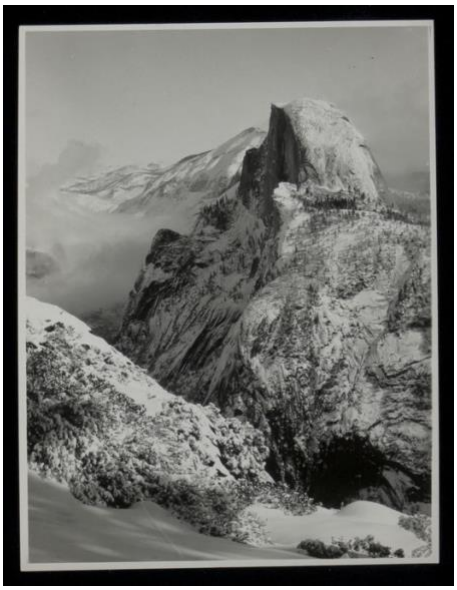

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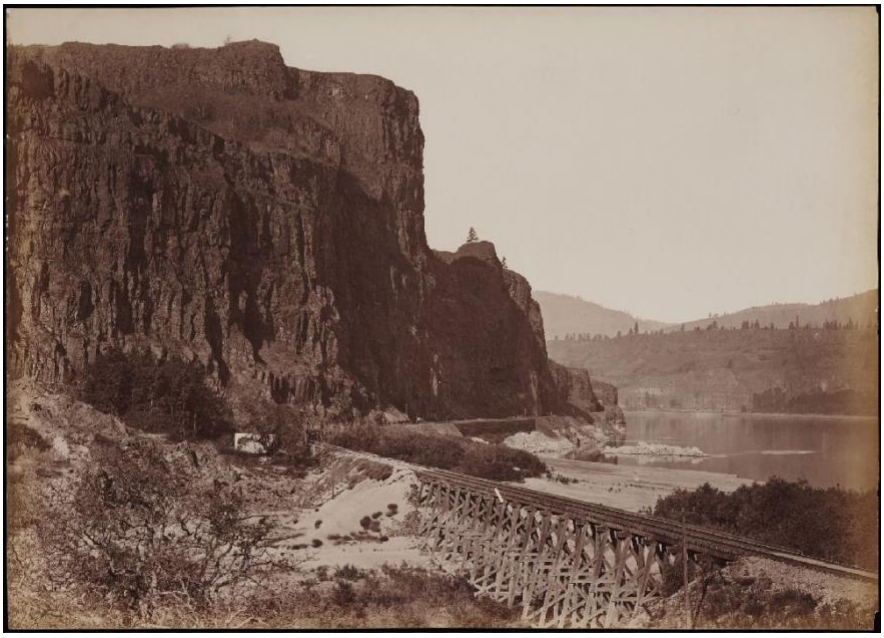

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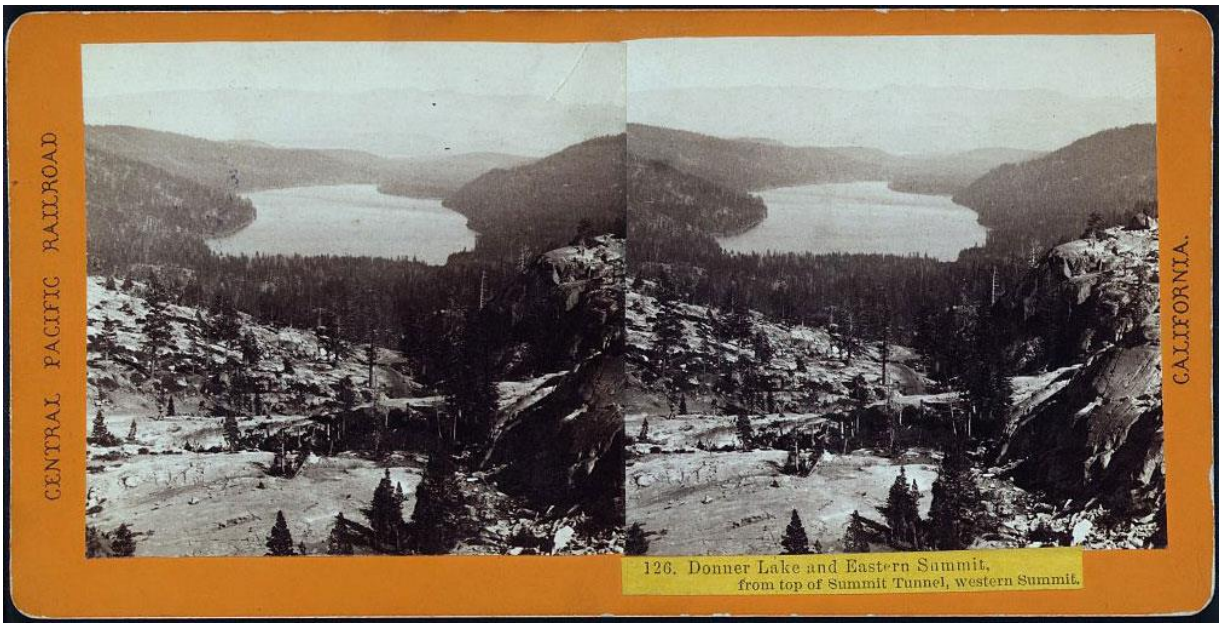

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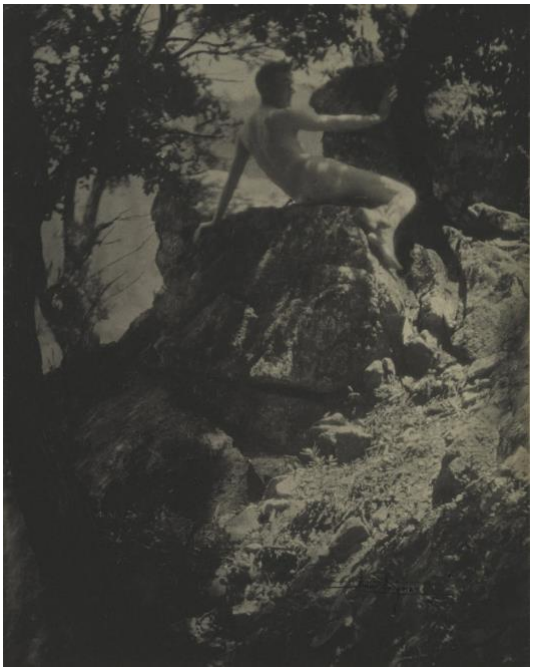

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