

Pearl — Hester's Messenger of Anguish

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Abstract—The *Scarlet Letter* keynotes the book, as the mature embodiment of Hawthorne's literary arts and thoughts, has received a remarkable amount of attention in the literary field. Many scholars have tried to approach this book from different perspectives, mostly concentrating on its main protagonist Hester and the priest. Pearl is the daughter of Hester and also perceived as the remainder of her sin of adultery often neglected by most researchers. This article tries to analyze the paradoxical child-Pearl and attempts to reveal how Pearl functions as the anguish messenger of Hester towards the suffocated outside world.

Keywords—*The Scarlet Letter; Pearl; Hester; Paradoxical character*

I. INTRODUCTION

The *Scarlet Letter* keynotes the book, as the mature embodiment of Hawthorne's literary arts and thoughts, has received a remarkable amount of attention in the literary field. And it's no doubt that a flood of criticism of this work rises constantly. Many leading critics have appreciated this work from different perspectives. They concentrate on its insight into the human soul, its stylistic and formal perfection, its mixture of tenderness, severity and solemnity, its power and pathos (Teng 24). Some scholars claim that the novel is actually a morally instructive, even puritanical work. The scarlet letter is also seen as an evidence of national moral decay meaning of the letter "A." Some scholars in China such as Ren Xiaojin and Wei Ling point out the symbolic meaning of the letter "A" with its transformed meaning. Scholars also try to interpret the work from the perspective of psychoanalysis and points out Hester has been expelled from her paradise and fallen into the abyss of sufferings (Wright 58). There are still some scholars try to analyze it from the feminist point of view and consider Hester as a heroine who stands out bravely to fight against the confinement of the patriarchal system and the stern rules of Puritanism. Chillington and Dimmestale are also often studied. But it seems that quite few studies and comments which concerned on Pearl. Quite often, the function of Pearl is said to present Hester's sin always before her and make her incapable of escaping the suffering of her sin. Such kind of conclusion belittles Pearl's importance. Harold Bloom even claims that of the four principle figures, "Pearl is at once the most carping and the largest intimation "Hawthorne's imaginations" (Harold, 26). So in this paper I will evaluate the scarlet letter with the help of analyzing the images of Pearl from the feminist literary criticism by adopting the

point of view of "Angel" and "Monster" and to represent how she acts as a messenger of Hester.

II. A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE POINT OF VIEW OF "ANGEL" AND "MONSTER"

Throughout literary history, women have been conceived as "other," as somehow abnormal and deviant (Robbins 47). Pratt, a critic, uses the term "stereotypical" to describe works "in which the image of woman in both male and female literature is examine for bias" (Pratt, 176) then the description of women images have moved from the "stereotyped criticism to "gynocritics." Afterwards, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar present two major kinds of feminism discussed so far — the stereotypical criticism and gynocritics as interdependent in *Madwomen* Gilbert and Gubar argue. Male artists have created two principles or images for women — the passive, submissive "Angel" and the destructive, sinister "Monster." Women in literature are only a product of man's images; they are either "Angels" or "Monsters". Gilbert and Gubar have a detailed explanation about Angel and Monster in their book. They indicate that the ideal woman that male authors dream of is always an Angel. An Angel is the surrender of her self of her personal comfort, her personal desire and rights. Therefore, angels that male literature imagined are dead to their own desires, live a life of silence and motionless. On the contrary, a monster is a magical creature that is kind of opposite mirror image of an angel. She possesses her own "presumptuous" desires rather than the angelic humility and "dullness" for which she designed. They are unsuited to the life of "contemplative purity" which patriarchy forced upon women. Therefore, in the male works they are often described as unhealthy energies, powerful and dangerous art. So the "monster" women lives a rebellious life, of "significant action" is a life of sound and sense (Gilbert & Gubar 80). After a brief view on the image of female as either an "Angel" or a "Monster.", based on the above thought, in the following paragraphs I will adopt the point of view of "angel" and "monster" to analyze the angelic and monstrous aspects existing in Pearl and how she serves as an anguish messenger of Hester.

III. PEARL — THE CHILD OF PARADOX

Pearl, the little elfish child who is described as her manner varies from that of a "peasant-baby" to that of "an infant princess" in this novel has many relations with the poor priest — Dimmestale. Pearl tends to aggressive and defensive toward other people. However, each time she

comes to the venerable priest, she shows her great sympathy to this poor man. In the end, she serves as an Angel to offer him the final dempntion from his sinness. The first time Pearl gets in touch with Dimmestale, she shows her tenderness toward the weak priest. We can see from Chapter Eight, after the minister helps Hester to keep Pearl stay with her, the minister withdraws to a nearby window. However, Pearl softly steals toward him and "taking his hand in the grasp of both her own, laid her cheek against it" (Hawthorne125). The minister responds by placing his hand on the Child's head and then after a brief hesitation kisses her brow (Hawthorne126). Each time the guilty priest comes across Hester, he suffers from the tortures as the result of his hypocrisy and also his cowardliness to take responsibilities in their affair. However, the little elf Pearl always comes to comfort him and shows her tenderness to him. This is also the strong desire which is hidden deeply in his mind. He wants to obtain the forgiveness either from mother or daughter. This can help to reduce the mental tortures. Throughout the novel, Pearl is described as various in her feelings and hard to predict. She is easy to be excited as well as annoyed. Whole, especially when she comes to the priest, she is always calm and relatively stable. She appears to be a little "angel" toward Dimmestale. There exists a sense of intimation between Pearl and Dimmestale, although they do not have much chance to stay together. The minister said: "even little babes, when I take them in my arms, weep bitterly. Yet pearl, twice in her little life time, hath been kind to me! The first time,-thou knowest it well! The last was when thou ledst her with thee to the house of yonder stem old Governor" (Hawthorne 125). The priest always senses that the little Pearl is kind to him. She represents a kind angel to relieve him from his interior tortures. This also can be revealed from her tentative attention on the priest's habitually gesture of holding his hands over his heart. While, other people even including Hester do not notice that, most people tend to believe that it is very likely that he has a physical pain in the region. What forms a contrast to other people is Pearl does sense the unusual aspect of situations. Pearl by instinct has supposed some things to be true which are true (Charles 125). In the novel, she keeps inquiring the same question: "and will he always keep his hand over his heart?" "What a strange sad man is he!" said the child as if speaking partly to herself. In the dark night-time he calls us to him, and holds thy hand and mine, as when we stood with him on the scaffold yonder! And in the deep forest, where only the old trees can hear and the strip of sky sees it, he talks with thee, sitting on a heap of moss! And he kisses my forehead, too. So that the little brook would hardly wash it off! But here in the sunny day, and among so many people, he knows us not; nor must we know him! A strange, sad man is he, with his hand always over his heart!"(Hawthorne 249). Pearl's repeated inquiring on the priest's habitual gesture shows her sympathy toward the priest. In her point of view, the priest pretends to hide some facts and also suffers from his hypocrisy and guilty sensations. He has bearded the tortments of the secret hidden in his mind. This indicates that he has led a very unhappy and miserable life. Pearl just catches this by instinct ions? She comes to comfort him and gives him the strength to confess his sin publically. What is

more, by the very end of the priest's life, her final kiss relived her from the earthly punishments brought by his cowardness toward his sin. In a sense, she is a little "Angel" to the lonely love beggar — Auther Dimmestale.

In this novel, Pearl is described as an "imp of evil, emblem and product of sin" (Hawthorne 83) She obeys no rules unless she wishes to do so. Her moods change very quickly. Pearl seems to have no set standard to govern her own behavior — she reacts according to her particular feeling of the moment. She is resented by most town people as an "an offspring of the devil." Her role as a "Monster" can be fully exposed in the process of getting in touch with Chillington and other authoritative people (Charles 115).

The first time Chillingworth has seen Pearl is on the scaffold. At that time, Pearl is still a baby. While, Pearl is also a spur of revenge in Chillington's heart. In the process of finding out Pearl's father and making revenge upon him. Chillingworth changes from a scholar to an evil man and finally destroys himself. As the fruit of adultery — Pearl serves as a trigger for Chillingworth vicious revenge and traps him into the shadow of hatred. His final death seems to be unavoidable. The second time Pearl gets in touch with Chillingworth is on the graveyard, which is located outside Dimmestale's house. The two men suddenly hear the "clear, wild laughter" of a young child voice coming from the burial-ground next door (Hawthorne 146). Pearl break the spell by urging her mother to come away or else "yonder old black man might catch her. The child adds that the black man has "got hold of the minister already." All through the novel, Pearl always behaves like that she never make disguise of herself, she regards chillington as the "black man" who is just like a devil in her little mind, note that the tuition of the small child allows her to sense the true situation existing between the two men. To some extence, she is not just a little child but a little "Monster" because she always reveals the realistic aspects to the world through her childish behavior. Not only in the eyes of Chillingworth but also in the eyes of the puritanical authorities, Pearl is more like a "Monster" than just a little child. Pearl is just like a rebel against the puritanical community. She obeys no rules and just does things as she likes. Her characteristic is quite inexplicable, sometimes so malicious that generally accompanied by a wild flow of spirits. Pearl is inflexible and inexorable. When the puritans scorn her and her mother and frequently revile them with tongues. Pearl requites it with the bitterest hatred. Therefore, she is isolated from all the christened infants and said to be "an imp of evil, emble" by the town people, even in front of Governor Bellingham who is an honorable person and respected by the town people. Pearl even pays no attention to him, even refuses to answer his questions. The Governor is greatly disturbed by her impolite behavior. Since Governor Bellingham who represents the law, Pearl's rejection to answer his questions also indicates her strong desire for freedom and reluctant to obey the rules conducted by the puritanical community. As compared with Governor Belling, the Reverend John Wilson is a "grandfatherly sort of person, being "usually a vast favorite with children" (Hawthorne 120). When Pearl resists the Governor's attempts to question her, Wilson tries but

Pearl still does not respond to him. To some degree, Wilson acts as the reprehensive of the church. Pearl does not respond to him also reveal that she does not surrender to the church power pressed on her and even her challenge the authorities that confine her freedom. In addition, in the process of getting in touch with Chillington and all the other town people within the community, Pearl shows her indifference and wild spirit to them. Pearl's power is real and dangerous to the puritan way of life. She acts like a rebel to the already existed authorities and social rules; all these contribute her image as a "Monster" in the puritan society.

In spite of her contact with different kinds people can reflect her paradoxical nature; the use of visual imagines can significantly reflect the two different aspects existing in her personal qualities which are the combinations of "Angel" and "Monster."

To the visual images, Hawthorne considers them the means whereby other creative men and women attempt to open an intercourse with fellow humans (Zhang 49). When it refers to the use of visual images, Hawthorne is more like an artist rather than a writer. Like many Americans of his time who were directly concerned with issues of creativity and aesthetics. Through all his life, Hawthorne deliberately took steps to learn more about the visual images and tried to combine his sense into his literary creation. All these visual images are particularly striking. His practices using visual images to describe the paradoxical sides existed in Pearl can help us understand more clearly about her nature. Pearl is described as a child of darkness and a child of light. Just as Maclean says "Pearl has been described in terms almost exclusively of uncontrolled, chaotic passion." "She brings with her disorder and disruption of the natural order of things everywhere she goes. Her very wildness and adherence to her instinctive, natural desires are the Dionysian influences at work in this novel." This indicates her importance in the novel as well as her unpredictable nature. At the same time, the delicate application of the visual images can also reflect her combination of angelic and monstrous aspects in her personal qualities.

Pearl inherits her parents' nature, as an embodiment of Hester's sin. Her living keeps reminding Hester of her guilty. The application of the sun image effectively represents her "evil" aspect. In "A forest walk" Pearl set forth, at a great pace, did actually catch the sunshine and stood laughing in the midst of it. All brightened its splendor... the light lingered about the lonely child, as if glad of such a playmate" while "as Hester attempted to do so the sun vanished" (Hawthorne 201). The sun here is not only a natural phenomenon but also used as an implication of the differences between Hester and Pearl. Pearl plays in the sunshine, for she has not sinned. She is pure. On the contrary, the sunlight disappears when Hester enters the scene, for she has sinned. The striking comparison between Hester and Pearl constructed by the use of sun image helps to expose the deeply sense of guilty harbored in Hester's mind. And Pearl keeps Hester's adultery always before her eyes so that Hester cannot escape from the moral consequences of her past deed and especially punishes Hester through making her feel guilty. Pearl arouses Hester's painful realization of her sin in

the public. In a sense, Pearl serves as a merciless agent of the puritan society — a "monster" that tortures Hester. Beside the color images and artistic techniques are often adapted by Hawthorne to describe a setting or delineate a character, he also uses artists as characters to examine their minds, hearts, talents and temperaments. In this novel Pearl is an artist-figure who always fashions something with her childish mind. One instance is Pearl's inherited gift from her mother for "devising drapery and custom" pearl took some eel-grass and imitated, as best she could, on her bosom. The decoration with which so was so familiar on her mother's "A" letter — the letter A — but freshly green instead of scarlet! She does not simply display a green "A" upon her bosom; she "bent her chin upon her breast and contemplated this device with strange interest; even as if the only thing for which she had been sent into the world was to make out its hidden impact (Hawthorne 194). Later when Pearl declares that the reason Hester wears the "A" is the same reason that Dimmestale holds his hand over his heart. Hester thinks her child might become a "meeting point of sympathy" Pearl has displayed signs of the true artist's disposition and ability. No longer would she limit to mere surface meanings. Her act of imitation and her probing into meanings bring insight and promise maturity. She is becoming adept reading emblems and begins to understand what they reveal about the human condition. She could sense the dark sight of human nature and brings it to light by her pointed questions. On one hand, she is a torture to Hester. Just as Hester cries: "Pearl keeps me in life! Pearl punishes me too! She is the Scarlet letter, only capable of being loved and so endowed with a million fold the power of retribution for my sin!"(Hawthorne 104). On the other hand, Pearl serves as a bridge to unite the dark and the night, consciousness with unconsciousness. This can be fully explained in three scaffold scenes that appeared in this novel. Things that happened in the scaffold are endowed with great meanings. Each scene brings together in a moment of moral, emotional and tensions which happened in a "bright" morning. Pearl has appeared in the three scaffolds. In the first scaffold scene which is the opening of the story, she is just a baby but an undeniable evidence of Hester's adultery. Appearing in the second scaffold scene, Pearl is a seven-year-old girl who asks Dimmestale to stand on the platform, taking her hand and Hester's hand. However, her existence serves as an urge to Dimmestale and spurs him to confess his sin publically. In the third scaffold scene, the climax of this novel, Dimmestale admits Pearl and reaches his final redemption. Meanwhile, Pearl is the key to the final unity between Hester and Dimmestale. She is the bringer of light to Hester and Dimmestale. From this point of view, she serves as an "Angel" to arouse man's consciousness. The adoption of visual images reflects the two sides of Pearl's nature — A combination of "Angel" and "Monster" in a more vivid and unique way.

IV. HESTER'S AMBIVALENT ATTITUDE TO HER DAUGHTER

Lonely as Hester's situation and without a friend on earth who dared to show himself, she has no one to turn to and isolated from the puritan society. The evil isolation leaves him room for her contemplation and thought and reveals to

her the secret sins of others and she begins to lose faith in the innocence of everyone. "The outward guise of purity is but a lie, if truth were everywhere to be shown, a scarlet letter would be blaze forth in many a bosom besides Hester Prynne's" (Charles 114). Yet, Hester struggles to believe that no one is guilty like herself. Superficially, she has been isolated herself from all that puritans in this small town and lost her position in this community. Her gorgeous embroidery work becomes the only opening that she communicates with the puritanical society and avails her embroidery as a tool to challenge the puritanical patriarchal society. Her embroidery work facilitates her with showing out her identity.

For instance, "she bore on her breast, in the curiously embroidered letter, specimen of her delicate and imaginative skill...by degrees, her handiwork became what...would be turned be fashion...her needle work was seen on the ruff of the Governor, military men wore it on their scarves, and the minister on his hand; that, it decked the baby's little cap...but it's not recorded that, in a single instance, her skill was called in aid to embroider the white veil which was to cover the pure blushes of a bride. The exception indicates the ever-relentless rigor, with which society frowned upon her sin. (Hawthorne 75-77).

Therefore, in all her intercourse with society, there is nothing that makes her feel as if she belongs to it. Every gesture, every word and even the silence of those with whom she comes in contact, impel and often express that she is banished. Nevertheless, a lonely mood does not make her surrender or just escape from the harsh reality. Quite the opposite during the course of fostering her only daughter — Pearl, She becomes much stronger and she has enough courage to fight against the male-dominated society and the position of women in this society. Pearl, who is also alienated from other puritanical infants, accompanies Hester. She becomes the hope of Hester. In some degree, she embodies Hester's character in a high degree. Pearl possess a native grace; her mother, Hester, with a purpose, had brought the richest tissues that could be purchased and allowed her imaginative faculty its full play in the arrangement and decoration of the dresses which the child wore, before the public eye, "so magnificent was the small figure, when that arrayed, and such was the splendor of Pearl's own proper beauty' (Hawthorne 82). Hester's morbid purpose that may be understood as another form of her refusal of the punishment the patriarchal society condemns her to. In giving Pearl's existence "a great law had been broken and the result was a being whose elements were perhaps beautiful and brilliant, but all in disorder" (Charles 124). As an embodiment of Hester's sin, Pearl is a kind of variant of the scarlet letter, Hester perceives her on such and dress her to bring out her own identity — a refusal to the puritanical punishment and to appreciate the love between her and Dimmesdale. And by displacing her love toward Pearl, she shows her challenges to the stern puritanical disciplines that confine the true love between people. The appearance of Pearl in front of the public reminds people of Hester's guiltiness. Under the governance of the stern puritan doctrines, she is sinful, a "monster" women.

Hester's rebellion toward the puritanical society can also be let out through her role as a mother and her protection for her daughter. Hester names the infant "Pearl," as being of great price — she has purchased with all she has — her fame, social life and love. Pearl is Hester's only treasure. "God, as a direct consequence of the sin which man has thus punished her, has given her a lovely child" (Hawthorne 82). Pearl is also the most precious baby who keeps her heart alive. Therefore, Hester does not flee from the reality but takes a cottage in the outskirts of the town and lives in solitude with her infant child who endures "humiliation and shame" from the puritans. On the other hand, she makes painstaking efforts to fight a way out through pearl. So when she hears there is a design on the part of some of the leading inhabitants who have governed this puritanical community trying to deprive her of her child. She does not surrender, because the miserable woman is strongly aware of her own right. So she goes to the mansion of Governor Bellingham with Pearl, confronting the old governor with a fierce expression:

"Alone in the world, cast off by it, and with this sole treasure to keep her heart alive, she felt that she possessed indefeasible rights against the world, and was ready to defend them to the death (Hawthorne 103).

Hester cries: "she is my happiness! — she is my torture, none the less! Pearl keeps me in life! She punishes me too! (Hawthorne 104). This wild appeal tells all people present "what area mother's rights, and how much stronger they are, when the mother has but her child and the Scarlet letter." (Hawthorne 104). With the help of Dimmesdale, she finally wins her right to keep Pearl. This is the first time that the Patriarchal society yields to a sinful woman and also indicates Hester's steadfastly belief in fighting against a women's right on her own daughter. However, most of her fight against the puritanical society tends to be inexplicit rather than explicit. She has projected most of her feelings toward Pearl and made her an opening to let out her interior feelings. Throughout the story, she wears the scarlet A till her death. In her mind, the letter manifests her love with Dimmesdale. She believes her love is not sinful because it is not disloyal to her evil husband when she has never loved or to the traditional morality in which she believed. She insists on her own morality a "high law" above all the dead rules produced by the patriarchal society. For "the world's law was no law for her mind" (Grashoff: 2006). She dares to follow her own instinctive nature to the end. Just as pearl obeys no rules on the earth, she does all the things by her mind. She seems to be more naturally in the nature than at home. She is honest to her true feelings and bursts out without any disguise. On the contrary, Hester always conveys her feelings in a less visible way. Although to her own self, she remains true. She tends to be submissive outwardly. In spite of her outward disguise, she is really dangerous to the patriarchal society. Because she tries to obtain women autonomy which has challenged male's absolute authoritative power. She never stops enjoying her inner freedom and resistance to the outside unfair world. In dressing Pearl to look like a letter, Hester appears to be trying to accept the puritan idea that Pearl is a creation of guilt. But her behavior

is subversive and cunning, for she has already transfigured the letter into a work of art with her gorgeous embroidery and it is to transfigured symbol that matches Pearl. Hester's spirit is perpetuated in Pearl. Hester can recognize "her wild, desperate, defiant mood and the flightiness of her temper. 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" (Hawthorne 83). While she is yet an infant, Pearl shows a "certain peculiar look" after she has grown up to the age when she was capable of social intercourse. She protects her mother whenever she is accused and humiliated by other puritans. She always threw back the evil words and spells to those people. Therefore, she is regarded as "an imp of evil, emblem and product of sin." Just as devious as Hester's sin, Pearl's behavior "appealed Hester to discern again a shadowy reflection of the evil that had existed in her. All this enmity and passion had Pearl inherited, by inalienable right, out of Hester's heart" (Hawthorne 87).

All through her life, Hester obliges herself to come to terms with the judgment given by the puritanical society. She endures all the insults and humiliation brought from the puritans. Her submissiveness to the puritanical society, her outward appearance live people a feeling of her acknowledgement to her guilty, she is not only accepts all the deeds and wrong doings from the puritans but also by performing charitable deeds for her fellow townsmen. Gradually people are moved by her efforts and goodness. Some women even go to Hester for counsels and comfort. The scarlet letter "A" on Hester's breast begins to be endowed with new meanings, such as "Angel". To some degree, she has obtained a respectful place in the puritanical society. Her outward performance totally fails to express the inner thinking of her. She performs as she has surrendered to the social rules and compensate her guilty. In fact, she never successfully persuades herself into believing the judgment conducted by the puritan magistrates is unfair to her. Even when she returns to the community again, she prefers to choose to live in the old cottage with the same scarlet letter on her bosom. She still margins herself outside the puritan society to show her resistance to the rigid and stern rules which limit the freedom of people. She comes to comfort these miserable women for the purpose of awakening them to aware their rights and tries to create a new social system in which men and women are equal. All her thinking is real challenging to the patriarchal society. Her inner world is rarely known by men society. While, her outward performances combined with her inner thinking make her a mixture of "Angel" and "Monster" in her nature.

Even though she leads a harsh life, her hope for a happy life never quenches. Pearl, acts as the wholeness of her life. Pearl's existence and her pierced questions drive Dimmesdale to acknowledge his part on their love affair and reunite with Hester and Pearl in the public. "Pearl kissed his lips. A spell was broken ...toward her mother, too" (Hawthorne 279). With the realization of Hester's dream of reunion with Dimmesdale, Pearl also relives herself from the errand as a messenger of anguish.

V. CONCLUSION

Throughout the above analysis on the nature of Pearl, a paradoxical mixture of "Angel" and "Monster" can be revealed by her contact with different kinds of people which include Chillingworth, Dimmesdale and Hester. Her characteristics are presented in an all-round way. All the qualities she possesses including her frank, honest and rebellious spirit. What is more important, as the only treasure and companion of Hester? She embraces the spirit of Hester in a high level. Her characteristics often reflect all the virtues displayed by Hester — Hester's strong strength in face of hardships, persistent love out of inner heart, self-reliance awareness, independent of male domination and womanhood are resented by the puritanical society. On the other hand, her generous help to her fellow townspeople and her sympathy toward the suffered also stands for some of the traits which the community praises. All these complicated elements existed in her personalities contribute to her mixed nature of "Angel" and "Monster." On the portrayal of her "evil" aspect, she has been regarded as a "Monster" woman in the patriarchal society. Her rebellions toward the phallogocentric patriarchal culture serve as an opening to reveal her independent consciousness of women existence and her role, as a prophetess of radical change of the relationship between men and women. All these go out with the earlier feminist thinker Virginia Woolf advocated: "women would finally achieve social and economical equality in the relation" (Ruth 75).

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