

The Living Symbol

Pearl. A child born of sin. Conceived by lust. Created by impurity.

As the result of her parents fall from grace, she represents the sinfulness of their act, and is a continual tool for the recollection of their dubious deed. Sent, was she, from the Almighty God as a gift, and a burden of the heart.

" 'God gave me the child?' cried she. 'He gave her in requital of all things else, which ye had taken from me. She is my happiness!- she is my torture, none the less! See ye not, she is the scarlet letter, only capable of being loved, and so endowed with a million fold the power of retribution for my sin? Ye shall not take her! I will die first!'"(109)...

... " 'There is truth in what she says,' began the minister, with a voice sweet, tremulous, but powerful, insomuch that the hall reechoed, and the hollow armor rang with it - 'truth in what Hester says, and in the feeling which inspires her!'"(110)...

... " 'It must be even so,' resumed the minister.'"... " 'This child of its father's guilt and its mother's shame hath come from the hand of God, to work in many ways upon her heart, who pleads so earnestly, and with such bitterness of spirit, the right to keep her. It was meant, doubtless, as the mother herself hath told us, for a retribution too; a torture to be felt at many an unthought-of moment; a pang, a sting, an ever-recurring agony, in the midst of a troubled joy! Hath she not expressed this thought with the garb of the poor child, so forcibly reminding us of that red symbol which sears her bosom?'"(110-111).

Pearl's gestures, and the essence which her presence pours forth, insinuate to the child's evil roots and the effect there of.

"...the child could not be made amenable to rules. In giving her existence, a great law had been broken, and the result was a being whose elements were perhaps beautiful and brilliant, but all in disorder."... "Above all, the warfare of Hester's spirit, at that epoch, was perpetuated in Pearl. She could recognize her wild, desperate, defiant mood, the flightiness of her temper, and even some of the very cloud-shapes of gloom and despondency that had brooded in her heart. They were now illuminated by the morning radiance of a young child's disposition, but later in the day of earthly existence, might be prolific of the storm and whirlwind."(87-88).

Due to her child's elfish antics, Hester often ponders on the thought of Pearl being something of the supernatural. Could it be that because the terms of conception were so corrupted that the child born there of has the personality or soul of an impish creature?

" 'Child, what art thou?' cried the mother.

"O, I am your little Pearl!" answered the child.

But while she said it, Pearl laughed, and began to dance up and down, with the humorsome gesticulation of a little imp whose next freak might be to fly up the chimney.

'Art thou my child, in very truth?' asked hester.

Nor did she put the question altogether idly, but, for the moment, with a portion of genuine earnestness; for such was Pearl's wonderful intelligence that her mother half doubted whether she were not acquainted with the secret spell of her existence, and might not now reveal herself.

'Yes; I am little Pearl!' repeated the child, continuing her antics.

'Thou art not my child! Thou art no Pearl of mine!' said the mother, half playfully; for it was often the case that a sportive impulse came over her, in the midst of her deepest suffering..."(95).

The child named Pearl whose very creation is credited to the evil of sin, is a living symbol and reminder of the sins of which Hester and Dimmesdale committed. This heaven sent combination of prize and punishment assumes the position of creating repentance in her mother's heart and bodily symbolizes the wrong she has

committed. Pearl is a device, tangible and real in nature, to reveal the evil in her guardians' deeds. She is, in all reality, the living Scarlet Letter!