

Marriage theme in Hawthorne's The Birthmark essays example

[Health & Medicine](#), [Beauty](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

One of the finest American writers during the 18th century, Nathaniel Hawthorne was a confident man and utterly skilled in his craft. Most of his stories contain allegorical devices that captivated readers of all generations. Likewise, he was odds with Edgar Allan Poe, who was more freeform with his words, indulging in prose that explored the recesses of his imagination without becoming moralistic or allegorical (Hawthorne, v-vii). Aside from *The Scarlet Letter* a novel recollecting a feverish nightmare, thus suffocating the reader with its dark prose and allegory. On the other hand, *The Birthmark*, Hawthorne tries to recreate the 18th century nuptials by presenting a picture of a highly stupid man, blinded by his obsession in Science (Hawthorne and Pearson, 66). Perhaps the joke of this story is Hawthorne's portrayal of women as secondary beings to their husbands. The wife's lack of knowledge about things and the husband's scientific contraptions makes the story appear more of a sarcastic overview on how couples live during the 18th century America. To prove my point, I would like to argue that Aylmer and Georgiana's relationship in the novel is not healthy because the man cannot love his wife's imperfections.

Loving one's self is truly important before establishing a romantic liaison with another person. In the case of Georgiana, she does not love herself and her amiable qualities as a woman. Hawthorne describes Georgiana as a woman endowed with a charming, and pleasant countenance. This is the reason that made Aylmer, a man of science (Hawthorne and Perry, location 211, par. 1). Despite Georgiana's beauty, her husband is still not satisfied with her physical appearance. On Aylmer's point of view, Georgiana is almost a perfect woman whose beauty is slightly deformed by the evidence of

Nature's earthly imperfection (Hawthorne and Perry, location 220, par. 2). Aylmer's vain acceptance of his wife's gentle character is thoroughly expressed in the story. The cause of their unhappiness is Georgiana's birthmark, which allegorically symbolizes the woman's liability to do unearthly things such as sin, lamentation and death. Another explanation offered by Wright is that the birthmark somehow is Hawthorne's representation of death. No one escapes death; and so no one can change what nature has produced, which specifically tackles the birthmark on Georgiana's left cheek. A healthy marriage is bound by love and trust. In their case, neither of them trusted each other. In one scene in the book wherein Aylmer is on the process of removing Georgiana's deuced birthmark, he caught her reading one of his leather bound books and although he remained calm, he is displeased with his wife's impropriety of reading his prized collections.

"It is dangerous to read in a sorcerer's book," said he with a smile though his countenance was uneasy and displeased. "Georgiana, there are pages in that volume which I can scarcely glance over and keep my senses. Take heed lest it prove as detrimental to you (Hawthorne and Perry, location 381, par. 3). Aylmer loved his wife for physical appearance. Her beauty captivated him which made him persuade Georgiana's mother so that he can marry her daughter. Nevertheless, he did not love Georgiana truly for whoever she was; which made Aylmer the subject of Aminadab's scrutiny of subjecting his own wife to some sort of lunatic experiment in order to remove the birthmark. It was here, that Aminadab, Aylmer's laboratory assistant harbored feelings of pity towards the poor Georgiana. Amidst the uncertainty

of their experiment, Georgiana entrusted herself under the care of her husband. The latter part of the story described the final moments of them being husband and wife. Georgiana dies from poison when she drank the liquid that was given to her by her husband, thinking that it would eventually remove the birthmark so that Aylmer could love her completely. As Wright remarked, Georgiana was indeed a doomed heroine whilst Aylmer is a scientist and an aesthete, but both his judgment and his alchemy are fallible (Wright, 38).

Works Cited

Hawthorne, Nathaniel, and Norman Holmes Pearson. *The Hawthorne Treasury*. New

York: Modern Library, 1999. Print.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *Collins Classics: The Scarlet Letter*. London: HarperCollins, 2010. Print.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel, and Bliss Perry. *Little Masterpieces*. New York: Doubleday & McClure Co. 1897. Kindle AZW File.

Lawson, Kate, and Lynn Shakinovsky. *The Marked Body*. Albany: State University of

New York Press, 2002. Print.

Wright, Sarah Bird. *Critical Companion to Nathaniel Hawthorne*. New York, NY:

Facts on File, 2007. Print.