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*"The Procession." An engraving by Elkanah Tisdale for M'Fingal: A Modern Epic Poem, in Four Cantos, by John Trumbull (New York: Printed by John Buel, 1795).*

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## Disorderly History in “My Kinsman, Major Molineux”

JOSEPH ALKANA

When Henry James reflected in his 1879 study *Hawthorne* on his subject's “earlier and simpler generation,” he embellished on the notion of that generation's relative lack of sophistication, citing its “genial optimism, in the light of which it appeared that the great American state was not as other human institutions are.”<sup>1</sup> The simplicity and “genial optimism” attributed to Hawthorne's contemporaries recall the characters and milieu of *The Europeans*, James's comedy of manners published in 1878 and set during a time early in Hawthorne's career, around 1830. Throughout the extended encounter between the newly arrived, courtly Europeans and their American relatives living outside “the little Puritan metropolis” of Boston, the discomfited Baroness Eugenia cannot understand, much less manipulate, the unrefined Americans.<sup>2</sup> Misinterpretation fuels the plot as James portrays Eugenia's failure to find a wealthy new husband from among Hawthorne's contemporaries, a failure that denotes a more nuanced approach to the period in James's historical fiction than in his subsequent literary essay. Both works imagine the prospect that a certain moral clarity might attend this earlier, less sophisticated era, but only the novel explores the elusive quality of this prospect. The play between the promise of clarity and its fulfillment links James's novel to Hawthorne's early story “My Kinsman, Major Molineux,” which similarly features an ambitious protagonist who, also traveling to Boston in the hope that kinship bonds will give rise

to prosperity, encounters situations that directly challenge the simplicity of his provincial background and leave him entirely at a loss. The frustrated expectation that the world will be simple leads in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" to something beyond the comic misunderstandings of *The Europeans*, however, and the tale discloses in place of "genial optimism" a profound anxiety about the fundamental conditions of order in "the great American state."

The importance of anxiety in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" must not be underestimated despite the way the narrative contains the threat of social upheaval within a historically remote setting. The protagonist, the naïve young Robin, eager to find the renowned kinsman with whom he believes his prospects rest, pursues his goal through a series of increasingly disorienting confrontations related in Hawthorne's proverbially ambiguous style. This ambiguity runs counter to the expectations created by the story's opening paragraph, with its laudatory survey of anticolonial activism in eighteenth-century Massachusetts that implies the reader already knows about the historical conflict and its eventual outcome. Yet the foreboding end to the first paragraph, which characterizes the forthcoming account as that of a "temporary inflammation of the popular mind," advises that the backward glance over a presumably simpler time will not fulfill nostalgic desire.<sup>3</sup> Hawthorne's mode of frustrating nostalgic expectation, in this case with a fantastic representation of political discord, has generated among critics varied assessments of his historical fictions. These critical assessments often reflect on moral agency within conditions of historical exigency, the inevitability of cultural reinscription despite rhetoric of resistance, or some mediation between the two.<sup>4</sup> In the case of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," ideological complexity and questions concerning moral agency should not divert attention from the story's affective component, for anxiety is a crucial indicator of conflict during Hawthorne's own time. The narrative obscurity that effectively amplifies Robin's own anxious desire to find his kinsman may also be understood in terms of a less immediately apparent situation: the fear of mob rule and social disorder. Fear of the mob featured prominently in the observations of Hawthorne's contemporaries, and, in the form

of a “temporary inflammation of the popular mind,” it shapes Robin’s strange, dreamlike experiences.<sup>5</sup> The conclusion of the story, in which the abstract “temporary inflammation” materializes as mob action, presents Robin as both witness and participant in the crowd’s humiliation of Major Molineux. While James characterized Hawthorne’s era as genially optimistic, the relationship between the concluding attack on authority in the story and the initial arrival in town of an uprooted farm boy indicates an undercurrent of malaise. Moreover, Hawthorne’s representation of events, notably Robin’s uncertain interpretations of social codes and the concomitant threats of violence, offers a point from which to regard the culture of Hawthorne’s own time.

Although mob action is associated in the story’s opening paragraph with anticolonial agitation, fear of the mob would have resonated with readers of the 1832 edition of the *Token*, in which “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” was first published.<sup>6</sup> Fear of the mob was characteristic of the antebellum era: when Hawthorne would lament in an 1855 letter to his publisher that “America is now wholly given over to a d—d mob of scribbling women” (*CE*, 17:304), his best-known use of the word recasts in a literary context pervasive anxieties about mob rule. Thus in 1838 Abraham Lincoln argued in his “Address to the Young Men’s Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois” that the greatest threats to “the perpetuation of our political institutions” were “the increasing disregard for law which pervade[d] the country; the growing disposition to substitute the wild and furious passions, in lieu of the sober judgement of Courts; and the worse than savage mobs, for the executive ministers of justice.”<sup>7</sup> When Lincoln issued this warning anti-abolitionist violence was intensifying, but even decades earlier Thomas Jefferson had voiced a related fear: “The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body.”<sup>8</sup> Jefferson’s apprehensiveness about cities along with the fears later evinced by Lincoln about the tenuousness of republican government in the face of “mobocratic spirit” were likewise articulated by Alexis de Tocqueville, who, after his American travels of 1831–32, remarked in response to recent “serious riots in Philadelphia and New York” and elsewhere,

I . . . look upon the size of certain American cities, and even more the composition of their population, as a veritable danger that threatens the future of the democratic republics of the New World, and I do not hesitate to predict that this is how they will perish, unless their governments succeed in creating an armed force obedient to the will of the national majority yet independent of the urban populace and capable of putting down its excesses.<sup>9</sup>

Tocqueville's dread of the urban population and its "excesses" might appear to have been shaped by reactions to the French Revolution, but contemporary readers would have been aware of increasingly frequent episodes of mob action early in the nineteenth century. These episodes were not as violent as many later events, most notoriously the 1863 New York draft riot, and to a degree they featured some continuity with earlier political uses of crowds, as in attacks on pro-British newspapers in Baltimore during the War of 1812 that mirrored similar events during the era of the American Revolution. Yet there was a crucial difference that Tocqueville and others discerned about the nineteenth-century mob: it posed a distinctive threat to civic order because it no longer exhibited the cross section of society—evident in the climactic scene of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux"—that had been characteristic of the eighteenth-century street crowd.

In his studies of mobs, riots, and early industrial-era working-class culture, Paul Gilje has identified crucial changes in early nineteenth-century mob actions. No longer was the eighteenth-century "ideal of community unity" evident during such actions; rather, "the tensions and strains of communities being torn asunder by divisions and enmities" were revealed as rioters became increasingly violent in their attacks on people and property.<sup>10</sup> While ethnic and racial divisions would be most prominent in riots during the decades immediately preceding the Civil War, the typically lower-class nineteenth-century mob made manifest a rise in class conflict throughout the industrializing Northeast. In New York City, for example, at least

thirty strikes were conducted during the first three decades of the nineteenth century; by contrast, there had been only three or four before 1800.<sup>11</sup> In the town of Pawtucket, opposition to textile mills and mill owners during the 1820s included strikes, arson, and “the erection of a town clock to counter the owners’ monopoly of public time.”<sup>12</sup> An increase in working-class militancy in Philadelphia is made evident by the fact that whereas from 1800 to 1819 there had been only six strikes, during 1821 alone there were ten.<sup>13</sup> A spontaneous eruption of class resentment among tens of thousands of spectators during an 1819 Philadelphia balloon ascension further illustrates the matter. Responding to a rumor that a guard had killed a boy trying to climb a fence around a tented area where wealthy spectators were gathered, the crowd broke down the fence, shredded the balloon, ransacked the area, and set fire to the tent.<sup>14</sup> Although not as spontaneous as the Philadelphia event, New Year’s Eve processions in New York during the 1820s likewise gave expression to class conflict in a manner less organized than labor strikes. Participants in these “Callithumpian” processions, mostly apprentices and laborers, marched through the streets, according to a contemporary account, making noise “with drums, tin kettles, rattles, horns, whistles, and a variety of other instruments of deafening and discordant tone.”<sup>15</sup> By 1827, these annual gatherings had become so unruly that a group of revelers “enacted in front of Mr. Mayor [Philip] Hone’s’ house a scene of disgraceful rage,” and in 1828 the Callithumpians smashed windows of houses belonging to the wealthy, vandalized an African American church, and faced down a police force that felt itself too weak to break up the gathering.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, the disorder associated with President Jackson’s 1829 inauguration further illustrates the emergence of unprecedented class differences. These class differences had not been so prominent in the traditional workshops, in which the social distinctions between artisan masters and their subordinates would seem, in retrospect, relatively modest.

The increase in urban class tensions dovetailed with major transformations in northeastern rural life, and a number of associated societal changes are evoked in the coming to town of the shabbily dressed young farm boy Robin: the decline of

the family farm, the concomitant migration from the farms to industrializing areas, and the expanding presence of poor and rootless young men in the cities. Although antebellum New England industrialization was still in its early phases when "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" appeared, the rural system of family farms had been breaking down for decades. As early as the 1790s, population growth could no longer be supported by New England farms, and the steady growth of manufacturing challenged the household industries that earlier had helped sustain rural families. Within rural families, traditional patriarchal authority declined as the economics of farm life became progressively more unstable. Alongside the development of separate gender spheres, a distinct yet related attitude of self-sufficiency evolved among children growing to adulthood who, beginning their own families, understood they could no longer rely on parental economic assistance as their forbears had. Rural children as a consequence increasingly acted on the belief that independence from families was both right and inevitable. A sense of autonomy paralleling the urban youth culture that produced the Callithumpians in New York, augmented by poverty and weakened familial bonds, led to increased migration. While one normally associates immigration from western Europe with antebellum industrialization, during this period many workers, especially from rural New England, migrated toward urban manufacturing centers; accordingly, the Lowell mills, following the start of operations in 1823, initially employed young women from the region. The population migration accompanying these economic and attitudinal changes led one historian to remark that "the early nineteenth-century northern hinterland fairly hummed with Yankees passing across the landscape."<sup>17</sup>

The urban and rural societal changes brought on by industrialization were manifold, but what is particularly relevant to "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" is the way anxiety about social disorder accompanied population migration, altered rural family dynamics, and increased class tensions. In comparison with these complex changes, the incipient revolt against colonial rule described at the start of the story seems both reasonable and imbued with a nostalgic sense of innocence.

But the concluding, revelatory encounter between Robin and the mob, which in light of early nineteenth-century society emerges as more than simply a plot contrivance, complicates matters while highlighting an important cultural problem of Hawthorne's own time. The arrival in manufacturing towns and cities of a newly autonomous young man like Robin reflects the conventional fear that a poor, urban population would not feel bound by traditions of social order. Thus the mob at the end of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" offers as its emblem its primary witness: the naïve and innocent young Robin, who may best be understood not merely as a befuddled observer or an incidental participant but as a cause of the discord and the riotous mob action with which the tale culminates.

Robin's disclosures late in the story about his origins and motivation provide background necessary for an understanding of how he serves in the double role of witness and figure for the mob. When he stops to rest near the church, having endured frustration in his search for Molineux as well as confusion following his arrival in town, Robin's fantasy of home and subsequent remarks to the kindly stranger explain how he may be perceived as a representative of the newly dispossessed. During the conversation, Robin divulges his rural origins, his connection to Major Molineux, and how his "elder brother was destined to succeed to the farm, which his father had cultivated, in the interval of sacred duties" (*CE*, II:224). With the elder brother named as sole inheritor of the farm, the narrative continues, "it was therefore determined that Robin should profit by his kinsman's generous intentions" (*CE*, II: 224–25). Robin's arrival in town is explained with phrasing—"it was therefore determined"—that suggests a force related to the "sacred" at work. The background story and the explanation that the older brother "was destined" to inherit the farm succinctly elucidates Robin's arrival. But this plain description of his situation, like so many other episodes in the story, dispenses complex information in a parsimonious and ultimately deceptive manner. The "destined" inheritance of the elder brother evokes the presence of an established custom of primogeniture and entail where, in fact, no such tradition existed. The story itself casts doubt on this, for Robin arrives in Boston after a five-day trek,

and one might assume that at such a distance from a primary colonial port arable land would not have been so scarce as to demand the practice of primogeniture and entail. Nevertheless, Hawthorne relies on this practice to set the story in motion. Despite the implausibility of the plot device, it nevertheless bears a relationship to both the antimonarchical thrust of the story and the economics of contemporary New England.

Records show that the New England colonies readily discarded primogeniture and entail, inheritance practices developed in medieval England. The problematic status of a younger brother like Robin was addressed by seventeenth-century Massachusetts legislators, who diminished primogeniture in order to promote the availability of a minimal subsistence income for younger male siblings. Any legal or practical remnant of the custom possibly remaining by the time of Hawthorne's childhood was entirely extirpated on the grounds it might inhibit business: in 1811 the high court of Massachusetts in conjunction with the state legislature ruled against entail to encourage the cultivation and development of lands.<sup>18</sup> The rejection of entail was common to northern states, as suggested by an episode in Catherine Maria Sedgwick's *Clarence: or, A Tale of Our Own Times* (1830). Here an English traveler in upstate New York reflects on "the happy effects of our law of entail" because "it fosters genius by preserving in families the chef d'oeuvres of the arts."<sup>19</sup> The English traveler, an ideological foil in this nationalistic novel, stridently regrets "that your legislators have deemed this law of primogeniture incompatible with your republican institutions": "It is an unfortunate mistake, which will for ever retard your advance in the sciences, arts, and manners."<sup>20</sup> While these sentiments were antithetical to prevalent contemporary belief, the critique accurately sets forth the common association between opposition to restrictive inheritance laws based on archaic and aristocratic British practices, the desire for economic growth, and faith in republican institutions. Thus while Robin's explanation of his need to leave the family farm may be historically incongruous, it reflects early nineteenth-century support for the conditions of economic development while simultaneously suggesting a continuity between such support and the republican, antimonarchical ideology that provides a

political framework for "My Kinsman, Major Molineux."

Robin's appearance in town may typify the dispossessed state of early nineteenth-century New England rural youth, but he does more than merely exemplify lower-class rootlessness. While his migration to town is typical, its conjunction with his account of his disinheritance suggests a level of imaginative and cultural complexity. This complexity emerges in the tableau immediately preceding Robin's conversation with the kindly stranger when, exhausted and confused, Robin envisions the evening as it presumably had passed at his father's household:

He pictured them assembled at the door, beneath the tree, the great old tree, which had been spared for its huge twisted trunk, and venerable shade, when a thousand leafy brethren fell. There, at the going down of the summer sun, it was his father's custom to perform domestic worship, that the neighbors might come and join him like brothers of the family, and that the wayfaring man might pause to drink at that fountain, and keep his heart pure by freshening the memory of home. Robin distinguished the seat of every individual of the little audience; he saw the good man in the midst, holding the Scriptures in the golden light that shone from the western clouds. . . . He perceived the slight inequality of his father's voice when he came to speak of the Absent One; he noted how his mother turned her face to the broad and knotted trunk; how his elder brother scorned, because the beard was rough upon his upper lip, to permit his features to be moved; how his younger sister drew down a low hanging branch before her eyes; and how the little one of all, whose sports had hitherto broken the decorum of the scene, understood the prayer for her playmate, and burst into clamorous grief. Then he saw them go in at the door; and

when Robin would have entered also, the latch tinkled into its place, and he was excluded from his home. (*CE*, II:222–23)

Robin's retrospective fantasy unveils a poignant scene of a simpler time: he is both author and audience of a vision akin to that which Henry James offered when reflecting on the period in *Hawthorne* and *The Europeans*. But just as James's novel reveals complexity where simplicity had initially been intimated, so the tableau of domestic worship, in its representation of gathered family, neighbors, and wayfarers, indicates the breakdown of social bonds along with subsequent disordered interpretations and conflict.

The sight of a sunlit landscape promises relief from the confusion that attends Robin's benighted wanderings through the town. Visual clarity and a release from the confusion of misinterpretation symbolically accompany the physical act of clearing forest land, which in turn allows for the seemingly natural view of illuminating sunlight. The terms that Hawthorne deploys make the act of clearing appear as a system of arboreal primogeniture, one that preserved "the great old tree, which had been spared for its huge twisted trunk, and venerable shade, when a thousand leafy *brethren* fell" (emphasis added). As the natural landscape is transformed by the felling of figural brothers, the social order gains what the landscape has lost when the gathered neighbors come to join Robin's father "like brothers of the family." Under these circumstances, "domestic worship" suggests beyond its meaning of a religious service the worship of domestic order maintained by the act of sending a brother off, much as the biblical scapegoat would be released into the wilderness. Although Robin may not bear the scapegoat's burden of collective sin, there remains a highly charged response when his father speaks of the "Absent One" with a "slight inequality" of voice that faintly echoes the inequality of inheritance. But Robin's discarded status accords with the unsympathetic stance presented by the elder brother, who "scorn[s]" emotional display when Robin is mentioned "because the beard [is] rough upon his upper lip." Here Robin rationalizes the elder brother's apparent indifference as a sign

of suppressed fraternal sympathy, the absence taken to indicate a presence. He thereby avoids considering the possibility that his brother's appearance may signal either unsympathetic complacency or perhaps some ambiguous mixture of conflicted feelings. Robin thus discloses his own desire, one for a brotherly allegiance that emerges earlier in the story when, surveying the patrons at the inn, he notes "two or three sheepish countrymen" toward whom he feels "a sort of *brotherhood*" (*CE*, II:213; emphasis added). Robin's imagined emotional attachment to strangers momentarily compensates for his own exclusion from home. Such unrecognized tenuousness of familial bonds stands as a backdrop to Robin's talismanic invocations of his kinsman throughout the story.

Robin's fantasy of sympathetic family feeling does more, however, than simply illustrate his desire for attachment during an era when family structures were transformed by economic forces. To philosophers and psychologists of Hawthorne's era, the affection that helped make a family cohere was among the most basic of interpersonal forces; accordingly, the breakdown of the family presages the failure of the less immediate bonds that effectively unify society.<sup>21</sup> If Robin's dispossession explains his journey from country to city, his nostalgic, not to say sentimental, fantasy of home furnishes an intellectual framework with which to interpret the confusing hostility he encounters in town as well as the culminating mob action. Robin basically maintains a hopeful outlook, at least until the more equivocal ending of the story, because he often interprets his surroundings with the same positive attitude that colors his understanding of his family. His misinterpretation of social codes in town may suggest inexperience, yet Hawthorne implies interpretive difficulty by depicting the unobstructed, farmland vista of Robin's recalled fantasy, which serves as a counterpoint to his perceptual problems in town. While these perceptual problems are augmented by his nighttime arrival, they signal a basic difference in the quality of vision within the city, where taking in the larger view—with the associated suggestion of understanding—is not possible as it seemed to be on the farm. Consequently, in his fantasy the younger sister must draw down a branch to obscure herself from the view of

others when hearing of Robin's departure. By contrast, in town Robin's vision is for the most part limited to the particular street he is on or to such segments as are artificially lighted, and when something distant is perceived, like ships' masts, this bit of visual evidence misleadingly accompanies "the smell of tar" (*CE*, II:211), producing the false suggestion of a placid maritime setting rather than the cruel weapon of a mob. That which is hidden from Robin's view is revealed, at least in part, by the end of the story, but the more prominent interpretive problems that Robin divulges are linked to his inexperience with the social conventions of "the little metropolis of a New England colony" (*CE*, II:210). But this unfamiliarity also constitutes the core of those threatening qualities implied in the dramatic sequence when his appearance in town is followed by the eruption of violence.

The dreamlike qualities of the story obscure the conjunction between the dispossessed Robin's arrival and the threat of violence, a relationship that is not accidental, although the elements of violence seem unconnected and, until the end, secondary to Robin's interpretive problems. These interpretive problems are so enmeshed with the obvious origins of this "country-bred" youth that it is hard to refrain from regarding him as a stock comic figure like Jonathan from Royall Tyler's *Contrast*, a bumbling hayseed who is, "as it should seem, upon his first visit to town" (*CE*, II:209). This initial comic presentation of Robin effectively minimizes the violence of Major Molineux's tarring, as Evert A. Duyckinck's disparaging 1852 review in the *Literary World* illustrates by referring to the climax as a "joke" and a "most lame and impotent conclusion" showing that "humor is not Hawthorne's forte."<sup>22</sup> But Robin's arrival in town and the concluding violence are not merely coincidental events. This lower-class young man unfamiliar with urbane manners, we are told, carries "a heavy cudgel, formed of an oak sapling" (*CE*, II:209); in assessing this image we might consider the anxiety-producing effects on middle-class, middle-aged readers today of encountering in the street a strong, analogously attired young man brandishing a heavy stick. Robin's unfashionable appearance merges with his social ineptitude so as almost to obscure the threat of violence contained within his two initial social

encounters in town, at the barber shop and at the inn.

Robin's first interactions in town make salient his difficulty interpreting social cues while they indicate how misinterpretation commingles with the threat of violent conflict. He is shocked when outside the barber shop the old man rebukes him after his greeting and inquiry as to the whereabouts of his kinsman, and the shock is amplified by the laughter emanating from the barber shop. Just as his memory would reconfigure into a nostalgic tableau his painful expulsion from home, a surprised Robin accounts for his embarrassment with a characteristically defensive, self-deluding interpretation: "'This is some country representative,' was his conclusion, 'who has never seen the in-side of my kinsman's door, and lacks the breeding to answer a stranger civilly. The man is old, or verily—I might be tempted to turn back and smite him on the nose'" (*CE*, II:211). Although Robin discloses an immediate impulse toward violence at not being given the respect he anticipates on mentioning Molineux's name, the scene is developed within a disconcertingly comic framework: the miscommunication is accompanied by Robin's ironically excessive self-regard as a "shrewd youth," and Hawthorne even inserts an audience response, the laughter from the barber shop. Robin accounts for his social humiliation by continuing to misinterpret: "Ah, Robin, Robin! even the barber's boys laugh at you, for choosing such a guide! You will be wiser in time, friend Robin" (*CE*, II:211). Robin in this instance recognizes some need for education in the social conventions of "the little metropolis," conventions referred to when he silently disparages the old man for not answering him "civilly," a word that Robin would not appreciate for its etymological association with the word *city*.

The idea of civility reappears in a different form during Robin's next inquiry, when the narrative reveals that Robin misapprehends the unfamiliar "superfluous civility" (*CE*, II:213) of the innkeeper as an attempt to curry favor with one who distinctly resembles Molineux. This episode resembles the first in its fusion of Robin's misinterpretation with the threat of violence, for when he boastfully mentions Molineux's name, he misunderstands the "sudden and general movement in the room . . . as expressing the eagerness of each individual to

become his guide" (*CE*, II:214). But when the innkeeper instructs him to move along, the mood is unambiguous: "Robin had begun to draw his hand towards the lighter end of the oak cudgel, but a strange hostility in every countenance, induced him to relinquish his purpose of breaking the courteous innkeeper's head" (*CE*, II:214). Robin's immediate unthinking reaction to the innkeeper is consistent with his behavior outside the barber shop. It is similarly telling that on walking away to the sound of "a general laugh" he is unable to regain his humor as he had just a few moments earlier: "Oh, if I had one of these grinning rascals in the woods, where I and my oak sapling grew up together, I would teach him that my arm is heavy, though my purse be light!" (*CE*, II:215). Robin's violent impulses might not resemble images of modern urban violence, but in Hawthorne's time they would have conveyed a discomfort that Hawthorne indicates by evoking civility. What is less obvious to a reader today is the pertinence of violence, the culminating act in the breakdown of social order and civility, to the seemingly innocuous behavior that accompanies these two early scenes—laughter.

The socially suspect nature of laughter was declared by early nineteenth-century behavioral guides. One such guidebook, first published in 1828, exhorts young men to be "sober-minded," recalling the admonition of a dying statesman: "'No,' said he, 'I am not melancholy; I am serious; and it is very proper I should be so. Ah, my friends, while we laugh, all things are serious round about us.'"<sup>23</sup> Seriousness, a feature of self-cultivation, constitutes the basis of propriety according to the most frequently reprinted antebellum behavioral guide, Lord Chesterfield's *Letters*. In this compendium of advice to his son, Chesterfield advises him to develop a "cheerful" and "harmonious voice," but "without laughing," while elaborating on the class associations of laughter:

Having mentioned laughing, I must particularly warn you against it: and I could heartily wish that you may often be seen to smile, but never heard to laugh while you live. Frequent and loud laughter is the characteristic of folly

and ill manners: it is the manner in which the *mob* express their silly joy at silly things; and they call it being merry. In my mind, there is nothing so illiberal, and so ill-bred, as audible laughter.<sup>24</sup>

Given Chesterfield's condemnation of laughter as a sign of ill breeding or the *mob*, it is perhaps no surprise he would boast that "nobody has ever heard me laugh." As if to illustrate Chesterton's assertion, characters with lower or questionable social standing laugh throughout "My Kinsman, Major Molineux." Toward the opening, after Robin's interchange with the old man, he is "pursued by an ill-mannered roar of laughter" from the barber's boys. A short time later, following his inquiry at the tavern frequented by mariners, "men who lived by regular and laborious handicraft," and rustic, "sheepish countrymen" like himself, Robin departs to the noise of a "general laugh" (*CE*, II:211-14). The flirtatious young woman exposing a scarlet petticoat signals him with a laugh after the watchman walks off. And the riotous procession announces itself with noise from "instruments of discord, and a wild and confused laughter" (*CE*, II:226). While hardly uniform, these outbursts of laughter accompany behaviors that defy Chesterfield's politeness code. Moreover, the wave of laughter during the climax of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" could have been created to illustrate the pronouncements of Chesterfield, who warned, "Loud laughter is the mirth of the mob, who are only pleased with silly things; for true wit or good sense never excited a laugh since the creation of the world."<sup>25</sup>

Laughter resonates in various ways throughout "My Kinsman, Major Molineux." It functions as a class marker, as it does for Chesterton, when issuing from the barber's boys or the laborers in the tavern, and it arises alongside the question of self-restraint, as when Robin "resisted temptation, and fled away," albeit encouraged by the night watchman's threat, from the "pleasant titter" of the young woman (*CE*, II:218-19). But laughter also creates a transitory sense of crowd unity, and it is this function of "the mirth of the mob" that Robin pursues. Thus the climactic episode begins with the enticing laughter

that draws the exhausted, isolated Robin. Having described to the friendly stranger his background and his intent, Robin reacts to the sounds of what he identifies as “a multitude of rioters,” their noise a blend of shouts, “frequent bursts from many instruments of discord, and a wild and confused laughter” (*CE*, II:226). With a typically oblique explanation, Robin describes to his new companion why he finds all this irresistible: “‘Surely some prodigious merrymaking is going on,’ exclaimed he. ‘I have laughed very little since I left home, Sir, and should be sorry to lose an opportunity.’” Restrained by his companion, Robin consents to await the arrival of the procession that will present Molineux, and as they wait, they are joined by townspeople similarly attracted. The impulse of the townspeople to gather may at first seem innocent, but once the procession arrives, greeted with “shrill voices of mirth or terror” (*CE*, II:228), the ominous aspect of the crowd merges with the comic, and their laughter conveys multiple meanings, of which the incongruous association with violence will ultimately be most significant.

The relationship in this episode between laughter and the threat of physical violence may be illustrated by analogy with the appearance of the procession leader, the lone horseman whose face is painted red and black. Initially seen by Robin at the inn, the man’s unpainted face was striking for its prominent features and glowing eyes. Hawthorne subsequently offers two separate descriptions of the painted face, each accompanied by an interpretation. On the first occasion, the red and the black halves of the face seem to embody demonic attributes: “The effect was as if two individual devils, a fiend of fire and a fiend of darkness, had united themselves to form this infernal visage” (*CE*, II:220). Later, during the climactic crowd scene, the strange and menacing qualities of the face are interpreted as a combined threat more specific to an anticolonial uprising when the face appears to be “war personified; the red of one cheek was an emblem of fire and sword; the blackness of the other betokened the mourning which attends them” (*CE*, II:227). These separate, implanted interpretations should not obscure other potential meanings of the painted face, such as the exclusion from the colonial community of those identi-

fied as nonwhite. The two commentaries are also silent about a more immediate act of physical violence, the painting of hot tar on Major Molineux. When Molineux is displayed, seated on the cart “in tar-and-feathery dignity,” it is the humiliation of one accustomed to deference that is emphasized. Yet Molineux’s inflamed skin, reddened underneath the burning black tar, would seem to refer more immediately to the procession leader’s theatrically painted face.<sup>26</sup> The link between the physical violence endured by Molineux and the political violence done to a normative colonial-era social hierarchy is simultaneously revealed by the story and obscured by the painted man’s prominence together with the narrator’s simplifying interpretations of his significance. Once again, as when laughter erupts, problematic or questionable interpretations arise alongside the appearance of conflict; moreover, the threat of violence emerges again as it did at the start, when Robin resisted the impulse to “turn back and smite” the old man in front of the barber shop’s laughing spectators.

The social bonds responsible for order in “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” repeatedly threaten to fail, and, reciprocally, interpretive strategies fall short of furnishing a nuanced, effective comprehension that would help assure one’s place within a new or altered setting. Yet Robin, who seems surrounded by a cloud of hazy interpretation and intimations of violence, is also propelled by the desire to establish himself within a social group, whether it is the hierarchy he anticipates when invoking the name of Molineux or that of the laughing crowd. When Robin finally does encounter Molineux, any feelings of kinship are promptly overwhelmed as the gathering asserts its group identity through the laughter, spread like a “contagion,” that “seized upon Robin” and even called forth the attention of “the Man in the Moon” (*CE*, II:230).<sup>27</sup> The crowd’s laughter may indicate such things as pleasure at the sudden fall of the king’s representative, anticipation of a desired change, and even a simultaneous anxiety over the prospect of disorder. Robin’s laughter furthermore suggests a sense of relief during his difficult transition from the country to town. But it is as a brief interval of social unity—in what George Meredith termed “that vigilant sense of a collective supervision”—that

the climactic laughter anchors the narrative in something that seems certain while offsetting the threat of disorder.<sup>28</sup> Like the image of a clear and sunlit landscape in Robin's earlier fantasy, a landscape that seems enduring but that, within the larger narrative, is an artifact of Robin's imagination, the interval of social unity passes, and the momentarily silent procession enveloping Molineux moves forward:

On they went, like fiends that throng in mockery round some dead potentate, mighty no more, but majestic still in his agony. On they went, in counterfeited pomp, in senseless uproar, in frenzied merriment, trampling all on an old man's heart. On swept the tumult, and left a silent street behind. (*CE*, II:230)

This description of the procession invites the reader to consider a series of contrasts: on the one hand, a "majestic," isolated Molineux sits in "agony," his "old man's heart" trampled, the living form of a "dead potentate"; on the other, an entourage of "fiends" engages in "senseless uproar" and "frenzied merriment." Behind these discordant images lies the backdrop of a colonial town engaged in the collective ridicule, humiliation, and exclusion of Molineux. The crowd and Robin respond to the events as comedy, but the narrative carefully presents the receding image of Molineux as a tragically scapegoated surrogate for the king. The crowd's characteristic expression here, as in *Chesterfield*, is a laughter that entirely overwhelms Hawthorne's sympathetic description of the tarred and feathered Molineux as well as the implied association with Robin's expulsion from his home.

Hawthorne's maledictory account of the receding procession raises the question of how a young, unestablished writer, as Hawthorne was in 1830, could feel comfortable derogating the street politics associated with national founding. The quasi-religious nationalist sentiments surrounding the American Revolution had even led to its use in the dating of some publications in place of the conventional Christian dating system.<sup>29</sup> Yet, as Sean Wilentz and other historians have observed, popu-

lar reverence for the Revolution did not simply lead to complacency. Laborers who opposed the developing industrial-era hierarchy, for example, drew on well-known rhetoric, as in the case of an 1809 strike manifesto issued by New York carpenters that began, "When one class of society finds it necessary to act in any manner that concerns the general interest, justice to themselves and respect for the public demands that the reasons for such actions should be assigned."<sup>30</sup> Such a contentious reinterpretation of a founding document of the Revolution suggests that Hawthorne's complex presentation of revolutionary events should not have seemed remarkable. Hawthorne's own very conventional children's history, *Grandfather's Chair*, published in 1840, accordingly blends veneration for founding fathers with fear of crowd actions. When Grandfather relates the story of the Boston Massacre to his young audience, one child responds, "I do not love to hear of mobs and broils in the street" (*CE*, 6:171). Another episode, called "The Hutchinson Mob," more directly tied to the events that shape "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," tells of a riotous mob action by "laborers and seafaring men, together with many young apprentices, and all those idle people about town, who were ready for any kind of mischief" (*CE*, 6:154). In the end, the mob drives off Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Hutchinson and destroys his irreplaceable library of colonial American manuscripts. The description of the mob, while less ambiguous than that in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," bears a clear resemblance to the earlier story: "The mob, meanwhile, were growing fiercer and fiercer, and seemed ready even to set the town on fire, for the sake of burning the king's friends out of house and home. And yet, angry as they were, they sometimes broke into a loud roar of laughter, as if mischief and destruction were their sport" (*CE*, 6:155). Nevertheless, redirecting the "outrageous violence" of the "excited mob," as described to the children by a reassuring Grandfather, was the "counsel of those wise and good men who conducted them safely and gloriously through the Revolution" (*CE*, 6:159). A counterbalancing sense of decorum, not developed in the earlier story, is thereby established, presumably to relieve the anxiety of Grandfather's audience.<sup>31</sup>

The nature of the crowd's sensibilities is something to which

Hawthorne would return more than once in his writings, most famously in *The Scarlet Letter*. In the first of the scaffold scenes, Hester Prynne faces the Puritan community and displays a dignity in response to its condemnation that recalls that of Molineux. Unlike Molineux's onlookers, however, the Puritans in *The Scarlet Letter* "were stern enough to look upon her death, had that been the sentence, without a murmur at its severity, but had none of the heartlessness of another social state, which would find only a theme for jest in [such] an exhibition" (*CE*, I:56). The Puritan crowd's decorum, in Hawthorne's rendering, typified a simpler yet more serious time, "before society shall have grown corrupt enough to smile, instead of shuddering" at a spectacle of public shaming (*CE*, I:56). Such a scene of future corruption is envisioned by Hester, who fantasizes in images reminiscent of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux":

There was a quality so much more terrible in the solemn mood of the popular mind, that she longed rather to behold all those rigid countenances contorted with scornful merriment, and herself the object. Had a roar of laughter burst from the multitude,—each man, each woman, each little shrill-voiced child, contributing their individual parts,—Hester Prynne might have repaid them all with a bitter and disdainful smile. (*CE*, I:57)

Once again a crowd's "roar of laughter" is the index of a corrosive power, here to be opposed by the individual's moral force figured with a "disdainful smile." Yet the Puritan crowd refrained from such derision, typical of the "heartlessness of another social state" experienced by Molineux. This "heartlessness" stands as a belated diagnosis of the earlier "temporary inflammation of the popular mind" (*CE*, II:209), the "contagion" that spread "among the multitude" during the climax of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" (*CE*, II:230). By contrast, when the Puritan community eventually reaccepts Hester Prynne, the act does more than imply a progressive democratic consciousness that would overtake that of a rigid Puritan elite;

it also dramatizes the development of a more enduring social feeling than that indicated by the transient laughter within the earlier short story.<sup>32</sup>

Although only a character as focused as Hester Prynne could alter the crowd's disposition over time, even in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," which depicts the events of one evening, Hawthorne avoids the relatively simple allegory about crowd control of *Grandfather's Chair*. Instead, a tension arises between the crowd's power and the empathic impulse of the individual observer. The point at which Robin is engulfed by the crowd—when "a bewildering excitement began to seize upon his mind," creating "a sort of mental inebriety" (*CE*, II:229)—is immediately preceded by the moment of mutual recognition between Robin and Molineux. Before Robin is affected by the contagious laughter, he assumes the role of one "witnessing the foul disgrace of a head that had grown grey in honor" (*CE*, II:229). The agonized Molineux, despite his "steady soul," finds himself no longer able to control his body, as he is "agitated by a quick, and continual tremor, which his pride str[ives] to quell" (*CE*, II:228–29). Robin's eyes meet Molineux's, and in turn Robin's own knees shake, as if he were vibrating in sympathy with his kinsman. The act of recognition, understandably humiliating to Molineux, cannot be sustained by Robin, who succumbs to the contagion of laughter. Yet the passing moment bespeaks an emotional presence within a story that, with the exception of the kindly stranger's appearance, has steadily shown people veering off from one another, averting gazes, and generally behaving in an oblique manner. The sight of Molineux's "ghastly" face, however, reveals a dynamic corresponding to Emmanuel Levinas's observation about the ethical demand created by the presence of another: "The face is not a form offered to serene perception. Immediately it summons me, claims me, recalls me to a responsibility I incurred in no previous experience."<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, Robin's "mixture of pity and terror" (*CE*, II:229) marks a new capacity to apprehend his surroundings and his situation with clarity—for once, he does not misinterpret. Moreover, after the procession departs and the crowd disperses, when the kindly stranger addresses him, Robin retains a facial pallor reflective of Molineux, who had

been “pale as death” (*CE*, II:228). The visual apprehension of another, indicated by Robin’s sympathetic pallor, operates here to make salient a sense of moral complexity that earlier had remained in the background but that now also seems to reflect back at the onlooking pale visage of the “man in the moon.”<sup>34</sup>

Robin thus no longer seems the simple, rustic clown in a comedy of uncivil manners, and the Jamesian veneer of “genial optimism” associated with an “earlier and simpler generation” is uneasily restored as the threat of mob violence recedes. Robin offers a concluding acknowledgment of a sense of dislocation when he observes: “I have at last met my kinsman, and he will scarce desire to see my face again. I begin to grow weary of a town life” (*CE*, II:230–31). In a final ironic turn, Robin’s disinherited state anticipates Emerson’s gesture toward intellectual sovereignty when he remarks in “Self-Reliance” that

a cultivated man . . . hates what he has, if he see that it is accidental,—came to him by inheritance, or gift, or crime; then he feels that it is not having; it does not belong to him, has no root in him, and merely lies there, because no revolution or no robber takes it away. But that which a man is does always by necessity acquire, and what the man acquires is living property, which does not wait the beck of rulers, or mobs, or revolutions, or fire, or storm, or bankruptcies, but perpetually renews itself wherever the man breathes.<sup>35</sup>

The threats of both mob and revolution linger in Emerson’s formulation, though now it is the “cultivated man” rather than a young rustic who is confronted with the threat of loss or the possibility of further gain. Although Hawthorne is not an Emersonian before the letter, the kindly stranger’s concluding suggestion that Robin remain in town seems reminiscent of Emerson’s notion that disinheritance is a condition of possibility. In addition, the stranger’s remark calls forth the image of founding father Benjamin Franklin as it takes shape in *The*

*Autobiography*: “As you are a shrewd youth, you may rise in the world, without the help of your kinsman, Major Molineux” (*CE*, II:231). The pale, traumatized Robin, neither shrewd nor threatening by this point, appears to have a decision before him, whether or not to begin again by pursuing a promise that could prove to be as vaporous as that associated with kinship.

Robin’s allegiance to ambition may serve, in either Franklinesque or Emersonian terms, as the basis for a future that safely sets in traditionally American terms an episode linking interpersonal bonds—whether familial or more broadly social—with their failure. These failures are multiple even in terms of family relations, for the disinherited Robin has seen himself participate in his kinsman’s degradation while simultaneously giving bodily evidence of sympathetic attachment to Molineux. Perhaps, as the stranger suggests, a shrewd, ambitious youth might develop alternative relationships based on a new, more egalitarian or meritocratic footing than was presumably available under colonial rule. The humiliation of the politically powerful Molineux implies this notion, and the conjoined laughter of Robin with the other spectators further suggests the development of new social sympathies befitting a colonial community preparing to overthrow the established political order. This understanding would be consistent with a compensatory view of a riotous eighteenth-century episode. Alternatively, one might regard the conclusion as a gesture that contains the unsettling narrative of the tale within a larger historical narrative, such as that presented by Hawthorne’s more reassuring children’s history. Such resolutely political interpretations of “My Kinsman, Major Molineux,” however, necessarily rest on an approach to the story that attends strictly to the eighteenth century and the promise of revolution.

But to the contemporaneous reader coming face to face with this story, nineteenth-century anxieties would merge with reverence for the generation of the American Revolution in a manner that resembles Robin’s unsettling apprehension of his kinsman. In Robin, Hawthorne gave his readers an unwitting avatar of nineteenth-century disorder who simultaneously acts out his more salient role as misinterpreter of a confusing milieu. It is no surprise that a commentator in Hawthorne’s

own time would dismiss the tale as a failed comedy, for the demands made on witnesses of trauma, even at second hand, arouse considerable resources in defense against such awareness. Hawthorne repeatedly dramatizes this aversive turn, as in Robin's fantasy of his sister hiding her face at the thought of his absence. Robin similarly can maintain his gaze on his tarred and feathered kinsman only momentarily before being consumed by a roar of laughter, which Hawthorne describes as "ill-mannered" when it first arises in the story. In the essay "Manners," Emerson remarks, "Defect in manners is usually the defect of fine perceptions," an observation that defines in contemporary terms Robin's climactic turn away from the pain of sympathetic perception.<sup>36</sup> Sympathetic perception is transient in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," whether it arises in association with the clearing away of a brotherly forest or the confrontation with a disgraced kinsman. Perceptual and civil disorder thus merge within the story, while for the reader what remains is the threat of disorder as a condition that necessarily accompanies the apprehension of history. Decades later, when Henry James creates his novel of "the little metropolis of a New England colony" during Hawthorne's era, he, too, draws together problems of manners and misinterpretation, thus transforming his own earlier historical vision of the simplicity of "the great American state." Fictions of misinterpretation would serve both writers when depicting the difficulty of maintaining perceptual clarity in the face of traumatic knowledge, whether historical or contemporary.

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#### NOTES

1. Henry James, "Nathaniel Hawthorne," in *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers* (New York: Library of America, 1983), 427, 426.
2. Henry James, *The Europeans*, in *Novels, 1871-1880* (New York: Library of America, 1983), 886. In an 1877 letter to William Dean Howells,

- James identified “some imaginary locality in New England 1830” with which he planned to “play havoc” as the setting for the novel (*Letters*, ed. Leon Edel, 4 vols. [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1974–84], 2:106).
3. Nathaniel Hawthorne, “My Kinsman, Major Molineux,” in *The Snow-Image, and Uncollected Tales*, vol. 11 of *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, ed. William Charvat et al., 23 vols. to date (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1962–), 209. All references to Hawthorne’s writings are to this edition, hereafter cited as *CE*, with volume and page number.
  4. Michael Colacurcio understands Hawthorne’s early fiction as the work of an ironist for whom the pieties of the American Revolution are diminished while moral issues are sharpened; see *The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne’s Early Tales* (1984; repr., Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1995), 130–53, as well as “‘Certain Circumstances’: Hawthorne and the Interest of History,” in *New Essays on Hawthorne’s Major Tales*, ed. Millicent Bell (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), 37–66. Others have explored the conflation of psychological and political uncertainty; see Emily Miller Budick, “American Literature’s Declaration of In/dependence: Stanley Cavell, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and the Covenant of Consent,” in *Summoning: Ideas of the Covenant and Interpretive Theory*, ed. Ellen Spolsky (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1993), 211–27. American providential history frames the study of physical environment in Robert E. Abrams, “Critiquing Colonial American Geography: Hawthorne’s Landscape of Bewilderment,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 36, no. 4 (1994): 357–79. Also see G. R. Thompson, *The Art of Authorial Presence: Hawthorne’s Provincial Tales* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1993), 120–58.
  5. Even a historicist critic of the story more than half a century ago, Q. D. Leavis, would comment on its dreamlike qualities; see “Hawthorne as Poet,” *Sewanee Review* 59 (April 1951): 198–205. Other more bluntly psychological criticism would follow: see, for example, Seymour L. Gross, “Hawthorne’s ‘My Kinsman, Major Molineux’: History as Moral Adventure,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 12 (1957): 97–109; also see Frederick Crews’s Oedipal interpretation in *The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne’s Psychological Themes* (1966; repr., Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1989), 72–79. The analogy between Robin’s departure from his father’s home and the colonial break from English rule creates both rationale and horizon for these earlier discussions

- of the surreal in the story. David Leverenz updates such readings by regarding Robin in terms of the transition from colonial-era manhood in *Manhood and the American Renaissance* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1989), 232–39; also see T. Walter Herbert Jr., “Doing Cultural Work: ‘My Kinsman Major Molineux’ and the Construction of the Self-Made Man,” *Studies in the Novel* 23 (1991): 20–27.
6. Hawthorne first alluded to the story in a letter dated 20 December 1829 (*CE*, 15:199–200). The climactic mob scene initially is described by Hawthorne as “not far from a hundred years ago” (*CE*, 11:209), yet anticolonial agitation preceding the American Revolution more properly dates from the middle of the 1750s. Hawthorne’s familiarity with this point was noted by early historicist critics, such as Roy Harvey Pearce, “Hawthorne and the Sense of the Past or, the Immortality of Major Molineux,” *ELH* 21, no. 4 (1954): 327–49.
  7. Abraham Lincoln, *Speeches and Writings, 1832–1858*, ed. Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Library of America, 1989), 28, 29.
  8. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in *Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1984), 291.
  9. Lincoln, *Speeches and Writings*, 31; Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Library of America, 2004), 321.
  10. Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1996), 63.
  11. See Paul A. Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763–1834* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1987), 194–95. Gilje attributes this militancy to the breakdown of artisan republicanism.
  12. Gary B. Kulik, “Patterns of Resistance to Industrial Capitalism, Pawtucket Village, and the Strike of 1824,” in *American Workingclass Culture: Explorations in American Labor and Social History*, ed. Milton Cantor (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 232. Kulik elaborates on the effects of industrialization and its opponents from 1790 to 1830: “[Opposition to the textile mills] derived from a preindustrial culture, democratic traditions, and the villagers’ stark awareness of the changes brought by textile industrialism. The history of that opposition, lost for so long, undercuts the Tocquevillian assumption, underlying most of American historiography, that industrial capitalism sank its roots into American soil quickly and without opposition.”
  13. Ronald Schultz, *The Republic of Labor: Philadelphia Artisans and the Politics of Class*,

- 1720–1830 (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993), 221.
14. See Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 72. Also see the discussion of unruly working-class traditionalist behaviors in antebellum Philadelphia in Bruce Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800–1850* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1980), 53–66.
  15. *New York Gazette*, 3 January 1828; quoted in Paul A. Gilje and Howard B. Rock, *Keepers of the Revolution: New Yorkers at Work in the Early Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1992), 63.
  16. See Gilje, *Road to Mobocracy*, 253–60.
  17. Jonathan Prude, *The Coming of Industrial Order: Town and Factory Life in Rural Massachusetts, 1810–1860* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), 23. Prude describes population shifts while also analyzing the increasing autonomy of rural youth. On the decline of household industries and the migration of the rural population to the cities, also see Thomas C. Cochran, *Frontiers of Change: Early Industrialism in America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), 87–89. The transformation of rural antebellum families and the shift away from patriarchal authority are detailed by Mary P. Ryan in *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981). Also see Mary Blewett, *Men, Women, and Work: Class, Gender, and Protest in the New England Shoe Industry, 1780–1910* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1990); and Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815–1846* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), 17–52. The history of the Lowell mills is the focus of Brian C. Mitchell, *The Paddy Camps: The Irish of Lowell, 1821–61* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1988). The early Lowell mill owners offered the paternalistic rationale that mill work would have a positive moral influence on young rural women no longer constrained by family authority; see Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826–1860* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1979).
  18. For a general treatment of primogeniture and entail in New England and elsewhere, see Lawrence Friedman, *A History of American Law*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985). Friedman observes that even in the South the practice, never common, had disappeared by 1800 (234). Also see Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class*, 28–30, on inheritance patterns. On seventeenth-century legislation, see William E. Nelson, *Americanization of the Common Law: The Impact of Legal Change on Massachusetts Society, 1760–1830* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975), 48. As one historian of colonial era Massachusetts law has commented, “The

- substitution of divisible inheritance of real property for the English rule of primogeniture was undoubtedly attributable in part to a recognition of the needs of younger children" (George Lee Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts: Study in Tradition and Design* [1960; repr., Hamden, CT: Archon, 1968], 116). On nineteenth-century legislative and court activities, see Sellers, *Market Revolution*, 52.
19. Catherine Maria Sedgwick, *Clarence; or, A Tale of Our Own Times*, 2nd ed. (1830; New York: G. P. Putnam, 1849), 171.
  20. Sedgwick, *Clarence*, 171.
  21. Moral philosophers such as Francis Hutcheson, Thomas Brown, and Adam Smith, as well as the American psychologist Thomas C. Upham, developed ideas about social cohesion and the importance of family with which Hawthorne was familiar; see Joseph Alkana, *The Social Self: Hawthorne, Howells, William James, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1997), 48–55.
  22. Evert A. Duycinck, quoted in *Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Critical Heritage*, ed. J. Donald Crowley (1970; repr., New York: Routledge, 1997), 238.
  23. Joel Hawes, *Lectures to Young Men, on the Formation of Character, &c.: Originally Addressed to the Young Men of Hartford and New Haven, and Published at Their United Request . . .*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (1828; Hartford: Belknap and Hamersley, 1837), 33.
  24. *The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield*, ed. Lord Mahon (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1892), 1:49; emphasis added. Chesterfield's letters to his son had been reprinted in New York as early as 1775, and they underwent numerous editions in the United States during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.
  25. Chesterfield, *Letters*, 1:222. Almost two decades later Hawthorne would return to troublesome indications of laughter in "Ethan Brand": "Laughter, when out of place, mistimed, or bursting forth from a disordered state of feeling, may be the most terrible modulation of the human voice" (*CE*, 11:87).
  26. As Benjamin H. Irvin observes, "even when tar was applied cool, it made for a painful experience" ("Tar, Feathers, and the Enemies of American Liberties, 1768–1776," *New England Quarterly* 76 [2003]: 204). While discussing how anticolonial agitators used tarring and feathering to intimidate opponents, Irvin also tells the ironic story of one William Molineux, a Son of Liberty, who was himself threatened by those siding with Boston merchants wishing to maintain commerce with the British.

27. On the association between the moonlight and social instability, see Peter J. Bellis, *Writing Revolution: Aesthetics and Politics in Hawthorne, Whitman, and Thoreau* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 2003), 20.
28. George Meredith, "An Essay on Comedy," in *Comedy*, ed. Wylie Sypher (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956), 51–52. The dangerously contagious nature of laughter also emerges in *The Blithedale Romance* when Miles Coverdale interacts with the suspicious Professor Westervelt: "The fantasy of his spectral character so wrought upon me, together with the contagion of his strange mirth on my sympathies, that I soon began to laugh as loudly as himself" (*CE*, 3:95).
29. For example, Hawes's *Lectures to Young Men* offers as its publication date "the fifty-third year of the Independence of the United States of America." Along similar lines, such publications of that era as the *Farmer's Almanack* and the *American Annual Register* referred to "year[s] of American Independence" in their publication information.
30. Gilje and Rock, *Keepers of the Revolution*, 103. This topic is treated in Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984), 61–103; also see Gilje, *Road to Mobocracy*, 177–78.
31. For a discussion of Hawthorne's fear of revolution, see Larry J. Reynolds, *European Revolutions and the American Literary Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1988), 79–96.
32. Hawthorne's attitudes toward the political power of the crowd include fear; as with the Puritan populace's changed opinion of Hester Prynne, however, he creates a multifaceted perspective in *The House of the Seven Gables* after Clifford observes a loud "political procession": "The spectator feels it to be a fool's play, when he can distinguish the tedious common-place of each man's visage, with the perspiration and weary self-importance on it. . . . In order to become majestic, it should be viewed from some vantage-point . . . for then, by its remoteness, it melts all the petty personalities, of which it is made up, into one broad mass of existence—one great life—one collected body of mankind, with a vast, homogeneous spirit animating it" (*CE*, 2:165). Yet the narrative also warns against the procession's allure to "an impressible person" who might "hardly be restrained from plunging into the surging stream of human sympathies." The crowd is thus simultaneously attractive and horrifying in its ability to engulf a person, and Clifford's response reflects both perceptions. On Hawthorne's multifaceted representations of character, see Larry J. Reynolds, "The Challenge of Cultural

- Relativity: The Case of Hawthorne," *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 49 (2003): 129–47.
33. Emmanuel Levinas, *Outside the Subject*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1994), 93–94.
  34. For a discussion of the ethical complexities associated with the gaze, see Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1999), 58–86. John Dolis evaluates the function of the gaze in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" in *The Style of Hawthorne's Gaze: Regarding Subjectivity* (Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1993), 96.
  35. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance," in *Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte (New York: Library of America, 1983), 281.
  36. Emerson, "Manners," in *Essays and Lectures*, 523.