

## tradition in e. w. howe's *the story of a country town*

richard gid powers

*The Story of a Country Town* by E. W. Howe is today firmly established as a little classic of Middle Western realism. It has been awarded this position on two counts: Howe's book was an opening blast of the trumpet which was later given the name of the revolt of the village. Secondly, many have felt that Howe's book is early evidence of the tendency toward naturalism in American literature that would later reach a peak in the works of Dreiser. Certainly if Howe's book is not naturalistic in the restrictive sense of the word, *The Story of a Country Town* exhibits the anti-romantic spirit that would be one of the most obvious characteristics of literary naturalism.

Neither of these two claims, however, would win Howe's book any important place in a history of American literature. In the one case *The Story of a Country Town* belongs only to an epicycle in the progress of the American novel; in the other it depends for its glory on the triumphs of later writers to whose development it has probably contributed nothing. If, however, Howe's novel is considered in the broadest possible perspective of American literary and cultural history, several factors emerge that claim for *The Story of a Country Town* serious consideration as an important step in the development of several major American literary themes.

*The Story of a Country Town* was praised at first appearance in 1883 for bringing a note of "gri mreality" to American fiction. Ever since that time critical attention has remained focused on this aspect of the book. Both Mark Twain and William Dean Howells applauded Howe's sense of the dreariness and isolation of small town life. It was evident that the Atchison, Kansas, newspaper editor had depended largely upon first hand experience in constructing his nearly autobiographical narrative. Nevertheless, Howells asked Howe whether he had ever read Turgenev, indicating that readers felt in Howe's personal style the same sort of tragic realism found in the Russian author whose work was a decisive in-

fluence in turning American fiction towards realism and in changing the emphasis of the American short story and novel from plot to characterization.

The particular characterization that attracted the attention of the prophet of American realism, William Dean Howells, was, of course, that of the hamlet of Fairview and the village of Twin Mounds, in that mid-American region that once had been the frontier, but which had been left behind. Howe had grown up the son of the editor of the Bethany, Missouri, newspaper, *The Union of the States*, and once said that he lived in some fifty small towns before settling in Atchison, Kansas, four years before beginning his book. Howe knew by heart his "prairied district, out West, where we had gone to grow up with the country," and he described it so well that Fairview and Twin Mounds seem to move to the foreground in the book while the silly plot twists and turns painfully behind it. The book is ultimately rescued from the weakness of the plot by the quality of the analysis of country life for which the plot serves as the excuse. Yet Howe clearly labored to express his ideas through his characters, and a close examination shows that he has, with great imagination but with less skill, expressed in the melodrama of Jo Erring and Mateel Shepherd the same criticisms of small town life that he dourly stated in the flatly descriptive portions of his books and in his nationally popular *Ed Howe's Monthly*.

Howe's narrator is the young Ned Westlock, son of the Reverend John Westlock, the pastor of the Fairview Methodist Church and a farmer. Mrs. Westlock and her brother, Jo Erring, complete the family. Jo is so close in age to Ned that he is more a brother than an uncle. Ned's father is hell-preaching and God-fearing. He drives himself and his family with an intensity and a formless dissatisfaction that make their lives miserable. After a new minister, the Rev. Goode Shepherd, comes to Fairview, and after Jo has moved away to apprentice himself to the local miller, Damon Barker, John Westlock moves his family to the county seat, Twin Mounds, where he has bought the paper, *The Union of the States*, which was also the name of Howe's father's paper. There John Westlock's business ability and his foresight in real estate make the family wealthy but not happy. The father, particularly, is consumed with a mysterious unhappiness whose cause is finally revealed when he abandons his family and paper and runs away with his assistant at the Fairview church, Mrs. B. Tremaine, never to reappear until the night of his wife's death. Then the unhappy wanderer returns, but too late, and leaves again, forever.

Westlock's tragedy is echoed in the career of Jo Erring. He industriously builds his own mill and marries his sweetheart, the daughter of the Rev. Goode Shepherd, Mateel, but like John Westlock, is restless and dissatisfied. His despair is the result of an obsessive belief a person can love but once. Thus when he discovers that Mateel was engaged long

before to a melodramatic villain, Clinton Bragg, he rejects his wife, divorces her and finally kills Bragg and himself, leaving Mateel to pine away in time-tested sentimental fashion. The only happy story in the book belongs to Ned. He is successful with his father's paper, marries his school teacher, Agnes Deming, and lives happily ever after to honor the memory and water the graves of all his misery-slain friends and relatives.

Into this web of melodramatic complications, uninteresting and unpalatable to realists like Twain and Howells (who especially disliked the figure of Jo Erring), but oddly affecting once allowances are made for sentimental conventions, Howe has woven elements of American social myth. In doing so he commented on those myths and changed their form. Moreover, his very use of the stock sentimental and Gothic conventions which seriously damages the novel's appeal to the modern reader is an indication of the failure of the romancers' efforts to adapt the romantic form to the American scene by use of American materials.

*The Story of a Country Town* has been generally viewed as a repudiation of the small town idyll, of the success myth and especially of the American myth of the garden West. However it has not been remarked that Howe specifically includes a garden image in his book that is a travesty of the mythic garden West. Henry Nash Smith in *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* traces the myth of the American West as the garden of the world, and the image of the American farmer as the new Adam from Jefferson and Cooper to Garland and Turner. Of Howe, Smith says "the most important trait of [his] work is the constant note of sadness and disillusionment that bespeaks of the fading of the dream of an agrarian utopia."<sup>1</sup> Yet he points to the general tenor of the book as the refutation of the garden myth, rather than any single part of it. Much of *The Story of a Country Town*, however, is directly concerned with an elaboration and travesty of this characteristic American theme.

Howe's garden is the farm of Lytle Biggs, the uncle of Agnes Deming, Ned Westlock's schoolteacher and sweetheart. Biggs's oxymoronic name, as well as his character, places him among the satirical portraits of the man on the make that include Cooper's Steadfast Dodge, Hawthorne's Holgrave, Twain's Beriah Sellers and Melville's Confidence Man. The Smoky Hill neighborhood where the Biggs's farm is located is twice referred to as "a superior neighborhood," although Ned admits that "no one of us knew why we had this impression." The Eve of this superior neighborhood, Agnes Deming, is called "a bird of paradise." In another context Howe refers to the entire prairie region in which the Biggs farm is located as

a very pretty country, and though . . . we frequently referred to it in the "Union of States" as the garden spot of the world, I knew it was not necessarily true, for every

paper coming in exchange to the office said exactly the same thing of the different localities it which it was published.<sup>2</sup>

Biggs's farm is introduced to the reader on the occasion of Ned's first trip there. Yet when Ned comes in sight of the place he says he "knew it just as well as if [he] . . . had lived within hailing distance all his life." This could mean that it represented a form of the garden West that was always just over the horizon for the pioneer, as well as meaning that Biggs's farm differed in no respect from the other farms with which Ned had been familiar all his life.

Lytle Biggs's farmhouse, which was "evidently built after the plans of an architect" (a reference both to the Creator and to the prelapsarian order), by this time is in sad repair. The farm is littered with dilapidated farm machinery "all rotting away for lack of care and use." There was "a general air of neglect everywhere." Animals were roaming "in every place where they did not belong." In short, Howe pictures the garden West as a run-down paradise.

The hired man of this neglected Eden is appropriately named Big Adam, "a large, boyish-looking young man." His name recalls that Adam was the caretaker of the Garden of Eden, as well as the master. True to American type, this paradise has a heavy mortgage. Also true to type, this American garden is far too large for a single independent gardener to maintain. "I do all the work that is done here," says Big Adam, "and though you may think from looking around that I am not kept very busy, I am. There are four hundred acres here, and they expect me to keep it in a high state of cultivation. You see how well I succeed; its [*sic*] the worst-looking place on earth."<sup>3</sup> He complains that the farm is not only already too large for him to take care of, but the owners spend their money on more land instead of keeping up that which they already have. Adam justly complains that while he is called lazy and shiftless, the farm is too large for him to take care of no matter how hard he works.

The owner and autocratic ruler of this farm is Agnes's mother, "very slender and very short," with features "dried-up like a mummy's," the "most repulsive-looking creature" Ned Westlock had ever seen, a horrible precursor of Philip Wylie's vipers. The ruler of Howe's garden West is an authoritarian harridan who tyrannizes all about her, including her nominal lord, her brother Lytle Biggs. This self-styled philosopher is an ineffectual braggart, recalling the "broken and dismantled wind-mill" which decorates his yard. While other farmers have a dozen hired men to take care of farms as large as his, Biggs boasts that Big Adam and he are able to do all the work, and "are equal to it, though it keeps us very busy, as you will imagine." He regrets that such vigorous activity denies them any time for the fine arts; in fact the horticultural arts are just all unknown to him. While Biggs calls himself a philosopher and a truth-teller, "he made his living by endorsing the follies of other people." Thus

he can often recognize the truth but he cannot openly act on it, for he can capitalize on the vices and ignorance of his neighbors only by sharing their vices and ignorance. He makes his living by selling fraudulent Farmers' Alliance charters and crooked country newspapers, and by misrepresenting his neighbors in the legislature.

His hired man, Big Adam, is a primitive with hair as matted as a rabbit warren who shows his pleasure by kicking out his legs like a young colt. The only great man Adam says that he has ever heard of is old Mrs. Deming's husband, for having had the courage to run away. Big Adam often claims that his father was slain by the Indians, but actually he comes from a family of outlaws and is ashamed of his heritage. This American Adam wishes to appear a romantic orphan, as later did Jay Gatsby, but he is really sprung from the dregs of older societies. Howe repeatedly asserts that the yeoman farmers he knew came out West to grow up with the country, having failed to grow up with the country they left; their only ambition is to get enough money, not to build in the West, but to return to civilization. In fact, Howe says that some of the Twin Mounds citizens could not deal with a mature society because "they always seemed to me to be boys yet, surprised at being their own masters, and only worked when they had to, as boys do."<sup>4</sup>

Howe's garden is cared for by an incompetent Adam, hag-ridden and self-contradictory. This garden cannot be managed by reason and science. Those who are shrewdest, like Lytle Biggs, are subject as much to the environmental sloth, smallness and ignorance as are the most ignorant. E. W. Howe's criticism foreshadows the conclusions of the later radical critics like Randolph Bourne who were to point out years later that energy and a plan of action, both of which America has never lacked, are not enough—there must also be a goal for all this activity; but then that would be perhaps un-American, certainly nonpragmatic.

Howe had inserted his vision of the garden West into his narrative to replace the Arcadia of romance. He has, however, merely replaced one archetype by another, one felt to be a more accurate representation of reality. In *The Story of a Country Town* he also analyzes the social and psychological causes for the weeds in the garden. In this diagnosis Howe indicts the psychology of success as the main cause of Western unhappiness. It has often been remarked that through the stories of John Westlock and Jo Erring Howe meant to debunk the American success myth. Howe's attempt to prove the perniciousness of this myth is the most important factor in the creation of the personalities of these two characters.

Ned Westlock says of his uncle Jo Erring, "I believe that there was nothing that he could not do." Yet, despite Jo's great abilities, he is forever setting impossible goals for himself and his failure to achieve them disappoints him bitterly.

While nobody disputed that he was a capable fellow, he was always attempting something that he could not carry out, and thus became a subject of ridicule in spite of his worth and ability; if he was sent to the timber for wood, he would volunteer to be back at an impossible time, and although he returned sooner than most men would have done, they laughed at him and regarded him as a great failure.<sup>5</sup>

Jo's dream consisted of becoming a man quickly, of building a mill and of marrying, but even as he contemplates his dreams' fulfillment, he knows that he could never be satisfied. He sees no happy people about him on whom he could pattern his behavior, and from whom he could learn to recognize happiness once he had achieved it. Howe has him say

I don't want to be like the people here, for none of them are contented or happy; but I intend to be like the people who I am certain live in other countries. I cannot believe but that there is a better way to live than that accepted at Fairview, and that somewhere—I don't know where, for I have never traveled—happy homes may be found, and contented people, where parents love their children and where people love their homes. Therefore I shall begin differently and work harder, and to more purpose, than the people here have done, to the end that I may be a better man.<sup>6</sup>

It never occurs to Jo until it is too late that happiness is not a necessary result of hard work. Jo's ceaseless ambition and nameless discontent could have been an example for Randolph Bourne's complaint that American pragmatism has no "concern for the quality of life as above the machinery of life." Jo's world is simple; happiness is just around the corner. "But after all," he says, "there is nothing like a fairy tale in it . . . I am simply in a place where if I work hard, I shall get something for it." To Howe Jo's ideas are self-destructive and unnatural but unfortunately typical of Americans, particularly of midwesterners. Jo's friend and employer, the miller Damon Barker (who later proves to be Agnes Deming's father), says at one point, "I have lived all my life in places where men were not expected to amount to much, and were satisfied if they did not. It seems to be different now." Jo's tragedy is first that he feels that he must amount to something, and second, that he does not know what the something is. No matter what he achieves, there is still something else to be sought. The ambitious boy is so sure that his energy will be rewarded with happiness that he can spend the "night in waiting for daylight, that he might commence to distinguish himself."

It is thus inevitable that Jo should cloak the figure of the woman he loves with all his ambitious dreams, all his fantasies of happiness. Like Christopher Newman before him, and Jay Gatsby after him, other worshipers of the ideal, Jo finally is betrayed by reality. Jo has created an ideal of a woman perfectly wise and perfectly virtuous, one who has

never even slightly admitted another to her affections before him. Heedless of Ned's warning that "your lonely fancies are wrong, and that there is not such a woman in the world as you have created, and no such love as you expect," Jo makes inevitable his ultimate dissatisfaction. Because of his limitless expectations, he ensures that the closer he gets to his goal, the more it will disappoint him. William Dean Howells charged that the romanticists' projection of unrealistic expectations into a prosaic world was a dangerous deceit, and Howe created a character in Jo Erring who demonstrates the truth of the charge. By implication, Howe also argued that an unrealistic view of the world and especially of human nature was a major cause of the misery he saw in his country towns.

Jo's dissatisfaction with his reward was already complete by the time he married Mateel, for he had discovered that an actualized ideal is no longer the ideal: "angels do not live in the woods, and they do not marry millers." When he discovers that Mateel had once been engaged to a Clinton Bragg, the news of his wife's antenuptual "unfaithfulness" merely makes his discontent more tangible. In Jo Erring's tragedy Howe argues that the reason for the failure of the American dream is that the dream is too incoherent and extreme. The quest for success becomes goalless activity creating a habitual desire that no achievement can satisfy. Like Sister Carrie, Jo *is* desire. Howe feels that this self-destructive desire is lonely and personal, and can be satisfied only by a realistic, unquestioning love like that of Ned for Agnes Deming.

Jo is silent, brooding; as a man he replicates the introspection that he so hated in John Westlock and which ruins both lives. This dissatisfied brooding, the silent and masturbatory nursing of ambition Howe castigates as an essential flaw in the doctrine of individualism. Both Jo Erring and John Westlock are ruined by being exactly the self-reliant, help-scorning individualists to whom the American dream promises all success. In Jo's world persons and things are looked upon as achievements, as steps in the ladder of success, rather than as occasions of happiness. In the self-immolation of Jo and the "evasion" of John Westlock Howe gives two further outcomes of the American quest for the ideal. Ahab, Christopher Newmann, Theron Ware, Sister Carrie and Jay Gatsby share with Jo and Westlock the nervous quest for an unrealizable, undefinable and even unimaginable ideal. The defeats of all these seekers differ in detail, but all share in the same tragedy. Howe's characters seek a grail, but their tragedy is that they do not know what the grail looks like; they do not know where it is nor how to go about finding it. It is this sense of groping, this vagueness of purpose that marks the "awkward school" of such later writers as Anderson in the novel and Williams in poetry. These rambling works have been castigated for their so-called heretical principles of imitative form, that is, of attempting to express a loose subject through loose writing. A sympathy with this formal principle is certainly prerequisite to an appreciation of much American writing. In Howe we see

the genesis of the loose, rambling, groping style that will lead to the happy results of Faulkner's comedies, and the unhappy results of Anderson's novels.

Thus E. W. Howe's blighted farms and ambition-blasted brooders are personal visions of themes that have presented themselves time and time again in our literature, the garden and success myths. A third aspect of *The Story of a Country Town* is of significance in illustrating the change from romance to novel in American literary history. This is Howe's use of Gothic materials drawn from the infancy of the romance.

In *The American Novel* Mark Van Doren speaks of the incongruity between the Gothic and sentimental elements of *A Story of a Country Town* and the broad, dry, sun-blasted prairie on which the story takes place. It is quite possible, of course, even likely, that Howe could have found dark nightmare woods and mysterious black mills in his Kansas-Missouri countryside; nevertheless Van Doren has noted an incongruity between the overall setting of the book and that setting which seems to be included specifically as backdrop for melodramatic episodes. The relocation of century-old Gothic elements onto the Missouri prairie of the mid-nineteenth century reveals a great deal about the early growth of realism in this country.

The first half of the nineteenth century recorded the attempt of the first American writers to construct romance out of American materials. In the novels of William Hill Brown, Charles Brockden Brown, Mrs. Rawson and Hannah Foster, stock English Gothic and sentimental conventions were transplanted to this country with scarcely the formality of covering the English roots with American soil. Monks were replaced by Indians, ruined castles by the forest primeval. These were often the only concessions made to the America in which the romances were supposed to take place. A story like Brown's *Wieland* could have taken place in Transylvania as well as in Pennsylvania.

The first popular American storyteller, Washington Irving, had more concern for the organic unity of the transplanted German folktales which he presented as legends of the Catskills. Not only did he change names, dates and places to simulate native American legend, but several times he created stories which expressed some real problems of American culture in his tales of the hamlets along the Hudson. By the middle of the nineteenth century masters of American romance like Hawthorne and Melville were constructing stories which organically united American history, society and psychology into masterpieces, which, for all their links with Western cultural tradition, had peculiar relevance for Americans. These writers were able to find both literary depth and meaning in American life. They had mined well the mass of history which James tells us it takes to make a little literature. Throughout this period the recurring complaint of the romancers was that American life was thin



compared to the European. There was no mystery, no richness in the American scene, and it took years of experimentation before the right methods of mining the deeply hidden veins of mystery and richness were discovered.

When the American realistic novel began struggling to be born, much later, and far away from the East coast, there were the same hit and miss searches for suitable American material. Lacking, of course, was the social situation which had led to the development of the European novel: highly individualized characters reacting to or rebelling against a highly developed social tradition. The American novel grew out of the anti-romantic attempt to portray American life accurately; the material for social drama and social analysis was indeed obvious, but what the American writer felt most keenly were the forces of nature and the weight of impersonal economic powers. The American writer, nurtured on romantic canons of character selection and development, thus had to illustrate impersonal forces while he still clung to ideals of romantic characterization. The more deterministic the writer among these pioneer realists, the more striking the difference between his success in portraying society in the large and his failure in portraying the individual members of that society. They could not accept merely portraying commonplace people living commonplace lives even in the face of great events. Thus we find unexpectedly appearing in the works of Norris, London and others, including Howe, characters and situations borrowed from the female scribblers of the Gothic and sentimental schools. Van Doren says that *The Story of a Country Town* has

various romantic elements; there is a mill in a dark wood; the church bell tolls fitfully in high winds; certain of the characters prowl about ominously midnight after midnight. The author, whose first book this was, apparently did not know how to give it a sense of locality. It is as if the lone, sunburned Kansas plain, on which the action passes, had no real depth, no mystery in itself, no native motif but the smouldering discontent of an inarticulate frontier.<sup>7</sup>

Howe has stated that his book was a Missouri story, not a Kansas one, but despite this mistake Van Doren has noticed a real incongruity. Hawthorne had been bothered by the same sense of the thinness of the American scene that seems to have oppressed Howe, and had written:

No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land.<sup>8</sup>

New England was found to be shallow literary material by the romancer; years later the realist found the Great Plains to be just as barren.

Howe's criteria for a plot worthy of literary treatment were those of the romancers. The essential notes had to be romance and mystery, but the romance and mystery Howe puts into his story are largely the result of the characters' ignorance. There is mystery in Howe's world only for the uneducated and the misguided; most of the mystery would have evaporated if Jo or Ned had had the natural inclination to discuss their difficulties. Like the early romancers, Howe had to put blindfolds on his characters to create his much-desired suspense. In their uncertainty and groping Howe's Jo Erring and John Westlock are similar to Anderson's Hugh McVey and Red Oliver. There is also a similarity between Howe's conceptions of a good plot and those of Anderson in his attempts at full-length novels. Since Anderson wanted to portray wonder and perplexity in his heroes he gave them wonderful and perplexing careers. Howe wanted most of all to portray the American ordinary, but in a literary sense he felt he could do so only if he provided a foreground of extraordinary events. Thus he dug deep into the literary past for bits and pieces of romance to enliven the Missouri scene. In his search for romantic nuggets to lift his tale out of the ordinary Howe borrowed from the American writer who went furthest afield for his materials, Washington Irving. Howe's Clinton Bragg seems to be derived from Irving's Brom Bones of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," a Brom Bones transmuted into a stock Gothic fiend without the appealing and lusty personality Irving was able to give his creation. Clinton Bragg is introduced

riding a horse as mean and vicious as himself. A decent man would not have owned the animal, for he had a reputation for biting and kicking; but Bragg lavished upon him the greatest attention, and was delighted to hear occasionally that he had injured a stable-boy. It was great pleasure to Bragg to know that his horse laid back his ears in anger at the approach of anyone, in the street or the road, and his master teased him for hours to cultivate his devilish disposition.<sup>9</sup>

Brom Bones's horse, Daredevil, Irving says, is

a creature, like himself, full of mettle and mischief, and which no one but himself could manage. He was, in fact, noted for preferring vicious animals, given to all kinds of tricks, which kept the rider in constant risk of his neck, for he held a tractable well-broken horse was unworthy of a lad of spirit.<sup>10</sup>

Clinton Bragg, like Bones, spends his days sleeping and his nights roaming the countryside on his steed, but his excursions are aimless. Brom Bones, unlike Bragg, is not vicious, but a prankster and a brawler. He even has a rude chivalry. Brom Bones is full of devilment, but Howe apparently meant Bragg to be the very devil himself. One of Bragg's villainies in particular seems to be derived from Brom Bones's persecu-

tion of Ichabod Crane. On one occasion when Ned was returning to Erring's Ford after a visit with Agnes, Clinton Bragg began to torment him just as the headless horseman had terrified poor Ichabod:

As I came out into the main road, and was closing a gate, a horseman dashed by me, riding toward the mill, and I saw with some surprise that it was Clinton Bragg, on the wicked, vicious horse. I followed leisurely, preferring to avoid him, but probably knowing who it was, he stopped beside the road, allowing me to pass that I could have touched him with my hand had I wished. Then he would run by, as if to frighten my horse, and this performance he repeated so many times that I would have pulled him off his horse and beaten him had I had the strength.<sup>11</sup>

Brom Bones and Clinton Bragg have similar roles in the two stories. Both provide a third party in a love triangle; both defeat their rivals. The great difference is in their suitability for their authors' purposes. In Irving's story the entire episode is suffused with a good-natured glow, well-suited to a romantic legend. We do not see Ichabod's defeat as tragic but as amusing; no one is hurt, for the episode takes place in a friendly never-never land. The romantic conventions save this episode from the ugliness it would have in real life. In Howe's story there is no legendary removal of the action from the real world. Howe asks us to believe that his narrative relates things as they really are. The realistic description of the Missouri countryside and society prevent one from adjusting to the intermittent intrusion of Gothic and romantic elements. Hence in Howe's story all the cruelty latent in Irving's story comes to the fore. Bragg's villainy is not a legendary, make-believe evil; it is real, down-to-earth and ugly. When Howe exaggerates and multiplies Bragg's maliciousness, the result is not heightened suspense and emotion, but ludicrousness. This German ghost, first transplanted to the Hudson valley, and then wafted two thousand miles further West, is ill-at-ease haunting a realistic novel. Romantic plants do not thrive in the soil of realism, and cardboard grasshoppers cannot live on Missouri wheat.

This Brom Bones-Clinton Bragg relationship suggests that the realists, like the romancers, had to experiment with alien characters and situations before they could find material to fit their form. But the lessons of the classic American romancers may not have been as instructive to their lesser realistic followers as might have been supposed if a minor realist of 1883 had to search among Gothic ghosts to find a villain to play a Missouri civil engineer. Faced with the difficulty of evolving unpredictable and indeterminate personalities out of a deterministic philosophy, a minor talent like Howe could only raid the romantic stockroom. It still remained for the next generation of realists to identify the true villains and heroes of contemporary existence and to merge modern characters into scenes of modern life.

Brown University

## footnotes

1. Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land* (New York, 1950), 285.
2. E. W. Howe, *The Story of a Country Town* (New York, 1964), 159.
3. *Ibid.*, 62.
4. *Ibid.*, 144.
5. *Ibid.*, 22.
6. *Ibid.*, 86.
7. Carl Van Doren, *The American Novel* (New York, 1926), 229.
8. Nathaniel Hawthorne, Preface to *The Marble Faun* in *The Complete Novels and the Selected Tales* (New York, 1937), 590.
9. Howe, 157.
10. Washington Irving, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," *The Sketch Book* (Philadelphia, 1863), 476.
11. Howe, 173.