

**WEAPONIZING THE EYES IN *THE MINISTER'S BLACK VEIL*
BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE**

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Abstract: While developing the plot of a literary story, writers use all kinds of devices such as symbolism, just to name but one, to carry their message home. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Minister's Black Veil" (1836), the plot line revolves around the Black Veil hiding the face of Reverend Hooper. Many critics, mostly from the 20th century, have assessed this story by focusing on its subject matter, the Black Veil. Seldom have they focused their analysis on what is behind the veil, Hooper's eyes. Throughout this short story, the use of the eyes is omnipresent in terms of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and colors. Be it "a nearer view," "a shuddering gaze," "a glimpse," "a glance," "a stare," "a weak sight," "to perceive," "to observe," ... the eyes are always involved. In this study, the analysis shifts the focus from the Black Veil only to the eyes and establishes the links between the veil and the eyes. This article aims at analyzing how the eyes are used as powerful weapons to impose one's will to the other, and the veil as a shield to absorb and dissolve intrusive attacks. Structuralism, Post-structuralism, and Psychoanalytic literary theory constitute the theoretical framework of this study.

Keywords: Eyes, Black Veil, Mirror, Weapon, Shield.

**L'ARMEMENT DES YEUX DANS *THE MINISTER'S BLACK VEIL* DE
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.**

Résumé : Tout en développant l'intrigue d'une histoire littéraire, les écrivains utilisent toutes sortes de dispositifs tels que le symbolisme, pour n'en citer que celui-ci, pour transmettre leur message. Dans *The Minister's Black Veil* de Nathaniel Hawthorne (1836), l'intrigue tourne autour du voile noir cachant le visage du révérend Hooper. De nombreux critiques, pour la plupart du 20^e siècle, ont évalué cette histoire en se concentrant sur son sujet central, le voile noir. Ils ont rarement concentré leur analyse sur ce qui se cache derrière le voile, les yeux de Hooper. Tout au long de cet essai, l'utilisation des yeux est omniprésente en termes de noms, de verbes, d'adjectifs et de couleurs. Que ce soit « une vue plus proche », « un regard tremblant », « un aperçu », « un regard », « une vue faible », « percevoir », « observer », ... les yeux sont toujours impliqués. Dans cette étude, l'analyse déplace l'attention du voile noir uniquement vers les yeux et établit le dialogue entre le voile et les yeux. Cet article vise à démontrer comment les yeux sont utilisés comme de puissantes armes pour imposer la volonté de soi à autrui, et le voile comme un bouclier pour absorber et dissoudre les attaques intrusives. Le structuralisme, le poststructuralisme et la théorie littéraire psychanalytique constituent le cadre théorique de cette étude.

Mots-clés : yeux, voile noir, miroir, arme, bouclier.

Introduction

Hawthorne's *The Minister's Black Veil* has been critically assessed over the century, but because "... the veil fosters confusion and antagonism," (Saunders, 2012, p. 420), and it "is more complex than it appears on the surface," (Santangelo, 1970, p. 67), it is vital to note that "By allowing readers to see how their predecessors have looked at, into, through, behind, and around "The Minister's Black Veil," this commentary is intended to illuminate all the explored potentials and to generate new insights and perspectives" (Newman, 1987, pp. 8-9). One of these predecessors (critics), William Bysshe Stein (1955, p.392), has it that "the parable of the black veil is the story of betrayal, of a man of God turned antichrist".

Another critic, Ronald E. Sheasby (2001), put it this way: "'The Minister's Black Veil," narrated omnisciently by an author who omits as much as he describes, is the story of the Reverend Mr. Hooper, a New England Puritan who arrives for meeting one Sunday wearing a mysterious double-folded black veil" (p. 385). And again, Newman observes that "when readers look at "The Minister's Black Veil" the text becomes a mirror wherein they see reflections of themselves, of their concerns and their preoccupations" (p. 7). Still there is room for Tim Deines (2005) to inquire:

What is the reader to do with this tragic information in the footnote about an accidental killing by a historical person, whose reasons for wearing his veil, moreover, "had a different import" from the ones that concern our Parson Hooper?

Deines (2005, p.181)

And one more aspect that needs to be borne in mind is that "Hawthorne inherited the psychology, but not theology nor the morality of his Puritan forebears" (Fogle, 1948, p. 344). While some of these critics focus their insight on the very nature of the conflicting relationship between Reverend Hooper and God, the nature of the conflict in the story, others look for its meaning, and others are still puzzled by the para-text elements. "New England Puritanism as it existed in the past and remained a force in Hawthorne's own time" (Miller, 1988, p. 18), the *Black Veil* seriously calls into question its self-righteousness and its predestination principles. Robert E. Morsberger (1973, p.456) argues that to Puritans "Anything less than absolute perfection was absolute corruption". This rigid approach to theology has underestimated the permanent sinful nature of mankind, and even overlooked its mazy implications. The Puritan community with its demands became a social pond wherein hypocrisy, untruth, and falseness reign. The *Black Veil* has become that permanent stumbling block to the New England Puritan community in this short story. On this issue, Samuel Coale (1993, p.84) insists that "The image takes the people's gaze and becomes a fetish; the story is replete with gazing. And it is precisely the gaze of the people and the gaze behind the veil that this study is about. It seeks to analyze how Hawthorne uses the eyes as a power weapon to subdue the

other, and how the Black Veil operates both as a lens to gauge the Puritan society and a shield to absorb and dissolve the attacks (interpretations, rumors...) thereof.

Judith P. Saunders observes that “The protagonist’s purposes have been analyzed, for example, from historical, biographical, theological, psychoanalytical, intertextual, receptionist, and semiotic perspectives” (p. 420). In the context of the current study, psychoanalytic literary theory, structuralism, and poststructuralism serve as bedrock to the analysis. Psychoanalytic criticism is applied because the story involves the Id, the Superego, and the Ego; structuralism is used because the story, a parable, nurtures the concepts of Signifier and Signified, and revolves around binary oppositions; and poststructuralism is called for because Reverend Hooper challenges the existing structure of Puritan society on one hand, and the multiple but non-static meaning (yet to be constructed) of the Black Veil to different people

1. The genesis of the Black Veil: Weapon and Shield

The genesis of the Black elaborates on period before Reverend Hooper decides to put on that piece of crape, the serious reflections he conducted and the expectations and the challenges he foresaw before accepting to don the veil. It also scrutinizes the nature and the function of the eyes in this story, the veil, and its function at a personal as well as at community level. Moreover, this section examines the influence of reflective surface on the protagonist.

1.1 Hooper Discovers Man’s Sinful Nature as a Minister

The job of a minister or a preacher as a shepherd over souls is extremely demanding. The shepherd must constantly be on the alert, on the watch as to ensure both the physical and the spiritual development of his “sheep.” He must see to it that each “sheep” behaves well in the eyes of the Lord, their Maker. This task is highly demanding because the minister has the same nature as the sheep he is to lead. This is the situation of Reverend Hooper whose job is far much complex due to the rigid and uncompromising Puritan doctrine. Hooper has certainly committed a sin, but this is not our concern here. That sin makes him realize one thing: if the minister who is the guardian of spiritual values (well trained) can fall in sin, how easily would that be for the sheep? With the sin, Reverend Hooper has lost his innocence and clearly seen the true sinful nature of mankind. As he realizes the situation, he must change strategy to save his sheep. “Mr. Hooper had the reputation of a good preacher, but not an energetic one: he strove to win his people heavenward by mild, persuasive influences, rather than to drive them thither by the thunders of the Word.” (Hawthorne, 1836, p.3) Here at least we can see that Hooper used gentle and persuasive means to uplift his people. Through the Freudian psychoanalytic approach, one can realize that the minister discovered that what the rigid Puritan norms (the Superego) demands is too high for the sinful nature (the Id) of mankind, and as a result people (the Ego) turned either hypocritical or fanatic. So, Hooper wants the Puritans to reconsider their social norms (Superego) taking into account the very

sinful nature of their Id in order to have a more balanced, convenient, and truthful Ego.

Reverend Hooper felt like what John Bunyan (1956, p.28) explained: "I saw that I wanted a perfect righteousness to present me without fault before God, and this righteousness was nowhere to be found, but in the person of Jesus Christ". So, if no one is that holy, why do Puritans behave as if they were better than others? To Hooper they failed to realize the hypocritical life they were leading. Santangelo anew observes that "Initially the recognition of evil leads to isolation which then causes subject to realize that he is a unique moral personality and to feel himself cut off from human community." (p. 61) Hooper's deep thoughts were at that level. But it is very dangerous as we will develop the idea. "The problem at this point is to reintegrate and to strike an adequate balance of the head and the heart. The worst effect of isolation leads to the Unpardonable Sin." (Santangelo, p.61) Hopper became what William James called "The Sick Soul" (Morsberger, 1973, p. 460). Because "Evil so permeates the soul that he can see the world only in black" (Santangelo, 1970, pp.61-62). By seeing the world in black, which is the true sinful nature of mankind that they seem to ignore, the minister puts himself in great danger to rescue them. On this issue, Thomas F. Walsh (1959) reveals that:

The Minister's Black Veil" is a psychological study of a man whose mistaken notions about the nature of evil prompt him to attempt the salvation of his fellow men by a method which seriously endangers his own salvation: the donning of the black veil.

Thomas F. Walsh (1959, p.404)

The veil has an aspect of self-punishment of a certain secrete sin. Robert E. Morsberger (1973, p.458) maintained that "There is an extremism in this unreasonable self-abasement that is a spiritual flagellation and may be an inverted pride". Yet, Reverend Hooper strongly believes that his method will force the Puritans to reconsider the very premises of their spiritual lives. Such were the thoughts of the minister after realizing his sinful nature and that of every man. Donning the veil has multiple functions, among which the hiding of his eyes where his fellow could read guilt, and shame, and teaching them a life lesson on their true sinful nature.

1.2 *The eyes and the veil*

The eyes and the veil are two strongly related symbols in this short story though the veil overshadows the eyes. In the context of this study the focus is rather on the role of the eyes, and the dialogue they establish with the veil. As J. Hillis Miller (1988, p.16) observed, the Minister "has covered over all but two of those features or marks by which we ordinarily interpret a person's mind and feelings from his or her face". Reverend Hooper covers all his face except for the mouth and the chin. He could have hidden his forehead, nose and mouth as Ninja and Special

Forces do, leaving free access to his eyes. Or he could have masked his nose and mouth like the case of Covid-19 face mask. He could have put on a white veil, but he deliberately donned a black veil to hide his eyes. By doing so, “the detached narrator does not lead us into his mind; voice is muted, and his motives remain hidden behind the mask; he has little dialogue, but twice when he speaks, it is in desperation (Morsberger, p. 460). Because Hooper knows people can have direct access to his mind and decipher his motives through his eyes.

-The nature of the eyes

“Eyes are probably the most important symbolic sensory organ. They can represent clairvoyance, omniscience, and/or a gateway into the soul. (Jaffe, et al. 2001) This account on the eyes is corroborated by Simon Baron-Cohen when he speculates that it “is probably what gives us such a strong impression that the eyes are ‘windows to the soul’” (Saunders, p. 422). For the others to read this “language of the eyes” and be able to judge him is what Hooper fears most. That is why he refuses to any mortal to see his eyes and they are unworthy of judging him since they all are sinners, maybe some are even worse than him. Reading Reverend Hooper’s eyes is very crucial, especially to his fiancée, Elizabeth. “What grievous affliction hath befallen you,” she earnestly inquired, “that you should thus darken your eyes forever?” (Hawthorne, 1836, p. 8) But “In refusing to meet her eyes, he undermines an important mechanism for assessing commonality of purpose and sympathy. Even as he reiterates his devotion to Elizabeth, Hooper shuts down an important communication route, deliberately and permanently” (Saunders, p. 426). Hooper deems it necessary to protect himself from the eyes of the others before he can save them.

-The eyes as weapons

Trudier Harris (1978, p.54) asserts that “Eye contact is both real and symbolic confrontation, be it for purposes of communion, seduction, or conquest”. To have the upper hand Hooper prevents this eye contact because he is using them as weapons to impose and dictate his will. Using his eyes as weapons, “Hooper renders those around him less “powerful” – more vulnerable – in their relations with himself. He has reduced their ability to understand and anticipate his actions and, as the story’s narrator points out, they “don’t like” this disadvantaged position” (Saunders, 2012, p.423). Reverend Hooper is a shrewd strategist who has already sorted out his weaponry before starting the war on the Puritan community. The veil serves as a shield in the war and a symbol of the lesson he wants to teach them.

-The veil as a shield

It is commonly accepted that “Looking someone in the eye is a western custom of honesty. In this way covering of the eyes, by wearing a helmet, sunglasses, etc. can mean mystery, not seeing the complete truth, or deceit...” (Jaffe, et al. 2001)

Knowing that the eyes are a gate to his soul, Reverend Hooper “effectively prevents members of his community from observing, monitoring, and interpreting his gaze” (Saunders, 2012, p. 423). Here the veil is used as a shield to prevent the other from effectively reading his soul in his eyes. This is what prompts Ronald E. Sheasby (2001) to argue that:

Hooper, having committed some sort of secret sin and finding himself aware of similar sins on the part of others, dons the veil for a dual purpose: to shield others from seeing his secret sin, but also to shield himself from the secret sins of others.

Ronald E. Sheasby (2001, p.386)

This veil-shield is designed to ensure his security in the community. Moreover, because “The eye often means judgment and authority,” (Jaffe, et al. 2001), Hooper cannot afford venturing in his newly discovered sinful and probably hypocritical community with no security mechanism. He is very aware of the eyes being a weapon and a source of unfathomable powers. Since the veil-shield is well set, people feel insecure and project negative thoughts on the minister. Samuel Coale (1993, p.83) noted that “The experience of the veil itself, apart from speculation, suggests dread, horror, terror, and fear, something in league with corpses and the burial ground”. And this is exactly what the whole atmosphere in the story is all about: negative energies. Even the doctor of Milford felt the same way: “The black veil, though it covers only our pastor’s face, throws its influence over his whole person, and makes him ghostlike from head to foot” (Hawthorne, p. 4). The shield spreads all over his body, a perfect refuge.

Yet, other critics contended the veil is the mark of alienation. Santangelo (1970, p.64) claims that “The alienation works two ways. The veil covers his face and metaphorically hides the true self”. Alienation or not, the veil is an integrated part of Hooper’s security mechanism. On the other hand, the veil “forces Father Hooper to see the world in a different perspective. The black veil forces him to see everything in darkness, certainly a single vision” (p. 64). This to Hooper is the actual image of society. Veiling the eyes is, in short, shielding Hooper’s Achille’s heel, so the minister could easily and effectively deliver his blows to the Puritan community as to teach them a life lesson: You are all sinners, no more no less.

1.3 *The mirror*

Hooper’s eye-veil security mechanism is meant to subjugate the Puritans. But this system shows some limit on reflexive surfaces. “In passing mirrors and looking at his reflection in the water, he also shudders in horror. The original dread that impelled him to wear the black veil reawakens when he sees himself as others see him” (Santangelo, p. 64). Reflexive surfaces are natural weapon-shield elements that fire back at the minister with the same intensity his gaze delivers. The only weapon able to neutralize his eye-veil weaponry is the mirror or any reflexive surface. At the

wedding, Hooper could not stand to see his own image in the looking glass. "At that instant, catching a glimpse of his figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others" (Hawthorne, p.6). The reflect of his own image is the most power weapon that seriously disturbs him. This also suggest that Reverend Hooper has surely committed a sin that will later consider in this paper.

2. Sunday morning, afternoon and evening

Now that the power and the role of the eyes and the veil have been assessed, let us consider their implication. This section scrutinizes how the minister imposes his ideas of the sinful nature of every human being and his attitude on the Puritan community.

2.1 The sunday morning service

Here goes Hooper with the veil (shield) on his face. And a profound shock spread across the congregation. This is the conflict or the problem in the story. On one hand, the conflict starts with the veil. In a binary opposition structuralist approach, Hooper is opposed to the Puritan society (individual vs. society), the black veil to brightness of the day (sun day), certitude of knowing their pastor to the doubts and uncertainty the veil project. On the other hand, the veil in a poststructuralist view, means different things to different people. Meaning is dynamic rather than static and ready-made to decode. At the first sight of the veil everyone is searching for its meaning for themselves. This process of binary opposition and longing to get the meaning of the veil "involves both Hooper and his congregation, the desire to read the veil as the specific sign of some specific reason for it, and the experience of gazing upon the veil itself, with all the effects that it creates" (Coale, p. 81). It is important to note the congregation has also used their eyes to fire on the veil. There is a social pressure on the minister as much as he is a matter of discomfort to them. It was a dialogue of pressures. The eyes were at war. The minister was victorious because of his veil (shield). The narrator said, "Such was the effect of this simple piece of crape, that more than one woman of delicate nerves was forced to leave the meeting-house.... the pale-faced congregation was almost as fearful a sight to the minister, as his black veil to them" (Hawthorne, 1863, p.3). The minister read the Holy Book this time with a dark sight which is the sight of conscious sinner. The congregation is also in viewed in black, their true sinful nature. The sermon that day was about secret sin Hooper invited them to realize. Though he probably committed a sin, Hooper could simply go on like the other member of the community and no one may find. But because of his position and having a sharper consciousness, he wants this hypocrisy to stop. Behind his veil-shield "A subtle power was breathed into his words" (p. 3). And he was serious on this issue of secret sin to a point that "Each member of the congregation, the most innocent girl, and the man of hardened breast, felt as if the

preacher had crept upon them, behind his awful veil, and discovered their hoarded iniquity of deed or thought" (p. 3). He could not do so if the veil was not his shield. This is the beginning of Hooper's lesson to holy self-righteous Puritans. Thomas Walsh (1959) observes that it "is one thing that he should make the truly guilty feel their guilt, but quite another to transfer his own neurotic guilt complex to the innocent, making them feel as if they were hoarding iniquity of deed and thought in their hearts" (p. 405). But to Hooper, there is no innocent person in matter of the sinful nature of mankind.

2.2 *The funeral*

To Wilford people, the minister's black veil means different things in different circumstance. At the church that Sunday morning, they deem it inappropriate. At the funeral the same day, "It was now an appropriate emblem" (Hawthorne, p. 5). So, they easily associate the black veil with death and negative energy. Yet, there was almost no tension nor pressure at the funeral as it was during the sermon in the morning. When he was honoring the dead person "the veil hung straight down from his forehead, so that, if her eyelids had not been closed forever, the dead maiden might have seen his face. Could Mr. Hooper be fearful of her glance, that he so hastily caught back the black veil?" (Hawthorne, p. 5). His security mechanism almost failed him. He became shield-less, therefore vulnerable, even to the dead. The narrator claims that "A person who watched the interview between the dead and living, scrupled not to affirm, that, at the instant when the clergyman's features were disclosed, the corpse had slightly shuddered, rustling the shroud and muslin cap, though the countenance retained the composure of death" (p. 5). So, the veil is not only his shield but also his refuge and stronghold in times of threats and danger. At the funeral, Reverend Hooper did not fail to seize the opportunity to lecture them through his prayer. "The people trembled, though they but darkly understood him when he prayed that they, and himself, and all of mortal race, might be ready, as he trusted this young maiden had been, for the dreadful hour that should snatch the veil from their faces" (p. 5). The veil on the face of Puritans is secret sins they keep hiding from others through a hypocritical life.

2.3 *The wedding*

The third time the minister shows in public at the wedding where people were not expecting him with the black veil. "The company at the wedding awaited his arrival with impatience, trusting that the strange awe, which had gathered over him throughout the day, would now be dispelled. But such was not the result" (Hawthorne, pp. 5-6). People began to understand that something more serious is going on. At the funeral, the veil puts no pressure on them, but a black veil at a wedding...? This is the highest form disrespect and anti-conformism ever! It was "the same horrible black veil, which had added deeper gloom to the funeral, and could portend nothing but evil to the wedding. Such was its immediate effect on the

guests that a cloud seemed to have rolled duskiily from beneath the black crape and dimmed the light of the candles” (p. 6). There is tension in the place. Strangely enough, when the bride and bridegroom stood in front of the minister, the bride’s appearance has changed. “the bride’s cold fingers quivered in the tremulous hand of the bridegroom, and her deathlike paleness caused a whisper that the maiden who had been buried a few hours before was come from her grave to be married” (p. 6). The comparison between the bride and the dead lady is not innocuous. Is the bride just afraid of the black veil or does she have an affair with the minister? Her death-like attitude is too strange to be linked to the veil only. Was this the minister’s secret sin? During the wedding reception, he spilt the wine glass upon seeing his own reflection in the mirror.

3. Career Success but personal failure

In this section of the paper the focus is laid on Hooper’s career success and on his failure as an individual. We noted that the veil has moved through various circumstances with a firm attitude from his bearer. Whatever situation, or whoever is in his audience, the minister would not remove this black veil. The Black Veil has become his trademark. And “The veil survives the changes of time after its meanings have turned to dust” (Carnochan, 1969, p. 192). But as the veil resist to time and space, its meaning grows deeper, darker, and gloomier. Saunders claims that “At first *astonishment*, *amazement*, and *confusion* prevail ...; then *mystery* and *obscurity* begin to make themselves felt ...; *horror* and “dread” soon follow ... (p. 423). Overall, “The veil has varying effects upon different minds and different levels of society” (Fogle, 1948, p. 346)

3.1 *The black veil and the puritans*

-The Milford people

The narrator reports that “The next day, the whole village of Milford talked of little else than Parson Hooper’s black veil” (Hawthorne, p.6). As there was no explanation from Hooper, people’s head was full of questions. “What is he feeling? What does he feel toward them? What plans is he forming? What actions might he undertake?” (Saunders, p. 423). The real issue is the veil directly accuses everyone. “Hooper, of course, in confessing all confesses nothing specific, with the result that his wearing the veil accuses everyone as much as himself” (Morsberger, p.459). And people are not at ease in his presence. To them, only “Thieves, kidnappers, and other criminals habitually mask their faces to hide their identity and thus evade capture and punishment. Often the masking itself serves to increase the terror of victims, who find themselves at the mercy of unknown and unknowable persons” (p. 425). At least if they could read his eyes, they would be appeased. ““Our parson has gone mad!” cried Goodman Gray, following him across the threshold” (Hawthorne, p. 2). Moreover, “None, as on former occasions, aspired to the honor of walking by their pastor’s side” (p. 4). People were afraid of the minister. The narrator highlights the

reaction of women to the veil. ““Truly do I,” replied the lady; “and I would not be alone with him for the world. I wonder he is not afraid to be alone with himself!”” (Hawthorne, p. 4). This woman’s “emotional” reaction is in a binary opposition to her husband’s. ““Something must surely be amiss with Mr. Hooper’s intellects,” observed her husband, the physician of the village” (p. 4). Not only this, but Hawthorne also opposes adults’ reaction to children. The latter were imitating the minister. “The children babbled of it on their way to school. One imitative little imp covered his face with an old black handkerchief, thereby so affrighting his playmates that the panic seized himself, and he well-nigh lost his wits by his own waggery” (p. 6). Curiously enough, as the meaning of the veil grows deeper, darker, and gloomier, children’s reaction moves accordingly. This fires back on the minister as well. “It grieved him, to the very depth of his kind heart, to observe how the children fled from his approach, breaking up their merriest sports, while his melancholy figure was yet afar off” (Hawthorne, p. 10). The opposition between the minister and the children resides in the fact they are innocent and not even aware of what evil mankind is capable of. The children’s attitude is also a natural element that fire bullets that easily pierce his shield. In addition, the minister has a strong influence on dying. “Dying sinners cried aloud for Mr. Hooper and would not yield their breath till he appeared; though ever, as he stooped to whisper consolation, they shuddered at the veiled face so near their own” (p. 10). Here again, it is important to remind the reader that the exchange between the minister and the others is basically through the eyes. And to assess both the minister and the Puritan, the reader sees their own eyes as well.

-Elizabeth

Due to their incapacity to inquire from Hooper about the veil, all hopes turned to Elizabeth, his fiancée. She was sure this a very simple issue and she can remove that black veil. Here too there is a binary opposition between man and woman. Elizabeth has utilized the extreme and ultimate weapon on Hooper. ““No,” said she aloud, and smiling, “there is nothing terrible in this piece of crape, except that it hides a face which I am always glad to look upon. Come, good sir, let the sunshine from behind the cloud. First lay aside your black veil: then tell me why you put it on”” (Hawthorne, pp. 7-8). Her attack is well coated in layers of flattery, but Hooper would not lower his guard. The veil-shield holds firm. One can see the image of Eve trying to seduce Adam into sin. Only this Adam (Hooper) is too aware of sin. “For a few moments she appeared lost in thought, considering, probably, what new methods might be tried to withdraw her lover from so dark a fantasy, which, if it had no other meaning, was perhaps a symptom of mental disease” (Hawthorne, pp. 8-9). After many strong but cunning attempts, Elizabeth realizes that she cannot change him. “Though of a firmer character than his own, the tears rolled down her cheeks” (pp. 8-9). From this last attempt nobody ever tried to ask a single question about the veil.

3.2 *Gaining popularity*

Fogle (1948) observes that "In one respect, however, the veil makes Mr. Hooper a more efficient clergyman, for it "enabled him to sympathize with all dark affections" (p. 347). The narrator explains this clearly. "Among all its bad influences, the black veil had the one desirable effect of making its wearer a very efficient clergyman" (Hawthorne, p. 10). Hooper has become "a man of awful power over souls" (p. 10). And Reverend Hooper has become very popular. "Strangers came long distances to attend service at his church, with the mere idle purpose of gazing at his figure, because it was forbidden them to behold his face" (pp. 10-11). He was even appointed to preach the election sermon during Governor Belcher's administration. "Covered with his black veil, he stood before the chief magistrate, the council, and the representatives, and wrought so deep an impression that the legislative measures of that year were characterized by all the gloom and piety of our earliest ancestral sway" (p. 11).

Hooper's career success keeps growing. "As years wore on, shedding their snows above his sable veil, he acquired a name throughout the New England churches, and they called him Father Hooper" (Hawthorne, p. 11). Two points can be raised from this quote. The first is the binary opposition between the white color of the snow and the sable color (black) of the veil. This reveals the permanent tension that exists in the whole story from start to end. The other point is that Hawthorne has brought a Roman Catholic attribute by calling a Puritan and Protestant minister "Father." This exposes the author's admiration for the Catholic Church where the confession of sins is well rooted. As Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1899) highlights in an interview with Mrs. Hawthorne on how people with hidden would come to confess secret sins to her husband. "This happened, she said, "after the publication of *The Scarlet Letter*, which made them regard him as father-confessor for all hidden sins see him and unburden their souls" (p. 2). That is the image the writer hides behind "Father Hooper". Saunders also condones Hooper's attitude when he explains that "Because he is a spiritual and ethical leader in his community, there is professional justification for his decision to assume the function of a living sermon. His role as clergyman requires him to encourage critical self-examination" (pp. 427-428). This is self-sacrificing, and it participated in his popularity and career success.

3.3 *Personal failure*

Although Reverend Hooper has a brilliant and successful career, he fails as an individual. This view is supported by Samuel Coale. "As for the Reverend Mr. Hooper, he succeeds as a minister but fails as a man. In confusing his role or function with his inner self- he makes that self an object lesson for his people by wearing the veil and in doing so rejects Elizabeth" (pp. 81-82). And Santangelo reinforces this by sustaining that the "human veil has a dual function. It makes color, and it traps him within himself. and cuts himself off from natural world" (p. 62).

-Unexpected results

When Reverend Hooper confuses his function and his own self in donning the Black Veil, he has become a miserable man. Thomas Walsh (1959) remarked that "... ironically, the veil's effect on the minister is almost opposite to that which he intended" (p. 405). Victor Strandberg (1968) added that "The effect of the veil on the minister himself, then, is as appalling as it is to others" (p. 568). The ironic results of the Black Veil reveal the minister's personal flaws. Earle Stibitz (1962, p.182) observes that "This is the sin Hooper commits by his self-righteous and self-deceptive insistence upon wearing the veil". The minister is a bit too ", which makes him take such an extreme risky decision. Hooper's intention was laudable but by veil-shielding his weapon-eyes, he subjugates the whole community. They extremely hate their vulnerability in his presence. And this is why "[...] with the multitude, good Mr. Hooper was irreparably a bugbear. He could not walk the street with any peace of mind, so conscious was he that the gentle and timid would turn aside to avoid him, and that others would make it a point of hardihood to throw themselves in his way" (Hawthorne, p. 9). Since of the Milforders could no more stand this vulnerability and the gloom, and the silence Hooper imposed on them through the veil, they display their boldness by throwing themselves in his way. The narrator announces that "The impertinence of the latter class compelled him to give up his customary walk at sunset to the burial ground; for when he leaned pensively over the gate, there would always be faces behind the gravestones, peeping at his black veil." (pp. 9-10) As years went by, the veil lost its power over people, and people's attitude and behavior fire back at the minister.

-Ambiguity of two extremes

Nathaniel Hawthorne has also shown ambiguity, ambivalence, and antithesis throughout the story. Thomas Walsh argued that "The light-dark imagery of the tale clearly reveals what harm the veil works in Mr. Hooper's soul" (p. 405). This binary opposition is further exposed as people referred to the minister as "good Mr. Hooper." His goodness opposes the gloom of the veil. The antithesis in this resides in the very opposing nature of "goodness" and "gloom." Reverend Hooper, though not sure of his own fate, still hangs feverishly to hope. This hope is suggested by his smile. "The minister's smile is mentioned eight times and is associated with the light image" (Walsh, 1959, p. 406). It is only this smile-light imagery that keeps the minister alive all these years.

The veil-dark imagery is balanced against the smile-light imagery throughout the tale, and from it arises the true ambiguity of the tale: we can never be sure of the minister's final destiny because the minister is not sure of it.

Walsh (1959, p.406)

Ambiguity is a technique used by the writer to generate a permanent suspense which keep the story interesting and moving. For if the reader known the final destiny of the minister, the story would lose its literary values and appraisal. As a matter of fact, Hooper's smile "[...] indicates that he has not been completely enveloped by the terrifying black veil which has multiplied his doubts about his own salvation" (Walsh, p. 406). All in all, Reverend Hooper in discovering and understanding the sinful nature of himself and the others sets up life philosophy. "The authentic self could be established only in isolation and in blackness and through loving service to humanity, not in personal happiness" (Santangelo, p. 66). But personal happiness should not enter in binary opposition and antithesis with service to humanity. One can enjoy personal happiness in serving humanity. And this is even the highest form of personal happiness. As this study has come to an end, it is of a tremendous significance to note that one crucial value is missing in Hooper's noble life philosophy: forgiveness. Morsberger (1973, p.461) complains that "What is missing in Father Hooper's flawed Christianity is forgiveness". Because we are sinful beings, mankind forgiveness is that mercy bringing us from the bottomless pits of our negative undertakings.

Conclusion

At the end of this study, one can clearly see how the use of gazes (eyes) is rampant in the short story. Nathaniel s Hawthorne has used the eyes of Hooper as power weapon to subdue and imposes his vision to the Puritan community while using the Black Veil as a shield to neutralize all the community gaze-attacks on the minister. Psychoanalysis has helped to show that the rigid Puritan Doctrine (the Superego) prompted people to be hypocritical as all of them are perpetual sinners, which makes Hooper to challenge its grounding structures. Hooper's Ego is tormented the fiercely conflict between his Id and the Puritan Superego. Due to the fact the Black Veil is a symbol of which the meaning has to be found, the poststructuralist approach reveals that the reactions of men, women, children, the Governor, the Council assembly differ from one other because meaning is a dynamic issue and is never static. The good nature of Reverend Hooper, the smile-light imagery on one hand, the gloom of the Black Veil, the conflict between Hooper and the Puritan society on the other hand induce the choice of structuralist approach to scrutinize these binary oppositions. This study has highlighted the fact that one individual has the power to challenge and even change social norms. It has also shown that a human being is mysterious and deceiving being who can never be thoroughly known. The question is "Do we really know the people we live with?" We can read and interpret messages in the eyes of people but fail to know who they really are. In addition, our sense organs, namely the eyes and the voice, are not mere communication tools, but powerful weapons to impose one's will to the other. In this way, Hawthorne's *The Minister's Black Veil* invites the reader to gauge the social norms of his community before abiding by them.

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