

HAMLET TO HAMILTON

Season One, Episode Seven *What's My Line (Ending)?*

EMILY. This is *Hamlet to Hamilton: Exploring Verse Drama*. I'm your host, Emily C. A. Snyder. You're listening to Season 1, Episode 7: The Tool Boudoir part 3, "What's My Line (Ending)?"

[music]

HAMLET 1. To be...

HAMLET 2. To be...

HAMLET 1. ... or not to be?

HAMLET 3. To be or not to be?

HAMLET 1. That is the question.

HAMLET 3. ... or not?

EMILY. Hello, friends, and welcome back to part 3 of the Tool Boudoir. Rather than having a toolbox, since it's verse drama that we're exploring, we'll have a tool boudoir. This is the time that we're looking at, and we're asking the question, all right, so what does a line of verse actually do? What are some of the tools that we can use on a line of verse when we're writing it or when we're acting it? Now, previously, we looked at meter and scansion briefly. There's far more to say about it, but we took a look at it. You can listen to that episode. And last episode, we started our look at line breaks, also known as line endings, line beginnings, essentially the place where the line of verse stops and then there's white space afterwards, and then we come back in.

Last time, we looked at the different types of line breaks and the different reasons why you might put in a line break, and then how to act them. If you haven't listened to that episode, I highly recommend stopping, going back, and listening, because today's episode is going to be looking at the traps that you can fall into in where you put your line break, basically ways that you might put a line break that are completely notactable. And for today's episode, I've brought in a couple of friends, so we have some interview pieces that you'll be able to hear of voices other than my own speaking new verse and some old verse as well.

A reminder that Season 1 of *Hamlet to Hamilton* is scaffolded, is cumulative. That means that it is meant to be listened to from the very beginning. If, however, you want to join us here, you are more than welcome to, but if at any point you get

lost, feel free to head over to hamlettohamilton.com, and you can check out transcripts. That's also where you can find texts for all of the verse that we're going to be looking at. That's also where you can find links to any of the books that we are talking about, as well as some audiovisual aids, and a glossary of all the terms that we use, some of which are new terms that have been invented just so that we can talk about how verse works. So if at any point you get lost, hamlettohamilton.com.

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All right, on with the show.

[music]

So, to recap a few things: when we're talking about verse drama, we are talking about drama that is something that is meant to be performed by possibly a second party, certainly meant to be viewed by a party that is different than the person that is originating the verse drama. Because, of course, a playwright might decide to also be the actor for their own verse drama. So there are at least two people involved. It is something that is presented. It is something that is seen. The way that it is written to qualify as verse drama is that it's primarily written or significantly written in verse, in the same way that we might differentiate between a musical and a play with music. In a musical, the music is significant enough, tells the story enough, is the sort of means by which we tell the story. In a play with music, the music is sort of ancillary to the story. In the same way for verse drama, the drama is told significantly through the use of verse, and it's not something where just every once in a while we'll stop and we'll say a poem, let's say.

For example, if you've seen Emma Thompson's version of *Sense and Sensibility*, there's a point when Willoughby and Marianne are discussing poetry and Sonnet 116 by Shakespeare, but that movie was not written in verse. It includes verse that happens to be poetical. It's not in verse. It's a movie that happens to have verse.

So, verse drama: a line of verse does not have to be poetical. I want to underline that. All that a line of verse is, is that it's words and then there's white space. It is defined by the line break. It does not follow grammatical punctuation, or it doesn't have to, at any rate. It is not in paragraph form. It is in verse form. It may or may

not be poetical. That's the reason why we're taking this time to really go through the tool boudoir and to ask the question, what does a line of verse do? Because, again, a line of verse works very much like what does writing music on a staff of music do? How does this function? How does a measure of music function? How does a line of verse function? It's important when, if we're the playwright, that we write out our lines of verse in functional ways, in actable ways, in ways that an actor can take up and actually get something from your line of verse, in the same way that if you're a composer, you need to put the measure marks in the correct place. Otherwise, no one can interpret your music. No one can figure out what you're trying to do. You make no mathematical sense. Or if you want to think about it, if you're not a musical person, if you're a writer of anything, you've got to kind of know spelling. You've got to kind of know punctuation. You need to know some basics of how a sentence works, and it should not be up to the reader to correct your spelling for what you published or correct your punctuation. That's why we're taking the time to look at what is a line of verse and how does it work.

One of the things that's been really surprising to me as I've been doing some research this week – and I will talk about the books that I'm looking at – is that this doesn't seem to be a question that's frequently asked, which I find rather odd. And certainly I can do a whole episode on the history of verse drama and the history of criticism and theory of verse drama, of which there is a lot of verse drama. There is an unbroken chain of English language verse drama. There is very thin theory of verse drama and of writing verse drama. In some senses, every playwright has kind of tried to reinvent the wheel. What I'm hoping is that we should ask the question, so what is a wheel? What does it do? How does it function? Then from there, we can make choices and say, well, I want my wheel to be made out of this substance or I want my wheel to be made out of that substance, or I don't want my vehicle to move at all, and so I'm going to put blocks on it. But we need to understand what the wheel is. We need to stop reinventing the wheel. We need to know what a line of verse is, what a line of verse does, what the frequent traps are that you can fall into with a line of verse. And then, playwrights, you've got to write your verse well so that you are writing your verse actably, so that the actors are not doing all the heavy lifting of making your verse better than it really is. And also, playwrights, so that the music that you hear can be enacted by those that will come after you. It's to everyone's benefit to know how this stuff works.

Last time, we said that there were two types of line breaks. Again, since a line of verse is what we're looking at and the defining thing of a line of verse, half of it is what words you put on the line of verse, and we certainly have a lot of theory that has looked at what are the words that are on it? What's the meter that's used? Is there a repeated meter? Is it sprung or free meter? Is there juxtaposed meter? Is it rhymed? Is it blank verse? We look at the words a lot and we forget to look at the white space, really taking the time now to look at line breaks and to realize that that sweet, sweet uvriel, that sweet, sweet energy that comes in a line break, in that white space at the end, or rather in between lines of verse.

We said that there were two types of line breaks. There's end stopped, which means that there's some sort of grammatical reason, or the grammar of the line also ends with the line break. There might be punctuation there, but it might also be the end of a prepositional phrase. It's a natural stopping point or pausing point. But there are also open-ended lines where it's... not – like I just did (laughs) – where there's not necessarily a grammatical reason to have a line break there, but there's an emotive reason or there's a musical reason.

We also talked about there are four reasons to break a line. There might be more. Again, if you have found other reasons or found other variations, send them along. Let's really get into, again, what does a line of verse do? What does that line break do? But there are four reasons that one might place a line break that, again, are helpful to an actor. The first one might be because the meter demands it, especially if you are writing in a repeated meter. Let's say you're writing in trochaic tetrameter. Then you're writing in a repeated metrical pattern – BA-duh BA-duh BA-duh BA-duh – and so your line will end after you've done that music. Hopefully it will end in an actable way, and we're going to be looking at that in today's podcast. But you might end it because of the meter. You might put a line break in order to highlight that these are rhyming couplets, that these are rhyming two lines or three lines or more of poetry. You might end a line on the rhyme. We listened to subtle versions of line breaks with rhymes and more overt or heavy rhymes, strong rhymes, end-stopped rhymes.

We also might have a line break because of the musicality. We looked at *Hamilton's* "My Shot," wherein perhaps if we were writing it out in such a way that we wanted people to get that rhythm that Miranda wrote of not

And I'm not throwing away my shot

which would be a perfectly fine grammatical way to write the verse, but the music goes

And I'm not throwing away my
shot

So you might actually put a line break before the word "shot." There are other choices you can make, too, in order to get the actor to enact that pause before the word "shot," but a line break is one of the tools that you could use. You might put a line break for a musical reason, to tell the actor this is the music. This is the place to pause. This is the rhythm of the way this character speaks.

Then the last reason was essentially because you're putting the line break at the end of a schwumpf. Go back and listen to the episode on schwumpfs or go to the glossary on hamlettohamilton.com, but essentially, all the words that are connected on a line of verse optimally are emotively connected. No matter how

many small sentences might be in a line of verse, no matter how many different thoughts or images, that because they're all on one line of verse, you're saying the character is experiencing all the words I've put on this line of verse as one emotion, even if they're contradicting each other in the way that you could be happy and sad. You could be, in the words of Sondheim, (sings) excited and scared, and that's one line of verse. Two very separate things. We're schwumpfing them together, and then we will put a line break because that's the end of that feeling. Essentially, to cut on the schwumpf is to cut on the emotion. What that will do is it will then thrust the actor, hopefully, into sweet, sweet uvriel, which is that sort of emotive envelope, that energy that surrounds really good verse. It's when you're searching for the next word or when you stop speaking a line of verse because you daren't say the next word, and then you have to choose to keep speaking. That's a reason to have a line break. That's kind of the beauty of what verse does for an actor.

I have invited some friends and had them look at some verse, and we're going to be looking at it with you as well. Now, a reminder that all the texts are on hamlettohamilton.com, so you can read along with us. This will be very helpful, since we're looking visually at the line breaks and then how these actors enact the line breaks. I very much recommend reading along. I also want to give you a huge apology. For a variety of different, holiday-related reasons, our wonderful Colin was not with me when I held the interviews, and I made a technical mistake, so the quality is going to be a little bit less when we get into interview sections. But I promise Colin that I won't make that mistake again (laughs) and all hail to Colin, who's going to do his best to equalize the voices, regardless.

So what we're looking at with the interviewees is essentially two major pitfalls regarding line endings that I see people fall into all the time, people from way back in the 1500s through to people that wrote yesterday, and I'm including myself in that. We're going to be looking at some of my verse that, frankly, didn't work, because I don't mind calling myself out. I imagine that many of you who are listening, if you're writers, you probably are looking at your stuff and going, "Ooh, I need to change that." That's awesome. Great. Now we've all learned how to place measures of music or how to place commas correctly. Don't feel bad. Again, people from the 1500s, yours truly, almost every piece of verse that I've seen has fallen into these traps. So great. We're going to learn about these traps, and from here on out, we're going to be able to avoid them. Woohoo! Go us.

Both traps have the same thing in common. Basically, it's two different ways for the line ending, for the line break, to be unactable. Again, the whole point of writing verse drama is that it's enacted. It's not just read. It's not just studied. And even so, be kind to anyone who likes to just read your stuff as literature, but it's meant to be enacted. You're meant to be giving gifts with your verse to the actors, and there's two ways for your line break to stop the acting cold.

The first way is if you have end-stopped lines that essentially have no energy. Frequently, the energy will die at the end of the end-stopped line, and then there'll be nothing to dive back into. There's no reason to keep speaking. There's nothing exciting about the beginning of your next line. That's why I keep talking about end breaks, because it's really about what happens in the white space, the reason that we stop talking, the reason that we start talking again. End-stopped lines can be deadly. It's interesting because this deadly end-stopped line seems to be more common in plays from about the 1500s through the mid to late 1800s. I'm wondering, honestly, if part of the reason why end stopped was so *de rigueur* was because poetry was still very formal at that time. We hadn't, in fact, had yet T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, who were breaking out of repeated rhythms, repeated beats, out of sonnet form, etc., etc. and giving us free and sprung meter, really. Gerard Manley Hopkins was also in that time period when we were switching over from very formal poetic verse in our poetry to free and sprung and experimental forms of poetry, which, of course, is the norm now. Naturally, that's going to also, then, bleed into verse drama.

Interestingly enough, with the turn of the previous century, so somewhere in about the 1920s when Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot started writing verse drama and then were followed by Christopher Fry, for example, I see a new trap emerging, which I have seen, still, in... I mean, I've seen it in Fletcher plays. Fletcher was an apprentice of William Shakespeare in the 1500s, 1600s. So *le plus ça change le plus la même chose*, the more things change, the more they stay the same. But the second trap is having an open-ended line, having a line break on a word that doesn't give you music, that doesn't give you energy or *uvriel*, that doesn't give you anything *actable*.

I will see it placed with an unactable, open-ended line for two reasons. One, and the more common reason, is because – as you remember me talking about in “Heresies,” in that episode – we've become so enamored with the repeated meter of iambic pentameter that a lot of people tend to just count to ten and then put a line break without asking whether this is *actable*. A good 30% of the time, it's not. The other reason would be – and I see this a little bit less. I see it more with Christopher Fry in his plays, and maybe it just hasn't crossed my desk as much, but the other reason people is put in unactable line breaks. It won't be because of repeated meter, but if you've seen modern poetry, I know the line breaks on those frequently baffle me, because I'm just not quite sure how you want me to hear the music of your verse line. It seems almost that the line breaks have been placed arbitrarily. Sometimes you just might place a line break in a semi-artistic way, I guess, or you feel it's artistic, but again, nothing matters unless the actor can act your work. In the same way, you could take a crayon and draw all over this fantastic flower, let's say, in crayon over a sheet of music. No one can sing that. What are they supposed to do with that? So, open-ended lines can end on a word that just makes no emotive sense. It doesn't give you anything, and, again, it stops that energy cold.

We're going to be looking at examples of both of these, and we're going to start with some verse from the end of the 1500s, which is going to be end stopped, but without uvriel, without energy. This is also going to be a sneak peek of Season 2, which, at this point, is going to happen right after the new year, where we look at King Arthur through the ages, from the 1500s through to 2019. This is from *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, a verse drama play by Sir Thomas Hughes, written in 1587. This is Act I scene 4, taking a little bit of Mordred's speech. I'm going to read it first so that you can hear a sort of clean version, a neutrally acted version, and then I'm going to have two friends of mine read it. Here's the verse, taking breaths at the end of the line, so you can hear it. Mordred:

A likely thing, your faults must make you friends;
What sets you both at odds must join you both.
Think well, he casts already for revenge,
And how to plague us both. I know his law;
A judge severe to us, mild to himself.
What then avails you to return too late,
When you have passed too far? You feed vain hopes.

All right, so that's what it is neutrally. I'm curious. What I would suggest is you actually take a second, pause the podcast, and write down what you feel or what you got from that, if anything. Now, once you're ready to come back to us... About now, there you go.

We're going to turn it over to two of my actor friends. The first one is actor Nick Ritacco. He actually played Lancelot for me in my own Arthurian verse drama, and he's going to join us for the whole of Season 2, *Arthur Through the Ages*, where we'll look at verse plays of King Arthur and we'll be looking at all the Lancelot and Guinevere scenes that we can find. He is an actor currently in LA. He also is a personal fitness trainer, and we will make sure to provide links, should you like to follow him. So take it away, Nick.

[music]

NICK.

A likely thing, your faults must make you friends;
What sets you both at odds must join you both.
Think well, he casts already for revenge,
And how to plague us both. I know his law;
A judge severe to us, mild to himself.
What then avails you to return too late,
When you have passed too far? You feed vain hopes.

Exeunt.

EMILY. Exeunt. So what did you get from that? What were you feeling from the inside there?

NICK. Well, when I'm, I guess, in this case, reading Mordred, a lot of his words, just how it felt in my mouth felt very blockish. Does that make sense? It felt very...

EMILY. Yeah, no, same.

NICK. I'm not sure that he has half the beautiful language of some lover in a verse play. Do you know what I mean? It's very-

EMILY. I mean,

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

That actually feels light on my tongue.

NICK. It feels right in your mouth, yeah. You feel like a lover. This does not. This feels very blockish, very...

EMILY. Yeah, but I'm so calm about it all. (laughs)

NICK. Mm-hmm. I felt the same way. I didn't feel stirred to... I felt if I were to put some sort of energy and urgency behind this, it wouldn't feel right in my mouth.

EMILY. And the whole play is like this, where it's chunks of perfect text. (laughs)

NICK. Yeah. Where is the play? You know what I mean?

EMILY. Yeah.

NICK. Where is the... And I don't want to say... Where is the play, as in where is the lightness?

EMILY. It's good verse.

NICK. Yes, the verse is kind of perfect, right? Like we were talking about, it's perfect, but it feels very plastic. It doesn't feel like there's depth to it. It doesn't feel like there's play to it. When I say play, I just mean a lightness, like we're going somewhere with this. It feels like we have to kind of pick up the dropped mic after every single line.

EMILY. Yeah, I felt that I was really pushing the energy, just because I'm like, I've got to push this energy, because if I pick up on your length, then you're going to pick up on mine. It was hard to throw the energy to each other.

NICK. Exactly.

[music]

EMILY. That was a little bit of what Nick and I discovered when we were looking at this play from the 1580s, but I wanted to double check it with another actor friend of mine. Here is Evan Sachs. Evan is an actor in New York City, and he also has the added skills of being a copy editor, and so is going to bring some of that into looking at the lines of text. This is the same line of text, the same lines of Mordred. Evan will read the lines of Mordred and then comment on it.

[music]

EVAN.

A likely thing, your faults must make you friends;
What sets you both at odds must join you both.
Think well, he casts already for revenge,
And how to plague us both. I know his law;
A judge severe to us, mild to himself.
What then avails you to return too late,
When you have passed too far? You feed vain hopes.

There are definitely a couple of parts in *The Misfortunes of Arthur* speech there that may be, a line may have ended on a comma, but the sentence continues in a way that isn't necessarily natural for the line break, at least when I was reading it.

EMILY. I agree with you. Where's one of the places that you see?

EVAN. So it's

Think well, he casts already for revenge,
And how to plague us both.

That's all one sentence, but "And how to plague us both" is on the next line, despite not really being an entirely separate thought.

EMILY. That it'd be easier for you to string together

he casts already for revenge, And how to plague us both.

Yeah, I can feel that, actually.

EVAN. Yeah.

EMILY. Let me try it.

Think well, he casts already for revenge,
And how to plague us both.

Yeah, it does feel weird in the brain to stop there.

EVAN. Yeah, exactly.

EMILY. It's so odd, because it makes intellectual sense, but it doesn't make emotional sense.

EVAN. Yeah, part of what makes a line break work so well is that, even if it's part of the same sentence, they're two completely separate parts of the same sentence, whereas it feels like you're kind of jerking to a halt in the middle of the same thought there.

EMILY. Yes. I guess that's it. No matter whether it's end stopped or open ended, by the end of a line of verse, you're constantly asking the question as an actor, I think – this is my theory, so tell me what you feel – you're constantly asking the question, why do I keep speaking? What is the thing that is causing me to start the next line? Is that a fair assessment of how a line of verse functions on the actor?

EVAN. I think for me, yeah, that would be a pretty accurate way to... Again, that kind of goes into the grammar of why do you end the line there? Is it that you're having a completely new thought? Is it that something has just occurred to you? Is it that you're still having the same thought, but something's giving you pause? At the end of every line, it feels like there's a reason that you stopped, but then you're continuing because you have this new thought or something new occurred to you, or there's some nuance in your thought process that made you change direction slightly.

EMILY. Yes, exactly, and again, the uvriel is the energy, and where it changed schwumpf, that's why we need to start a new line. We're in a new schwumpf. We're in a new collection of thoughts, for whatever reason, is the language that we use on the podcast. (laughs)

EVAN. Right. (laughs)

[music]

EMILY. One of the things that Evan brought up in the longer conversation was that he felt most comfortable when the line ended in a way that made, not necessarily grammatical sense, but essentially cut on the emotional grammar, which is something that we're going to be coming back to repeatedly in this

episode. Because the question then becomes, oh no, have I written any of my verse right? Oh no, how can I get out of this trap? Really, what I want to offer to you is that some of the easy, shortcut ways to break your line is to really think about either the music of your line, such as if we go way back to the beginning of this season with Deb Victoroff's *The Tragedy of the Election of the Citrus King*, if you remember, she went through her piece, and I asked her whenever she took a breath, whenever she wanted an actor to take a break, just to put a line break. In as simple as that, it clarified the speech and the thought for the actors, because there's something instinctual. You don't even have to be an actor if, instead, you sort of cut in that musical way.

If, however, you are an actor-writer, then put the line break more when there's this emotional grammar, what we've been talking about with schwumpf, with uvriel, this emotive grammar that says this is the end of the feeling. Now I put the line break, whether it's end stopped or open ended, and then asking the question, what is the new way of thinking? That begins the next line. That was a look at end-stopped lines. Let's now take a look at open-ended lines after this break.

[music]

Hello. Emily popping in between her own show to tell you a little bit about Patreon. Patreon is a great way to support artists that you love, to help them create the content that you love, like *Hamlet to Hamilton*. Signing up will get you perks, such as early access to episodes, extra bonus episodes, access to the super secret Facebook group, and it can also get you perks like critiques of your own verse or one-on-one coaching sessions. You can sign up over on patreon.com/hamlettohamilton. That's patreon.com/hamlettohamilton.

Or if you can't do that right now, give us a like, a share, a great review on Apple Podcasts. All of that goes a really long way to helping us keep this educational content free and on air for you and yours to learn about verse drama. And to sign off in typical versical form: enough with this ad, let's get back to the norm.

Welcome back, friends. We've just looked at end-stopped lines. Let's take a look at open-ended lines. As mentioned before, most frequently, what I see and what I've even done – and we're going to look at baby verse drama from me and how I've made the exact mistake I'm about to talk about – what frequently happens in modern verse drama is that the verse dramatist is trying to write in iambic pentameter and is succeeding, but is therefore cutting on the meter, which is to say they're really cutting on the ten, on the tenth syllable, which is not necessarilyactable.

Now, if we think about last week, when we were looking at *Winter's Tale*, for example, there's such beauty and there's so much uvriel to be gained if the open-ended line isactable. That wonderful verse line

Go, play, boy, play: thy mother plays, and I
Play too,

To sink into that word “I” and then to come back with the “play too,” to make that choice or to make a discovery in that moment between those three words, “I play too,” to divide it up that way, not just metrically but musically, and again, with that emotive grammar, with that, this is the end of the schwumpf. There is now new energy, new uvriel, new experience, and there’s a reason to come back in. That’s such a gift, and sometimes when modern playwrights are trying to write in iambic pentameter, they’re cutting on the meter, they’ve got a sort of irregular or a questionable, open-ended line, the actor might still – they might have actually stumbled into, by accident, that the actor can make an emotive choice about it, but it’s frequently by accident, because, again, you’re cutting on the ten. I really want the playwrights among you to have the gift, to give yourself the gift, to give your actors and directors the gift of not just cutting on the ten, but, again, cutting on the emotion.

We’re going to take a look at one of my baby pieces of writing, wherein I made this exact same mistake. Again, take comfort. I cannot tell you the number of playwrights that have fallen into this trap, and frequently it’s because they’re trying to write in iambic pentameter. It goes as far back as John Fletcher writing, with Shakespeare, *Henry VIII* in, I think maybe it was 1617, somewhere in there, and he’s doing the same exact thing. He’s cutting on the ten on helpful, open-ended line endings. I’m sure if I read all of *Gorboduc*, which is the first blank verse play, I bet you that that happens a couple times there too. This is so, so common, so take heart.

But at the same time, it’s so common that actors have become really good at fixing your verse on the fly. That’s when actors tend to use enjambment, and they basically just perform the piece, they put the line breaks in their performance where the line breaks actually belong, and they kind of don’t follow what you wrote because you wrote it wrong. This is an invitation to write more helpfully so that the actor isn’t sweeping up after you, and so that the actor doesn’t have to enjamb, and, in fact, so the actor receives the gift.

As mentioned, let’s look at my own baby verse. To give you a little bit of context, this is from my first verse play, *Cupid and Psyche*, which I wrote in the summer of 2008. What’s actually kind of cool is that I apparently wrote a good chunk of Act I out of five in longhand in my journal, and I found my journal, so I can tell you that the speech we’re about to look at was written on the 9th of July, 2008, which was a Wednesday, somewhere after 1:00 a.m. and after rehearsal for *Romeo and Juliet*, which I was directing at the time. Apparently, we worked on the poison scene that night, so take that for what you will. Then I came home and I was working under a deadline, and so I was trying this writing in blank verse. Writing

in iambic pentameter is what I was aiming for, and this is the way that I originally wrote a speech that still exists in the current draft of the play.

Let me read it for you as I initially wrote it, and we will provide this extremely rough draft, extremely bad quarto, extremely baby drama – which is fun – version of the script so that you can see the line endings. Then again, I'm going to have some of my friends take a look at this baby verse and give me their thoughts. This is the introduction of Cupid in *Cupid and Psyche*. This is Act I scene 1. Act I is one big scene. Maybe it shouldn't be, but it is. This is the very first time that Cupid speaks. I will take a pause at the end of each line so that you can hear it. Cupid:

A tale there was! A bawdy tale! A tale
Of tails well chased! Women, aye and men, too.
Caught in the May-morning brambles, and the
Red satyrs' arms, well-wound with climbing nymphs
That seemed at night to women be and now
Were found to be heady herbs and no women
There at all! This was much sport for Midsummer's
Eve. To make men mad is my delight.
And thou, Adonis, spurned our sport—for fear,
No doubt, of my mother's rage or else of
Hades' bride. O be a man, Adonis!
Spurn the love of women, your mistresses
Curse and join us in the hunt for lusty
Swains and wretches and I swear you will be
Well-satisfied for your endeavor.
What say you?

Okay, immediately, immediately you can hear that there are some open-ended line endings that are just awful and that are there solely because I was counting to as close to the tenth syllable as I could. This is so early in the play, so early in my writing process, so early in my exploration of verse drama as a form to be written and not just a form to be directed or acted or dramaturged, that I fell right into the trap. You can hear that, for example,

Caught in the May-morning brambles, and the
Red satyrs' arms...

There's no reason to take a line break at the word "the." The other immediately egregious one is... Let's see, the whole line is

There at all! This was much sport for Midsummer's
Eve. To make men mad...

to take a break between “Midsummer’s” and “Eve,” but I did it, again, in order to get close to ten syllables on a line, because I thought there was something magic about iambic pentameter, because that’s what we’re all taught. Again, if this podcast teaches you anything, that’s just not true. The magic of a verse line is giving the gift of that sweet, sweet uvriel, that sweet, sweet white space, that sweet, sweet energy, that sweet, sweet acting moment of I have finished speaking a string of things that are emotionally connected in me. I cut on that emotional grammar. I have a reason to come back in speaking. That is what a line of verse does, if the line of verse is effective. Just cutting on a tenth syllable doesn’t do anything.

That said, what you can also see in this is that there are a few line endings that, by accident, cut on the emotive grammar and therefore were helpful, and actually have stayed in the current version. For example,

That seemed at night to women be and now

That’s a great line ending, because the actor can maybe do a sort of ta-da. What are they now? I kept that one, actually, and I played with the placement of where it goes in subsequent drafts.

Once again, you can actually see the bad quarto version. It’s available on Amazon. It’s two scripts. There’s the 2009 workshop production that we did at Emerson College in Boston, Massachusetts, The United States back in 2009. Then there’s also published the 2014 draft, which we premiered in New York City, which is still not the final draft, but is much closer, and certainly the line breaks tend to be much cleaner. Both copies are available on Amazon. We will link to it if you’re interested. I might even make that available for certain patrons at certain levels to be able to get on Patreon, patreon.com/hamlettohamilton. I can make that available for you all.

But let’s take a look. Let me give it to some actors and see what they think about these open-ended lines that kind of go nowhere, but it’s iambic pentameter, but it’s notactable. This time, I’m joined by the actor Vanessa Wendt, who is also not only an actor, but she is an actor-combatant, so she does stage violence. She’s a director. She is a musician, a singer. She studied musical theatre. She also is the co-founder and Artistic Director of The Fools and Kings Project, which provides outdoor Shakespeare here in New York City. I had Vanessa read the 2008 version, and then we did an interesting exercise right after. This is how it went down.

[music]

VANESSA.

A tale there was! A bawdy tale! A tale
Of tails well chased! Women, aye and men, too.

Caught in the May-morning brambles, and the
Red satyrs' arms, well-wound with climbing nymphs
That seemed at night to women be and now
Were found to be heady herbs and no women
There at all! This was much sport for Midsummer's
Eve. To make men mad is my delight.
And thou, Adonis, spurned our sport—for fear,
No doubt, of my mother's rage or else of
Hades' bride. O be a man, Adonis!
Spurn the love of women, your mistresses
Curse and join us in the hunt for lusty
Swains and wretches and I swear you will be
Well-satisfied for your endeavor.
What say you?

EMILY. Okay, what are your first impressions of 2008 baby playwright who's just handed you this text as is?

VANESSA. There are a few sentences in it that definitely feel like you have to go back and read them a second time to make sure that you're saying them correctly.

EMILY. Now, in terms of taking breaths at the end, were there any places where the breath was helpful, and were there any places where the breath was weird?

VANESSA. Yes to both of those things. For me personally, the first breath at the end of a line, between "a tale Of tails well chased" felt strange. The third into the fourth, "and the Red satyr's arms." But the others seemed like you could pretty much easily make use of a quick breath at the end of that line.

EMILY. Such as?

VANESSA. The climbing nymphs. You can easily make use or a fun little nod at the audience with a breath at the end of that. "Men too" is clearly, could be a wink at some sort of whatever you wanted it to be, based on how the show was being directed or what you were doing with the character. I obviously don't know these characters and how you've written them, so I can't really say what that would be.

EMILY. That's okay, but you're right, yeah.

VANESSA. But yeah, there's definitely a few of those that are written into there that are a helpful thing or seem indicative of wanting to add some sort of emphasis to those particular aspects of the speech. Does that make sense?

EMILY. Yeah, absolutely.

VANESSA. That's how I would read it as I went through it.

EMILY. Now, if you were to read this, and let's say I was dead and you didn't get to talk to me. (laughs)

VANESSA. (laughs)

EMILY. I'm interested if you could read it taking breaths wherever you felt it was more helpful to take a breath. Do you know what I'm saying? Feel free to enjamb and fix my line endings.

VANESSA. Yeah. (laughs)

EMILY. But if a line ending ought to have a breath at the end – but just so that people can really hear the breath, whenever you feel that, “You know what? That's the end of the phrase. That's essentially the end of the musical phrase. I'm going to breathe here. I'm going to string all these things together, and now I'm going to breathe.” Would you mind snapping whenever you catch your breath?

VANESSA. Sure. I can give that a try.

EMILY. Yeah, just read it through as if it were... However you're interpreting as you go, and just whenever you catch yourself breathing, just snap your fingers.

VANESSA. Okay. Here we go.

A tale there was!* A bawdy tale! A tale
Of tails well chased!* Women, aye and men, too.*
Caught in the May-morning brambles, and the
Red satyrs' arms, well-wound with climbing nymphs
That seemed at night to women be and now*
Were found to be heady herbs and no women
There at all!* This was much sport for Midsummer's
Eve. To make men mad is my delight.

EMILY. Actually, go back, because you took one after “Eve,” which I loved.

VANESSA. Oh, okay. (laughs)

EMILY. Yeah, you definitely took a breath.

VANESSA.

This was much sport for Midsummer's
Eve.* To make men mad is my delight.*
And thou, Adonis, spurned our sport*—for fear,
No doubt, of my mother's rage or else* of

Hades' bride. * O be a man, Adonis!*
Spurn the love of women, your mistresses
Curse and join us in the hunt for lusty
Swains and wretches* and I swear you will be
Well-satisfied for your endeavor.*
What say you?*

EMILY. Okay, what I find absolutely fascinating is you ended up phrasing it more or less the way that I rephrased it, in a second that we're going to be looking at.

VANESSA. (laughs) Did I really?

EMILY. You did, which makes me so happy. I love it. I love it. I love it. In fact, there's one that you... Yeah, there's one you did, that I'm like, oh my gosh, that's so cool. (laughs) But what was also cool is as you were phrasing it, I saw you getting more into the acting of it, which was lovely. You were using your own breath to bring yourself through.

[music]

Just to answer the question, what was the phrase that she phrased instinctually that is how I rewrote, is I switched it from... The line originally, as I wrote it that night in 2008 was

No doubt, of my mother's rage or else of

Nó doubt, óf my móther's ráge or élse of

Ten syllables. That's why I cut it there. Then when I recut it emotively, I actually cut it after the word "else," so I believe it was

for fear,
No doubt, of my mother's rage or else
Of Hades' bride.

Which is how she instinctually read it, and is, in fact, how I later cut it, which is just kind of cool.

We're now going to actually throw this same speech... We're going to spend a little bit of time with my dear friend Andy Barrett, who is an actor that I met here thanks to [The Shakespeare Forum](#) that I've mentioned before. Do check them out. They're very cool. They provide education for adults and for students here in New York City and have open workshops, which are currently online, so you can always drop in. He and I met at The Shakespeare Forum at the time that I was looking for a new Cupid to try out some new verse that I was working on, since

Cupid is actually part of a trilogy of plays, *Persephone Rises*, *The Seduction of Adonis*, and then *Cupid and Psyche*. Since then, he has gone on to star in the Ewan McGregor role in *Trainspotting Live*, which played here on off-Broadway, and then played around the UK, I think, certainly in Scotland. He is back in Scotland now, and hoping to stage, once we can all be back in person, hoping to stage an all-UK and Scottish and European version of *Cupid and Psyche*.

He's been working on this role for a while, and I thought that I would give him not only this piece as it was written back in 2008, about 10 years before he played the role, but also, as we'll be picking up afterwards, to talk about a speech that he's worked on a lot, and, again, the original version of that speech. Here is Andy Barrett and his immediate reaction to "A tale there was! A bawdy tale! A tale Of tails well chased!" the 2008 bad quarto version.

[music]

ANDY. It's lovely to be here.

EMILY. I found my journal.

ANDY. Oh, wow.

EMILY. Yeah, where I actually wrote out...

ANDY. Be a man, Adonis.

EMILY. Yeah, where I actually – this is the first version, and this was before... I hadn't yet written Cupid's song, "If thou couldst see with eyes like mine, if I could be thy glass."

ANDY. Mm-hmm.

EMILY. That was going to happen the next day, apparently. (laughs) But I was still cutting on ten syllables. I was trying to do perfect iambic pentameter, and this is what I wrote. I want you to take a breath at the end of each line. Go ahead, try to justify it.

ANDY. Okay.

EMILY. Then we're going to... We'll see where you're at. We'll either speak about it or we'll go to the one that you know and where the line endings are for that, which actually I still think I have a bad line ending on at least one of them. But let's go ahead and run through it, forcing you to take a breath. No enjambing. Here we go.

ANDY.

A tale there was! A bawdy tale! A tale
Of tails well chased! Women, aye and men, too.
Caught in the May-morning brambles, and the
Red satyrs' arms, well-wound with climbing nymphs
That seemed at night to women be and now
Were found to be heady herbs and no women
There at all! This was much sport for Midsummer's

(laughs)

EMILY. (laughs) I know! I know! Go back. Go back.

ANDY. I'm sorry, you put a gap in the middle of "Midsummer's" and "Eve."

EMILY. (laughs) I know! It's so bad. Go ahead and take it from "There at all! This was much sport." Take that breath.

ANDY.

There at all! This was much sport for Midsummer's
Eve. To make men mad is my delight.
And thou, Adonis, spurned our sport—for fear,
No doubt, of my mother's rage or else of
Hades' bride. O be a man, Adonis!
Spurn the love of women, your mistresses
Curse and join us in the hunt for lusty
Swains and wretches and I swear you will be
Well-satisfied for your endeavor.
What say you?

EMILY. (laughs)

ANDY. I mean, that's not fair to the – because you would never do a bit of text without any enjambling. I'm not saying that enjambment is awful.

EMILY. But again, you, the actor, would enjamb it because I wrote the music wrong. You would fix my music if you were performing this.

ANDY. Are you saying that there should always be a breath at the end of every line?

EMILY. No. There should be some sort of oomph to the end of every line.

ANDY. Right, it should...

EMILY. Some energizing.

ANDY. Like a suspension before jumping down to the next line, yeah.

EMILY. But I do have people take that John Barton breath at the end of each line when it's cold text, because that tells you whether the playwright has done their job or not.

ANDY. Right.

EMILY. Whether it's actable or not.

ANDY. Right. It gives a little moment to choose the word of "Hades' bride" Or "Spurn" or "Curse" or "Swains." Like

and I swear you will be
Well-satisfied for your endeavor.

Is different than

and I swear you will be well-satisfied for your endeavor.

EMILY. Right.

ANDY. Sometimes that can serve you.

EMILY. If it serves you, then keep it. But that breath tells you whether it's serviceable or not, like the... I mean, that's why you could not hold it together.

ANDY.

This was much sport for Midsummer's
Eve.

Yeah.

EMILY. (laughs) But let's see,

There at all! This was much sport for Midsummer's

And I did what I considered a feminine line ending, but that meant I *had* to break it there.

Eve. To make men mad is my delight.

And I felt bad because then that's nine.

ANDY. Especially if you're iamb-ing it, and then you've got the emphasis on "to" and "is," and yeah, it doesn't...

EMILY. You're right.

Eve. Tó make mén mad ís my délight.

(laughs) Yeah, even

Caught in the May-morning brambles, and the
Red satyrs' arms,

Like, why? What do you get from that?

ANDY. I'm very curious to compare this with the newer one. Also, it's interesting hearing you say that you wrote this after working on *Romeo and Juliet*, because the end of it,

O be a man, Adonis!
Spurn the love of women,

is very much like

Wherefore art thou Romeo?

You know, forget your name. Just in terms of the rhythm of it, "Be a man." "Oh, why are you Romeo?" There's something that always kind of evoked *Romeo and Juliet* whenever I did that piece. "Don't be who you are, Adonis. Change your situation. Come on. Be in love with me" is very "Wherefore art thou Romeo?"

EMILY. You're right. You're right.

Her vestal livery is but sick and green
And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.

ANDY. Cast it off, yeah.

[music]

EMILY. Andy and I did have a lovely long interview, which as you can hear, unfortunately the audio's a little off, but it's still well worth it, so we might be able to make it available for Patreons. We did then look at the revised version, wherein Andy actually convinced me to reformat one of the words, so you'll be able to hear that in the longer interview.

We're going to be coming back with Andy and with a few other friends in just a minute, because the final thing that I want to look at is actually a speech that I wrote for Cupid, again, that's in the bad quarto, in the 2008-2009 version, and how I rewrote the speech entirely, not just changed the line breaks, but completely rewrote it once I understood better how verse works. We're going to be taking a look at that when we come back, right after this.

[music]

Hello. This is Emily popping in here to take a minute to tell you about Turn to Flesh Productions. Turn to Flesh is a New York City theatre company that develops new plays in heightened text with vibrant roles for women and those underrepresented in classical art. So basically, we create new Shakespeare shows for everybody that Shakespeare didn't write for. Since our founding in 2013, we've given various levels of development space to over 50 plays through playwriting workshops, such as our monthly MUSE Program, or through our in-person classes, through the staged readings of full works, and even workshop productions and world premieres of entire shows.

We love to feature actors of all ages, abilities, shapes and sizes, ethnicities and orientations, usually swinging swords and falling in love and having epic battles, or just being terribly clever, frequently, although not always, speaking in blank verse.

Now, in 2020, Turn To Flesh is excited to being working internationally over audio programming and workshops and productions held via digital platforms like Zoom. And we'd like to hear from you. You can find us on all social medias @turntoflesh and to keep up with the latest events, such as our monthly MUSE Program, where playwrights bring in the first draft of their new scenes and actors embody and give feedback. Right now, The MUSE Program is also being held virtually over Zoom. I mean, you can, from your own living room on your laptop, watch a new Shakespeare play get written and workshopped right before your eyes. You might even have your own piece workshopped. You might be the new Burbage playing in the new Shakespeare's show. That's pretty cool.

So make sure to like us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @turntoflesh and join the Turn to Flesh community. If you want to do more, you can support us by visiting turntoflesh.org and hitting that Donate button. Or if you want to book a one-on-one session with me, Emily C. A. Snyder, make sure to listen to the end of the podcast for more information. Right, back to the show.

Hello, friends, and welcome back. Thus far, we've looked at end-stopped lines and how they really point out how important it is, frankly, for there to be a very strong line beginning, for there to be a reason to keep speaking, since the end of the previous line was stopped. If you want a good example, take a look at Romeo's speech "But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?" I found it

very interesting, actually, as I was putting this podcast together, the number of actors that have referenced *Romeo and Juliet* as a piece that uses verse lines well, and that, again, as Nick Ritacco said way back when, feel right in the actor's mouth, because ultimately that's what we're attempting to do, whether we're looking at the words of verse that we put on the line of verse or whether we're looking at how those words spring us into that minute pause, that minute hitch breath that can happen between the lines of verse on the white space. We're looking for things that, (laughs) actually, to quote *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, we look for things to make us go. I believe that's episode 2. It's a long-running joke in my family, at any rate. But the actor is looking for things to make them go, and it's the job of the playwright to provide that in the verse by using the verse.

For actors, I think it's also important, if you are starting to read various verse dramatists, not just Shakespeare but beyond Shakespeare – and I say this especially for anyone who's maybe like, they like verse drama, but they don't like Shakespeare – there are more people than Shakespeare that write verse drama, just like where you're going to love certain musicians and you're going to be totally unmoved by other musicians, and both musicians may have written the music very well, but one you vibe with and one you don't vibe with. So actors, as you're starting to read these different playwrights – and we feature all the new verse playwrights on our website, hamlettohamilton.com, so you can check them out. You can look at their work. If there's someone that you vibe with, if there's someone's verse that you vibe with, if there's someone's verse that you really like, that's awesome. If you're picking up the musical patterns and the emotive, grammatical patterns that another playwright is writing down, follow their work. Introduce yourself. Audition for them, because something that I certainly have found in my work as a verse dramatist, and even was reminded of in these interviews, is that there are actors who could mechanically do my verse very well, because they're good actors. They know how to approach line breaks and how to delve into words, etc., etc., but they don't vibe with my work and that's okay. Then what I'm looking for are those actors that do vibe with my work, and then because I'm still alive and working with them, I'm also looking for actors who vibe with me in whatever capacity I'm working on the play, if I'm a director, if I'm the playwright, if I'm also acting in the show.

I guess this whole thing is kind of like follow your vibe, man. Follow your vibe. Where should I put the line ending? Follow your vibe. What verse playwright should I be auditioning for? Follow your vibe. If you like the work that I'm about to present to you, awesome. Follow your vibe. If it's not your cup of tea, that's okay. Follow your vibe. But hopefully, these next two pieces, whether you vibe with them or not, you will hear technically the difference between one and the other and make some choices yourself.

The other thing that I would suggest, and that I'm going to always suggest, is that quite a lot of this part of the technique that I'm talking about will not be as deeply

understood until you try it out. Basically, when we talk about open-ended lines and how you can be sort of thrust into *uvriel*, you won't really get that from just reading it. You've got to try to do it. When Evan was talking about how there felt like there was a hiccup or being shuddered to a stop that felt unnatural in the *Mordred* lines from way back when, you wouldn't pick that up from just reading it on a piece of paper. You would only feel that it doesn't work if you try it out yourself. I cannot more highly recommend or strongly say that if you want to do verse drama, you have to experience it as well. You cannot just read it. You cannot just write it. You can't even just receive it, because, again, the actors might have done a whole heck of a lot of work to get you to feel and to be moved and to understand and to make it be your vibe. It's really important if you want to actually look at the analytics of verse drama and to understand how it works, you really do have to do it. So highly recommend taking a look at all these texts, and whether you vibe with them or not, start to become aware of how it hits you. Start to become aware of where there feels like a disconnect or it feels like you're sort of shoving the energy through, or it feels like you're being buoyed up and it's very easy to do it, such as

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

You may hate *Romeo*, but reading those words aloud will have an affect on you because they are well written. It's definitely worth stepping into that language, stepping into that skin, and just having the experience of what a helpful line of verse does and what an unhelpful line of verse does, and to feel the difference. That is the best thing you can do for yourself. All the texts that we have provided for you, say them out loud. Say them out loud and then note what you're feeling, what you're going through, what felt right, what felt helpful, what felt odd, what felt unhelpful.

Okay, going on with all that. These next two pieces are both from *Cupid*. They're both soliloquies. One is more of a monologue, because there is someone there. The first one is from the 2008 version, and then the second one is the revision that I did two or three years later. What you need to know is that at this point, *Cupid* is supposed to be transformed into the beast. There's a longer story behind that. If you know *Cupid* and *Psyche*, then you know that there's a beast that comes and demands a sacrifice, and that's why *Psyche* is sacrificed to him. In my version, *Cupid* is the beast.

We'll start with the 2008-2009 version, the bad quarto version. We're going to actually start with *Vanessa* reading and giving us feedback on this version, which is almost entirely end stopped.

[music]

EMILY. Once again, I'm going to ask you to take a breath at the end of each line. I will say that this speech, I had figured out that counting to ten thing a little

bit by the time I wrote this, so most of this is end stopped anyway. You're kind of forced – I mean, almost all of them end with some sort of period.

VANESSA. Yeah, as I just take a quick glance at it, I'm seeing mostly punctuation at the end of lines.

EMILY. Yeah. Once again, if you feel that you are moved to act, awesome. If you're not feeling that you're moved to act, that is helpful.

VANESSA. Okay.

EMILY. All right, here we go.

VANESSA.

A god of Passions, aye!—No more.
Two or five or twenty-five or fifty-two
Or more I've slain in search of Psyche's heart
Which she, with cunning, hath safe hid away.
My every step Persephone hath shadowed,
And every murder hath been a deal with Death
Who is most hungry for Psyche's soul...
Psyche, whom every day reviles me more.
O, she hath made a monster out of me!
Revealed me for what I truly am—a Beast,
A wretch, a god of lusts unsated.
For never was I a god of Love—O, no!
No god of Love could do what I have done.
Nor will she love, 'til loving I become.
O, let me patient be. But soft. Her sisters.

EMILY. Great. What did you get from that? Anything? Nothing? Where are you at?

VANESSA. From what you've described to me of where this speech comes in, it doesn't seem to fit those emotions.

EMILY. Great. Why?

VANESSA. It's hard for me to put my finger on exactly. Part of it might actually be – and this is a weird thing to say – over-punctuated.

EMILY. Oh my gosh, that's so cool. Go on.

VANESSA. (laughs) In that there are so many stop, start, stop, start, here's-a-little-pause things happening that there's no way to get a full head of steam.

EMILY. Yes. You're right. It keeps cutting off...

VANESSA. Yeah, and it's really a fascinating thing, because a speech like this, when they're kind of at their wit's end, you picture somebody just – am I allowed to swear? I never even asked.

EMILY. Go ahead and swear. Go ahead.

VANESSA. Great.

EMILY. We'll just put "explicit" on it.

VANESSA. I mean, you just, you want to fucking rip somebody's head off, and the way that this is punctuated stops you from ever being able to build that up. The thing that I think of immediately as far as a comparison, and it's just because I've done this role so it's in my head, is Beatrice's "I will eat his heart in the marketplace."

EMILY. Ah.

VANESSA. And that whole scene with Benedick where he is barely getting a phrase out, maybe a syllable once or twice, and she is just off and running. This seems like it should be that energy, but it can't get there because the train never starts. Does that make sense?

EMILY. It totally does.

VANESSA. Okay.

EMILY. And I love your comment. I'm going to invite you to stop calling your thoughts weird, because they're all spot on.

VANESSA. (laughs)

EMILY. I'm going to just throw that out there.

[music]

We're now going to throw it back to Andy Barrett. He has been working on the role of Cupid for two years, and he's accustomed to the speech that I have written since, so let's listen in to him reading the original speech for when Cupid became a beast.

[music]

EMILY. “A god of passions” was the original one, and what I’m going to ask you to do is to take a breath at the end of each line, just so that people can hear that. Also, see if there’s anything that you get – go ahead and try to act it.

ANDY. Yeah.

EMILY. I’m having you read it pretty much cold, just so that there’s no place for me, as a playwright, to hide. You haven’t worked on it. You haven’t justified anything. (laughs) You haven’t done my work for me.

ANDY. And is this – just because I haven’t seen the early version – this sits and the same place, so he’s already got a bit of the beast in him?

EMILY. This is exactly the same place in the play.

ANDY. Okay.

EMILY. This was the speech that used to be in the same place as “Go, fool, gloat.” And in fact, the exact same series of events, and the scene that comes after is the same oracle scene. It was a little – everything was a little bit longer because I had overwritten everything, you know? Everything was half as much as it needed to be, so part of the reworking was just cutting that sucker down. (laughs)

ANDY. Good.

EMILY. Okay, go for it.

ANDY.

A god of Passions, aye!—No more.
Two or five or twenty-five or fifty-two
Or more I’ve slain in search of Psyche’s heart
Which she, with cunning, hath safe hid away.
My every step Persephone hath shadowed,
And every murder hath been a deal with Death
Who is most hungry for Psyche’s soul...
Psyche, whom every day reviles me more.
O, she hath made a monster out of me!
Revealed me for what I truly am—a Beast,
A wretch, a god of lusts unsated.
For never was I a god of Love—O, no!
No god of Love could do what I have done.
Nor will she love, ‘til loving I become.
O, let me patient be. But soft. Her sisters.

EMILY. (laughs)

ANDY. Wow. Ah.

EMILY. Yeah. Where are you at? What are you feeling?

ANDY. That's so interesting. It reads like you've written the blurb of the scene into a speech, like you're explaining what's happening.

EMILY. It's the abstract.

ANDY. Sort of, yeah. It's very Brechtian, of just, like, here's what Cupid's feeling right now, like very direct.

No god of Love could do what I have done.
Nor will she love, 'til loving I become.

It's broad strokes, you know? "Persphone hath showed me to kill these people." It doesn't move. Also, I found myself doing a little bit of... I mean, I tend to do this with a new verse speech anyway.

EMILY. Sure.

ANDY. I'll de-DUM de-DUM de-DUM de-DUM de-DUM it, and you can see what comes up.

Or more I've slain in search of Psyche's heart

Which is just the raw rhythm. It doesn't... I don't mean to rip it apart.

EMILY. No, actually I am asking you to rip it apart. Go ahead and be so honest. I am sitting here being quiet because I have so much I want to rip it apart on, so go for it, please.

ANDY. Well, it's just so much exposition, isn't it?

EMILY. Yes. (laughs)

ANDY.

Two or five or twenty-five or fifty-two
Or more I've slain in search of Psyche's heart
Which she, with cunning, hath safe hid away.

Like, okay.

EMILY. Can I tell you how... I thought I was so clever when I wrote that "Two or five or twenty-five or fifty-two." Oh my gosh, it is so...

ANDY. It is a little bit clever.

Nor will she love, 'til loving I become.

It reads-

EMILY. But you're right, this is actually beautiful iambic pentameter, but so?

ANDY. That's what it is. It doesn't read like Cupid's saying this. The Chorus could be saying this.

EMILY. Ah!

ANDY.

Two or five or twenty-five or fifty-two
Or more he's slain in search of Psyche's heart
Which she, with cunning, hath safe hid away.
And every step Persephone hath shadowed,
And every murder hath been a deal with Death

You know, it's the chorus bringing people back up to speed. As an actor playing a character, there's nothing to move through, because it's just, he's not the god of passions anymore. Nothing in that O.

For never was I a god of Love—O, no!

EMILY. (laughs)

ANDY. Isn't that a shame?

EMILY. Yeah, it's interesting, the first time he mentions Psyche in the second one, or Persephone, "Or more I've searched in Psyche's heart," which yeah, he's got no point of view about any of the people he's talking about, including himself.

ANDY. I think it's because we think that, with iambic pentameter, that if you write a line with ten beats, some magic's going to happen where it'll become a good theatrical line.

EMILY. An actable line.

ANDY. An actable line. I've played by the rules. I've used the format. It goes de-DUM de-DUM de-DUM. I've finished, and so that's good writing. But it just isn't true. I can go through the "Go, fool, gloat" thing, and if I really look at it and I really do it out in my head, it can be like, oh yeah, that line is ten syllables and that, but also I should say Cupid's very impulsive and he moves all the time, and

he isn't, particularly in this moment, a terribly cerebral character. He feels. He's the god of passions, so there's almost a refusal to think about anything at the time. He is just passionate and impulsive, so he should talk like that. He should talk through enjambling lines and interrupted thoughts and

Go, fool! Gloat.
Your god is dead; the globe unhinged;

That's one line that's four pieces within that. Five, actually, with "Go, fool." The amount of punctuation within that one line.

[music]

EMILY. Now let's take a look at the speech that I wrote in place of "A god of passions, aye." Once again, we're going to let Andy move through it, and then hear what he gets out of it. This speech, just for those who are reading along, includes a lot of emotive formatting, which our patrons have chosen as the next episode in our tool boudoir. We'll be talking about emotive formatting, so you can get a sneak peek of that by taking a look or downloading the document that has the formatting, which you can find on hamlettohamilton.com.

But now let's listen in once again with Andy, who will read the current draft's version of this speech for when Cupid becomes the beast. Just a content warning, the following speech is better, I think, at showing Cupid as a rapacious beast, as a god of lusts unbridled, so this is a content warning for you. He will get better, but if this is a topic that you do not need to listen to, then go ahead and stop the podcast right now, and we will see you next time when we talk about emotive formatting. If not, here we go.

[music]

ANDY.

Go, fool! Gloat.
Your god is dead; the globe unhinged;
Th'unguarded gateways to Olympus' crown
Exposed. By *Psyche*—O!
We are weakling gods! To be usurped
By Reason's proud, unyielding ice-queen *harlot!*
Virgin. (Nay, she's a virgin sure...)—yet not so chaste;
There's fire in her yet, 'twill burn me cold.
I'll have her.
Jade and strumpet! Where do you hide, my sweet?
I'll have thee, *whore*—know thee, inhabit thee—
Cleft thee in two and die in the remains—I'll—
(*To ADONIS.*) But stay!...stay. I will be well.
Sad confessor, fear me not. Nay, sit. Sit!

Stay—and sit. I cannot kill thee twice.
But soft.
I am...
...Remembered of a thing. What was it?
Of something soft—*remember!* Of something...
Fragile as a newborn's sigh, as lovely
As the dawn when sea and sky are one, as...
Innocent as a window with new linens.
O, there was Eden-breath once in these lungs,
Eden-kisses on my lips, Eden-thoughts
Within my all-too fevered brain. Pity me,
Confessor. I am more Death's bondsman—*bitch!*—
Than thee in all thy chains. But see, there's blood
Upon my hands. It's strange there should be blood;
Is't thine? O—she is lovely. My mistress,
And my murderer.
Nay, friend—take pity, pray, and tell me, too:
Where the heart of Psyche lies? I'll eat it.
And be made whole at last.

EMILY. Great. Can you tell me some things that are running through your body or your mind right now?

ANDY. Just every time the softness that comes through at the “soft I am remembered of a thing.” There’s something so uncomfortable about those first few lines of the speech, so the “jade and strumpet, I’ll have you, I’ll split you in two, I’ll die in the remains.” To go from being Cupid the god of love to saying those things, which are, in a lot of ways, the opposite of love...

EMILY. A little bit.

ANDY. The absence of it. There’s something so upsetting about it. That necessitates that softness. There’s something like... I found myself getting very upset saying those words, which only really land because they come out of anger. That deep sadness comes out, and that’s what he’s trying to remember. He goes, “Oh, wait, no, there’s that goodness in me that hates what I’m saying,” and it feeds into that next stanza, where he chases that feeling of, “No, no, I was better than this. I was better. I used to be innocent. I used to be fragile. I used to be soft.” And he loses it and has to go back to “I’m in chains,” and then at the end asks for pity in order to get the information that he needs. It’s not Cupid’s innocence asking for pity at the end. It’s the beast saying, “Pity me. Tell me where Psyche is. I’ll have her anyway.”

EMILY. The first time you approached this, what are some things... I’m going to ask you sort of technically, if you can reach back into your mind, or even as you were reworking this in preparation for today. What in the verse does work for

you? What tricks are used that do work for you as an actor that you would love to see other verse playwrights also use, because it's helpful to you?

ANDY. We talked a little bit before starting recording about when you see things in text that show up as opportunities rather than mistakes, something that you can tell is intentional but isn't proscriptive from the writer. They're not telling you how to play this. They're just saying, "Play something here. Do something," and giving you a gift. This speech is full of them. I mean, particularly I just like a lot of speeches that have that O in them at the right point, because that's a gift for an actor. It doesn't have to be "O for a muse of fire." It can be any noise at all, and it's very exciting for me as an actor to look at that and be like, okay, I need to get to a point where words aren't enough when we get to that point in the script, where I just need to get a sound out, an emotion out. I didn't study musical theatre, but I think it's something they talk about, where you use text, and then eventually they burst into song.

EMILY. Yep.

ANDY. And you get to navigate what that switch is, where suddenly spoken text doesn't serve you in the same way. So those are gifts. I mean, they're slightly stylistic. I don't see them very often in new plays, but I wish I did.

EMILY. (laughs)

ANDY. Everyone's got a different approach to verse, text, and Shakespeare, and there are certain tropes that you're taught, and then later they don't serve you. The one that I quite like is if you're given a verse text where all of the words have one syllable, it's an invitation to the actor to slow down.

EMILY. Oh!

ANDY. Yeah.

EMILY. Yeah, no, I think I have heard that. I don't think it's something that was drilled into me, so I don't...

ANDY. And it sometimes doesn't work. You can't go "To... be... or... not," but in some ways, that is a moment of pause. "It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and" – you know, these are all...

EMILY. Now, as you say, yeah, I tend to... I feel when I do those sorts of lines, like "It is a tale told by an idiot," I tend to feel like I'm pushing through clay.

ANDY. Yeah. Yeah, because each word demands a certain amount of weight, and so if there's a lot of them in succession that are short, it is going to slow you down.

EMILY. Yeah.

ANDY. They are each vitally important. There's a line in this one where the whole line is

I'll have her.

and there's a space on one side and there's space on the other, and that's, because there's a lot of moments that come out of this speech that are through a tic, like an impulse. The "jade and strumpet, harlot" is through a kind of fiery, explosive fury and it's impulse. But then there's this line in the middle that has space around it, which to me implies thought.

EMILY. Mm-hmm.

ANDY. It's as if you've taken a breath, maybe two, and still decide to say

I'll have her.

EMILY. Ooh. That's so interesting. So in the moment when you take that breath, you're actually, you find you tend to decide, am I going to say this out loud?

ANDY. I think it's a chance to... Yeah, maybe there's a reluctance, like am I really going to say this? Or it's a determination. Even in the moment of stillness and clarity, the voice that comes out isn't Cupid's innocence. It's the beast's rapaciousness.

I'll have her.

And then the next one, after some space, is

Jade and strumpet!

in italics, which is back to this explosive quality. But there's something so cold and calculating about that one line.

EMILY. Yeah.

ANDY. And so sure. "I will have her." Not: "I want her." It's a truth. It's going to happen.

EMILY. Yeah.

ANDY. (shuddery noise)

EMILY. (laughs) Yeah. He's not very pretty in this scene.

ANDY. No. But then he does catch himself after that, three lines in.

Cleft thee in two and die in the remains—I'll—

And there's something that he won't say. There's an interruption. Those are also gifts to an actor. Whenever there's a line that... A lot of writers tend to write perfect thoughts, and there's actually a lot of information that can be given to the audience and to the actor in just having contradictory thoughts meet in one line. He's decided to say this, and then something's pulled him back. And we talk like that in real life. I've done it loads in this podcast already, decide to say one thing and then change my mind halfway through. It happens in real conversations when we're talking over each other, and it should happen in plays as well, even with characters that do speak perfectly and speak in poetry.

Cleft thee in two and die in the remains—I'll—

And then he switches to

But stay!...stay.

There's a clear change there. And I like the way it's laid out with the

Stay—and sit. I cannot kill thee twice.

And there's a space.

But soft.

And more space, and then an even longer space to the start of the text

I am...

And you can tell he's breathing again.

[music]

EMILY. That's where we're going to end today, because, as you can hear, line breaks move right into emotive formatting and move right into the use of white space and of silences and of rests, all of which can be valuable information for your actor.

I want to take a moment to thank all of our actors. Thank you to Nick Ritacco. Thank you to Evan Sachs, to Vanessa Wendt, and to Andy Barrett for joining us today. We'll make sure that there are links to whatever social media they may

have, and certainly they're all fantastic people that if you have the opportunity to hire them, you should.

One of the things that I hope is most valuable to you hearing actors talking about how they approach the technical side of verse is, again, always the question of is this useful? What does this tell me about my character? Because, as much as right now we're focusing on the tool boudoir and the craftsmanship of writing a line of verse, at the end of the day, we're writing drama. We're writing characters. We're writing plot. We are writing stories. We are telling each other stories, and when we're doing theatre, we're letting those stories be told for centuries to come by people whom you will possibly never meet, but who may be really grateful for the gift that you leave in words. We'll see you next time. Bye.

[music]

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Thank you for joining us, dear friends, for all things true, good, beautiful, and frequently in verse.