Environmental Ethics and Democratic Citizenship in Mary Austin's *The Basket Woman*

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Abstract

This article examines the intertwined notion of environmental ethics and democratic citizenship in Mary Austin's *The Basket Woman: A Book of Indian Tales for Children* (1904). It argues that Austin attempts to craft Native American tales to inculcate the spiritual relationship between humans and nonhumans, an idea which is derived from Native American beliefs. Reading this text in juxtaposition with her political piece, *The Young Woman Citizen* (1918), it further argues that *The Basket Woman* can be interpreted as instilling in children's minds at least two civic values which are necessary for the construction of a democratic society: social responsibility and public-spiritedness. Moreover, this article investigates the transformation of the attitude of a white boy, who is the male protagonist in the frame narrative, toward marginalized Native Americans, including the Basket Woman, and the nonhuman world after his immersion into the tales told by her. It will therefore demonstrate how Austin employs the Basket Woman's tales as a means to instruct children how to coexist harmoniously with nonhumans and other humans.

Keywords: democratic citizenship, ecocriticism, environmental ethics, Native American tales

Mary Hunter Austin (1868–1934)[1] was an American writer who, albeit less studied, significantly contributed to the literary landscape of America at the turn of the century.[2] She lived in California where the deserts nurtured her love for the land. Her vivid delineation of the beautiful and promising image of the desert as well as its flora and fauna "brought to Americans a new perspective on

[1] For more information about Mary Austin's life, see Susan Goodman and Carl Dawson's *Mary Austin and the American West* (2008).

[2] In this article, the phrase "the turn of the century" is used to refer to the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century.

the Western desert" (Goodman & Dawson, 2008, p. ix). Austin was also keen on politics. She fought for democracy in the Progressive movement and participated in various campaigns for women's rights and the minorities' democratic participation. Austin expressed her concerns with the environment and politics in several of her works, such as *The Land of Little Rain* (1903), *A Woman of Genius* (1912), *The Ford* (1917) and *The Young Woman Citizen* (1918). Given these interests, scholars have regarded Austin within various designations, such as a "naturalist" (Blend, 1988, p. 26) for her spiritual feelings toward the land and a "female activist" (Mohammed, 2021, p. viii), for her advocacy of women's suffrage and her critique of World War I.

The Basket Woman: A Book of Indian Tales for Children (1904), one of her early works, vividly demonstrates her promotion of nature appreciation. As she states in the Preface, it "present[s] certain aspects of nature" as the "strongest appeal to the child mind" (Austin, 1904, p. iii). Although written in the early 20th century, the text remains relevant to 21st-century readers, especially young audiences, as Austin aims to employ her stories to instill respect and love for the natural world. Moreover, while advocating for the nonhuman world, Austin envisions certain values necessary for human coexistence with other beings. This article argues that *The Basket Woman* interweaves Austin's dual commitments to nature and politics, specifically the idea of democratic citizenship. Thus, this text remains significantly relevant to contemporary discussions on humanity's place within the shared world of both human and nonhuman beings.

Literature Review and Main Arguments

Taking into consideration her interests in the environment and politics, this article focuses on Austin's less-studied work, *The Basket Woman: A Book of Indian Tales for Children* (1904). It investigates the interlacing of her notions of environmental ethics and democracy in this children's work created in her early writing career. Consisting of various Native American tales embedded in the frame narrative, *The Basket Woman* involves the relationship between a white boy, Alan, and a Native American, the Basket Woman, who recounts the tales to the boy. Having heard these Native American tales, Alan shifts from his indescribable fear and misperception of the Basket Woman to a more positive and sympathetic view. Primarily, Austin designs the text to be a collection of Native American tales embedded within a frame narrative to teach environmental awareness to children. She makes it clear in the Preface that she does not aim to "provide authentic Indian Folk-tales" (Austin, 1904, p. iii) but intends to use the made-up Native American tales to help foster children's imagination and "intimacy with nature" (Austin, 1904, p. iii). This article attempts to further analyze this text in light of Austin's idea of democratic citizenship presented in her later political piece, *The Young Woman Citizen* (1918). It examines how her

idea of democratic citizenship is intertwined with her environmental concerns and is evident in her nature writing for children.

Few critics have analyzed *The Basket Woman.* Existing criticism approaches it in terms of Austin's use of Native American culture. For example, Mark T. Hoyer (1998) in his article "Weaving the Story: Northern Paiute Myth and *The Basket Woman*", examines her portrayal of the cultural syncretism of white and Native American cultures in *The Basket Woman*. Hoyer argues that Austin's attempt to syncretize Native Americans' and whites' religious beliefs is evident in "The Christmas Tree," one of the Native American tales. He also presents the writer's tendency to mythologize the relationship between Indigenous and white people. Therefore, Hoyer (1998) contends that her endeavor to merge the two cultures serves as a negotiation between the whites' "assimilation and extermination" (p. 65) of Native Americans. Moreover, William J. Scheick (1999) in "The Art of Maternal Nurture in Mary Austin's *The Basket Woman*" examines Romanticism in this particular work. He argues that Austin employs such Romantic elements as childlike imaginativeness and the human relationship with nature in the Native American tales. He further argues that the female protagonists in both the main narrative (the Basket Woman) and in some of the embedded Native American tales help revitalize such Romantic elements in the minds of children characters.

In addition to the issue of Native American culture, few scholars have examined the issue of women in *The Basket Woman*. Anna Carew-Miller (1999) in her book chapter entitled "Between Worlds, Crossing Borders: Mary Austin, Liminality, and the Dilemma of Women's Creativity" argues that Austin challenges the masculine narrative by creating an image of the "artist as a woman" (Carew-Miller, 1999, p. 108) who can use her voice and tell "the truth about herself" (Carew-Miller, 1999, p. 108). One example that Carew-Miller uses to illustrate her point is the portrayal of the Weaving Woman in "The Coyote Spirit and the Weaving Woman," one of the tales in *The Basket Woman*. The Weaving Woman exemplifies a woman who has an "infirmity of the eyes" (Carew-Miller, 1999, p. 116), which, however, suggests not a weakness but her gift in reading people's minds. Carew-Miller further argues that this artistic, creative ability enables the Weaving Woman to transgress gender borders in such a way that she dares to roam in the wilderness instead of dwelling in the domestic sphere, and also to reject sexual desire symbolized by the Coyote Spirit.

Diverging from the existing criticism, this article attempts to examine the intertwining of Mary Austin's environmental ethics and her interest in democratic citizenship in *The Basket Woman*. It argues that Austin attempts to craft Native American tales as a means to inculcate the spiritual relationship between humans and non-humans, which is derived from Native American beliefs. Reading *The Basket Woman* in juxtaposition with Austin's political piece *The Young Woman Citizen*, it also investigates how *The Basket Woman* can be interpreted as

demonstrating certain values for democratic citizenship which Austin proposes in her political work. Simultaneously, this article discusses the interlacing of environmental ethics and civic values and examines how Austin attempts to instill in children's minds these ethics and values for their harmonious coexistence with other humans and the non-human world.

Theoretical Frameworks

Mary Austin's Notion of Democracy and Democratic Citizenship

This article employs Austin's notion of democracy and democratic citizenship from her book *The Young Woman Citizen* (1918). As democracy was a heated debate in America at the turn of the century when the movement called Progressivism emerged as a response to rampant industrialization, Austin participated in the movement with her focus on women's rights, which was later presented in *The Young Woman Citizen*. However, Austin not only attempted to call for democracy among her fellow whites but she also paid attention to the minorities, especially women who were deprived of civil rights. Austin states in the work, "[t]he root of democracy is a joyous, objectiveless sense of allness" (Austin, 1918, p. 24). She posits that the objective for individuals to join together is not for benefits but simply for the fact that "they liked togetherness" (Austin, 1918, p. 24). In other words, she discerns that democracy is generated by a sense of togetherness from every human. Such a fundamental notion of democracy underpins Austin's call for the participation of individuals, especially women, in public affairs. She raises awareness of how a woman can stand "as a woman" (Austin, 1918, p. 16) and take part in contributing to democracy in American society.

To formulate America as a democratic nation that allows women to exercise their civil rights, Austin proposes certain civic values needed not only for women but also for each individual to function as a full citizen. Austin defines "[p]olitics" as "the progressive practice of social relations" (Austin, 1918, p. 11). She explains that any society needs to have a "distribution of responsibilities" (Austin, 1918, p. 11) for each individual. Youths, both male and female, should be instructed and trained to realize their sense of responsibility through household duties, and they can learn to apply such a sense of responsibility to the world outside their house (Austin, 1918, p. 12). Austin argues that such examples of youths with distributed responsibility should strengthen young individuals' sense of duty for public affairs when they become adult citizens.

In addition to social responsibility, Austin suggests the idea of "public-spiritedness" (Austin, 1918, p. 32) for each individual. She argues that public-spiritedness should not be easily translated into "occasional acts" (Austin, 1918, p. 31), such as donating money or gifts to the disadvantaged. On the contrary, it is, in fact, a "very profound human instinct" (Austin, 1918, p. 32). Austin

elaborates that "true" public-spiritedness is "a state of continuous awareness of the extent to which other people are involved in everything we do, and of their right to be considered" (Austin, 1918, p. 32). In this regard, she calls for a true sense of individuals' "humanitarian" mind (Austin, 1918, p. 32) to care for others and the public, rather than the "vanity of giving" (Austin, 1918, p. 32) merely derived from an occasional sense of "public service" (Austin, 1918, p. 33).

Although she intends *The Young Woman Citizen* to draw people's attention to women as individuals who deserve the same rights as men in public administration, Austin implies that the two civic values—responsibility and public-spiritedness—are, in fact, fundamentally pivotal for all people. Not only are these civic values necessary for men, women and other individuals to act as full citizens in American society but they also help individual citizens create a democratic society.

Native Americans' Perception of the Environment

As Austin is a writer who delves into the cultures of Native Americans, particularly those in California, this article attempts to examine her employment of certain Native Americans' views of the natural world in her craftmanship of *The Basket Woman*. Although the beliefs of different Native American tribes vary, most Native Americans have in common certain beliefs about the natural world. In this regard, scholars have conceptualized the basis of Native Americans' views of nature. For example, Scholar Paula Gunn Allen in her book chapter titled "The Sacred Hoop" (1996) elaborates on Native Americans' notion of "egalitarianism" (Allen, 1996, p. 245) as their distinctive approach to nature. She explains that Indigenous people do not perceive themselves as superior to, or separated from, other beings; rather, they consider themselves a part that participates in the universe of beings or "a balanced whole" (Allen, 1996, p. 242). Moreover, Allen (1996) explicates that Native Americans view all beings that surround them as living entities, which are, in her words, "dynamic and aware" (p. 243), emphasizing the idea that all things are parts of the living whole. Allen (1996) also points out the fact that Native Americans perceive all beings as closely intimate: "all creatures as relatives" (p. 246). Ultimately, Allen explains that all lives that are partaking in the whole of beings help constitute the "All Spirit" (Allen, 1996, p. 247), which is comparable to God in theistic religions.

In addition to these basic ideas, Allen also brings to the fore certain disparities between Christian and Native American beliefs. She points out that non-Native Americans tend to perceive "space as linear and time as sequential" (Allen, 1996, p. 246) whereas Native Americans view space as "spherical" and time as "cyclical" (Allen, 1996, p. 246) as seen in how Native American literature does not conform to the structure of "conflict, crisis, and resolution" (Allen, 1996, p. 245). Interestingly, to some degree, Allen points out that Indigenous people sometimes prioritize the roles of non-human beings as opposed to the dominant

role of God in the Christians' narrative of Creation. In other words, while Christians believe in the hierarchical relationships in which God is the only Creator who governs other species, Native Americans believe that even animals can act as "cocreators" (Allen, 1996, p. 246) in the myth of Creation.

As this article discusses Austin's idea of conservationism, it is worth examining Native American beliefs in light of conservationism. Interestingly, although the term "conservationism" emerged in the late nineteenth century as a movement to promote the appropriate use of natural resources, the gist of conservationism can also be traced in the Native American approach to nature. As Anthropologist Shepard Krech III (2007) puts it, "American Indian comprehension of relationships between living organisms and their organic and inorganic environments has always been ecological" (p. 4). For example, Native Americans' hunting can be seen as "maximizing efficiency" (Krech, 2007, p. 12). With respect for their prey, they hunt in an extent that suffices for their use.

Mary Austin in Her Historical Context

To further comprehend the context of *The Basket Woman* which helps tease out the two issues of environmental ethics and civic values that are interwoven in the text, it is necessary to discuss the Native American relationship with the whites in America at the turn of the century and Austin's profound interest in Native American culture.

Native Americans have long been dominated by white Americans since the European expansion into the New World (Porter, 2005). Numerous conflicts and wars between the Native inhabitants and the invaders continued for centuries until they reached a significant shift in the nineteenth century. White Americans changed from their desire to exterminate Native Americans to their attempt to assimilate them into the white American culture. They strove to replace indigenous lifestyles and cultures with their own through land dispossession acts and educational systems. First of all, land dispossession was one among many strategies to assimilate and control Native Americans. For example, the Indian Removal Act of 1830 forced Native Americans to move from their ancestral lands in the East to lands west of the Mississippi River where the land was infertile (Tindall & Shi, 1996). Several tribes, such as the Choctaws, Chickasaws and Seminoles, suffered tremendously from forced relocation and were moved to specific reservations provided by the government in the West, where arid land made their lives even more difficult (Porter, 2005). The Dawes Severalty Act of 1887 was another law that deprived Indigenous people of their rights to the land. The Act granted the central government the authority to control and break up Native Americans' lands and reservations into private property. Such attempts destroyed their tribal belief that the land could neither be owned nor sold. In addition, one main assimilation strategy was the provision of white education for Native Americans. The Indigenous people were forced to receive educational

programs provided by the government through boarding schools. The schools prohibited such Native American cultural practices as dress codes, tribal languages and religious beliefs. This kind of oppressive education was considered a type of war against Native Americans (Porter, 2005).

While the majority of white Americans at the time were not even aware of the subtlety of violence they inflicted upon the Native Americans, Mary Austin was one among a small number of them who discerned the oppression. Austin was keen on mingling with Native Americans and their cultures. Specifically, she dedicated herself to studying the customs, characteristics and languages of various Native American tribes in California, such as Yokuts, Serranos and Mojaves, both through anthropological documents and her first-hand experiences with them (Goodman & Dawson, 2008). As a result, Austin was cognizant of the grave injustices done to the Paiutes, such as the policies that prohibited them from speaking their languages and the schools that maltreated children and deprived them of their cultural identity (Goodman & Dawson, 2008). Austin's interest in, and sentiments for, Native Americans were reflected in several of her works, which center around these marginalized people. The influence of Native Americans and their cultures upon Austin is evident in her statement in her work *Earth Horizon* (1932) that the Natives inspired "the illumination and reformation of [her] own way of thought" (Austin, 1932, as cited in Viehmann, 2004, p. 6). Austin explicated that "contemporary society should learn from its Native peoples" (Goodman & Dawson, 2008, p. 64), specifically from how Native Americans "valued community life and respected the earth's natural resources" (Blend, 1988, p. 17). In this regard, it is evident that Native Americans and their ways of thinking served as a main impetus for Austin's imagination and literary creations.

Story-Telling and the Art of Teaching Environmental Appreciation and Democratic Citizenship in *The Basket Woman*

Myth-Making Elements and Children's Learning

In the Preface to *The Basket Woman*, Austin (1904) discusses children's early learning phase, which she calls the "myth-making" period (p. v). The period marks the time when children are unable to distinguish between animate and inanimate entities: "There is a period in the life of every child when almost the only road to understanding is the one blazed out by the myth-making spirit, kept open to the larger significance of things long after he is apprised that the thunder did not originate in the smithy of the gods nor the Walrus talk to the Carpenter" (Austin, 1904, p. v). Austin (1904) gives significance to this particular period as potentially contributing to children's learning. She desires to "[turn] the myth-making period to advantage" (p. v) in her text. In her composition of *The Basket Woman*, she employs mythopoeia both in the frame narrative and embedded tales.

These tales showcase the natural world, such as animals, trees, the stream, and the glacier, which is presented as anthropomorphized and "sentient" (Austin, 1904, p. iv).

The portrayal of these nonhumans as sentient also reflects Austin's notion of the natural world. Austin also points out in the Preface to *The Basket Woman* that her idea of myth-making presentation corresponds with the Native American view of nature. As she puts it, Native Americans perceive that "nature presents itself in mythical terms" (Austin, 1904, p. vi). They regard all lives as imbued with sentience. In the tales, Austin presents the anthropomorphized natural entities as protagonists equipped with agency. She explains that, on the one hand, such a mythical portrayal acts as the "strongest appeal to the child mind" (Austin, 1904, p. iii). On the other hand, these myth-making tales continue to influence children's perception of reality as they linger in children's minds well into the time when they are informed of scientific explanations of nature. The mythical world depicted in the tales will impact the white boy, Alan, in the frame narrative and young readers as they learn that they resemble other beings, especially nonhuman ones, in various ways. These children are expected to perceive natural entities not as the Other but as similar to their fellow human beings. Accordingly, children's perception of the natural world will influence their treatment of these nonhuman beings.

Furthermore, Austin's mythopoeic construction of the tales instills in children's minds the idea that nonhuman beings can take the same active role as human beings. The anthropomorphized natural entities demonstrate what it means to be individuals and, most importantly, what they are supposed to do as part of society. In this light, the tales can be interpreted as implicitly suggesting civic values which should be cultivated in individuals as Austin explicitly propounded a few years later in *The Young Woman Citizen*. This article thus focuses on four tales that present both the perception of the natural world and civic values: "The Golden Fortune," "The Fire Bringer," "The Christmas Tree" and "The Stream That Ran Away."

"The Golden Fortune": Humans, Animals, and Egalitarian Lives

"The Golden Fortune" accentuates the possible repercussions of selfishness and the unfathomable value of selflessness. It centers around a poor old miner, Jerry, who luckily discovers a mine with an ore of gold specks which he names "Golden Fortune." Because of his greed and fear that other people will know of his luck, the old man tries to prevent others from coming to his site. His paranoia is so extreme that he refuses to help a young stranger who loses his way and asks for directions. Jerry starts feeling guilty over his cold-heartedness and he tries to search for the young man in a nearby village after three snowing days but he cannot find the stranger there. After that incident, his gold specks start to dwindle. Jerry's lack of compassion and thus his failure to help the young man

result in his sense of guilt and desire for redemption. In the process of his self-redemption, Jerry alters his perception of other humans and nonhumans and treats them with compassion. At the story's end, his act of helping a frail sheep on one heavily snowing day enables him to reconcile with the apparition of the deceased young man who returns to forgive and liberate him from his remorse.

One of the significant changes in Jerry lies in his attitude toward, and compassion for, humans. After his indifferent refusal to help the young man, who "was not very well prepared for the mountain passes and the night" (Austin, 1904, p. 146) and "looked wistfully at [Jerry's] cabin and the boding sky" (Austin, 1904, p. 147), Jerry becomes aware of his unkindness to his human fellows and tries to take some action. As he "could not get the young stranger out of his mind" (Austin, 1904, p. 148), the old man visits the village to "inquire" (Austin, 1904, p. 148) about the young man's wellbeing. Although his attempt proves to be of no avail because the young man has probably passed away, Jerry's decision to visit the village marks a promising change in his concern for other humans. Moreover, driven by his remorse, Jerry extends his kindness to other humans in general as he sets his mind to "looking for an opportunity" (Austin, 1904, p. 150) to help other human fellows. He is determined to help other humans who struggle with harsh coldness on the trail and to look for any passers-by who "could by any possibility be persuaded to stay the night in [his] cabin" (Austin, 1904, p. 150).

Not only does Jerry change his attitude toward his fellow humans but he also demonstrates positive relationships with animals. When Jerry notices that some villagers gossip about his misdeed against the young stranger in the past, he decides to withdraw from human society and live in the forest. He befriends animals to the extent that he both depends on and resembles them. Jerry's life is significantly rendered meaningful by the animals as he develops an intimate bond with nature from these creatures. Jerry learns about the seasons from the flux of the "furred and feathered folk" (Austin, 1904, p. 152) and the herbs that contain seeds for cultivation from the grouse and quail. In return, the animals perceive him, who has taken refuge in the woods, as one of them. To the animals' eyes, his cabin is "weathered to a semblance of the stones" (Austin, 1904, p. 151) and serves as a haven that welcomes rabbits and deer to sojourn.

Most importantly, the transformation of Jerry's attitudes toward animals and his compassion for them culminates in an incident in which he assists a frail sheep. When hearing his name called in the woods, he searches for the source of the voice, but it turns out to be a feeble sheep that is struggling in the thick snow. The old man's new perception of animals as he "has lost the sense of distinction which should be between man and beast" (Austin, 1904, pp. 155-156) and his burning desire to "do a good turn on the trail" (Austin, 1904, p. 155) are fulfilled by this opportunity to help the animal. It is worthy of note that in his rescue of the sheep, Jerry shows his determination to help the sheep to the extent that he is willing to sacrifice himself. Given that the snowstorm is harsh and the sheep is

"full heavier then than he" (Austin, 1904, p. 157), Jerry selflessly determines to help the sheep. Fortunately, Jerry's help for the sheep turns out to be a reciprocal act of benevolence as he "half [carries] the sheep and [is] half borne up and supported by the spread of the great horns" (Austin, 1904, p. 157). The two lives make their way out of the thick snow and eventually reach a haven where the sheep can walk farther and meet "the new chance of life" (Austin, 1904, p. 158). Feeling very "worn and weary" (Austin, 1904, p. 158), Jerry is aware that he may even die after this selfless act: "If I sleep, I shall freeze" (Austin, 1904, p. 158).

Jerry's succor of the sheep provides him with an opportunity to redeem his guilt and to reconcile with the stranger. Jerry's benevolent act for the sheep is presented as comparable to that for humans. The stranger who returns to the old man as an apparition right after the help further enlightens him with this insight into the equivalence between humans and nonhumans:

> "You bear me no ill-will for what I did?" said Jerry.
> And the stranger answered, "None."
> "I have wished it undone many times," said the old man. "I have tried this night to repay it."
> "By what you have done this night I am repaid," said the stranger.
> "It was only a sheep."
> "It was one of God's creatures," said the man. (Austin, 1904, p. 159)

In this scene, the stranger forgives Jerry for his misdeed done to him because of the old man's selfless help for the sheep. Since helping an animal can be equated with saving a human life, Jerry is regarded as capable of redeeming his sin against the young stranger. Not only is Jerry able to reconcile with the stranger but he, albeit in his dream, also believes that "the stranger had brought back the luck again" (Austin, 1904, p. 159).

It is noteworthy to point out that this tale indicates the idea that all lives are, in Paula Gunn Allen's words, "of equal value in the scheme of things" (Allen, 1996, p. 243). Identifying this idea as one of the distinctive features of Native Americans' views of nature, Allen refers to it as "egalitarianism" (Allen, 1996, p. 245) for the fact that all lives, human or nonhuman, shares the equal value of life. This notion also suggests all lives deserve equal rights and treatment. This tale thus emphasizes that readers, particularly children, should regard and treat nonhuman beings in the same way as they do their fellow humans as they all are similarly "God's creatures" (Austin, 1904, p. 159).

In addition to suggesting the egalitarian perception of the natural world, the tale insinuates that self-absorption is an obstacle to harmonious coexistence in society. Jerry exemplifies those who are so preoccupied with their self-interest that they disregard other people. Jerry's selfishness and greed for the gold specks blind him as he cannot see that these obsessions prevent him from kindly

providing help and care for other fellows, especially the young stranger who "[looks] wistfully" (Austin, 1904, p. 147) at Jerry's cabin. Furthermore, the tale suggests a promising way in which Jerry can relinquish his selfishness and become more compassionate for other lives. Throughout the years of guilty feelings, Jerry embarks on a transformative journey in which he shifts from selfishness to sheer selflessness and also achieves a sense of social responsibility. He suffers from his unkindness toward the young man and gains a sense that he should take responsibility for his misconduct. He courageously admits to himself that he is "accountable" (Austin, 1904, p. 149) for his being "inhospitable" (Austin, 1904, p. 149) to other fellows. Moreover, Jerry starts caring for other creatures, both humans and animals, and demonstrates what Austin in *The Young Woman Citizen* calls a "humanitarian" spirit (Austin, 1918, p. 32). Although this tale does not directly touch upon the idea of public-spiritedness, it can be understood that Jerry's gained compassion is a foundation and a catalyst for the awakening of public-spiritedness. Jerry's kind hospitality for any visitors, rabbits, deer and sheep in the woods, signifies his improvement as an individual who has a public mind to care for other lives. One could thus conclude that it is his guilt that elicits his sense of responsibility and humanitarianism.

Finally, the tale can be interpreted as suggesting that these civic values can be nurtured. Jerry exemplifies an individual who successfully fosters a sense of responsibility and public-spiritedness throughout the years that he spends with others living in the woods. Departing from his indulgence in self-interest to sacrificing himself for the benefit of other beings as the means to redeem his guilt, Jerry proves true to the ability to nurture these values. Most importantly, as the tale presents the egalitarianism of all lives, which blurs the line between humans and nonhumans, these two values are thus depicted as benefiting not only humans but also nonhumans, all of whom are considered members of the whole society.

"The Fire Bringer": Animals as Co-Creators of Humans' Civilization

Apart from her myth-making portrayal of animals as equal in value to humans, Austin portrays how animals can sometimes serve as counselors who guide humans in "The Fire Bringer." The tale concerns a boy and the Coyote Counselor who join hands in bringing fire for the benefit of people. Initially, the Coyote does not care to help his people as he can survive the cold because of his fur but upon the boy's generous request for his compassion for people, the Coyote changes his mind and becomes of assistance to the boy's magnanimity. The boy and his people, with the Coyote as a counselor, embark on a strategic march and successfully snatch the fire from the Fire Spirit on the Burning Mountain. The Fire Bringer, thus, becomes the title of the boy for his dauntless acts before it later becomes the designation for the Coyote after the boy's death.

Austin's mythopoeic depiction of the Coyote as the Counselor of humans corresponds with the Native American belief in the idea of the greater privilege of

the animals. Apart from suggesting that Native Americans consider all lives as kinfolk, Allen (1996) explains that tribespeople sometimes "allow all animals, vegetables, and minerals . . . the same or even greater privilege than humans" (p. 243). In this tale, Austin's depiction of the Coyote as the Counselor of humans does not suggest that animals have complete dominion over humans. Instead, the privilege here signifies animals' ability to serve as, in Allen's (1996) words, "cocreators" (p. 246) with humans in this narrative of world creation. In addition, coyotes are considered by Native Americans as "tricksters" (Payne, 2017, p. 186) who are equipped with wisdom and mischief and can shapeshift into different forms for specific purposes. In this tale, Austin opts to portray the Coyotes' tricksterism in a positive light: the Coyote can employ his brilliant wisdom to assist humans in their attempt to cope with the cold weather.

Compared to the Greek mythology of Prometheus who brought fire to humans and the Biblical myth of creation in which God created the world, "The Fire Bringer" provides another narrative about creation which highlights the significant role of animals. While the story is set in the time "before [the] fire was brought to the tribes" (Austin, 1904, p. 111) and humans were not cognizant of the use of fire, the Coyote Counselor is highlighted as one main player in bringing the fire for humans to use. Contrasted with the whites' belief in God as the only Creator of the world, the Coyote in this tale plays the roles of guide, "Friend" and "Counselor" (Austin, 1904, p. 112) of humans. As a friend of humans, the Coyote is depicted as having the ability to communicate with humans: they "talked together with understanding" (Austin, 1904, p. 111). Furthermore, the Coyote's role as a Counselor lies in his wisdom to introduce to the boy the knowledge that fire can "serve the people well and keep them warm" (Austin, 1904, p. 114). The Coyote Counselor also devises a strategic plan for the boy and his people to march for the fire.

It is worthy of note that Austin further attempts to accentuate the importance of the Coyote in human civilization by drawing a connection between myth and reality. She links the heroic Coyote Counselor in her mythic story with the image of actual coyotes in reality; those whose "fur is singed and yellow as it [is] by the flames that [blow] backward from the band when he [brings] it down from the Burning Mountain" (Austin, 1904, p. 118). With this connection in their minds, the children can, in their myth-making period, realize that coyotes are by no means merely insignificant nonhumans, inferior and useless to humans. They can understand how the human species is, in fact, indebted to the coyotes. This appreciation will help foster their grateful feeling toward these animals and, consequently, their respectful treatment of them. For Alan, not only does this Native American tale "[come] oftenest to his mind" (p. 109) but he also deeply "love[s]" and "believe[s]" the tale (Austin, 1904, p. 109). In this light, it can be inferred that the Coyote's necessary role as a counselor for humans will be positively and deeply ingrained in Alan's and other child readers' perceptions.

While "The Fire Bringer" highlights the importance of animals with the privilege to function as humans' co-creators, it can be interpreted as demonstrating the importance of civic values in society. The tale simulates a democratic society where such citizens as the boy and his people and especially the Coyote live together and possess different voices and opinions. Initially, the boy has a debate with the Coyote on the issue of his people's struggle with the cold. The boy attempts to convince the Coyote to help him think of possible ways to relieve people's suffering. It is not because of his disregard for others' suffering that the Coyote does not feel the need to help the boy. He, in fact, is unaware of afflictions caused by coldness since he is covered with a "coat of good fur" (Austin, 1904, p. 112). Construed as the portrayal of a democratic society in which divergent voices coexist with a forum that provides room for those voices to come to an agreement, this tale presents the Coyote Counselor as a citizen who listens to the voice of the boy who expresses his concerns for his people and employs logic to argue for his stance. Being open to the boy's explanation that his people "suffer and have no way to escape the cold" (Austin, 1904, p. 112) and his attempt to convince him to help, the Coyote significantly shifts from disagreement to compassion for the boy's people and willingness to help them.

The depiction of such a democratic society in this tale, furthermore, reveals the importance of public-spiritedness in various dimensions. Similar to "The Golden Fortune," this tale implies that sympathy is a foundation of individuals' minds for the public. For example, the boy demonstrates his ability to notice people's difficulties and sympathize with them. Seeing his tribespeople "r[un] nakedly in snow or huddled in cave of the rocks and were very miserable" (Austin, 1904, p. 112), the boy is the first person to initiate the idea of alleviating his people's sufferings by seeking consultation with the Coyote Counselor. The boy even expresses his strong will not to go hunting, promising to himself that "[he] will hunt no more . . . until [he has] found a way to save [his] people from the cold" (Austin, 1904, p. 113). Not only the boy but the Coyote Counselor also represents an individual with a sense of sympathy. That is, the Coyote Counselor is at first indifferent to the boy's care for the people as he has a "coat of good fur" (Austin, 1904, p. 112) and cannot understand others' suffering. However, the fact that the Coyote Spirit changes his mind upon the boy's request demonstrates that he is able to show his compassion for those who are in need of help.

In addition to illustrating sympathy as one quality that underpins public-spiritedness, the tale presents one of the most ideal aspects of public-spiritedness: a sense of selflessness. The Coyote Counselor significantly shifts from his mere self-absorption to his gained sympathy and ultimately to his selflessness. Despite "being known to fear [the fire]" (Austin, 1904, p. 114), the Coyote Counselor is willing to risk his life to help the people when he becomes determined that "[the boy] and [he] must take [the fire] together" (Austin, 1904, p. 113). Moreover, the Coyote Counselor is the one who, among all the people on the march, dauntlessly

advances to "steal the fire" (Austin, 1904, p. 116) from the dangerous Fire Spirits and "[begin] to run away with it down the slope of the Burning Mountain" (Austin, 1904, p. 116). The Coyote Counselor's ultimate ideal of selflessness is further implied by the fact that he does not claim to bear the designation of "the Fire Bringer," but such a title finally "[falls] to the Coyote" (Austin, 1904, p. 118) when there is no human, after the boy, who has "a right to the name" (Austin, 1904, p. 118).

Not only does the tale illustrate sympathy as the root, and selflessness as an ultimate expression, of public-spiritedness but it also gives significance to leadership as an attribute that enhances this civic value. For example, the Coyote Spirit and the boy cannot accomplish the plan to bring the fire unless they demonstrate their leadership among the people. Although people are "slothful" and "afraid" (Austin, 1904, p. 114) and do not believe in the feasibility of the plan, they later change their minds because "the boy and their own misery persuaded them" (Austin, 1904, p. 114). At this point, it can be seen that the boy, with his leadership, can successfully convince the people to join the plan. Furthermore, the boy's leadership helps the people change from mistrust to confidence that the plan will be accomplished. These people thus gain a sense that they all should contribute to the plan for the public welfare as seen in their march of "strong runners for every one of the hundred days (Austin, 1904, p. 114) to pass the fire "hand to hand" (Austin, 1904, p. 117) and carry it to their land. In short, the boy's leadership succeeds in catalyzing cooperative power which yields benefits to the people who use the fire to "warm [themselves] and cook their food" (Austin, 1904, p. 118) from then on.

"The Christmas Tree": Nature, God, and the Plurality of Religious Beliefs

Austin's myth-making elements are also highlighted in her delineation of the trees in "The Christmas Tree." This tale focuses on the transformation of the boy's attitude toward, and treatment of, the silver fir when he receives schooling in the city. In the woods, Mathew bonds with the fir that supplies him with spiritual comfort. He even regards the fir's physical features—i.e., star-shaped branchlets and cross-like sprigs—as signifying the tree's spiritual power. One day, Mathew starts noticing from afar the town's church that has "a cross on top like [the fir's]" (Austin, 1904, p. 98) and wonders if the fir and the church have something in common. Before leaving the woods to attend the town's school, Mathew promises to come back to the fir and learn from the church why it has a similar cross to the fir. With his engagement with the church and his hearing the minister's sermons about God in the Bible, Mathew truly believes in "the story of love and sacrifice" (Austin, 1904, p. 100) that the Bible provides. Simultaneously, Mathew starts fearing to return to the woods as it may diminish his time to "pleas[e] God" (Austin, 1904, p. 99) in the town. Mathew even decides to fell his beloved silver fir to be used as the church's Christmas tree, claiming that he

cannot find any other occasions for his fir to "share in his new delight" (Austin, 1904, p. 101) in God. Noticing the similarities of the physical features, i.e., the cross and stars, that the fir and the church have in common, Mathew later comes to an epiphany that there is no distinction between the fir and the church, both of which similarly point to the faith in the Great Being.

Austin's mythopoetic portrayal of the woods and the trees as imbued with spirituality suggests to readers the idea that the natural world is capable of interacting with humans. The tale highlights Mathew's intimate bond with the woods as they provide a place that nurtures the growth of the boy's body and mind. First of all, the woods are presented as "a better place for a boy to grow up" (Austin, 1904, p. 91) as they supply him with "room for roaming as one [desires]" (Austin, 1904, p. 91). To a certain extent, the trees in the woods are presented as having a spiritual connection with humans. That is, the fir serves as a reminder of his deceased mother. It gives a "pleasant odor" (Austin, 1904, p. 93), which reminds him of "the memory of what his mother had been" (Austin, 1904, p. 93). Mathew can thus be seen as treating his beloved fir as if it were a human being. He brings berries and water from the spring to the fir as he considers that "the fir tree had a soul" (Austin, 1904, p. 93). In addition to presenting how children, especially Mathew, can take refuge in the natural world, the tale emphasizes the reciprocity of the relationship between the trees and Mathew. In other words, the tree "ha[s] its own way of comforting him" (Austin, 1904, p. 94) in response to Mathew's love for it. When the boy has "heaviness in his breast" (Austin, 1904, p. 94), he can alleviate this melancholy by "[creeping] up to the slender trunk of the fir" (Austin, 1904, p. 94) that spreads its branches to the ground and "[shuts] him in dark and close" (Austin, 1904, p. 94). Such a comforting posture of the fir renders it a surrogate mother who embraces her child.

To promote children's environmental appreciation, Austin employs the Native American notion of "the Great Mystery" (Allen, 1996, p. 243), to use Allen's words, in this tale. Allen describes that the Great Mystery, or "the All Spirit" (Allen, 1996, p. 243), is the culmination of all lives that are living. She explains that the Indigenous people believe that all lives are "dynamic and aware" (Allen, 1996, p. 243) of themselves as they partake in, and contribute to, the All Spirit. In this light, Mathew's silver fir can be seen as an entity imbued with spirituality and concurrently emblematic of the sacredness of the Great Mystery in the natural world. Mathew's appreciation of, and faith in, the fir thus bespeaks his respect for the Great Being in the natural world. In addition, Critic Joy Porter (2014) explains that the Native American notion of God is not similar to Christians' "human-like God" (Porter, 2014, p. 5) but it is "the life forces of nature" (Porter, 2014, p. 5). This explanation of "life forces" corresponds to Austin's portrayal of Mathew's spiritual connection with the fir. Mathew exemplifies how "people who grow up in [the woods] are best at believing" (Austin, 1904, p. 99) in the Great Mystery as he can intuit the transcendental

dimension of nature and develop spiritual intimacy with the natural world through the silver fir even before he comes into contact with divinity in such monotheistic belief systems as Christianity in the town.

Furthermore, this tale can be read as Austin's attempt to advocate a plurality of beliefs in society. It portrays different beliefs, namely the faith in the natural world and the belief in such institutionalized religions as Christianity. The tale insinuates that the world is full of various belief systems and that these beliefs should have their place in society. The key to such a harmonious coexistence of these beliefs is, as the tale suggests, individual tolerance. To elaborate, "The Christmas Tree" presents the value of religious tolerance as a foundation for harmonious coexistence in a pluralistic society. Contextualized in the nineteenth century when white Americans were preoccupied with the extermination of Native American culture which they viewed as wild and primitive in opposition to their rational and civilized one (Hendry, 2003), this tale can be seen as an attempt to debunk such dualism and also to champion Native American religious belief. More specifically, the tale highlights Native American belief in the profundity of nature's capacity to provide spiritual comfort and nurturance to individuals as exemplified by Mathew whose spirit is well tended by, and in, the woods.

In addition, the tale criticizes any attempt to discriminate against, or destroy, a religious belief in a pluralistic society. Such religious violence can be seen when Mathew unknowingly sacrifices his faith in the natural world for the benefit of such institutionalized religion as Christianity. In the tale, Mathew privileges his faith in Christianity to the extent that he "wish[es] never to live in any place where he might not hear about God" (Austin, 1904, p. 101) and abandons his love for the natural world. His loss of faith in nature reaches its peak when he sacrifices his fir to be used as Christmas "gifts" (Austin, 1904, p. 102) for the church. Although he expresses the good intention for his beloved silver fir to "share in his new delight" (Austin, 1904, p. 101) in the church, Mathew's decision to cut down the tree for the benefit of the church signifies the sacrifice of one religious belief for another. In her attempt to criticize the notion of religious supremacy, Austin further argues through the narrative voice that the two beliefs, nature-based affiliation and Christianity, in fact, have certain features in common. The tale illustrates how Mathew discerns physical commonalities between the fir and the church at the moment when he fells the tree:

> Suddenly he remembered his old puzzle about it, how the smallest twigs were divided off in each in the shape of a cross, how the boughs repeated the star form every year, and what was true of his fir was true of them all. Then it must have been that there were tears in his eyes, for he could not see plainly: the pillars of the church spread upward like the shafts of the trees, and the organ playing was like the sound of the wind in their

> branches, and the stately star-built firs rose up like spires, taller than the church tower, each with a cross on top. (Austin, 1904, p. 103)

Moreover, the tale reveals that the two beliefs share the same goal, that is, to reach the Great Being. Austin conveys this message through Mathew's realization at the end of the tale that "everything speaks of God in its own way" (Austin, 1904, p. 104). Such a message suggests various ways in which individuals can attain divinity. Mathew further asserts that the roads to the ultimate goal can be varied as it is "a matter of understanding how" (Austin, 1904, p. 104).

It is worth noting that Mathew's spiritual intimacy with the natural world paves the way for his respect for the plurality of beliefs. At first, Mathew changes from his faith in the natural world to his belief in Christianity when he lives in the town, and this transformation results in his refusal to "go back to the mountain" (Austin, 1904, p. 99). However, after Mathew's realization that all lives are, as Allen (1996) suggests, "dynamic and aware" (p. 243) as exemplified by the silver fir which acts as if it wept when being felled to be used as the Christmas gift, Mathew starts comprehending that the spirited fir also speaks of God. This sentient fir can thus be seen as, to use Allen's words, "partaking as it does in the life of the All Spirit and contributing as it does to the continuing life of that same Great Mystery" (Allen, 1996, p. 243) in its own way. Consequently, Mathew's epiphany results in his determination to return to the woods. He ponders that "the mountains know quite as much of the important things as they know here in the town" (Austin, 1904, p. 104). In this light, Mathew no longer considers his belief in the natural world represented by mountains as inferior to his faith in the Christian God represented by the town. He further suggests that these two beliefs are, in fact, capable of providing him with "important things" pertaining to the Great Spirit. Ultimately, Mathew's acceptance of the equal importance, and coexistence, of these different beliefs indicates his idea of religious pluralism. In addition, after Mathew tells his father about his keenness to return to the woods, his father succinctly replies to him, "I am pleased to think you have turned out such a sensible little fellow" (Austin, 1904, p. 105). The father's remark about Mathew's becoming "sensible" implicates that the son has the prudence to examine and overcome his unknown fear of the woods. As a result, Mathew is able not only to restore but also deepen his faith in the natural world.

"The Stream That Ran Away": Negligence of Duty and Its Impact on the Chains of Lives

"The Stream That Ran Away" deals with the life of a stream that perceives itself as being shallow and useless to others. Without realizing that its course of water dries in certain seasons, the stream thinks that it is unable to benefit others and decides to run away from its place. The stream refuses to accommodate others and sets its mind to leisurely enjoying the world. When two men, Shorty and

Long Tom, discover the stream and decide to settle on the site, the stream becomes happy because it can draw the two men's attention and, therefore, it forgets about the escape plan. However, afraid of being diverted into an irrigating ditch, the stream flees the site with the help of a storm. Consequently, its escape causes other lives that depend on it to suffer from drought. As the stream wanders and sees that all waters are put into use in different forms, it decides to return to its previous site only to realize that most of the lives there are already dead. When a new family comes to the stream's site but decides not to settle there as they notice the signs of drought, the stream becomes regretful and expresses its intention to compensate for its wrongdoing.

The tale accentuates the idea of conservationism, which means the sustainable use of natural resources with the aim of contributing "the greatest good for the greatest number" (Pinchot, as cited in Porter, 2014, p. 6). It suggests an anthropocentric notion of natural resources being effectively used for the benefit of humans and all lives. Such an idea is vividly portrayed through the life of the stream. Before the realization of its function, the stream thinks that it is unimportant for other beings and wants to escape the area given that it has no attraction for other lives: "no pools in it deep enough for trout, and no trees on its borders" (Austin, 1904, p. 34). However, the tale incorporates the notion of conservationism by depicting how the stream turns happy for a moment and forgets about the escape plan when it is of benefit to others. That is, the saddened stream becomes elated when it is visited by the two old men, Shorty and Long Tom, who make use of its water. They both build a house and grow plants on the stream's bank and can utilize water for their different purposes: Shorty's orchard and Long Tom's vegetable garden. Benefiting from the stream, the two men feel so happy with the abundance of produce that the stream yields for them. They are "never so happy as when walking in the garden in the cool of the day, touching the growing things as they walked and praising each other's work" (Austin, 1904, p. 37). Simultaneously, the narrative voice suggests that the stream who almost decided to run away starts feeling "so interested" (Austin, 1904, p. 37) because of its usefulness to the two men that "it had almost forgotten about running away" (Austin, 1904, p. 37). In addition to the portrayal of the stream as being of service to humans, the tale further emphasizes the idea of conservationism by pointing to the stream's realization of "water at work" (Austin, 1904, p. 38). After escaping from Shorty and Long Tom when it is aware that the two men decide to "govern its running" (Austin, 1904, p. 37), the stream experiences how water should be of use to others in various functions, such as "turning mills, watering fields, carrying trade," and in various forms, such as "hail, rain, and snow" (Austin, 1904, p. 38). This insight results in the stream's return to its place to function and put itself to good use "with the best heart it could contrive" (Austin, 1904, p. 39).

Not only does the tale present the idea of conservationism but it also invites readers to notice the relatedness of all beings. Allen (1996) puts it that

Native Americans believe that "all creature is part of a living whole and that all parts of that whole are related to one another by the virtue of their participation in the whole of being" (p. 247). This notion of the relatedness of all beings is evident in Austin's depiction of how humans, animals and plants are dependent upon the stream. For example, the tale stresses that the stream which thinks it has neither attractions nor benefits is, in fact, never useless and has "no lack of good company" (Austin, 1904, p. 35), even in its driest condition. On the stream's borders, there are several lives that benefit from it, such as the birds that "[nest] in the willows" (Austin, 1904, p. 35), the rabbits that "[come] to drink" (Austin, 1904, p. 35), and the bobcat that "[makes] its lair" (Austin, 1904, p. 35). Furthermore, the stream attracts Shorty and Long Tom because an abundance of lives around it indicates the fertility of the land surrounding this water source as the men conclude when they first notice the stream: "Here is good meadow and water enough; let us build a house and grow trees" (Austin, 1904, p. 36). In addition to presenting how the stream is interwoven with other lives by its serviceable water, the tale suggests the negative chain reaction to all lives when such relatedness is shattered. The stream's escape from its place causes all lives that inhabit there to suffer from the drought:

> The willows were there, but grown shabby and dying at the top; the birches were quite dead, but stood still in their places; and there was only rubbish where the white clematis had been. Even the rabbits had gone away. The little stream ran whimpering in the meadow, fumbling at the ruined ditches to comfort the fruit-trees which were not quite dead. It was very dull in those days living in the canon of Piñon Pines. (Austin, 1904, p. 39)

In this light, it can be seen that the drought which results from the stream's escape affects many lives. It causes hardship to the fruit trees and other plants, subsequently impacting the lives of animals, such as rabbits and deer, as well.

While the tale can be read as implicitly pointing to the relatedness between humans and the stream, it is mainly suggestive of important civic values for individuals. The stream can be interpreted as an individual member of society who is full of self-interest. The stream always desires to live a leisurely life with its impulse to "fling in the world" (Austin, 1904, p. 37) and refuses to be diverted into an irrigating ditch. Such an ego-centric impulse is antagonistic to a sense of responsibility for individuals' duty. When the stream abandons its duty by running away, it causes all lives that depend on it to suffer. For example, Shorty and Long Tom suffer from the lack of water use as the stream flees the area: "no fruit set on the trees, and the seeds Long Tom planted shriveled in the earth" (Austin, 1904, p. 38). Focusing on the stream's duty to serve and benefit all lives, the tale suggests that individuals are accountable for fulfilling their duties, and

that their responsibility renders their existence meaningful and useful to society as a whole.

In addition, the tale reveals that the stream's lack of responsibility has a serious impact on its credibility. That is, a new family that comes to the stream's place and almost settles there decides to change their mind as the family can see "signs of great drought" (Austin, 1904, p. 41) in that area:

> Look, there is a clump of birches in the very path of the stream, but all dead; and the largest limbs of the fruit-trees have died. In this country one must be able to make sure of the water supply. I suppose the people who planted them must have abandoned the place when the stream went dry. We must go on farther. (Austin, 1904, p. 41)

The stream itself thus admits its lack of responsibility. Realizing that "home is best" (Austin, 1904, p. 39) and returning to its place to function after its escape, the stream is aware of its own "fault" (Austin, 1904, p. 39) and attempts to "[go] on repairing the borders with the best heart it could contrive" (Austin, 1904, p. 39). It needs to bear the consequences of its "reputation for neglecting one's duty" (Austin, 1904, p. 41), and eventually suffers from its inability to benefit others as the tale ends with the stream's "mournful sound" (Austin, 1904, p. 41) ever after.

Frame Narrative: Story-Telling and the Making of Democratic Citizenship

Prior to his immersion in these tales, Alan's attitudes can be seen as having been shaped by the whites' discourse against Native Americans. In their imperialist discourse, the white Americans in the nineteenth century employed binary oppositions to distinguish themselves from the Indigenous people. They deemed themselves to be superior and civilized while considering Native Americans as inferior and primitive. This discourse was widespread among the white community and employed to indoctrinate younger generations into white supremacy. Alan as a boy is influenced by this discriminating discourse. Initially, the first tale entitled "The Basket Woman" describes Alan's indescribable fear of the Basket Woman when he meets her for the first time during his walk to a spring. Alan refuses to go farther toward the spring when he sees the Native American woman heading in the same direction. Despite her "pleasant smile" (Austin, 1904, p. 4), Alan cannot cast off his fear because what he "[has] heard of Indians before coming to this country was very frightful" (Austin, 1904, p. 4). This narrative which perpetuates the view of the Native Americans as dangerous affects the way in which Alan perceives the Basket Woman. Moreover, the tale demonstrates that the whites' jokes embody discriminating prejudice against the Native Americans. Alan remembers when a teamster tells him to behave well, or the Basket Woman may "pack [him] away in that basket o' her" (Austin, 1904, p. 6). This joke spurs Alan's fear of the old woman to the point that he sets his mind

"not to trust her" (Austin, 1904, p. 5) despite her kind praise of him as a "very pretty boy" (Austin, 1904, p. 5).

While demonstrating the whites' indoctrination of racism, the very first tale, "The Basket Woman" indicates the young boy's inherent proclivity to sympathize with the harsh conditions of the Native Americans even before he listens to the tales from the Basket Woman. First and foremost, Alan's compassion for the Native Americans can be seen as being derived from his young mind which is not fully tarnished by the whites' imperialist ideologies. Although he is surrounded by many discriminating voices against Native Americans, Alan himself witnesses the harsh reality of Native Americans. For example, when he accompanies his homesteader father to a campoodie to "get an Indian to help at fence building" (Austin, 1904, p. 6), Alan sees Native Americans' poor quality of life. They are "living in low, foul huts" (Austin, 1904, p. 6) with their dirty clothes. It is worth noting that Alan's untarnished mind is fostered by his first-hand experience with the hardship of Native Americans, resulting in his genuine compassion as he describes this scene as "very disappointing" (Austin, 1904, p. 6). Furthermore, Alan's sympathy with the Indigenous people emanates from his curiosity. Alan always asks his parents questions about Native Americans' livelihoods and characteristics: "Will they not hurt us, father?" (Austin, 1904, p. 6). The boy's questioning reflects his curiosity to seek the truth against the pervasive discourse. Not only does the tale suggest the boy's natural goodwill but it also reveals the role of parents in advising their children on proper attitudes and behaviors when they interact with others, especially Native Americans. For example, when he asks his father whether the Native Americans will hurt them when they visit the campoodie, his father teaches him: "Oh, no, my boy; you must not get any such notion as that" (Austin, 1904, p. 6). Eventually, the boy demonstrates a sign of a change in his attitude toward Native Americans by expressing his honest sympathy with their present condition: "I do not like Indians the way they are now" (Austin, 1904, p. 7). Alan's inherent compassion with Native Americans miraculously leads to the arrival of the Basket Woman in the night who claims to show him the stories of "Indians as they used to be" (Austin, 1904, p. 8) and begins immersing him in the Native American tales.

It is important to note that Austin employs myth-making elements, such as the blurring of dreams and reality or shifts between past and present, to demonstrate how Alan gradually changes his attitudes toward the Native Americans, especially the Basket Woman, from fear to sympathy. In the first tale, "The Basket Woman," Alan is visited by the Basket Woman, presumably in his dreams. Offering a seat in her basket for Alan to "[step] into it on his own accord" (Austin, 1904, p. 7), the old woman takes him on a retrospective journey during which the boy sees the happy lives of Native Americans in the past. Alan experiences how Native Americans could be "happier" (Austin, 1904, p. 12) with

their lives as they gathered in a community and enjoyed "singing and dancing" (Austin, 1904, p. 12). These images are contrasted with the harsh conditions of Native Americans that Alan witnesses in the present. The boy feels "even troubled" (Austin, 1904, p. 14) by their present suffering. His compassion for the Native Americans results in his decision to take some action to help these people. For example, when his mother gives the money to him to "spend it as he [wishes]" (Austin, 1904, p. 20), the boy "[throws] his dime into [the Basket Woman's] lap" (Austin, 1904, p. 21) and runs quickly away from her. The change in Alan's attitude and behavior after his fear and distrust indicates the beginning of his sympathy for Native Americans, particularly the Basket Woman.

Furthermore, Austin employs another mythopoeic technique to demonstrate Alan's transformation: the blending of myth and reality. For example, "The Fire Bringer" which narrates the myth of the Fire Bringer boy and the people who collaboratively bring the fire to their place turns out to have a connection with Alan in reality. To explain, the myth of people's march for the fire, "[keeping] it among stones, and [feeding] it with small sticks" (Austin, 1904, p. 114) resembles Alan's use of the fire as he in the present "[feeds] the fire with [a] broken brush" (Austin, 1904, 109). Alan also says that he hears this myth of the Fire Bringer narrated by the Basket Woman so often that it "[comes] oftenest to his mind" (Austin, 1904, p. 109) and that he feels that he "[has] been part of the story himself" (Austin, 1904, p. 110). In this regard, Alan's imaginative link with the tale reveals different aspects of his transformation. For example, the fact that Alan imagines himself to be a character in this Native American tale implies his appreciation of the Native Americans' role in contributing to the beginning of civilization, which is contrasted with the grand narrative provided by his whites' community. Moreover, the fact that he associates himself with the Fire Bringer, presumably a dark-skinned Native boy dressed in a "scrap of deerskin" (Austin, 1904, p. 111), indicates that Alan identifies himself with people of other races. Finally, the tale reveals how it is useful for Alan to make friends with people of different races in his real life. Alan creates a game inspired by "The Fire Bringer" and plays it with other "little Indian boys" (Austin, 1904, p. 109) who join him in this game.

Not only does the tale show Alan's transformation in terms of attitude toward, and treatment of, Native Americans but it also suggests a shift in his perception of the natural world. As many Native American tales in *The Basket Woman* are full of anthropomorphized natural entities that count as members of society, the text shows how animals can be thought of, and treated, as equal to humans. To convey this message, Austin's mythopoeic elements incorporate Alan and his story into one of the tales in this collection, "The Merry-Go-Round." The tale deals with Alan's getting lost in the woods and almost becoming prey to a coyote and a buzzard before the Basket Woman comes to rescue him. The tale reveals how Alan comes to change his attitude toward nonhuman beings. At first,

Alan does not understand why the coyotes howl when they "[go] home from [their] hunting" (Austin, 1904, p. 15), and he says that he fears their howling. However, when Alan gets lost in the woods, he becomes cognizant of animals' feelings of hunger and thirst. He himself begins to "be thirsty, next tired, and then hungry" (Austin, 1904, p. 77) as well, and eventually he lies sobbing and cries. It is at around the same time that the coyote tries to attack Alan and "[makes] a doleful cry" (Austin, 1904, p. 81) out of his hunger. This coyote's howling seems to Alan as if it "spoke in words that he could understand" (Austin, 1904, p. 81). In other words, the coyote's howling resembles Alan's crying as these two lives undergo the same suffering of starvation.

Conclusion

Up to this point, we can see that Austin's *The Basket Woman* yields benefits to readers in terms of environmental appreciation. To begin with, many of the Native American tales in *The Basket Woman* can be seen as Austin's attempt to instill in children's minds an appreciation of the natural world. Austin's mythopoeic presentation of the natural world in each Native American tale suggests to children the idea that all lives are equal, sacred and related to humans. The tales include such nonhumans as animals, plants and streams and portrays them as necessary parts of the society of all beings. In this light, children are expected to learn that the nonhuman world does not exist without reason but plays a part in almost all aspects of human lives. Ultimately, these children are expected to perceive and treat nonhuman entities as equally as they do to other humans.

Read in juxtaposition with Austin's *The Young Woman Citizen*, this text can also be interpreted as implying necessary civic values, which include, but are not limited to, social responsibility and public-spiritedness, for individuals. First of all, being immersed in these Native American tales which present a mythical world where all lives are included, children can perceive that even such natural entities as the animals, the trees and the stream count as necessary members of society. Moreover, the tales demonstrate how these natural entities are given specific roles and functions in society. In other words, such a portrayal of the natural world—the coyote as a co-creator and cooperator with humans in "The Fire Bringer," the trees as giving spiritual comfort to humans in "The Christmas Tree," and the stream as having its beneficial duty for all lives in "The Stream That Ran Away"—can instruct children that each entity has its own place and function in society.

Most importantly, it can be seen that the tales demonstrate how the notion of nature appreciation is interwoven with the teaching of civic values. Counting these natural entities as members of the mythical world in Native American tales, Austin accentuates the important parts of these nonhumans in human lives. For instance, she points to the role of animals in making humans aware of their interrelationships with the nonhuman world, the importance of such wild animals

as the coyote in the early phase of human civilization, the spiritual nurturance humans receive from the woods, and the benefits of water to humans. In addition, anthropomorphizing the natural entities through her mythopoeic employment, Austin reveals through these nonhuman protagonists the necessary civic values with which children and other human individuals should be acquainted and equipped. For example, she insinuates how an anguishing sheep can elicit human compassion which is the bedrock for all lives to peacefully coexist in society, how the Coyote Counselor can adopt leadership which contributes to his sense of public-spiritedness, how the silver fir which represents marginalized beliefs should have its own place in society and how the stream should take responsibility for its neglect of duty. Not only does Austin anthropomorphize animals as a means of conveying civic values but she also suggests the intimate relationships between humans and nonhumans in various ways.

Finally, Austin's two interlaced issues of environmental appreciation and civic values in these Native American tales can be seen as an attempt to embody democratic citizenship. Imagine a community where individuals, particularly children, are deficient in their sympathy with other beings and unaware of their sense of social responsibility. Such a society would be a horrendous place to inhabit. In contrast, a society full of conscientious individuals who also care for others would be a benevolent place for all to coexist. Having young readers as her target audience, *The Basket Woman* can be seen as teaching how they should perceive and treat other beings in tandem with giving underlying significance to the civic values, which embody the democratic citizenship expected among individuals for their harmonious coexistence.

In addition to promoting environmental appreciation and inculcating certain civic values as the bedrock of democratic citizenship for children, *The Basket Woman* can also be seen as a counter-narrative against the whites' imperialist discourse. Contextualized in the nineteenth century when Native Americans were deemed inferior and subject to discrimination, Austin through this collection of tales subverts the whites' dominant ideologies and advocates new voices from the Indigenous people. Austin highlights the role of a Native American woman in enlightening a white boy on the interrelatedness between humans and the natural world. Presenting Native Americans in a positive light not as threats but as friends of the whites opens up ways for both whites and Native Americans to coexist peacefully. Furthermore, Austin provides Native American conceptions of the world by presenting animals, plants and other natural entities as the main protagonists equal to humans in each tale to emphasize the equality of all beings. Such a presentation liberates young readers from the ideas of white supremacy and anthropocentrism. In addition, Austin's employment of Native American wisdom, i.e., the notion that all lives are sentient, equal, sacred and related to one another, marks her attempt to reclaim Native American voices and champion their values. Through the impact of Native American tales upon the

white boy, the text emphasizes that what was considered inferior and primitive has, in fact, its own values and deserves its place to exist in society. With its very nature to advocate for such marginalized voices as Native Americans, *The Basket Woman* can be seen as the embodiment of a democratic society in which all voices matter and have a right to exist for their own sake.

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