

ENGL 230 INVENTED DIALOGUE #5:
Hawthorne's "The Birthmark" (1846)



The Anatomist by Gabriel von Max, 1869



Tintoretto Painting His Dead Daughter by Léon Cogniet, 1843

Both these paintings illustrate the (morbid!) Romantic fascination with the death of beautiful young women. As Edgar Allan Poe famously wrote, "The death... of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world" (from "The Philosophy of Composition," 1846).

FOCUS:

The focus of today's dialogue is on *THEME*.

PROMPT:

Aylmer's assistant Aminadab is an almost voiceless but very powerful presence in Hawthorne's "The Birthmark." While readers grow very familiar with his guttural growls and portentous laughter, his only real line of dialogue occurs roughly midway through the story when he stares at the prostrate Georgiana and then mutters to himself, "If she were my wife, I'd never part with that birthmark."

Today's prompt is a bit of a creative writing exercise. Your assignment is to write a brief dialogue on the back of this sheet between Aylmer (AL) and Aminadab (AM) in the fraught moments after the story has ended. The experiment has failed, to Aylmer's utter incomprehension and Aminadab's hoarse laughter; now, use your imaginative powers to conjure up a revealing exchange that might ensue between assistant and master as they both stare down at Georgina's perfect but lifeless visage...

Note: Since this is written as a kind of screenplay or script, feel free to insert parenthetical emotional indicators like (frowning harshly) or (laughing triumphantly) into the dialogue as you write.

Remember to try to stay true to each character's voice, and to write something that bears on the story's main themes—almost guaranteed with this particular prompt! As always, be prepared to share with your working partner/s and the class.