

**From Naivety to Maturity: A study of Protagonist's Transformation in Nathaniel Hawthorn's My kinsman Major Molineux**

من الغفلة الى النضج : دراسة التحول في شخصية البطل في رواية ناثانيال هاوثورن قريبي الرائد مولينيو

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المستخلص :

تعتبر رواية ناثانيال هاوثورن قريبي الرائد مولينيو واحدة من الأعمال الأدبية الهامة التي يركز الكاتب فيها على تأثير الظروف الخارجية على تشكيل التطور الشخصي للشخصيات حيث تسلط هذه الرواية الضوء على تطورو نمو البطل الذي يتجسد في رحلته من الريف إلى المدينة بحثاً عن قريبه (ابن عمه) ، وفي هذا الإطار من الرحلة ، قدم الروائي مواضيع أخرى ذات صلة مثل المدينة مقابل الريف ، والتي تساهم في نهاية المطاف في اثراء وتعميق الموضوع الرئيسي المتمثل في التطور الشخصي للبطل لاجل الوصول الى وضع كان يعتقده مثاليا في البدايه ولكن حدث تطور حاسم أثر في شخصية البطل عندما انتقل من مجتمع الريف المحدود الى مجتمع المدينة ذو القيم المختلفة والتي اسهمت في تحوله الداخلي.

الكلمات الدالة : .. التحول ، البطل ، النضج ، قريبي الرائد مولينيو ، مجتمع الريف .

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**Abstract**

Nathaniel Hawthorn's novella "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," is one of the important literary works in which he focuses on how outside circumstances can shape the personal development of characters. This paper sheds light on the development of the protagonist's growth which is symbolised by his journey from the country to the city in search of his kinsman (cousin), and Within this framework of the journey, the novelist presented other related themes such as the city versus the countryside, which ultimately contributes to the central theme of the protagonist's personal development, which he initially presented as idealistic. The crucial stage which influenced the protagonist's development happened when society transitions from being naive to wise during the pre-modern to the modern era, from being immature to mature, as the youthful protagonist's character demonstrates. The protagonist typically travels through a place where people experience pain and humiliation which contribute to his internal transformation .

**Key words:** Transformation, the hero, the maturity, my relative, Major Molineux, the country community.

**From Naivety to Maturity a study of the Protagonist transformation in Nathaniel Hawthorne's  
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Nathaniel Hawthorne's novella My Kinsman Major Molineux(1832) is a realistic novel that shed light on the social and political changes that took place in America during the 19 century through tracing the development of the protagonist in this time which witnessed social and cultural transitions in the united states. During the first decades of the nineteenth century many social and moral standards were redefined and they had their influence on the individuals who were living in that period. To shed light on the changes that took place in America Hawthorne established a historical frame of reference in the opening paragraph of the novella. The opening paragraph

served as a historical background which shed light on the conflict between the colonial governors and the colonists which lasted "about forty years, from the surrender of the old charter under James II"(Hawthorne 1209) to the revolution. The novelist referred to events that took place in the pre-revolutionary period especially to the year 1765. After establishing the historical context in which the story takes place, Hawthorne introduced the protagonist of the story, Robin, a country young man who arrived to the city coming from the country. Robin was

a youth of barely eighteen years, evidently country-

bred, and now, as it should seem, upon his

first visit to town. He was clad in a coarse

gray coat, well worn, but in excellent repair;

his under -garments were

durably constructed

of leather, and fitted tight to a pair of serviceable

and well- shaped limbs; his stockings of

blue yarn were the inconvertible work of

a mother or a sister and on his head was

a three-cornered hat, which in its better days , had

perhaps sheltered the graver brow of the lad's

father(Hawthorne 1210).

The Purpose of Robin's journey is to look for his kinsman, Major Molineux who is supposedly a man of civil or military rank in the colonial administration. Robin tries to make progress in his life and to become an acknowledged member of society through the protection and the help of his relative Major Molineux.

Hawthorne closely followed Robin in his journey describing the young man's experiences and the effects of every event on the young man's character. He also stressed the main changes that occur in Robin's identity, his values and his attitudes about himself and about others. Through the journey, Robin underwent changes after his encounters with many characters which finally led to his attaining maturation. As he reaches into maturation, he discovered the contradictory nature of the moral values in society. Leverenz pointed out that Hawthorne's story sheds light on the "initiation into manhood and the self-realization of a young man" ( Leverenz 234).

When Robin arrived to the city, he had many expectations and dreams. He was proud of his own shrewdness, of his kinsman, Major Molineux whom he was looking for and of his abilities to make the necessary adjustments to the life in the city. He thought that he could control his own destiny in his new environment. Being a countryman, Robin was unacquainted with the political upheaval which the city was witnessing as a result of the antagonism between the colonists and the royalists like his kinsman , therefore, the political changes which took place in the city shocked him and revealed his immaturity and his inability to understand what goes on in the city. For example, after his arrival, he did not ask the ferryman about his kinsman thinking that anybody will lead him to his kinsman. Later on, he was disappointed when he discovered that the task of finding his kinsman was not an easy one because people reacted to his question in an expected way, In this respect Frank Stevenson points out that "The knowing grins and winks they share among themselves, in dead their barely-suppressed derisive laughter, pointedly exclude him from this "Secret knowledge " (Stevenson 174).

When Robin reached an inn, he thought of asking about his kinsman, but his attempts to ask people about him were in vain. When the innkeeper welcomed Robin with a bow, Robin thought that the man was doing so because he noticed the likeness between him and Major Molineux , " the man sees the likeness! The rouge has guessed that I am related to the Major."( Hawthorne 1212 ) At this stage in Robin's attempt to adjust himself to the new environment, he was not thinking of Major Molineux's as a relative but rather he was thinking of his kinsman's authoritative position in the city and the privileges that he would get from his relationship with him. J. C. Nietzsche pointed out that " the materialistic and social advantages of being attached to his kinsman's house overwhelms any feeling of affection or concern for his kinsman" (Nitzsche 169).

When Robin passed in a poor neighborhood, he never thought that his kinsman might live there, " This low hovel cannot be my kinsman's dwelling nor yonder old houses where the moonlight enters at the broken casement, and truly I see none hereabouts that might be worthy of him" (Hawthorne 1210). Robin's expectations about his kinsman's dwelling, his style of life and the support that he might receive from him reflects his naivety and his dreamy character because he can not understand the complex city of the city and the political changes which happened there. His transformation at the end of the story came as a result of the contradiction between his naïve expectations and the inevitable reality which he became acquainted with.

When Robin entered the inn, the innkeeper asked him, "from the country, I presume, sir ?" (Hawthorne 1210). This question made him aware of his being an outsider and deepened his feelings of alienation and non-belonging. Furthermore, his being from the country made him feel that he was inferior in comparison with the townsmen. In the inn, Robin looked at two countrymen. They were the only people " to whom Robin's sympathies inclined him" (Hawthorne 1210). Though he felt sympathy towards them, he refused to talk to them or even to look at them any longer because within himself he did not want to be identified with them. He thought that his connection with his kinsman would help him to live as one of the townsmen and to forget his past.

Robin felt shattered in the city because he was confronting a world of different values which required that he should make necessary adjustments in order to live in and in order to be accepted by the townsmen. His encounter with the first man he saw reflected his ignorance of the hierarchic order of society in the town. After seeing the man, Robin laid hold of the skirt of the old man's coat and asked him about the house of his kinsman. His behavior and his loud voice attracted the attention of the people in the barber's shop who stared at him through the window. His behavior seemed presumptuous according to the old man and to the people in the barber's shop and it incurs the old man's anger, " I have authority, I have-hem, hem-authority; and if this be the respect you show for your betters, your feet shall be brought acquainted with the stocks by daylight, tomorrow morning"( Hawthorne 1211). Robin misinterpreted the old man's threatening remarks. He thought that the old man was not acquainted with his kinsman, Major Molineux, otherwise he would treat him differently. Robin tried to convince himself that "the man is old, or verily- I might be tempted to turn back and smite him on the nose" (Hawthorne 1211). He thought of relying on his physical strength when he wanted to deal with the situation which is presumably what he would do when he would encounter a similar situation in the country.

Robin was not only ignorant of the proper behavior in the town but he was also ignorant of the political upheaval in the town. When he arrived to the city, people were rebellious against their governs because they were royalists. He was unaware that his kinsman was one of the royalists who would be exposed to all forms of punishments and humiliations at the end of the story.

When he entered the inn, he was confident that he would be received warmly by the innkeeper when he would know that Robin was a relative of Major Molineux. At that time, “people were united to rebel against the royalists, therefore, all the people in the inn treated Robin as an outsider and was expelled” (Nilson 128). The attitudes of the people in the inn towards Robin represented people's attitude towards him in the city. The townsmen considered him as an outsider because he did not share them their attitudes towards certain political issues because of his ignorance of the political situation in the city.

The city attracted Robin and when he left the inn he found himself in the street looking with admiration at people who are entirely different in their behavior and appearance from the people he used to meet in the country side where he was living . He

encountered many gay and gallant figures.

embroidered garments of showy colors, enormous

periwigs, gold-laced hats, and silver-hilted swords.

glided past him, and dazzled optics. Travelled youth.

imitators of the European fine-gentlemen of the period.

trod jauntily along, half dancing to the fashionable tunes

which they hummed, and making poor Robing ashamed

of his quiet and natural gait (Hawthorne 1213).

He was even rebuked because he was looking at people faces with curiosity. This behavior reflects his naïve attraction to the new world in which he dreams to settle. The first man Robin met in the city was a well-dressed man "with a full perwig of gray hair, a wide skirted coat of dark cloth and silk stockings rolled above his knees" (Hawthorne 1210). Then, he passed by a barber's shop. Inside the shop, one of the barbers was shaving " a well-soaped chin" (Hawthorne 1210) while another "was dressing a Ramillies wig" (Hawthorne 1210). These scenes made Robin aware of the disparities between his old world represented by the country side where he was living and his new world represented by the city where he came looking for his relative . In this context, Jose Ruiz Mas argued that " A country boy like Robin feels inadequate and 'young', too inexperienced beside these 'travelled' experienced city youths" (Mas 182). This scene and the scene in the inn showed Robin as an alien whose attitudes and values did not conform to those of the townsmen for that reason he was rejected by them and treated like an outsider in the new environment.

Robin's new environment was presented as "a dark terrifying labyrinth" (Gross 100). This description reflects his fear from the new environment he found himself in because he found difficulties in making adjustments to this new environment. Part of the difficulties which he faced came as a result on the contradiction between the country side where he was living and the city which represent his new environment. In this context, Carl Dennis argued that the country " is a millennial realm, in which man is in perfect harmony with all the elements of his world. with nature, with God and with his fellow men" (Dennis 251) .while the town is entirely different, its seems like labyrinth where he was wondering from one street to another asking about his relative but no one was willing to help him .

Though the country was presented as a source of simplicity and innocence but it had its limitations because it did not provide Robin with the economic independence he was looking for. Robin came from a rural community which fell short of meeting the individual's basic needs, therefore, Robin went to the city seeking the patronage of his kinsman. Robin was not an ideal representative of the country because in his naïve reliance on his relative, he "forsakes the democratic ideal of making one's own way in the world" (Duban 280). Furthermore, Robin did not have enough knowledge of the ways of adjusting himself to the new environment. He behaved in a naïve and awkward way with the people whom he met in the city. Although he believed that he was

shrewd , he proved that he was "shrewd only by his own report" (Hoffman 55) His lack of knowledge about the city led him to believe that the city was similar to the country. He innocently assumed that his life in the city would be subject to forces related to his father's control.

Robin felt disappointed in the city . Part of his disappointment came as a result of his encounter with people who represented the materialistic values in the city which he was not acquainted with before. For example, when he arrived to the town, he paid the ferryman " the little province bill of five shillings" (Hawthorne 1210) but the ferryman asked for an extra fare. The ferryman's behavior reflected the material values of the townsmen. Richard H. Fogle argued that the ferryman did not accept the province bill because " country values are at discount in the city"( Fogle 105).

While he was walking in the streets of the town looking for his kinsman, Robin passed by a house. When he looked through the half-open door, he saw a pretty girl with scarlet petticoat. He asked her about the house of his relative. She deceived him when she told him that Major Molineux was living in that house and she invited him in. Robin did not know that this girl was a prostitute he thought that she was the housekeeper of his kinsman. He innocently believed that his kinsman was lucky "in having so pretty a housekeeper" (Hawthorne 1214) . While Robin was stepping inside the house, a watchman appeared and asked him to leave immediately. This woman represented the degeneration of the moral values in the city which Robin was not acquainted with before.

While Robin was roaming desperately in the city he met a stranger whose face was muffled. Robin stopped him to ask him about the house of his relative. When the man showed his face to Robin, Robin saw that one side of the man's face was red while the other was black. Robin was afraid of the man and at the same time he was confused because he could not account for the strange appearance of the man. Roy Harvey Peace pointed out that " the bizarre appearance of the man with the red and black face intensified the quality of general and mounting incoherence in the tale" (Peace 22). Besides, the presence of the double-faced man intensified Robin's feelings of loss and bewilderment.

Robin's meeting with the strange man was not the only shocking experience that he passed through in the city. Moments later, Robin heard " the sounds of a trumpet in some neighboring street now became so evident and continual, that Robin's curiosity was strongly excited. In addition to the shouts, he heard frequent bursts from many instruments of discord and a wild and confused

laughter filled up the intervals" (Hawthorne 1220). He asked a gentleman whom he met about the source of the noise. The old man, who was the only kind man in the city tried to prepare Robin for what he would see moments later. He told Robin " You must not expect all the stillness of your native woods here in our streets" (Hawthorne 1220). The wise gentleman knew that Major Molineux would pass in the streets of the city surrounded by people who would expose him to all kinds of torture and humiliation because he was a royalist, but he did not want to shock the naïve and the dreamy Robin. He wanted Robin to see the truth by himself therefore he told Robin that they should sit near the church and wait for Robin's kinsman. Roy Harvey Pearce pointed out that while waiting for his relative,

Robin's mind vibrates between 'fancy and reality'.

A feeling of homelessness accentuates his confusion.

Locked out of the house of his memory, he has not yet

been admitted to the house of his expectations. Thus,

he occupies a middle ground, to which ( as he sits in

front of the church), "the moon creating like the imaginative

power, a beautiful strangeness in familiar objects, gave

something of a romance to a scene that might not have

possessed it in the light of the day(Hawthorne 1220).

While he was waiting near the church, Robin heard the noise approaching. Then he saw "a mighty stream of people now emptied into the street, and came rolling slowly towards the church . A single horseman wheeled the corner in the midst of them, and close behind him came a band of fearful wind-instruments , sending forth a fresher discord now that no intervening building kept it from the ear" (Hawthorne 1221). He saw the man with the

bulging head painted black and red on a horseback leading the crowd of people. Then he heard the rattling of the wheels of a cart in the middle of the crowd and in the cart someone was sitting. When Robin looked closely he saw his kinsman Major Molineux in the cart "in tar and feathering dignity" (Hawthorne 1221). The townsmen were practicing an act of humiliation and retribution which was committed upon Major Molineux whom they considered unpopular because he was one of the officials of the British administration, the royalists. Usually the person who was exposed to this kind of punishment would be stripped to the waist and people would pour hot tar over his body and roll him in feathers that would adhere to the tar. The person was paraded about the area in a cart before being released, or perhaps threatened with further violence. Robin stared at Major Molineux who was

an elderly man, of large and majestic person, and strong square features, betokening a steady soul; but steady as it was, his enemies had found means to shake it. His face was pale as death, and far more ghastly; the broad forehead was contracted in his agony, so that his eyebrows formed one grizzled line; his eyes were red and wild, and the foam hung white upon his quivering lip. His whole frame was agitated by a quick and continual tremor, which his pride strove to quell, even in those circumstances of overwhelming humiliation (Hawthorne 1221) .

The presence of the man with the face painted red and black in the procession signifies evil in mankind because he was leading the mob whose aim was the destruction of Major Molineux but at the same time this double-faced man could represent rebellion. This interpretation is valid because he was leading the rebellious Boston mob who were seeking change and fighting for their rights. Ray Harvey Peace pointed out that

Robin's ability to account 'shrewdly', rationally, satisfactorily for this wild and grinning figure disposes even the most sympathetic reader to join the town in laughing at him, to participate, that is, in the drama of his initiation. For how Robin explains 'rationally' to himself a man running around with his face painted a grotesque black and red we are not told; that he does so, however, evidences a depth of faith in the dimensions of his own (in-)experience which it would have been difficult otherwise to suspect (Peace 22).

This scene is important because it contributed to the change in Robin's character and his perception of the world around him. It was a critical moment in Robin's life because all his dreams about the support that he would get from his kinsman collapsed.

In his essay "Hawthorne as Poet", O.D. Leavis commented on this stage in Robin's development. He pointed out that Robin

has arrived at a critical moment in his kinsman's

history. The colonists– with considerable skill and economy Hawthorne represents all ranks and classes of the states in this dream–town–have secretly planned to throw off British rule, or at any rate to rid themselves of Major Molineux, a symbolic action which, performed in the street outside the church at midnight, and before the innocent eyes of the mystified youth, takes the form of something between a pageant and a ritual drama disguised in the emotional logic of a dream(Leavis 39).

Reaching this state, Robin realized that the city was no longer a comfortable and peaceful place in which he would achieve his dreams but rather the city became a realm of chaos, confusion and moral decline.

Robin noticed that his kinsman, Major Molineux whose name "suggests both his military and aristocratic status" (Leavis 38) became an object of ridicule by the mobs. Seeing his kinsman tortured and humiliated, Robin "sent forth a shout of laughter that echoed through the street" (Hawthorne 1222). Through this action, Robin decided to join the mobs in its struggle for independence from the British Aristocracy represented by Major Molineux. He realized that he should join the crowd in destroying his kinsman in order to become part of the new society. Now Robin thought that finding a place in society is more important than thinking about his kinsman's suffering or sympathizing with him. Though Robin's behavior might lack ethical standards but it is necessary for the evolution of his new character. According to Robin, his action was inevitable in order to get his independence from his kinsman and to secure a place in the new society. Q. D. Leavis pointed out that Robin "was drawn into the emotional vortex and comes to share the reactions of the participants. He has felt intimately the dreadful degradation of his English Kinsman,

but now he is seized with the excitement of the victors , his fellow- country-men and sees their triumph as his own"( Leavis 42). Robin's character developed as he realized that the mobs were establishing anew and a democratic society and to live in that society, Robin must get rid of his "aristocratic nepotism" (Adams 15) and to live as a free man like the mobs.

Later on, when Robin saw that the procession went on " like fiends that throng in mockery around some dead potentate, mighty no more but majestic in his agony" (Hawthorne 1222) he realized that he should take a decision whether to remain in the city or to leave to the country. He told the townsman " I begin to grow weary of a town life" (Hawthorne 1223). But the townsman asked him to stay for few days and he would help him to leave or if he preferred to remain in the town he may rise without the help of his kinsman. The tale did not give a clear solution to Robin's problem but it "ends in reasonable sober hopefulness for the future of life" (Leavis 42). The writer gave the moral lesson at the end of the tale which is " provided we recognize the facts , and fully comprehend the position, we can cope with it, if not master it" (Leavis 42).

### Conclusion

As it has been discussed , Hawthorne's My Kinsman Major Molineux demonstrated the development in Robin's character as he passed through many experiences and confronted many people in his journey from the country to the town in his search for his kinsman Major Molineux. By providing the readers with a historical background at the beginning of the tale, the writer prepared the readers for the events which would take place throughout the tale. The events of the story took place in the age which was preparing the colonies for the War of Independence. It was a period of social and political upheavals. Robin came from the country and he was carrying ethical values which collided with those of the townsmen. After passing through many experiences, Robin discovered that the city was not the long-wished place in which he would find a promising future. On the contrary, it was a realm of chaos, moral disintegration and trickery.

His experience reached its climax when he saw his kinsman tarred and feathered, followed by the mobs and discordant music which was traditionally used to drive undesirable characters out of the community .At that moment, all his dreams collapsed but finally he unconsciously decided to release himself from any connection with his kinsman. He joined the mobs and laughed loudly. By doing this, Robin decided to conform to the ethics of the city and at the same time to find his own

way in life without the help of his kinsman. By choosing this end for the story, Hawthorne demonstrated the need for change not only in Robin but also in the society of New England, Therefore, Hawthorne presented a tale of social transformation from the pre-modern to the modern through the protagonist's experience of coming from the backwoods to the city. Here Robin was transformed in terms of his religious attitudes as well as in terms of his simple individual rural independence.

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