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Thinking Security in *The House of the Seven  
Gables* through Daguerreotype

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*Seikei Review of English Studies*, No.23  
Faculty of Humanities, Seikei University  
March, 2019

成蹊英語英文学研究  
第23号抜刷  
2019

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**Introduction: Belatedness of Representation**

Before the emergence of visual technology like photography or cameras, what we have seen was mainly described in language. Representing the optical information which our eye retina perceives was conveyed by oral form or put down on paper in writing or drawings. Thus, in order to explain what their eyesight caught, people did not have any option but to rely on the form of language; in a word, that was language-centered presentation. It is in the nineteenth century that optical technology first emerged in the world to capture images and to represent what we have seen as it really is.

The news that Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre had succeeded in fixing an image on a plate with his brilliant optical apparatus and obtained a patent for the early photography of “daguerreotype” in the summer of 1839, brought an immediate sensation into the world.<sup>1</sup> This new technology of vision represented human perceptual information onto a material object through the process of making a daguerreotype: a sheet of copper plate coated with silver iodization exposed to light to fix the image on it. When it arrived in America in the same year, Edgar Allan Poe welcomed this technology as saying that “the Daguerreotyped plate is infinitely (we use the term advisedly) is *infinitely* more accurate in its representation than any painting by human hands” (Poe 38) in his first article on photography. Hawthorne also referred to the Daguerreotype in his letter to Sophia as early as on December 11 1839, wishing that this new instrument would have some intellectual ability to print off humans’ deepest or subtlest thoughts and feelings “minutely and accurately.”<sup>2</sup> As both Poe and Hawthorne used the term “accuracy,” its faithful representation to reality is one of the conspicuous features of this new

technology, that made people attracted to the daguerreotype all the more and increased their desires to possess their own.<sup>3</sup>

Since fixing an image on a plate means confining a certain moment onto the plate, there is a connection between the process of making accurate images and the concept of time. As long as the photograph represents the real object faithfully and accurately, we cannot negate the time factor of the subject having been there at that single moment. Caught in a photograph ensures "the fact that this object has indeed existed and that it has been there where I see it" (Barthes 115), and whoever sees that picture feels continually lured back to the point where the photo was taken. It is well known that the relation between time and space about photography ensures the fact of proof that the event really took place or a person in a picture surely once existed. This sense of time reminds the viewers of the concept of time concerning photography. Whether it was taken one hundred years ago or five minutes before, it has the same concept that the figure taken in the photo was separated from the referent and fixed on a plate or a paper. That means the subject which had once been there or did exist always emerges behind the referent itself. Andreas Huyssen connects this photographic gap of time with the process of making memory through its "belatedness":

It does not require much theoretical sophistication to see that all representation – whether in language, narrative, image, or recorded sound – is based on memory. *Re*-presentation always comes after, even though some media will try to provide us with the delusion of pure presence. But rather than leading us to some authentic origin or giving us verifiable access to the real, memory, even and especially in its belatedness, is itself based on representation. The past is not simply there in memory, but it must be articulated to become memory. (Huyssen 2-3)

Once an object is taken by the external medium, the subject inevitably arrives after its actual presence, then people recognize and accept it as an undoubtable

real, or an authentic past. Then they see and read it precisely in order to get information from it or put a meaning on it. Through this recognition process, our memory is constructed slowly but steadily over time. Thus, desire of “seeing” the photo induces the act of “reading” at the same time, and when they are interpreted from the social or cultural context of sharing with others, it may have the possibility to become one common memory, or history. As the subject appears behind its object, the process of representation always accompanies a delay of time.

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The House of the Seven Gables* deeply entwines the two types of visual representation with past; in other words, the painted portrait and daguerreotype are deeply connected to the collective memory and family history. The main plot stems from the conflict triggered by the Pyncheon and the Maule families over the estate in the seventeenth century. This background was narrated in the first chapter and the incident coincided with the Salem witchcraft panic of 1692, and the subsequent conditions were told to us before opening the nineteenth-century narrative. After depriving Matthew Maule of his shabby cottage at the foot of the peninsula and executing him for the crime of witchcraft, Colonel Pyncheon erected “a family-mansion” to “endure for many generations of his posterity —over the spot.”<sup>4</sup> It was said that Maule shouted at the point of his death, “God will give him blood to drink!” (II 8) Since then, this curse or unfavorable inheritance has clung to future generations.

In the narrative, Hawthorne attempted to connect this long gap of time using two items: traditional lore like chimney-corner legends and one painted portrait. According to the narrator, nothing else than this is Hawthorne’s well-known technique to conceal the narrative authority. He asserted, “no written record of this dispute is known to be in existence” and rendered the narrative power to the collective memory by confessing that “our acquaintance with the whole subject is derived chiefly from tradition” (II 7).<sup>5</sup> He also provided the portrait of the original founder Colonel Pyncheon hanging in the parlor as surviving visual evidence. Holgrave, a descendant of Matthew Maule, employs the modern technique of daguerreotype as an instrument to

uncover the shadowed connection between his fore-fathers and the Pyncheon family. As Susan Sontag points out, "photography provides a unique system of disclosures: that it shows us reality as we had not seen it before" (Sontag 119), Holgrave's daguerreotypes re-present another aspect of reality that were unfamiliar to people of that time and fixed them on a plate so that beholders can inspect them from every possible angle. If daguerreotype can "disclose only a more absolute truth, a more perfect identity of aspect with the thing represented" as pointed by Poe, how does it acquire its role in the literary fields that consist of only written language?<sup>6</sup> It is true that as Megan Rowley Williams argued, "photography raises numerous metarepresentational questions about the relationship between visual and written media" (Williams 15), yet critics who tried to read the text as a problem of representation have concluded the superiority of literature over the visual arts or vice versa. However, they often lose sight of the fact that words and images are so deeply merged in this work that it should be considered not as an inferior-to-superior argument but as a mutual effect on the narrative discourse.<sup>7</sup>

In this chapter, I shall examine how Holgrave's daguerreotypes re-present the present-past relation visually in a language-centered narrative for settling the long-lasting family issue concerning the real estate and the ancestors. By focusing on two types of "original," both the visual and linguistic sides, I would like to demonstrate how the ominous representation of the "original" Pyncheon had survived and affected his descendents. At the same time, I would like to elucidate the function of daguerreotype by analyzing the way of revelation of "Judge Pyncheon's dead body" fixed on the plate and try to trace how it connects to "a dead" confined in the House for over one hundred and fifty years. Then, by decoding the meaning of "security" and focusing on the sanitary problem in 19<sup>th</sup> century America, I would like to reconsider the reason why all the characters had to leave this House in the end of the story.

### **1. Transgressive "Original" Figure and Copied Daguerreotypes**

Once a portrait is taken or painted, it provides the evidence that the actual subject once existed. Those subjects become "original" from the painted or

photographed pictures' side. In *The House of the Seven Gables*, the term "original" appears in the text accompanied by two meanings: one is to signify the subject of the portraits, and the other is to indicate the earliest figure of "the original founder" (II 19) of the mansion, that is Colonel Pyncheon, who had lived there in the seventeenth century. These two kinds of "original," the founder of the Pyncheon family as well as the subject of the portrait, become one merged referent: the old ancestral oil painting hanging on the wall in the House. This portrait survives through the narrative up to the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> In the first chapter of the narrative, which serves as a prologue before entering the eighteenth-century story, the narrator told us the critical moment when the original founder Pyncheon symbolically accords to his portrayed picture. That was Colonel Pyncheon's sudden death. In this section, I would like to focus on two types of visual representations of the portraits and explore the function of daguerreotype to decipher the original surviving figure and its role in this narrative.

On the unveiling ceremony day of his mansion, he was found dead in his study under the condition described as "a portrait of Colonel Pyncheon, beneath which sat the original Colonel himself" (II 15) in an oaken elbow-chair. Since this scene talks about the picture and its object, the term "original" used here may indicate the subject of the portrait of the Colonel. However, this "original" seems also to mean the first family lineage that appeared in this story, because he is the original founder of this mansion. At this moment, the copied picture figuratively identified with the original, as if covered with a peeled-off-sticker which was put back in its original position again. Colonel Pyncheon had died and his flesh-and-blood became static, but his portrait, which totally depended on the referent until then, took the position of the original substance that had been signified in the pictorial record of Pyncheon and achieved the chance to survive successive generations as an independent object accompanied with the "original" visual code. Thus, the reason why this portrait had been terrifying beholders was not only because of a tradition which had been passed down but also due to the enigmatic fear that this portrait evoked such as "Returning the Dead."

Cathy N. Davidson points out that "viewing old photographs, old portraiture, is thus always unsettling—the 'Return of the Dead' as a photocentric zombiism, with the restless undead aroused and sometimes . . . arousing" (Davidson 672). The sense of returning the dead aroused by a photo is attributed to its strange characteristic that even though they did not exist any longer, they wear their living face toward their viewers. Susan S. Williams also employs the phrase "return of the dead" and added the word "uncanny" when she suggested that the Colonel's portrait promotes his self-multiplication by its way of presentation and by the life-like figure transmitted to his descendent Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon:

Yet Hawthorne's portraits do repeat themselves in an uncanny return of the dead. The portrait of Colonel Pyncheon, which hangs in the parlor in which he died, both prolongs the scene of death and gives the dead man a continuing presence. It also has reproductive power of its own: it has a walking replica in Judge Pyncheon, who "would have made a good and massive portrait" (57). . . . Here Jaffrey becomes an image; the copy (portrait) of the ancestor assumes an originary [originally] power that can produce its own copies (Susan S. Williams 225).

Since his portrait was kept affixed to the wall in the parlor following his will, townspeople could visually compare their contemporary representative of the Judge to the original Colonel. His enduring image had penetrated so vividly into this community that every time "this representative of hereditary qualities" had emerged on his descendents' appearance, people could put its figure over the original one or even replace its position whispering, "Here is the old Pyncheon come again!" (II 20). Thus, the identification of those two transcendental figures could be connected by one visual code, and occasionally his descendent having a similar appearance took over the replacement of the position. This newest figure of re-presentation also undertook the potential for producing the next copy. This also means that no matter how many new

Pyncheons were reproduced, their appearance would visually identify with the original figure and the beholders found him in the “original” position in their society.

Kept hanging in the House of the Seven Gables, the Colonel’s portrait survives through the years and controls the people in later generations with his everlasting impact. In fact, Hepzibah’s brother Clifford refused to look at that portrait because “it was the evil genius” (*II* 111) and asked her to take it down or cover it with a curtain. Since the visualized features in the portrait had been transmitted to the newest Pyncheon, seeing the Colonel’s portrait reminds him of cousin Jaffrey clearly. Also, when Hepzibah gazed at the portrait, “the face of the picture enabled her—at least, she fancied so—to read more accurately, and to a greater depth” (*II* 59) to find the close resemblance to Jaffrey Pyncheon. The portrait of Colonel Pyncheon thus lives through the family transcendently, and his haunting effect enforces its evil power on the viewers because the local community could identify the Judge as a living copy of the original Pyncheon.

It was Holgrave’s daguerreotypes that exposed the visual accordance in a vivid way. In the text, two daguerreotypes of the Judge were presented: the first was his living face, and the second was his dead one. Rather than the descriptive parts, the information about their resemblance was mainly transferred by the voice of Phoebe, who is Hepzibah’s young cousin helping in her cent-shop. Before meeting the original Judge Pyncheon, Holgrave showed her a daguerreotype miniature of the living Judge in order to “have your [her] judgment on this [its] character” (91). Instead of seeing the real Judge, she saw the copied figure first—it was normally an ex-post appearance—before recognizing his real appearance. This experience in the reversed order led her to misinterpret or “misjudge” the Judge as the Colonel:

“I know the face,” she replied; “for its stern eye has been following me about, all day. It is my Puritan ancestor, who hangs yonder in the parlor. To be sure, you have found some way of copying the portrait without its black velvet cap and gray beard, and have given him a



modern coat and satin cravat, instead of his cloak and band. I don't think him improved by your alteration." (92)

From just a glance at the daguerreotype, what she recognized on its surface was not the Judge she had never seen before but the Colonel who already registered in her memory. She assumed that the clothes which the figure wore were somehow changed in its copied photograph. As for alteration of photography, this became possible only after the introduction of the negative development in the 1850s, when photographers could touch up negatives directly, which allowed them to modify images to a certain degree.<sup>9</sup> But a daguerreotype, since the image is directly fixed on a plate, does not have a negative but only a positive, so this unique characteristic would clearly negate Phoebe's last remark. Her misinterpretation became all the more effective to highlight the close resemblance or the sameness between those two figures.

Phoebe's remark not only revealed their external resemblance but also their internal natures. When Phoebe showed her disfavor of the daguerreotype because of its "hard and stern" features, Holgrave responded "the originals are so" (*II* 91). Of course, the term of "the originals" uttered by Holgrave here was intended to signify the subjects of the pictures, but his remark implied the possibility that the original figures have such a heartless personality as well. If we accept the translation in this way, Phoebe's misinterpretation had been caused both by external identification between the Colonel and the Judge and their unmerciful personalities that their appearance signified. Indeed, Phoebe made a misjudgment, but it could be said that Holgrave induced her to articulate so by presenting the Judge's photo capturing his unfavorable aspect. With their joint operation, her voice fixed the floating original Colonel Pyncheon's image upon the silver-coppered plate of the Judge's daguerreotype and produced the one and only superimposed "original" image on the text which readers can read.

It was Holgrave who realized the two figures' similarity and tried to convert a mere image into a tangible form. He was the remaining survivor of Maule and inherited what they called "the witchcraft of Maule's eye" (*II* 189) or an

“Evil Eye” (*II* 190) to mesmerize others. Not abusing this traditional power for a malevolent intention, but transforming it into the modern techniques of daguerreotype, he succeeded in transfixing the Judge’s concealed character on the plates. In fact, he testified that his motivation behind this interest was “to look on, to analyze, to explain matters to myself, and to comprehend the drama which, for almost two hundred years” (*II* 216) had hung over this shady land. Considering his attitude toward this situation, it could be rephrased that his photography and occupation provided “a unique system of disclosures,” and “it shows us reality as we had *not* seen it before” (Sontag 119). Holgrave performed this role by transforming the camera with his endowed eyes and succeeded in transfixing the Judge’s moving entity, and finally visualized his real nature on the plate. It was the Judge’s hard and imperious character that was transmitted by the original figure, which other people only sensed but could not visualize clearly until then. Bringing the modern technology into the narrative, Holgrave’s daguerreotype disclosed the hereditary nature of the Pyncheons and revealed this to the world with the help of Phoebe’s voice.

## **2. The House Confining the Dead Men Built over “an Unquiet Grave”**

As the mansion was built over “an unquiet grave” (*II* 9) of Matthew Maule, and Colonel Pyncheon was said to have died by the curse of Maule in his private room, this house was filled with the odor of death, or it could be said that “Dead Men” were affecting not only the house itself but also the people who live in it. Holgrave who called this historical mansion one of the “Dead Men’s houses” (*II* 183) bitterly confessed the current condition to Phoebe by using the terms of “a Dead Man” and “Dead Men” repeatedly:

A Dead Man sits on all our judgment-seats; and living judges do but search out and repeat his decisions. We read in Dead Men’s books! We laugh at Dead Men’s jokes, and cry at Dead Men’s pathos. ... We worship the living Deity, according to Dead Men’s forms and creeds! Whatever we seek to do, of our own free motion, a Dead Man’s icy hand obstructs us! Turn our eyes to what point we may, a Dead

Man's white, immitigable face encounters them, and freezes our very heart!" (II 183)

In the above quotation "a Dead Man" appears three times and "Dead Men" four times, however, Holgrave seems to use these two terms differently. According to his interpretation, the plural form of "Dead Men" suggests anonymous dead in a general sense and these once-living people had long established conventional culture and customs which present people obey. However, "a Dead Man" is different. Holgrave intended to indicate the specific person who had died long ago leaving his influential power to his descendants: the original founder Colonel Pyncheon. Even today, it is assumed that his last will controlled living authorities to "repeat his decisions" (183). It is true that the dead had already passed away and disappeared physically from the earth, so how should we treat the rhetoric of "a Dead" as still surviving?

In the previous section, we found out that the external and internal traits of the original Pyncheon were almost captured in the Judge's daguerreotype as if the original figure had achieved eternal life. As Susan Williams points out that "life and death are not stable categories here but continually coalesce and transform one another in the various permutations of the portraits" (Williams 227), the reason why people were so embarrassed by the Judge would be summarized as that the images of Pyncheon had survived in their community. By re-emphasizing and reaffirming the resemblance between the Colonel and the Judge, Holgrave identifies "a Dead Man" with "the original perpetrator and father of this mischief" and this Dead Man "appears to have perpetuated himself, and still walks the street – at least, his very image, in mind and body" (II 185). Here, Holgrave clearly declared the original image was surely duplicated into the Judge, and finally Judge Pyncheon succeeds in becoming "a living replica of the ancestral portrait" (Williams 228) in the nineteenth-century narrative.

It is true that the vivid image of his dead ancestor overwhelmed the living Judge, however, we cannot tell how the Colonel actually died. No characters in the narrative nor readers witnessed the exact moment of the Colonel becoming

a lifeless body, but only heard about it through the narrator. His last condition of opening his eyes and bleeding on his ruff and white beard were only told by the narrator in the beginning of the story, but nobody can tell about the truth of Colonel Pyncheon's sudden and mysterious death. Furthermore, all the information told by the narrator was transmitted by people in a form of tradition, thus readers could not reach the primary source of the Colonel's death. On the other hand, we are told about the Judge's death. As the narrative goes on, the Judge's death is becoming an overlapped image of "a corpse" which is "half-decayed, and still decaying, and diffusing its death-scent all through the palace" (*II* 230), so we could actually witness the process of how Judge Pyncheon becomes "being dead" in the House of the Seven Gables. Here, in order to reconsider "a Dead," I would like to trace the process of the Judge's death first. By focusing on his death in the "Governor Pyncheon" chapter, it might give us some clue to decode the symbol of "a Dead" surviving in this House. When and how was the Judge's body signified as "the dead" and transmitted to us?

One day, the Judge visited the house to see Clifford, and while he was waiting for him sitting on an oaken chair in the parlor, it is suggested he passed away in the same manner as his great-great-grandfather Colonel Pyncheon. The reason why I use "is suggested" here is deeply related to the process of the disclosure of his death. At first, our eyes were barred from crossing the threshold where Clifford was standing, thus the reader had to follow to read Clifford's gesture and Hepzibah's reaction in order to comprehend what had happened to the Judge. Before leaving the house like "two owls," Clifford found something in the parlor and pointed his finger at "an object" three times to let her know, then Hepzibah "disappeared into the room, but almost immediately returned, with a cry choking in her throat." Both of them found something inside the room and tried to indicate it, but did not try to articulate such as "Judge" is "dead" with their own voices (*II* 249-250). By the gesture of Clifford, the Judge was just pointed to, but what his finger pointed to was kept hidden from our view, and no language signified it. Not only the dead but also the word "death" was concealed from us, and this manner stretches backward to

disclose his dead body and the death itself.

As starting the "Governor Pyncheon" chapter, the narrator's point of view entered into the parlor and his voice let us know the inside situation.<sup>10</sup> An exceptional way to disclose his death was employed via a unique point of view; it seemed to be narrated from a fixed video camera or an installed security camera, which was set on the ceiling and monitored his inanimate figure along with the change of sunlight into the room. Here, the change of tense to describe his condition suggests the lapse of time. At first, the motionless figure was described in the present progressive tense, and at the same time, his agenda written on the back side of his name card was read aloud by the narrator when the estimated time comes: to meet a State-street broker, to present an auction of real estate, to buy a horse to drive him, to attend a committee of his political party and to ask for some money for the coming election of a Governor, to consult his family physician for his checkup, and so on and so on. These agendas were supposed to be acted upon by the Judge. Before long, the real time had passed over his schedule and his unachieved items were left behind. The narrator's voice, in half-mockery-and-half-encouragement to the Judge to resume his busy schedule, ironically drags him away from the real time. The more the narrator told about Pyncheon's future agenda, it elucidated that these plans had not been acted upon with punctuality, and it also suggested less possibility of his becoming "Governor Pyncheon of Massachusetts!" (*II* 274) in the future. It was overnight into the following morning that one sign of death was finally coming into our sight:

And there we see a fly – one of your common houseflies, such as are always buzzing on the window-pane – which has smelt out Governor Pyncheon, and alights now on his forehead, now on his chin, and now, Heaven help us, is creeping over the bridge of his nose, towards the would-be-chief-magistrate's wide-open eye! (*II* 283)

When a fly was breaking into this scene, the angle of its view has changed and the narrator began to give us live coverage along with the camera lens as if it

were zoomed in on the Judge's figure and to take a close-up of his face for the first time. In contrast to the absolutely still Judge, this movement of a buzzing fly creeping over his face emphasized its power of life, and its action that it "has smelt out Governor Pyncheon" conveyed two definitive meanings: an implication of his death and his unachievable future as a Governor. Needless to say, a fly will sniff out a carcass or corpse, and its performance symbolizes the lifeless condition or death. Thus, its act indicated that the Judge's body had begun to rot, at the same time, his possibility to become a communal representative was disappeared. The death was strongly implied here, however, his body had not been labeled by the word "death" yet.

As "Alice's Posies" chapter starts from next morning, our view was pushed out of the parlor and the reader's viewpoint was integrated with the townspeople who peeped into the house through the windows. The eyes of the local community became observers to sense and watch something unusual in the house, and the reader would share the process of finding the Judge's death with these people. They were Uncle Venner collecting scraps to feed a pig, a good lady coming to buy pork, Ned Higgins buying his favorite elephant cookie on his way to school, deliverymen of root-beer, the baker, and the butcher, who felt so suspicious about the absence of Hepzibah and her closed cent-shop that they tried to find any clue to settle an unexpected incident. In fact, two people peeped through the crack in the curtains and noticed the slight change: Ned saw that "the inner door, communicating with the passage towards the parlor, was closed" (*II* 290), then the butcher noticed "the inner door, not closed ... and almost wide open" and he discerned "the stalwart legs, clad in black pantaloons, of a man sitting in a large oaken chair" (*II* 292) but the remainder of his figure had been concealed. (He took this figure to be not the Judge but Clifford). The description of this opening and closing door indicated that someone had entered the parlor, which suggested some change had happened inside the house. Furthermore, the narrator leaked that there was "the fearful secret, hidden within the house" and "a dead corpse lay unseen" (*II* 291). However, he never connects "a dead corpse" with the Judge by his own voice. Thus, death remained in the house just as Holgrave had

mentioned "a Dead Man" previously.

The belatedness of declaration of his death made the townspeople nervous since Hepzibah, Clifford, and the Judge had disappeared in front of them. And, this unclear situation puzzled the reader even more because both the Judge's body and the word to signify his death were confined in the mansion and being kept apart from each other. Here townspeople inside the text and the reader outside the text shared the information from the same point of view, and became "we" as the narrator sometimes mentioned in this part of narrative. We were all waiting for the word to fix the signifié. In other words, we were waiting for the voice to signify the object as a dead body. It was Phoebe's voice, again, to fix the word over the dead figure confined in the house.

### **3. Daguerreotype as a Device to Secure the Death**

When Holgrave let Phoebe know of the Judge's death, instead of facing the dead body directly, he showed two daguerreotypes. Its very order was significant to this narrative since it will identify "the Dead" surviving in this house. The first one was the same daguerreotype that he had shown her at their first interview in the garden, and the second one was taken just before her arrival. After showing the first daguerreotype to reconfirm that it was the Judge, he continued to show the second one as follows:

"But here is the same face, taken within this half-hour," said the artist, presenting her with another miniature. "I had just finished it, when I heard you at the door."

"This is death!" shuddered Phoebe, turning very pale. "Judge Pyncheon dead!"

"Such as there represented," said Holgrave, "he sits in the next room. The Judge is dead, and Clifford and Hepzibah have vanished! I know no more. . . ." (*II* 302)

Here, Holgrave showed the Judge's living face first and then he made her see the other daguerreotype in order to induce her reaction before asserting

the Judge's death by his own words. Of course, "the same face" on the second daguerreotype is a literally indication of the Judge, but when we remember their first interview we also notice that it contains another face. By looking at the first daguerreotype that captured the living face, it might have the effect of recalling the original Colonel's face which had been insinuated into her mind. What is interesting in this scene is the order of words she voiced. First, she discovered "death" on the daguerreotype, then she accorded the symbol of "death" with the real figure of "Judge Pyncheon." This is the performative utterance to connect them as an equal relation that "Judge Pyncheon [is / is being] dead!" Moreover, it is really meaningful that the voice to fix its referent with the word of "death" was none other than Phoebe's, since she was the person who had once mistaken the Judge for the Colonel, and this very person had survived as "a Dead Man" in this house. Thus, speaking out the "death" was the affirmative performance in terms of putting an end to two peoples' lives because her voice determined the condition of "Judge Pyncheon" containing the Colonel's visual image as "being dead." More than anything, her articulation was critical to this narrative since her performance brought the safe condition to their present community that means there is no more fear to resurrect the original figure. Phoebe pronounced Jaffrey's death on the basis of Holgrave's daguerreotype and it might secure the community, but how? From here, I would like to demonstrate how and to whom his daguerreotype provides the sense of security, then consider how this modern form of a deep-seeing device functions to connect the different times.

Through this story, the performance of the daguerreotype has a close link to the verb "secure." The transitive verb "secure" needs an object after its verb, and Holgrave's daguerreotype replaced its object which is to be secured along with expanding the operating space step-by-step by shifting the meaning of "secure." Today, to "secure" is widely used when referring "to make something / someone safe" from a dangerous situation. In the first phase, however, what was secured by Holgrave's daguerreotype was the figure that was taken by photography as a fixed material. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "secure" has the meaning "to fix or attach something so as not to become



loose" or not to "come apart" and "to hold firmly in place."<sup>11</sup> This is the act of attachment to fix something not to become loose or fall off from the other material. The Judge's dead face, though it was just a visual image, was fixed on the plate with the power of sunlight and the effect of chemicals in order not to be peeled off or disappeared. This process can be rephrased as that the daguerreotype secured the Judge's dead face on the plate. Thus, to take a dead man on a daguerreotype obtains an assurance that he does not exist anywhere any longer and ensures that he is being as dead as dead can be, and this is what the daguerreotype could do in the first place. Unlike the Colonel's oil-painted portrait, there is no more terror of reviving the "original" subject of the photograph.

Since the Judge's dead face captured by daguerreotype had become unmovable evidence, this photo secures those who had suffered the Judge's animosity. Thus in the second phase, the direct object of "secure" has shifted from the printed material to specific people in the expanded context that the dead Judge's face created a safe space for the contemporary people. Here, the most commonly used meaning of "secure" is applied to this situation, that is "to keep safe from danger, harm, or loss to ensure the safety of, to protect" and "to keep or make sure from attack by an opposing force."<sup>12</sup> It is sure that the daguerreotype delivered a big benefit to Clifford who had suffered and been abused directly by the Judge. As Holgrave confessed to Phoebe that "as a point of evidence that may be useful to Clifford" (*II* 303), it would help to clear his suspicion of murdering his uncle. On the practical level in the narrative, the cause of Jaffrey's death was judged by "the highest professional authority" as "by no means an unusual form of death" but actually including "a slight idiosyncrasy" (*II* 309). So, there is no specific mention about whether his daguerreotype had actually been used in this investigation, however, Clifford's disgrace was almost reversed by the effort of the "Daguerreotypist" (*II* 311).<sup>13</sup>

In real society in the mid-nineteenth century, the daguerreotype began to be used to prevent crimes before they occurred and help to keep society safe. For instance, police began to use new technology of photography with

their investigation from its appearance: The French authorities had begun to take daguerreotypes of prisoners as early as 1841, and the New York Police Department had collected 450 ambrogypes by 1858, in order to find the solution or evidence to criminal investigations.<sup>14</sup> This is the way that the *OED* suggests that “to free from doubt; to satisfy, convince of or against a particular contingency, that something might happen” and it will bring “to make (a person) certain of obtaining something, ... to ensure or guarantee present or future possession of something.”<sup>15</sup> An early scientific device of daguerreotype assisted in seeing the prospects for the future possibilities and tried to ensure the space itself by providing the security of the future community. In this way, real society began to utilize the visual technology of photography as a means to predict the evil things and tried to see through the future in order to have solid security. It was certain that Holgrave’s daguerreotype secured Clifford in the narrative space, but it also served to secure the real community in mid-nineteenth century America.

While real society had begun to use daguerreotype to predict the anxiety in the future, a daguerreotype that captured the Judge’s death functioned in an inverse direction. It connected the past from the present point in this narrative. To form a link with the past, Hawthorne introduced the pseudoscience of mesmeric powers of the Maules family as a primitive method of investigation and observation, and this practice took the form of a play within a play, or an inserted narrative. In the “Alice Pyncheon” chapter, mesmeric power was used by young Matthew Maule, who was the grandson of the former Matthew Maule, to seek the missing deeds of the eastern-land claim by the order of the grandson of the original Pyncheon. Maule’s magical power was recognized as to investigate something missing in the past, so his power also functioned to connect bygone time to the present. That power was taken over by the early scientific method of daguerreotype, and Holgrave tried to detect the truth and grasp the historical context about long-lasting family strife. When he identified the cause of the Judge’s sudden death as a hereditary disposition in the Pyncheon race, he tried to investigate this consequence by way of depicting the “similarity” as follows:

This mode of death has been an idiosyncrasy with his family, for generations past; ... . Old Maule's prophecy was probably founded on a knowledge of this physical predisposition in the Pyncheon race. Now, there is a minute and almost exact similarity in the appearances, connected with the death that occurred yesterday, and those recorded of the death of Clifford's uncle, thirty years ago. (*II* 304)

Until then, the whole community believed that the Pyncheon family's unexplained sudden death was caused by Maule's curse of "God will give him blood to drink" (*II* 8), shouted before his execution dated back to the seventeenth century. Later, Maule's descendent Holgrave demonstrated that it was not such a supernatural power that drove the Pyncheons to their death but that just by careful observation it could be possible to estimate the timing of their death. More than anything, since his daguerreotype had captured the predicted death as the pictorial record, he traced it out through the almost exact similarity in the appearances between the Judge's and Clifford's uncle's death. Thus, it could be possible to connect two mysterious deaths, yesterday's and thirty years ago, both of which were caused by an inherited genetic factor. Furthermore, these two connection could succeed in interpreting the primal Pyncheon's death which had been transmitted by local tradition over the years. The daguerreotype which seemed only to capture the Judge's superficial dead face, actually visualized those similarities inherited in the consanguineous Pyncheon family and succeeded to link its fragments of facts linearly over one hundred and fifty years.

Photography can be said to contain the past in its image. On the subject of photography and its association with time, Megan Rowley Williams points out that the portrait "freezes the present and simultaneously assures that this present will be memorialized as the past by future moments" (Megan 33). It is well known that Daguerreotype cannot duplicate another copy since the object is fixed directly on the plate, thus this very method of photography ensures the Judge's death as the "original" and contained it into the fixed image as

an unalterable past in the future. This process is critical to this narrative, because Holgrave's daguerreotype both reveals and connects the family incident chronologically. This pictorial record secures the Judge's death as an unmovable fact and keeps its unique form of "original" permanently. Thus, it brought the safe condition not only to the Pyncheons but also to the whole community that always felt anxiety about this House and the resurrection of "the original" figure.

### **Conclusion: What the House Could Do to Make People Survive**

Soon after the Judge passed away, his unmovable death brought two effects on society. The first was to vindicate Clifford's innocence for his uncle's murder publicly as I discussed before; the second was to liberate the community's oppressed voice, which had been confined in the domestic sphere as "the chimney-corner legend." The narrator said that the Judge's death is "so genuine a fact" that it "give[s] people a truer idea of his character ... than they have ever possessed while he was living" (*II* 310) among the community. It is interesting that his unmovable death induced people to testify the dead man's personality "truer," using the comparative form to describe it, than when he was living. That change indicates that the community space has expanded so that people could share their own impressions about the Judge's personality. Until then, unfavorable evaluations of the Judge had been whispered inside each house as "a hidden stream of private talk" and they dared not to "speak loudly at the street-corners" (*II* 310).<sup>16</sup> This might be a significant shift that the chimney-corner traditions got the insights to transfer "a truer" fact with their own words by re-observing the dead man's performance in life retrospectively. It finally acquired the wider space from domestic sphere to the public space and provided the chance to share their opinions freely under the open sky.

As to the influence of the Judge's death in the society, it not only led to expand the community space, but also let the House of Seven Gables' door open to circulate the air inside the rooms. Emerging from the house after the Judge's death, people who had lived in the house became aware of how they had been affected by the oppressive atmosphere, or contaminated by the evil

power of old Pyncheon. When Clifford and Hepzibah carried out a temporal flight, leaving the Judge's body inside the house, Clifford recognized that what he needed was fresh "air," and described his condition using the rhetoric of contamination connected with the space in which he had been confined:

The soul needs air; a wide sweep and frequent change of it. Morbid influences, in a thousand-fold variety, gather about hearths, and *pollute* the life of households. There is no such *unwholesome* atmosphere as they of an old home, rendered *poisonous* by one's defunct forefathers and relatives! ... whenever my thoughts recur to this seven-gabled mansion ... immediately, I have a vision or image of an elderly man, of remarkably stern countenance sitting in an oaken elbow-chair, dead, stone-dead with an ugly flow of blood upon his shirt-bosom. Dead but with open eyes! *He taints the whole house*, as I remember it. (*II* 261 Italics mine)

Referring to the House of Seven Gables, Clifford described that an old house had been "polluted" by the influence of his long-dead "forefathers and relatives," and now an unhealthy and unpleasant object of the dead Judge, though Clifford did not mention his name yet, who was left alone in the house "taints the whole house" as well. The poisonous air arose from the dead body and it actually polluted the air as the body became corrupt. Thus according to Clifford's opinion, in order to live in a clean environment, it was essential for the residents that not only such an unhealthy object was to be removed from the House but also to push the contaminated air out and take fresh air inside the house.

In fact, the Judge had bitterly affected Clifford in terms of air pollution. He remarked "there was no free breath to be drawn, within the sphere of so malevolent an influence" of the Judge (*II* 313). What is remarkable with this utterance is the word choice of "sphere" rather than "space" to represent the house. "Sphere" originally means a round object shaped like a ball, then shifts the meaning to indicate that "particular area of activity, work, knowledge."<sup>17</sup>

“The sphere” in this quotation may be employing the latter meaning since the area of the Judge’s activity affected Clifford and he oppressed him constantly within his reach. It, however, also seems to imply the meaning of a specific physical place that is covered with walls, floors, and ceilings of the House of the Seven Gables. Within the closed rooms, it is difficult to intake fresh air and circulate it freely, and the House was gradually polluted with not only the dead forefathers’ influence but the living Judge’s malevolence as well.<sup>18</sup> Remembering the utterance mentioned by Holgrave that “we live in Dead Men’s house” (*II* 183), it clearly suggested that this closed house with less ventilation had been contaminated by the Pyncheons over many generations. The object of the oppression had now been revealed, so how did they settle this final situation?

In the final chapter entitled “The Departure,” all the major surviving characters, except Uncle Venner who would follow them later, “concluded to remove from the dismal old House of the Seven Gables” to the “elegant country-seat of the late Judge Pyncheon” (*II* 314) for the present. For this conclusion, many critics seem not to be satisfied with its “fairy-tale ending” and Mizruchi calls it “a collective evasion of history” (Mizruchi 101) since they took off their burden of long-term conflict and all exited the stage of narrative receiving a large inheritance from the Judge.<sup>19</sup> It is a most drastic adjustment that all the problems, from the Judge’s death to the missing Indian deeds, were totally settled magically in the last chapter by the help of Holgrave who also became rich enough to be got married to Phoebe, and all the characters suddenly left this problematic house. Then, how about accepting this ending as the evacuation from the unhealthy polluted house to a safer place? They fled for refuge from the contaminated house in order to intake the fresh air and become healthy. Therefore, they decided to “remove” themselves “from the dismal old House of the Seven Gables” in the city of Salem and move to the country house instead of removing the accumulated bad effects of the dead and cleansing them completely. Finally, they determinedly left the house of the dead, in other words, they had to leave the burial place of their dead ancestors in order to survive securely.

Remember the phrase Holgrave remarked that "the Past" was "like a giant's dead body" and present people were carrying the corpse of their grandfather, and became "slaves" to "Death" of "by-gone time" (*II* 182-83). He suggested that in order to get rid of Death, at the same time this act is to remove the contaminated air from the house, the only need for them was to be "decently buried" (*II* 183) in an appropriate place. Back to the beginning of this story, Colonel Pyncheon built the House of the Seven Gables over the very spot of Matthew Maule's log-built hut. This fact indicates that he had built his house "over an unquiet grave" of Maule, and his mansion would include "the home of the dead and buried wizard" from the starting point. Through this historical fact, the space of The House of the Seven Gables had been built on the very spot which contained not only Dead Men of the Pyncheons but also Matthew Maule's restless spirit. With Maule's unquiet grave on the bottom, the dead Pyncheons and the living characters coexisted without marking the boundary between their territories. Thus, in order to provide a decent burial for the Pyncheons and Maule and make the rest of the people survive, the separation of their space was urgent and necessary for this matter. This situation could be connected with the urban burial reform movement in the mid-nineteenth century in America.

In the nineteenth century, as the towns expanded and the population increased, the government tried to cope with the problem of burial places in many cities. It was in 1831 that the first urban burial ground, Mount Auburn Cemetery, was founded near Boston by Dr. Jacob Bigelow and General Dearborn of The Massachusetts Horticultural Society (Linden 133-36). As to the background of the rural-cemetery movement, which is to remove the graves from city centers to rural areas, there is a serious hygienic problem in the urban areas. Garry Wills remarks "the removal of the burial ground to places outside the city limits used to be attributed entirely to hygienic considerations" (Wills 64), and historian Blanche Linden asserts that the crucial trigger to motivate the improving burial practices was "fears" that "burying the dead in the midst of busy cities endangered public health and precipitated epidemics" (Linden 117). In fact, in New York City, yellow fever epidemics

continued to reoccur from 1793 to the 1820s. Some physicians conjectured that the disease spread through a miasma, a gas or atmosphere hovering over the earth carried by “animalcules” through the air to infect the person, and they insisted on installing a new system of garbage collection or other measures to cleanse the city of decaying matter (Slone 34-37). Shitsuyo Masui, who first read this work through the context of the urban burial reform movement, affirms that “the question of where and how to place corpses troubled urbanites by the mid-nineteenth century” and this critical problem “led to an extensive urban cemetery reform movement” (Masui 44). Reading through reflecting these historical circumstances, it is interesting that Hawthorne commented about the burial grounds of Mount Auburn on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1847, four years before the publication of this work: “Death Possesses a good deal of real estate — viz. the grave yards in every town. Of late years, too, he has pleasure grounds — as at Mount Auburn and elsewhere” (*The American Notebooks* 280). This commentary suggested that when the dead people were “decently buried” in the proper grounds, that place became their real estate in the after-life. To apply this interpretation to the ending of this narrative, it can be read that the House became a burial ground for the Pyncheons and Maule to settle the ineradicable curse for the real estate over the years. Masui interprets the ending that after the “Governor Pyncheon” chapter, the House is “turning into a place similar to the garden cemetery” and “becomes a place of proper burial,” and this shift has also accomplished their forefathers’ burial who needed to be “decently buried,” which had been Holgrave’s big concern (Masui 58). Thus, Matthew Maule’s spirit was comforted by redeeming his home ground and obtaining a place to sleep peacefully forever, one hundred and fifty years after his execution. At the same time, by the terminal and powerless state of the Judge as the dead being captured in the daguerreotype, the possibility of the original Colonel’s resurrection had ceased and “the Dead Men” ancestors also could go to their eternal sleep within the House of the Seven Gables.

The surviving characters “removed” themselves from this contaminated house built on the burial ground to the country house in order to survive



"for the present" (II 314), which implies the possibility that someone will return here someday or restart to tell the future story concerning this House. In the closing paragraph of this story, Maule's Well kept throwing up the kaleidoscopic pictures, in which "a gifted eye" might have "fore-shadowed the coming fortunes" of characters, and the Pyncheon elm "whispered unintelligible prophecies" after the main characters had left the House (II 319). As the well and elm named after the two families kept mumbling future visions and words, the ending of this story seems to foresee the future. Surely, the modern visual device of Holgrave's daguerreotype succeeded in exposing the concealed connection between past and present, and what it captured provided the security to the present people by articulating who was "the Dead Man" and where he had lurked. Hawthorne seems to leave the future possibilities for the audience to be retold the story of the House of the Seven Gables, that has not only survived in the narrative but also still survives in the real space of Salem.

### Note

This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number JP 16K0522.

- <sup>1</sup> The public announcement of the birth of the daguerreotype was made by the French government on August 19, 1839 with Daguerre. Until then, the details of this process had been secret, but shortly after the announcement, Daguerre published a manual entitled *Histoire et description des procédés du Daguerreotype* giving full particulars of the process and it was printed in twenty-six editions in several countries and languages before the end of 1839. See Alfred H. Marks "Hawthorne's Daguerreotypist: Scientist, Artist, Reformer."
- <sup>2</sup> Hawthorne mentions as follows: "I wish there was something in the intellectual world analogous to the Daguerreotype (is that the name of it?) in the visible — something which should print off our deepest, and subtlest, and delicatest thought and feelings, as minutely and accurately

as the above-mentioned instrument paints the various aspects of Nature” (XV 384).

- 3 According to Charles Swann, other than middle-class professional daguerreotypists, there were a large number of self-proclaimed daguerreotypists, whose original professional was watch repairers or dentists. Holgrave seemed to have been such a kind of part-time daguerreotypist. See Swann, p. 104-05.
- 4 All citations from *The House of the Seven Gables*, identified by page numbers in the text, refer to the *Centenary Edition*, p.8.
- 5 For the “chimney-corner legends” or “traditional lore,” I am indebted to the ideas of Susan L. Mizruchi, Richard H. Millington, and Shitsuyo Masui. Mizrushi points out the chimney-corner legends is “a form of storytelling that is more capable than others of penetrating the deeper historical truths of the novel’s society” (131). Millington asserts that in the “Governor Pyncheon” chapter, its oppressed voice becomes a “collective voice” as “we,” and this voice will be “the rebellious communal voice” in “traditional lore” (142-145). Masui characterized these voices as “the influence of the underworld” and analyzes it connecting with the dead in the domestic space.
- 6 Edgar Allan Poe, *Alexander’s Weekly Messenger*, vol. 4, no.3, January 15, 1840, p.2. <https://www.eapoe.org/works/misc/dgtypea.htm>. Accessed 4 July 2018.
- 7 Such a claim has sometimes occurred: Susan S. Williams explores the narrative power of the visual and Hawthorne’s works to assert the superiority of literature over the visual arts, but at the same time she points out that “words and images, then, frequently merge in this work, as a writer becomes a daguerreotypist and a portrait covers a written deed” (222). Megan Rowley Williams explains that “on a literal level, the daguerreotype speaks louder than words and endangers the role of the literary author” (17).
- 8 Swann identifies the exact year by calculating Zachary Taylor’s Presidency and the election of the Governor of Pyncheon, that the story was set may

"be no question that the year is 1848" of mid-summer to September. p.97.

- <sup>9</sup> According to Gill Holland, referring to Beaumont Newhall's "Introduction" of Fox Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature* (1844-46) which introduces the calotype photography process using salted paper in his book, and remarking on the technique of image modification: "by the end of the 1850s the integrity of the daguerreotype had attenuated, and beautification had set in; the waistline could be narrowed to please the eye as easily by the camera as by the brush." And, he also indicates the year of the death of Daguerre was exactly the same time as the publication of *The House of the Seven Gables* in 1851. This year was also the death of daguerreotype since "technological advance had already rendered the daguerreotype obsolete." Gill p.4.
- <sup>10</sup> According to Richard H. Millington, this chapter is a really exceptional way of narrative compared to other contemporary American novels: "The "Governor Pyncheon" chapter – surely one of the most extraordinary acts of formal experimentation in the history of American fiction – represents the resolution of the book's action from an entirely different perspective. It is the culmination of Hawthorne's exploration of the cultural power of the communal voice" (142).
- <sup>11</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1989), s. v. "secure" of 5a.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, s. v. "secure" of 1a and 1c.
- <sup>13</sup> It seems not to completely demonstrate Clifford's innocent, but "whencesoever originating, there now arose a theory that undertook so to account for these circumstances as to exclude the idea of Clifford's agency" (310-11), and "the Daguerreotypist from one of those mesmerical seers" gets the power to reveal "the history and elucidation of the fact" concerning the incident of his Uncle's murder. (311)
- <sup>14</sup> According to Simon A. Cole, the British police also employed a photographer in the 1840s, and other than daguerreotype, ambrotypes, which were an early method of photography developed by James Ambrose Cutting using glass negatives, were used to record Birmingham prisoners from the 1850s. In the United States, the use of photography concerning

visual record spread quickly and police constables instituted a rogues' gallery in 1859 in Albany by collecting the photographs from cities like Philadelphia and New York. See, Simon A. Cole, *Suspect Identities: A History of Fingerprinting and Criminal Identification*. 6-31.

<sup>15</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., s. v. "secure." The first one is 2b, but its meaning is obsolete, and the second one is from 3a.

<sup>16</sup> As "the chimney-corner legends," Susan L. Mizruchi argues its significance that "the chimney-corner legends also constitute a view of history that consistently portrays it as a process of conflict and change" and it also "persist through the generations," it has the power to "represent an inside view that penetrates the self-serving truths of particular social hierarchies." (Mizruchi 131-4).

<sup>17</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., s. v. "sphere."

<sup>18</sup> About the rhetoric of contamination, I deeply agree with Masui's argument that Phoebe had already noticed the Judge's "peculiar odor" (119) while he was living, and the reason why Holgrave presented his daguerreotype to Phoebe was to "not let her directly witness the dead body" (Masui 57).

<sup>19</sup> It is famous that F. O. Matthiessen suggested that "the reconciliation [of Maule and Pyncheon] is somewhat too lightly made" (p.332), but William Charvat and Michael T. Gilmore supported Hawthorne's circumstances to answer the request from the marketplace to "put on a bright face for his readers" (Gilmore 111). The phrase of "the fairy-tale ending" was used by both Gilmore and Mizruchi. (Gilmore 96, Mizruchi 101). Mizruchi, however, sees the possibility to tell the historical truth of the novel's society by the "chimney-corner legends" (Mizruchi 131).

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