

Nancy Newhall and Environmentalism:  
Art, Activism, and Land Preservation

by

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## ABSTRACT

During the politically charged period between the 1950s and 1970s in the United States, Nancy Newhall emerged as an important advocate for open space. She began traveling to the West which encouraged her dedication to land preservation and invigorated her enthusiasm for photography. Newhall was already a respected curator and author addressing the communicative roles of photographs. After spearheading groundbreaking museum retrospectives of contemporary photographers she expanded her artistic vision to include conservation activism. The notable photographers, scholars, writers, and politicians with whom she collaborated often overshadowed her contributions, and they have been under celebrated until recently. My project studies her efforts on a quintessential Sierra Club publication from 1960. While considering her book titled *This Is The American Earth* I was led to insightful explorations of her unique approach to contextualizing photographs. My investigations revealed the impact that the work of Nancy Newhall had on land preservation, alongside her prolonged influence on the acceptance of photography as fine art and a resilient device of communication. In *This Is The American Earth* her calculated, inspired approach, attaching text to photos conveyed stirring messages to readers and forwarded an innovative use of a genre that the Sierra Club willingly embraced. Working with its president and Ansel Adams, she edited, wrote, and published several popular illustrated volumes which brought an interpretation of open space into American living rooms. Her efforts produced iconic picture books that remain memorable examples of the mid-20th century conservation movement.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate my thesis work to my family and many friends. A special word of gratitude to my loving mother, Pat Wyman whose words of encouragement, fortified my resolve, and her support has buoyed me through my work.

I dedicate my work to Jeff Porter, who is always supportive and has endured gracefully with an open heart and mind through all of the trials and tribulations that accompanied my continuing education.

I also dedicate this thesis to my many friends old and new who have thoughtfully and patiently sustained me during the process. I will always appreciate all they have done, and for being there for me throughout the entire development. You have been my best cheerleaders. I am sincerely grateful to all of you.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Historically, Nancy Newhall's career has been overshadowed by her more famous husband Beaumont Newhall and her fellow collaborators. Yet her work was far-sighted and visionary and her accomplishments deserve further investigation. My thesis seeks to reclaim Nancy Newhall as a writer, editor, curator, and important contributor to the environmental movement. Within the civically turbulent time in the United States between the 1950s and the early 1970s, she earnestly joined a group of curatorial interpreters, gallerists, and historians whose aim was to influence audiences beyond the art community and broaden acceptance of photography as fine art. Her particular efforts powerfully expanded the allure of large format exhibit book series, which was a specific type of emergent publication. With her written commentaries and curatorial displays Newhall aligned herself with the environmental movement of the mid-twentieth century. Although the high-profile male personalities with whom she often collaborated held the public's interest, which had the effect of obscuring and hiding Newhall's essential roles and practical responsibilities. When she combined text and photography in an innovative and, at times, politically charged manner, Nancy Newhall amplified the presence of the "coffee table" book, a genre that grew in popularity and rose in status and power.

Writing thoughtful, well-researched biographies about notable photographers, particularly ones she knew well, such as Edward Weston, Alfred Stieglitz, and Ansel Adams, Newhall then extended her poetic voice, heightening her concerns about land preservation. Her advancement of multi-layered descriptive articles and books highlighting specific geographies buoyed the visibility of grassroots movements and their publications that

focused on conservation. Compiled evidence from available published literature and archival material serve to substantiate the value of Newhall's interpretive contributions in the development and cultural reception to these published mechanisms advocating for the protection of open space.

Although Nancy Newhall is well known as a scholar and she published important books on several key figures, as well as being the wife of pioneering photo historian and curator Beaumont Newhall, whose 1937 volume helped define the history of photography, Nancy Newhall has never received the recognition she deserved. Yet the work of Nancy Newhall was crucial to the development of emerging photographers and the wider acceptance of the medium with its individualist artistic styles. It is historically imperative to reclaim her position because she was an author, editor, and curator who was passionately in search of a deeper understanding about the inner workings of visual language present in imagery. She was connected to the earth on a visceral level, which led her to notable collaborations. The resulting creative efforts and their cultural impact on the public's understanding of open space and her wilderness conservation goals will be of particular focus in this thesis.

Nancy Newhall's professional life was spent thinking about photographic imagery and its place in society. Collaborating with notable contemporary photographers, including Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Paul Strand, Dorothea Lange, and Eliot Porter who all produced images of the West and beyond, she analyzed the expanding cultural functions and styles of their work. Her innovative and comprehensive evaluations elucidated these artists' photos, their creative processes and their production skills. The final outcomes were thoughtful, illustrated biographies about current up and coming artists rising in the emerging



photographic tradition. Unpacking Newhall's work connecting verse and pictures highlights her evolving individual voice, which recognized both the importance of the new large exhibition-style or "coffee table" books and considered their collective influence.

Her accomplishments are particularly pertinent in contemporary discussions furthering the public's awareness about early environmental and sustainable issues. I will explore how Nancy Newhall's connection to the land is pronounced when considering the volumes she edited and wrote for the Sierra Club, *Arizona Highways*, plus 5 Associates, *Aperture Magazine*, and the numerous articles she submitted to a variety of scholarly and aesthetically oriented publications. Examining her efforts to persuade opinion about land conservation opens a new perspective for research. Although she often worked in the background, her concepts pressed the environmental movement in new communicative directions. Newhall's innovations informed an ecologically concerned audience creating an elegant and accessible method and eventually activating increased public involvement. Her creative approach utilized text to supplement photographs which advanced the new and modern medium that became commonly referred to as "coffee table" books.

Nancy Newhall reimagined where and how photographic images could fit into discourse both as fine art and popular culture in books and museum exhibitions recognizing the potency and influence of imagery and its wide reaching properties for fuller communication. However, since her roles were often overshadowed by the iconic images and strong personalities of photographers about whom she wrote, notably Ansel Adams, Paul Strand, and Edward Weston, in addition to her husband Beaumont's pivotal writing and pioneering exhibitions of photography, her contributions failed to gain proper credit in the canonical treatise. The historical contexts of Nancy Newhall's work deserves more attention.

Her personal story, progressing from Smith College graduate and later becoming the wife of prominent photography historian and curator, Beaumont Newhall, and finally to adventurer and poet of the West is a fascinating journey. Consequently, deciphering her principal roles offers us insights into women's cultural leadership in the mid twentieth century and its historical significance. Clearly revisiting her inspired writings offers an opportunity to better comprehend the dynamic balance she maintained in professional and private circles. Judiciously reframing the wide variety of roles Nancy Newhall fulfilled makes it apparent that her influence is relevant to modern issues facing women and sustainability.

She was an innovative thinker who realized the value of text accompanying pictures to go beyond mere journalistic captions. Newhall's involvement with a publication and exhibition entitled *This Is The American Earth* proved especially fruitful. The book she published with Ansel Adams and the Sierra Club in 1960 demonstrates her decisive constructs using photos and text describing the communal value of open space. Published and archival material from the Center for Creative Photography enabled me to unravel Newhall's artistic and editorial choices and goals. Looking at her poetic approaches and the reasons they increasingly led to a modernistic view of conservation literature and its distribution expands our current understandings. Newhall's concept and her presentation of a conservationist mindset forwarding her novel approach to wilderness imagery are pertinent to contemporary views of eco-criticism and aligning closely with ecofeminism.

Nancy Newhall lived in an age of intensified feminist and environmentalist activism. As an engaged traveler finding respite and rejuvenation being outdoors, especially in the West her respect for the narrative possibilities of pictures deepened. Her background in art and writing enabled her to help codify the imagery of wilderness. Newhall's intuitive and

educated viewpoints about the power of photographs motivated her intrepid journeys as she closely explored the locales she encountered. Her written accounts about various geographies of the West drew from the area's pasts starting with the very formation of the land and its geology and continued through the natural records surrounding the flora and fauna. Likewise, she consistently connected the reader to the imagery by including narrated passages from prominent regional voices. Within these works, a disposition for the earth's steady order as a leveling force contributed to her social commentary and her egalitarian attitudes uniting humanity and nature were clearly displayed and intensified. I have yet to find any evidence that Nancy Newhall ever asserted herself as an eco-feminist; however, her professional approaches fit well into that contemporary philosophy, which was also developing. Looking at Newhall's undertakings through the lens of ecology and feminist issues toward the earth, offers a matrix to quantify her impact on environmentalism in the American West.

## CHAPTER 2

### FROM ARTIST, TO EMERGING PHOTOGRAPHY CRITIC, BIOGRAPHER, AUTHOR, AND EXPLORER

Nancy Newhall was a visionary, an adventurer, a scholar, and a writer. She was born in Massachusetts in 1908 as Nancy Wynne Parker and lived until 1974 when she was tragically hit by a falling tree while rafting on the Snake River in Wyoming. During her marriage to prominent curator Beaumont Newhall, from 1936 forward she spent much of her career quietly promoting photography and the beauty of wilderness.<sup>1</sup> She relished the freedom and exploration she discovered in the West and her fiercely independent spirit led her to jobs away from conventional settings. The Newhall's left the Museum of Modern Art in 1945 on differing dates because of a change in leadership and direction in the department of photography. Nancy had already been usurped upon Beaumont's return from military service. However after they were both dismissed and before arriving at the Eastman House, the couple had already decided that working on independent projects as freelancers suited their professional development."<sup>2</sup> Nancy Newhall's commitment to her professional and

<sup>1</sup> Beaumont Newhall (1908-1993) graduated from Harvard in 1930 after studying in the art history and museum programs, the latter with the legendary Paul Sachs. He earned his MA in art history in 1931. Nancy Newhall (1908-1974) went to Smith College and graduated with degrees in painting, English, and drama, in 1930. They met in 1935 in Massachusetts and were married in 1936. The Newhall's made their first trip West by train in 1940. Beaumont was hired by Alfred Barr, a fellow Harvard graduate to work at Museum of Modern Art in 1935 and later formed the Department of Photography in 1940. When Beaumont was drafted in WWII in August of 1942, Nancy took over his curatorial role in the Department of Photography in his stead (1942-1945). After leaving MoMA, Beaumont became the curator at the George Eastman House and rose to director in 1958. His classic book *History of Photography From 1839 to the Present Day* was first published in 1937, and its updated and revised editions remain in circulation. Nancy Newhall worked as a freelance writer after MoMA, authoring several monographs about contemporary and historical photographers, and began working with Ansel Adams on a series of publications contextualizing specific geographies and locations. Long overshadowed by her husband's career and that of Ansel Adams, Nancy Newhall can now be understood as making a critical connection between photography and environmentalism.

<sup>2</sup> MaLin Wilson-Powell, "An Eloquent Image," in *Nancy Newhall: A Literacy of Images* (San Diego: The Museum of Photographic Arts, 2008), 30. MaLin Wilson-Powell utilizes the names Malin and MaLin and Wilson plus Wilson-Powell during her authorships about Nancy Newhall.

personal goals becomes clear upon their move to the George Eastman House. Although she was not granted an official position at their new location in Rochester, New York, she immediately set out to improve the facility. Her previous curatorial experience at the Museum of Modern Art and as the leader of the “short lived and almost forgotten Photography Center”<sup>3</sup> offered her the foresight and understanding of the Eastman House’s potential. She began to work at the museum by accessing its contents which she found eclectic and in need of meaningful contextual organization. When they first arrived, Nancy Newhall described her impressions of the collections and administrative organization at the “House and grounds and an underpaid staff cowering in corners, plus shows of memorabilia such as heads and horns shot by Eastman in Africa.”<sup>4</sup> She continues deciphering the museum’s assorted objects as “Admiral Byrd’s and Mary Pickford’s cameras: two molting dioramas, and a dead advertising show in the former garage.”<sup>5</sup> She indicated in the following years, that she “helped restore House grounds, morale, and organize space for offices, shows, etc.”<sup>6</sup> It became a project that she devoted “nearly ten years, during which I [she] served as consultant on restorations, exhibitions, publications.”<sup>7</sup> The Eastman House also provided a home and strong foundational base where Nancy Newhall began an extended period of influential cooperative projects with some of the most important artists in the field of photography. Buoyed by determination and dedication to better understanding of the emerging mediums enabled by cameras, she contributed to the wider understanding by

<sup>3</sup> Beaumont Newhall, *Focus, Memoirs of a Life in Photography* (Boston: Bulfinch Press Book, 1993), 101.

<sup>4</sup> Wilson-Powell, “An Eloquent Image,” 36.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

becoming “One of the first to write about visual literacy”<sup>8</sup> Deborah Klochko expertly defines Newhall’s innovative process approaching visual literacy as “the importance of reading images and how text can change the meaning of images.”<sup>9</sup> Klochko observes that Nancy Newhall’s skills were “decades ahead of her time.”<sup>10</sup> Throughout her career Newhall diligently promoted photography through writing, exhibitions and publications. She organized the first retrospective of an individual photographer highlighting the photographs of Paul Strand at the Museum of Modern Art in 1945. Newhall was the originating author of the Sierra Club’s award winning “Exhibit Format” books beginning in 1960. Author Merry Foresta credits Nancy Newhall’s forward thinking about the power of images matched with allusive text when she wrote that Newhall virtually invented the genre during her work in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>11</sup>

Nancy Newhall began collaborating with photographer Ansel Adams in 1940, and they traveled working together on projects for *Arizona Highways* and the Sierra Club throughout the western states of Arizona, California, Nevada, and New Mexico. Focused on environmental conservation, she participated in a cultural phenomenon that led the grassroots movement to preserve some of the most important landscapes of the West. In doing so, Newhall proposed a new view of environmentalism with the publication of books and articles featuring photographs and text. These large format “environmental coffee table”

<sup>8</sup> Debra Klochko, forward in “An Eloquent Image,” in *Nancy Newhall: A Literacy of Images* (San Diego: The Museum of Photographic Arts, 2008), 5.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Foresta, “Introduction in Nancy Newhall: A Literacy of Images (San Diego: The Museum of Photographic Arts, 2008), 9.

books were capable of, as Sierra Club executive director David Brower said “what stone, space, and sky were doing for us.”<sup>12</sup> He and Adams discussed the importance of wilderness images which led him to consider “what could happen when words and photographs worked their magic together.”<sup>13</sup> Brower felt that the large volumes were “the most effective way to promote the cause of wilderness preservation.”<sup>14</sup> Fusing the words and pictures together was Nancy Newhall’s critical contribution in the development of what became to be known as the Sierra Club’s “Exhibit Format titles.”<sup>15</sup> The Sierra Club, founded in 1892 by naturalist John Muir, had become a persuasive organization abetted by its innovative call to action media campaigns. It put forward an ecological awareness and political prowess in publishing books, newspaper advertisements, and holding exhibitions. Comparing the club’s environmental stance and the significant contributions Nancy Newhall made to their overall vision with contemporary ecology and ecofeminism, deepens our understanding of her modernist expressions surrounding art and the environment. Since both ecofeminism and the Sierra Club are unified in personal and pragmatic experiential relationships with nature an analyses of Newhall’s iconic volumes suggests a broader understanding of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century activism.

<sup>12</sup> David Brower, *For Earth’s Sake: The Life and Times of David Brower* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publishing, 1990), 190. Brower was the first executive director of the Sierra Club beginning in 1952 and held the position until 1969.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Finis Dunaway, *Natural Visions: The Power of Images in American Environmental Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 118.

Nancy Newhall arrived at a personal crossroads between art, scholarship, and museum curation and arose as an important voice in the history of nature conservation in the United States. Newhall although often overlooked, was an influential woman in the developing environmental movement. The chronicle of her transformation from a historian writing about photographers to outdoor activist is a compelling one. Her impact on wilderness protection and her contribution to a national dialogue about the value of public lands was a passage of individual discovery and expanded connectedness to the earth. Ansel Adams described Nancy Newhall's ability to study a geographic location or topic and possess the aptitude to describe the subject with such accuracy and intensity that her written outcomes relayed a feeling of direct experience of place to the reader. With the publication of oversized photographic folios between the 1950s and the 1970s, she moved beyond the realm of editor to advocate for open spaces. Her knowledge about environmentalism was appreciated and far reaching and The New York Times professes it extended to national audiences when Newhall lent her editorial voice to presidential speeches concerning conservation given by Lyndon B. Johnson.<sup>16</sup>

Nancy Newhall's journey into art and literature, began in high school and furthered as a student at Smith College. As a single-sex school in the early twentieth century, it represented an empowering force during a time when professional options for young women were limited. Women's collegiate establishments offered supportive academic environments for mentoring and forward thinking. Administrations and faculties were principally concerned with the intellectual development of their students. These colleges became sanctuaries nurturing ideas and theoretical thinking from female perspectives for

<sup>16</sup> *New York Times*. (New York, N.Y) July 10, 1974: 40.



both students and faculty. It was within such a fertile academic setting that Newhall studied writing, poetry, drama, and painting. Graduating in 1930, she departed with an impressive portfolio of articles from editing and writing regularly and serving as art editor for the Smith College paper.<sup>17</sup> Her scholastic accomplishments also included fine art painting in the school's studio settings.

Her artistic pursuits led her to New York where she studied with painter Thomas Hart Benton at the Art Students League. Benton's interests in the "Middle Western School"<sup>18</sup> and expertise in emerging styles of modernism and populist attitudes helped Newhall cultivate her own Regionalist style which was a genre gaining respect and recognition in the 1930s. Her first one-person exhibition in 1933 opened in Boston to good reviews, and her explorations in painting gave her insights into the mechanisms of images and the workings of the creative process.<sup>19</sup> Newhall's early artistic practicum later aided her as she strove to develop a full vocabulary supporting her theories about visual literacy. She was well ensconced in fine art painting, residing at her studio when she met Beaumont Newhall later in the same decade.

<sup>17</sup> Beaumont Newhall, *Focus, Memoirs of a Life in Photography* (Boston: Bulfinch Press Book, 1993), 34.

<sup>18</sup> The Middle Western School was linked with Benton because of a 1934 article in *Time Magazine*. Thomas Hart Benton was on the cover of the issue. It was the first time an artist had been honored on the publication's cover. The article in *Time* included two Midwestern artists, John Steuart Curry and Grant Wood. After the article's release, Thomas Hart Benton became known as the leader of the Regionalist Movement to the public. The Regionalists Movement turned away from European modernism and embraced scenes from America's heartland. Although he became associated with Curry and Wood who were very focused on the Midwest, Hart Benton's interests encompassed American scenes from the South, the West, urban environments, and the native tribes of the Plains.

<sup>19</sup> Beaumont Newhall, *Focus, Memoirs of a Life in Photography*, 34.

She and Beaumont were married on July 1, 1936 in Swampscott Massachusetts.<sup>20</sup> After pursuing art history and museum studies at Harvard, Beaumont was hired at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and eventually headed the newly formed Department of Photography. Nancy held degrees in painting and literature and her scholarly aptitude fortified her abilities to curate at MoMA in Beaumont's absence during WWII. In 1942 his conscripted commission was activated and his military service in photo-reconnaissance soon followed. He served in the United States Army Air Force until September of 1945. Beaumont later curated at the George Eastman House as Nancy's career grew in editorial capacities writing about artists and particular localized settings plus her museum work opportunities increased. While the Newhall's resided in Rochester Nancy worked on a large variety of books, publications and exhibitions.

In the March 1975 issue of *Image* magazine, Patricia G. Fuller's memorial essay gave high praise to Nancy Newhall's curatorial accomplishments: "she established beginning with the 1945 Paul Strand retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art the tradition in major museums of mounting retrospective showings of a photographer's work."<sup>21</sup> By the time Nancy Newhall assumed the temporary museum position, she was already one of the most qualified candidates available to lead the museum's new endeavors. The Newhall's shared collaborative careers exhibiting and writing about photography. Nancy Newhall's commitment to the medium was unwavering after meeting Beaumont and curating in the department for two years.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>21</sup> Patricia G. Fuller, "Nancy Newhall (1908-1974)," *Image* 18, no. 1 (1975): 1-5.

Nancy Newhall lived in an age of intensified environmental awareness. The Newhall's vacation trip by rail to California in 1940 introduced them to the West. She found relief and rejuvenation in being outdoors especially in the spaciousness she discovered on the excursion. On the journey she became acutely aware of the wild landscapes and their expressive powers. After viewing an exhibition in San Francisco curated by Ansel Adams and group *f/64* in 1940, she exclaimed, "Beyond question, photography was the art of the West—A new art in a new land."<sup>22</sup>

She was an explorer with a deepening reverence for the narrative possibilities of pictures and the growing scope of visual literacy. Newhall was shy, but engaged and her intuitive and learned viewpoints about the power of photographs motivated her adventurous travels while her explanations unraveled the enigmatic regions she encountered. Her written discourses about the visited geographies drawing from the area's pasts described the very essence of locations from geological and botanical development, through the cyclical lives of the creatures and the human inhabitants alike. Similarly, she consistently connected the reader to the imagery by including narrated accounts of local voices both historical and contemporaneous.

Newhall's quests traveling and working with Ansel Adams offer insight about her reverence for the earth and its outdoor environments. Their adventures personally introduced her to the great open vistas that Adams was relaying in his photographs, eventually driving her to consider the contiguous functions of photographs and text to influence political resolution surrounding land preservation and conservation. Their collaborative publication titled *This Is The American Earth* epitomized her efforts combining

<sup>22</sup> Ansel Adams, *An Autobiography* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1985), 166.

imagery and popularized text to effectively persuade readers to reflect on the importance of environmentalism.

The large format book *This Is The American Earth* was the extension and reconfiguration of an exhibition that opened in 1955. It was held at the LeConte Memorial Lodge which was the headquarters of the Sierra Club in Yosemite National Park, and displayed at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco.<sup>23</sup> First conceived as an exhibition to increase the public's use of the lodge in Yosemite National Park, it drew wide audiences and was well received and attended. It was one of many collaborative projects which became seminal achievements for Nancy Newhall highlighting her abilities as a designer. Her exhibition layout in the compact space in Yosemite strived to speak to a variety of contemporary preservationist theories. Philosophies which sometimes conflicted in their considerations of humankind's impact and habitation on the earth and its environments. She envisioned the museum display stimulating conversation to global audiences while relaying messages about the universal necessity for conservation. Speaking to her profusion of creative vision on projects from curatorial through final versions of edited publications, Ansel Adams described her resourceful capacities:

Always a pleasure to work with, Nancy possessed the ability of structured anticipation to a remarkable degree: projects from their inception would be beautifully conceived in their entirety. If we discussed a book or article, she could visualize the completed work precision in content, format, and design. In laying out an exhibit or a book, I wondered how she could memorize the various placements and sequences without notes or apparent effort. She had a permanent visual memory for what she saw in the world, in a work of art, or on a page of type.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Christi and Beaumont Newhall, "Introduction," in Ansel Adams and Nancy Newhall, *This Is The American Earth* (San Francisco: The Sierra Club, 1992).

<sup>24</sup> Adams, *An Autobiography*, 181.

The exhibit's great success led to a request from the Smithsonian and the United States Information Agency to circulate two additional exhibition copies for display throughout the country and beyond to international audiences in Asia and Europe. It acted as a new platform for land preservation and *This Is The American Earth* became an evocative vehicle for Adams and Newhall to illustrate their desires to further expand public land holdings. Their understanding of imagery was clearly displayed in the large folio with a rich variety of uninhabited landscapes, and portrayals of bucolic countrysides, contrasted with images of overcrowded humanity or industrially overdeveloped locations. It afforded readers both a glimpse into the wild and prehistoric past and a view of the perceived threat to the earth's desolate places.

Newhall's biographies profiling the artistic works, creative processes, and personalities of the preeminent photographers of her time were prophetic preludes to her efforts on behalf of the environmental movement. Within her intertwined memoirs about artists and their approaches to photography, methods and subjects, she attained a growing command concerning the societal impacts of realistic images. From these written and experiential musings she articulated a well-informed opinion about how captions served photographs and how photos served text.

In the inaugural issue of *Aperture* magazine, in a piece devoted to the mechanisms of text titled "The Caption," Nancy Newhall wrote what has been described as "one of the first important essays to explore the relationship of words and images."<sup>25</sup> Newhall begins her

<sup>25</sup> Beaumont Newhall, "Introduction" in Nancy Newhall, *From Adams to Stieglitz: Pioneers of Modern Photography*, (New York: Aperture, 1989), inside of front cover. In the 1989 paperback version of *From Adams to Stieglitz* a short and poignant introduction by Nancy Newhall's widower, Beaumont, is included inside the front cover of the book. Although an additional Introduction by Beaumont Newhall is incorporated in the proper text, the supplementary five paragraphs on the inside of the front jacket speak to Nancy's personality and approaches to her work.

essay by stating that “perhaps the old literacy of words is dying and a new literacy of images is being born.”<sup>26</sup> Her critical writing continues contemplating a new or fledgling language to describe the multiplicity of layers of meanings photographs offer to viewers. She compares the human intuitive reaction to music with the immediate visual recognition available in photographs. As a conduit for expression, Newhall wrote “Yet more and more photographers have discovered that the power of the photograph springs from a deeper source than words—the same deep source as music.”<sup>27</sup> The immediacy of thoughts relayed in images anticipates the very use of words before they can be verbalized is a thoughtful concept she aptly describes and adheres to throughout the essay. Newhall continued: “The art of the photographer lies in using those connotations, as a poet uses the connotation of words and a musician the tonal connotations of sound.”<sup>28</sup> Openly she is considering a creative solution to interpreting photographs on a level beyond the directness based exclusively on the subject of the composition.

Newhall’s respect for photographs and their approachability helped move her in a sophisticated direction about the nuance that words could add. She speaks to the supplemental quality beyond simply describing a photo’s content arguing that a caption can be “additive,” “narrative” or even a “miniature essay.”<sup>29</sup> Expressly looking at works from the popular midcentury *Life*, magazine, Newhall writes about differing styles among

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 136.

photojournalists and their uses of captions. In a photo story by Eugene Smith from the December 3, 1951 issue of *Life* Newhall observes:

The photographs, words and layout seem natural and inevitable to each other. The photographs are so intense that the photographer and his means of photographing become invisible. The words are so sensitive an extension of the photographs and the layout so clear and quiet that we ourselves are there, looking with our own eyes and hearts upon these people.<sup>30</sup>

She compares this eloquence with an assessment of alternative techniques also employed by editors: “Small wonder that most photo stories emerge with the marks of brutal confession still upon them.”<sup>31</sup> Newhall’s conclusions recap stating a “great photograph outlives any words that may from time to time be attached to it, just as a great book outlives many attempts to illustrate it.”<sup>32</sup>

Although it may appear that her loyalties lie with the photographer, she equally respects the editor’s duties. Furthering her narrative by speaking to such goals she reminds readers that they must remain practical and focused on the well-defined outcome, but the triumph is still in the creative editorial journey. Realizing that orchestrating and balancing ideas within a publication is a primary role, Newhall expands her stance including editors who can help the new and young medium of photography expand. She advocates for them to remain open and sensitive to the mediums needs.<sup>33</sup> She then advances the editorial roles to function as encouragement for the artists by fitting the job to the photographers

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

facilitating them to realize their highest potential. Her understanding of text and photography's abilities to empower one another are profoundly present in the essay.

Nancy Newhall's path towards more extensive editorial projects becomes pronounced when reviewing "The Caption." The progress of her critical analysis continually points to her wider understanding of the synergetic characteristics of text and photographs while highlighting her command about how these components can complement one another. The exhibition and coffee table book *This Is The American Earth* demonstrates her theoretical reflections and they are expressed with strength and clarity in both examples. Understanding her exhibition designs and editorial choices offers insights into the potentialities of the Sierra Club's large format books. The effects wielded on the environmental movement became a direct reflection of her responses to travel, her adventurous explorations of the West, and her collaborations. Publications referring to her Western travels with Adams expressed her research on localities stretching from Arizona, through New Mexico, California, Nevada and Wyoming.



## CHAPTER 3

### PRACTICALITY VERSUS PATRIARCHY: WOMEN'S EXPANSION OF DEEP ECOLOGY

People's lives and their relationships to the ground they lived upon were a primary concern in Nancy Newhall's activist writings. Connecting feminism and environmentalism is layered with implications about the complexities of women's affiliations with the land, and images of nature as female have long storied western cultures. The Egyptian Isis, the rejuvenator of life through annual flooding on the great Nile River; Pre-Hellenic Gaia, deriving an orderly earth from Chaos; and Eve representing the pristine, virgin, or untouched nature; and the resplendent verdant Garden of Eden, are familiar scenarios. Women as caregivers of the home and hearth endures as a powerful narrative linking them directly to the faculties of nature. Instances such as growing food in cultivated soils or gathering plants for family consumption have tied women's labors to earthly seasonal cycles for millennia. In New England traditions of female relationships to the animate plot were ideologically wide-ranging. In the Southwest the Corn Maiden deity paid with her life to provide subsistence for her fellow tribe's people, and the colonial wife's garden tending could earn her family moral fortitude through its God-given nourishing and plentiful success.

Amidst this multitude of images, the foundations for ecofeminism sprouted from women's desires to preserve the planet and extend dialogues beyond the confines of gender contradictions. Feminist advocates arguing on behalf of Mother Earth had steadily grown

from the women's clubs of the early 1900s into influential consortiums by the 1960s.<sup>34</sup> These women valued open space which they felt was endangered and that its loss compromised their rights to raise children in clean non-toxic healthy environments.

The mid twentieth century saw the upsurge of both the environmental and feminist movements. Female activists reflected and “analyzed the woman-nature connection from several perspectives.”<sup>35</sup> Theories of ecology appealed to women on a level of oneness with nature. Carolyn Merchant summarizes the conclusions of many women emerging in ecofeminism writing “a new age of consciousness, the Earth as a symbol of life, beauty, and spiritual fulfillment could regenerate respect for nature and reunify all human beings with other organisms on the planet.”<sup>36</sup> An updated set of symbols and language linked to Earth became desirable, influential, and intentionally compelled women to move away from misogynistic labels associated with nature. Ciphers that could reclaim the complementary power their interlaced connection to the earth held instead of common feminine associations with mistrusted natural phenomenon. Female anthropologists realized that in some hunter-gatherer societies women, men, children and even animals maintained a “dynamic equilibrium”<sup>37</sup> through ritual. Their discoveries enlightened approaches which upheld the importance of life for human and non-human group members. These newly fused constructs

<sup>34</sup> For more on this subject, see Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women, Philanthropy, and Civil Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001). McCarthy's book considers the historical roles of women's organized philanthropic actions. One hypothesis states that women's involvement in voluntary associations enabled them to build “parallel power structures” affecting public policy. The book addresses women's impacts on civil society through their volunteer efforts throughout the world and under differing governing, and cultural hierarchies.

<sup>35</sup> Carolyn Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 141.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

began to define ecofeminism in broader terms compared to androcentric patriarchal views. Women's theories expanded to include environmental issues of equity, justice, and fair ethics.

The term ecofeminism was not widespread in the art realm, where Nancy Newhall did her most important work, but gauging her accomplishments through these lenses proves insightful. Comparing her writing, curatorial, and editorial roles with principal theorists who have developed the tenets of ecology and ecofeminism offers a broader view of Newhall's environmental achievements. Origins of ecological feminism are found in *Le féminisme ou la mort* the 1974 book written by Françoise d'Eaubonne where she discussed the parallels between society's disregard for women and its disrespect for the environment. Her subsequent publication *Ecologie-Féminisme, Révolution ou Mutation?* addressed threats on the biosphere associated with energy choices, the regulation of women's reproductive rights, genetic engineering, and the intersection of feminism and ecology. d'Eaubonne maintains that increased patriarchal control over these issues caused a shift in societal dynamics and speculates that wresting control away from women resulted in regressive degrading ecological changes. Feminist writers were reconsidering their relationships with their physical environments and the theories that addressed human residency on earth. Women were reevaluating the male interpretation of ecology during the time period and broadening considerations of environmental components that were intertwined in their daily lives. Invigorated by their reassessments which framed their connectedness to the earth, mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and post-modernist ecofeminist authors developed philosophical doctrines aligned with cultural feminism which celebrated the pragmatic and organic relationships women uphold with the fabric of nature.

Carolyn Merchant emerges during this period by exploring and writing new and evolving views about female roles. She evaluates ecofeminist tenets in *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* and concludes that a suitable theory incorporates the pragmatic concerns of women for quality of life with integrated environmentalist outcomes that are better defined as “sustainable livelihood.” She utilizes a “partnership ethic” of four precepts to guide the livelihood model: equity between the human and nonhuman communities, moral considerations for human and nonhuman nature, respect for cultural diversity and biodiversity and inclusion of women, minorities and nonhuman nature in the code of ethical accountability.<sup>38</sup>

Mid-century 20<sup>th</sup> century versions of ecofeminism consider all of nature’s ecological systems combined with the human focused anthropocentric interests then brings them together into cooperatively sustainable models and holistic partnerships. It strives to move past the cultural romanticisms of pictorial images showing vast expanses of wilderness. Using the tenants of ecofeminism and mid-century ecological theory deepens the understanding of the Sierra Clubs and Nancy Newhall’s objectives. The attitudes became apparent in their cooperative publications. Ecofeminism examined and reframed the patriarchal models of industrialization’s resource management, empathic views of nature as objects, and symbiotic relationships to nature. Concepts defined by authors Carolyn Merchant, Aldo Leopold, Arne Naess, Marti Kheel, and Michael Zimmerman offer a broader assessment of Newhall’s place in the historical conversation about ecology.

Merchant is a Professor of Environmental History, Ethics and History at the University of California in Berkeley. Her research focuses on environmental, cultural and

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 222, 217.

philosophic histories in America through the context of Western history. Merchant looks at the interactions between humans and the natural environment and considers women's roles with ecology. Essays by Kheel and Zimmerman furthered my investigations comparing ecofeminism with Deep Ecology.

Kheel examines the connections between the biotic community of animals and the human concept of self. Her primary philosophical discourse in *Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology: Reflections on Identity and Difference* observes the risks that Deep Ecologist's necessitate when separating themselves from nonhuman entities of the natural world especially the animal kingdom. Her view of ethics offers an alternative and holist perspective through ecofeminism comparing masculine moralistic ideals that diminish individual animals while proposing an empathic inclusive ecofeminist philosophy caring for all beings. She was the author of seventeen different articles and anthology chapters plus the pivotal book titled *Nature Ethics An Ecofeminist Perspective* in 2008. As a foundering member of *Feminist for Animal Rights*, she was part of a group hoping to bridge the divide between animal advocacy and feminist outlooks.

Zimmerman is a former Director of the Center of Humanities and the Arts and a Professor of Emeritus from the University of Colorado Department of Philosophy. Authoring several books on ethics and ecology he approaches environmental studies from a multi-disciplinary understanding. In *Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism* he seeks to reconcile the two philosophies offering new forms of individualization for both men and women through their personal relationships with environmental degradation.

Arne Neass was a Norwegian philosopher who popularized the terms Deep Ecology and Shallow Ecology. Deep Ecology encourages humans to look beyond themselves to

greater understanding about the interdependence of all natural systems and the value of planetary biodiversity. In *Økologi, Stmfunn og Livsstil* or *Ecology Community and Lifestyle* Naess calls for people to solve environmental problems based on their deeper understanding of the complexity of nature. Naess promotes individual *Ecosophies* where each person delves into themselves and builds a respectful relationship with nature. Deep Ecologists believe communion with nature instills an appreciative attitude and shapes the profound comprehensions required to understand the interdependence of natural system and sustain them into the future. Naess was a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Oslo and an accomplished mountaineer.

Aldo Leopold was a leading American conservationist author in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Writing *A Sand Country Almanac* and *The Land Ethic* his virtuous regards for Americana's lands spoke to his familiarity with Wisconsin, Arizona, Sonora, Oregon, Manitoba, and Iowan landscapes. *The Land Ethic* extended his philosophical call for Americans to respect and treat the land with an ethical attitude. He spoke to "sportsmanship" as a conduit for wilderness conservation, which was fitting since he was a graduate of the Yale Forest School who eagerly joined the United States Forest Service in 1909. He became the supervisor of the Carson National Forest in New Mexico by the age of 24, and in 1922 was instrumental in proposing, developing and managing the first official wilderness area established in the Gila National Forest located in New Mexico. Can Nancy Newhall's publications with the Sierra Club constitute new symbols on the ecofeminist, land conservation, and environmental fronts?

Merchant reevaluates the initial male centered androcentric views replacing them with a "sustainable development" model with a holistic partnership strategy. It is a tactic that

remains person centered while considering the necessity to renew the nonhuman agents creating and promoting equality for all entities. Merchant's participatory organization emphasizes the human striving for harmonious and productive existence with the nonhuman entities. Similarly, Nancy Newhall's visionary work stressed an equity of partnerships between the communities both hominid and natural. Newhall wrote in *This Is The American Earth* "shall we not learn from life its laws, dynamics, balances? Learn to base our needs not on death, destruction, waste, but on renewal? In wisdom and in gentleness learn to walk again with Eden's angels? Learn at last to shape a civilization in harmony with the earth?"<sup>39</sup> The text sits on the first page of part five titled "Dynamics" and floats in large airy margins of white next to a pastoral wide shot taken by Adams, *Pasture, Sonoma County, California*, (c. 1957, figure 1).<sup>40</sup> The combination illustrates Newhall's encouragement that humans could achieve a balanced existence with nature.

Merchant offers one approach of a modern lens for comparison when looking at Nancy Newhall's impact on environmentalism in the mid-twentieth century. Newhall's accomplishments evolved to highlight her deep appreciation for nature and an improvement of "a new form of communication" which she called "photograph writing."<sup>41</sup> It contextualized and legitimized her message encouraging cooperation between nature and humanity. Newhall's interpretive text went beyond mere captions to lead the reader into reflective considerations about their roles with our planet. She exposed civilization's

<sup>39</sup> Adams and Newhall, *This Is The American Earth* (San Francisco: The Sierra Club, 1960), 48, 49.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>41</sup> MaLin Wilson-Powell, "An Eloquent Image," in *Nancy Newhall: A Literacy of Images* (San Diego: The Museum of Photographic Arts, 2008), 30.

dominating indemnifying trends toward the earth but softened the overtures with historical elements of humanity's rise. Her editorial choices often juxtaposed the heroic majesty of photographed landscapes paired with words about people's impacts on the unspoiled terrestrial space. She contrasted solitude in nature with societal interactions instilling the need for protecting the wilderness. Beneath Adams photograph titled *Yosemite Valley Thunderstorm* Newhall includes text confirming the historical rise of appreciation for wild open spaces replacing the earlier attitude based in resource development. Her chorological interpretations begin with tales about the West recounted by scouts, settlers, soldiers, surveyors, and early photographers. She continues marking President Abraham Lincoln's enactment deeding the Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove to the state of California for future preservation. The next passage reads: "In 1871, a group of men around a campfire in Yellowstone decided that the awesome phenomenon they had seen must never be profaned by commercial use, not even by themselves; these must become the nation's heritage."<sup>42</sup> Newhall reinforces their views with a short description confirming the 1872 congressional creation of Yellowstone as the first National Public Park.<sup>43</sup>

Although patriarchy prevailed in the earliest precepts of environmentalism it, laid the groundwork for the challenges of future ecofeminists. Principles of conservation based on the desire for human's ultimate consumption of natural resources founded much of land preservation in the beginning. Early preeminent authors and advocates of the natural world such as Aldo Leopold (1887-1948) writing from 1920 on rejected these beliefs and promoted

<sup>42</sup> Adams and Newhall, *This Is The American Earth* (San Francisco: The Sierra Club, 1960), 20.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*



a stance that nature would best be considered in a symbiotic relationship with humanity. He held the view that humans should look beyond land as merely property and progress because this notion led to “enslavement of a stable and constant earth.”<sup>44</sup> His views characterized “nature as a delicately balanced organism that humanity must relate to symbiotically” which opposed predominant conquering and utilitarian attitudes towards nature.<sup>45</sup> Born from the hardships of the Dust Bowl, a new self-conscious era arose in ecological beliefs and knowledge. Leopold illustrated his dedication to reside harmoniously with nature when he wrote *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), which was published posthumously, and told the story of the ecology surrounding his Wisconsin home. Leopold’s style led readers through specific environments by painting a narrated picture of the area’s distinct natural features. He portrayed the environs through the eyes of the native flora and fauna appealing for humane, ethical, and moralistic sensibility toward nature. His respectful attitude didn’t really anthropomorphize creatures and plants of the ecology but instead elicited compassion for their existence. With the 1949 publication as a “finale to *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold’s ‘*Land Ethic*’ defined a new relationship between people and nature and set the stage for the modern conservation movement.”<sup>46</sup> His writing helped define a fresh attitude toward the earth and humanity as a greater community and it capped his long public service in the Southwest for the newly formed United States Forest Service. Leopold’s sympathetic writing,

<sup>44</sup> Aldo Leopold, “The Conservation Ethic,” *Journal of Forestry* 31 (October 1933): 635, quoted in Marc Andrew White, “Alexandre Houge’s Passion, Ecology and Agribusiness in *The Crucified Land*,” in *A Keener Perspective, Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*, ed. Alan C. Braddock and Christopher Irmscher (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2009), 179.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>46</sup> “The Land Ethic” *The Leopold Legacy* accessed November 20 2015, <http://www.aldoleopold.org/AldoLeopold/landethics.html>.

although influential, still held nature at a distance of inanimate objectivity. Retaining the separation between earth's natural systems and its human entities was a question that enlivened discourse in ecofeminism.

In the 1970s, writers such as Arne Naess expanded previous environmental philosophies questioning human roles in conjunction with nature. His views became one of the starting points for the ecofeminist movement. Newhall reflected these emerging dialogues by including a passage stating "A new concept, that nature is wiser and nobler than Man, was shaping art, philosophy, science."<sup>47</sup> Similar to Leopold, Naess's philosophy was derived from his personal familiarity with the outdoors and especially from a woodland cabin in southern Norway he visited regularly. His consistent communion with nature informed his theoretical views because his singular experience remained an important component of his deliberations. *Ecosophy* was his version of self-realization that "advocates a psychological rather than a moralistic approach to environmentalism."<sup>48</sup> It is a movement known as "Deep Ecology" protecting the earth and rejecting industrialization's role on the exploitation of natural resources. Naess defines Deep and Shallow in terms of wider and narrower frameworks used when people deal with ecological conflicts. Deep Ecology is philosophical and dives into the depths of the issues while what could be termed Shallow Ecology simply skims the surface of problems. The possible outcomes are applicably different in their practical solutions. Naess and Deep Ecology's efforts speak about the overall connectedness of basic actions and their possible far reaching bearings. It is

<sup>47</sup> Adams and Newhall, *This Is The American Earth*, 18.

<sup>48</sup> Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue, "Introduction," in *The Deep Ecology Movement An Introductory Anthology*, (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995), xxii.

described by Michel Zimmerman when he writes “only by recognizing that humanity is no more, but also no less, important than all other things on Earth can we learn to dwell on the planet within limits that would allow other species to flourish and to follow out their own evolutionary destiny.”<sup>49</sup> Zimmerman’s interpretation of Deep Ecology resonates with ecofeminist idea’s although the patriarchal philosophy continues to endorse “relative autonomy”<sup>50</sup> from the other earthly residents.

Newhall considers the fate of earthly environs and the strong impressions they made on her personally. Her perspectives mirrored both empathy for the outdoors and a rapt desire to explore its vast wildness. Tactics when acting as a conservationist allowed her to wed her intuitive love for nature and her scholarly investigations of written and pictorial media. Newhall again regards the significance of uniting words and photographs because she “could not deny how deeply she was touched by the sound of a mountain stream, the glow of a sunset, the dew on a wildflower.”<sup>51</sup> Malin Wilson discussing Newhall’s command of the combined mediums communicative effects describes her process: “She was groping toward the idea expressed to Ansel upon the publication of *This Is The American Earth*.”<sup>52</sup> The publication demonstrates the profound capacities she had to fuse the concurrent theories about ecology with her individual flourishes of text and dramatize pictures in hopes of

<sup>49</sup> Michael E. Zimmerman “Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism,” in *Reweaving the World*, ed. Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990), 140.

<sup>50</sup> Khell, “Ecofeminism and Depp Ecology: Reflections on Identity and Difference,” in *Reweaving the World*, 133.

<sup>51</sup> Malin Wilson. “Walking on the Desert in the Sky, Nancy Newhall, Words and Images,” in *The Desert is No Lady: Southwestern Landscapes in Women's Writing and Art*, ed. Vera Norwood and Janice Monk (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987), 54. Malin Wilson and MaLin Wilson-Powell are the same person. The capital “L” she uses in her name later is correct.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

swaying readers. Although truthfully when preservationist consider nature's aptitude to inspire awe "in the grandeur of unspoiled wild places"<sup>53</sup> it, too, sustains the anthropocentric or human aligned attitude.

Newhall's appreciation for nature's intrinsic value and the power of its images was also influenced by midcentury fears about the Cold War, and it surely added to her resolve surrounding the hopefulness of land preservation. The anxiety of the nuclear arms race made her consider the redemptive qualities of nature and how she could impact the negativity that gripped so many people. Adams was being accused of unpatriotic thoughtlessness by consistently pursuing nature photography during the Cold War years, but Newhall speaks to the terrifying times saying in a letter to him in 1950 "I think we do it by powerful words and images. Man still has the capacity for faith and action; it is up to us to rouse it, to concert it."<sup>54</sup> Newhall was moving her ideas into tangential concepts. Her growing understanding was spurred by eco-criticism's greater comprehensions concerning the connections between human actions upon nature, and her sense of urgency brought on by the possibility of an apocalyptic man-made end of days. Although humanity and earth are effectively separated in the nuclear politics, they are inescapably tied to one another in destruction. Once again the duality of objectivity identifying the earth as the "Other" prevails in the conversation. Nancy Newhall steadily steered through a world full of dualities in both her professional and personal life.

Emboldened with newfound confidence and realizations from traveling to the West, Newhall continued curatorial and biographical ventures. Although she navigated in a

<sup>53</sup> Michael E. Zimmerman, "Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism," in *Reweaving the World*, 140.

<sup>54</sup> Wilson. "Walking on the Desert in the Sky," 54.

professional world dominated by men, she found her distinct voice in both writing and orchestrating projects. She began to gain force by editing and composing for illustrated books and articles about western locales such as Death Valley in 1953, Organ Pipe in 1954, Sunset Crater and Canyon de Chelly in 1952 and Yosemite in 1950. Her collaborations set her evenly in an ecofeminist camp, moving away from the accepted masculine hierarchal standards while she passionately pushed her agenda forward. In a patriarchal society her egalitarian attitude prevailed. When comparing the self-realization tenants of Deep Ecology and women theorists calling for new symbols to denote earth, it becomes clear that Nancy Newhall's collective altruistic and creative explorations met the philosophical identities of both. When she overlaid contextual enhancements to the meanings of images in *This Is The American Earth* her environmental goals were manifested.

Differing perspectives historically deviated when observing human roles and women's rights. Ecofeminist's saw the rise of patriarchal and masculine views of industrial development and privilege of place as limitations in a worldview that strives to promote holistic environmentalism. Marti Kheel examines the person-centered conclusion that ultimately elevates all humanity above the natural world. When theories are defined in both human focused anthropocentric and masculine androcentric attitudes, they continue to devalue nature. Kheel expounds on the scheme writing "under patriarchal society, women have been identified with the devaluated natural world, an identification that they have often adopted well."<sup>55</sup> When analyzing Nancy Newhall's writing in the Sierra Club's books, especially *This Is The American Earth*, her combinations of texts and chosen photos support

<sup>55</sup> Kheel, "Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology: Reflections on Identity and Difference," in *Reweaving the World*, 129.

the numerous environmental and feminists outlooks gathering momentum during the mid-twentieth century. The status of women in the book is fluid, ranging from the verbal renderings of “evil Lilith” versus “the lovely Eve” in the Garden of Eden through a full page image photograph titled *Famine, India* by Werner Bischoff of a hungry woman holding her baby.<sup>56</sup> The woman appears desperate and holds her hand out in a gesture appealing for help, possibly food. However compared with the numerous illustrations, historical references and conquering impositions of resource development deemed by the collective personifications of “He,” which represent destruction and demise of the earth’s natural systems throughout the publication, she becomes elevated. Thus, women ultimately rise above the conflictive image of males in the early presentation. However, as the book progresses in chronological consensus with the wrath of Europeans’ settling North America, her tone changes to “We” signifying all of humanity.

In the development of Naess’s Deep Ecology, he highlights the importance of policy when stating that “the ecological movement cannot avoid politics.”<sup>57</sup> Naess clarified his understanding of the overall connectedness of the simplest actions (like making and drinking a cup of tea) and their possible far reaching ramifications when he wrote if “I reflect on all these things along ecological lines and make my opinions known, I contribute to the strength of the politically conscious ecological movement.”<sup>58</sup> Nancy Newhall’s editorial and written contributions in *This Is The American Earth* categorically moved the book in a political

<sup>56</sup> Adams and Newhall, *This Is The American Earth*, 2, 6.

<sup>57</sup> Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle*, trans. David Rothenberg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 130.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

direction which fit with David Brower's intent from its inception. Brower felt his newly devised "Exhibit Format"<sup>59</sup> series books had potential on many fronts. Newhall shared Deep Ecology's gender-neutral opinion that America's obsession with production was causation for widespread environmental degradation. Her beliefs about its effects on the demise of open space were demonstrated when she used William Garnett's aerial photographs of a Los Angeles suburb advancing from leveled fields, through symmetrically poured concrete slabs laid out in close proximity to one another. The photographs were "initially commissioned in 1950 by real-estate developers to document their building project,"<sup>60</sup> and assisted them in assembling suburban neighborhoods quickly. Her inclusion of the rapid progression of devoured land faced by a picture of Los Angeles covered in a cloud of smog illustrates her power as an editor and commentator.

Her steadfast belief in the benefits of uninhabited land aligned with both the historical idea that it offered spiritual renewal and the more recent emerging desires to conserve threatened geographies. Likewise Merchant's holistic stance in *Earthcare* proposes that "a partnership ethic would say that, we, the human community, ought to respect nature's autonomy as an actor by also limiting building and leaving open space."<sup>61</sup> Merchant and Newhall's attitudes are similar regarding the importance of undeveloped acreage and the advantages it affords humankind's quality of life. Their approaches certainly look at feminist concerns but they reach beyond to consider the wholeness of humanity. Merchant notes that

<sup>59</sup> Brower, *For Earth's Sake*, 192.

<sup>60</sup> Finis Dunaway, *Natural Visions The Power of Images in American Environmental Reform*, 135.

<sup>61</sup> Merchant, *Earthcare*, 221.

partnerships are not gender specific but rather involve vision for “a new balance in which humans and nonhuman nature are equal partners, neither having the upper hand yet cooperating with each other.”<sup>62</sup> Nancy Newhall’s powerful editorial inclusions of photographs showing the mechanical exploitation of the land in *This Is The American Earth* beside her synergistic text progressed into a chapter entitled “The Machine and A New Ethic.”<sup>63</sup> For ten pages Newhall guides her readers to reflect on people’s need for natural resources through imagery and writing which chronicled American extractive industries and increased commercialization. Pictures of wagon trains, steam engines, grazing animals, logging, mining, soil erosion, and large scale farming framed her discourse on how humanity can cultivate a sustainable relationship with the earth. She concludes the pages with the wistful admission “that to any beauty we must come as lovers, not destroyers, come humbly, softly, to look, listen, learn, cherish and to shield.”<sup>64</sup> The passage was contrasted with a full page, stark and severe, but graceful black and white photo by Ansel Adams aptly titled *Moon and Television Relay Antennae* (1955, figure 2).<sup>65</sup>

The image choice of the TV antennae noted modern technological developments of a medium she was interested in when she wrote “Television and the Arts” in a 1940 issue of *Parnassus*.<sup>66</sup> In the article, Newhall writes relaying “central ideas of the program”<sup>67</sup> by

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>63</sup> Adams and Newhall, *This Is The American Earth*, 22.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>66</sup> Nancy Newhall, “Television and the Arts” *Parnassus*, 12. No 1 (January 1940): 37-38.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 38.



comparing the “immense pleasure in finding a brilliantly simple way of demonstrating a complex truth.”<sup>68</sup> She observes the power of “constructing a sentence with clarity” and “building up the wanted image in the mind of the spectator is a genuinely creative work.” She refers to the practice as “The presentation of art is art itself.”<sup>69</sup> Her integrated combination of the power of developing technologies with our place in the terrestrial environment is reinforced by her text saying “we descend into the sea, scale the last dread peaks, cross icecaps, dare outer space, seeking somewhere, in some last far place, our birthright, the wild majesty.”<sup>70</sup>

Women’s relationships with nature were considered by theoreticians more interactive than men’s. Ecofeminists maintain that women are more concerned about merging with biological systems, not separating themselves from the organic foundations of the earth. Both issues of reproductive rights and the ability to have children separates their perspective from their male counterparts. Similarly when Merchant recaps the World Women’s Action Agenda 21 in *Earthcare*, the Sierra Club’s ecological stance abides by the universal need for “environmental audits and impact assessments [which] must be made for all proposals before funding.”<sup>71</sup> The ecofeminist agenda declares that “corporations, the counterpoint institutions, organizations, states, and nations are accountable to the public.”<sup>72</sup> These ethics were the guiding doctrines of the original LeConte Memorial Lodge exhibit. Nancy Newhall understood that environmental issues deeply affected women in practical and ideological

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Adams and Newhall, *This Is The American Earth*, 32.

<sup>71</sup> Merchant, *Earthcare*, 219.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

ways. She broadened the dialogue by including photos and texts that spoke to worldwide problems threatening the planet's capacities. Overpopulation was a threat to open space, plus it questioned women's reproductive rights. A heightened perception of a population explosion that was taking place in the 1950s was well publicized. She included a photo by Ferenc Berko of *Bathers on Ganges* (no date figure 3) which was an overcrowded and alien scene to the American public. The photograph addressed the prominent concern of the mid-century while conveying a message of overextended resources affecting humans and Mother Earth. *The Population Bomb* (1968) by Stanford professor Paul Ehrlich and his collaborator wife Anne Ehrlich was published by the Sierra Club eight years later unleashing an outcry for zero population growth and food security.

Her first venture into the style merging vernacular voices with pictures was with photographer Paul Strand. The striking 1950 *Time in New England* picture book combined Strand's photos from New England with Newhall's choices of regionally significant and historic voices. The prints led the reader to a deeper understanding of the image or contextualized theme around the sequences presented. Newhall and Strand's collaboration's led to an edition of pictures and text which authentically represented the North East. The finished publication followed a retrospective of Strand's photographs held at the Museum of Modern Art and curated by Nancy Newhall in 1945.<sup>73</sup> Her corresponding text did not describe the associated image, nor did the image define the text, rather it was positioned to enhance the reader's individual experience of the locale illustrated.

<sup>73</sup> Beaumont Newhall, "Afterward" in Nancy Newhall and Paul Strand, *Time in New England*, (New York: Aperture Inc., 1950), 253.

In *Time in New England*, Newhall contributed reflections about the partnerships between women and their environments. Her editorial inclusions wove together the female settler's wonderment of the land and impressions of nature's bounty. Speaking to the immigrant's experiences, Newhall quoted from *A New England Girlhood* (1899) by Lucy Larcom in Boston who finds comfort in the river during her work days at a textile mill. When young Lucy is promoted to spinning, she "obtains permission"<sup>74</sup> to work near the windows and finds joy and solace from her scenic view; observing: "I kept myself occupied with the river, my work, and my thoughts. And the river and my thoughts flowed on together. Like a loitering pilgrim, it sparkled up to me and bore away my little frets and fatigues on its bosom."<sup>75</sup> Newhall also included Ralph Waldo Emerson's transcript from 1869 about his aunt Mary Moody who thought of nature as her companion. Emerson describing Moody's "attempts to wake up the soul amid dreary scenes of monotonous Sabbaths, when Nature looked like a pulpit."<sup>76</sup> His quotation of Moody looking at the stars just before dawn queries "when the eastern stars glow or appear to glow with more indescribable luster, a luster which penetrates the spirit with wonder and curiosity then however awed, who can fear?"<sup>77</sup> Amidst the conquering policy of exploitation in the early Americas, Newhall found and embraced female pioneer voices appreciating nature's role as agents for personal transcendence. Newhall's layout choices seated Strand's close up

<sup>74</sup> Nancy Newhall, and Paul Strand, *Time in New England*, 117. Nancy Newhall includes the story of Lucy Larcom in Part Three of the book. It is divided into subtitles considering colonial life and its relationship to nature.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 25. Throughout the book Newhall's editorial choices incorporated naturalist authors Emily Dickinson, Henry David Thoreau, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

photograph of the lush moss covered forest facing Emerson's recollections about his naturalist aunt. With Newhall's texts and selected photographs, the publication created a "new structure" that portrayed "in both documentary and artistic modes, the cultural landscape."<sup>78</sup>

Nancy Newhall's selections of women's voices regarding nature as facilitator for guidance, joy, and solace fit accordingly with emerging popular environmental and eco-feminist's principles. Their emphasis on partnership ethic endorsed earth as an autonomous actor which benefits both human and non-human participants. The earthly edifices of rivers and viewing the nightly celestial skies were not dominating vicissitudes of the women's lives but were inspirational proxies. Within these works a disposition for the earth's steady order as a leveling force contributed to her social commentary and her egalitarian attitudes uniting humanity and nature were clearly displayed and intensified. Although these excerpts from her earlier work uphold an anthropocentric stance, they fit with evolving ecofeminist desires, to develop new imagery that capacitated improved care and respect for the environment. Newhall's version of environmentalism forwarded in *This Is The American Earth* offered a new symbol of humans' place on the planet. The book's particular typology moving rhythmically through images of beautiful outdoor places, domesticated or wild, to humanity's societal hardships prompts reader's emotive responses. The position is further accentuated with the addition of poetic verse that infers fuller meaning to the individual photographs. It asks audiences to ponder where they fit into the larger realm of their terrestrial localities. It challenges viewers with photographs of nature's splendor, contrasted with images of

<sup>78</sup> John Rohrbach, "Time In New England: Creating a Usable Past," in *Paul Strand Essays on His Life and Work*, 1989, ed. Maren Stange (New York: Aperture, 1989), 161.

ecological and human demise. The shift of perceptions creates compelling tension and communal conscience querying readers and creating new symbols to shape a modern template for ecological activism. In Newhall's forward in *Time in New England* she describes her editorial goals:

The usual pairing of text and photograph or the intersection of a sheaf of photographs at regular intervals struck us as monotonous. Apt or literal juxtapositions we avoided as static. We wanted an integration so complete that either medium could state or develop a theme...creat[ing] a portrait more dynamic than either medium could present alone.<sup>79</sup>

Her early book, subtly political and based on historical references, set the stage for later works with more rousing messages.

The Sierra Club and environmental movement embraced Newhall's techniques and they suited an emerging allegory in the eco-critical women's movement. Merchant assesses fellow eco-feminist authors considering new developments in codes representing women's relationship with the earth. They call for "A revolution in symbol structures" to help "transform the patriarchal-technological culture that brought about the separation of people from nature" and ultimately "lowered the status of women."<sup>80</sup> The symbolic fusion of women with nature is cogently expressed by Susan Griffin, who poses: "I know I'm made from this earth, as my mother's hands were made from this earth, as her dreams came from this earth and all I know, I know in this earth."<sup>81</sup> The broad acceptance of *This Is The American Earth* resonated with the new dialogue about ecology: "the importance of symbol in generating the emotional response that can lead the way to a new ethic and to new behavior

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>80</sup> Merchant, *Earthcare*, 141.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 142.

patterns toward the Earth and toward women is undeniable. A revolution in root metaphors away from “The Machine” which has guided industrial society since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, is now taking place in American culture.”<sup>82</sup> It was an evolution with roots in Deep Ecology, and it was now coming full circle.

Leopold’s early empathic view of the woodland environment surrounding his Wisconsin home, followed by his proclamation that the native land held larger corollaries beyond reliance on people’s eventual improvement introduced a new phase of ecological thought. Naess’s theories expand further our relationship with the earth. Although both men wrote from their personal views, their words offered readers a shift in perspectives about human and non-human entities. The women’s movement considered its place in ecological discourse and concluded that a partnership philosophy better fit their livelihood needs. A turn away from nature as object and separate from humanity was garnering strength.

Amidst these growing philosophies, the collaborative mission *This Is The American Earth*, which Nancy Newhall worked on with David Brower and Ansel Adams would become a marker in environmental conservation strategies. Her exceptional ability to guide, illuminate, and visualize such expansive projects expresses her remarkable foresight and deep commitment to land preservation. Newhall’s individual efforts plus her cooperative authorships display her thoughtful insights about visual literacy, its foundations, substructures, and its far-reaching implications for communication. Her explorations fusing text and photographs are a legacy that portray her most personal beliefs toward the earth and her knowledgeable approaches to professional art criticism.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 4

### PERCEIVED WILDERNESS:

#### THE SYNERGY OF WORDS AND PICTURES DELIVERING THE WILDS INTO THE AMERICAN LIVING ROOM

In Chapter three “Perceived Wilderness” I assess the mood of the country during the 1950s and 60s and attitudes toward conservation, plus the direct effects of Newhall’s publications on preservation. Evidence of her impact on an increased consciousness about open space driven by her high profile environmentally suggestive exhibitions and publications is the focus of the final section. Sifting through correspondence between Newhall and her fellow advocates reveals their deep-seated desire for land protection. She was part of a collaborative force working to both popularize protected land and influence its impending responsible management. Her efforts are pronounced when exposing the connections and inner workings of this close knit group of artists and advocates whom she joined as an author and editor. The heritage and rise of the Sierra Club as an important strategist and voice for conservation policy continues to capture the imagination of scholars and historians. As an innovative template for future organizational fund raising, the grass roots movement gained a nimble reputation by appealing to the public beyond conservation activists. How Nancy Newhall’s work contributed to the effort is an important enquiry.

The conclusions will stem from my research looking for answers to questions surrounding Nancy Newhall’s impact on environmentalism in the mid-twentieth century. Her extensive legacy of written analogies about photography helped widen art historians’ understanding of visual literacy. Photography served as her vehicle to better comprehend the emerging media, while she engaged viewers and afforded the public and artists an enhanced

understanding of the cultural properties of imagery. It is impossible in one project to review Newhall's wealth of written analysis about visual literacy and especially the art done by photographers. Thus, my focus rests within her power to impress on Americans the importance of open space in the West.

To further understand Newhall's work writing about the history of photography, its emerging modernist artists, all of whom are photographers, and her use of texts to enhance the pictorial messages, requires an understanding of her depth of knowledge about photography combined with her generous respect for words. In 1960 with the release of the Sierra Club book entitled *This Is The American Earth*, she drew a much wider audience. Newhall, Ansel Adams, and the club's president, David Brower, had worked together to bring the publication to fruition.<sup>83</sup> This celebrated book became a cultural icon which underscored their expertise surrounding the power of artistic landscape photos combined with symbolic verse. It also worked to establish and cultivate a particular style of inspired communication. The book was an early example in a series of provocative works completed by the grassroots environmental club integrating ecologically sensitive texts and images.<sup>84</sup> Newhall as a scholar and historian, was already a respected author who wrote passionately about photography and its practitioners. With an expanding career, her focus grew beyond insightful biographies of photographers and chronicles about their processes to include original writing and editing realizing her particular creative vision, which ultimately portrayed her sincere love of nature. The heart of these realizations came through weaving text and art

<sup>83</sup> Adams and Newhall, *This Is The American Earth*, xii.

<sup>84</sup> *This Is The American Earth 1955 Exhibit and 1960 Book*, Sierra Club Environmental Education Program, LeConte Memorial Lodge, <http://sierraclub.org>, last accessed January 10, 2015.



together to create a new genre, which is now very familiar and accepted in its modernity.<sup>85</sup> During the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, Newhall and Adams shared in the Sierra Club's successes by editing, collaborating, and writing for the organizations "Exhibit Format" books.<sup>86</sup> These large oversized volumes were comprised of full-page glossy photos with inspirational words added for dramatic effect. The written content varied from natural and cultural histories to poetic phrases. The "Coffee Table Book" was thus launched into the public limelight.<sup>87</sup> The publications combined images with text in an innovative, lasting, and politically motivated new method. The impressive issue makes a political statement on behalf of her desire to preserve the wilderness she had experienced and loved, plus it gave her a platform with the Sierra Club's help to bring her environmental stance to the greater public.

Newhall's deft editorial capacities matching photos and text was gaining force, as her focused environmental expression clarified. She was developing a literary style incorporating her interests in the power of images, the differences between art and journalistic photos, her affection for nature, and a modernist aesthetic in photography. Newhall wisely forged into this new territory seeking a well-rounded mode of exploration by consulting with her circle of knowledgeable intellectual and articulate friends. Many members of her network were professional artists, curators, critics, and writers. Their joint discussions were insightful and central to accommodate the wide breadth of the enigmatic "portraits of place" she was striving to capture.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Dunaway, *Natural Visions*, 118.

<sup>88</sup> Wilson-Powell, "An Eloquent Image," 31.

We learn from MaLin Wilson in *The Desert is No Lady* that Nancy Newhall “called this relationship between pictures and writing ‘synergistic’, and it was closely related to fellow photographer friend Alfred Stieglitz’s idea of equivalence.”<sup>89</sup> Equating her scheme to his is understandable, since their conceptions of photography were closely aligned. From age sixty-five in 1929 until his death in 1946 she spent considerable time with him at his gallery, An American Place, discussing modernist styles. Since the turn of the twentieth century, he had established himself as an important gallerist and accomplished photographer in New York City. In his own creative work he included many photos of skies filled with clouds, which he called Equivalents. Nancy Newhall’s husband, Beaumont, wrote about Stieglitz’s sky works in *History of Photography* observing “that he put them in series with other pictures of expressive, often evocative, content and handling—a meadow glistening with raindrops, a woman’s hands between her knees.”<sup>90</sup> Stieglitz equalized these compositions “to his thoughts, to his hopes and aspirations, to his despairs, and fears.”<sup>91</sup> Beaumont Newhall wrote “this is the power of the camera: it can seize upon the familiar and endow it with new meanings, with special significance.”<sup>92</sup>

Nancy Newhall agreed with Beaumont’s knowledgeable authority that photographic images demonstrated new meanings and began using them to communicate her reverence for the outdoors and the need for wilderness preservation. Nevertheless, her evolving arrival at the defining possibilities of art was partially formed at An American Place under Stieglitz’s

<sup>89</sup> Wilson. “Walking on the Desert in the Sky,” 47.

<sup>90</sup> Newhall, *History of Photography*, 171.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

tutelage. Nancy Newhall's associations with Stieglitz, her husband Beaumont, and their friend and photographer Ansel Adams contributed to her discourses surrounding the medium. Passing time with Stieglitz she developed an interpretation of his concept of "Equivalence" to accentuate her writing skills. At first she felt the notion was romantic and frivolous, but after spending an afternoon looking through many boxes of his prints, she came to a very different conclusion. Nancy formulated a method to achieve an analogous emotional response by pairing photos and verse. Her aspiration to "potentiate the power of photographs"<sup>93</sup> and to heighten the emotional response was coalescing with the discovery of Stieglitz's boxes of Equivalents. Recalling that "there must be some way to lead those who don't understand those things. Dramatic antidotes don't do it, at least not for me."<sup>94</sup> Stieglitz advised her to "make your own Equivalents" advice she said, "still rings in me," then she said, "it has been the guiding principal of almost all the books and shows I have done."<sup>95</sup> In her unpublished manuscript and notes for a biography about Alfred Stieglitz, Newhall recalled:

It has been an extraordinary experience to observe how a different text or sequence or general context can change what people see and feel in the same photograph. Behind us all stands Stieglitz without Equivalents and their sequence concept, both of which are beyond journalism, we might never have done what we have done—perhaps we would have had to invent it ourselves.<sup>96</sup>

These discussions helped Nancy Newhall's efforts to congregate words to complement photos, as her views clarified, matured, her particular approach in achieving a holistic version

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Wilson-Powell, "An Eloquent Image," 27.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

of editorial synergy deepened.<sup>97</sup> She began to further develop her theory and use of the “additive caption.”<sup>98</sup> It would evolve to accentuate her individual prose and poetic style working to aptly guide readers.

Meanwhile across the West a growing number of water storage facilities were being proposed. The Colorado River Storage Project (CRSP) of 1949 had some of its dams and reservoir projects sited for construction within the boundaries of Dinosaur National Monument and the Grand Canyon. Early water projects conflicted with the Sierra Club’s posture on land preservation inside of the parks protected margins. In the early 1900’s in a remote part of Yosemite National Park the Hetch Hetchy Valley was slated for water storage to provide for San Francisco. Preservation of the secluded basin became the first substantial environmental battle of the twentieth century. The final loss of Hetch Hetchy in 1913 gave rise to the club’s newly emboldened environmental political lobby. From the ashes of the defeat “the lost cause of the Hetch Hetchy also motivated the Sierra Club and influential preservationists...to press congress for increased federal protection of national parks.”<sup>99</sup> By 1916, the National Park Service was formed to safeguard the parks. Stephen Mather, a club member became its first director. A quarter century old, the ecological organization began to understand its activist possibilities.

In *Still the Wild River Runs*, Byron Pearson observes that the CRSP was “breathtaking in its scope, this proposal called for the construction of ten major dams on the Colorado and

<sup>97</sup> Wilson, “Walking on the Desert Sky,” 47.

<sup>98</sup> Newhall, *From Adams to Stieglitz: Pioneers of Modern Photography*, (Aperture: New York, 1989), 141-144 Nancy Newhall wrote an essay for *Aperture* in 1952 (1) titled “The Caption, The Mutual Relation of Words/ Photographs.” In the essay she further developed and refined her views of the functionality of words accompanying photographs in a variety of literary vehicles from journalistic to artistic.

<sup>99</sup> Byron E. Pearson, *Still the Wild River Runs* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2002), 5.

its tributaries within the upper basin.”<sup>100</sup> These systematic plans represented a threat to the integrity of national parks and their status as protected open space. The Sierra Club actually reversed its 1949 position of an organization concentrating on public access for recreational use and advanced their posture concentrating on land conservation. Pearson understood the importance of the time period and The Colorado River Storage Project: “The 1950’s were a time of great ideological change, a period when, at least in the minds of many environmental advocates, encouraging the development of recreational potential of park lands would give way to viewing parks as the most available means to preserve wilderness.”<sup>101</sup> Preservation became a primary concern for many of the environmental conservation organizations. Pearson describes this crystallization and subsequent rise: “it is from this inauspicious position of having approved of dams in the Grand Canyon in 1949 that the Sierra Club would slowly emerge as one of the most vocal and successful advocates in favor of wilderness preservation and defending the integrity of the national park system during the last half of the twentieth century.”<sup>102</sup>

The Sierra Club’s aspirations broadened with the times. With a growing membership, and with David Brower at the helm plus his friend Ansel Adams close at hand serving the club as a guide, photographer, and board member, the Sierra Club would expand the organization’s communication strategies to strengthen its political impact. It was at this juncture that Nancy Newhall arrived ready to deploy her consummate skills for “photograph writing.”<sup>103</sup> She had been recruited to originally curate the exhibition for *This Is The American*

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Wilson-Powell, “An Eloquent Image,” 33.

*Earth* and later author the book. The Sierra Club's urgency spurred by the dam building proposals in Dinosaur National Monument had increased its visibility and controversy. The idea of an exhibit came in 1955 when the park service felt the club's LeConte Memorial Lodge in Yosemite was declining in public use which prompted Newhall and Adams to forward the idea of a gallery display in the space. Once again Newhall's museum experience from the Eastman House and MoMA would prove advantageous. In the tiny LeConte Memorial Lodge building interior, she and Adams would mount an exhibition that would eventually travel to venues throughout the United States and abroad. Josephine Minhinnett pieces the exhibition's travel together from sources both ephemeral and intuitively documented. Her schedule includes its well-known stops at The Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, and the Stanford University Library in 1955, plus museums in Boston, Rochester, and Albany in New York, and Norwich, Connecticut, through 1959.<sup>104</sup> The exhibition also visited a variety of studios, universities and art departments, plus historical, and horticultural societies among other public venues.<sup>105</sup> The exhibition traveled internationally to Cologne, Baghdad, Belgrade, and Tokyo sponsored by the United States Information Agency in 1957.<sup>106</sup> The history of the exhibition's association with the Smithsonian remains incomplete, although "they toured one copy of the exhibition beginning in 1956."<sup>107</sup> The tour itinerary and the USIA involvement infer its possibilities to communicate both political

<sup>104</sup> Josephine Minhinnett, "This Is The American Earth: An Exhibition and Book by Ansel Adams, Nancy Newhall, and The Sierra Club," MA Thesis, Ryerson University, 2014, 41.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

content alongside the originator's desires to save wilderness and to spread a message of its inherent value. The exhibit was a call for mobilization to protect wild places from eventual destruction.

When reflecting on Nancy Newhall's interests in nature and considering the texts she selected for the show and book, we gain a greater comprehension of how *This Is The American Earth* epitomized her mindful pairings. Her rigorous standards and creative vision were demonstrated in her poetic writing and lyrical expression arguing on behalf of wilderness. The exhibition was a legacy that would markedly move her work beyond art photography and into environmentalism. Her strategy used more than 100 works, including Adams and 32 additional photographers, which were displayed with the text panels she wrote. The exhibit was successful, possibly based on the sheer numbers of park patrons. But Nancy Newhall had ingeniously treated the small space at LeConte Memorial Lodge by crafting a continuing concentric circle which directed visitors. A guide suggested the sequence to realize a complete grasp of the intended message: "The purpose of this exhibit *This Is The American Earth* is not only to present the natural scene in terms of National Parks and wilderness areas, but also to give perspective to the whole vast pattern of conservation."<sup>108</sup> Further, the brochure said "the exhibit suggests the enormous inspirational potential of the natural scene, and pleads for wise forest protection and use, for the cautious building of dams, for understanding of management of the soil, and for the protection of wildlife. It strives for continuation of the wilderness mood, the spiritual experience of young

<sup>108</sup> *This Is The American Earth 1955 Exhibit and 1960 Book*, LeConte Memorial Lodge, <http://sierraclub.org>, last accessed January 10, 2015. *This Is The American Earth* was originally an exhibition held at the LeConte Memorial Lodge in Yosemite National Park during 1955. The photographs exhibited were by Ansel Adams but also drew from Nancy Newhall's knowledge of works by fellow artists at the George Eastman House and The Museum of Modern Art. Nancy and Beaumont Newhall had worked at both facilities in curatorial and design roles.

and old in the presence of nature.” Her message was passionate, thoughtful and thoroughly researched.

In New York researching for the exhibition during the summer of 1954, she studied conservationist writings and conferred with a number of leading ecology enthusiasts about her passage choices to accompany the photographs. Her personal connection with the topic progressed during these preparations. In the fall of 1954 she wrote in a letter to Adams that “Man is part of Nature,” concluding:

If we are, so far as we can perceive or judge, the highest expression of Nature—a postulate that might be doubted—why does that imply that therefore everything from atom to universe must revolve around us to our benefit alone? It seems to me we are just the contemporary heirs to the position held in past eons by trilobites and dinosaurs—and we may well be treading on our successors.<sup>109</sup>

Her respectful trepidations seem visionary and modern in their resonance with emerging tenets of partnership ethics striving for “possibilities of non-dominating relationships between human and nonhuman nature.”<sup>110</sup>

Describing Newhall’s efforts in the exhibition, David Brower wrote she had “added words where they needed to be to assure that that voice and image reinforced each other, creating a whole new dimension that neither could evoke by itself. There is no point in trying to get words alone, on this page, to tell you what the counterpoint was like. It was a symphony. It moved people.”<sup>111</sup> It impressed the U.S. Information Agency, and the California Academy of Sciences, plus Stanford University also sponsored its presentation,

<sup>109</sup> In a letter Nancy Newhall wrote to Ansel Adams in 1954 quoted in Jonathan Spaulding, *Ansel Adams and the American Landscape, A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 290.

<sup>110</sup> Merchant, *Earthcare*, 222.

<sup>111</sup> David Brower, *For Earth’s Sake The Life and Times of David Brower*, 191.



and the Smithsonian packaged it for circulation around the country. From the great successes of the exhibition the book was born.

The exhibition's achievement afforded Nancy Newhall overall control with editorial, design, content and decision making over the book's development. *This Is The American Earth* became a critical marker in ecological awareness. Her nuanced voice gained momentum in the large format publications. Wilson-Powell describes Newhall's vision for the exhibit format book as symphonic in structure, and rhythmic in prose, she calls the "chapter division's musical movements."<sup>112</sup> The volume's visual language moved between close up pictures and large panoramic views. She contrasted intimate likenesses of nature with vast scenes and far horizons, the long views acting as divine agents on behalf of open space translated into calls for its preservation. The pictorial planes were open and wide relaying nature's immensity. Photos of the natural world both near and distant held few boundaries only the composition's edge at their margins. The pages bore Nancy Newhall's "hard won experience, her keen perception, and her convictions about wilderness, photography, wholeness, America, humanity and God."<sup>113</sup> Newhall had "gathered such a broad scope of photographs and ideas" creating an apogee of transfiguration by punctuating the images with inspirational texts.<sup>114</sup> It weaves back and forth through complex notions about life on earth and our impending stewardship of wilderness. The photographs with the words and the words with the photographs severed together as agency to preserve all wild lands.

<sup>112</sup> Wilson-Powell, "An Eloquent Image," 36.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

Evidence supporting her work and its impact on the mid-century environmental movement were pronounced. In the book's forward David Brower writes:

*This Is The American Earth* epitomizes what the Sierra Club, since its founding in 1892 by John Muir, has been seeking on behalf of the nation's scenic resources and needs to pursue harder in the time to come. The book is by far the most important work the club has published and the debt is enormous to Ansel Adams for his inspiration of the book, his photographs, and his guidance, and to Nancy Newhall for the organization of the book and the power of its text. It is a stirring book.<sup>115</sup>

Accolades of the publication were noted by many respected followers of the conservation movement but the attention it garnered was much broader. Brower first explains the process and mindset needed to move the influential exhibition into book format. The imposing 10 ¼ x 13 ½ inch size was key to marketing the publication but also spoke to the complexities of the display at LeConte Memorial Lodge. Brower's opinion about the effect of "coffee table books" with their large pages full of photographs was clearly shaped when he wrote what was needed was "a format large enough to accommodate images big enough to require that your eyes roam them and to tempt you to dive in and swim."<sup>116</sup>

Brower also mentions the need to request of the "U.S. Register of Copyrights to agree to our moving the title page well into the book following a several page prelude."<sup>117</sup> This allowed Nancy Newhall to summon readers immediately into a wide tranquil landscape by Adams. It is an editorial style very familiar to audiences today and often employed by contemporary advertisers. Not all of the Sierra Club books that were published before or after *This Is The American Earth* use similar editorial formatting, but Newhall's decision to

<sup>115</sup> Brower, forward in Adams and Newhall, *This Is The American Earth*, xviii.

<sup>116</sup> Brower, *For Earth's Sake The Life and Times of David Brower*, 192.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

begin with a series of four dramatic landscapes by Adams plus close ups of fern leaves by Adams and an arctic tern in flight by Porter relayed messages of fragility and strength. The earthly perspectives in the eight pages before the double leaf title page began the book's dialogue about public awareness and responsibility. Using her "photograph writing"<sup>118</sup> matching text with images, she immediately appeals to the reader: "This, as citizens, we all inherit. This is ours, to love and live upon, and use wisely down all generations of the future."<sup>119</sup> The words accompany a large photo almost filling both plates, but leaving a wide enough margin to make her early statement.<sup>120</sup> She continues the tone on the following leaf:

In all the centuries to come. Always we must have water for dry land, rich earth beneath the plow, pasture for flocks and herds, fish in the seas and streams, and timber in the hills. Yet never can Man live by bread alone. Now in an age whose hopes are darkened by huge fears—an age frantic with speed, noise complexity—an age constricted, of crowds, collisions, of cities choked by smog and traffic,— an age of greed, power, terror—an age when the closed mind, the starved eye, the empty heart, the brutal fist, threaten life upon this planet—What is the price of exaltation?<sup>121</sup>

Her convincing poetic passage is highlighted by "*Nevada Falls, Yosemite National Park, California*"<sup>122</sup> an image by Adams of a thunderous cascade filling the following page with misty waters outlined by sharp rocks and a single tree. Compiled these initial end papers make a powerful appeal with their textual content and visual context, before the body even begins. Brower's response to the power of the publication as a skillful marketer "designed a

<sup>118</sup> Wilson-Powell, "An Eloquent Image," 30.

<sup>119</sup> Adams and Newhall, *This Is The American Earth*. The first 9 pages of the book do not include page numbers. The pagination begins after the list of photographers which is placed after the title page, copyright page, and table of contents.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

double-spread-size promotional brochure folded into an envelope that modestly claims, the most important announcement the Sierra Club has ever made.”<sup>123</sup> He continued “I believed it, and so did a lot of people-reviewers, editorial writers across the country, and book buyers.”<sup>124</sup>

Rebecca Solnit writing about fellow photographer Eliot Porter’s experience, defines Brower’s leadership abilities observing, “In David Brower and the Sierra Club Porter met a man and organization that had long put the aesthetic to political use in a way no other environmental group had.”<sup>125</sup> Finis Dunaway calls the large format and Brower’s desired outcomes as pages and images large enough that they required the eye to wonder, to not take in the image in a single glance.<sup>126</sup> Large enough to indulge the “dynamic” of the picture.<sup>127</sup> Dunaway noted, “He became more and more convinced that the coffee table book was the most effective way to promote the cause of wilderness preservation”<sup>128</sup> It became one of the most persuasive vehicles campaigning on behalf of wilderness preservation. The Wilderness Bill crept through congress until its passage in 1964. By the time of its legislation the Sierra Club had already successfully used a photographic exposés to defend Echo Park in Dinosaur National Monument. The Yampa River was the last free flowing uncontrolled section of water left in the upper Colorado River basin and a dam project in Echo Park threatened its

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Rebecca Solnit, “Eliot Porter as an Environmentalist and Artist,” in *A Keener Perspective, Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*, ed. Alan C. Braddock and Christopher Irmscher (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2009), 222.

<sup>126</sup> Dunaway, *Natural Visions*, 118.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

wildness and public access. With the publication of *This is Dinosaur* in 1955 and its distribution throughout the legislative body and its eventual influence on a vote to kill the water storage project, the Sierra Club felt encouraged about the power of publishing. Books allowed the club to “rather than acting on the defensive, trying to protect a particular wilderness from a dam or some other threat, they would take the offensive.”<sup>129</sup>

Nancy Newhall’s decision to work on the large format exhibition series encouraged her experimental voice interlacing text and photographs. Pairing words with photos throughout *This Is The American Earth* gave her a hopeful conduit on behalf of the conservation movement. Since the book’s goals were to heighten the public’s awareness about the value of open space she employed a tactic that displayed the joys of wild places contrasted with midcentury concerns that compromised its preservation. Her editorial message used chronology from the beginning of time, through humanity’s rise, to the contemporary mechanized society with the inexhaustible production of man, to the dynamics of survival, and ended with the importance of nature’s bounty if left untouched. The chapters of the book reflected her fearless passion.

Her well-practiced collaborative efforts with Adams fusing words and photos had begun in 1952 on projects for *Arizona Highways*.<sup>130</sup> Newhall and Adams were not always completely satisfied with the final outcomes for *Arizona Highways*, but “if nothing else, he and Newhall appreciated the income and the opportunity to hone their collaborative skills.”<sup>131</sup> By contrast, Brower felt that the first book in the exhibition series “should be of

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>130</sup> Jonathan Spaulding, *Ansel Adams and the Landscape: A Biography*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 273.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 275.

the highest possible quality, an enduring and beautiful summation of the club's philosophy expressed in positive terms."<sup>132</sup> Their high expectations were fulfilled upon its publication in 1960 because it was "beautifully bound and printed, it had the look and feel of a fine limited edition."<sup>133</sup>

She had verbalized and editorialized "the Sierra Club's core message, the ideals of John Muir presented to a new generation."<sup>134</sup> Cécile Whiting writing about her skilled pairings in the earlier *Time in New England* calls the book a "multitemporal experience."<sup>135</sup> He further developed the topic:

Time takes three different forms in *Time in New England*, each of which attempts to settle with loss. First *Time in New England* develops chronologically to produce a historical past, which accepts loss. Second time stands still to posit a past that is also New England's present, which is to say that all is not lost. Finally, time looks forward to anticipate a future when New England will have been irretrievably lost in the past. In designing their book Strand and Newhall chose artifacts surviving from the past and propelled them back in time.<sup>136</sup>

Newhall employed a similar technique in *This Is The American Earth* with a more hopeful tone. She propels an image of rock art outlined by leaves back to the beginning of human appearance on earth. Her chronology is clarified by pictures of a *Spiral Nebula*, from the Palomar Observatory and Minor White's reflective abstract view of the sun in a pool of water surrounded by rock, titled *Sun in Rock*.<sup>137</sup> These images signifying the beginning of the

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 309.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 310.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 313.

<sup>135</sup> Cécile Whiting, "A New England Lament: Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand in the 1940s," *The Art Bulletin*, 89, no 4 (December, 2007): 797-814, 807.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 807.

<sup>137</sup> Adams and Newhall, *This Is The American Earth*, 1.

planet, she subsequently launches into the hominids' earthly arrival, leading quickly into the rise of great ancient civilizations. It is a prompt statement about humans' prominence on the planet. The ephemeral ten-page chapter titled "Brief Tenant" sets the stage for the book's declaration.<sup>138</sup> The back and forth tension she created surrounding time reinforced her message about the impact of man and nature's abilities to spiritually replenish and renew.

Newhall titles chapter two "New World," beckoning the reader into a vast seascape.<sup>139</sup> In the first six pages, readers see the enduring images of nature. The timeline is interrupted by an eternal presence of landscape grandeur culminating in a classic view of the Tetons with the Snake River winding into the foreground. It is sanguine image and coupled with text asserts the rejuvenative qualities of nature. Newhall embraces a diverse variety of natural landscapes and places that are familiar to the widely varied geographies found across the country. Though her publications often took a regional and localized view, *This Is The American Earth* took on a universal and enduring character. But her optimistic stance begins to change in following chapters, a strong commitment to the value of land preservation persists. The cadence vacillates from an emphasis on majestic landscapes to people's disparaging detrimental actions on nature often in the name of resource development, then returns by signaling readers back into the present in pastoral landed scenes. In the final chapters, Newhall capitalizes on her capacities to build an abstracted sentiment guiding readers through the commonality of place. Her optimism triumphs in the publication's last two partitions.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 1-9.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 10.

With images full of immediacy and relatability, she heroically reclaims the earth's presence, its equity of balance, and stability for all humans. In the end Newhall's textual edifices stress rebirth and renewal of humanity's repaired relationship with the environment. Whiting summarizes the result of her editorial ranges in *Time in New England* writing "ultimately, Newhall and Strand cast the region's spirit as the foundation for a nation because it embodied both devotion to freedom and endurance."<sup>140</sup> Fitting qualities applied to New England relayed by "photographs of ruined artifacts always also attest to the pastness of that New England past: they do not allow the reader to forget the present in order to re-inhabit the past even momentarily."<sup>141</sup> Spaulding describes her techniques as a "collage of images and text arranged in carefully planned sequences to create a dynamic flow of ideas and emotions."<sup>142</sup> Addressing environmental issues pushed well beyond her previous regional narratives and spoke to much grander goals. It required imaginative reflections that could empower the breadth of the task. For the exhibition Newhall became "deeply immersed in the literature of conservation and biology, Nancy had begun to realize its potentially revolutionary implications."<sup>143</sup> Understanding the levity and breadth needed for the wording Newhall turned back to historical precedence and knowledgeable associates.

Articulating the complexities of ecology and its principles through words and photographs required reentering past national dialogues. One discourse that persisted throughout the country was the conquering attitude toward uninhabited land, and Spaulding

<sup>140</sup> Whiting, "A New England Lament: Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand in the 1940s," 811.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 810.

<sup>142</sup> Spaulding, *Ansel Adams and the American Landscape*, 274.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.



writes one “key to a reconnection between humanity and nature, Newhall argued, lay in the insights of biology and ecology.”<sup>144</sup> Her authentic connection to nature stemming from the all the remote locations she and Adams had visited becomes apparent. The dialogue of the book becomes a personal reflection about photography and her earnest attitudes towards conservation. Michael E. Hoffman explains her sincerity: “In all of her work Nancy was not simply writing about photography. She was bringing her own vision, her own gift for truth--- in short, her own light ---to explore and expand her chosen subject, and strive to articulate the fullest possible experience of the medium.”<sup>145</sup> Composing from her lengthy observations about photography, and her eagerness to protect nature sometimes made the epic poem a lament to the American Frontier. Developed populations needed to set aside their industrial aims, and reconsider the planet’s purpose:

Beside ox or horse, Americans had walked three thousand miles to the Pacific. With long rifle, ax and plow, we had conquered a continent. Now with easy riches gone—the furs, the timber, and the gold---we stood on the land’s last ramparts. Was this the end of our dream of freedom? The end of Eden?<sup>146</sup>

Reacting to the irrevocability of human actions set the book on a path of “redefining the frontier.”<sup>147</sup>

*This Is The American Earth* became an anthem to release the land from debt to industrialization echoing the conservation movement’s outlooks. Its immediate success lay in Nancy Newhall’s ability to describe the wilderness as a source of American freedom and

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 312.

<sup>145</sup> Michael E. Hoffman, “Forward” in Nancy Newhall, *From Adams to Stieglitz*, (New York: Aperture, 1989), i.

<sup>146</sup> Spaulding, *Ansel Adams and the American Landscape*, 313.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

democracy.<sup>148</sup> The book presented a fresh image of the fleeting frontier through “the need for a new relationship with nature rather than a continuation of old ways. She emphasized the folly of conquest, the dead end policy of exploitation. Rather than the dichotomies of civilization versus savagery and humanity versus nature, she pointed to the unity and interdependence of life.”<sup>149</sup> It was a powerful strategy that may have led to the publication’s great success. It also met the criteria of the environmental movement and the “romantic and nationalist traditions”<sup>150</sup> with its Whitmanesque poetic text and black and white photos which functioned together as an effective piece of propaganda and art.

The book’s immediate success was practically credited with adding to the growing membership of the Sierra Club. *This Is The American Earth* gave David Brower a new view of the conservation movement plus informed him about the publicity and educational value of books. The publication was hailed by Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas as “the finest statement on conservation ever made, and it was featured on “NBC’s Today Show” during their morning broadcast.<sup>151</sup> The book “sold approximately twenty-five thousand hardcover copies” and the “paperback edition released several years later sold around fifty thousand” copies.<sup>152</sup> Solnit writes “As an exhibit-format book, it introduced many Americans to their public lands through fine art photography.”<sup>153</sup> Brower had successfully changed the

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 313.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 313, 314.

<sup>150</sup> Solnit, “Eliot Porter as an Environmentalist and Artist,” 222.

<sup>151</sup> Spaulding, *Ansel Adams and the American Landscape*, 313.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 313.

<sup>153</sup> Solnit, “Eliot Porter as an Environmentalist and Artist,” 222.

Sierra Club from a “small, regional outdoor society that did little lobbying to the preeminent environmental organization of the 1960’s.”<sup>154</sup> Book projects such as the Exhibit Format series were not always profitable, but “they brought in members and raised awareness.”<sup>155</sup> The membership numbers grew from 7,000 members in 1952, to 16,500 in 1961, 24,000 in 1964, and 55,000 by 1967 and in the mid 2000’s a membership number of over half a million( 636,302) was recorded.<sup>156</sup> The Sierra Club had grown and matured into an environmentalist institution lobbying and advocating on behalf of public land issues and conservation’s greater needs.

Nancy Newhall and Ansel Adams collaborated for almost thirty years. By the 1970’s the “optimistic spirit of 1960’s”<sup>157</sup> had passed. Adams complained to Nancy Newhall “that the world was plunging toward chaos.”<sup>158</sup> Nancy Newhall had been Adams’s closest collaborator and staunch ally, while he had been her constant supporter on photography and guide through the wilderness of the West. They each worked hard and gained solace, rejuvenation, inspiration, and, most importantly, joy from their outdoor explorations. Their large professional and personal network included many influential mid-century artists, curators, and art critics whose alliances moved easily among the roles of friendship, collaborator, and colleague. Nancy Newhall’s exceptional cooperative capabilities facilitated her work with some of the most prominent photographers of the time period. Her

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Spaulding, *Ansel Adams and the American Landscape*, 349.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

collaborations with Adams helped establish her distinct career surrounding photography separating it from her husband Beaumont's work. Hoffman states Nancy and Beaumont Newhall "were all too aware that these artists had few avenues to the public, either through exhibitions or publication. They knew that the foundation of excellent criticism was essential for the appreciation of the artists' work, and indeed for understanding of the potential of the medium itself."<sup>159</sup> Upon Newhall's accidental death in 1974 "In tribute to her work for photography, Ansel and Virginia Adams gave \$250,000 to the Museum of Modern art to endow the Beaumont and Nancy Newhall Curatorial Fellowship in Photography at the museum. Beaumont was deeply touched by their generosity and the rightness of their gift."<sup>160</sup> He commented on the endowment saying "Were I but young enough...I can think of nothing I would more desire to be than a Newhall fellow!"<sup>161</sup> The Adams' foresight strived to continually accommodate the work about which Nancy had been so passionate and insure a legacy surrounding photography in the Newhall name.

Nancy Newhall's curatorial and publishing efforts secured greater opportunities and venues for photographers to exhibit and promote their art. She found her individual voice merging text with photographs, enhancing their meanings and bringing the artists to the public's eye. She wrote important biographies about photographers, choosing her words wisely she helped bring the emerging art form to prestige. Nancy Newhall's impact on environmentalism deserves to be emphasized as her impressive accomplishments were far

<sup>159</sup> Hoffman, "Forward" in *Newhall, From Adams to Stieglitz*, i.

<sup>160</sup> Spaulding, *Ansel Adams and the American Landscape*, 350.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

reaching in heralding new voice to interpretive publications. *This Is The American Earth* was her critical opportunity to care for the planet.

Shall we not learn from life its laws, dynamics, balances?  
Learn to base our needs not on death, destruction, waste, but on  
renewal?  
In wisdom and in gentleness learn to walk again with Eden's angels?  
Learn at last to shape a civilization in harmony with the earth!



Figure 1.  
Ansel Adams, *Pasture, Sonoma, County, California*, circa 1957, gelatin silver print,  
27.2 x 32.7 cm. Adams and Newhall, *This Is The American Earth*, 48, 49.

Now, by machines, we are torn loose from earth—  
too soon, too suddenly surrendered, the arts, skills, strengths  
that were our pride as Man.  
Confined by our own artifice, borne up on vast abundance and colossal waste,  
Restless, disconsolate, passing in higher, faster flight  
over old arduous obstacles,  
above old bitter boundaries,  
we course across this dwindling globe that once seemed infinite,  
hoping to find some shell of civilization harboring still  
the echoes of old faiths, passions, and delights;  
we descend into the seas, scale the last dread peaks, cross icecaps, dare outer space,  
seeking somewhere, in some last far place, our birthright: the wild majesty,  
beauty, freedom through which for a million years Man grew,  
—too few of us aware that to any beauty we must come as lovers, not destroyers,  
come humbly, softly, to look, listen, learn,  
to cherish and to shield.

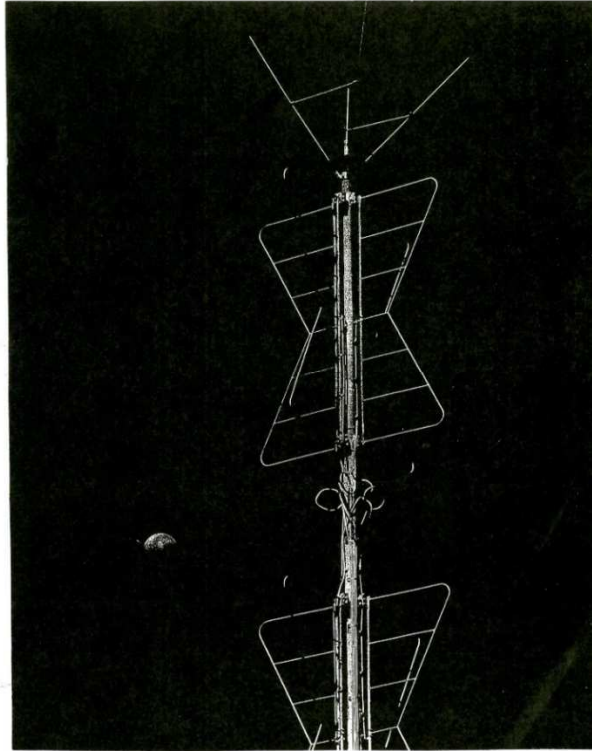


Figure 2. Ansel Adams, *Moon and Television Relay Antennae, Haleakala, Maui, Hawaii*  
circa 1955, silver print, 13.25 x 10. Adams and Newhall, *This Is The American Earth*, 33.



Figure 3. Ferenc Berko, *Bathers on the Ganges*, no date. Adams and Newhall, *This Is The American Earth*, 42, 43.



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