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Cover –
Karen Maloney

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April Selley
come
with me
along the
high water mark
and please watch your step because
the bro-
ken shells lie
spattered among the other
treasures
among the other treasures ... and your feet are so pretty
and white
my
young lady

Audrey Fontes
sing bird perch upon.
pay homage to a warm spell singing into wind.

Audrey Fontes

pink men like you always die of heartattacks on lawns of summer.
you look so bulgy stepping into the men’s room.

Audrey Fontes
Eggery

You are baroque as an ukrainian easter egg
I spend my time painting onion domes on your

  turtle-thick shell    graffiti is a call
  across vast subways to a dead line
  on fire island

Cut a raw egg
  you’ll find it splits
into its yang and its yin

  crazy chinese tots
one with braids
  the other straight-haired

you laugh
  flee
  away
  fuse

then you guess it
  siamese twins
This gets to the meat of what
I'm trying to say

incubators full of lovepoems
  waiting to crack into wombs

just to go along with the crazy
  spring talk of rising clams

It's easier to deal with the shell
  the skin which keeps our gills from leaking
    yellow yolks
  that's why i keep painting you
    my real mc coy

Anne McDonald

Earth's soft shades of morning
  illuminate your
    indigo eyes,
  crystalline blue kaleidoscopes
  early dawn — i watch you
    envious
  of the sun which lies against
    your skin.

Michele Ricciardi
Blues Man

Oh
mr. black and blues man
with fingers that dance and prance
and whirl on six silvery tightropes.
Why do you caress and stroke that guitar?
And then beat it till it wails in
its ecstatic blues.
Are you a magician?
Giving this dirty dead hall a
throbhing heartbeat, making it jump
and contract and scream as it echoes
the life within itself.
God, must you stop blues man?
everything will die
must we wait again for you to bring
Lazarus, the blues
back to life.

J.W. Little

The mirror reflects
not me.
I am not
merely a piece of flesh
sunken cheeks, big red nose
squatting
between two pools of brackish green.
I am
more. I must be
I don’t recognize myself
The slow silent man
bleeding tears, washing
the day’s dust away.

J.W. Little
Hawthorne’s Misshapen Scholars: Aylmer, Ethan Brand and Roger Chillingworth

From Aylmer to Roger Chillingworth, the intellectuals in the fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne confirm the horrors of the life devoted to the mind and not the heart. His pale scholars find loneliness and isolation as the only rewards for the intellect developed to the exclusion of all other sensibilities. His fears gain expression in the fate of each “self-relying intelligence”\(^1\) in individuals supremely confident of their powers of mind. The man of science and the lime-burner alike become little more than cold geniuses unaware of the human reality beyond the reason.

This figure of the man of science recurs in several of Hawthorne’s best works. “The Birthmark” offers one of these characters in Aylmer, the brilliant scientist who sacrifices his bride for an experiment new and wholly unnecessary. The feat which he attempts is the removal of his wife Georgiana’s birthmark, the smallest of blemishes on a beauty near perfection. This slight stain so mars her fairness for Aylmer that he insists upon an elaborate operation to correct nature’s handiwork. His obsession with this one idea betrays the proud intellect to which he soon falls victim. The experiment into which he plunges with such great relish brings only the death of Georgiana. All Aylmer gains at story’s end is a wife perfect for the briefest of moments—at the cost of a lifetime of loneliness for him.

This lifetime of solitude takes its toll on another character in Hawthorne’s stories. The subject of “Ethan Brand: A Chapter from an Abortive Romance” is not a scientist but a lime-burner who has spent years alone, tending his kiln and brooding about the nature of the Unpardonable Sin. This question leads Ethan Brand on a long search which consumes twenty-odd years of his life. The story follows his return home with his revelation of the source of this blackest of sins. He has discovered the evil in his own heart—“the sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God and sacrificed everything to its own mighty claims.”\(^2\) The unholy search of Ethan Brand ends with his rejection of the community alien to him and his interests. His final act of suicide remains as bleak and harsh as his past life spent in pursuits solely intellectual.

Similar pursuits shape the life of Roger Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter*. Years of secluded study lead to the role which he assumes to hide his identity and thus, wreak vengeance as the wronged husband. Early in the novel, Hawthorne exposes the complete inability of this “misshapen scholar” to deal with the complex questions before him:

> He had begun an investigation, as he imagined, with the severe and equal integrity of a judge, desirous only of truth, even as if the question involved no more than the air-drawn lines of a geometrical problem, instead of human passions, and wrongs inflicted on himself.\(^3\)

Approaching such questions with the detachment of the scientist yields no quick answers, and merely serves to change Chillingworth into the Black Man. His inevitable deterioration and death stem from this reliance upon a prowess mental and not moral.
This faith in the reason swells to dangerous proportions in each of the three characters. In stressing the inordinate pride of Aylmer, Hawthorne uncovers a basic flaw weakening each of these rationalists. Chillingworth and Ethan Brand exhibit the same lofty independence — their powers of mind resolve any problem or crisis. This intellectual arrogance fosters a dangerous haughtiness in each individual. The stark effect of such a demeanor is a widening of the gap separating the thinkers from all human society.

This final effect stands out as the most frightening point in an examination of any of Hawthorne's rationalists. The flaw already alluded to in Aylmer triggers his plan to remove Georgiana's birthmark. His revulsion at the mere sight of the tiny imprint bespeaks a pronounced egotism: such are his demands that perfection alone satisfies him. Yet he does admit to a certain elation at the prospect of testing his knowledge so ingeniously — "what will be my triumph when I shall have corrected what Nature left imperfect in her fairest work!" His anxious efforts to realize this one aim blind him to all other considerations and ultimately deny him the solace of human companionship and sympathy.

Overweening confidence in the strength of the intellect helps to shape a similar doom for Ethan Brand. The precise nature of the Unpardonable Sin absorbs his interest to the point where the question becomes a matter exclusively speculative. This extreme attitude leads directly to the pride which he nurtures after discovering the most vile sin in his own heart: "Freely, were it to do again, would I incur the guilt. Unshrinkingly I accept the retribution!" Ethan Brand hoards his sin largely for the distance which it imposes between himself and the villagers whom he considers most unsavory. Through his one lime-burner, Hawthorne adds detail to his portrait of the arrogant intellectual indulging his own desire to reduce truth to an abstract untouched by human response.

A subtler form of egotism colors the character of Roger Chillingworth. The accumulation of years lavished upon study directs his attitude toward all reality. In the first scene of The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne dwells upon his description of Chillingworth as a man "chiefly accustomed to look inward, and to whom external matters are of little value and import, unless they bear relation to something within his mind." The excessive subjectivity implied here suggests the most complex form of superiority. The revealing description offers a man whose slightest perceptions are bound by the limits of his own mind, a man wrapped up in his thoughts to a frightening degree. From the very start, Hawthorne thus emphasizes the extreme isolation of the accomplished Chillingworth.

Another significant trait in this character manifests itself in his greed for data, new facts and observations to fill the annals of science. He collects objective facts with little or no regard for his human subjects or sources. Chillingworth views his investigation in much the same inhuman manner as Ethan Brand — the emphasis falls on advancement of the intellect alone. Note the cruel excitement of the former as he delves deeper into the confidence of Arthur Dimmesdale: "A rare case! I must needs look deeper into it. A strange sympathy betwixt soul and body. Were it only for the art's sake, I must search the matter to the bottom!" The complexities of the issue obviously lose their force with him: "were it only for the art's sake," he must follow his inquiry through to its dark conclusion.
The same fierce resolution operates in another man of science. At his wife's bedside, the anxiety of Aylmer the loving husband is not untinged by the deep curiosity of Aylmer the busy scientist. Hawthorne accents this unhealthy detachment throughout "The Birthmark." Of special interest here is Aylmer’s presumption underlying all the experiments recorded in his folio. "He handled physical details as if there were nothing beyond them; yet spiritualized them all, and redeemed himself from materialism by his strong and eager aspiration towards the infinite."8

This attitude reflects the overriding goal of science — the power over and ultimate control of a nature stripped of mystery. Hawthorne places Aylmer in this larger historical context with the opening of his story and its introduction to modern men of science unwilling to forsake this grandiose vision for the love of a woman. Aylmer rejoices in the birthmark for the opportunity it affords him to strengthen his love for Georgiana by stimulating his scientific labors. The subservience of the love between husband and wife to purely intellectual efforts to unlock nature's mystery or correct her flaws suggests an inhuman bent in Aylmer and others of his ilk.

At this point, it may help to note the particular branch of science garnering the attention of both Aylmer and Chillingworth. In a masterful stroke of characterization, Hawthorne describes them each as alchemists. The associations conjured up by this pseudo-science flesh out the two characters with appropriate force. The unnatural reality behind such ancient efforts to extract gold from base metals is readily apparent. What motivates the two men of science here is not greed for wealth as much as lust for the power which would accrue to the successful alchemist. Small wonder that Georgiana recoils from intimations of such ambition and closes her husband's "sorcerer's books."9

What these ambitious investigations imply is a dangerous dichotomy between thought and feeling. The detached interest of Chillingworth, the all-consuming love of science in Aylmer and the extreme dedication to one abstract question in Ethan Brand unite these rationalists in an unnatural approach to all human reality. Hawthorne suggests the reason in his discussion of the paucity of doctors in the theocracy of Massachusetts Bay:

They seldom, it would appear, partook of the religious zeal that brought other emigrants across the Atlantic. In their researches into the human frame, it may be that the higher and more subtle faculties of such men were materialized, and that they lost the spiritual view of existence amid the intricacies of that wondrous mechanism, which seemed to involve art enough to comprise all of life within itself.10

Fascination with "that wondrous mechanism" precludes any other interest or awareness in each of the rationalists.
This fascination dictates the close relationship which Chillingworth achieves with Dimmesdale. In this situation, Chillingworth is a most efficient leech. The physician preys on the minister’s inmost being only to extract information useful to his own black purpose. It is interesting to note that Hawthorne repeats the image of a machine to describe Chillingworth’s mode of operation. Under his skillful manipulation, Dimmesdale performs as surely as a puppet. (“He became, thenceforth, not a spectator only, but a chief actor, in the minister’s interior world. He could play upon him as he chose.”11) More than the misery of the tormented Dimmesdale, the description suggests the utter lifelessness of the tormentor.

Another powerful example of this evil can be found in “Ethan Brand” with the mention of Esther. Her name alone causes him to wince; he cannot give glad tidings to her old and tired father. Reminders of this circus-performer convinces Ethan Brand he has indeed found the Unpardonable Sin. This is the girl whose very soul was destroyed for the sake of a “psychological experiment.”12 This project of Ethan Brand’s dams him as surely as Chillingworth’s investigation consumes him. The Unpardonable Sin lodges in the heart of more than one intellectual.

The blackness of this sin lies in its effect on all human relationships. Chillingworth and Ethan Brand burrow and pry to the point where they violate the souls of their victims. Dimmesdale and Esther are each tormented for the most perverse reasons — their deepest thoughts and feelings are scrutinized largely “for the sake of the art.” Hawthorne’s assessment of Ethan Brand and success of his long search is most powerful:

He had lost his hold of the magnetic chain of humanity. He was no longer a brother-man, opening the chambers or the dungeons of our common nature by the key of holy sympathy, which gave him a right to share in all its secrets; he was now a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment, and at length, converting man and woman to be his puppets, and pulling the wires that moved them to such degrees of crime as were demanded for his study.13

This description of Brand as a “cold observer” isolated from humanity is apt for Chillingworth and Aylmer as well. The single greatest cause for this isolation of the three intellectuals grows out of their cultivation of the mind with no regard for the heart. The lag of the moral sense behind the rational ensues in each instance. As a consequence of such uneven development, the intellectuals become cold and remote figures interacting with others for their own abstract, scientific purposes. The clearest symbol for them is the dog snapping at his own tail in “Ethan Brand” — “as if one end of the ridiculous brute’s body were at deadly and most unforgiving enmity with the other.”14

A brief return to the laboratory of Aylmer should illustrate this disastrous dichotomy between thought and feeling. The central theme of “The Birthmark” is the inevitability of flaw in all earthly creations; this scientist’s hubris prevents his grasping the nature of Georgiana’s tiny birthmark. He assumes that nature can and should be corrected, even controlled. Here he suffers by a comparison to the unwieldy Aminadab, the simple assistant who understands that the birthmark should not be tampered with or removed. Aylmer in all his brilliance fails to take in this one central reality — his talents are purely intellectual and thus useless in this situation.
The bleak outcome of each story offers the best summary here. Aylmer loses the one person closest to him and faces the seclusion of his laboratory. The crippled Chillingworth devotes seven years toward an unholy end. Yet divorced from the important human realities and deprived of his prey, he dies a self-styled fiend. This last horror stands out with great clarity in the life of Ethan Brand. After exploiting countless Esthers for his own abstruse purposes, he returns to the community with his search fulfilled. So complete is his withdrawal from human society ("the universal throb")\textsuperscript{15} that he cannot bring himself to associate with the likes of the stage-agent or the doctor.

As the village sleeps, Ethan Brand consigns himself to the kiln’s bright flames, as the only abode for a human fiend whose active intellect has supplanted his heart. The infernal dimension of each intellectual examined here suggests Hawthorne’s final judgement on the perilous course which each undertakes.

The dismal fate of each of these rationalists charges "The Birthmark," "Ethan Brand" and \textit{The Scarlet Letter} with a very special power. Howthorne’s art effectively unites the three different tales by highlighting the same basic flaws in each of the intellectuals. There is a consistency to his imagery and his characterization which accentuates the horrors of any life withdrawn from the community. Two out of three scholars are successful men of science, yet the spiritual malaise of all three is betrayed by signs of physical infirmity. The pallor of Aylmer, the fearful appearance of Ethan Brand, the deformity of Chillingworth — the reader’s sense of serious imperfection is sparked in each case by such symbolic representation.

The creativity responsible for such characterization is readily apparent. The tremendous force wielded by Hawthorne’s theme in each of the stories grows out of his success in this direction. The stories of Aylmer, Ethan Brand and Chillingworth are each complete in their frightening indictments of remote intellectuals adrift from the "magnetic chain of humanity." Together, the works offer a detailed and fascinating picture of the figure most dreadful in the fiction of Hawthorne — that of the proud rationalist severed from all natural relationships by the loss of his own humanity.

\textbf{FOOTNOTES}

\textsuperscript{1}Nathaniel Hawthorne, \textit{The Scarlet Letter} (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1963), p. 73.
\textsuperscript{3}Hawthorne, p. 59, p. 124.
\textsuperscript{4}Bradley, p. 710.
\textsuperscript{5}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 771.
\textsuperscript{6}Hawthorne, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{7}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 132.
\textsuperscript{8}Bradley, p. 716.
\textsuperscript{9}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 716.
\textsuperscript{10}Hawthorne, p. 114.
\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 134.
\textsuperscript{12}Bradley, p. 773.
\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 777.
\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 775.
\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 777.

Suzanne Fournier
Haute Cuisine

I dined on my shirt yesterday chewing the cuffs and collar slowly 32 times per thread and thanking God Mom doesn’t use starch

For dessert I popped the buttons past my throat and they played wild rounds of tiddly-winks in my gullet

I washed them down with Clorox and was just glad I didn’t bet I’d eat my hat too

Michael M. Woody
The Fatted Calf

The man-made moons
    illuminate the silver sweating streets.
A woman stands in the shadows.
She is drowning in her coat.
Her face is that of an unfinished doll’s.
I hand her some money,
    and walk on.
Only then facing
My sin of sins!

Francis P. McAleer

Poem to the Gang

Like little ballons their faces
    are floating in the photo
(That is tacked to the bulletin board).
They were participants in the game!

Francis P. McAleer
Fisherman’s Widow: Galilee, Rhode Island

In a ski parka and beige slacks the Eskimo woman is afraid
the shrivelled docks cannot hold her
and in the wet winter air
shivers like the sea.

Today, for her, Galilee is an old TV rerun she suddenly pays
attention to: Frayed ends
hang like rough beards from
knotted repairs in pale yellow and sand-grey nets.
Dead dried crabs wither in lobster pots,
their broken claws skeletal, washed red fingers.
Now men rusted by the sea,
their clothes smooth with grit,
unload huge metal baskets of little necks.
Their swearing for December tourists is familiar as an old song,
boring but nostalgic. Their ships’ rust
is gnawed by algae:
plankton, kelp, sea weeds: widow’s weeds.
Not only the old cold
aches as the spitting spray stings
her face like sharp tears.

April Selley
Grasshopper

I see you riding wheatwaves.

Tickled by wind grasses fold,
weak-kneed.
A sudden arching

to earth and you hang up side down.

Turning your back on me

the sun tans your lime belly.
I bend wanting a closer look.

We see eye to eye.
You blink.
Earth shifts.
You jump at the chance.

Paula M. DeSaulvier
Frozen Rose

When love was a frozen rose, never growing, I watered it and sealed tighter its icy tomb. Glossy, picture-perfect, it was a trophy for my pride, flaming red from the blood of wounds that thorns left me with on my climb to the blossom. When love was a frozen rose, it was dead, just a memory that could not fade.

Mark Travers
The Starfish, Among Other Things

I

The ducks could always fly
To where the sun
Makes feathers shine.
But the ground is home
For them, too.

They are not smart enough to fail.
They know just how far
The river rises,
And build nests
Where the water stops.

II

My feet were always wet
When I walked the beaches
Of sand and debris.
It was not failure
To place bets with the waves
And lose.

III

Ask me about the starfish.
IV

I found it on the sand,
Stranded on its back,
Trapped by its own body
When the river deserted it.
I watched its suction feet
Stare at sky for once
Instead of mud,
Squirming at blue
And me, it seemed,
Like a hundred
Or a thousand
Or countless
Moving definitions of frustration.

V

He wanted so badly to cling to something.
Oh God, he wanted it so badly.

VI

If he could have understood me,
I would have told him
Why I left him like that.

Mark Travers