



Felix Octavius Carr Darley

Title

The Child at the Brookside

Medium

Ink on paper

Date

ca. 1879

Dimensions

14 1/8 × 18 1/8 in. (35.9 × 46 cm)

Accession number

79.16

Credit Line

Purchased with funds given in memory of Dr. Margaret I. Handy, 1979

Web Description

Felix Octavius Carr Darley's drawing *The Child at the Brookside* illustrates a pivotal moment in the story of Nathaniel Hawthorne's classic 1850 novel *The Scarlet Letter*. Published fifteen years after Hawthorne's death, Darley's illustrated version of the tale contains twelve drawings in outline form, as seen here. The style recalls the attention to detail and exacting line work of Northern European printmakers that made the phrase "illustrated by Darley" a highly marketable addition to a book. *The Child at the Brookside*, which is also the title of chapter nineteen in *The Scarlet Letter*, presents the protagonist Hester Prynne and her paramour Arthur Dimmesdale on one side of the brook and their illegitimate daughter, Pearl, on the other. The triangular construction of the composition focuses the viewer's attention on the complicated relationships between the three figures, reinforced by their gestures and glances. Darley captures the willfulness of the child as she refuses to obey her mother, who has temporarily removed her scarlet letter. A. Dimmesdale's own guilt is revealed as he reacts to Pearl's accusation of her mother by clutching his chest, the spot of his hidden scarlet letter.