

Hawthorne's Ego Defense Mechanism on "The Birthmark"

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Abstract

Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birthmark" is a rich embroidery of human psychology with the constraints of Puritan society. The analysis employs a descriptive qualitative method to examine the themes of human imperfection and the attempt to pursue perfection through the ego defense mechanism. In Hawthorne's "The Birthmark", Aylmer endures the anxiety and fear of intimacy that he leads to deny and projects Georgiana's birthmark removal through scientific surgery. His fixation on her birthmark is also a way to unleash his scientific insecurity. Georgiana not only internalizes Aylmer's ideals but also rationalizes the removal of the birthmark. Key findings unveil instances of Aylmer's and Georgiana's denial, repression, projection, idealization, and rationalization. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities of human desires and societal expectations, demonstrating how Hawthorne critiques the relentless pursuit of perfection and its psychological implications.

Keywords: anxiety, the Birthmark, ego defense mechanisms, idealization, repression

Introduction

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) was a prolific American Romanticism writer. He explores the human psyche's depth as a symbol of American Puritans and the social judgment in the past time. He characterizes moral dilemmas, guilt, sin, and history as the central theme in his masterpiece "The Scarlet Letter" (1850). With the background of the human psyche against the Puritan society, his work "The Scarlet Letter" is so famous. He harnessed the strength of Dark Romanticism narratives, vividly portrayed in his work "The House of Seven Gables" and stories "Young Goodman Brown," both of which scrutinize the themes of faith, isolation, and Puritan hypocrisy. Despite his financial barrier, Hawthorne's literary legacy continues to influence and remains a pillar of American literature.

Among Hawthorne's most renowned literary works is "The Birthmark", a metaphorical tale available in the Mosses from an Old Manse (1846). The narrative centers on the protagonist, Aylmer, and his wife, Georgiana. Aylmer is a scientist who marries Georgiana, who has a red birthmark "bloody hand" on her left cheek. This "visible mark of earthly imperfection" causes increasing distress in Aylmer and his lovely wife, Georgiana. Finally, he is obliged to undergo surgery and murder Georgiana due to her imperfect birthmark. This story encapsulates the misconceptions about ideal beauty that persist today, highlighting the psychological suffering entwined by the most natural "defect" in a woman's body.

Employing the umbrella of psychoanalytic criticism, particularly on Sigmund Freud's "tripartite model", I explore the psychological complexities of Aylmer and Georgiana's

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struggles. Freud posits that the human psyche embraces three correlate components: the id, the ego, and the superego (Rennison, 2001:29). As the id part is the main part, it satisfies all instinctive desires, even if it may be unrestrained and inappropriate thoughts, such as unexpressed and cruel desires. Additionally, the ego- the more rational part- provides social or legal norms to guide the unconscious and conscious thought and justify the self. The superego acts to control the id's impulses, such as sex and anger. As an attentive mediator, the superego helps guide these immoral desires back to the unconscious level. That is why the psyche-ego part of a person has a balancing role in calming the intensity between the superego and the id. Put differently, the superego is satisfied to prevent how the unconscious enters the mind when it wants to break free from oppression to the consciousness. The interplays of the three parts maintain the human psychological balance.

In "The Birthmark", a psychoanalysis lens unveils how Aylmer and Georgiana employ ego defense mechanisms in response to their internal anxieties. Aylmer is so anxious about his wife's birthmark, and he is obsessed with removing her birthmark. He throws himself entirely into his scientific endeavors, using his intellect as a shield against confronting his emotional vulnerability. Conversely, Georgiana has pulled herself into the scientist's observation. In the beginning, she denies her husband's offers of magnificent treatment. As she undergoes the clash of trust and denial, she just then decides to follow his husband's instruction. Thus, this paper examines the causes of anxiety and the ego defense mechanism of protagonists Aylmer and Georgiana. This paper articulates the specific exploration: the manifestation of ego defense on Aylmer and Georgiana and the consequences of anxiety within the character. The study aims to answer the following research questions: 1) What are the causes of Aylmer and Georgiana's psychological anxiety? and 2) How do Aylmer and Georgiana use ego defense mechanisms in response to their internal psychological anxieties? Through this analysis, I contribute to exploring the interplay between Aylmer and Georgiana's psychology.

Literature Review

Several scholars have explored the story of "The Birthmark" through different critical lenses, enriching the implications and insights. Jules Zanger (1983: 364-371) does the "Speaking of the Unspeakable: 'The Birthmark'" research. He argues that Georgiana's birthmark does not indicate her sexual orientation, and the blood mark on Georgiana's cheek represents her menstrual cycle. By investigating that men prove the deep understanding in the men during the 1800s, he finds that Aylmer is appalled by this revelation about Georgiana's sexual orientation. She maintains that the absence of exposure to what made men vulnerable made it challenging to get pregnant, citing the "independent female nature" as an explanation. Although there is no denying that Georgiana's birthmark indicates her sexuality, there are some disagreements with Zanger's interpretation of a woman's sexual identity as if she were on her menstrual cycle.

A study on a New Historicist approach by Ting, S and Zheng (2023) contextualizes how the protagonist Aylmer's "The Birthmark" reflects the period of scientific advancement and employs problematic details from humanistic concerns. The analysis highlights how Hawthorne's narrative criticizes the age's delusion of science and the ethical issues that ensued, suggesting that Aylmer's failure indicates a more extensive social breakdown in balancing scientific advancement with ethical duty. Moreover, Sylvia Karasu's analysis (2017) identifies the birthmark as a representation of gender dynamics and the malevolent nature of women in societal structures that follow patriarchal traditions. In the story, Georgiana is shown to be self-conscious and ashamed as she accepts Aylmer's opinions. This perspective regards the story as an examination of how women are subjected to sex and brainwashing and the oppressive atmosphere surrounding their union, where Aylmer's dominance appears tragic while Georgiana consents.

Goldenberg and Roberts (2011: 77-99) argue that "The Birthmark" prompts us to react differently towards women's bodies. Like a coin, we can treat "birthmarks" as a natural function and validate their physical appearance. From this perspective, women are associated with "imperfectness", in which they have menstruation, childbearing and lactating. In addition, this perspective suggests that "the sexual and self-objectification of women's bodies serves an existential function". Furthermore, Mary E. Rucker (1987, 445-461) distinguishes between the Birthmark's scientific and artistic aspects. He suggests that the scientific occupation of Aylmer, divorced from ethical considerations and human empathy, finally causes the death of Georgiana. Rucker suggests that Hawthorne criticises the Enlightenment ideal of scientific progress without moral responsibility and presents the story as treacherous because of the dangers of putting scientific ambitions ahead of human values and relationships. However, my investigation of "The Birthmark" story focuses on the ego defence mechanism of the protagonists, Aylmer and Georgiana. By employing Freud's lens, this study is aimed at two research objectives: the causes of anxiety and the type of ego defence mechanisms employed by Aylmer and Georgiana.

Some scholars have revealed the study of psychoanalysis using the lens of feminist theory. However, the discussion on "The Birthmark" from a fresh psychoanalytic perspective, especially investigating Aylmer and Georgiana through Freudian psychological theory, has not been explored yet.

METHOD

This paper employs a qualitative approach grounded in psychoanalytic literary criticism. By identifying and interpreting the characters' defense mechanisms as proposed by Freudian theory, this study illuminates how Nathaniel Hawthorne portrays the motivations and actions of Aylmer and Georgiana. Specifically, this study examines how these defense mechanisms are manifested in each recurring dialogue and the key scene throughout "The Birthmark."

Through close reading, the analysis showcases Aylmer's obsessive desire to remove Georgiana's birthmark. He views it as a source of Georgiana's flawlessness and inadequacy, which are imposed on his insecurities. Concurrently, it investigates on how Georgiana employs various defense mechanisms—such as rationalization and denial—in response to Aylmer's fixation. Despite expounding the cause of psychological anxiety, it also presents the character's actions as an ego defense mechanism toward the imperfection and flawlessness of human beings.

Results and Discussion

"The Birthmark" story interplays an ego defence mechanism, which offers Aylmer's obsessive desire for perfection. Through the lens of psychoanalytic theory, this discussion will elaborate on the ego defence mechanism employed by Aylmer and his lovely wife, Georgiana. Furthermore, this discussion will discuss the cause of Aylmer's anxiety.

Repression

Repression is the defence mechanism that blocks and pushes some unpleasant feelings unconsciously and thoughts out of awareness. Freud points out that repression functions to minimise guilt and anxiety. Although an individual may not act with fear, memories of repressed material can still be perceived implicitly, as demonstrated by Aylmer's obsession with his wife's birthmark. His anxiety about imperfection, mortality, or even intimacy leads to his intense anxiety. Through the narratives, his bad dreams at night lead him to retrieve the unromantic life even to his death as it is proposed by Freud that dream is the symbol of

the one to peek at the unconscious mind. As Aylmer told Georgiana, "I might well dream of it, for before I fell asleep, it had taken a pretty firm hold of my fancy" (Hawthorne, 1974: 4), he endures the guilt. He fears Georgiana's birthmark that pressure on his unconscious mind.

By revisiting history, we see that birthmarks were considered to be emblems of guilt commonly linked to witches in ancient times. Georgiana's red crimson skin can be entwined with a previous life, and her difficulties can be interpreted from an early age. Hawthorne's background story is Puritan society (Gettok, 2024, p. 28). Puritans adhere to the principles of original sin and demand strictness. To rephrase, their conviction is that individuals are born with wickedness. In terms of the concept of "original sin", Hawthorne acknowledges it perfectly, depicting that the birthmark on Georgiana's cheek symbolizes sin and wickedness.

It is evidence that the feeling of anxiety comes from Aylmer's unhappy mind about Georgiana's birthmark, which leads him to repetitive dreams and his insistence on the birthmark's removal. In his dream, Aylmer envisages shaving Georgiana's mark, and the more re-sounding the knife goes, the more deeply it penetrates. By the time of his action, the shaving comes to the point where even her heart is affected, leading to her death. By employing the ego defense of repression, Aylmer attempts to manage his nightmare and insists on expressing his feelings to Georgiana. With his many times of seduction that he will create the perfect, beautiful Georgiana, Georgiana then agrees to the laboratory action. "Dearest Georgiana, I have spent much thought upon the subject "I am convinced of the perfect practicability of its removal." (Hawthorne, 1974:5). The heartfelt seduction reveals that the perfect observation is in Aylmer's hand, and he will prove his extraordinary expertise. In short, Aylmer's repression of the birthmark causes emotional turmoil and hinders self-acceptance of Georgiana's physical appearance. Throughout the story, the birthmark is the cause of the tension between Aylmer and Georgiana, which leads them to feel distress and fear.

Denial

Berger (2004: 90) states that denial is a natural phenomenon when someone is not ready to face reality, whether someone's response will believe or not believe it. By understanding the feelings of the protagonist Aylmer and his wife, Hawthorne initially shows Aylmer's feeling of anxiety at the very beginning of the dialogue. Early on, his first question to Georgiana exhibits his denial of her birthmark as he questions as follows:

"Georgiana," said he, "has it never occurred to you that the mark upon your cheek might be removed?" (Hawthorne, 1974:2)

When talking to Georgiana, Aylmer showcases his denial while always observing Georgiana's cheek by exhibiting the expression "might be removed". He perceives that it is better to remove the birthmark on her face. In doing so, he denies her body as the birthmark imposes her perfection and her beauty. Besides, Aylmer's denial of his wife is portrayed as he wants to control his wife. Aylmer states that the birthmark can exist on other's checks, but Georgiana's birthmark is not excused to him.

"Ah, upon another face, perhaps it might," replied her husband. "But never on yours! No, dearest Georgiana, you came so nearly perfect from the hand of Nature, that this slightest possible defect -- which we hesitate whether to term a defect or a beauty -- shocks me, as being the visible mark of earthly imperfection." (Hawthorne, 1974: 2)

As quoted above, according to Aylmer, his actual denial, which became a source of his anxiety, is Georgiana's birthmark. The denial incorporates Aylmer's feelings of hate and fear. He does not like Georgiana's face even though they have married. On the other hand, Aylmer's denial shows his imperfect affection for her. He rudely expressed denial by saying, "Shock me", that he desires to vanish it. He dreams of fulfilling his control and objects to Georgiana,

and he wants her to be naturally perfect. From Aylmer's perspective, the red crimson on her cheek is a visible imperfection. He resistibly acknowledges that the imperfection from the birthmark confesses the negativity, and by his science scholarship, he will normalize it, neglecting Georgiana's feelings.

Another quotation depicting Aylmer's denial is when he denies the dangerous implications of his action. By confessing to Georgiana, "Oh, do not tremble, my love! I would not wrong either you or myself, by working such inharmonious effects upon our lives" (Hawthorne, 1974: 8), Aylmer strives to soothe Georgiana's fear. He seemingly does not commit "wrong" in his action even though he possibly acquires the potential risk for danger. He keeps away the dangers from Georgiana's mind by confessing that "wrong" is not the place for his actions. The word "wrong" reeks of denial, for he does confront the possibility of the injury while removing Georgiana's birthmark or even the worst possibility is Georgiana's mortality. Aylmer imagines in Georgiana's mind that birthmark removal is an "insignificant skill" and "a tiny procedure" as he has mastered the science knowledge for many years. He confidently ignores that failure or destruction or even a tragic ending will happen. This denial serves as his obsession to pursue perfection. However, his confidence is just a fantasy of escaping from his anxiety. Aylmer's action leads to the unspoken truth: the dangers and Georgiana's dying. His word "wrong" leads to the wrong action, bringing the wrong ultimate goal. His denial gives him an illusion of a perfect wife, a flawless Georgiana. In addition, his denial is a coping mechanism for his anxiety that he understands each potential risk, but he attempts to ignore the consequences and Georgiana's safety. Aylmer's unideal ability will lead to tragic penalties.

Although Georgiana agrees with the Aylmer idea of her birthmark removal, she perfectly demonstrates the ego defence mechanism of denial. At the beginning of the story, she perceives that her birthmark is a natural charm, and often, she considers it as a "proud distinction" as she confesses to Aylmer, "To tell you the truth, it has been so often called a charm, that I was simple enough to imagine it might be so." (Hawthorne, 1974: 2). To this extend, she never confesses the negative connotation of her birthmark, so she attempts to confess to her husband. Her statement, "It has been so often called a charm," suggests a denial where she diminishes the birthmark's potential significance. Unfortunately, Aylmer's intense reactions toward her birthmark engage her self-doubt and self-confidence. As a newly married spouse, Aylmer's statement, "But never on yours!" (Hawthorne, 1974: 2), leads her to psychological tension of his denial of her body, especially her cheek. Moreover, Aylmer expresses that her birthmark shocks him. From the lens of denial, Georgiana's answer in "Shocks you, my husband" reveals her immediate reaction to his unpleasant statements toward her birthmark. Further, Georgiana hints at her denial by figuring out that "you cannot love what shocks you." It implies that their unconditional love is tainted by the unacceptance of her tiny blemish, a tiny birthmark, that disfigures her beauty. Although she does not understand Aylmer's motif, she has to consider the reality that her husband dislikes her because of her insignificant birthmark. By employing the ego defense mechanism of denial, Georgiana acknowledges herself to avoid any insecurity and anxiety.

Projection

Projection releases unwanted thoughts, emotions, and motives to another person as a psychological defence mechanism. A person with this tendency sees in other people their invalid desires (Berger, 2004: 90). There is an incident in which Aylmer's projection is elegantly conveyed through his fixation on Georgiana's birthmark. Leading by his internal psychological conflict, Aylmer perceives a minor blemish as a failure or an imperfection that is the source of his insecurity. As quoted in Papa (2018: 4), this story brings up nuanced issues about disability and its consequences, including how society identifies individuals with disabilities and whether they require correction. The main character, Aylmer, also regards

Georgiana's birthmark as a flaw and is consumed with scientific reasoning to eradicate it. As a result, Aylmer projects this insecurity and disability onto Georgiana. Through this lens, Aylmer's action externalises his internal deficiencies by fixating on and attempting to remove them. The projection allows Aylmer to avert his attention from his imperfect scientific ability to Georgiana as the target. He underscores the physical limitation and is obsessed with controlling it and making it as perfect as possible. His existential struggle with the birthmark's removal highlights Aylmer's inability to address his inner turmoil. Despite the inherent risk, he projects Georgiana to maintain her pleasure and satisfaction. Georgiana's tragic life addresses his denial of his failures and his own imperfection.

Idealization

An individual may use idealization as a defence mechanism to create the most favourable impression of acquiring something, an object, or a location. Idealisation is characterized by emphasising someone's positive qualities and ignoring their negative qualities (Berger, 2004: 90). Using this defence mechanism, a person adjusts how he or she perceives the world, which encourages people's perceptions towards human beings and things. Aylmer's "The Birthmark" showcases his idealization concept throughout the story. His idealisation is depicted through his persistent pursuit of Georgiana's perfection. His explicit statement "shocks me as the visible mark of earthly imperfection" (Hawthorne, 1974: 2) proves his consideration that beauty shines both in flawless face and body. Georgiana's particular hand-shaped birthmark is destructively annoying his psyche as it reminds him of a sinful life and mortality. Aylmer's obsession with the birthmark is evidence of his great concern. Green (2017:13) stated that the evidence of Aylmer's obsession usually focuses on "Aylmer's quest for knowledge and fulfilling the mad scientist archetype" rather than his relationship with Georgiana.

Despite Aylmer's absurd claim, it is permissible if the birthmark on someone else's cheek is less attractive than that of Georgiana. It is not the charming Georgiana that has this charm, but rather the fatal flaw of mankind and its inherent sinfulness. He repeatedly declares to remove her birthmark, which sometimes neglects Georgiana's hurt feelings. Georgiana supposes that her birthmark is innately her beauty and that the fact of her beauty does not match with her husband's preference. The clash of Georgiana's affection and Aylmer's intellectual idealism leads to anguish. As Aylmer is a brilliant scientist, he is obsessive about removing the blemish birthmark under his reckless scientific surgery. His desire to control and own a flawless wife is his idealization. He wants to control and erase Georgiana's individuality on her birthmark to mould Georgiana into the ideal individual.

"The Birthmark" also sheds light upon Georgiana's idealization of her conception of Aylmer. Her attitude and feelings towards Aylmer's inexplicable scientific abilities trigger her emotional turmoil about Aylmer's ideal image. She reinforces him as a genius scientist who can accomplish impossible actions. Because of his scientific expertise, Georgiana trusts him as a savior of her flaws as she expresses, "You have deep science! Is this beyond your power, for the sake of your own peace, and to save your poor wife from madness?" (Hawthorne, 1974: 5). Even in the beginning, she rejects the idea of her blemish removal; she then understands his husband's desire. She pretends that the idea of removal is a form of Aylmer's love and care. According to Aylmer's idealised perspective, Georgiana seems to internalize Aylmer's perception and signifies her self-satisfaction. Georgiana's idealization of Aylmer leads her to accept Aylmer's attitude and idea of her blemish removal. While in the laboratory, Aylmer treats her kindly and shows her his discoveries about natural wonders. Georgiana feels comfortable, but she is also curious about the experiment. In short, her admiration for his husband's ability in science ignores the possible dangers she faces during the surgery. She even understands that the surgery will lead her to death, and she does not care about it.

Rationalisation

Aylmer's "The Birthmark" heavily embodies rationalization as a defense mechanism. Rationalization is using logical reasoning to explain behaviour, thoughts, or feelings. People may seek explanations and solutions to alleviate discomfort caused by feelings or behaviours contradicting their beliefs (Berger, 2004: 91). From the story, we learn that Aylmer attempts to minimize his feelings of anxiety about his wife's birthmark by creating logical explanations that removal is the best way he can save the life. Aylmer's perfection lies in his love of his wife and science. He attempts to unite both in order to gain the perfect life. Once he finds the flaw of his wife, he seeks justification for it by proposing his thoughts and feelings that Georgiana's cheek must be perfect as his science. By claiming a positive explanation to Georgiana, he attempts to avoid his anxiety sources. His obsession with separating his wife from her defects is primarily due to his eugenics and scientific fixation, which is almost non-existent at the beginning of the story. Aylmer's rationalization is that he focuses on his own needs and the need for perfection in everything, including his wife, Georgiana. Aylmer believes that his role as a scientist is unlimited and unrestricted, so he never has any restrictions on the types of experiments. Despite his inability to attain perfection, Aylmer is determined to achieve it and remains committed, perhaps due to his selfish tendencies. The birthmark removal surgery is deemed disgusting by Georgiana, which is why she consents to it. However, Aylmer's actions make her look unappealing. After being appalled by his mistake, Aylmer becomes so disgusted that he would prefer to die rather than endure the birthmark. In the end, his pursuit of perfection results in the death of his wife and compels him to acknowledge that it is unattainable.

Furthermore, Georgiana copes with the mechanism of rationalization in response to Aylmer's focus on her perceived imperfection. Initially, she never doubts her appearance and neutrally perceives her birthmark as it is. However, Aylmer's intense insistence suggests she questions her self-appearance. As a result, Georgiana rationalizes Aylmer's idealized perspective about her birthmark and decides to undergo the risky experiment. Georgiana's rationalization stems from her desire to maintain her love for Aylmer and fulfil his desire. She then prioritizes Aylmer's assurances and his scientific expertise. She trusts his judgement as she relies on her love despite overlooking the danger she will face. By coping with this rationalization, she maintains her comfortable feelings even at the end; she has a tragic ending with her death.

Aylmer Core Issues on Intimacy and Insecurity

The defense mechanism theory outlines how the ego shields itself from worries. The defense acts as a fluid to prevent the unpleasant or disturbing parts of the unconscious from becoming conscious. Anxiety is the core issue in how individuals deal with their ego defense mechanism. By revisiting "The Birthmark" story, we can find that Aylmer and Georgiana propose a fear of intimacy and fear of insecurity. In Hawthorne's story, Aylmer manifests a relentless pursuit of perfection and feels a deep fear of intimacy in some aspects. Firstly, the birthmark, as a symbol of a flawless human, triggers bottomless anxiety in Aylmer. As a noble scientist, he perceives that the birthmark disrupts Georgiana's beauty, and maybe it also reflects his imperfect ability. In addition, Hawthorne's background in Puritan society leads his story to the mysterious understanding of the birthmark as a sin symbol. This message is also internalized in Aylmer's mindset, which can reduce the intimacy with her wife. He must accept her strengths and weaknesses, but the imperfection creates a barrier to true intimacy. Secondly, Aylmer's focus on the scientific removal of the mark reflects a desire for control. As intimacy seems to involve an emotional connection, he seeks to control an aspect of their relationship by manipulating Georgiana's cheek. However, Georgiana's fear of preserving their intimacy makes her sacrifice her idealism and identity. As her

imperfection will be a barrier to their love, she tends to attend Aylmer's scientific procedures. Unfortunately, she also fears losing her life in pursuit of Aylmer's ideal. Nevertheless, voicing her fear will disrupt their fragile emotional connection.

Aylmer's insecurity in the story showcases his anxiety about the birthmark. Georgiana deliberately looks down because of her birthmark. Georgiana never thought of it, though. Her birthmark is a fault, as men are mesmerised by her fairy purple miniature hand. However, good wife Georgiana agrees to join Aylmer's attempt to remove it and make him happy. By agreeing to Aylmer's proposal, she seeks Aylmer's validation of her perfection to cope with her insecurity. Besides, Aylmer copes with his insecurity by showing his ability in science, helping his wife escape from being an imperfect wife. With his outstanding expertise, he has to fulfil his ambition and obsession of getting rid of Georgiana's blemish. In this part of the story, it is evident that both protagonists undergo the fear of intimacy and insecurity.

CONCLUSION

Hawthorne's "The Birthmark" is a vivid exploration of the psychological defense mechanisms in which the characters of Aylmer and Georgiana exhibit repression, denial, projection, idealization, and rationalisation. Removing the small red birthmark from Georgiana's cheek is Aylmer's manifestation of his repressed anxieties and insecurities. He denies and rejects the inherent risks and the natural limitations. Instead of his scientific capability, his denial of his wife's imperfections channels his failure on his scientific ability and life. The projection of his anxiety onto Georgiana's cheek maintains his idealisation of the perfect wife. Aylmer idealises and rationalizes that Georgiana will be naturally beautiful without her birthmark, and he decides to proceed the surgery removal to rid of his anxiety.

Georgiana exhibits denial, idealization, and rationalism ego defense mechanisms. Initially, she perceives that her unique charm is worth her life. Intensifying by Aylmer's seduction that her birthmark is her imperfection, she internalises Aylmer's perspective and rationalises his desire. Her willingness to follow the dangerous procedures on the birthmark's removal reflects her rationalisation of Aylmer's justification. Ignoring the dangerous risk, she idealizes Aylmer's behaviour as she thinks Aylmer is a genius scientist. Idealization and rationalization shape her self-perception that the birthmark is the fundamental flaw that destroys their intimacy and relationship.

Hawthorne's story exhibits that feeling anxiety and fear of intimacy lead Aylmer and Georgiana to employ their ego defense mechanism. Aylmer's emphasis on the scientific removal of the sign indicates a craving for authority. Because intimacy is a form of emotional connection, he attempts to control it by manipulating Georgiana's check in their relationship. Georgiana hesitates to maintain her love for them, leading her to relinquish ideas and values. She tends to be involved in Aylmer's scientific procedures as her flaws hinder their love. To summarise, "The Birthmark" story reminds us of the timeless dangers of pursuing perfection. The depiction of repression, denial, projection, idealisation, and rationalisation reveals a prevailing critique of technological enhancement to achieve flawless beauty and perfection.

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