

# Repression and Rebellion: An Analysis of “The Minister’s Black Veil” from Deleuze and Guattari’s Schizoanalysis

**Ma Xiaohui**

School of Foreign Languages and Literature, Shandong University, 5 Hongjia Building, Jinan City,  
Shandong Province, 250100, P.R.China  
E-mail: [jiangyuanaboutwork@163.com](mailto:jiangyuanaboutwork@163.com)

**Published: 30 April 2021**

**Copyright © Xiaohui.**

## **Abstract**

This article aims to tease out Nathaniel Hawthorne’s short story “The Minister’s Black Veil” from the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari’s schizoanalysis which developed from anti-Oedipus, especially the “line of flight” method, to discuss Mr. Hooper’s repression and rebellion. Through a detailed analysis of rhizome, “lose your face”, the body without organs and deterritorialization, this study draws a map of “line of flight”. While Hawthorne’s creation Mr. Hooper is constantly repressed in the whole process of life-experimentation, he is undoubtedly a rebel in the light of schizoanalysis who manages to liberate himself from oppressive surroundings by the method of line of flight.

**Key Words:** Deleuze; Schizoanalysis; Line of Flight

“The Minister’s Black Veil” is a short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne in which the Puritan reverend of a small New England town begins wearing a black veil. The Reverend Mr. Hooper in the tale puzzled readers for Hooper’s words and actions often seem deliberately obscure as well as the symbolic meaning of his black veil. Many critics, starting from the analysis of original sin and then extended to use Freud’s psychoanalysis to explore Mr. Hooper’s behavior, regards the repression of desire as a fundamental precondition of Mr. Hooper’s mental development. However, by means of anti-oedipus, Deleuze and Guattari animadvert on the irrational repression of desire induced by psychoanalysis. As a result, they advocate schizoanalysis in order to clear up the negative effects caused by psychoanalysis. In Deleuze and Guattari’s view, the process of literary creation is the line of flight. “To leave, to escape, is to trace a line” (*Dialogues* 36). In *Dialogues* with Claire Parent, he clearly expresses the true sense of the line of flight, “The highest aim of literature, according to Lawrence, is ‘To leave, to leave, to escape...to cross the horizon, enter into another life’ (*Dialogues* 36). According to the concept of Deleuze’s theory of schizophrenia, the “line of flight” method in literary criticism are specifically refined, which mainly include rhizome, “lose your face”, the body without organs, deterritorialization. This essay aims to tease out Nathaniel Hawthorne’s short story from the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari’s schizoanalysis, especially the “line of flight” method, to discuss Mr. Hooper’s repression and rebellion.

## I. Rhizome

The biological term “rhizome” describes a form of plant that can extend itself through its underground horizontal tuber-like root system and develop new plants. “Rhizome” describes the connections that occur between the most disparate and the most similar of objects, places and people, a metaphorical concept created by Deleuze and Guattari to describe an irregular extensive model without hierarchies. Rhizome is an open system which has six properties.

In the story, Mr. Hooper has been the most ambiguous protagonist and he is understood as a mystery. In the view of schizoanalysis, Mr. Hooper can be perceived from the perspective of Rhizome for being in a minority. As a minoritarian who thinks rhizomatically, Mr. Hooper reflects some principles of Rhizome.

### 1.1 Principle of connection

First, principle of connection means that any point of Rhizome can connect with the others regardless of time and place. Mr. Hooper, a gentleman, of about thirty, a age which should be full of virility and masculinity. However, he “walked onward, at a low and quiet pace, stooping somewhat, and looking on the ground” (Hawthorne 4). This is a kind of morbid gait and posture, utterly contrary to what a man of about thirty should be like. Mr. Hooper’s gait does not accord with his age, but from the perspective of rhizome they are connected. Besides, at the wedding ceremony, “Mr. Hooper raised a glass of wine to his lips, wishing happiness to the new-married couple in a strain of mild pleasantry that ought to have brightened the features of the guests, like a cheerful gleam from the hearth”, but at that moment, “his frame shuddered, his lips grew white, he spilled the untasted wine upon the carpet,

and rushed froth into the darkness” (Hawthorne 14). A wedding ceremony should be happy and joyous, and as an invited wedding host and revered minister, Mr. Hooper should toast the new couple of their happy marriage. However, he spills the wine and runs away into the darkness. Mr. Hooper’s behavior does not accord with his identity, yet from the perspective of rhizome, they are connected. Mr. Hooper thinks and behaves in the mode of Rhizome. His wearing the veil, spilling the wine, refusing the negotiation and working diligently are all guided by his rhizomatic thinking.

## 1.2 Metaphor of cartography

Second, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the growth and extension of Rhizome is also a metaphor of cartography. It is the result of the shredded map or genetic mutation. Cartography principle reflected on Mr. Hooper means that Mr. Hooper’s life is constructed like a map, shattering and then pieced together. Deleuze says that “a map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back “ ‘to the same’”. It means that from any perspective or entryway, Mr. Hooper’s life map can be constructed, and his life will finally come to the same conclusion. Mr. Hooper’s life is a map constructed with several fragments. The first segment is about his preach. His sermon topic concerns the secret sins that people hide from their closest associations, even from their own consciousness, forgetting that God is omniscient. People murmur about Hooper’s dreadfully changed appearance, questioning if it is truly his face behind the veil or if he has lost his sanity. The second segment is about the funeral of a young lady. At this funeral, parishioners suspect that Mr. Hooper is wearing the black veil because of some secret sin committed while the girl was still alive. The third segment is about the wedding. At the wedding, the minister’s black veil, which had fit in well with the funerals’ mourning, casts an evil pall over the festivities. The fourth segment is about the inquiry. In the end, Mr. Hooper refuses to reveal the veil or give any explanation. The fact that the black veil alienates him from the parishioners can be concluded from each fragment of the map of Hooper’s life.

## II. Face

“Face” generated by an abstract machine Deleuze and Guattari call “faciality”, refers to a series of social organizations that appear due to the change of social economic structure and power structure, which consists of two parts, the white wall and the black hole. Therefore, for Deleuze and Guattari, they call a “face” as a white wall/ black hole system. The feature of the white wall that represents the collective universality replaces the subjectivity of the individual in the black hole. A social or psychic black hole can either trap subjectivity in its deadly grip or provided energy which enable liberating lines of flight (Young 49). Deleuze and Guattari points out the significance of black hole by “subjectification is never without a black hole in which it lodges its consciousness, passion, and redundancies” (TP 167).

The veil that so distinguishes him from Mr. Hooper’s fellow villagers strikes fear in the hearts of all and causes them to dread his approach and to withdraw their friendship and companionship from him. Undoubtedly, he becomes completely isolated. In his interview with Elizabeth, the Reverend Mr.

Hooper suggests that all mortals could cover their faces just as he has because all have some secret sin or sorrows. What Mr. Hooper suggests is similar to Deleuze's discussion about "Lose your face" for the reason that "Your secret can always be seen on your face and in your eyes" (*Dialogues* 47). In fact, Mr. Hooper gets rid of the constraint of social collective cognition, that is, the discipline of the white wall, by covering his face, and implies that the apparent collective identity expressed by others is deceptive, simply a helpless act of catering to the masses, which will annihilate their own personality. For Mr. Hooper, everyone wears a black veil secretly, however, due to the limitation of self-interest and social environment, they choose to keep their individuality in their own hearts. When the Reverend Mr. Hooper wears the black veil, he is immediately set apart from his parishioners in a very special way. Thus, they no longer accept Mr. Hooper among them. After the service, those who usually vie for the prestige of accompanying Hooper out of the church do not do so, and a parishioner who always invites Hooper to dinner fails to invite him on this occasion. This isolation is evident in his despairing cry to Elizabeth: "Oh! You know not how lonely I am, and how frightened, to be behind my black veil." That miserable obscurity only intensifies as he adamantly continues to wear the veil. For Deleuze, Mr. Hooper's particularity belongs to the line of flight in the realm of literature as a result of "black holes of subjectivation pierce the white wall of significance" (Young 50). Deleuze argues that, "The face digs the hole that subjectification needs in order to break through; it constitutes the black hole of subjectivity as consciousness or passion, the camera, the third eye" (*TP* 186). In "The Minister's Black Veil", the veil is like the third eye which is used for Mr. Hooper to discover deceptive human nature and hidden crimes and sins. He can see through the veil, but it darkens everything he sees. Mr. Hooper becomes a schizophrenic in the process of being differentiated, in the meantime, "the face" lines up, turns away and accomplishes his divine mission of subjectivity. To give up the white wall means to leave the group and to lose the interests. Mr. Hooper lives in a state of other people's deep incomprehension and huge suspicion, which alienate him from money, power and position. He will eventually get rid of the shackles of the face, give up the rules and become a revolutionary.

### III. Body without Organs

A "body without organs" is proposed as a means of escaping what Deleuze and Guattari perceive as the shortcomings of traditional (Freudian, Lacanian) psychoanalysis. It's a phrase that Antonin Artaud uses, "When you will have made him a body without organs/ then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions/ and restored him to his true freedom" (Artaud 571). The "body without organs" is similarly characterized as an "egg" and "the field of immanence" which deny the "self". Forming a body without organs is a kind of line of flight, a process of breaking away from the defined "self".

In this light, Mr. Hooper is not a subject, a thinking thing, but a desiring machine or a schizophrenic: "The only subject is desire itself on the body without organs, inasmuch as it machines partial objects and flows, selecting and cutting the one with the other, passing from one body to another, following connections and appropriations that each time destroy the factitious unity of a progressive or proprietary ego (anoedipal sexuality)" (Gilles, *Anti-Oedipus* 72). Thus, it is

understandable that Mr. Hooper's cognition is not determined by any lack; it is determined by his desire: "Nothing is lacking, nothing can be defined as a lack; nor are the disjunctions in the unconscious ever exclusive, but rather the object of a properly inclusive use that we must analyze"(Hawthorne 60). When Mr. Hooper insists on carrying the black veil to the tomb, his desire is liberated from worldly views of a minister. The congregation would prefer to see matters return to normal. However, between Mr. Hooper and his congregation there cannot be the simple peace of ordinariness as usual. Unlike his abidingly natural congregation, Mr. Hooper will not now live by appearances or judge according to nature but will measure existence absolutely. Mr. Hooper has made himself a "body without organs" under such conditions that his body can no longer be populated by anything but his perfect desire of spiritual purity. Instead of returning to his inner "self", Mr. Hooper's body is no longer closed, but opened to the outside. Mr. Hooper actually goes into "amorphous" state, becoming "individuation without a subject" (*Dialogues* 40). According to the expression in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the "body without organs" at the command of the desire to function is schizophrenic, belonging to minority and becomes "the full body without organs". Mr. Hooper's desire are maximized to function in the meantime he is isolated, which determine him to be "the full body without organs".

#### **IV. Deterritorialization**

For Deleuze and Guattari, "The line of flight is a deterritorialization" (36). They proclaim that line of flight centers on Becoming, and moves toward absolute deterritorialization. Deterritorialization is the action of productive change.

##### **4.1 The Subjectivity**

As a line of flight, it reveals the creative potential of the subjectivity. By fleeing, the subjectivity leaves the old environment and enters a new field. With Mr. Hooper's dying words, he asks that his behavior be judged until others have examined their own consciences and found themselves free of sin for he knows that he has worn the black veil of "secret sin" visibly on his face while others wear that black veil on their souls. It means that he has left the real world in which most people believe, by becoming a minority, and he has entered into the field of creative interpretation of the secrecy of sins. In Christianity, original sin is an imprint of guilt from Adam and Eve, who sinned against God and then tried to hide from God. No one is born innocent of original sin, so no one can escape the mark of guilt of which Mr. Hooper's black veil is representative. It seems that he devotes himself to uncover the secrecy of God's will. By creating a new environment, the subjectivity explores its new potential. Mr. Hooper's smile is a kind of expression of new potential. On the first day that Mr. Hooper wears the veil, he turns to enter the parsonage after having delivered his sermon on secret sin. Before he enters, "A sad smile gleamed faintly from beneath the black veil, and flickered about his mouth, glimmering as he disappeared." Besides, there are seven additional smiles in the story: Once when he receives the delegation of parishioners, three times in the important central scene with Elizabeth, once as he contemplates the rumors that the veil has given him supernatural powers, once on his deathbed just

before he pronounces his final moralizing statement about the veils of men in general, and finally as it lingers on his corpse lying in the coffin. Deterritorialization is a process in which the subject breaks away from all kinds of shackles. With the expression of new potential like his smile, he continuously gets rid of restrictions and restraints on him, completely out of touch with people's definition and expectation of a minister. By giving up the past, subjectivity breaks free from the illusion that imprisons him, so he gains the newly released energy which is the power of decentralization.

#### 4.2 The use of alcohol

What's more, Deleuze notices that the use of drugs or alcohol can be cited as a way as effective as madness/schizophrenia. Alcohol might serve as a revolutionary means of drawing a line of flight from dominant forms and entities by changing and producing perception which allows for the experiments on new modes of existence. We notice that at the wedding ceremony, "Mr. Hooper raised a glass of wine to his lips, wishing happiness to the new-married couple in a strain of mild pleasantry that ought to have brightened the features of the guests, like a cheerful gleam from the hearth", but at that moment, "his frame shuddered, his lips grew white, he spilled the untasted wine upon the carpet, and rushed froth into the darkness" (Hawthorne 14). After drinking a little wine, Mr. Hooper immediately began to behave differently from other people. From that moment "the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others" (Hawthorne 67). In this story, Mr. Hooper makes himself "deterritorialization" more quickly with the help of alcohol.

#### Conclusion

"On lines of flight there can no longer be but one thing, life-experimentation" (Gilles, *Dialogues* 47). "The Minister's Black Veil" can be seen as a record of Mr. Hooper's life-experimentation. Mr. Hooper's line of flight proves that "To flee is to produce the real, to create life, to find a weapon" (Gilles, *Dialogues* 49). In Deleuze's view, writers are minority for they can only be constructed on the line of flight. Writing is a betrayal, a betrayal of gender, class, majority and even writing itself. In *Dialogues*, he argues that "we betray the fixed powers which try to hold us back, the established powers of the earth" (40). By creating the character to explore the line of flight, the author Hawthorne becomes a seer as well as hearer of things, giving him enough power to reveal life in things. From the perspective of schizophrenia, Hawthorne's creation Mr. Hooper is a rebel who manages to liberate himself from repressed surroundings by the method of line of flight.

#### References

- [1] Arai, Hidenaga. *Literature Along the Lines of Flight: D. H. Lawrence's Later Novels and Critical Theory*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- [2] Artaud, Antonin. 'To Have Done with the Judgment of God' in *Selected Writings*. Edited by Susan Sontag. University of California Press: Berkeley, CA. 1976. Print.

- [3] Buchanan, Ian. *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus-A Reader's Guide*. Bodmin: MPG books Ltd, 2008. Print.
- [4] Deleuze, Gilles & Claire Parnet. *Dialogues* [M]. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987. Print.
- [5] Deleuze, Gilles. *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. London: Verso, 1998. Print.
- [6] Gilles, Deleuze & Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [M]. Trans. Brian Massumi. London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.  
---. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. The University of Minnesota, 1983.
- [7] Hughes, John. *Lines of Flight: Reading Deleuze with Hardy, Gissing, Conrad, Woolf*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997.
- [8] Parr, Adrian. *The Deleuze Dictionary* [M]. Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2005. Print
- [9] Thornton, Edward. *On Lines of Flight: A Study of Deleuze and Guattari's Concept*. London: U of London P, 2018.
- [10] Young, Eugene B., Gary Genosko, and Janell Watson. *The Deleuze and Guattari Dictionary*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013. Print