Perverse Love and Gender in the Sacred Father: Reading the American Way in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*

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I. Hester's Letter A and the American Way

The nineteenth-century American literary marketplace is known to have been flooded with sentimental novels written by bestselling female writers such as Catharine Sedgwick, Fanny Fern, and E. D. E. N. Southworth (Tompkins, Newbury). A common feature they shared was a style of writing that awoke sympathy in middle-class women. One might ask nowadays whether Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–64) imitated the style adopted by these female writers. If he did, he must have sympathized and identified with the heroic heroin [Hester in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850)] with an intensity comparable to the middle-class women readers and bestselling women writers of the day.[1] To borrow a keyword from Lacanian psychoanalysis, female writers and Hawthorne both put their heroines (including, in Hawthorne's case, Hester Prynne of *The Scarlet Letter*) in a position of symbolic "lack" (a position where they are divested of phallic power) and then urged them to articulate themselves to gain status as speaking subjects. In fact, Hawthorne allows Hester to unfold a story in which the letter *A* she embroiders on her bosom may form the beginnings of a narrative where

A signifies not A(dulteress), the meaning imposed upon her by the patriarchic Puritan society, but Angelic and Able, very different meanings of her invention. Thus, Hester destabilizes the otherwise unchangeable patriarchic discourse of the seventeenth-century New England theocracy. Viewed from the perspective of proto-feministic female writers, the author might have been satisfied to see Hester successfully self-asserting in her political struggle against the patriarchic Puritanism. It would be premature, however, to conclude that female writers and Hawthorne should be named in the same breath, and it also seems suspicious that Hawthorne was sympathetic to Hester's proto-feministic individualism. Unlike Hester, Hawthorne the writer must have already enjoyed the prerogative to ventriloquize himself through the personae in the fictions of his own making. Indeed, Hawthorne might not have fully enjoyed the status of canonical writer, judging from his long apprenticeship to the writing profession and his firing from the Salem Custom House. Yet the disgruntled author could not have been totally receptive to Hester, who, unlike the author, could openly and blatantly assert her independence and break free from the boundary that incarcerates her as a scapegoat in the patriarchy.

Speaking on American individualism, an individualism quite different from that of Europe, Sacvan Bercovitch posits that it paradoxically reinforces consensus-building, and consequently helps to promote further Americanization. This Americanization nullifies the existing notion that the individual stands face to face with society. According to Bercovitch, American individualism can be defined as follows: radical though it may be in its resolute dismissal of the past and continual reshaping of the present, this principle tends to assert itself within the permissible limits, reproaching European individualism for stirring up unnecessary riots and bringing about chaotic regression. The so-called "American Way" can be defined as a course of conduct by which the individualism that calls for social reform is assimilated into the mainstream. The letter A in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* could symbolize this American Way. Though its denotation takes various positive meanings such as Angel, Admirable, and Able, this multivalent A does not clash with the A(merican Way) (Bercovitch, *The Office*). Hester's behavior and way of thinking — i.e., holding an unshakable belief in herself and fixing it as a law unto herself, going to her native country England to marry her illicit daughter Pearl, and then returning to America — exemplify how well

accepted and adaptable her seemingly radical individualism is within American society of the seventeenth century, and thus directly and indirectly contributes to the establishment of the American Way. *The Scarlet Letter* might help formulate the liberal democratic genealogy that Matthiessen extols in his landmark criticism, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (1941): the tenacious genealogy from Hester, the proto-feministic individualist, through Emerson, the advocator of the *Self-Reliant Man,* and Thoreau, the exemplifier of Emersonian philosophy, to Whitman, the champion of democracy based on homoerotic bonds with (physical) laborers. We should not, of course, ignore the negative side of the American Way. The period from 1846 to 1849, when Hawthorne worked as Salem custom surveyor and prepared to write *The Scarlet Letter*, overlapped with the period of emergent American imperialism under the presidency of James Knox Polk (1845-49), the Democrat who declared the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) to authorize the annexation of Texas (1845), Oregon (1846), and California (1848).

In addition to this politically negative effect of the American Way just mentioned, there might be some other adverse power hidden in *The Scarlet Letter.* What is blurred in the backlight of Hester's letter A (of the A(merican Way)), the letter A "in fine red cloth, surrounded with an elaborate embroidery and fantastic flourishes of gold thread" on the breast of her gown (52-54)? Should we try to make the invisible visible? Putting aside Hester's effort to redefine the letter A into Angel, Admirable, and Able, into an effort that will never completely deconstruct the patriarchy, should we retrieve what has been excluded from the realm of the so-called Lacanian Symbolic, i.e., the realm where the A(merican Way) is brilliantly represented/re-presented, or the realm where the discipline of God/Father/father predominates in determining the meaning of the letter A as Adultery? What has been ignored? Lurking behind the rationality, the ignored might have been something irrational or unjustifiable, perhaps the aberrant love or the mystery of the apparently axiomatic binary gender mechanism. This irrationality might have kept supporting the A(merican Way) to let it make sense. Behind the two winners, Hester and Dimmesdale, a once-ruined woman and a minister with prestige, both of whom take the road to radiant glory, there is a loser, Chillingworth, the old physician who occupies the invisibly dark realm of the irrational to support the rationality of the A(merican Way). Hawthorne

seems to have been particularly sympathetic and attached to Chillingworth, who is defeated in his revenge on the young minister and therefore not qualified to openly or heroically talk about his tactics. Proleptically speaking, the secret of gender and the hidden monstrous love may actually hinge on Chillingworth. My aim, therefore, in this paper, is to clarify why the author held an emotional and perhaps even a somewhat morbid attachment to Chillingworth, the figure who serves, I suspect, as a key player in supporting the perpetuation of the A(merican Way).

Under the assumption that we will probably be able to diagnose the author's emotional problem if we succeed in disentangling the intricate interdependence between Chillingworth and A(merican Way) [consensus building], we will begin by scooping up two issues hidden in blind spots, i.e., Chillingworth's fragile masculinity and Chillingworth's homosocial relation with Dimmesdale. In the ensuing discussion I will make recourse to Julia Kristeva's theory defining literary text as polyphony. This will allow me to posit the hypothesis that Hawthorne secretly inserts both the nineteenth-century ideology of gender construction and its closely related domestic discourse into the seventeenth-century Puritan society of his story.

II. The Gender of the Father and Aporia of Love

James R. Mellow said, "One does ... encounter that mysterious father ... or his surrogate ... in Hawthorne's fiction" (14). In *The Scarlet Letter,* Chillingworth fits the bill as the "mysterious father." Chillingworth reveals his innermost heart to Hester in statements like this:

> My heart was ... lonely and chill, and without a householdfire. I longed to kindle one! (74)
>
> .....
>
> Here, on this wild outskirt of the earth, I shall pitch my tent; for, elsewhere a wanderer, and isolated from human interests, I find here *a woman, a man, a child, amongst whom and myself there exist the closest ligaments.... Thou and thine, Hester Prynne, belong to me. My home is where thou art and where he is* (76) (my italics).

The basis of Chillingworth's patriarchic status [i.e., heterosexual male gender identity] is undermined by Dimmesdale, and this is unlikely to attenuate his

desire to revenge Dimmesdale for the latter's illicit affair with the former's wife, Hester. This obsessive emotional power of Chillingworth probably befuddles the rationality in which Chillingworth takes pride, and consequently further erodes his heterosexual male gender identity.

As an adjustment, of sorts, for having lost heterosexual masculinity and having failed to occupy the patriarchic position, Chillingworth shifts all the responsibility onto Dimmesdale, the man who had sexual relations with Hester and fathered a daughter, Pearl. Chillingworth's anger and antagonism towards Dimmesdale keeps fermenting. Yet this anger also seems curious in a man of Chillingworth's social standing: as a respectably positioned pharmacologist with academically laudable achievements, he is by no means inferior to Dimmesdale, the clergyman. How shoould we interpret Chillingworth's inferiority complex?

Alfred Adler argues that a likely adaptation to a sense of physical inferiority is overcompensation through idiosyncratic psychological tactics such as strenuous grabs for power and unreserved demonstrations of the desire to dominate (Connell 138-39). This theory seems to be put into practice by Chillingworth, the man well aware of his physical inferiority: "[m]isshapen from my birth-hour" (74) and no longer young, but "delud[ing] myself with the idea that intellectual gifts might veil physical deformity in a young girl's [Hester's] fantasy" (74). Chillingworth's delusion of having all-controlling power could have effectively put him at ease until the young adulterer [Dimmesdale] intruded into the two, Chillingworth and Hester. Megalomaniacally, Chillingworth compares himself to the all-commanding being, the being similar to the narrating subject of *Nature* (1836) written by Ralph Waldo Emerson, the spokesman for transcendentalism: "I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God" (7). Up until Dimmesdale turns up, Chillingworth has held the belief that, transcending the physical limit, he has achieved the status of a god-like being. To follow the notion of phallogocentrism in Lacanian psychology, we can argue that if one can get the better part of one's carnal desire and physicality to sublimate oneself into the subject as an operator of language, the language represented by the letter A (=short for Alphabet or language), one can wield power over the world composed exclusively of words, symbols, and A(lphabets). In a word, one can be a mastermind of the Lacanian symbolic realm (Gallop 67, 120).

The subject defined as such is allowed to refer to the alleged truth, knowledge, reason, objectivity, and science, but in fact is disguising himself as a mouthpiece of phallogocentric [patriarchic] order.

As a physician, Chillingworth tries to domesticate, get the upper hand on, and, if necessary, suppress, the sensory emotions caused by birth, aging, death, ingestion, and excretion — the emotions triggered by human corporeal physicality and directly related to life-giving motherhood, femaleness, and Hester. When Chillingworth self-styledly in the decoporealized subject position comes face to face with Dimmesdale over the love for and by Hester, he becomes powerless and impotent. Hester suggests his defeat in her negative portrayal of him: "there was something ugly and evil in his face," with "his visage ... getting sooty with the smoke," and "grew still the more obvious to sight" (111). She wonders "whether the tender grass of early spring would not be blighted beneath him and show the wavering track of his footsteps, sere and brown, across its cheerful verdure" (175). Ironically, the winner of Hester's womanly love is not Chillingworth, who has conquered human corporeality with his medical knowledge and thus established his male gender identity, but Dimmesdale, a man in the clergy, a position "increasingly resembling the evolving feminine one" in the context of the antebellum period when Hawthorne was writing *The Scarlet Letter* (Douglass 42). Like Chillingworth, Dimmesdale is physically powerless, but unlike Chillingworth he is morbidly oversensitive and suffers nervous breakdown: "his voice, though still rich and sweet, had a certain melancholy prophecy of decay in it; he was often observed, on any slight alarm or other sudden accident, to put his hand over his heart with first a flush and then a paleness, indicative of pain" (120).

Indeed, the intelligent doctor takes the Lacanian subject position of patriarchic man, adult heterosexual male, supposedly endowed with enough knowledg to logically maneuver the language or the letter A for A(lphabet). This man, however, receives a fatal blow. He confronts intelligible aporia when he sees Pearl, the illicit girl born between Hester and Dimmesdale, and the girl is not the dead letter A but "the living hieroglyphic" (207) that escapes the A(uthority) of Puritan Society, denying the power of language or the A(lphabet). When we consider that the word "infant" derives etymologically from the meaning "incapable of speech," we may come to believe that, to the intelligent

Chillingworth, Pearl seems like an unintelligible hieroglyphic, the living scarlet letter A, and the A for Aporia, denoting to Chillingworth the limit of his own intelligence. To explain this, let us tentatively refer to Julia Kristeva, who stresses the importance of the pre-Oedipal realm in a psychoanalytical theory of the abject body (*Powers of Horror*). According to Kristeva (180), the body function of little children represented by ingestion and excretion, a process vital to life-sustenance but repugnant to see, comes to the fore. Pearl shows a proclivity to "the A(poria), exemplifying this corporeality that Hester's letter A also suggests: vital activity, sensuality, copulation, and childbirth. To the no-longer young or healthy Chillingworth, Pearl thrusts home the hard facts of his infertility, his deformed, ugly, A(bject) body.

In Euro-American middle-class society from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century, the wife was supposed to be dispossessed of individuality and subjectivity, and to be entirely dependent on the husband. Hence, Hester is said to be a *property* of Chillingworth, and Chillingworth, in turn, forfeits "*property* [Hester]" to Dimmesdale. Consequently, the patriarchic status of Chillingworth is undercut; he suffers a symbolic castration. Lacking the potency or maleness to beget a child, Chillingworth becomes improper for a patriarch. This failure to become patriarch is both symbolic and physical. Reluctantly, he allows his own physical entity to ruin apparently sophisticated former patriarchic identity, hence the patriarchic man degenerates into a monstrous being or the body itself. The problem would not be so serious if his body was healthy and beautiful to look at, like that of Hester's, but alas, Chillingworth is "black-a-visaged, [and] hump shouldered" (132). The medical herbs he gathers betoken his physical ugliness, sterility, and impotence, herbs "with such a dark, flabby leaf" (131) in "a barren and blasted spot," namely, "nightshade, dogwood, henbane, and whatever else of vegetable wickedness the climate could produce" (171). These herbs strike a stark contrast with Pearl, who emanates an exuberant vitality possibly somewhat rosier than her name, or the shining whiteness of pearl: "Ruby, rather — or Coral! — or Red Rose" (110). Hester exposed Chillingworth's depleted vitality, wondering whether "the tender grass of early spring would not be blighted beneath him and show the wavering track of his footsteps" (175). Theoretically, the male physique could be sublimated, ascended, and subsumed into the ideal patriarchic order, and yet there remains the possibility that heterosexual

masculinity, along with its correspondent effect of paternity, is essentially built on male corporality. Male corporality is thoroughly denied to Chillingworth, who, as a consequence, is pulled back to the former repressed state of the A(bject), the state of a toddler and its mother, the state related to motherhood, femaleness, procreation, sexual intercourse, ingestion, and excretion. His power of knowledge and reason turn out to be vulnerable to and defeated by the corporeality of his former self, the power associated with the female body, or the power Hester represents. Thus, Chillingworth is defeated by both Dimmesdale and Hester, and in Freudian terms his repressed [physicality] returns.

The situation has reversed. With the power of medical knowledge of which he boasts, Chillingworth decorporealizes himself and earns credentials as patriarchic man, and this is made possible insofar as he maintains the androcentric discourse and this stays in the hierarchically ordered gender system. But then this assumption crumbles, and Chillingworth allows his ugly corporeality to grow conspicuous. He loses his male gender identity, the condition required for the patriarch, which means by extension that the patriarchy he depends on has broken down. Here we witness Chillingworth's difficulty in verbalizing his anger and the consequent deformation of his face.

Not a few women suffered from hysteria in the Euro-American middle-class society of the nineteenth century. In the first place, the strict Victorian moral code and domestic ideology imposed upon them unnecessarily repressed and condemned their female sexuality. In the second place, the housewife's (seeming) female desexuality was adored as an attribute of a domestic angel (Smith-Rosenberg 652-78). Here in *The Scarlet Letter,* the male physician himself shows the symptoms of testeria, testicular version of hysteria described by queer critic Lee Edelman.

The blame for Chillingworth's psychosomatic suffering, it turns out, should be attributed not to his wife's paramour but to Chillingworth himself. During his newlywed days, Chillingworth thinks that he needs "to emerge at eventide from the seclusion of his study and sit down in the firelight of their home, and in the light of her nuptial smile," "in order that the chill of so many lonely hours among his books might be taken off the scholar's heart" (176). As Joel Pfister elucidates, what significantly affected Hawthorne was not the woman's role in the family of the theocratic seventeenth century, but rather that in the family of the

mid-nineteenth century. If a middle-class woman of the nineteenth century lived up to expectations in providing emotional and moral assistance to her husband, she deserved idealization as an Angel of the domestic Eden. Magazines and books of etiquette for women helped propagate this ideal image of housewife in the contemporary *feminized* American society, and Hawthorne transplanted this nineteenth-century image into the seventeenth-century Puritan society of *The Scarlet Letter*. Hawthorne and Chillingworth did not dare permit Hester to step beyond the fixed identity as an ideal housewife. To use more materialistic terms, they did not dare permit her to step beyond the tool by which Chillingworth, as husband, could fulfill his desire to feel at ease. As expected, Hester deserts Chillingworth because of his negligence in responding to her warmly and his subsequent failure to rekindle the fire of love. Chillingworth has merely tried to live out the patriarchic ideology of compulsory heterosexism, in which a man could guarantee his male gender if only he could gain the status of patriarch by getting married and establishing a household. Rooted in nothing more than an imaginary relationship, this patriarchic ideology does not reflect the actual relationship cultivated through negotiation in the real world. Thus, even Chillingworth comes to see that merely sitting idly, inactive, in the supposedly masculine realm of knowledge and reason is insufficient to bring on the promise of the coveted patriarchic position with the male heterosexual gender identity. Worse still, Chillingworth realizes that inaction would even endanger his own physical masculinity. To offset this disadvantage, Chillingworth paradoxically resorts to the "queer" logic (to be discussed later in this thesis) and finds a remaining hope in the bachelor Dimmesdale: if a woman or wife is unavailable for male gender establishment, then an adulterer or (quasi-)son will do. The physician decides to target the sick minister. Contending himself with "unsavoury morsel always at another's board, and endure[ing] the life-long chill which must be his lot who seeks to warm himself only at another's fireside," Dimmesdale adamantly refuses to "select some one of the many blooming damsels, spiritually devoted to him, to become his devoted wife" (125). Here, as already referred to in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the author manipulates the text into the polyphonic and secretly slips the nineteenth-century domestic ideology into the Puritan society of the seventeenth century. As it turns out, the discourse that "the conjugal hearth and home is where the bachelor really wants to be"

(Bertolini 25) was actually prevalent in the mid-nineteenth-century America. In fact, many books of etiquette were published to warn liberalized society that "in his solitary and unmonitorable status as an autonomous unmarried adult male, the bachelor represented the transgressive triple threat of masturbation, whoremongering, and that nameless horror .... homosexual sex" (Bertolini 20).

With "[his] old faith, long forgotten, com[ing] back to him" (174), Chillingworth abuses the Puritan dogma to retrieve his masculinity and patriarchic status. As a first step to be taken, the physician begins to live doubled up with the minister and forge a quasi-sacred family. The conditions are conceivably present for Chillingworth to proxy as a sacred father in the minister's mind: for immigrants and their descendants, we may recall, could "sanctify" John Winthrop (the Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony) as the New England and Moses, Cotton Mather (the Puritan minister) as the American Abraham, Joshua, and John the Divine combined or as ur-Fathers (Bercovitch, *Rites* 80). The old roguery may be well aware of the following historical circumstances peculiar to New England. First, New England authority claimed that God made a contract with a community as a whole and not with an individual member. This is clear from the case of Anne Hutchinson, the historically existent antinomianist who was expelled for her vociferous arguments for the need to communicate directly with God. Second, the Puritan immigrants thought that they were forbidden from overthrowing the patriarchic theocracy because their *fathers,* who had taken them overseas to create Utopia, were different from the counterparts in the Old World (Berlant 132; Jehlen). Chillingworth's strategy of assuming the attitude of a pious man is natural, as is the slight shift of this attitude from pious man to patriarchic man. This strategy, it turns out, effectively helps Chillingworth wield power over the quasi-sacred family, the family composed of the quasi-father and son, Chillingworth and Dimmesdale.

Chillingworth thus becomes able to internalize himself in the minister's psych as the Super Ego and to stay there as a guardian of the minister's conscience, i.e., the Lacanian Law. Chillingworth criticizes Dimmesdale in a roundabout way by insinuating that "if they [sinners] seek to glorify God, let them not lift heavenward their unclean hands**!**" (133) Interestingly, the old physician deals with the minister "with the paternal affection" (106) while keeping a watchful eye on him at the same time. What enables the (quasi-) father to come

close quarters with the (quasi-) son is not so much the condition of the family in the Puritan society of the seventeenth century, but the condition of the middle-class family in the emergent capitalistic society of the nineteenth century century, the society in which the author actually lived. The members of the nineteenth-century middle-class nuclear family were bound together with the tenacious emotional bond between husband and wife, parents and children, presumably apart and disconnected from the outer capitalistic world, the world contaminated with corruption, greed, and rivalries. To liberate the family from self-perceived constraints against displays of emotion and facilitate mutual understanding, the supreme order was set to erase any distinct differences among the individual family members. As a side effect, all unknown strangers were excluded from the domestic realm.

The symbolic death of the father allows the son's psyche to internalize the image of the father as a sacred father, or as a Super Ego that functions to sharply rebuke the son. When invisible and dead, the father could, as Freud theorizes, maximize his power over his son. What evinces this point here is Dimmesdale's failure to detect the identity of Chillingworth, i.e., Hester's (ex-)husband, behind the mask of a sacred father. Hence, the (quasi-) father is invisible and virtually dead to the (quasi-) son. This assumption is persuasive enough, because Hester's husband is alleged to have died in the shipwreck. These circumstances make it possible for Chillingworth to keep tormenting Dimmesdale's conscience, the conscience forged under the influence of his symbolic father Chillingworth. Victim to a hazard of his profession, the minister becomes oversensitive to his "own" conscience, and Chillingworth, by exploiting Dimmesdale's oversensitiveness, takes over the role of the punishing Calvinistic God/Father/father. Since the relation between God and followers is compared to that of paterfamilias and family members, the minister cannot defy God/ (mock-)sacred father/ Chillingworth. Here, the old physician preempts and misuses Pierre-Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, the French psychologists and flag-bearers of postmodernism known to have reversed the Freudian concept to explain how a feeling of guilt is triggered (327, 330). Chillingworth abuses their postmodern theory that the paranoiac father unconsciously forges the feeling of guilt and plants it into the son before the son forges it, and that the son's unconscious Oedipus complex negates the very existence of the father's evil unconscious

desire.[2] It seems natural, in considering this psychological system together with the aforesaid historical situation peculiar to New England, that impediments should prevent the son from gaining awareness of the tyrannous father's desire, the malicious desire to put his own son under control.

In the patriarchic nuclear family, "the body of the child," like that of the woman, "emerges as the sight of the enactment and reproduction of social regulation and control (as taboo) under the auspices of the family" and becomes "colonized" for psychological exploitation (Castricano 208, 212). By extension, the body and sexuality of the bachelor son are colonized by the physician father in exactly the same way. It is not altogether nonsensical for parishioners to spread a rumor that "[the] old Roger Chillingworth, being a potent necromancer, had caused it [the letter] to appear [on the breast of the minister], through the agency of magic and poisonous drugs" (258). Symbolically speaking, the castrating father/physician performs transsexual surgery on the minister, carves the letter A on the minister's breast, as if creating a woman's pudendal cleft. As Castricano cites Foucault, "the 'Word made flesh' is the 'individual subject' who emerges as 'the effect of power' which inscribes or 'writes' the 'political anatomy of the body'" (209). Representing (the Puritan) Law, the Law-enforcing Father (law-enforcing father), or the Father substitute (mock-sacred father), Chillingworth allows the illicit but mature heterosexual tie between Hester and Dimmesdale backslide into the immature mother-son dyad and attributes the cause of this regression to the bachelor minister's suspicious (homo)sexuality. Chillingworth's (il)logic is based on the alleged "psychological truism ... that male homosexuality both constituted, and resulted from, an inappropriate identification between the mother [the symbolic mother Hester] and her son [the symbolic son Dimmesdale]" (Edelman 166). Because the all-too-close bind of "the pre-oedipal relationship with the mother threaten[s] the male ego," and, by extension, the heterosexual patriarchy (Rutherford 165-66), Chillingworth feels himself justified in separating Dimmesdale away from Hester by any means.

With his medical knowledge and symbolic role as Freudian punishing (castrating) paterfamilias, Chillingworth symbolically performs a sex change operation, and thus exercises uncurbed dominion over the dyad of (symbolic) mother [Hester] and son [Dimmesdale]. Indeed, his scientific knowledge and honorable social position as a renowned doctor fail to clear either his anxiety or

uncertainty over his physical ability (sexual potency). Nonetheless, we should not underestimate the immense advantages he derives from the power of knowledge and reason. To establish his own masculinity, he entirely depends on scientific rationality, the power to conquer nature and other inferior beings; in other words, he depends on the traditional Euro-American way of thinking [gaining knowledge], the tacit assumption of which invites criticism from the deconstructionists in the age of current postmodernism. *Knowledge* formulated in this way helps build the mentality of the subject [subject as the Western man] by putting it in relation to other inferior being(s). Here, the man in the subject position fixes his targets upon the other being(s) and places them under his control (Lévinas 206). Chillingworth brags, "[s]ooner or later, he must needs be mine" (75), and proves that "knowledge," especially medical knowledge, is most profitable to him. First, medical knowledge, which deals with the issue of life and death and encroaches on the realm of God, might somehow usurp the position of God the Father. Indeed, Chillingworth is too old to father a child, unlike the young minister, who has actually fathered a daughter; but Chillingworth relentlessly unleashes on Dimmesdale the anger arising from his senile impotence, from his inability to become biological father, and by unleashing this anger, he becomes a mock-sacred father and punishes the minister. Second, since medical knowledge directly deals with the phenomena of birth, life, and death, i.e., affairs of life directly related to mother and woman, it is not only enormously effective in clearing Chillingworth of the trauma caused by his failure to maintain his marital status with Hester, but also effective, from now on, in distancing Chillingworth form marriage or sexual contact with a woman through marriage, and thus in concealing from him his own senile impotence and feeling of powerlessness.

From here we will take up the issue of the gender stability of Chillingworth, the old man assuming the role of the mock-sacred father in the-mock sacred family, and then verify the effectiveness of Chillingworth's strategy. Because the minister is a patient in need of treatment, Chillingworth's medical knowledge makes it easier for Chillingworth to approach, inspect, and even dominate Dimmesdale. In asking the young male minister whether "all the operations of this disorder [hath] been fairly laid open and recounted to me" (136), we see the old male doctor somehow trying to identify with the male patient. This iden-

tification process could be explicable by the Freudian theory on narcissism and ego ideal. To the eyes of Chillingworth, Dimmesdale appears to be bestowed the potential to occupy the position of a paterfamilias, the position that Chillingworth envies but cannot actually attain. Dimmesdale appears qualified as a candidate to join the affectionate nuclear family, the family that can and should exclude strangers, including Chillingworth, the family made up of Pearl, Hester, and Dimmesdale himself. Thus, Chillingworth, in his own morbid mind, sees Dimmesdale as an opponent, a threatening cause of complexes—persecution complex and inferiority complex.

At the same time, Dimmesdale can also be seen as a homosexual lover. Speaking from an unconscious point of view, Chillingworth finds his ideal ego in his opponent [Dimmesdale] and ceases to love his ex-wife. To Hester, who shows an unmistakable symptom of hysteria after exposing herself in public and returning to her cell with the whole of her personality reduced to the letter A for Abjection, i.e., sexual intercourse and ugly genitalia, Chillingworth prescribes to her a medicine for the sole purpose of "letting thee [Hester] live—than to give thee medicines against all harm and peril of life—so that this burning shame may still blaze upon thy bosom" (73). Directing his love to, of all the people, a foe whom he should revenge, he inadvertently says to Hester, "I find here a woman, a *man,* a child, amongst whom and myself there exist the closest ligaments" (my italics), and "[t]here is a sympathy that will make me conscious of him.... Sooner or later, he must needs be mine" (75, 76). Thus, Chillingworth blurts out his hidden homosexual desire, "break[ing] the confrontational relationship" with his narcissism (Borch-Jacobsen 91). With his status of prerogative subject merged to the status of other, his male gender identity as Emersonian Self-Reliant Man is nullified. His opponent, Dimmesdale, is a mere bachelor, pressured to select "some one of the many blooming damsels, spiritually devoted to him, to become his devoted wife" (125). Taking advantage of this situation, Chillingworth "effected an arrangement by which the two were lodged in the same house; so that every ebb and flow of the minister's life-tide might pass under the eye of his *anxious* and *attached* physician" (my italics) (125). Captivated with each other, "they took long walks on the sea-shore, or in the forest; mingling various walks with the splash and murmur of the waves, and the solemn wind-anthem among the tree-tops.... There was a *fascination* for the

minister in the company of the man of science ...." (my italics) (102). The minister "feel[s] the occasional relief of looking at the universe through the medium of *another kind of intellect* [a euphemism for homosexual love]" (my italics) (123). Here, it becomes almost impossible for Chillingworth to realize his initial aim of retrieving the heterosexual patriarchic position, the position from which he could confirm his authority over and vengeance against the minister. On the contrary, Chillingworth leaves himself vulnerable to a possible self-transformation into the very dangerous being that threatens to destabilize the compulsory heterosexual patriarchy, the system he has counted on so far. Thus, the physician faces an aporia: the closer he comes to the status of paterfamilias in the heterosexually built nuclear family, the further he deviates from the gender norm. Despite, or because of, his adherence to the supreme order of maintaining the male gender identity and the patriarchic position, Chillingworth begins a homosexual relation with Dimmesdale. As will be discussed later, this might be the cause of his unavoidable doom.

III. The Sacred Father Rides with the American Way

Let us discuss whether Chillingworth, a problematic figure both heterosexually and homosexually, really infringes on the A(merican Way), i.e., the seemingly heterosexually based homosocial norm. Here, we will refer to the queer theory expounded by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. To concoct an alibi and distract the eyes of the Puritan community, Chillingworth devises the insidious strategy of forcing them to continuously see the letter A as a symbol of Adultery, the sin committed jointly by the minister and the woman defiant against the Puritan authority. Outwardly he advocates the cause of heterosexuality, but essentially he reinforces the homosocially bound interest group, the group composed exclusively of elite men of the patriarchic society. They make a great fuss about apparently heterosexual problems: for example, how they should put Hester's excessive sexuality under surveillance; whether or not they should permit Hester to remove the letter A from her bosom; and, how to educate her daughter Pearl and conform her to the Puritan social order. In reality, they treat these issues for the sole purpose of strengthening the male-only solidarity. The heterosexual men in the prerogative position need to maintain the hegemony. For this they feel obliged to make an alliance with homosexual men and to maintain a sub-

tle balance between the heterosexual and homosexual, on the condition that the solidarity should not appear homosexual. This condition is easy to fulfill, because the homosexual members have "(strategically manipulable) capacity to 'pass [for the heterosexual],' [and] to remain invisible" (Edelman 4). The homosexual man is hard to find, whereas Hester, as a woman whose visible sexuality is beyond her control, is exposed to the public view with the brilliant scarlet letter A on her breast.

Just like the capitalistic society of nineteenth-century America, the Puritan society of seventeenth-century New England was in need of the homosocial practice as a means of reinforcing its patriarchic value and centripetal force. We can confirm this by referring to the case of Ann Hibbins, the historically real woman fictionalized in the text: now importunately hanging around Dimmesdale and Hester, "a few years later, [Hibbins] was executed as a witch" (116). Hibbins and antinomianists defied patriarchic authority by insisting that God would directly send his message to each believer, and, in transmitting the message, would need no medium such as a church or minister. Their insistence tended to challenge the current patriarchic authority and openly contradicted the A(merican Way) or "the Americanization of Puritanism" (Lang 37, 135), misleadingly casting the antinomianists in a suspicious light in the eyes of both the Puritans of the seventeenth century and the author of the nineteenth century. Here, we should bear in mind, in the historical context, that in 1848, just a year before Hawthorne began writing *The Scarlet Letter,* the revolution broke out in France, spread its repercussions throughout central and southern Europe, and thoroughly collapsed the conservative Vienna system. The white middle-class men who held the hegemony of American society fretted that the 1848 European revolutions could cross the Pacific, spur the radical proto-feminists to a women's liberation movement, and consequently abolish the patriarchy upholding nascent American capitalism (Bercovitch, *Office* 78-79).

Likewise, the prerogative men of the seventeenth-century society called into their minds an image of their patriarchic society being overthrown by Hester, the woman who "critici[zes] all with hardly more reverence than the Indian would feel for the clerical band, the judicial robe, the pillory, the gallows, the fireside, or the church" (199) or "the state, the alter, the hearth, and the soil"—the kind of stuff "intimately linked with social institutions" (Berlant 206).

The men who dominate these institutions face the implicit threat of symbolic castration when Hester wishes "the very nature of the opposite sex [meaning male], or its long hereditary habit ... to be essentially modified," or "the whole system of society to be torn down and built up anew" (165). In a word, Hester appears to be a threatening phallic mother.

Recall that an aporia still remains. Is the existence of the homosexual problem politically acceptable and advisable from the perspective of keeping a homosocial alliance? Should or could the problem be left unfixed in the seemingly heterosexual patriarchy? With this problem untouched, Chillingworth devotes himself to defending what the letter A symbolizes: the A(merican Way), patriarchic family, and male-centric society.

One may quickly add here that, through the similarity of sounds, Hester reminds us of not only Ester, but also Vesta/Hestia, Goddess of the hearth. Ester is a renowned heroin in the Old Testament who saves the patriarchs of the Jewish race, defends the patriarchy of the Jew, and thus virtually proves herself to be loyal to the patriarchy. Leslie Fiedler describes a homo-erotic tradition in American literature that "turn[s] from society to nature or nightmare out of a desperate need to avoid the facts of wooing, marriage, and child-bearing" (24). Yet this description, as Fiedler himself admits, seems to be inappropriate for *The Scarlet Letter,* where the narrative focuses on how domestic life can be maintained. The two bachelors, Chillingworth and Dimmesdale, paradoxically defend the patriarchic family order and patriarchy in general and worship the domestic goddess, Vesta/Hestia/Hester. As celibate men, they jointly take part in the group of vestal virgins, and become harbingers of Hilda, a Maria worshipper, in Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1860). Despite his morbidly persistent attachment to the male gender identity, Chillingworth tamely submits to the fate of becoming either a mock-virgin or an ugly old freak, and subsequently of being tainted with the ambiguous or homosexual identity. This ironic result is the mere byproduct of a homosocial practice, the practice in which Chillingworth and Dimmesdale cooperatively engage.

Although he allows his previous heterosexual love for Hester to deviate into the homosexual love for Dimmesdale, Chillingworth still manages to join the mainstream or A(merican way). Chillingworth is probably aware that, "emerg[ing] within the matrix of power relations" as "a uniform repetition of a

masculinist economy of identity," the sexuality, whether it is heterosexual or homosexual, is coextensive with power (Butler 29). Guattari and Deleuze endorse this suggestion when, in trying to unravel the riddles of sexualities, they assert that heterosexuality and homosexuality, the dual manifestations of the unsublimated libido, derive their energy from the Oedipal complex, and therefore become endowed with explicit social [patriarchal] features (417, 420). Though deprived of straight male gender identity, Chillingworth successfully assumes the role of sacred father and manipulates the conscience of the guilt-stricken minister who cannot stop the neurotic purification ceremony of vigil, fasting, and self-whipping. At the same time, Chillingworth enfolds Dimmesdale with a furtive homosexual love and by doing so supports the A(merican Way), i.e., the consensual but male-only system, jointly with Dimmesdale. Using metaphors of river, flood, and embankment, we can put it this way: Chillingworth allows the embankment of the heterosexual A(merican Way) to burst, then sees the wide area of the watershed flooded, then finally spreads the homosocial A(merican Way) over the whole area. Denied of either the male gender identity or the dream of establishing a close-knit family sphere, the old impotent man Chillingworth finds a mooring in the A(merican Way), i.e., the patriarchic homosocial consensus. By riding with the A(merican Way) that penetrates the sacred oedipally-constructed close-knit family, Chillingworth takes part in the sacred alliance of the homosocial theocratic community and fabricates the raison d'être therein.

IV. The American Way and Hawthorne

The final destination of the American Way, as conceived in earlier days, was a practically constructed utopia. This utopia was quite unique in its stress on industriousness and labor, and was thus starkly contrastive to the final destination described in the Old Testament or in various myths (Takayanagi 130). Historically, the gradual loss of religious fervor, together with the irritation derived from the foreseeable failure in realizing the Utopia, led to the so-called Lamentation of Jeremiah, and this Lamentation, as an ideology, helped solidify the group cohesion and ultimately a nationalistic sentiment. Williams Evans Arthur, a newly fledged lawyer, exemplified this in a July Fourth oration of 1850, the year *The Scarlet Letter* was published: "[The American] is Liberty's chosen

apostle .... He is more fertile in expedients, more steadfast in purpose, more indomitable of soul, more energetic, more bold and aspiring, than his European predecessors or their contemporaries" (Bercovich, *Jeremiah* 151). The more difficult the blueprints for the construction of a paradise became, the more strongly this nationalistic ideology was empowered. This ideology took so definite a form as to be called *Manifest Destiny,* and Americans emphasized typically masculine features in describing it: an industrious attitude, aggressive will, and robust physicality (features required in the westward expansion). These features, however, reveal the stealth tie between the white-collar and blue collar. Up to the mid-nineteenth century, the middle-class patriarchy on which the male gender identity could be constructed had remained apparently stable. But now, the signs of collapse began to show from below and the patriarchy had to withstand tests of its volition, physicality, and aggressiveness. Yet degenerate ministers, philanthropists, and moral reformers were rampant in American society; Calvinistic definitions of virtue and vice were relativized; materials were available to hacks for their sensational exposé novels. Regardless of the social class to which they belonged, the male members of society responded alertly to the crisis of the traditional male-centric system. They were driven to reorganize the [homosocial] alliance by the political unconscious, the unconscious made up of the nostalgia for the once-thriving patriarchic power and of their uneasiness about its possible collapse. According to Jean Baudrillard (33), one of the representatives of postmodernism, the power could be activated and manipulated by obsessive anxiety as to whether the current authority could hold up against the crisis. In the critical moment of the mid-nineteenth century, the patriarchic consensual system or the A(merican Way) was paradoxically reinforced.

Hawthorne nervously responded to the crisis of patriarchy in just the same way. This response was not without personal reasons. First, in 1849, a year before the publication of *The Scarlet Letter,* he was fired from the custom house. This was tantamount to a loss of power, both financially and socially. Second, he was not endowed with an aggressive or practical masculine nature in terms of physicality. He was said to have had an air of femininity about him. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow — who like Hawthorne, "was often described by his contemporaries as a kind of literary cross-dresser" (Gruesz 47) — observed that "to converse with Hawthorne was talking with a woman" (Elbert 18-19). Oliver

Wendell Holmes, a professor of Harvard Medical School, went so far as to say that "Hawthorne's 'shy, beautiful, soul had to be wooed from its bashful prudency like an unschooled maiden,'" and boldly added that talking to him was like "love-making" (Mellow 28). The Freudian psychologist Alfred Adler suggests that the body remains a screen onto which one's anxiety about power is projected even after one's physical inferiority complex is seemingly dispelled and conquered (Connel 139). It thus seems natural that Hawthorne should be obsessive about his physicality, male gender identity, paternity, patriarchic family, and authority. One might also logically assume that the author should feel difficult in maintaining a clam objective attitude in portraying the old physician, who yearns for what Hawthorne himself desperately needed.

Here, let us bring Chillingworth up for discussion again and superimpose some of his traits on the author. Any doubt of a close relationship between the two is dispelled when we see the tapestry of the Gobelin looming in Dimmesdale's study, the figure representing Nathan's curse at David for having an extramarital affair with Bathsheba and killing her husband Uriah. A close affinity is suggested here: Bathsheba is compared to Hester; Uriah is compared to Chillingworth, the man rumored to be dead, due to the shipwreck; and curiously enough, Nathan is compared to both Nathaniel (Hawthorne) and Chillingworth, the latter misusing religious authority to admonish the minister for committing an extramarital affair. To be exact, the physician is symmetrical to the writer on two axes: one axis of whether one is beautiful or ugly to see; and another of whether one has established one's patriarch position or not. Repeatedly referred to as an ugly old man, Chillingworth has lost his previous patriarchic position, i.e., the supposed adult male gender identity, and has fallen so low as to forfeit the prerogative of speaking subject, the prerogative given only to the male in the patriarchic position. Hawthorne, meanwhile, was known for his delicate feminine features, and yet, he stuck to his position as a canonical writer, at least until the publication of his last completed romance, *The Marble Faun* (1860). Despite his heterosexual status from his previous marriage with Hester and his current authoritative and paternal identity as a physician in the outward public realm of seventeenth-century Puritan society, Chillingworth cannot possibly feel comfortable in the inward domestic realm. Rather, he is forced to content himself with his current status of uncertain masculinity. In a similar but different way,

Hawthorne, in spite his established status in the inward private textually virtual realm as a speaking subject or canonical writer able to manipulate and circulate the patriarchic discourse of nineteenth-century America, felt bereft of the male gender identity in the outward public realm. His firing from public service when the governing administration switched from Democrat to Republican, not only symbolized disablement and unmanning, but went so far as to exclude him from society, literally and figuratively, and ultimately to drive him to the virtual diaspora.

The time has come to answer the question of why the author was emotionally attached to Chillingworth, the pivotal person who holds the key to the successful perpetuation of the A(merican Way). Hawthorne, the man with feminine beauty, saw his own gender ambiguity distortedly reflected in the figure of Chillingworth, the deformed ugly man, and went so far as to let Chillingworth and Dimmesdale collaboratively produce a freak two-hander show. Hawthorne had no other choice but to accept the burdensome identity of the gender-wise ambiguous and freak (quasi-)other being. To render his freak, queer, and otherwise (quasi-)other identity worthwhile, what was left for Hawthorne? It was to be a part of the patriarchic society, or to accomplice with Chillingworth, to build up consensus of deceptive democracy (meaning male-centric "democracy"), and thus to strengthen the A(merican Way) symbolized by the letter A that Hester puts on her bosom. Otherwise, their quasi-masculine gender identity would keep Hawthorne and Chillingworth from securing their footings in the inherently heterosexually-based American society where, at least on the superficial level, only the unquestionably heterosexual masculine gender status could promise predominance over other statuses.

Notes

1. All subsequent references to this romance will be parenthetically included in this thesis. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter,* eds. William Charvat et al., vol. 1 of *Centenary Edition* (1850; Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1962).
2. Although Guattari and Deleuze claim that the father the unconsciously activates the desire to punish his son, Hawthorne seems to insinuate that Chillingworth does so consciously.

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Perverse Love and Gender in the Sacred Father: Reading the American Way in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*

SASAKI, Eitetsu

Sacvan Bercovitch has clarified in *The Rites of Assent* that American individualism has had a share in consensus building and contributed to the Americanization of society. This process is called the American Way. If Chillingworth the cuckold and Dimmesdale the paramour contribute together to the American Way, why did the author hold an emotional and even a somewhat morbid attachment to Chillingworth?

The author lets the revengeful Chillingworth misuse the nineteenth-century domestic ideology that warned of the threat of that nameless horror represented by the bachelor, i.e., homosexual sex. Psychologically, the old physician confronts the minister as if he were blaming the latter for committing a deed likely to rouse the homophobic, i.e., forming an immature umbilical relation with Hester, mother-goddess-like self-willed woman. To prevent the patriarchy he stands on from backsliding into the pre-Oedipal Eros, and to prevent the basis of patriarchy, i.e., the compulsory heterosexuality, from breaking down, Chillingworth acts as the Law enforcing father. By actually living with the minister Dimmesdale on the pretext of treating his psychosomatic condition, Chillingworth creates the sacrosanct family, insinuates domestic ideology, behaves within Dimmesdale's psyche as a sacred father, or punishing super-ego, and thus preys on Dimmesdale with the Oedipal sense of guilt.

In his observing eyes, however, Dimmesdale appears to reside in an enviable patriarchic family—the family composed of the minister, Hester, and Pearl, the family exclusive of outsiders. According to Freud's theory of narcissism, Dimmesdale is, first, the model the physician wants to imitate, second, his opponent / persecutor, and third, his homosexual lover. Chillingworth's homosexual stance is not, however, in conflict with the American Way, i.e., with the cause of

preserving the androcentric society, because the heterosexual and the homosexual alike are prone to strive to maintain patriarchy.

The author detected the common anxiety shared by the intelligent men of the seventeenth century like Chillingworth and the men of power of the nineteenth century like Hawthorne: the former were fearful of the antinomians who, like Hester, claimed thorough individualism and direct communication with God, and the latter were cautious against those who were influenced by the effect of revolutions in European countries around 1848, and those who imbibed radical concepts of freedom, including proto-feminism and the dismantling of the family. Therefore, the author lets Chillingworth protect the patriarchy and its foundation of the heterosexual norm and sexism—in a paradoxical way—by robbing him of heterosexuality, letting him remain a bachelor, and uniting him homosexually with Dimmesdale.