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4 'This is not the play': Shakespeare  
5 and Space Opera in Lois McMaster  
6 Bujold's Vorkosigan Saga  
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9 *Patricia Taylor*  
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14 **Introduction**  
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16 In the sixth book of her award-winning science fiction series the  
17 Vorkosigan Saga, Lois McMaster Bujold offers an important fact about  
18 her main character, Miles Vorkosigan: at a young age, he memorized  
19 all of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, and, years later, he can still recite it,  
20 complete with falsetto voices for the female characters.<sup>1</sup> In the series,  
21 *Richard III* provides a mirror for Miles's political situation and some  
22 of his personal characteristics: Miles stands only a few steps from the  
23 throne of a tri-planetary empire at the end of a bloody civil war, and  
24 was raised as the current Emperor's foster brother. He is deformed, with  
25 a hunched back, brittle bones, and a scarred body. He is charismatic and  
26 persuasive in situations where persuasion should be impossible, and he  
27 can be utterly ruthless when it suits him.

28 Bujold's novels borrow liberally from Shakespeare's plays in order to  
29 critique the conventions of the space opera and offer the genre new  
30 complexities, particularly in the form of character psychology. But, just  
31 as Miles is not the tragic or anti-hero that he so clearly resembles from  
32 the Shakespearean tradition, the series steadfastly refuses to be fully  
33 remade into Shakespearean forms. While Bujold suggests that space  
34 opera can be improved by borrowing from Shakespeare, her novels  
35 demonstrate that the genre must also reject Shakespearean paths in  
36 order to create and maintain its own identity. The Vorkosigan Saga pro-  
37 vides a model for Shakespearean engagement in which neither competi-  
38 tion nor collaboration are sufficient terms to describe the relationship  
39 between appropriated and appropriator. Rather than employing the  
40 parent-child framework that tends to dominate discussions of anxiety  
41 of influence, both in and out of adaptation studies but with particular

1 regard to Shakespeare, Bujold's novels suggest that sibling relation-  
2 ships, with their more limited hierarchies, their lack of a need for the  
3 next generation to replace the former, and their ability to embody both  
4 rivalry and collaboration, may provide provocative new metaphors for  
5 imitation, adaptation, and appropriation.

6 The Vorkosigan Saga currently consists of 15 novels, four novellas,  
7 and a short story (commenced in 1986, with the latest novel appear-  
8 ing in 2012) that chronicle the adventures of the Vorkosigans, an  
9 aristocratic family from Barrayar, the capital planet of the neo-feudal  
10 Barrayaran Empire. While the first two novels focus on Aral Vorkosigan  
11 and Cordelia Naismith, most feature their son Miles as the central  
12 character.<sup>2</sup> Set in a future where human beings have colonized multiple  
13 planets, scientists engage in casual genetic engineering, and merce-  
14 nary fleets roam the stars looking for work, the Vorkosigan Saga has  
15 been called 'traditional space opera' (Westfahl, 2003, p. 205). When  
16 Hugo Gernsback coined the term 'space opera' in 1932, it served as  
17 shorthand for plots set in outer space that were simplistic, hackneyed,  
18 and formulaic. Since then, the term has become less an indictment of  
19 quality and now functions more neutrally to describe any space-set  
20 action-adventure story, particularly science fiction series that have an  
21 epic scope, with the rise and fall of governments, species, or planets at  
22 stake (Westfahl, 2003, p. 197). The most famous examples of the genre,  
23 of course, are *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*.

24 Despite the popularity of the space opera genre, it suffers from criti-  
25 cal neglect compared to more literary science fiction. Bujold's novels  
26 are a case in point; while Bujold has garnered more Hugo awards and  
27 nominations for Best Novel than any author except Robert A. Heinlein,  
28 until 2013 only a handful of scholarly articles existed on her work.<sup>3</sup> As  
29 Janet Brennan Croft explains in the introduction to *Lois McMaster Bujold:*  
30 *Essays on a Modern Master of Science Fiction and Fantasy*, the reason scholars  
31 have generally ignored Bujold's work is that it occupies an awkward spot  
32 in the science fiction canon. While written by a woman, the Saga bears  
33 little resemblance to the feminist science fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin,  
34 Joanna Russ, or James Triptree, Jr. Instead, the Vorkosigan Saga is una-  
35 bashedly militaristic space opera, which, too, has been largely ignored,  
36 though the situation is further complicated by the series' engagement  
37 with other, similarly ignored genres such as the romance novel.<sup>4</sup>

38 Works from genres and mediums that have been critically panned –  
39 like the space opera and romance – have often drawn on Shakespeare  
40 to legitimize themselves (Osborne, 1999, p. 84). Perhaps the most well  
41 known example of this phenomenon is the early twentieth-century

1 silent film use of Shakespeare's plays to counter accusations that film  
 2 was sensationalist and morally corrupting (Dobson and Wells, 2001,  
 3 p. 351). But, as Douglas Lanier has argued, Shakespeare has also served  
 4 as a symbol of highbrow culture, an elite reference against which popu-  
 5 lar culture sometimes defines itself by inverse snobbery: 'The drive to  
 6 keep Shakespeare and popular culture apart is shared both by those who  
 7 lament that popular culture has been displacing our cultural heritage,  
 8 and by those who champion popular culture as the people's alterna-  
 9 tive to an elitist literary canon' (2002, p. 3). Science fiction, too, has  
 10 vacillated between embracing its status as popular entertainment,  
 11 and attempting to find a way to become a part of a more elite literary  
 12 culture.<sup>5</sup> Adapting or appropriating Shakespeare can be a way of mark-  
 13 ing such attempts, on either side.

14 Bujold's use of Shakespeare is also part of the larger tradition of women  
 15 writers who appropriate and adapt Shakespeare. As Marianne Novy has  
 16 shown, the need to engage with Shakespeare has been a marked feature  
 17 of works by women novelists, who have a long 'tradition of appro-  
 18 priative creativity' in which they rewrite Shakespearean texts in order to  
 19 make space for themselves in a literary world dominated by men (Novy,  
 20 1998, p. 1). Novy's study of twentieth-century women novelists at the  
 21 end of *Engaging with Shakespeare* draws attention to the particular promi-  
 22 nence of familial metaphors for understanding the relationship between  
 23 Shakespeare and his literary appropriators. *King Lear* and *The Tempest*,  
 24 plays that focus on problematic father–daughter relationships, have been  
 25 among the most adapted by women in the twentieth century (Novy,  
 26 1998, p. 186).<sup>6</sup> Novy argues that appropriating these particular plays has  
 27 allowed women to explore and redefine the relationships they have with  
 28 their cultural heritage as embodied in Shakespeare (Novy, 1998, p. 186).  
 29 While Shakespeare does not always stay in the role of problematic father –  
 30 sometimes becoming a 'generous, if often disappearing, uncle' – the  
 31 almost Freudian tone of Bloomian anxiety of influence is hard to miss  
 32 (Novy, 1998, p. 188). Bujold, like so many other women writers, plays  
 33 with familial metaphors drawn from Shakespeare to explore her own  
 34 relationship to tradition. But her work is notable in that she collapses  
 35 generational differences, offering the possibility of sidestepping anxiety  
 36 of influence through sibling, rather than parental metaphors.

### 37 38 **Rewriting *Richard III*: Adaptation and Agency**

39  
40 Some of the *Vorkosigan Saga*'s Shakespearean allusions are casual refer-  
 41 ences of the sort common in popular culture but that bear little weight,

1 as when Miles refers to himself as ‘a pint-sized Polonius’ after giving  
2 too much advice.<sup>7</sup> More influences are structural or thematic, such as  
3 Bujold’s incorporation of mistaken identity plots and gender-bending  
4 characters similar to those found in Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*  
5 or *Twelfth Night*, and these influences deserve further study. However,  
6 Shakespeare’s plays appear most prominently as texts that the main  
7 characters must wrestle with as they (and the genres they inhabit) strive  
8 for self-definition.

9 Miles Vorkosigan is the unequivocal hero of the series. He repeatedly  
10 prevents wars, wins space battles, and rescues prisoners, and always  
11 manages to somehow survive to the end of the story and go on to  
12 the next adventure. But while Miles fulfills the generic conventions  
13 of a space opera hero in this respect, his resemblance to Richard III  
14 subverts other traditional heroic characteristics. Stereotypical space  
15 operas feature strong, quick-thinking, good-looking heroes who aren’t  
16 even quite aware of how heroic they are (think Captain Kirk or Han  
17 Solo). In an essay on the relationship between her series and the space  
18 opera genre, Bujold describes Miles as ‘a space opera counter-hero, or a  
19 critique of the original genre, and indeed of the whole male-adventure  
20 genre including James Bond and the like’ (Bujold, 2007). Rather than  
21 ‘tall, lantern-jawed, strong, [and] handsome,’ he is ‘short, fragile-  
22 boned, and odd-looking’; in place of an unselfconscious hero, Miles  
23 is ‘a post-modern hero [who] can’t help being conscious of just about  
24 everything’ (Bujold, 2007). Miles’s deformities and self-awareness of  
25 both his own desire to be heroic and his resemblance to Richard III  
26 allow Bujold to draw on Shakespeare’s iconic character in order to give  
27 Miles a physical and psychological complexity that surpasses the usual  
28 space opera hero.

29 It is easy to see why Miles wrestles with *Richard III*. Miles’s deformities  
30 and their cultural meaning are a source of considerable angst for him.  
31 Like the Duchess of York, who says that her son Richard’s evil nature  
32 was ‘sealed’ in his misshapen birth, most Barrayarans see physical  
33 deformity as a sign of great moral evil (*Richard III*, 1.3.226). Their society  
34 attributes deformities to genetic mutation (though Miles persistently  
35 reminds everyone that his deformities are not genetic, only teratogenic,  
36 the result of an assassination attempt on his parents while he was in  
37 utero), and ‘mutant’ is perhaps the greatest insult on Barrayar. The  
38 response to apparent mutation is often violent: Miles notes that ‘the  
39 old genetic fears were so subtly ingrained, so pervasive even now, you  
40 could get beaten to death by people who didn’t even know quite why  
41 they hated you’ (Bujold, 2003, p. 477). Miles’s own grandfather, Count

1 Piotr Vorkosigan, tries to convince Aral and Cordelia to abort Miles,  
 2 and later attempts to murder Miles in his crib (Bujold, 2002, p. 210).  
 3 Infanticide has been illegal for only 40 years by the time Miles, at  
 4 age 20, investigates the murder of a child with a cleft lip and palate in  
 5 'The Mountains of Mourning' (Bujold, 2003, pp. 375–464).

6 Miles is thus incredibly aware of how others in his culture view  
 7 deformity and expect him to 'prove a villain' (*RIII*, 1.1.30). In *The*  
 8 *Warrior's Apprentice* (the first novel to focus on Miles), quotations and  
 9 allusions to *Richard III* are littered over the early chapters as Bujold bor-  
 10 rows fragments of Shakespeare's language to allow Miles to describe  
 11 himself. Upon breaking both his legs while botching a military entrance  
 12 exam, Miles contemplates his future: 'The deformed were invariably  
 13 cast as plotting villains in Barrayaran drama. If he couldn't be a soldier,  
 14 perhaps he had a future as a villain' (Bujold, 2003, p. 27). In a 1998  
 15 online discussion with fans that has circulated widely in the years  
 16 since, Bujold indicates that when Miles discusses Barrayaran drama, he  
 17 includes Shakespeare. Barrayar experienced a 'Time of Isolation' early in  
 18 its colonization: colonists had come from Earth through a wormhole,  
 19 which had collapsed. Cut off from the rest of the galaxy, Barrayar turned  
 20 to a form of military feudalism, lost much of its technology, and even  
 21 reverted to a primarily oral culture. But the Barrayarans took particular  
 22 pains to preserve important parts of their literary culture and herit-  
 23 age, especially Shakespeare's plays. When the Time of Isolation ended  
 24 several centuries later, Shakespeare's canon had expanded by five plays  
 25 (Bujold, 1998). In some respects, Shakespeare became Barrayaran, much  
 26 the way Shakespeare became Klingon in *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered*  
 27 *Country* (Lanier, 2002, p. 2).<sup>8</sup>

28 Miles's vision of himself as a villain – a 'capering dwarf' who carries  
 29 off his love interest Elena by force – bears Shakespeare's mark, echoing  
 30 Richard's rejection of the idea that he could be one who 'capers nimbly  
 31 in a lady's chamber' (*RIII*, 1.1.12) (Bujold, 2003, p. 27). *Richard III* is  
 32 quoted directly, and more forcefully, a few pages later. The 17-year-old  
 33 Miles, having been found kissing Elena by their two fathers, attempts  
 34 to pretend they are rehearsing the seduction scene between Richard  
 35 and Anne:

36  
 37 'All right,' he said in a didactic tone, 'Now, after "Grant me this  
 38 boon," on the next line you say, "With all my heart, and much it  
 39 joys me too, to see you are become so penitent.'" He glanced up most  
 40 impatiently at his father. 'Good evening, sir. Are we taking up your  
 41 space? We can go practice elsewhere.' (Bujold, 2003, p. 47)

1 The play and characters are never mentioned by name. In fact,  
2 Shakespeare's plays are rarely mentioned by name in the series, leav-  
3 ing readers to identify them based on their own familiarity with  
4 Shakespeare's dialogue, characters, and themes.<sup>9</sup> The nature of the  
5 allusions suggests that Bujold assumes her audience will be familiar  
6 with Shakespeare, despite space opera's reputation as a relatively non-  
7 literary subset of science fiction, even if she does not expect them to  
8 catch *all* the references (Bujold, 1998).

9 While a reader does not need to grasp the references to *Richard III*  
10 in order to understand Miles's sense of his own deformity and the  
11 problems it poses, the Shakespearean references add a layer of com-  
12 plexity as they suggest that Miles truly could prove a villain if he  
13 wanted. Indeed, it is precisely the fact that Miles has the Machiavellian  
14 mindset that would allow him to prove a Shakespearean villain if he  
15 chose that drives the climactic action of both *The Warrior's Apprentice*  
16 and its immediate sequel, *The Vor Game*. By the end of *The Warrior's*  
17 *Apprentice*, an 18-year-old Miles ends up in command of a mercenary  
18 fleet that knows him as 'Admiral Naismith.' While Miles describes  
19 acquiring the fleet as 'an accident' that 'just happened, in the course  
20 of scrambling from crisis to crisis,' the acquisition is also the product  
21 of his persuasive techniques and acting abilities: he manages to con-  
22 vince trained mercenaries and military commanders that he knows  
23 what he's doing, and that it is in their best interests to do what he  
24 says (Bujold, 2003, p. 355). At home on Barrayar, his father's politi-  
25 cal enemies use the fleet's existence to accuse Miles of attempting  
26 to usurp Emperor Gregor's throne. Upon hearing the charge, Miles  
27 reacts in horror: 'This is pure insanity! I don't want Gregor's job! Do  
28 they think I'm out of my mind?' (Bujold, 2003, p. 338). Miles, unlike  
29 Richard or other Shakespearean villains such as Macbeth or Edmund  
30 in *King Lear*, has no thought of taking the throne. His intention was  
31 only ever to be like 'Vorthalia the loyal' (Bujold, 2003, p. 355). But  
32 his plan to foil the treason charge brings the Ricardian themes back  
33 to the forefront, as his cousin Ivan exclaims, 'Your mind is crookeder  
34 than your bac – I mean – ' (Bujold, 2003, p. 340). While Miles would  
35 never consider taking the Imperial throne, Ivan's comment undercuts  
36 the assumption that he could not do so.

37 In *The Vor Game*, Miles faces an inverted version of the dilemma,  
38 as he must pretend to be more like the power-hungry Richard than  
39 he actually is in order to outwit Cavilo, a mercenary who intends to  
40 make herself empress of Barrayar. In this novel, Miles's friends, aware of  
41

1 the duplicity, are awed by his ability to create plots within plots, to  
2 verbally twist and slide in order to save Gregor's throne:

3  
4 'Damn,' said Elena in a hushed voice. 'If I didn't know you, I'd think  
5 you were Mad Yuri's understudy. The look on your face ... am I read-  
6 ing too much into all that innuendo, or did you in fact just connive  
7 to assassinate Gregor in one breath, offer to cuckold him in the next,  
8 accuse your father of homosexuality, suggest a patricidal plot against  
9 him, and league yourself with Cavilo?' (Bujold, 2003, p. 768)<sup>10</sup>

10 Miles, in the midst of out-thinking and out-maneuvering Cavilo, channels  
11 Richard III: his sly double talk and manipulation prove just as effective –  
12 and improbable – as Richard's manipulation of Anne (*RIII*, 1.2.32–212).

13 The inversion of the Ricardian plot as Miles saves Gregor's throne  
14 demonstrates how conscientiously Miles has rejected Richard's response  
15 to deformity and its perceived cultural meaning, but it also shows how  
16 similar Miles is to Richard III from the outside. As Gregor and Elena tell  
17 him later, Miles *could* be like Cavilo or (implicitly) Richard:

18  
19 'Yet in a weird way, you seem to get along with each other. You think  
20 alike.'

21 'Gregor!' Miles protested. 'Elena?' he called for a counter-vote.

22 'You're both very twisty,' said Elena doubtfully. 'And, er, short.' At  
23 Miles's tight-lipped look of outrage she explained. 'It's more a matter  
24 of pattern than content. If you were power-crazy, instead of, of ...'

25 'Some other kind of crazy, yes, go on.'

26 '– you could plot like that.' (Bujold, 2003, p. 783)

27  
28 Miles bears the 'pattern' of Richard III, both in body and in methods,  
29 but not in goal (Bujold, 2003, p. 783). The difference in goal is impor-  
30 tant, and demonstrates Bujold's simultaneous critique and endorsement  
31 of the space opera genre: while the hero need not be a perfect physical  
32 specimen, and may be more flawed and complex than the genre usually  
33 allows, he must still, at heart, be a hero.

### 34 35 Clones and Brothers: Genetic Similarity, Textual Difference

36  
37 While Miles's rejection of Richard III as a pattern for his goals is perhaps  
38 a foregone conclusion, Bujold uses *Brothers in Arms*, the fourth novel,  
39 to focus on Miles, as a further exploration of the extent to which Miles  
40 must *choose* to reject the Shakespearean patterns of behavior. To pursue  
41

1 Gregor's throne would make Miles an anti-hero, rather than a counter-  
 2 hero, but there are less villainous ways Miles could make Richard his  
 3 mirror or guide, and these are true choices for Miles. In *Brothers in Arms*,  
 4 Miles discovers a plot by terrorists from one of Barrayar's conquered  
 5 colonies, Komarr, to replace him with a clone who will in fact attempt  
 6 to seize the Barrayaran throne. While the terrorists hope only that the  
 7 clone's actions will create enough of a political distraction to allow them  
 8 to free Komarr from Barrayaran rule, Mark (as Miles eventually names the  
 9 clone) intends to disprove them all and actually take the throne (Bujold,  
 10 2002, pp. 203–4). Mark, who has been physically mutilated so he shares  
 11 Miles's deformities, is convinced that just as Miles was able to co-opt a  
 12 mercenary fleet, he will be able to take the Barrayaran Empire. Mark sees  
 13 Miles as his unwanted progenitor, and he has a deep anxiety of influence,  
 14 to borrow Harold Bloom's phrase: he blames Miles for the physical tor-  
 15 tures he's undergone and hates how he must imitate Miles to please his  
 16 captors, but he also envies Miles's accomplishments, and wants to prove  
 17 more adept than Miles, taking his place and surpassing his achievements.  
 18 Mark echoes, then, not only Richard III, but perhaps also Edmund from  
 19 *King Lear* and, as I discuss below, Caliban from *The Tempest*.

20 Miles, when he finally is able to talk with Mark alone, starts by imagin-  
 21 ing that he can sabotage his clone's plans, just as he sabotaged Cavilo's.  
 22 But he ends up rejecting the idea, instead offering his clone an alterna-  
 23 tive Shakespeare's plays rarely propose: the villain could transform him-  
 24 self into a true hero. The clone could become *Mark* Vorkosigan instead  
 25 of only Miles's doppelgänger; he could become a hero himself instead of  
 26 being forced to remain the villain. Miles offers him an identity shaped  
 27 by a new education and a real family: 'Any life you want. The galaxy  
 28 at your fingertips. Choice – freedom – ask, and it's yours. ... Galen offers  
 29 you death on a silver platter. I can get you life. I can get it for you whole-  
 30 sale, for God's sake' (Bujold, 2002, p. 208).

31 Miles makes this offer because he imagines his mother whispering,  
 32 '*what have you done with your baby brother?*' (Bujold, 2002, p. 199).  
 33 Cordelia has no knowledge of Mark's existence at this point, but Miles  
 34 knows that his mother's views on cloning and her general sense of ethi-  
 35 cal obligation require that he treat Mark as the brother he never had.  
 36 The question '*what have you done with your baby brother?*' is uncomfort-  
 37 able especially in the context of Miles's awareness of Richard III's own  
 38 fratricide. In a previous scene, the Komarran terrorist Galen questions  
 39 Miles using fast-penta, a drug that normally prevents interrogatees from  
 40 withholding information. But Miles discovers that an odd reaction to  
 41 the drug allows him to recite memorized poems and songs to prevent



1 himself from spilling secrets. While he begins with 'bad narrative verse  
2 [and] obscene Dendarii drinking songs,' it is ultimately the poetic  
3 rhythms of Shakespeare's language that his interrogators cannot stop:

4  
5 'At this rate we'll be here till next winter,' said one of the guards in  
6 disgust.

7 Miles's bleeding lips peeled back in a maniacal grin. 'Now is the  
8 winter of our discontent,' he cried, 'made glorious summer by this  
9 sun of York –'

10 It had been years since he'd memorized the ancient play, but the  
11 vivid iambic pentameter carried him along relentlessly. Short of beat-  
12 ing him into unconsciousness, there seemed nothing Galen could do  
13 to turn him off. Miles was not even to the end of Act I when the two  
14 guards dragged him back down the lift tube and threw him roughly  
15 back into his prison room. (Bujold, 2002, p. 192).

16  
17 Under the influence of the drug, he cannot stop the recitation when  
18 he is returned to his cell; he only collapses into exhaustion when the  
19 play is done. This is the first time Bujold reveals that Miles can not only  
20 quote a few parts of the play, as he does in *The Warrior Apprentice*, but  
21 also has memorized it in its entirety. Miles's quotation is compulsive,  
22 but not just because of the fast-penta. *Richard III* has a particularly tight  
23 hold on Miles's sense of self.

24 The revelation is timely because Richard's first villainous act in the  
25 play is to set up his brother Clarence to be murdered (*RIII*, 1.1.118–21).  
26 But, by forcing Miles to complete his performance of the play, even  
27 if the reader is not party to the complete rehearsal, Bujold hints at  
28 Richard's ghosts and his brutal end (*RIII*, 5.5.71–130, 5.8.1–2). Both  
29 Miles and Mark have the potential not merely to mirror Richard, but  
30 also to become him in one way or another: Mark is tempted by the  
31 villainous opportunities that Miles has rejected already, while Miles  
32 is faced with the much more personal and insidious temptation to do  
33 away with his inconvenient clone brother. For both Miles and Mark, it  
34 is only through rejecting Richard's trajectory that they come closer to  
35 the self-definition Miles promises Mark.

36 When Mark receives his own story in the series, *Mirror Dance*, his  
37 self-conception is plagued less by *Richard III* (there is no indication  
38 that he has it memorized, nor is he as self-conscious about Barrayaran  
39 prejudices against mutation) and more by the *Tempest* and its image of  
40 the monstrous Caliban, slave to Prospero. In *Mirror Dance*, Mark co-opts  
41 the Dendarii Mercenaries (which Miles commands in his persona as

1 Admiral Naismith) to save other clones from the facility where he was  
 2 originally created, and to try to end the cloning practices originally used  
 3 to create and enslave him. The rescue goes badly because Mark does not  
 4 have Miles's facility with military tactics. Miles tries to save both Mark  
 5 and the clones and dies in the process (albeit temporarily). Mark is  
 6 captured and tortured so badly his psyche fractures into four additional  
 7 personalities (Gorge, Grunt, Howl, and Killer) whom he refers to as 'the  
 8 black gang' (Bujold, 2002, p. 737). Eventually, the particular talents of  
 9 his different personalities allow Mark to kill his torturer and escape,  
 10 and even later rescue a revived Miles, but the damage to both body and  
 11 mind is complex.

12 Much of the novel takes place from Mark's perspective, as he wrestles  
 13 first with how to imitate Miles, and, later, how to find or even create his  
 14 own identity. At the end of the novel, when the adventures are largely over,  
 15 Mark speaks with Cordelia about Kareen, a Barrayaran girl he is attracted  
 16 to. In this conversation, he explains that he sees himself as Caliban:

17  
 18 'I don't regret knowing myself, ma'am. I don't even regret ... *being*  
 19 *myself.* *Me and the black gang.* 'But I do regret ... being so far from  
 20 Kareen. I believe I am a monster, of some sort. And in the play,  
 21 Caliban does not marry Prospero's daughter. In fact, he gets stomped  
 22 for trying, as I recall.' Yes, how could he possibly explain Gorge and  
 23 Grunt and Howl and Killer to someone like Kareen, without frighten-  
 24 ing or disgusting her? [...] It was hopeless. Better not to try.

25 (Bujold, 2002, p. 737)

26  
 27 Mark, in comparing himself to Caliban, is guided to not repeat Caliban's  
 28 mistakes. Caliban is a mirror for Mark himself: 'better not to try' lest he  
 29 end up forcing himself on Kareen the way Caliban is accused of forcing  
 30 himself on Miranda.

31 Cordelia, however, rejects the idea that Shakespeare holds an expla-  
 32 nation for what will happen to Mark if he pursues Kareen. She points  
 33 out that Mark is not subhuman, and Kareen is not a prize to be won,  
 34 remarking, 'This is not the play, Mark, and old Prospero has many  
 35 daughters. One may even have a low taste for fishy fellows' (Bujold,  
 36 2002, p. 737). Cordelia voices what has been implicit in Bujold's  
 37 use of Shakespeare from the very beginning: 'This is not the play.'  
 38 The characters of Bujold's novels are conscious of Shakespeare and  
 39 take pleasure in knowing his plays and drawing on them to under-  
 40 stand the possibilities of their own situations, but to be bound by  
 41 the fates of Shakespeare's characters would be to give up their own

1 self-determination. Cordelia rejects Shakespeare's looming authority as  
 2 a predetermined script; notably, she also forcefully reminds others that  
 3 Mark is his own person, not a pale imitation of Miles. Cordelia frees  
 4 Mark from Shakespeare's overwhelming influence with her statement,  
 5 just as Miles freed Mark by offering him the chance to choose a new  
 6 life, one not dictated by Miles's role as his progenitor. Cordelia pro-  
 7 poses that imitation is not a sufficient form of adaptation; Shakespeare  
 8 must be rewritten, repurposed – and possibly even rejected.

### 10 Rejecting Rivalry, Becoming Family

11  
 12 Miles rejects his parallels with *Richard III* one final time in *Komarr*,  
 13 the tenth novel of the series, in which Miles meets his eventual  
 14 wife, Ekaterin Vorsoisson. Richard's wooing of Anne is the seduction  
 15 scene that comes to Miles's mind first whenever he considers his own  
 16 romances. By *Komarr*, Miles has been forced to give up his identity as  
 17 Admiral Naismith of the Dendarii Mercenaries, but has found a new  
 18 place in Emperor Gregor's government as an Imperial Auditor, a posi-  
 19 tion somewhere between diplomat and special prosecutor. During his  
 20 investigation of terrorist activity on Komarr, Miles is forced to watch as  
 21 Ekaterin's husband Tien, a minor player in the terrorist organization,  
 22 chokes to death. While Ekaterin knows that Miles bears no responsibil-  
 23 ity for Tien's death, the police suspect that Miles might have murdered  
 24 Tien out of love for Ekaterin, blamed it on the terrorists, and planned  
 25 to run off with her – a plot not unlike the twisted version of Prince  
 26 Edward's death that Richard presents to Anne (*RIII*, 1.2.121–70). Miles  
 27 himself recognizes the similarities, thinking, '*Was ever woman in this*  
 28 *humor wooed? Was ever woman in this humor won? I think not*' (Bujold,  
 29 2008a, p. 206). Although allusions to other plays continue, Miles's  
 30 thought contains the final direct quotation of *Richard III* in the series.  
 31 'I think not' is Miles's equivalent of Cordelia's 'This is not the play,'  
 32 his final rejection of the Shakespearean patterns that had previously  
 33 informed his self-knowledge.

34 Miles's pursuit of Ekaterin, which makes up the bulk of the eleventh  
 35 novel, *A Civil Campaign*, does not run nearly as smoothly as Richard's  
 36 pursuit of Anne, though it does end much more happily. It is tempt-  
 37 ing to compare Miles to Henry V, given that 'Ekaterin' is the Russian  
 38 version of Katherine, and because Miles is heir to the Imperial throne  
 39 through Salic law, the same law that Henry used to justify his war on  
 40 France. However, this is a comparison that Bujold largely ignores: the  
 41 only other direct allusion to *Henry V* occurs after Miles's marriage as he

1 watches a video of his sperm fertilizing Ekaterin's egg, as he mutters,  
 2 'Once more unto the breach!' The humorous citation that occurs well  
 3 after the events of *A Civil Campaign* highlights the oddness of Bujold's  
 4 decision not to reference *Henry V* given the almost constant engage-  
 5 ment with Shakespeare's other plays, and Miles's dual roles as soldier  
 6 and diplomat. Miles's courtship instead depends on literary precedents  
 7 drawn from nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature: Bujold calls  
 8 *A Civil Campaign* a 'Regency Romance' and dedicates it to Jane Austen,  
 9 Charlotte Bronte, Georgette Heyer, and Dorothy Sayers. Miles falls  
 10 somewhere between Mr. Darcy and Mr. Rochester in terms of making  
 11 romantic mistakes: while there is no wife hidden in the attic, he makes  
 12 serious missteps that briefly drive Ekaterin away. He only gets the girl  
 13 when he gives up his characteristically suave rhetorical techniques and  
 14 apologizes – very different tactics from Henry's sly wordplay.

15 Ultimately, *Henry V* is perhaps too much a conventional hero to  
 16 be a direct foil for Miles in the same way as Richard III. But Miles's  
 17 marriage and what follows – a novella and two more novels – speaks to  
 18 the series' larger dismissal of the idea that Shakespeare functions as an  
 19 authority that literature must choose to follow, rewrite, or reject, rather  
 20 than all three at once. Bujold intentionally extended the series beyond  
 21 Shakespearean form: 'Properly, [the series] should have ended at the  
 22 end of *A Civil Campaign* – all comedies are supposed to end in wed-  
 23 dings, Shakespeareanly, and the stories are ultimately comedies in the  
 24 broadest sense, life-affirming. But I was weak, alas, and three times have  
 25 been suckered into going on. Codicils, all codicils now' (Walton, 2009).  
 26 While Bujold characterizes her decision as 'weak,' her choice to go on  
 27 is standard practice within the space opera genre. Unlike Shakespeare's  
 28 comedies or histories, with their relatively clear beginning and end  
 29 points, a space opera series – whether Bujold's Vorkosigan Saga, *Star*  
 30 *Wars*, or almost any other example of the genre – relies on an open con-  
 31 clusion to each tale that leaves room for continual expansion (Westfahl,  
 32 2003, p. 206). Codicils are the rule, not the exception.

33 The relationship that develops between Shakespeare and space opera  
 34 in the Vorkosigan Saga is ultimately one that parallels the complex  
 35 relationship between Miles and Mark. Mark's anxiety of influence about  
 36 Miles is finally deflated by recognizing that his primary relationship to  
 37 Miles is not that of child to progenitor, or poor imitation to the origi-  
 38 nal genetic source, but younger brother to older brother. Eventually,  
 39 Mark gains weight to end their physical resemblance, moves to another  
 40 planet, gets an education in economics, and builds a business empire  
 41 that occasionally intersects with his brother's investigations and

1 adventures, but never competes with them. Mark has his own strengths  
2 and weaknesses even though he shares the same intelligence. Similarly,  
3 in Bujold's conception, space opera contains room for Shakespearean  
4 plots, themes, and language, but it also has its own identity and  
5 makes its own demands on authors. Rather than positioning space  
6 opera as Shakespeare's competitor, imitator, or bastard child, Bujold  
7 uses Shakespeare to further complicate assumptions about seemingly  
8 clear lines between high and low culture, between literariness and  
9 non-literariness. Instead of allowing rivalry and competition to be the  
10 dominant metaphors, Bujold is suggesting the possibility of a function-  
11 ing sibling relationship. The richer character psychology and constant  
12 textual allusions demonstrate sibling love, but space opera must exist  
13 on its own terms. Siblings, of course, are not immune to rivalry, but  
14 they can learn to move past it. And sometimes, the only way to avoid  
15 such rivalry – as Mark and Miles discover – is to consciously move in  
16 separate spheres.<sup>11</sup>

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