

My kinsman, major molineux by nathaniel hawthorne

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

My Kinsman, Major Molineux by Nathaniel Hawthorne

In his article, Charles White investigates light as a symbol and as an imagery in Hawthorne's *My Kinsman, Major Molineux*. In doing this, the literary scholar investigates the use of light majorly in communicating some of the themes in the short story. He explores the different scenes in which the author employs light both naturally and artificially. Such include the expansive use of the moonlight background in the introduction and the successive artificial sources of light such as the torches and bulbs hanging out of the shops and shopping malls. However, White concentrates on the author's use of light to portray romance thus evidently missing out the basic concept of light in the short story. In this discourse, the analysis is on the basic use of light to illuminate scenes as the author narrates the short story. Light naturally illuminates thus facilitates vision; the use is among the most basic. Hawthorne, just as any other writer, employs light to illuminate the scenes thus facilitates the audiences' conceptualization of the scenes and the subsequent actions. He portrays this by developing a darker background to most of the scenes thereafter introducing a source of light to illuminate the scene. It is evident that the writer describes some of the scenes scantily before he introduces a source of light to illuminate the scenes thus providing subsequent clearer description of the same. Hawthorne develops a moonlight background for the story right at the beginning. Robin strides into this background that contributes to his strange attribute as brought out in the book. Moonlight, unlike the sunlight, does not illuminate effectively. It leaves some of the features of the subject without light thus portraying Robin as a mysterious stranger. The choice to use the moonlight is deliberate

though not every other audience would single it out. The moon does not provide effective illumination for the character. Additionally, a man who enters a town at night against the backdrop of moonlight arouses more suspicion and exhibits some sense of strangeness. The author thus achieves this by deliberately using the moonlight.

The introductory scene is a deliberate comparison of the effectiveness of artificial and natural light. All along, through his nightly search, Robin feels noble. He meets an old man in the street and is about to begin a consultative interview but the author describes the two as mere shadows. Robin is, therefore, skeptical about beginning a conversation until light emanating from the open doors and windows of a barbershop illuminates them. Just like with the interaction with the ferryman, the author portrays the inability of the moonlight to provide light; it provides a blanket overview to everyone in the street thus preventing any effective description of either the action or the features of the characters. The author does not introduce any action nor does he describe the two until the light from the barber shop shines on them. This implies his inability to see them. This is a feature shared by his audiences.

As Robin approaches, the ferryman reveals the ineffectiveness of the moonlight by illuminating him using his lantern. The head to toe illumination of the character reveals more about him. The scrutiny by the ferryman's lantern reveals more details about the character (Hawthorne 30). Unlike the restrictive moonlight that provides a blanket context of everyone indiscriminately, the human light proves more powerful in scrutinizing the stranger. This way, the illumination quells the ambiguity that the moonlight

had initially developed over the character. The scanty description of the character following his illumination by the lantern implies that he had little mystery about him and proves to be decent and trustworthy stranger coming into the town for the first time.

Robin moves into an inn still in the backdrop of the moonlight night, bearing some strangeness still, the smoky inn is scantily lit. He does not provide any vivid description of either the action or the faces he finds in the inn. In fact, he believes that the innkeeper is treating him nicely because of a resemblance he bears to Major Molineux. He refers to this as a family likeness and is indeed proud of the association. However, when he announces that he is looking for the major, the author explains that the smoke that had hung in the room clears and everything immediately becomes clearer (Hawthorne 34). The author clears the room as Robin is about to discover a massive truth about his quest, as the smoke in the room clears the tone becomes clearer as everyone in the inn focuses on him. However, he leaves thus continues with the suspense and uncertainty the author had managed to develop about him.

In retrospect, literature permits relative interpretation of concepts and the author's use of images. Many literary scholars including Charles White have investigated Hawthorne use of light in his story but the established analysts ignore the basic use of light in illuminating the scenes in the short story.

Works cited

Charles, D. White. Hawthorne's MY KINSMAN, MAJOR MOLINEUX. *The Explicator*, 2007. 65: 4, 215-217,

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. " My Kinsman, Major Molineux." Tales and Sketches.
New York: Lib. OfAmerica, 1982. 68-87.