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Review of *Mary Heaton Vorse: The Life of an American Insurgent*, by Dee Garrison

Elliott Shore

Bryn Mawr College, eshore@brynmawr.edu

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and what that meant in terms of contrasting perceptions of the role and meaning of sport. The breadth of his discussion ranges from the wood-paneled bastions of the *fin-de-siècle* New York Athletic Club to the grimmer confines of Irish boys' social and athletic clubs in World War I-era Chicago. He also attempts to answer these questions about the role and meaning of sport in terms of ethnic differences, but he has less material to work with here.

This volume builds on Riess's earlier, important study of baseball in the Progressive era and includes additional archival work, but the foundations of this book rest on the author's careful analysis of the work of a score of historians who have assayed sport's growth in the city. Important here are the works of Stephen Hardy, Melvin Adelman, Roy Rosenzweig, Cary Goodman, and Benjamin Rader. Their studies of aspects of urban sport and its changing structure in particular cities provide Riess with the evidence he uses to fashion a synthesis and theory for urbanization's role in sport's development.

Riess knows which questions are important to ask and which factors must be considered in evaluating the answers. He raises the scholarly analysis of sport to a more sophisticated level. Riess reminds us that it is not just class and race or the tendencies toward greater specialization and standardization but also factors such as population change, the amount and nature of physical space, and the role of institutions such as the Works Progress Administration that must be considered in analyzing sport's history. This book is a densely written study, unlikely to work well in an undergraduate course, but it is probably a book to which those who take the study of sport further will turn as they begin their own explorations.

ROB RUCK
Pittsburgh Social History Center

ESTHER LANIGAN STINEMAN. *Mary Austin: Song of a Maverick*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1989. Pp. xv, 269. \$25.00.

Mary Austin's (1868–1934) struggle to fame is an astounding demonstration of personal will and creative force. Her rise was made implausible by her gender as much as by her impoverished material and intellectual upbringing in small-town Illinois and her fruition as a writer on a desolate sector of the California frontier. Austin's literary reception in 1903 as a great regional artist enabled her escape from community controls and an unhappy marriage. Her single-minded search for creative equals won her entry into the literary and intellectual communities of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Carmel, perhaps because of interest in her daring eccentricity as much as respect for her mental powers. Nevertheless, despite her success, a central question haunted her life, as it shapes this book: given her prolific writing and acknowledged artistic standing, why was she never recognized as a foremost literary

figure of her time? It seems obvious why the masculine literary canon might deny such notice to a western woman writer who wrote contemptuously of patriarchal privileges, yet feminist critics, too, have found her work disturbing.

A fierce agitator against male disempowerment of women, especially in marriage and the arts, Austin also preferred the society of male mentors and believed that only a few women of genius like herself were capable of constructive social thought. She found American literature faulty in its attention to class, race, and gender and had no peer in her capacity to express the ethnic diversity of minorities in the West. Yet this lyrical champion of Indian life patronized American Indians, was not immune to anti-Semitism, and often disparaged political radicals.

This study is the first to analyze Austin's major fictional and nonfictional work in light of modern scholarship on women. Esther Lanigan Stineman stresses how Austin's liminal status as an unloved child who suffered her widowed mother's pronounced favoritism toward a younger brother determined Austin's choice of literary themes. Early trauma made Austin the perpetual outsider who covered her insecurities with a grandiose egotism and personal abrasiveness. Bereft of community, Austin proved too much a feminist for most men and not nearly enough for many feminists.

Stineman skillfully portrays Austin's heartbreaking failure to conquer the eastern literary world during her sojourn in New York City from 1910 to 1922. Austin remained an interesting oddity to eastern literary lights, who assigned a marginal position in American letters to female authors, naturists, and the West and found Austin's assault on modern marriage absurd. Stineman's sensitive description of the troubled friendship between Austin and Mabel Dodge Luhan during Austin's last years in Santa Fe is also well done.

The study suffers from an inadequate analysis of the importance of Austin's earliest and best work—a breathtakingly brilliant statement of western grandeur that enthralled Americans longing for authenticity and relief from the alienation of urban industrialism. The book also has a narrative structure that a reader unfamiliar with the background of Austin's immediate world may sometimes find difficult to follow. But Stineman provides a thoughtful reminder of the barriers, both external and self-imposed, so often erected against the creative woman seeking notice in the public world.

DEE GARRISON
*Rutgers University,
New Brunswick*

DEE GARRISON. *Mary Heaton Vorse: The Life of an American Insurgent*. (American Civilization.) Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 1989. Pp. xix, 377. \$27.95.

Beginning with the Lawrence textile strike in 1912, the 1919 steel strike, the 1926 Passaic textile strike, through the battles of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in the 1930s, and the scandal of the waterfront unions of the 1950s, one major labor journalist always seemed to be present, active on behalf of "labor's new millions." As Dee Garrison makes clear in her lucidly written and brilliantly realized biography, this socially committed career was one of several full-time occupations that Mary Heaton Vorse juggled throughout her long and productive life. As a woman in the first half of the twentieth century, Vorse struggled to fulfill an impossible ideal: to be a perfect mother and to find the time to write. For it was as a writer and reporter, not as a labor activist, that she came to find the cause to which she would devote herself. Her background as a child of privilege did not specifically push her toward labor militancy. If there is an omission in this fine work, it may be that the author does not specifically address the issue of Vorse's class position in relation to the working-class subjects of her labor reporting. Garrison does find in Vorse's mother the basic contradiction from which she would attempt to break free. As Vorse put it: "My mother's life was a tragedy. She had a fine mind and great executive ability and all this dynamo was idle" (p. 7).

The dynamo was not idle in Vorse, but it was strained at times. Trying to succeed as a writer of fiction, a wife to an unloving husband, and a mother with strongly ambivalent feelings about dividing her time and energy, drained emotionally and scarred physically after an affair with the American Communist Robert Minor and left for years fighting a morphine addiction inadvertently caused by well-meaning but inept medical treatment, she could not live up to all of her own expectations. Financial problems were at the root of much of her anxiety and a partial cause of her long bouts of depression. Once a highly paid writer of popular fiction, she turned her back on this lucrative income as she became more involved with labor reporting.

Garrison points to Vorse's dual life as woman and labor activist as a potent lesson for the present. So is Vorse's form of labor reporting. Support for oppressed workers could be coupled with factual reporting without being seen as a contradiction to her or to her readers. She wrote largely in a period not yet dulled by the insistence on "objectivity" in reporting imposed during the cold war. This notion resulted in a *de facto* promanagement stance by the news media that equated the status quo with the ways things should be. But Vorse's writing meant to move people as well as to report facts. She saw no contradiction in joining the workers' cause, walking picket lines, and organizing resistance, for she saw the struggle between capital and labor as an unequal contest, and she understood that justice was on the side of the weak. This can be seen most clearly in her position vis-à-vis the leaders of American communism and other radical and labor groups. She held them to the same standard of justice

and never feared to disagree with them when she saw them pushing the rank and file around.

Benefiting from full access to Vorse's papers and the active assistance of her children, Garrison has brought vividly to life an important figure in American letters and labor, interweaving biography with the insights of feminist and labor history.

ELLIOTT SHORE
Institute for Advanced Study
Princeton, New Jersey

SHELDON M. NOVICK. *Honorable Justice: The Life of Oliver Wendell Holmes*. Boston: Little, Brown. 1989. Pp. xxi, 522. \$24.95.

Oliver Wendell Holmes outlived most of his contemporaries and proved too daunting for later biographers as well. Two of them—Mark DeWolfe Howe and Grant Gilmore—died before finishing their work. Sheldon M. Novick has not only survived the "Holmes jinx" but has given us a splendid book, one worthy of its monumental subject. Not all who read this work will agree with Novick's emphasis or with his conclusions on many points, but we are not likely to have very soon a better one-volume biography of perhaps the most celebrated jurist in American history.

Those who have long read Holmes through his judicial writings and published letters will be reminded once again in this book why he remains among the masters of English prose writing. On social life in Washington, D.C.: "It seems as if everybody smiled and lied" (p. 260). On returning to America on the eve of World War I: "And I thought to myself the Gotterdammerung will end, and from those globes clustered like evil eggs will come the new masters of the sky. . . . But then I remembered the faith that I partly have expressed, faith in a universe not measured by our fears, a universe that has thought and more than thought inside of it, and as I gazed, after the sunset and above the electric lights there shone the stars" (p. 309). On wiretapping: "We have to choose, and for my part I think it a less evil that some criminals should escape than that the government should play an ignoble part" (p. 363).

Novick also gives us unforgettable scenes of the Civil War battles that Holmes and his compatriots from Massachusetts endured in the state's Twentieth Regiment. After two and a half years, the regiment's losses were greater than its original strength. Captain Holmes was wounded three times. The darker side of Holmes's nature, one suspects, derived less from reading philosophy than from those harrowing days of Ball's Bluff, the Peninsular campaign, and Fredericksburg.

That Holmes possessed an eye for women as well as for *le mot juste* has long been an item of gossip, but Novick is the first to document fully (often in veiled terms) the extent and variety of his amorous liaisons. The most important involved Ursula Emily Clare St. Leger, daughter of Viscount Doneraile and wife of