

Mary Hunter Austin

A Female Writer's Protest Against the First World War
in the United States

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Series in American History



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To my parents.

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Preface

The way we tend to read and interpret the past is very much related to our understanding of the present. Societies redefine their own history and decide about the historiographical focus upon the latter. While historians—that, for a long period of time, meant men—defined the past by taking a look at the lives of the “great men of the past.” Thereby a male monopoly of history was created, often only caring to cement the inequalities of an existent society that was much more diverse than history books would actually acknowledge. Thankfully, we live in a time period where minorities, may they be determined by ethnicity, social status, or gender, are taken more into consideration when we discuss the human past.

Nevertheless, women’s impact on history still needs to be discovered, identified, spread to become public knowledge, and eventually acknowledged by a majority of people. Women fought for their rights for centuries, but many brave minds still remain underrepresented and less appreciated in our days, although feminist movements already pointed to these figures in earlier years as well. The danger to forget them is again very high, and more works on issues related to gender and women’s history should be encouraged at universities worldwide.

Mary Hunter Austin (1868-1934) was such an essential mind related to gender and women’s history. Very often, however, she is just referred to as a female writer of the American Midwest, whose works provide important descriptions of the landscape and the people in this part of the United States at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Yet Hunter Austin was more than that. She was a woman that no longer accepted the boundaries of a society that had been hegemonically ruled and determined by men. The young woman rebelled against the world she was born into, and demanded a better future for herself and all women alike. Especially during the First World War (1914-1918), Hunter Austin, like many other American women, was active to achieve more rights, particularly citizenship rights, for women and protested against old-fashioned gender roles.

The enslavement and exploitation of the female body and mind by an antiquated society were not acceptable to a woman whose personal life had been shaped by arrogant men, who did not grant her equality in any sense.

It is the great merit of Jowan A. Mohammed to again critically review the life and achievements of such an important woman and her history during the transnational event US diplomat and historian George F Kennan (1904-2005)

referred to as the “seminal catastrophe” of the 20th century. The present study is an interdisciplinary approach to show how Hunter Austin’s life was impacted by this war and how it stimulated her attempt to help to gain more rights for women. They, according to the female activist, had also proven more than worthy to be recognized as equal citizens of the United States. The study therefore combines and addresses different fields of study, namely military history, gender studies, and modern American literature. A close reading of Austin’s literary works in the years related to the First World War shows how the “proto-feminist” author’s political agenda was interwoven with her personal experiences and the war-related activism, especially in New York City at that time, alike.

The present book consequently proves to be valuable for different readers. Those who are interested in the history of New York will be able to dive into a radical female milieu that existed in this US metropolis during the First World War. Those readers whose field of interest is women’s and gender history will find an analysis of problems that women born in the second half of the 19th century had to face in the United States; furthermore, a scientific discussion of female responses to this situation—represented by Mary Hunter Austin in the present study. Finally, readers looking for an analysis of unknown works of modern American literature, whose author was rediscovered during the American feminist movement in the latter half of the 20th century, will find an equally close reading.

The present book is, therefore, the result of an interdisciplinary approach and not only a simple biographical study. It is obviously much more than that. It is the attempt to re-evaluate the role of a strong woman in modern American history, to view her story, and to read her works from a different angle, no longer solely focusing on landscapes and the people of the Midwest. Jowan A. Mohammed provides a splendid and tremendously important work that will hopefully stimulate further research that will follow this direction, as there were many strong women in all parts of the United States—and other countries as well—whose fight for freedom, equality, and justice needs to be taken into further consideration. This is even more important in times when gender equality is again threatened by political reactionism.

True equality can only be achieved if the merits and achievements of women and men are accepted equally by society. To reach such an acceptance demands a history that deals equitably with those who were responsible for the course of history, which eventually led to our modern societies. It is the task of all those who long for a just and equal world to make sure that the role of women in human history is neither forgotten nor underestimated. The present book is part of this task and sheds more light on an important figure of the movement for women’s rights since the dawn of the 20th century. One

can only hope that it finds many readers and that the story of Mary Hunter Austin will give reasons for young women and men of the 21st century to continue the fight for true gender equality, in spite of those who still want to neglect the impact of women throughout human history and tend to solely emphasize the history of “old white men.”

Bodø, March 2020
Frank Jacob

Introduction

Mary Hunter Austin (1868-1934) is usually considered as an important American writer of the early decades of the 20th century, whose well-known works deal with Native American culture and space, especially in Southern California and New Mexico. Nevertheless, the later US feminist movement reconsidered her to be an early feminist author whose works had an impact on the redefinition of gender roles during, and as an impact of, the First World War (WWI). She is described by modern scholars as an unusual voice in American literature who was gifted, eccentric, exasperating, tragic, elitist, and idiosyncratic.¹

While it is correct to categorize Mary Hunter Austin as a proto-feminist writer, in the term's broadest sense, in her own time, her works were also impacted by the events of WWI, and this impact on Austin as a writer, activist, woman, and her 'feminist' views shall be taken into closer consideration in the present book. It will therefore offer a focus on some of Austin's works that have not been taken into close consideration yet, and will also show how Austin's relation to the proto-feminist movement during WWI would later transform her into a well-known and well-read figure among US feminists in later decades. How Austin's role as a war critic was related to her proto-feminist identity and her overall oeuvre shall also be discussed.

The present research therefore selects some essential texts related to the time period in question, as Austin wrote them during or immediately after WWI. The texts were consequently chosen due to their chronological context to determine the war's influence on Austin's thoughts and opinions, not only expressed in her own literary works, but which the author often also voiced at rallies or in newspaper interviews. Timewise, the selection also overlaps with the war in Europe, as they were written before, during, and after the American interference. Therefore, I will look at how the war influenced the American writer's stand toward American intervention, the existent social order, and the role women played within the latter. Austin was a productive writer, thus there are many texts, plays, books, articles, and essays to choose from, but for the sake of sticking to the timeline, I do not intend to examine her entire life and works. Instead, I will provide a close reading for a time-limited case study of

¹ Esther Lanigan Stineman, *Mary Austin: Song of a Maverick* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 1.

Austin's writings and her criticism of WWI, including a special focus on gender-related issues she, as one of the early 20th-century agents of female emancipation, had criticized as well.

The essential texts that will build the text corpus of the present study are *The Ford* (1917),² *The Young Woman Citizen* (1918),³ *No. 26 Jayne Street* (1920),⁴ the political essay "Sex Emancipation Through War" (1918), as well as supplementary shorter newspaper articles published during the defined time period. Other important works that are of a notably 'feminist' character that will supplement this book and the discussion of Austin's later perception, but which do not fall into the WWI timeline, are Austin's autobiography from 1932, *Earth Horizon*,⁵ and the work of fiction *A Woman of Genius* (1912),⁶ in addition to contemporary newspaper essays and articles that discussed Austin's impact as a writer with regard to her role as an author and an activist.

Structure and Intention of the Work

This book will commence with a biographical chapter on Austin's life, motives, and experiences to show how her political identity formed over the years before WWI. After this biographical survey, a chapter will discuss the First World War in New York City, the war's impact on female anti-war movements, and Austin's life and works. After having mapped out these aspects, a close analytical reading of the four essential texts will be presented in chapter 3, followed by a final chapter discussing Austin and the feminist perception of her works in modern times. The chapters are arranged to go from biography to war experience to literature analysis, before finally presenting a discussion of Austin's commemoration and re-interpretation by feminists in the 1960s and 1970s. This will provide an insight into feminist "constructions of the past" as well as emphasize theoretical discussions about the creation of a collective memory that in a way also reflect upon the WWI experiences of American proto-feminists like Austin.⁷

The theoretical basis of this book is related to memory theory, reception theory, and the history of early 20th century US feminism in a broad sense.

² Mary Austin, *The Ford* (Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1917).

³ Mary Austin, *The Young Woman Citizen* (New York: The Woman's Press, 1918).

⁴ Mary Austin, *No. 26 Jayne Street* (Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1920).

⁵ Mary Austin, *Earth Horizon: An Autobiography* (Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1932).

⁶ Mary Austin, *A Woman of Genius* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1912).

⁷ Anna Green and Kathleen Troup, *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 92-93.

The historical impact of WWI, although mapped out in its own chapter, will also be present throughout the book, as it is important to clarify its significance as a cultural watershed⁸ in women's history in general and in Austin's individual case in particular. WWI and gender roles will consequently be looked at from a comparative perspective to analyze how the writer herself spoke of women's role in society in the developing years. She is perhaps one of the period's most significant female voices, as she documents her "journey of independence" from the Californian desert to her life as a single woman at the heart of political activism and commitments, which one can clearly read in the journalism about her.

Chapter 1 will provide insights into both who Mary Hunter Austin was and the main events of her life leading up to the timeframe of our research and focus. The chapter intends to show how the effects of her personal experiences impacted the literature that later also attracted or inspired members of the feminist movement. What makes Austin's biography special is that she was often allowed to tell her own story while others often played bystander roles. Among the important people in her life were her husband, mother, siblings, daughter, and many more, yet in many ways these people are often shadows of themselves, resulting in a characterization of the author as an almost self-centered yet also very dominant figure. It is her egocentricity and oddness that historian Abraham Hoffman criticizes in the concluding section "History vs. Literary Biography" of his article about Austin in the *Journal of the Southwest*.⁹ Ultimately what the chapter critically puts forward is the idea not to trust all narratives; for example, despite Austin often claiming in her autobiography that she was unwanted by her family growing up, her being unwanted was not factual as a matter of scientific claim, but merely her own perspective and the voice of her adolescent loneliness. The importance of presenting a biographical chapter is to give readers an insight into who the late author was, as well as to be critical of how she saw herself.

The next chapter will present a short summary of the First World War in order to try to determine the impact of this war on Austin's works and growth, which are directly related to the war years and her respective experiences. The third chapter will then provide a close reading of the above-identified works and extract evident narratives that were presented within them to identify

⁸ Some examples of the cultural impact of WWI can be found in Frank Jacob, Jeffrey Shaw, and Timothy Demy, eds., *War and the Humanities: The Cultural Impact of the First World War* (Paderborn: Schöningh/Brill, 2018).

⁹ Abraham Hoffman, "Mary Austin, Stafford Austin, and the Owens Valley," *Journal of the Southwest* 53, no. 3/4 (2011): 319-320.

Austin's political positions in relation to her war experience, attempting to move the textual analysis away from modern re-readings and instead focus on the texts as truly to their intentions as possible. The narratives within the books shift with the years (1914-1920); for example, *The Ford* is socially and politically critical, like the two other books, but is also inspired by real events from the earlier 1900s. It is therefore important to take into consideration that, despite Austin taking inspiration from life around her until 1917 when it was published, the book's fundamental basis is from another time, yet it also highlights long-term conflicts within American society that had intensified and eventually erupted as a consequence of the war. This recollection of events, which are written about while being inspired by the current political climate, is something that occurs again and probably also more intensely with regard to the publication of *No. 26 Jayne Street*. This 1920 novel is a recollection of the war; thus, the author's narrative is carefully constructed around the experiences which she reminisces in its aftermath, thereby giving the narrative a wisdom that only a "post-experience" voice could.

The curious thing about Mary Hunter Austin's writing is that her stories, although rooted in fictional plots, often address larger ideas – e.g. gender roles or socialist philosophy – through individual experiences which are carefully connected to the single stories of the presented characters. The larger perspective of most of her writing is how she reflects on events and ideas in her life and around the world and then presents them in the form of people, perhaps because it is easier for a reader to connect to an individual than ongoing political debates without a heart to which they can relate the former and their own interest; this is particularly evident in *The Ford* and *No. 26 Jayne Street*, in which each character is carefully crafted to represent a political idea or agenda in themselves.

America's participation in the war definitely inspired Austin when she wrote *The Young Woman Citizen* in 1918, and its publication was made possible due to support from the Women's Press, whose editors actively went in to publish more books by women and for women in the period in question. The book is inspired by a time when women were eager to show their place in American society as men went to the battlefields in Europe. Austin reflects more directly on her politics and ideas in this book, which is similar to her journalism but unlike her other literary works, which deal less with political issues or debates. The most binding and interesting thing that this chapter will highlight is how utterly open to interpretation these books are, regardless of what era they are read in, thus making it evident as to why they are so open to modern (re-)readings.

The final chapter will then focus on the feminist perception and commemoration of Austin's work in later years and try to show why other works than those she wrote in relation to WWI were obviously more appealing

to later feminists. The chapter will explore the idea of feminism and discuss the developments within the movement in the US during the 1960s and 1970s. Having established the historical context, the chapter will continue into the theoretical discussion regarding feminism, memory, and perception. The main goal of the chapter is to discuss literary reception, as well as memory and perception, in order to determine whether Mary Hunter Austin was correctly interpreted and perceived or not, and it will try to answer whether she was later constructed to be an early or proto-feminist writer. The chapter will consequently highlight the differences between the realities of the First World War and later feminist re-interpretations, with a special focus on Austin. The intent is to determine if the understanding of Austin (as a feminist) and her texts is more impacted by the redefinitions related to collective cultural memory or if it really is an appropriated interpretation of Austin's activities and her works, especially the ones in question for the present book. The theoretical discussion in this chapter must therefore also elaborate on feminism in its different historical forms or, better, stages of development.

Research Subject, Historiography, and Theoretical Reflections

Mary Hunter Austin is a significant research subject, because she was an important individual both in her own time and in times after her death. She concerned herself with matters of the geological and cultural landscape, women's rights, Native American rights, poetry, and matters of democracy and ethical issues alike. She was a prolific writer who produced short stories, novels, plays, essays, and articles, as well as being an activist on matters of nature, women, and war. Two years before her passing in 1934, Austin wrote and published her autobiography *Earth Horizon* (1932),¹⁰ providing her own view on things she deemed more important than others, regardless of the image the public had of them. It is often claimed that Austin concerned herself with "feminist causes." The present study will refer to these more as "women's" causes than "feminist" ones, as it is important to note that "feminism," as the term will be used here, is not fully synonymous with its meaning and consideration in Austin's time. The research around Austin is often limited to her Native American prose and her best-known work, *The Land of Little Rain* (1903),¹¹ however the author was versatile in her literature and in her role in society, rather than being limited to just a few poems. In contrast to these more well-known works, the present study will explore

¹⁰ Austin, *Earth Horizon*.

¹¹ Mary Austin, *The Land of Little Rain* (Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1903).

rather more ignored works by Austin and try to put them into their historical context and link them to their time of genesis and thereby the struggles women had waged for social justice and gender equality during WWI.¹² Austin often portrayed the struggle of imbalance between the two sexes, the construction of social gender roles, and the overpowering control of men. How her portrayals of imbalance and suchlike are of notable significance in modern interpretations will consequently be part of the analysis of her later perception. Nevertheless, the research question of the present book first and foremost focuses on the impact of the First World War on Austin's writings and the influence the war experience had on the gender roles represented in her war-related literature. Through analyzing her works from the period in question, the aim is to determine if later generations of feminist writers are truly justified in claiming the author's literature as being feminist in nature. The "women's movement," despite its long history even before our timeline, was able to reach tremendous political changes while Austin was able to observe and participate in the movement in her time. Therefore, it is with this in mind that this book should be read, as it does not attempt, nor claim, to tackle the entirety of Mary Hunter Austin's writings, but rather a small portion of them to answer the fundamental question about the creation of her political legacy as an activist writer in correlation with WWI.

In addition to Austin's main literary works in question, *The Ford* (1917), *The Young Woman Citizen* (1918), *No. 26 Jayne Street* (1920), and "Sex Emancipation Through War" (1918), the most important primary sources that this research is built on are contemporary newspaper articles. In regard to the quality of the literature specifically selected for its timely connection to the First World War, *The Ford* is related to its early years before the US intervened, *The Young Woman Citizen* was published during the global conflict, while *No. 26 Jayne Street* is significant as it provides an insight into the aftermath of the war. Thus, the selection is meant to provide a wide spectrum of both the author's standpoints as well as her perceptions of society in war-related contexts.

The Ford is included among the literature of importance because it was published during our period, however the work does not necessarily serve as a direct "war witness," as the plot is inspired by events unfolding in the earlier 1900s. *The Young Woman Citizen* and *No. 26 Jayne Street* are the works that we can directly connect to the war, as they are both, in a way, results of it. *The*

¹² For a broader discussion about the "women's question" and its link to left political movements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, see Vincent Streichhahn and Frank Jacob, eds., *Geschlecht und Klassenkampf: Die "Frauenfrage" aus deutscher und internationaler Perspektive im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Metropol, 2020).

Young Woman Citizen showcases Austin's increased political engagement as a result of WWI and displays how the author became more outspoken about political matters not only in women's issues but about citizenship in general. *No. 26 Jayne Street* is important as it is a rewind of both the war and the research period. Ultimately, these books lay the ground for the present research and will be read to provide broader potential insights into Austin's intentions and voice.

As for the literature about the subject, rather than the literature that will be analyzed, the quality and quantity of previous research vary. When it comes to the literature available to date, the main positions and concepts when talking about Mary Hunter Austin have often been in regard to her nature-related or regionally focused writing, e.g. about California or New Mexico,¹³ as well as to her position as a female teacher. For example, Abraham Hoffman's article about Austin, her husband Stafford Austin, and the Owens Valley, which also had a role in the events of a water crisis, focuses on the domestic portrayal of her life more than anything else and discusses the dynamic and unfolding of their story.¹⁴ Hoffman quotes the author herself, saying, "I seem to be the sort of person about whom more myth than truth is in circulation."¹⁵ If we take that quote, it serves as a purpose for Hoffman's paper. Its contribution to research on Austin is to question Mary Hunter Austin's feelings of superiority, focusing on what the author presented biographically and what was historically accurate, e.g. the plot of her book *The Ford*. Hoffman questions what the full truth is, because historically not all credit went where it was due, for example, to her ex-husband.

Hoffman's article encourages biographers and those who study any subject matter, in this case Austin and her war-related works, to be critical, rather than just to celebrate any greatness that is easily presented; for example, to be critical of how Austin gave very little credit to her husband Stafford in the fight for water rights in the later book adaptation of the events. Ultimately what Hoffman is attempting to discuss and criticize is the overwhelming optimism about Austin's achievements instead of questioning sources. The reason for this is that he believes many of the author's achievements in her efforts to secure water rights should have been credited to her husband and not her (such as "ignoring the fact that it was Stafford who contacted federal officials

¹³ Oleh Heike Schaefer, *Mary Austin's Regionalism: Reflections on Gender, Genre, and Geography* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2004).

¹⁴ Hoffman, "Mary Austin," 305-322.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 305.

about what was going on”¹⁶). Hoffman focuses on the events of her life that inspired *The Ford* and discusses the importance of knowing what is fact and what is fiction, despite Austin painting herself as the heroic character, which cannot be believed based on memory/perception without real biographical research.¹⁷ Therefore, works such as *Exploring Lost Borders: Critical Essays On Mary Austin* by Melody Graulich and Elizabeth Klimasmith that offer a more critical approach will also be brought forth.¹⁸ While Hoffman only focused on the events inspiring *The Ford*, the present analysis shall take a wider scope into consideration: the war era, the author’s persona, her literature, and modern perceptions.

The focus points of the previous research are limited. While Hoffman centers on the real events inspiring *The Ford* and questions the reliabilities of biographies, others have also taken particular motivation points, such as in the article “Mary Austin and the Western Conservation Movement: 1900-1927” by historian Benay Blend, which goes into environmental issues and the claim of female space.¹⁹ This research is important to create a deeper understanding of Austin as a person and author through a modern narrative, as her Native American writing and activism were not fueled by environmentalism per se but rather by the understanding of modernity. The presented research therefore intends to show that earlier studies focused on smaller, more specific things instead of providing an overall picture of Austin’s development as a writer and activist.

Other interdisciplinary research of significance is provided by historian Karen S. Langlois, who has written about both personal and professional aspects of Austin’s life over many decades and in different works. In 1986, Langlois could claim that “recently there has been a revival of interest in the American writer Mary Hunter Austin,”²⁰ making it clear that the research interest grew and declined in waves, which is noteworthy as the narratives of these different waves, namely during the 1960s and 1970s, are of special

¹⁶ Ibid., 319. For more examples where the writer is credited for the discovery of water injustice without further criticism, see Gwen Sullivan, Review of *Mary Austin’s Southwest: An Anthology of Her Literary Criticism*, by Chelsea Blackbird and Barney Nelson, *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 60, no. 1 (2006): 126.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Melody Graulich and Elizabeth Klimasmith, eds., *Exploring Lost Borders: Critical Essays On Mary Austin* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 1999).

¹⁹ Benay Blend, “Mary Austin and the Western Conservation Movement: 1900-1927,” *Journal of the Southwest* 30, no. 1 (1988): 32.

²⁰ Karen S. Langlois, “Mary Hunter Austin and Lincoln Steffens,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (1986): 357.

interest to the present work. The recent revival, to name another of the waves, is related to the blooming interest in the US in the conservation and environmental protection of land and water during the period in which Austin wrote.²¹ This is similar to the research presented by Esther Stineman, whose 1988 scholarly contribution is precisely about the subject of scholars (and society) continuously re-discovering Austin in different periods.²²

Langlois' praise and research tributes to Austin continued, and in 1990, she published her article "A Fresh Voice from the West: Mary Austin, California, and American Literary Magazines, 1892-1910."²³ Her latest research on this subject, "Mary Austin and Andrew Forbes: Poetry, Photography, and the Eastern Sierra," was published in 2007.²⁴

What Langlois brings to the field is specific and not always directly in tune with the "orthodox opinion" about Austin, however it improves the overall basis when attempting to profile her life, whether this is directly about the author or her harmony with other significant characters (such as Steffens or Forbes). Some of the research goes into feminism, using one of the modern definitions,²⁵ however the trend of the research is once again the female sex and landscape, in which Austin is repeatedly of great significance.²⁶ The same themes are present in Vera Norwood's work "Heroines of Nature: Four Women Respond to the American Landscape," published in 1984.²⁷

²¹ See also Nancy Cook, Review of *Exploring Lost Borders: Critical Essays on Mary Austin*, by Melody Graulich and Elizabeth Klimasmith, *Western Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2001): 96.

²² Esther Lanigan Stineman, "Mary Austin Rediscovered," *Journal of the Southwest* 30, no. 4 (1988): 545-551. For more on the rediscovery of Mary Hunter Austin, see Catharine Savage Brosman, *Southwestern Women Writers and The Vision of Goodness* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2016), 31-64.

²³ Karen S. Langlois, "A Fresh Voice from the West: Mary Austin, California, and American Literary Magazines, 1892-1910," *California History* 69, no. 1 (1990): 22-35.

²⁴ Karen S. Langlois, "Mary Austin and Andrew Forbes: Poetry, Photography, and the Eastern Sierra," *California History* 85, no. 1 (2007): 24-43.

²⁵ "Feminism is the refusal to define all women and therefore all human beings solely in terms of sex." Ginette Castro, *American Feminism: A Contemporary History* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 2.

²⁶ Glenda Riley, "'Wimmin Is Everywhere': Conserving and Feminizing Western Landscapes, 1870 to 1940," *Western Historical Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1998): 4-23.

²⁷ Vera L. Norwood, "Heroines of Nature: Four Women Respond to the American Landscape," *Environmental Review* 8, no. 1 (1984): 34-56.

In addition to her article “Mary Austin Rediscovered,” Stineman is also the author of *Mary Austin: Song of a Maverick*,²⁸ a critical biographical work used as the basis for many discussions on Austin to come. Among those who further Stineman’s work is Lois Rudnick, who in her article “Feminist on the Frontier”²⁹ writes that Stineman “examines Austin’s life and work within a feminist framework that gives both positive and negative characteristics their due.”³⁰ This enhances the point about the picture painted of Austin as predominantly feminist as a result of her life and work based on modern perceptions. This also leads to the necessity to include reception theory, which is a theoretical ground that will enhance our understanding of why the rediscovering of old texts and writers is a subjective matter for modern times. Reception theory is based on ideas such as those of Robert C. Holub, Hans Robert Jauss (1921-1997), and cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1932-2014), among others. These works all build on the idea of interpretation and how information, experience, history, and suchlike are sorted through perception.³¹

Austin’s views on citizenship and her contribution to literature about social democratic themes in the 20th century are highlighted and discussed in Teena Gabrielson’s “Women-Thought, Social Capital, and the Generative State: Mary Austin and the Integrative Civic Ideal in Progressive Thought,” published in 2006.³² This article is one of the most relevant pieces of research about the theme, as Gabrielson goes into the necessity for women going into politics and, thus, Austin’s role in this development. A similar approach to the one of Rudnick reviewing Stineman can be found in Shelly Armitage’s essay “Mary Austin’s Regionalism: Reflections on Gender, Genre, and Geography by Heike Schaefer,” in which Armitage argues that Schaefer makes it evident that “Austin cannot be understood nor valued unless reexamined in her own terms.”³³

²⁸ Stineman, *Mary Austin*.

²⁹ Lois Rudnick, “Feminist on the Frontier,” Review of *Mary Austin: Songs of a Maverick*, by Esther Lanigan Stineman, *The Women’s Review of Books* 7, no. 7 (1990): 22.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ For further reading, see Stuart Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse* (Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1973); Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Hans-Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

³² Teena Gabrielson, “Woman-Thought, Social Capital, and the Generative State: Mary Austin and the Integrative Civic Ideal in Progressive Thought,” *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 3 (2006): 650-663.

³³ Shelly Armitage, Review of *Mary Austin’s Regionalism: Reflections on Gender, Genre, and Geography*, by Heike Schaefer, *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 25, no. 1, (2006): 170.

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