ABSTRACT

Exploring the connections between Shakespeare's Bastard Character archetype and the Byronic Hero, this paper argues that there are similarities between the two which have not been adequately considered before. Beginning with the archetype's origins in the Vice character of Medieval Morality Plays, the Bastard Character evolved in light of socio-political pressures of the English Renaissance. In Shakespeare's theater, it traces the Bastard Character's development over three plays to show the fundamental problem facing the character, that is the longing to belong in a society unwilling to accept them. Moving into the Romantic period, the origins of the Byronic Hero are considered in order to show how what has been assumed to be Byron's literary self-insert character is indebted to the archetype established by Shakespeare. By recognizing the differences between their portrayals of this character type, the study reveals how Byron reduces the Bastard Character's crisis from the political sphere to the personal, and the difficulties which emerge from his hero's choices. Finally, the essay concludes with a few thoughts about the implications of this archetype's journey, and its prevailing popularity in literature and other media today.

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LONGING TO BELONG: THE LITERARY EVOLUTION OF THE BASTARD CHARACTER ARCHETYPE FROM SHAKESPEARE TO BYRON

by

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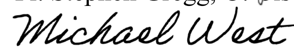

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Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother? why “bastard”? Wherefore “base,”
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous and my shape as true
As honest madam’s issue? Why brand they us
With “base,” with “baseness,” “bastardy,” “base,” “base,”
Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take
More composition and fierce quality
Than doth within a dull, stale, tired bed
Go to th’ creating a whole tribe of fops
Got ’tween asleep and wake?

— William Shakespeare, *King Lear*

To be Byronic is to be willful, ardent, brooding, superhumanly attractive, and to have a thrilling disregard for bourgeois convention. It is to be an existential hero. It is, admittedly, usually to have a flaw — but the flaw is of the ennobling, Tragic Flaw sort, like being too tempestuous and passionate. The flaw in a Byronic hero is the sort of humblebraggy flaw that makes him (it’s always him) more interesting. You’ll never catch a Byronic hero having the sort of flaws the rest of us deal with, such as being a bit thick or suffering from athlete’s foot. Byronic heroes may be cruel and self-involved, but chicks dig them.

— Sam Leith, *Why Chicks Still Dig Byronic Heroes*

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Introduction

The Bastard Character, emerging from the socio-political concerns of the Elizabethan era as a stereotypical stage villain, has been until recently under-studied in spite of its appeal. While initially presented as a kind of maliciously antagonistic trickster, the Bastard Character type became a springboard for some of Shakespeare's most famously devious villains. These villains, as Harold Bloom observes, are truly puzzling as characters who, for all their problematic nature, enchant their audiences:

> Edmund fascinates…Gloucester's Bastard is madly attractive, and not just to the infatuated Goneril and Regan, who die for him. Properly played, he is the sublime of Jacobean villains, icily sophisticated and frighteningly disinterested for a Machiavel who would have secured supreme power but for Edgar's triumphant return as accuser and avenger. (Bloom 499)

While these characters of Shakespeare's have received plenty of attention from critics as villains, they have not yet received much consideration as Bastard Characters.

Equally bewitching to audiences is the broodingly intense Byronic Hero. Named after his creator and often assumed to be strongly influenced by him, the Byronic Hero is a character type which has dominated literature and popular media since the type's development two hundred years ago. However, few have given the character's origins or influences much consideration beyond the personality of their poet. Recognized by many as "difficult, puzzling, and even dangerous", Byronic Heroes have remained a critical enigma (Bogg and Ray 460).

Through a closer examination of the two types and an understanding of the connection of influence between Shakespeare and Byron, it becomes evident that Shakespeare's Bastard Characters were a key inspiration for the Byronic Hero type. Bastard Characters emerged on the

Elizabethan stage in response to a particular social environment when it in many ways first faced the problems caused by illegitimacy. Shakespeare took the theatrical type, little more than a stock-character, and made it more human through his repeated representations and his realization of their core problem: the desire to belong in a world which rejects them. Through both authors' character types, this crisis is developed into a two-sided stalemate. While Shakespeare's Bastard Characters are isolated because they are rejected by a community which is unwilling to recognize their equal human dignity, Byron's Heroes choose their isolation because they reject the community at large, preferring instead to situate their need for belonging solely in a romantic relationship which never lasts. While neither Shakespeare nor Byron are able to land upon a solution for their characters which successfully integrates them into the community, they nevertheless demonstrate a willingness to grapple with the reality presented by the human struggles of illegitimacy in order to understand the core need for belonging, something fundamental to human experience.

In the first chapter, the history of bastardy will be explored in order to elucidate what led to the rising awareness and concerns about illegitimacy before tracing the development of the Bastard Character as a type in the Medieval Vice character's evolution into a new era of theater. Next, it will examine three of Shakespeare's plays from across his career to see how he humanizes the character by identifying their core desire in conflict with the community's inability to see beyond the stigma projected onto bastards, as the direct consequence of their parents' transgression. By steadily adding to the nuance in his portrayals of Bastard Characters, Shakespeare forces his audience to confront the humanity of bastards and challenges the biases which put communities and Bastard Characters into conflict. After establishing Shakespeare's

vision of the Bastard Character, the paper will move to examine the Byronic Hero, recognizing in him many of the same characteristics and tensions which the Bastard Character exemplifies in order to see better how Byron changes the focus of the problem. In reducing the Bastard Character's longing to belong from a community to a relationship with one beloved person, Byron reveals how the hero's choice to reject everyone else leads to devastating isolation. Finally, the study will conclude with a brief consideration of the greater significance found in making the connection between these two types.

Chapter One

From Vice to Villainy: A History of the Bastard Character

Theaters during the English Renaissance were no strangers to unsavory characters. Often built on the outskirts of town, they attracted all sorts of individuals to attend their shows, which could contain just as varied a cast of characters, from kings to demons, nobles in exile to women of shady morals. There was one particular class of people in Renaissance England typically excluded from polite society, who was invited into the theater and onto the stage in a very curious way during the late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century. A persistent presence in English Renaissance society, but an increasingly troubling one during the last quarter of the century, bastards became prominent in the public eye because of the problems their existence testified to more than created.

The increase in cases of bastards—children born out of wedlock with no legal tie to a father or a family-based structure—was an economic and ideological problem for Renaissance England during a significant increase in bastard birth rates. Some scholars, like Adrian Wilson, estimate that approximately ten percent of all births in England between 1580-1620 were births of illegitimate children (qtd. in Xaver 121-2). And yet, the story of this illegitimacy spike among English births of the time is more complex, often made so by misconceptions of what was occurring in society to cause this increase, as well as improperly explored repercussions. The Bastard Character type began in this socially fraught atmosphere. While the prototype for the character had been on English stages since medieval cycle plays traveled on pageant carts, the socio-political concerns of the day inspired a transformation of such stock characters to reflect

the changes in the most-pressing social issues. Emerging from the Medieval theater's Vice character, Bastard Characters took center stage during this particular time because of the political instability illegitimacy caused, the moral dilemmas occasioned by illegitimacy, and the literary opportunity to explore these concerns through the natural evolution of an already captivating villain type into something new, relevant, and dangerous.

This chapter will first explore the emergence of bastardy on the stage of Renaissance England from historical and literary perspectives. First, the history portion will deal with the problems presented by bastardy as a legal and economic issue, resulting in a social crisis and communal bias against illegitimates. Likewise, the literary latter portion will look at how theatrical art changed in response to this time and these concerns. In particular, it is through the evolution of popular character types such as "The Vice" of medieval morality plays from stock-types to more realistic characters for the English Renaissance stage that the Bastard Character emerges as a new character type.

HISTORY

In the beginning, the word "bastard" was a legal term which became corrupted into an insult. The term emerges in the fourteenth-century as the specific designation for individuals who, because of their parents' marital status, were considered illegitimate (*OED* "bastard, (*n.*), sense I.1.a"). For the next two hundred years, the term bastard would not be "a slur on character and reputation", but would remain a legal distinction: "within the patriarchal system of primogeniture, [the term] simply [delineated] the children who were entitled to inherit from those who were not" ("Everything Illegitimate" 273). It was not until the number of illegitimate births

increased in the sixteenth-century that the term began to carry derogatory connotations (ibid). As Matthews notes, this shift in connotation was in a large part due to the fact that, “attitudes toward bastard children were much harsher” in the advent of Elizabethan Poor Laws and the concerns occasioned by illegitimacy, which Richard Hemholz calls “the ‘contemporary mania about bastard children’”(Matthews 133). As seen through even the linguistic shifts of the word “bastard”, illegitimacy was not perceived to be particularly derogatory or insulting until the sixteenth-century as society began to see them as problematic.

While it was becoming a pervasive problem, officially determining illegitimacy was difficult in part because of a lack of synchronization between church courts and common legal courts. Though the term “bastard” was initially applied only as a legal term for individuals ineligible to inherit based on their circumstances of birth, the specifics of this designation became more complex. As Helen Matthews explains, the legal status of a child was determined, “according to the marital status of the parents” from which four distinct statuses arise. Children were either natural and legal if from a typical family dynamic, unnatural and legal if they were adopted, natural but not legal if born to parents all but married, and neither natural nor legal if the parents were prevented from marriage for any major reason (4). The distinctions between these types were “essential to the stability of a patriarchal society with patrilineal inheritance”, because they helped to separate any children born from illicit unions from legitimized children, as well as from each other (Gibson 3). The complication which having two distinct illegitimate statuses arose because of discrepancies between the church and state courts respectively. Because the church disapproved of extramarital sex, a child born outside of wedlock could never be legitimized in the church courts. For the common law courts, however, a natural but not

legitimate child could be legitimized in the eyes of the law by a subsequent marriage between the parents, whereas a child of an impossible match or with absentee parents could never be legitimized either by church or state (Wrightson 85). These distinctions of status and discrepancies between the courts added complexity to the already difficult issue of defining illegitimacy.

Statistically speaking, studies have shown that there was a real problem with increases in illegitimacy rates near the end of the sixteenth-century. Concurring with Wrightson's discoveries from demographic evidence, Wilson similarly contends that at its peak the birth rate of bastards was as high as ten percent of all births in the nation (17). Wilson also points out that the "majority of bastard births—typically 80 per cent of them or more—were first births…. Bastard-bearing took place at the beginning of a childbearing career; the usual age of the bastard-bearer was very similar to the age of the newly married mother, on average between 23 and 27" (10). Contrary to previous assumptions that illegitimate conceptions were part of the troubles afflicting a vulnerable lower social strata, Wrightson argues that, "English brides were commonly pregnant in this period—generally between 10 per cent and 30 per cent in different parishes [*sic*]" (85). Whether or not this was a result of common betrothal customs allowing premarital sex, as Wrightson suspects, Wilson expands upon the findings of the data to suggest that "more than 1 in 4 of all first births were conceived out of wedlock. Indeed even at its lowest, that is to say the late seventeenth century, this proportion was 1 in 5… and at other times the proportion was higher than this, and sometimes dramatically higher" (12-13).

Unlike previous sociological theories of a politically victimized lower class of society vulnerable to being taken advantage of, recent scholarship has theorized that illegitimacy was

predominantly the problem of an increase in delayed or aborted weddings among the middle class. As mentioned before, most women bearing bastards were comparably the same age as their contemporaries bearing legitimate first children. Likewise, there is no evidence to suggest that these women were less-advantaged in regards to their opportunities for marriage or employment than others. In reality, this rise seems to be because couples were struggling to make ends meet during this period. England was suffering economically due to intermittent waves of plague and difficulties in finding stable employment (Wrightson 134-6). Threatened with recession and financial insecurity, couples would delay their weddings until they could afford it, but not necessarily refrain from premarital intercourse. This led to more scenarios of first children occurring before their parents' marriage. The rise in illegitimate births was the result of socio-economic instability, which led to greater "insecurity in the [courtship process]…[because of] a deteriorating economic climate following the crisis of the 1590s" (145-6).

Practically speaking, bastards were problematic for the community economically because they often became the community's financial responsibility whether or not the community liked it. Considered "children of the parish" by the Poor Law of 1531, as Allison Findlay notes, illegitimate children—that is any designated natural and illegitimate or unnatural and illegitimate, without a family to harbor them or a father to care for them financially—became the responsibility of the whole community, maintained through church management of regular donations and taxes (12). These children, more often than not, would rely on the support of parish funds until they were old enough to join a trade (ibid). Faced with these sorts of demands, increasing in the harsh financial environment (ironically made so hard by the same issues that were delaying weddings) where people were struggling already to provide for their own families,

led to a general attitude of resentment towards the bastard and their parents. Rising in population during an economically difficult time, the obligatory bastard children place such pressures onto the already stretched community that the community began to resent illegitimate children.

Bastards were also problematic ideologically to the English Renaissance society because their existence posed an implicit challenge to social norms. In a society "based on paternal authority", illegitimate children were inherently disassociated from the communal structure because, as fatherless individuals disconnected from a family, they "represented something 'other', something outside this divinely ordered pattern. Born of a female sexuality unsanctioned by patriarchal authority, [their] birth created an extraneous social unit…Because domestic and political authority were mutually dependent, an illegitimate birth…was an implicit challenge to the Renaissance authority, to gender and class distinctions" (2-3). Illegitimate children posed a challenge not only to the principles of society, but also to the organization of society. Unless they were either the bastard child of a noble, or willing to accept a "role as victim" in society, illegitimate individuals were unable to find a place in society's order (40-1).

In part, the hostility of the community was due to an implicit expectation of shame projected onto children of illegitimate unions, which may or may not be actually experienced. Because of the "religious beliefs that extra-marital sex was a sin, combined with a desire for economic and political stability", the community believed that illegitimate children themselves would feel the weight of their parents' sins. And yet testimony from illegitimate individuals shows again and again that while "[their] self-identity was negatively affected by illegitimate status," it was more because they felt, "frustration at its consequences, such as the deprivation of estates or familial isolation, rather than the expression of shame attached to their self-worth"

(218 & 242). Loneliness and isolation were the bastard's lot and burden during this time as individuals separated their proper families, rather than shame at their circumstances of origin. This disjunction between society's expectations for illegitimate children' behavior and the real source of frustration led to the "uneasy tolerance" which became the *modus operandi* of the community towards bastard children, a thin veneer over a rather negative and prejudicial attitude which manifests "classic signs of stigma" (240). Illegitimate children as a steadily rising population became a society-wide problem during the English Renaissance by nature of their existence as economic issues and socially rootless individuals.

Literature

While literature and theater have represented illegitimate individuals since ancient times, most scholars agree that the Bastard Character as a theatrical type descends from the medieval morality play's Vice character in regards to their dangerously attractive personality and their relationship with the audience. Begun in medieval morality plays about the Everyman's journey, the vice (lowercase v) character was a specifically human representation of vices such as Pride, Avarice, Lust, or any other sin needed (Rycroft par. 2). The vice character was a medieval theater trickster figure whose primary goal was to tempt the Everyman protagonist to his destruction through his charming wickedness and the Everyman's inherent weakness (ibid). Over time these characteristics became consolidated into one character, The Vice (uppercase v) both "provided the humor [of the play] by performing his antics on stage" and yet "was the instigator of schemes which could lead Mankind to hell" (George 10-1). Most inclined to break the fourth wall and confide in the audience as well as entrench himself into the hijinks of the play, this delightfully

destructive character found a strangely nebulous place among the action of the play on stage: "[he] exists on the margins of the play, between the actors and audience, and in an undefinable relationship to time and space" (Rycroft par 5). Though the Vice character is almost always an antagonist and tempter, "he is never a villain in the moralities", but instead presents a reflection of the protagonist: "[he is] a sort of an incomplete everyman … [whose] incompleteness makes him lack human sensibility" (George 16-7). The Vice character developed through the Medieval era from a simple stand-in for particular human failings into a devious trickster who charmed his audience with jokes and mischief that always had a potential for destruction.

The Vice character survived the transition from highly allegorical Medieval pageant plays to the more realistic Renaissance stage by dividing his characteristics into two distinct archetypes. The theater of England changed in response to what the present public desired, and as England entered the sixteenth-century it sought more realism and less allegory on stage. The theatrical environment of the English Renaissance demanded that characters like the Vice "become…less of a metaphor and more of a human being" (12). As writers began "to release the Vice character's metaphorical significance" in order to bring him onto the Renaissance stage, they preserved his villainous characteristics in the translation into the real world: "The playwrights were beginning to put evil where it really exists—in the mind of man. By the time of the Tudor interludes, the Vice character was becoming a man with an evil nature, and his old allegorical name and nature were being concealed" (George 27-8). The Vice character survived this transition from Medieval pageant plays to the English Renaissance by "bifurcating", as George puts it, splitting his characteristics between two types (47). In one case, his goofy tricks, penchant for bawdy humor, and love of mischief became the hallmarks of the "comic-hybrid

Vice". These somewhat tamed versions of the Vice were most often jesters and fools, such as Feste from *Twelfth Night* (51). In this role, he is vicious only in his puns and quick-quips, fulfilling the role of comedic chorus to the action of the play and surprising the audience with his tomfoolery and his insightful wisdom. In another case, his desire to control the events of the play through manipulating Everyman, his moral ambiguity, uncanny ability to walk between malice and mischief, and relentless energy in pursuit of a scheme for personal gain, became the trademarks of the "villain-hybrid Vice". Cruel, calculating, and vicious, these characters were often the petty villains or master manipulators of the Elizabethan stage.

It is from the latter type, the "villain-hybrid Vice" that the Bastard Character most directly emerges into the fraught atmosphere of the late-sixteenth-and-early-seventeenth-century stages. And yet, greater representation does not always equate to fair reprentation. Zunshine notices in her comparison of foundling and bastard stories that there were particularly predictable qualities in representations of the types. While the chances of illegitimacy were equally divided between genders, "an abandoned child['s gender] served as a largely reliable predictor of whether at the end of the story, he/she would turn out to be a legitimately born foundling or a bastard. Lost male children… were allowed to stay illegitimate…[whereas] the bastardy of female foundlings…barely existed" (8). As Neill observes, Bastard Characters were most frequently represented as "a special class of transgressive male" (275). Bastard Characters were a compilation of dangerous characteristics associated with illegitimacy—uncontrollable energy, seductive appeal, and mysterious lack of definition. Taken together, Bastard Characters are often presented in ways which intentionally or unintentionally create "a decidedly negative image in the eyes of the public" (Meservey 57).

This negative view, as Mersevey puts it, was nonethelesss a complicated portrait. On the one hand, Bastard Characters were the products of the society, but perceived to be as Neill points out, “a kind of usurping substitute” whose position within the community was a forged status (“Counterfeiting” 400). And yet, this character has a morally ambiguous nature; just as the Vice character is an incomplete reflection of an everyman, the Bastard Character is also inherently incomplete: “they were unholy because their adulterous procreation constituted an act of forbidden mixture which rendered them un-whole…Being unholy, the bastard can never be ‘whole’” (“Everything Illegitimate” 278 & 287). Developed from a stock character which had itself already undergone some evolution between the medieval stage and the Renaissance, bastard characters presented a new type of villain for the stage whose inclination to realism made present the real problems of illegitimate individuals’ situation.

Illegitimacy was a difficult and pervasive topic in the English Renaissance, because of the increasing illegitimate birth rates of the times. Concerns, unassuaged by less-than-successful legal and ecclesiastical policies, led to the emergence of Bastard Characters as central to many stories in mass media of the day, most particularly on the stage. The Bastard Character of the English Renaissance derived from the villain-hybrid variation of the medieval theater’s Vice, and became a major antagonist of drama. And yet their presence on stage as petty antagonists out for revenge begins to bring to light Renaissance England’s biases and preconceived prejudices. It would not be until Shakespeare took on the challenge of representing Bastard Characters on stage that the Bastard Character type would be realized as a fully human archetype with a fully human problem.

Chapter Two

Wherefore Base? Bastard Characters of Shakespeare's Stage and the Struggle for Recognition

The first thirty lines of *King Lear* introduce the audience to the Duke of Gloucester and the Earl of Kent, both supporters of old King Lear, as well as Gloucester's illegitimate son, Edmund. Even if the audience has no knowledge of the play before attending, they are made aware of Edmund's illegitimacy almost immediately as, in introducing Kent to his son, Gloucester embarks on a sequence of embarrassing jokes about his son's bastard state. Gloucester introduces his son to Kent as a child who "[he has] so often blushed to acknowledge… / that now [he] is brazed to't" (I.1.10-1). When Kent expresses confusion, saying he "cannot conceive" of what Gloucester means, Gloucester turns it into a tasteless joke about Edmund's origins: "Sir, this young fellow's mother could, / whereupon she grew round-wombed and had indeed, / sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband" (*Lear* I.1.8-18). While insults such as "bastard" were common during this age, this moment moves beyond the realm of ordinary insults. As the only one with the authority to either welcome Edmund into his family circle or keep him out, Gloucester's jokes are embarrassingly inappropriate. To watch the bastard son take this kind of speech from his father, eventually protesting his equal worth with the "son…by order of law" in his first speech, cannot but move the audience to some pity for Edmund (I.1.19 & I.2.1-23). For Shakespeare's original audience, this would have entirely off balanced their expectations for theatrical treatment of Bastard Characters as a far more human, humane, and complicated portrayal.

Illegitimacy, as Sokol observes, was a common topic in Elizabethan times, and especially on Shakespeare's stage: "Illegitimate birth is referred to in nearly every one of Shakespeare's plays…'whore-son', 'half blooded fellow', 'bastard blood … / Contaminated, base, / And misbegotten' are flung about liberally in most of Shakespeare's plays, and such epithets, together with the plain 'bastard', were used by Shakespeare in mainly derogatory contexts" (159). While Shakespeare's Bastard Characters are often presented as villains full of "scheming and disruptive energy" who desire to disrupt the community, they seem to present more than just mere villainy (Meservey 57-8). These Bastard Characters often exist in the edges of the society, relegated to the outside by the community of the play in their failure to recognize him in any way other than as a "bastard". And yet, Shakespeare's Bastard Characters are a different type from his outsiders. Even when his outsider characters, like Othello or Shylock, are relegated to the outskirts of the boundaries of the socio-political order they interact with, they still have communities of a different type to which they belong: Shylock for example still has connections to his Jewish merchants, and Othello's troop of soldiers serve as his community wherever he goes. The problem of illegitimacy was a fascinatingly difficult topic to tackle, and one that Shakespeare was not afraid to face.

The consistency with which Shakespeare returns to this archetype is curious. Writing wildly popular plays, good enough for royal endorsement, why return with such regularity to this particularly troubling type? Interested in exploring nuanced characters on stage, Shakespeare finds a curious problem in representing the newly developing archetype. As Shakespeare sees it, for Bastard Characters kept to the outskirts of a community so often because of the stigma projected onto the circumstances of their birth there arises a tension between the

excluded bastard and the community. By introducing and humanizing Bastard Characters, Shakespeare uses the archetype to present, “an outward sign of the inner deformity afflicting a whole society where the 'unnatural' has become obscenely naturalized” (Neill 286). The problem of the Bastard Character on Shakespeare’s stage is to integrate themselves into a community that considers them as an outsider and inherent threat. It is a problem which Shakespeare, without attempting to excuse the villainous actions of his characters, does nonetheless highlight as a fault of the community. Through the Bastard Character’s evolution in his plays, *Richard III, Much Ado About Nothing,* and *King Lear*, Shakespeare humanizes the Bastard Character and portrays how their longing to belong in the community that shuns them leads them to bitterness and villainy. From his view, reconciliation between the Bastard Character and his community is only possible if the community opens itself to see the human beyond the stigma, and if then the Bastard Character willingly releases resentment in a gesture of charity and forgiveness.

To see the development of this character type over the course of Shakespeare’s time writing for the theater requires judicious selection of his plays. I have determined to focus on three plays from across Shakespeare’s career: *Richard III* (1592-3), *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598-9), and *King Lear* (1605-6). Written approximately six years apart, these plays contain some of Shakespeare’s most infamous Bastard Characters—Richard III, Don John, and Edmund of Gloucester. Their placement across Shakespeare’s oeuvre presents the evolution of the character type from a complicated trickster figure to complexly authentic people. In the first, Richard III shows the initial turn from the Morality play’s Vice character in his unique place on the stage and ability to manipulate the plot, but complicated by the concern of whether or not his schemes actually bring him satisfaction. Don John takes the development and makes it more

"natural", complicating the character type established by Richard with his frustration and disharmonious relationship to his community. Finally, Edmund combines these elements into a painfully human and morally morally antagonist. All three characters, though villains, choose to turn to villainy as the only chance they have for integration within their community. These three plays and their Bastard Characters expose the biases against illegitimates in their inability to integrate, their overwhelming isolation and resentment, and only begin to suggest a path to eventual resolution by the very end of *King Lear*.

RICHARD III

The earliest of the plays written, It may seem odd to begin a study of Shakespeare's Bastard Characters with Richard III who is not technically from an illegitimate union. Shakespeare places the titular character of *Richard III* among his Bastard Characters through his bitter resentment at his treatment by the community, and also by his striking similarity to the Vice character in his alluring intimacy with the audience and his determination to overturn the social order for his own benefit. While Shakespeare's Richard does not legally qualify as a "bastard", he promotes the slanderous implication of bastardy upon his brother, Edward IV, in order to throw his brother's heirs into a doubtful light as possibly illegitimate themselves (III.5.73-96). While real rumors such as this may have circulated in Shakespeare's day, what is significant is that in Richard's willingness to use this tactic, he "opens the door to questions about his own legitimacy… Physically twisted, resembling the shape of neither his mother nor his father, Richard feels like a bastard, even though he is by all accounts legitimately born" (Hunt 122). Richard also associates himself with the Bastard Character type by seeing himself as

a kind of Vice character who, "like the formal Vice, Iniquity, / …moralize two meanings in one word" (*Richard III* I.5.83-4). By layering these associations early in the play, Shakespeare includes Richard in the Bastard Character archetype.

From the very first speech that opens the play, Richard presents himself like the Bastard Characters do as a man frustrated with the limits imposed on him by his community, to the point that he is now determined to get his dues:

> But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
> Nor made to court an amorous looking glass;
> I, that am rudely stamped and want love's majesty
> To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
> I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
> Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
> Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
> Into this breathing world scarce half made up.
> ……………………………………………
> And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover
> To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
> I am determinèd to prove a villain
> And hate the idle pleasures of these days. (I.1.14-31)

In the opening speech, Shakespeare reveals Richard's sense of frustration at his own disadvantage, unsuited for the presumably happy days that have come to the court. His openness cannot help but win over his listeners, and Shakespeare uses this openness in order to make Richard's mind transparent. The play is full of such asides, which not only serve as exposition for Richard's schemes but also foster closeness with the audience, a trick he borrows from the Vice character. As Harold Bloom observes, "Shakespeare's greatest originality in *Richard III*… is the hero-villain's startlingly intimate relationship with the audience. We are on unnervingly confidential terms with him…we have been unable to resist Richard's outrageous charm, which has made Machiavels of us all" (70-1). In his insidiously intense relationship with the audience

and his disregard for the pain brought upon others along the way, Richard proves himself to be among Shakespeare's Bastard Characters as the one who most closely resembles the maliciously treacherous Vice character.

Because Richard cannot integrate himself with the community of the play which perceives him as only an outsider, he turns to villainy and puts into play a plan to become king in order to make a place for himself in the community by taking control of the socio-political hierarchy. Caught amid the power-struggles of the War of the Roses, calmed for now under an unsteady and ailing monarch, the community of nobles close to King Edward IV is a distinctly hostile society, that attempts to make their position more secure by negating or denigrating anyone that they perceive poses a threat to their tenuous peace. Known for his "interior hatred" against Queen Elizabeth, Edward's wife, Richard is treated with cold welcome as they secretly hope that "God grant we never may have need of him" (I.3.77). In a different vein from his opening speech, Richard, resentful of their treatment, turns upon these courtiers with injured rage: "[t]hey do me wrong, and I will not endure it! / …When have I injured thee? When done thee wrong? / … [M]y pains are quite forgot" (I.3.43-121). Excluded from the favorable eye of the community, Richard retreats into isolation and villainy as he concocts a scheme to win the royal crown for himself at any cost, whether that be a politically advantageous marriage or murder (I.2 & IV.3).

Richard is ultimately unreconcilable with his community because he has become an embodied version of the very threat posed by illegitimacy in Elizabethan society. Their inability to recognize his humanity, along with his descent into villainy, leads Richard into total isolation. Over the course of the play, his focus shifts from gaining power to destroying his opponents, a

switch which robs him of his claims to compassion: “Richard incessantly surges on, from victim to victim, in quest of more power to hurt…. To invent Richard is to have created a monster” (Bloom 71-3). When the forces of Richmond and widowed Queen Elizabeth rise against Richard in the final act, he recognizes the utter isolation he in his tyranny has brought upon himself in his own inability to love or feel pity: “ I shall despair. There is no creature loves me, / And if I die no soul will pity me. / And wherefore should they, since that I myself / Find in myself no pity to myself” (V.3.212-5)? In the end, the community can not find a way to integrate him because their previous mistrust seems justified in the end by his descent into villainy. With the entire community against him, Richard falls in battle entirely abandoned by living creatures—soldiers and horses alike (V.5). Richard fails to integrate himself into the world of his play because, in choosing to avenge his injuries through Machiavellian machinations, he becomes the threat that the community considers him to be by virtue of his outsider, bastardized state.

Much Ado About Nothing

Written during the peak of Shakespeare’s comedies and halfway through his career, *Much Ado About Nothing* presents Don John as a man deeply out of tune with his environment. Intentionally, even excessively bitter, Don John’s malice, however, is complicated; from the first Shakespeare utilizes the notion of bastards as “natural children” to present Don John as a man of unrestrained passions, who “cannot hide / what [he is]”, but instead follows his impulses wherever they lead (I.3.12-3). This play also provides a complicated continuation to the problem of the Bastard Character by removing many of the complications of the last play—political turmoil and legally uncertain bastardy—in order to set the community’s inherent bias against

bastards into clearer relief as the main reason for failed reconciliation in this play. Through the treatment of Don John, Shakespeare complicates the portrayal of the Bastard Character by making it more natural and human, while also exploring the dangers which intense resentment poses, especially when underestimated.

Don John is in a sense a more traditional Bastard Character than Richard because of his actual legal status, and yet is still significantly influenced by Richard's example. Daniel J. Kornstein argues that both Richard III and Don John have "no complex ambiguity here, no admirable character traits marred by tragic flaws—just simple evil", but that this time "[t]o underscore Don John's evil nature, Shakespeare stresses his illegitimacy. Again and again, he is referred to as 'the bastard,' as if the circumstances of his birth explain his wicked disposition" (174). Similarly to Richard and the Vice character, Don John desires to disrupt his world by attacking his brother Don Pedro's happiness, and schemes with his cronies "for any model to build mischief on" (I.3.44). Ultimately, he lights upon a scheme to ruin the reputation of Hero, the betrothed of Don Pedro's right-hand-man, Claudio, and cause them to call off their imminent wedding (II.2 & IV.1). Like Richard, Don John lashes out against the community within the play in order to find purpose and attempt to find a place within the community.

In his portrayal of Don John, Shakespeare introduces the idea that bastards are more "natural" individuals in order to remove some of the monstrous attributes of Richard. Don John's motive for attacking Claudio is confusing because it seems almost a-political. If anything, he seems to embark upon this scheme merely in order to express his frustration in a way that will "make all use of [his spleen]" (I.3.36). What seems to be an inexplicable pettiness it is best understood in conjunction with the natural character which Shakespeare attributes to him. As

Neill phrases it, Bastard Characters present a curious mixture of naturalness and unnaturalness: "For all his supposedly 'unnatural' qualities, the bastard was traditionally described as a 'natural child' because, conceived without benefit of matrimony, his origins lay outside the order of culture (typically imagined as masculine) in the (typically feminine) domain of nature" ("Counterfeiting" 408-9). In his first speech, Don John explains his reasons for being frustrated with Don Pedro as a problem of his nature being unable to fit within the scope of others' expectations:

> ……………………………………I cannot hide
> what I am. I must be sad when I have cause, and
> smile at no man's jests; eat when I have stomach,
> and wait for no man's leisure; sleep when I am
> drowsy, and tend on no man's business; laugh when
> I am merry, and claw no man in his humor.
> ………………………………………………
> I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a
> rose in his grace, and it better fits my blood to be
> disdained of all than to fashion a carriage to rob
> love from any. In this, though I cannot be said to be
> a flattering honest man, it must not be denied but I
> am a plain-dealing villain. (*Much Ado* I.3.12-30)

Though he argues that these impulses are natural, they are naturally inclined toward harming others, a role he is quite happy to fulfill as it "better fits [his] blood" to be seen as a threat than a friend (I.3.26). As Kornstein points out, the main difference between Don John's "naturalness" and that of the other characters in the play is his intentional maliciousness: "Don John's twisted mind is far more dangerous than merely a sharp tongue….The difference is the intent behind the words. Don John is malicious, Beatrice [for example] is not" (174). A Bastard Character in a highly traditional setting, Don John is the bitter antagonist that he is because he is out of tune with the world of the play.

Don John is unable to harmonize with the world he inhabits because of an inherent bias in the community, as seen in the progression of how other characters talk about him. Like Richard, Don John stays at the edges of the community because of their deep mistrust. Noted to be "of a very melancholy disposition", he is either ignored or turned into the butt of jokes during the party at Leonato's house (II.1.5). Though Kornstein observes that everyone who knows the play recognizes the character Don John as "the Bastard", there are surprisingly few times when he is actually referred to by that moniker in the play, aside from stage directions (174). While in the feast scene at the beginning of the play everyone refers to him as "Count John", even while discussing how out of humor he is, once he is later suspected of setting a trap for Hero and Claudio, he becomes "John the Bastard / Whose spirits toil in frame of villainies" according to Benedick (IV.1.198-9). It is as if until now Benedick did not realize what Don John was capable of, and is only able to comprehend it in the attachment of the term "bastard" to his name. By the end of the play, Benedick drops Don John's name almost entirely as he reports to Don Pedro that "[y]our brother the Bastard is fled" in his tirade against Don Pedro's own naivety (V.1.202). Don John is isolated from the society of the other characters not only because of his resentment against Don Pedro and his community, but also because of the community's inability to see him as anything other than "the bastard", who by rights is always on the outside of the community.

While Don John's attempts to ruin Hero's reputation may not constitute a crime as heinous as Richard III's litany of murders and manipulations, especially considering that the bride only pretends to be dead, Don John in his bitterness poses just as much of a threat because the environment of the world is comic. Richard III lives in a world fragmented by decades of war and political power-shifting, and from this already broken world he emerges as a deeply flawed,

yet powerful man. Don John's world, however, is more carnivalesque than carnage: wars are resolved with few casualties, romantic relationships are encouraged and supported, and problems are resolved through kindhearted pranks (I.I.5-9, II.1.340-78, & IV.1.211-45). Don John cannot be integrated into the world through his own fault and the fault of the other characters in the play; actively working to disrupt and unbalance their harmony just to spite his brother, Don John is never recognized as anything but an outsider by the community (I.3.25-66). Though the protagonists of the play are able to resolve the conflict Don John causes and bring Hero and Claudio back together, Don John's role in the play is not resolved so easily. His repeated turns to villainy and wanton destruction cause too much harm for the others to allow him to integrate back into their circle safely in any way other than through the justice of the law (V.4. 129-30). Through the treatment of Don John, Shakespeare makes the Bastard Character more human in the injection of more naturalness, which leads to disharmony as the community is unable to recognize either Don John's common humanity or the dangers of his intense resentment.

KING LEAR

Emerging from among Shakespeare's greatest tragedies, *King Lear* presents the most complexly human portrait of the Bastard Character type in the mixed motives and initial lack of villainous intention in Edmund of Gloucester. Edmund begins the play in a pitiable position, as described at the beginning of the chapter. Gloucester's "snickering attitude" towards his son, in conjunction with the legal stigma of bastardy, "deprives Edmund of any shred of human dignity" and causes him to "[feel] gravely wronged by his outcast status" (Kornstein 220). As many scholars acknowledge, Edmund is a complex character, with a valid complaint against the

community's predisposed bias against him. Like Don John, Edmund's first soliloquy identifies himself as another "natural" child, yet he highlights how he is as well-constructed as his brother Edgar, and ought to be equal except for his inferior status:

> Thou, Nature, art my goddess. To thy law
> My services are bound. Wherefore should I
> Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
> The curiosity of nations to deprive me
> For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
> Lag of a brother? why "bastard"? Wherefore"base,"
> When my dimensions are as well compact,
> My mind as generous and my shape as true
> As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
> With "base", with "baseness," "bastardy,"…? (I.2.2-10)

Edmund is not satisfied with remaining on the outskirts and merely serving as a blight upon others' happiness in the same way that Don John is. As Kornstein argues, it is the isolation caused by the "prejudice and legal disabilities imposed on him [by the community] because of his birth" which Edmund chafes at, and which drive him to "find some way—legitimate or illegitimate—to make his way in the world…. We may abhor the means but not the desire for a better material life" (224). Edmund's complex portrait shows him to be another Bastard Character who, in his mixed motives and desires, is as painfully human, and as deeply dangerous as both Richard III and Don John.

Driven by a desire for equal treatment, Edmund freely chooses to become a villain in order to make a place for himself in the community which has ignored him for so long. Edmund's primary gripe is against his disenfranchised state, in contrast with "Legitimate Edgar['s]" preference because, "[o]ur father's love is to the bastard Edmund / As to th' legitimate." (I.2.18-9). While his desire for equal recognition is not necessarily malicious at its

outset, it drives him to choose malicious means to achieve the change he hopes for: "Edmund feels himself entitled to revenge for the wrong committed against him. He does not feel bound by law and morals, and disregards them whenever it works to his advantage to do so…. Such resentment makes Edmund into, in his own words, 'a plain villain'" (Kornstein 220-1). Edmund carefully plans his alliance with the cruel sisters Regan and Goneril in order to ascend Richard III-like into a place of social significance and power (III.5, 7, V.1). And yet, Edmund is also not a copy of Richard; he is not the charming rhetorician that Richard is, nor does he rely on total obedience and fear to maintain control. Unlike the Bastard Characters who precede him, Edmund seems surprisingly satisfied to be in a limbo-state. Bloom even goes so far as to argue that this unique detachment is a core quality: "Edmund is amazingly free of all connection, all affect….he take[s] great pride in assuming responsibility for his own amorality, his pure opportunism…[and] has no passions whatsoever, he has never loved anyone, and he never will. In that respect, he is Shakespeare's most original character" (500). No longer a villain by birth right, Edmund descends into villainy by choice, willing to use whatever and whoever necessary in order to achieve his designs as he so often does, whether they be truly evil, simply selfish, or urgently valid.

It is in Edmund's final moments—his duel with Edgar and desperate, last-minute attempt to save Cordelia and Lear—that Shakespeare begins to visualize an answer to the Bastard Character's plight, found in recognition of the Bastard Character's human dignity and his ability to forgive. When Edgar challenges Edmund to a duel in Act V, he places Edmund in contradiction one of the Bastard Character's core as, "[f]alse to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father", Edgar denotes Edmund as unnatural (V.4.162). After he mortally wounds Edmund, who

asks to know the identity of his opponent, Edgar identifies himself as “no less in blood than thou art, Edmund”, and in the same moment acknowledges the strange justice in Edmund’s indirect sanction of their father’s blinding:

> EDGAR The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
> Make instruments to plague us.
> The dark and vicious place where thee he got
> Cost him his eyes.
> EDMUND Th’ hast spoken right. ’Tis true.
> The wheel is come full circle. I am here. (V.4.201-9)

In this brief exchange, Edgar turns the tables on the typical relationship between the Bastard Character and the community. Instead of projecting onto him all the sins of the past, Edgar recognizes their father’s portion of blame and Edmund as a fellow, fallen human, not as the “pleasant vices”, a role Richard III might have assumed had he been in Edmund’s place (V.4.201). Strange as it may seem, it is this recognition of Edmund’s equality with Edgar in this moment, followed by the frank but moving tale of Gloucester’s suffering and death, that compels Edmund to acknowledge that “[t]his speech…hath moved me, / And shall perchance do good” (V.4.235-6). When Regan and Goneril are brought onto the stage dead, he realizes that their jealous rivalry over him has led to their deaths (V.4.285). It is these double proofs of his effect on others, both in the pain he can inflict as well as his own ability to be loved, that guides Edmund to determine to do “some good… / Despite of mine own nature” (Dupree, V.4.285-94). Though not entirely convinced of its efficacy, even Bloom argues that Edmund’s last-minute change of heart comes about because of this proof of his own essential dignity and worth:

> [I]n spite of all he was and did, he *was* beloved. He does not say that he cared for either, or for anyone else, and yet this evidence of connection moves him…. An intellect as cold, powerful, and triumphant as Iago’s is suddenly startled by overhearing itself, and the will to change comes upon Edmund. The good he

> means to do will be "despite of mine own nature," he tells us, so that his final judgement must be that he has not changed…. And yet he is finally mistaken, for his nature has altered, too late to avoid the play's tragic catastrophe….We do not know who Edmund is as he dies, and he does not know either. (505)

Edmund's realization that he is in fact worthy of love is connected to his greater desire of longing. The detachment which Bloom argues is Edmund's most unique trait actually serves to hide from himself the weight of isolation his liminal status has burdened him with. Though Edmund is ultimately unable to save Cordelia and Lear, or be integrated with his community, it becomes a rare instance when the thought truly counts. Shakespeare finds in Edgar's recognition of Edmund's dignity , and from Edmund's final choice to forgive and to change a potential answer to the problem of the Bastard Character. While before the Bastard Character struggled in a world that would not change, especially towards them, Edgar's recognition of Edmund as separate from his father's sins allows Edmund a new avenue to integration with the community through forgiveness and charity, rather than the selfish protection that villainy afforded before.

Painful in their bitterness, terrible in their power, magnificent in their humanity, the Bastard Character came into his own as a fully fledged human on Shakespeare's stage. Evolved from the medieval Vice character and the socio-political concerns of the English Renaissance, Shakespeare's take on the Bastard Character offers the opportunity to explore the type as more than a stock character, but as a truly human character struggling to belong.Through the individual journeys of Richard III, Don John, and Edmund of Gloucester, Shakespeare plays out the "[t]he complex legal status of bastardy…in many varied Shakespearian settings" faced by Bastard Characters with increasing awareness of their humanity and the validity of their problems (Sokol 162). Resenting their exclusion from their communities and yet deeply desiring

to belong, each tries to create that space for himself within the community. Out of a self-protecting and mistrustful attitude towards the communities that hold prejudices against them, each problematically chooses villainy as a tool to find their belonging. As Richard breaks away from the stock-character of the Vice in his cunning effectiveness, so too does Don John humanize the role in such a way that makes an Edmund possible. He not only blends the emphasized naturalness of Don John with the Machiavellian calculation of Richard, but adds to these a vision of the internal turmoil Bastard Characters face in their isolation and need for community. It is in Edmund's change in the final act of *King Lear* that Shakespeare begins to find a solution. For him, the problem of Bastard Characters and the solution both involve two-way streets. Because the community forces Bastard Characters into liminal spaces because it projects their parents' sins onto them, it must learn to see beyond its prejudices to the individual human. As Bastard Characters try to connive their way into a self-protected, isolated place, they must learn to forgive, and to open themselves to the possibility of charity beyond the expectations of their nature. Shakespeare transforms the Bastard Character from a stock-type villain into a nuanced, realistic character who struggles against resentment and prejudice in order to find their value and place, where recognition of human dignity and charity outweigh the stigma of bastardy.

Chapter Three

Mad, Bad, and Dangerous Alone: the Byronic Hero and the Crisis of Isolation

In the introduction to the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* Lord George Gordon Byron states very clearly that the protagonist is not supposed to be a fictional version of himself. Though he borrowed extensively from his own grand tour around Europe for the composition of the poem, Harold is as far as he is concerned just "the child of imagination, for the purpose [of giving some connection to the piece]" (*Harold* 1). Even still, by the time the fourth canto came out barely six years later, Byron gives up trying to maintain a distinction that he claims "everyone seemed determined not to perceive", stating that "I [have] become weary of drawing a line…it was in vain that I asserted, and imagined that I had drawn, a distinction between the author and the pilgrim…and disappointment at finding it unavailing, so far crushed my efforts in the composition, that I determined to abandon it altogether" (54).

While Shakespeare's plays were becoming once more in vogue during the late eighteenth-century and into the nineteenth-century, not everyone was in favor of this cultural shift. Lord Byron, celebrated poet of the Romantic movement and eventual hero of Greece, was not particularly impressed with Shakespeare. In what is presumed to be Thomas Medwin's "unsigned piece" for the October 30th, 1830 edition of *The New Monthly Magazine*, he recounts an anecdote where Byron, talking to Percy Shelley about the play *Hamlet* first and after about Shakespeare as an author, expresses his distaste for what he calls, "the work of a dramatist 'of great genius but no art', episodic, full of unnecessary actions, 'wild rhapsodies', and superfluous

figures…surely introduced only to please 'the mob'" (qtd. in Barton, 225). And yet, Byron could appreciate a good performance of Shakespeare—he was an avid admirer of Kean's work, seeing him perform Iago and owning a collection of Shakespeare with portraits of Kean playing Richard III. (Cite?)

Because of his sensationally scandalous reputation, scholars often face the temptation to read everything he wrote through the lens of biography. This has been a prevalent and perpetual problem, one that not even Byron himself could effectively discredit. Byron was a larger-than-life figure in his day and age, but more recent studies suggest that this figure was a carefully curated one. As Peter Thorslev argues, just as Byron's public persona was crafted to project a certain identity, so too was his heroic type: "all the elements of the Byronic Hero existed before him in the literature of the age… he did not spring by a miracle of parthenogenesis from Byron's mind…. Byron may in some sense become his hero after the fact, but his hero was no mere outgrowth of the poet's personality" (12).

Byron liked the idea of disliking Shakespeare more than he actually disliked Shakespeare, partly because of Shakespeare's popularity, and partly because Byron had some self-conscious concerns about tying himself too closely to Shakespeare. Byron struggled with his own fascination with Shakespeare, and his desire to be distinct. And yet, as an avid fan of theater, Byron had no hope of escape. While succeeded in making a name for himself as a distinctly popular poet, it was impossible to escape entirely from a poet so influential, an influence perceptible throughout Byron's own work. Knowing Shakespeare better than he let on, Byron combined the Bastard Character archetype with some of the popular stage characters in order to create his own version of the Romantic protagonist, the Byronic Hero, who turns the tables on

the problem of the Bastard Character in Shakespeare. The Byronic Hero chooses his isolation in spite of the community, reducing the Bastard Characters' desire to belong from a desire for integration with the whole community to that of desire for total love and fidelity from one person. In contracting the scope of the Bastard Character's problem, Byron dramatically shifts the balance in one way, making the desire far more particular and individualistic for Byron's characters. This relationship with a beloved which fulfills his need for community, but also presents problems in that Byron's heroes face a dramatically intensified problem. Once their connection with their one true love is lost, the Byronic hero's ability to connect to humanity is at stake, and they devolve into an unresolvable state of perpetual isolation.

Wary of reading the Byronic Hero through a biographical lens, some background is necessary in order to elucidate the connection between Byron and Shakespeare. After exploring Byron's familiarity with Shakespeare and the theater, as well as its predominant stereotypes during his day and age, , this chapter will turn to the Byronic Hero character type itself, brought to its fullest expression in the figures of Conrad the Corsair and Manfred. Exposing the connections between this type and the Bastard Character, it will look at how Byron's contracted sense of community is as problematic as Shakespeare's hostile and prejudiced community. Ultimately the Byronic Heroes are themselves to blame for their isolation, because they willingly reject all community but one with their beloved. By placing so much importance on that one relationship, his heroes are completely isolated when the relationship is irreparably severed.

BYRON'S RELATIONSHIP WITH SHAKESPEARE

When English theater rediscovered Shakespeare around the turn of the nineteenth century, after the Puritan extremists when Cromwell banned theater for almost twenty years and stages were dominated by raunchy Restoration comedies for the next century, a new approach to theater brought new attention to Shakespeare's plays. With the rise of a star-based system that featured actors like Edmund Kean, John Philip Kemble, and Sarah Siddon, Shakespeare's plays were popular once more for their powerful characters who afforded new and illustrious actors the chance to take on a truly great-souled role (Nagler 361-3, 413-9, 455-7). Plays which had not been performed because their endings were unpopular, such as *King Lear*, returned to the stage along with newfound favorites. In particular, *Richard III* was made a success by Kean, who brought such passion and sprit to his performance that it went on to be the primary perception of the character for a good while after, just as Edwin Booth's melancholy brooding approach to *Hamlet* would make the play famous later that century (Nagler 455-9, 564-6).

Byron's relationship to Shakespeare has confused scholars for the past two centuries, in a great part because of his own contradictory efforts to distance himself from the playwright. While Byron maintained a disdain for Shakespeare which was as well publicized as it was vehement, his poetry tells a different story, one with impressive understanding of Shakespeare. On the one hand, Byron dismissed the idea of Shakespeare as a great writer, and was anxious to prove that he had brought no copies of either Shakespeare or Milton with him to Pisa to be inspiration, because "[p]lagiarism was always, for him, a sensitive subject" (225-7). Byron reveled in the chance to flaunt his nonconformist perspective, one time upsetting a fellow conversationalist so much that he "became so distressed by the poet [Byron]'s… attack upon

Shakespeare, that he was obliged to rush out of the room to calm himself. When he returned, protesting, Byron delightedly redoubled his onslaught" (226). Byron was very outspoken in his rejection of Shakespeare, yet on the other hand Barton argues that he "cannot really be included in that curiously disparate group of notorious Shakespeare detractors" such as Voltaire, Tolstoy, or Shaw (ibid). Byron frequently surprised his friends with his extensive knowledge of Shakespeare's work, seen in his frequent allusions to his plays and poetry in his own work and conversation. Presumed to have discovered Shakespeare at a young age and to have continued to read him at least until his entrance into Trinity College, Byron's journals are full of quotations from Shakespeare, sometimes carefully copied from a book and cited, sometimes written out by memory. Some, as in the case of his famous journal entries after Napoleon's fall, include misspellings and misquoted lines highly suggestive of the idea that he was working from memory (227-8). An "indefatigable and wide-ranging reader" with a good memory, Byron had such an uncanny ability to recall Shakespeare that while "[f]ew people doubted the formidable tenacity of Byron's memory….[it] could not explain his continual recourse to Shakespearean characters, allusions, and quotations, drawn from…virtually the entire canon…in conversation…[and] in his letters, journals, and poems" (ibid). In total, "only *The Comedy of Errors* and *Venus and Adonis* seem to be missing from the long list of Shakespearean quotations and allusions"—an impressive feat, even if his memory was so good that "whatever he read stayed in his mind, whether he admired it or not" (227-9).

Though Byron attempted to divide himself from any subordinate poetic position to Shakespeare in word, the witness of his written works betrays a more complicated relationship to England's bard. Shakespeare appears throughout Byron's work usually in the form of either

allusions or (mis)quotations. While some of these references are conscious quotations or allusions to Shakespeare's work, such as his probable echoing of the graveyard scene from Hamlet in his twelfth stanza to *Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte*, others are more complicated (232). For example, in the twelfth stanza of the *Corsair*, describing Conrad's intensely loyal love for Medora, his woman back home, Byron draws upon Shakespeare's sonnet 116—"Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments"—in order to highlight that this relationship is in fact one of the purest loves possible for man. Written in roughly iambic pentameter lines, Byron's meter becomes perfect when he borrows rewrites Shakespeare into the poem, in particular for the perhaps most obviously influenced lines: "Which nought removed, nor menaced to remove— / If there be Love in mortals—this was Love" (*Corsair* 301-2). While Byron's most direct references in his poetry are to Shakespearean characters, particular lines, or specific moments from plays, the bard's influence can also be seen in the majority of his closet dramas (Barton 230-3), written in response to the bad theater which abounded at this time and intended to be read rather than staged. Barton shows how these references consistently add extra layers of meaning to his poetry, either through allusive or structural benefits:

> Byron [often] depends on Shakespeare to thicken and enrich the texture of his poem, and often where it is least laughable…. He can also draw upon Shakespeare in larger and more structural ways. *The Tempest* informs the entire idyll of Haidee's island in Cantos II-IV [of *Don Juan*]…the tragic ending of his own tale becoming more poignant by contrast with its happier Shakespearean paradigm. Never in thrall to his great predecessor, as so many of his contemporaries were, Byron can use him creatively—much as Shakespeare used his own source material. (234)

As much as Byron may have liked to claim that Shakespeare had no influence on him, his poetry is so full of references and allusions to Shakespeare it is impossible to be unaware of even the inadvertent influences.

One possible reason that Byron found himself drawn to Shakespeare could be because several of Shakespeare's characters resonated with him deeply at a personal level, especially some of those characters who were themselves inspiration for the Bastard Character. As G. Wilson Knight asserts: "Byron *was* Shakespearean drama incarnate… [he] was by turns or simultaneously Hamlet, Puck, Macbeth, Falstaff, Antony, Timon and Prospero" (10-8). While Knight's work occasionally inclines toward a too psychologically-biographic interpretation of Byron and his relationship to Shakespeare, Knight's theory offers a perspective on how Byron could contextualize his life in terms of Shakespeare. In particular, Byron had a strong affinity for Richard III because, painfully self-conscious of his own mild foot deformity, he related to the physically deformed and his socially outcast state: "Richard III made a peculiarly strong impression on Byron…. Richard was deformed, and Byron's lameness, slight though it was… caused him continual embarrassment, or worse; the sense of it appearing to 'haunt' him 'like a curse'….Both endured a sense of inferiority coupled to knowledge of unusual powers" (151-4). Without reducing Byron's connection to a biographical, pseudo-psychological fixation, his connection to Shakespeare was in part fostered by an intense sympathy with his characters, especially those conflicted characters who make up Shakespeare's representation of the Bastard Character type.

Another reason to connect these two authors is in Byron's interest in theater as an arena ripe for character exploration. From his schooldays, Byron was fond of theater, and showed a proclivity for dramatic performance:

> Byron was a gifted and enthusiastic amateur actor, dating from his schooldays at Harrow, where he recited Lear and other roles to gratifying applause. As late as 1822, Byron attempted to get up an amateur production of *Othello* while living in exile at Pisa. Though the plan fell through, Byron's interpretation of Iago inspired Thomas Medwin to remark that 'perhaps Lord Byron would have made the finest actor in the world'. (Richardson 133)

Less than a year before his self-imposed exile from England, Byron began to work with the Drury Lane Theater as a member of the subcommittee created to reinvigorate the theater and bring audiences to the shows (134). Primarily involved in reviewing play submissions and finding authors to solicit for new plays, Byron found his task depressingly fruitless: "The 'number of plays upon the shelves were about five hundred', he later recalled; 'I do not think that of those which I saw – there was one which could be conscientiously tolerated'" (qtd. in Richardson 135). Though he only ever attempted to write his own play for the stage once with his work *Werner*—never performed during his lifetime—Byron preferred to stick to what he called plays "written 'without regard to the Stage' but for the 'mental theatre of the reader'" (qtd. in Richardson 136). Dramatic works such as these—most notably *Marino Faliero*, *Sardanapalus,* and *The Two Foscari*— walk the line between highly metaphysical plays and long narrative poems. Though he was never inspired enough to write many plays, Byron was fascinated by theater as an audience member and as a patron through the subcommittee he joined.

Why Byron never wrote a formal play for the stage is difficult to say. David V. Erdman influentially argued that Byron was crippled by an overwhelming stage fright, attached to his fear

of rejection: “far from considering his own plays unactable [*sic*], Byron only feared they might be…. [U]nlike a moth [drawn to the flame], [Byron was] conscious and fearful that the flame might burn him… [and] angrily refused to make the ‘experiment for applause’ which representation would constitute” (6). Other critics, such as Knight, have criticized this argument as insufficient, based on “crudely applied Adlerian psychology” and “sometimes misleadingly pruned quotations from Byron” (135-6). While it is entirely possible that Byron was afraid of rejection from audiences of the stage, it seems more likely that Byron, aware of the popularity of plot-light entertainments like pantomimes, melodramas, and puppet shows, realized that while nobody would be interested in attending the kind of plays he was interested in writing, his ready-made audience of readers would happily consume it in written form (134). In this estimation, Byron was not wrong; the *Corsair* sold over 10,000 copies on the first day of its publication (McCarthy 215). Byron’s mental dramas repurpose theatrical techniques such as dialogue, soliloquies, and sudden scene changes in order to make a poetry that can be more narrative and explorative of character, still within a coherent plot. Uninspired by the kinds of theatrical performances on the stages of his day, yet wildly intrigued by the idea of writing a play, Byron began to create “dramatic poems” such as *Manfred* and *Corsair*, long poems which inhabit the hazy space between poetry and performance and explore these fascinating character types.

The Byronic Hero Type

As noted above, interpreting Byron biographically is one of the biggest problems of Byron scholarship. Because his life was at times so outrageously adventurous, the critical world has been swampy in biographical studies. As mentioned before, however, Byron was very

conscious of his appearance, and so recent studies have begun to argue that the identity known as Byron's by the public sphere was a carefully crafted impression created by the poet himself. According to Jake Phipps, just like the Scottish poet he admired Robert Burns's purposefully-curated identity as "Scotland's bardie", Byron too created a public character for himself:

> Much is made…of Byron creating and exploiting a role or personae for poetic effect, or to advance his own celebrity. Reading Byron as an actor of his own (often contradictory) creations who then self-consciously wrote his role under the mask of autobiography, is a conceit that also applies to Burns….Whereas Byron is generally thought to have written himself as character into his poems…Burns more frequently appears not as a character within his poems, but within the character of his poems. (Phipps 21-3)

While this interpretation of Byron's poetic presence does call into question arguments based predominantly on biographical data, it also opens the opportunity for scholars to divide Byron as a man from his identity as a poetic persona or narrative voice.

In particular, the understanding that Byron's public identity may be more contrived than previously assumed frees the Byronic Hero from being interpreted as a literary self-insert for the author. From the time that Byron began to become famous until today, readers have presumed that the inspiration for the Byronic Hero must have come from Byron himself. A young aristocrat who styled himself as a melancholy, brooding, passionate poet, Byron was wildly popular (and infamous) among Regency England Society (Hussain par. 14). To be fair, some of Byron's eccentric hijinks may have helped that idea; not only did he go on a grand tour as Childe Harold does in his poem, but shortly after the *Corsair* was published he commissioned a portrait of himself in a Turkish costume, which became the standard model for his Turkish pirate-captain's appearance (McCarthy 216). As Peter L. Thorslev argues, however, just as Byron's public persona was crafted to project a certain idea of himself, so too was his heroic type a projection of

particular ideals (12). No longer reliant upon Byron's self-portrait, criticism has the opportunity to open up to new interpretations of the Byronic Hero's origins and inspiration.

Considering that the Byronic Hero character is most often found in many of Byron's dramatic poems, it seems reasonable to look at Byron's continuous interest in theater for potential influences on the creations of this literary figure. This is exactly what Thorslev does in his preeminent work, *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes* by identifying particular traits which stage character types of the early-nineteenth-century stage share with Byron's interpretation of a hero. As the Romantic movement brought Gothic literature to the center stage, the models of heroism were changing from stage heroes of tame Comedies of Manners and overly-sensitive or victimized protagonists, famous in books like Richardson's *Pamela*. Heroes, if they were still included, were usually what Thorslev calls "the Man of Feeling" type, insipid protagonists of moderate means who seek out experiences that will cause melancholy and promote "social sympathy" (39). Villains, especially on the stage more than in novels, became the new heroes in popular fiction, made particularly alluring by their powerful personalities and their privately wounding "past [of] secret sins"(51-4). Thorslev sees the Byronic Hero type as something of "a potpourri or an agglomeration of the characteristics of the heroes", from the mysterious Gothic villain-heroes who "if he was not a hero at first, he was shortly to become one in the later dramas…a true Romantic rebel", to the Hero of Sensibility with "his capacities for feeling…gentle and tearful love, nostalgia, and a pervasive melancholy", and even to the Noble Outlaw whose "fiery, passionate, and heroic" nature adds to his darker "cloak of mystery and his air of the sublime" (35, 52, 68-9). Seen in this light, Byron's character type emerges as a natural permutation in the popular literature of his day, rather than from a confessional need for

disguised autobiography: "This hero is unique, in one sense, in the powerful fusion of these disparate elements into a single commanding image…. Byron did not project life into literature nearly so much as he projected literature into life" (12). Acquainted with the popular character types of the day through his interest in theater as well as popular literature, Byron drew from some of the most remarkable types in his creation of the Byronic Hero.

Many of the Byronic Heroes' primarily recognizable qualities—their identity as natural individuals who refuse to conform to society, the liminal yet influential state they inhabit, and their preeminent desire to find love and belonging—draw the sphere of their influences further back from Byron's contemporary stage to that of Shakespeare's Bastard Characters. Like the Bastard Character, Byronic Heroes are powerful and attractive individuals, unafraid to go to dark places or use less-than-heroic means to achieve what they want. Their rebellious lifestyles on the fringes of society, a liminal border of the community that they both despise and desperately need, creates once again the plight which Shakespeare's Bastard Characters faced.

A few core differences differentiate the Byronic Hero from his literary predecessors of the Romantic stage and from the Bastard Character. The key difference from Shakespeare's character type helps to elucidate how Byron sees the hero at fault more than the community. On the one hand, the Byronic Hero is unique in his boundless energy and very real power. Byron's heroes—especially Manfred and Conrad—usually demonstrate their power through their position in each of the stories. Of the three, two are the leaders and primary unifiers of their particular outlaw bands who provide the energy and directions to their crews (*Corsair* 43-82). This capacity for energy and drive establishes Byron's heroes as of a different caliber than the sentimental naif the Man of Feeling and his melancholic cousin the Hero of Sensibility (Thorslev

35). On the other hand, Byron's characters, in spite of their at-times overwhelming desire for vengeance, are never truly villains (53).

How they present the desire for belonging becomes the most significant difference between Shakespeare's type and Byron's reimagining of it. While Shakespeare's Bastard Characters want to belong to a community which is built to reject them, Byron's heroes reject the community even if it is possibly open to them because they place all their need for community into a romantic relationship. Though some of Shakespeare's Bastard Characters do have romantic relationships, they are too enmeshed in their scheming ways to truly spare the time for love. Richard intentionally woos Lady Anne for a purely political purpose, and Edmund entertains the advances of Goneril and Regan as a potential avenue forward (*Richard* I.2.247-62, *Lear* V.1.63-77). Byron's heroes, on the other hand, have one true love to connect them back to the community they eschew. Though Conrad and Manfred both revel in their ability to be independently powerful men, each nevertheless cannot persist in that identity unless they are securely in a relationship with their beloveds Medora and Astarte respectively. This new shift restricts their scope of community and creates an environment where belonging is a case of all or nothing. When the Byronic Hero's true love invariably dies, it severs his ties to the broader community and his wish to be connected from any community, thereby leaving him in total isolation when his beloved is gone.

"That man of loneliness and mystery,…/Warped by the world in Disappointment's school, / … Too firm to yield, and far too proud to stoop," Conrad is a Byronic Hero who reveals his Bastard Character past in his self sufficiency, impressive authority, and in his terrible loneliness (*Corsair* 173, 253-5). Grave, taciturn, and authoritative, he wins loyalty from his crew through

respect for his skill rather than friendliness—"[f]ew are his words, but keen his eye and hand. /… they forgive his silence for success"—while, like Richard III, intentionally controlling them with his intellectual prowess: "[he] sways their souls with that commanding art… / The power of Thought—the magic of the Mind" (64-6, 177-82)! For Conrad, his success is all due to his strength and capability, even at the cost of becoming a villain:

> He knew himself a villain—but he deemed
> The rest no better than the thing he seemed;
> And scorned the best as hypocrites who hid
> Those deeds the bolder spirit plainly did.
> He knew himself detested, but he knew
> The hearts that loath'd him, crouch'd and dreaded too.
> Lone, wild, and strange, he stood alike exempt
> From all affection and from all contempt:
> His name could sadden, and his acts surprize [*sic*];
> But they that fear'd him dared not to despise:…. (265-74)

Betrayed and wronged before, now hardened and unswerving, Conrad is powerful only because he has entirely cut himself off from others. Conrad sets himself against the rest of mankind in order to protect himself from their treachery (256-64). While this isolation is in part what allows him to be as authoritative and efficient as he is, it also creates the almost-complete loneliness which characterizes him from the beginning of the poem.

For Conrad, it is his love for Medora which saves him from total isolation and total depravity is that "one softer feeling" which "[will] not yet depart" and make him completely depraved:

> Yes—it was Love—if thoughts of tenderness,
> Tried in temptation, strengthened by distress,
> ………………………………………………
> Which nought removed, nor menaced to remove—
> If there be Love in mortals—this was Love!
> He was a villain—aye, reproaches shower

On him—but not the Passion, nor its power,
Which only proved—all other virtues gone—
Not Guilt itself could quench this loveliest one! (*Corsair* 281-308)

Inflexibly faithful in his love to her, Conrad's primary solace is in seeing her and main anxiety is for her care (291-300). It is this kind of softness, manifested in a chivalrous and pure disposition towards all other women, which leads to his entrapment halfway through the poem; rather than escape while he can, having successfully carried out an attack on one of Conrad's nemeses, he and his men stay behind to save the harem from a fire, and this delay causes him alone to be captured (801-914). Love for Medora serves as Conrad's north star, able to call him to a higher sense of nobility and right, and always there to bring him home.

Published after the wildly-popular *Corsair*, Manfred is another Byronic Hero who demonstrates the traits of Bastard Characters in his isolation and willingness to do whatever it takes to find his place in the world. A dark sorcerer with an indistinctly tragic past, Manfred is a man of tremendous power, a particularly charismatic and domineering personality, and the ability to able to manipulate man and spirits alike (*Manfred* I.1.41-9). Able to command spirits and natural powers, as well as hold his own against deities and demons, Manfred's occult authority places him into a singular position of power outside of the community (ibid). He achieves this unique power through his remarkable self-control and restraint. When he experiences the pain of loss again as his beloved's ghost departs, the underling spirits of Nemesis comment on his ability to control himself even in the middle of great grief:

A Spirit. [Observing Manfred] He is convulsed—This is to be a mortal
And seek the things beyond mortality.

Another Spirit. Yet, see, he mastereth himself, and makes

> His torture tributary to his will.
> Had he been one of us, he would have made
> An awful spirit. (II.4.528-32)

Though Manfred's case is a bit different because of his otherworldly power, he nonetheless presents many of the same characteristics which Conrad likewise shares with the Bastard Character.

However, the position he has made for himself with dark magic and aloofness comes at the cost of great isolation. Manfred's lonely autonomy is softened by the power of his affection for Astarte, tinged by his regret (warranted or not) felt for her death: "If I had never lived, that which I love / Had still been living; had I never loved, / That which I love would still be beautiful—/ Happy and giving happiness" (*Manfred* II.2.286-9). It is through these relationships that Byron's heroes strive to find belonging in the world they ostensibly wish to reject. Set adrift in the world after the death of his beloved, Astarte, Manfred searches for a way to bring back his sense of belonging into the world, either by bringing her back or through the total "oblivion" of death (I.1.131-43).

In spite of their fascination with the idea of obtaining true love, these poems more often than not involve the loss of the hero's beloved, and the devastation caused prevents the Byronic Hero's ultimate reunion with their community. Though Manfred cheekily responds to the Chamois Hunter's expressions of sympathy for his grief with "Do I not bear it?—Look on me—I *live*", his desperate loneliness after the loss of Astarte is truly "no *healthful life*" (II.1.42-3**,** emphasis added). From this point forward, the play becomes a sequence of Manfred's rejections of opportunities to integrate into communities, whether with the hunter, the spirits, the abbey of monks, or the cohort of demons. In the end, he chooses to die entirely alone and with no recourse

to divine power beyond his own: “[I] was my own destroyer, and will be / My own hereafter” (III.4.399-400). Likewise, when Conrad discovers that Medora has died of a broken heart, believing he was dead rather than detained, he is crushed by grief: “In helpless—hopeless—brokenness of heart: / The Sun goes forth, but Conrad's day is dim: / … tempests wear, and lightning cleaves the rock; / If such his heart, so shattered it the shock” (*Corsair* 1823-37)**.** Devastated, Conrad simply vanishes at the end of the poem: “Conrad comes not, came not since that day: / Nor trace nor tidings of his doom declare / Where lives his grief, or perished his despair” (*Corsair* 1856-8)! The loss of their one true beloved leads both of Byron’s heroes into isolation and despair: Byron’s heroes are unable to find any further resolution than total, pervasive isolation from the world once their one true love has died.

Unlike in *King Lear*, Byron offers almost no resolution for the Byronic Hero because, by placing all of his hope for belonging into his romantic relationship, integration is impossible once she is dead. Once the one person Byronic Heroes can love is gone, they are unable to find, like the Bastard Characters of Shakespeare, a place to belong in the world. By reducing the scale of the Byronic Heroes’ community to the desire for total love from one person, the desire becomes far more particular and far more intense. Suddenly, union with the beloved puts the Byronic Hero’s ability to connect to all of humanity at stake. Once their connection with their one true love is irreparably lost, Byron’s heroes reject any other avenues for integration; Conrad never accepts the advances of Gulnare, and Manfred sees his lot only in total loneliness: “My joys, my griefs, my passions, and my powers, / Made me a stranger; though I wore the form, / I had no sympathy with breathing flesh” (*Corsair* 1674-90; *Manfred* 149-51). Though exploring in his own way the same problem as Shakespeare’s Bastard Characters, Byron refuses to even

attempt a possible resolution because, reduces the longing to belong into one relationship with an individual results in an inability to find a way out of their overwhelming isolation.

While Richardson rightfully notes that, “[n]o one would place Byron next to Shakespeare”, none can deny that many of Byron’s works were in conversation with the works of the English Renaissance Bard. Though his plays never became as popular as Shakespeare’s, Byron’s closet dramas “showcase Byron’s experimentalism and formal range…[and] significantly add to Byron’s development of a poetry resolutely engaged with the political and social issues of his era… [by underscoring] the dramatic and dialogic character of his later poetic style, and the performative aspect of [his] life” (Richardson 148). Ever interested in theater as a stage for experimentation, Byron’s closet dramas and long-narrative poems offer a unique perspective into the developing character of the Byronic Hero as a descendant of the Elizabethan Bastard Character. Just as Byron was famously characterized as “mad, bad, and dangerous to know”, his heroes, as well as their Bastard Character antecedents, could be so described (Lang par. 2). Powerful, authoritative, and alone, Byronic Heroes like Conrad and Manfred exemplify the traits which serve to bridge the space between the Romantic ideals of heroes and the Bastard Character archetype. From this union, and in particular through the ways that Byron adds on to the legacy of Shakespeare’s characters, the Bastard Character archetype becomes even more dangerous in the Byronic Hero’s intensification of his core desire. Rather than look at the community as problematic in the way that Shakespeare does, Byron shows how the hero himself has the potential to create the problem of isolation by willingly choosing it in order to focus their longing to belong onto a particular union with their true love. When that connection becomes

severed by death, Byron's heroes have no other avenue for belonging, and retreat into oblivion and isolation.

Conclusion

Two extremely public and popular men in their day who remain some of the most preeminent authors of British literature, both William Shakespeare and Lord Byron were fascinated with the plight of the social outcast. Both explore the complexities of this character in the isolated Bastard Characters and Byronic Heroes, portraying characters whose power, independence, and vitality have made them perpetually fascinating. Each sees in it a conflict between the individual and their community, but each has different focuses in their representations of the problem. While Shakespeare sees in the Bastard Character's turn to villainy a failure of the community to see beyond their prejudices and recognize the humanity of the bastard, Byron sees that it is the hero's vehement rejection of community, or reduction of his need to belong to a sole relationship, which prevents him from ultimately finding a place to belong.

The fact that these character types have remained such pervasive archetypes even to the present day testifies to the enduring fascination this character inspires. By returning to the Bastard Character type over the whole scope of his career, Shakespeare developed the Bastard Character beyond the point of stock character and into the realm of archetype, where his qualities could become more defined without stagnating. Throughout the succeeding centuries since Byron made his idea of a hero one of the dominant Romantic archetypes, Byronic Heroes have continued to remain one of the most-used and most-enchantingly dangerous types of hero. One possible avenue for further study would be how the Byronic Hero brought the Bastard Character

type through the Victorian age into the literary world of modern, postmodern, and contemporary fiction.

Initially a theatrical response to the concerns which illegitimacy brought to the surface during the English Renaissance, both Shakespeare and Byron find in the Bastard Character archetype something more than just a political problem. The plight of the Bastard Character is this crisis of loneliness which haunts each character examined in this paper, his insurmountable isolation that prevents him from finding communion with his fellow men. Even as Byronic Heroes try to make their goal more achievable by reducing the scale from belonging with a community to belonging with a single person, they are still incapable of success in the end because their desire for belonging is too great. Rather than trying to offer a solution that can fix the problem, Shakespeare and Byron invite their audience to recognize the essential humanity in the Bastard Character and Byronic Hero's plight. By following these dynamic, lonely, alluring characters through their various attempts to find belonging, sometimes through less-than-heroic means, the reader sees in them a reflection of the essential human need for connection. Through the journey of the isolated Bastard Character or Byronic Hero in pursuit of a place to belong, they present the perennial human struggle to find a true home.

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