

HAMLET TO HAMILTON

Season Two, Episode Three: Burlesque & Verse Drama: Henry Fielding's *Tom Thumb the Great* (1730)

EMILY. This is *Hamlet to Hamilton: Exploring Verse Drama*. I'm your host, Emily C. A. Snyder. You're listening to Season 2, Episode 3: "Arthur Through the Ages," today looking at the interplay of verse drama and burlesque theatre.

[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?

[music out]

EMILY. Hello, friends, and welcome back to *Hamlet to Hamilton: Exploring Verse Drama*. This season, Season 2, we're taking a look at the history of verse drama from 1587 through to 2019 by looking at different examples of the King Arthur myth as written in verse drama. We are limiting ourselves to only plays that are written in the English language, only plays that are written about the Arthurian mythology, only plays that are written in verse and, increasingly, only plays that also include the Guinevere and Lancelot drama. Now, these first three episodes do not include the Lancelot and Guinevere drama, although we'll be coming up to that very soon, but it is important in these early dramas for you to hear about the development of verse drama. So, Season 2 we are moving through the plays chronologically. However, you are welcome to skip around to any part that intrigues you, as opposed to last season, Season 1, when we were looking at the fundamentals of writing verse drama. That was meant to be listened to in order.

This season, you can listen at your heart's content. If at any point we use a word or a phrase that you may not know, feel free to go to hamlettohamilton.com, check out the glossary there, or you can always listen to the appropriate episode and fill yourself in. Similarly, if you're looking for the texts for today's readings, you can find them over on hamlettohamilton.com, as well as transcripts of today's

program. Similarly, if you are interested in joining the Hamlet to Hamilton community, you can become a patron over on patreon.com/hamlettohamilton and you will get access to the super secret Facebook group as well as you will be invited to such things as we had a kickoff party on Zoom before this season and we looked at different King Arthur texts that will not be in this season. We also got to talk to the living playwrights directly. If you're interested in joining us for that and for other goodies, or just to support this program and the free education that it offers on verse drama, you can become a patron over on patreon.com/hamlettohamilton. Now, with that out of the way, today we're going to be looking at the overlap of burlesque theatre and verse drama.

[brief music]

So, as the title of our podcast implies, there is a great overlap between verse drama and various forms of musical theatre. In point of fact, in our last episode when we looked at John Dryden's *King Arthur, or The British Worthy*, some of you may know that better as one of the very early English operas. Now, when we talk about operas in this early time, English operas, English burlesques, what it's important to know is that it's not what we think of now. Opera in the very early days would not necessarily be sung through, such as Dryden's *King Arthur* is actually a verse play with music, is the way that we would categorize it now. It isn't even a musical where the action takes place in the music. It's really a verse drama with music, but it's still categorized as an opera in the history books.

Similarly, when we think about something called burlesque now, we might think of belly dancers and the sort of vaudeville tradition, and certainly burlesque comes from sort of the lower class, but also the mirror image, frankly, of opera. A burlesque is similarly going to look, to us, like a play with music, rather than a musical, rather than an opera. But the idea was that the burlesque was kind of the topsy-turvy version of those early operas. They were making fun of the highfalutin people. They were for the common folk. For example, you may have heard of *The Beggar's Opera*, which is a prose play with music that used common music, music of the people then with new lyrics.

Today's offering is also going to be a burlesque, but it's a verse burlesque. Again, the play is in verse, and then it is meant to make fun, essentially, of what verse drama was becoming. Remember, last episode we talked about how, because of the Puritan Commonwealth in England, verse drama did one of two things. It either went underground as something to be published and read in people's homes and not performed, since theatre was outlawed during the Puritan Commonwealth, or it disguised itself as an opera and it said, "Oh, no, no, we're not performing theatre. We're an opera. See? We've got music and everything." The burlesque is coming after that and is making fun of the highfalutin-ness that started to come around verse drama. If you remember as well from last time, John Dryden, who wrote *King Arthur, or The British Worthy* that we looked at last episode, coined the idea of the heroic drama, which was

meant to be verse drama in iambic pentameter but not blank verse, rather in rhyming couplets.

Let's take a moment. Let's give ourselves the context of history and dates, and I'll see about putting up a timeline for anyone who's interested of these various important dates over on hamlettohamilton.com. But let's talk through it right now. A brief reminder: for us, the all-important starting date of 1560 is the first iambic pentameter blank verse play of *Gorboduc*. Then in our first episode, we looked at 1587, Sir Thomas Hughes' *The Misfortunes of Arthur*. Then in the 1590s through to the 1610s is when Shakespeare is writing. Then – and this is the important thing for our purposes – in 1630, there was the publication of the first published fairy tale, which was called *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb*. Now, this is not a play, but I do want to mark that this was a publication, because what's going to happen with the Arthurian dramas, if anyone has already read Malory or Tennyson or even older texts, you know that there are fiction writers who will write about King Arthur and that's what the plays are based on. What's kind of fascinating is we can see over and over – and we're going to be seeing as we move through this season – that there will be the writing in a fiction sense, frequently in verse. Frequently the writing is itself in verse, but not meant to be performed, meant to be read as a piece of fiction, like *The Iliad*, for example. Although that might have been performed, but leave that be. Anyway, you'll have a piece of writing, frequently – although not always – but frequently in verse, and then a little while later the playwrights come along, they take it up, and they turn it into a theatrical.

In 1630, we have the publication of *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb*. Now, you may know *Tom Thumb* as just a fairy tale – certainly I did – about a guy who's no bigger than the size of your thumb and his many misadventures. It's very similar to *Thumbelina*, which is Hans Christian Andersen. It's very similar, frankly, to... There are just stories the world over of someone wishes they could have a child, and from a walnut or from just sort of wishing it, a child appears and remains no bigger than the size of one's thumb, and then it's a question of what would it be like to try to move through the world if you were that small.

The difference about *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb*, as published by some anonymous person in 1630, is that they put Tom Thumb into the court of King Arthur. It's an interesting thing – again, if you're a scholar of Arthurian myth and legend, in many ways, King Arthur, and in most of the stories that are considered Arthurian, King Arthur doesn't have that much to do. It's his knights who are doing everything. King Arthur and his court are kind of the background. If your introduction to King Arthur, however, was something like the TV show *Merlin* or, perhaps, *The Mists of Avalon* or the musical *Camelot* or *The Sword in the Stone*, more of our modern work, then your feeling is going to be that Arthur is, in fact, central to his own story – crazy notion – but historically speaking, it's more like King Arthur's court (sings) Camelot is just the place where cool stuff happens.

That's where Tom Thumb, in this fairy tale, goes to the court of King Arthur, and that is why we are including it in our "Arthur Through the Ages."

Now, that piece, as I said, was written in verse. It's written not in iambic pentameter. It is written in rhyming couplets and I'll give you just a little taste of what that version is like. Here is the first stanza of the fairy tale of *Tom Thumb*, as it was published in 1630.

In Arthurs Court Tom Thumbe did liue
a man of mickle might,
The best of all the Table round,
and eke a doughty knight:
His stature but an inch in height,
or quarter of a span,
Then thinke you not this little knight
was prov'd a valiant man:

Then it goes on and they mention Merlin in the next few lines. They mention the Fairy Queen.

His hat made of an Oaken leafe,
his shirt a spiders web,
Both light and soft, for those his limbes
that were so smally bred.

Which reminds me a lot, of course, of the Queen Mab speech. It goes on in that way for a little bit. It's a very long poem, of which I only have a little bit, once again, thanks to the University of Rochester and The Camelot Project, which has preserved so many of these pieces regarding Arthurian myth.

If we're going to analyze this, a couple things that we'll note. Let's take a look at our scansion work, which is to take a look at what rhythms and what beats, what are things repeated, juxtaposed, etc. What we're seeing here is a compound meter. It is in rhyme, and the rhyme is, essentially, ABCB with some variation. For example, this first stanza is ABCBBDBD, where each of the letters that I just mentioned is a word that rhymes with the other one. There does seem to be variation in this, but the crucial thing is that every second line rhymes and that there are eight lines per stanza. If we're to look at the beat, we will see

In Árthurs Cóurt Tom Thúmbe did líue

That's tetrameter.

a mán of míckle míght,

That's trimeter.

The bést of áll the Táble róund,
Tetrameter.

and éke a dóughty kníght:

Trimeter. So again, you have a compound meter of 4-3-4-3-4-3-4-3 with all the ones that are 3 rhyming with the previous line, with the previous 3.

We also see here that, again, it's got that sing-songy:

In Árthurs Cóurt Tom Thúmbe did líue

So the whole thing is in iambic, basically.

a mán of míckle míght,

And it's charming, frankly. It's charming. It's delightful, but it definitely has a Dr. Seussian feel, and this is actually exactly why people argue that by, essentially, moving anything past tetrameter, it's long enough that the audience has the sensation that it's not so much a rhyming ditty or a jingle, but it's just long enough that it starts to feel like normal conversation again, or at least that is, again, what most people feel regarding scansion and why many people will advocate a pentameter, by giving it just that little extra foot, makes it feel more conversational. Once more, that's not entirely true. That is not, by any means, gospel, but we can see from looking at something like this why shorter lines that rhyme consistently will feel more poetical, will feel more sing-songy rather than conversational, and so therefore why we've had a shift in English towards pentameter or longer. So, when it's then being brought over to be performed, we're not necessarily going to be keeping the meter, that is the interplay of rhythm and beat, that was used in the original piece in 1630.

Let's jump back into history now. As we were saying, in 1630, this *Life and Death of Tom Thumb*, which we just read, is published, and only 12 years later, 1642-1660, the Puritan Commonwealth closes all the theatres. So even if someone wanted to do a dramatization of *Tom Thumb*, it would be very difficult to do so. The theatres are reopened in 1660, and then in 1670 – so this is 40 years after *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb* and only 10 years after the theatre is returned – we have John Dryden, who wrote last week's play, create something called the heroic drama. The heroic drama is essentially John Dryden's... It's like his manifesto. It's where he's saying, "We will only have rhyming couplets in our great verse plays, and it will be in iambic pentameter, and the piece that we are working on will be very patriotic, will be very Britain rah rah, will be only showing the noblest of heroes," and so on. Certainly, then, in 1691, that's when he writes *King Arthur, or The British Worthy*.

It's interesting to look at what's happening in this time, because when Charles II comes back, that's when most of us who've taken theatre history, what do we think of in terms of theatre? We think of Restoration comedy. Restoration comedy is in prose, by and large. Restoration comedy is much more like a burlesque. It is bawdy and it's sexy and no one behaves well. It also tends to be more about the burgeoning middle class than it is about highfalutin people. So in that way, it still is not like Shakespeare anymore, where Shakespeare would tend to write about extremely poor people or extremely low class people next to extremely high class people. There wasn't as much middle class-ness, one could argue, in his plays. But with Restoration comedy, it is firmly about the middle class and it is very much, very much bawdy and very much prose. Against that backdrop, that's what John Dryden is writing against, and why he's saying, "Ah, all right. In prose drama, you're going to be writing about all sorts of slightly low-class things." Well, then as verse drama is coming out of closet drama – remember, closet drama is what happened during the Puritan Commonwealth. People would write plays just to be read. Those were called closet dramas. So John Dryden is saying as we're sort of reclaiming verse, verse will be incredibly highbrow. Verse will maintain those Puritan ideals. Verse will be so patriotic and will have no blemish or anything low about it.

This is only increased when William and Mary, just three years before his *King Arthur*, take over in The Glorious Revolution. Then one year after *King Arthur* is written, we have the creation in Britain of The Society for the Reformation of Manners. I shouldn't even say that with an American accent. We have:

[flourish of trumpets]

(English accent) The Society for the Reformation of Manners [drum beat], coming from the good old anti-theatrical tradition that we talked about last time. So that tension remains, and verse drama is coming down in the later half of the 1600s as sort of the opposite of prose drama. We are highfalutin. We are the moral center, etc., etc. We, in fact, will fit in well with (English accent) The Society for the Reformation of Manners [drum beat]. Now, The Society for the Reformation of Manners, which, in fact, did help bring down and stop Restoration comedy as well as, frankly, William and Mary took over. There was the movement to make sure that there was a Protestant, and I would say a slightly Puritanically tinged Protestantism flavor to being Protestant that was *de rigueur*, that was polite. This is how The Church of England is. We are polite. Now I can only think of Eddie Izzard's

Cake or death?
Cake or death?
Welcome to The Church of England.
Cake or death?

Which, if you don't know "Cake or Death," we will link it in the show notes. You are welcome.

The Society for the Reformation of Manners continued from 1692 to about the 1730s, so we are now a century from *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb*, as published as the first fairy tale. We're in the 1730s. We are at the end of Restoration comedy. We are still in the grip of heroic drama, John Dryden's heroic drama, and we are also in a movement towards respectability in our theatre. Enter Henry Fielding, who has something to say about being so respectable with verse. In fact, enter Henry Fielding and his *Tom Thumb the Great: A Burlesque Tragedy*.

[music]

Did you know that hamlettohamilton.com is brought to you by the theatre company Turn to Flesh Productions? Turn to Flesh Productions is a New York City-based theatre company that develops new works in heightened text, such as verse, with vibrant roles for women and those underrepresented in classical art. Right now, we are on Zoom, so no matter where you are in the world, you can come and join us at one of our educational classes or you can join us for our Monthly MUSE Program and see new plays being developed in real time. You might even participate if you are so inclined. So take a look at what we do at turntoflesh.org, or you can follow us on all social medias @turntoflesh, as opposed to "turn to stone," because we really believe that the power of verse can lift up so many voices and turn those stony hearts back to flesh again.

[music out]

So, Henry Fielding. Some of you may recognize his name because he is the author of *Tom Jones*, which is a very risqué novel and is important because it's the beginning of novels being written whatsoever. He also is the fellow that helped to found the Bow Street Runners, which is London's first intermittently funded full-time police force. So, yay? And he also was a dramatist, especially a satirist. He thought, in 1730, that it was high time that perhaps we show that verse drama can also be a burlesque, can also be fun. This play that we're looking at – again, he went and he took the fairy tale that had been written a hundred years before in 1630, and he took it, he expanded it into essentially a one-act, because this play is going to have four different versions. You ready?

Tom Thumb did really well. Great box office smash. If you're looking for a new project that isn't about superheroes, I guess try *Tom Thumb*. It did well in its day. So he wrote *Tom Thumb the Great, A Burlesque Tragedy*, and it was kind of like a one-act and it was performed with other one-acts that he had written, so sort of put up a few times. It did well enough that the following year he took this one-act of *Tom Thumb the Great, A Burlesque Tragedy*, and he expanded it to a full-length play in 1731, which he renamed *The Tragedy of Tragedies, or The Life*

and Death of Tom Thumb the Great. He actually took out the word “burlesque” because some of his critics were saying, “Ugh, this is a burlesque. Well, then, it has sort of no point. Then it’s too low to be performed.” It’s interesting. It was performed at Haymarket, which was considered the more upscale of the places to perform a show, because that’s where the king went, rather than his wayward son, who went over to where *The Beggar’s Opera* was playing.

An interesting overlap here, too. Remember closet dramas were things that were written and published and meant to be performed in people’s home. Well, Henry Fielding, when he rewrote his play and published it in 1731, he not only expanded it, but then he also released a version that was meant to be a closet drama. In fact, he had this entire pseudonym called H. Scriblerus Secundus, who was this made-up character that would have addendums and footnotes and an introduction to the work and commentary on the work of Henry Fielding. He created this whole piece that was meant to be performed in people’s houses, and we happen to know that it was performed in people’s houses. This second version that he expanded, for example, the novelist Frances Burney, who is a very important, one of the earliest female authors of novels, she played the role of Princess Huncamunca in a private production in 1777. There was also a private production of this *Tragedy of Tragedies*, the expanded version of *Tom Thumb*, that was produced by Jane Austen’s family at her home in 1788. Then in the good old tradition of pantomime and dame roles, William Kurtz Wimsatt, Jr. played the giantess Glumdalca in Yale University production in 1953.

All I can think of, honestly, is if you’ve ever read *The Princess Bride* and how William Goldman, the author of that, created the character of S. Morgenstern, who is the supposed author of the piece, and then William Goldman, he’s saying that he came in and he’s editing and commenting on it, but it’s all a big joke. He’s not the first one to do that. Fielding did that already with this play. He already put out, essentially, the DVD commentary version of his play, kind of massively amazing.

So 1730 is when we have the one-act version by Henry Fielding. 1731, we have the expanded version, which went over really great and then was also published so that it could be performed in people's homes. So it was both performed on the stage, and then it was also available as a closet drama. In 1733, just two years later, there is the presentation of - (laughs) I love the name of this. You ready? *The presentation of The Opera of Operas; Or, Tom Thumb the Great Alter'd from the Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great and Set to Musick after the Italian Manner. As It Is Performing at the New Theatre in the Hay-Market.* And this is by Eliza Haywood and William Hatchet. Basically, what they did is two years after Henry Fielding's piece, they went, took his piece, and sort of edited it down, did some rewriting of it, and then added in little bits of music. It is notable, because these little bits of music – as opposed to, remember, with the opera last time, 50 years ago in our timeline, with Dryden's piece it wasn't so much that the lead characters sang their own music, but random, extra chorus characters would come and would sing a song, and then we'd be back to the play. In this one, actually, in *The Opera of Operas*, which is, essentially, the burlesque version of *The Tragedy of Tragedies*, which is itself the expanded version of *Tom Thumb the Great, A Burlesque Tragedy*, so in this *Opera of Operas*, it is interesting that the lead characters will sing. They will sing a little thing, not so much to move the plot along so much as they're treated almost like extended asides or soliloquies. You'll see what I mean in a minute.

Then in 1810 – so we skip from 1733 to 1810, which is about 80 years later – we have *Tom Thumb the Great, A Burlesque Tragedy from Fielding*, by Kane O'Hara, which is another piece that is, again, a burlesque insofar as it will have bits of music in it. This is by Kane O'Hara, and it also played at Haymarket. So we've got four versions of this same piece, and – whoo – that's what we're going to look at today. It counts as a King Arthur piece, even though the only Arthurian thing about it is that the king in the piece is King Arthur. There's no Mordred. There's no Lancelot. The wife's name is Dollalolla, not Guinevere. Dollalolla has a daughter named Huncamunca. There is no Lancelot. Tom Thumb sort of behaves as the Casanova of the piece, and depending on the piece, there is a servant/conspirator who is known as – let's see – in the first version, the conspirator is known as Noodle. In the expanded 1731, the conspirator is known as Foodle, with an F. In the 1733 version, which is the first time music was added, the conspirator or helper person is called Doodle with a D. Then the 1805/1810 version, the conspirator's name – let's see here. Sorry, just looking on the document. Is, again, Doodle. Oh, okay, we've got two Doodles. So, Noodle, Foodle, and Doodle. (laughs) Why not? In the later pieces, there is a giantess called Glumdalca, I believe is how it's pronounced.

We're going to take a look and see what the differences are between these. I want you to keep in mind that Fielding originally is making fun of heroic drama, so he's putting it in verse, to begin with. And remember, by this point, most of the plays are in prose. It's only the plays that consider themselves above it all that are in verse. Typically, you have in heroic drama, in their version of verse drama,

you'd have all rhyming couplets. You would have it in very strict repeated iambic pentameter, and you would have all of the people, certainly the heroes involved, would be just outsize characters. In some ways, just because I'm recording this just as Zack Snyder has dropped his four-hour version of *Justice League* and I was watching a little bit of it – I don't really like Zack Snyder, and I'm always giggling and laughing because of his adoration of the male torso and men with 15,000 abs. While I admire anyone that can get into that good shape, at the same time it's like, just calm down. Calm down. Like, chill. It's going to be okay. (laughs) I kind of feel like John Dryden had the same sort of sense as Zack Snyder. Actually, I could, in the future, I was listening to some of Zack Snyder's stuff and going, "This guy so desperately wants to write in verse," and he actually kind of does. There are certain parts where he writes in tetrameter, actually, I was noticing. But that's for another day.

Anyway, we're taking a look at *Tom Thumb*, but that's why it's so hilarious to the people, right? It's low-hanging fruit, but the idea that our big, heroic "Britain First" hero is a dude that's no bigger than your thumb. I have not in my studies found out how they managed to do this. I don't know whether it was a puppet, whether they hired someone of a smaller stature, and actually the character of Tom Thumb is kind of awesome. It's too bad that, "Oh, you're short" is the joke of it, because, as you're going to hear, I mean, Tom Thumb, he's over the top, but he's actually kind of awesome and fun in these plays, as you will hear.

Right. So with all of that, let's get into some text. This is what you've been waiting for. Now, I have to apologize. We were able to take a look with multiple people, including this season's guest, Nick Ritacco and our own Colin Kovarik for the final piece. We have their voices on *Tom Thumb the Great, A Burlesque Tragedy*. But I was not able to get us all together on a Zoom call in order to look at each of the four versions of this play. What I think we're going to do is let's actually start by orienting you. We're going to look at *Tom Thumb the Great, A Burlesque Tragedy* from 1810 by Kane O'Hara, and you'll hear all three of our voices on it. You'll hear our commentary on it. Then when we come back, I will take a look at the earlier versions of the play. Something that you should know is that there's going to be a lot of overlap because, again, intellectual property rights and copyright were clearly not a thing. If you remember from last time, David Garrick was just outright stealing Dryden's work and editing it and calling it his own in the same way that he was taking Shakespeare's work and editing it, and he was saying, "It's Shakespeare, and it's my cut of Shakespeare." Again, you know, the Snyder cut, the Whedon cut. I guess, how much do things really change?

But with *Tom Thumb the Great*, let's take a moment. Let's listen to the final evolution of it with Nick Ritacco playing Tom Thumb, myself as the Queen Dollalolla and our own Colin Kovarik reading for King Arthur.

[musical flourish]

EMILY. And so they have the king, who's King Arthur, and Colin is going to read King Arthur for us. I will read the queen, who actually is not called Guinevere, and again, my guess is in some ways King Arthur's still a little sacred in England. In fact, Monty Python, they were more offended at Monty Python's *Holy Grail* than they were at *Life of Brian*, which makes fun of Jesus, because Arthur is a big more sacred. (laughs)

NICK. Yeah. (laughs) That's great.

EMILY. Yeah, fascinating, right?

NICK. That is fantastic.

EMILY. Then Tom Thumb in this version actually is in love with the queen's daughter, it seems by some other fellow than Arthur, and the daughter's name is Huncamunca. So you can see just how serious this particular piece is going to be. (laughs)

NICK. Yeah. We've jumped forward a couple hundred years and here we are. (laughs)

EMILY. We've jumped forward. Henry Fielding. This play played in Covent Garden and was apparently a hit. This thing was a hit.

NICK. Oh yeah.

EMILY. So here we go. You ready, everybody? *Tom Thumb, A Burlesque Tragedy*. Off we go.

King. Haste we to meet and meetly to receive him.
Welcome, thrice welcome, mighty Thomas Thumb!
Thou tiny hero—pigmy giant queller!
What gratitude can thank away the debt
Thy valour puts upon us. [*Takes him up and embraces him.*]

Queen. Oh! ye gods! [*Aside.*]

Tom. When I'm not thank'd at all I'm thank'd enough—
I've done my duty, and I've done no more [*Bows.*]

Queen. Was ever such a godlike creature seen?

King. Thy modesty's a flambeau to thy merit;
It shines itself, and shows thy merit too.

O Tommy, Tommy Thumb! what to thy prowess do we owe!
Ask some reward—great as we can bestow.

Tom. I ask not kingdoms, I can conquer those;
I ask not money, money I've enough:
If this be called a debt, take my receipt in full:
I ask but this, to sun myself in Huncamunca's eyes,

King. *[Aside.]* Prodigious bold request!

Queen. Be still, my soul!—

King. *[After a pause.]* It is resolv'd
The princess is thy own! *[To THUMB.]*

Tom. O happy Tommy! super-happy Thumb.
Whisper, ye winds, that Huncamunca's mine!
The bloody bus'ness of grim war is o'er,
And beauty, heavenly beauty, crowns my toils.

EMILY. (laughs)

NICK. Oh yeah. (laughs)

COLIN. Amazing.

EMILY. Oh my gosh. Yeah, and I didn't pull out – I kind of wish I had, but I didn't pull out the scene between Tom Thumb and Huncamunca.

NICK. Tom Thumb and Huncamunca. (laughs)

EMILY. (laughs) Yeah, which reads – if we have extra time, if we want to, I'll pull up the link and we can take a look at that scene, because it reads very much like any of the Guinevere/Lancelot “Oh, you're so hot.” “No, *you're* so hot.” (laughs)

NICK. (laughs) Great. That actually, that sounds right. That sounds along, yeah, along the lines.

EMILY. Well, tell me. Why does that sound right?

NICK. Well, no, this... (laughs) Where it felt like in the first scene there was literally no chemistry between the two of them in terms of their sexual chemistry or their...

EMILY. No. But he wasn't even threatening her.

NICK. No.

EMILY. And there are other plays where Mordred is coming on to Guinevere. So it could be there.

NICK. Yeah. Oh, yeah, and part of the canon, possibly, is that Mordred steals Guinevere away...

EMILY. Oh, that's right.

NICK. ... and takes her to a tower and sleeps with her, possibly – do we know? – and Lancelot rescues her. You know what I mean? We have all of those.

EMILY. That's right. So, friends, Nick is partially Ravenclaw and did a bunch of reading that your humble authoress did not do when he was prepping for Lancelot, so he does know better than me. (laughs)

NICK. I get Ravenclaw a lot. I like to say I'm...

EMILY. You're actually Gryffindor, yeah.

NICK. Gryffindor is what I get on the test, but I'm the Hermione Granger of Gryffindor. I'm more that end of it, you know?

EMILY. No, I'm same. I'm Slytherin, but Ravenclaw ascending, as it were, yeah.

NICK. Ascending, yes, there we go. Perfect. No, I kind of nerded out on the legend, just because there were so, so many different aspects to it that could possibly inform playing those roles. But this piece, the *Tom Thumb the Great* (laughs) piece feels like of course it taps immediately into the shallow aspect of what their relationship could have been, right? This purely, they think each other's hot, and why wouldn't you sleep with that person regardless of the rules or the nature of the times?

EMILY. It's what I call – only once have I seen *Les Miserables* done truly egregiously with, like, none of it was good, which is really impressive because it's an excellent musical. There was this one moment where – and I'm not going to say where I saw it. (laughs) They don't need to be called out.

NICK. (laughs)

EMILY. They were trying hard, but every choice they made was wrong. But when Cosette saw Marius, you almost saw little sparkle hearts over their heads, but the interior monologue was like, "You're hot. I'm hot. Let's sing a duet." (laughs)

NICK. (laughs) Yeah. That actually, that kind of lines up here. Yeah, that feels like it fits into this burlesque tragedy.

EMILY. It does, and it's – Colin, if you want to chime in, feel free to do so. Please do. Some cool things about this immediately is you've got shorter lines. You have shared lines. You're using asides, so all the queen's lines are asides, whether they're noted as aside or not, and we've also got language that's sort of leaping. You know:

Oh! ye gods!

Was ever such a godlike creature seen?

(laughs)

NICK. Yeah, there's nothing subtle about any of this now.

EMILY. No, although I don't think it's anything... I'm not entirely sure it's metered verse at all. I think it's unmetered verse. So:

King. Haste wé to méet and méetly tó recéive him.

Okay, that's iambic pentameter.

Wélcome, thrice wélcome, míghty Thómas Thúmb!

That's actually trochaic pentameter.

Thou tíny héro—pígmy gíant quéeller!

Okay.

What grátitúde can thánk awáy the débt
Thy válour púts upón us.

Queen. Óh! ye góds! [*Aside.*]

And the "oh" kind of takes two feet. Then Tom comes:

Tom. When Í'm not thánk'd at áll I'm thánk'd enóugh—

Okay, but somewhere down here:

King. O Tómmy, Tómmy Thúmb! what tó thy prówess dó we ówe!

is, like, six or seven feet.

COLIN. Yeah, it's playing fast and loose, certainly, with the form. (laughs)

NICK. Yeah, yeah.

EMILY. But who cares? (laughs)

COLIN. Right, exactly, because it's funny.

EMILY. Yeah, well, also, if you're going over, like that line that you had,

King. O Tómmy, Tómmy Thúmb! what tó thy prówess dó we ówe!

You're overflowing the verse, so of course you should overflow the verse.

COLIN. Mm-hmm, yeah.

NICK. Yeah, "Tommy, Tommy Thumb" gets a... Sucks up a whole verse line. It's so important.

EMILY. Yeah.

COLIN. Yeah,

King. O Tómmy, Tómmy Thúmb! what tó thy prówess dó we ówe!

That's, like, way, yeah.

EMILY. It's too many.

NICK. But then Tom Thumb is

Tom. I ásk not kíngdoms, Í can cónquer thóse;
I ásk not móney, móney Í've enóugh:
If thís be cálléd a débt, take mý recéipt in fúll:

EMILY. That's actually six.

NICK. That, yeah, that's six, yeah.

I ásk but thís, to sún mysélf in Húncamúnca's éyes,

EMILY. And that's seven.

NICK. Audience, you don't need to count that one. (laughs) Huncamunca being in there kind of throws everything off.

EMILY. But also, I love the fact that they just go for, her name is Huncamunca.

NICK. Yeah.

EMILY. (laughs) Why not?

NICK. Huncamunca's eyes.

EMILY. And you can just imagine that you could play it, I mean, because in the later scene, he says her name so much, where he's like, (growls) "Huncamunca!" (laughs)

NICK. (laughs) Yes. That's perfect. That's excellent.

EMILY. Yeah.

NICK. You can't help but smile. I think we all were smiling saying all of these lines. You can't help.

EMILY. There were multiple places where I had to cover my mouth so that I wasn't just giggling over your lines. (laughs)

NICK. (laughs)

COLIN. (laughs)

EMILY. Also-

NICK. But then you look at – oh, sorry. Go ahead.

EMILY. No, no. I was just going to say you notice how fast we went.

COLIN. Mm-hmm.

EMILY. And there was so much energy. Yeah, I felt awake very quickly.

NICK. Yeah, like a bolt of energy, right? Yeah. Even from the first line, the King's line, you already could tell this is a completely different play than the texts we were reading earlier, yeah.

EMILY. Yeah, well, it begins even with "Haste we to meet," so you're – whoosh – with an open vowel to begin with.

NICK. Yeah. All the queen's lines are to the audience.

EMILY. Yeah.

NICK. (laughs) Which I also found, yes, like you were saying, they're all asides. They're all this sort of including them in this story in a way that I did not feel the first play was in the slightest, at least not in the language, you know?

EMILY. No, the first play, there is no audience. Not even your scene partner is your audience. (laughs)

NICK. Yeah, you are your own audience. You might as well, yeah, be in a separate room from who you're talking to.

EMILY. Yeah.

NICK. And in this play, this is a party, it feels like. (laughs)

EMILY. (laughs) Yeah. it is, it is!

[musical flourish]

EMILY. So as you can hear, there's a really good reason why this was a big hit. But what about those other versions of the play, and what about the fact that it is a burlesque, especially in later editions, and so there's music involved? Well, let's take a little break and then we'll take a look at the other versions of *Tom Thumb the Great, A Burlesque Extravaganza*.

[music]

CHA. Hey there. I'm Cha Ramos, and I will be teaching the "Boundaries and Needs" class in partnership with Turn to Flesh Productions. This course is a six-part series designed to help you get into better communication with your own boundaries and needs in the privacy and comfort of your home. So often nowadays, we're being asked in rehearsal rooms and on film sets and in contract negotiations about our boundaries and needs so that we can do our best work, and that's really exciting. But so few of us have actually had the opportunity to figure those things out by ourselves and for ourselves and with ourselves so that we can know how to answer those questions. This class will give you some concrete tools. We'll do some movement exercises, some guided meditations, and have some discussions about how you can begin to discover those things and examine them and practice them regularly for yourself. We will meet once a month on Saturdays on Zoom, often with our cameras off for some of these exercises, and you're welcome to join for one class here and there or for the whole six-part series. The idea is to better equip you to bring your whole self to your art and to your workspaces, no matter how you identify as an artist. If you want some more information about the class or about me, there's a lot to read on the Turn to Flesh website, on social media, and of course you are welcome to

reach out with questions at any time. I'm really excited to do this work with all of you in community, and I hope to see you in class. Until then, take care.

[music out]

EMILY. So, as we're talking about *Tom Thumb the Great, A Burlesque Tragedy* and its many iterations, let's take a look at what was happening in the previous versions. If you will bear with me, I'm going to read the opening court scene for each version, and since this is an audio format, I will do my best to give very silly, different voices for each character.

This first piece is the first court scene, Act I scene 3 from the one-act version by Henry Fielding in 1730. The characters are going to be the king, King Arthur, Tom Thumb, Queen Dollalolla, and the character of Noodle. All right. It goes a little something like this. The king speaks first.

[musical flourish]

KING. O welcome, ever welcome to my Arms,
My dear *Tom Thumb*! How shall I thank thy Merit?

THUMB. By not b'ing thank'd at all, I'm thank'd enough;
My Duty I have done, and done no more.

QUEEN. (*Aside.*) Was ever such a lovely Creature seen! [*Aside.*]

KING. Thy Modesty's a Candle to thy Merit,
It shines itself, and shews thy Merit too.
Vain Impudence, if it be ever found
With Virtue, like the Trumpet in a Consort,
Drowns the sweet Musick of the softer Flute.
But say, my Boy, where didst thou leave the Giants?

THUMB. My Liege, without the Castle Gates they stand,
The Castle Gates too low for their Admittance.

KING. What look they like?

THUMB. Like twenty Things, my Liege;
Like twenty thousand Oaks, by Winter's Hand
Stripp'd of their Blossoms; like a Range of Houses,
When Fire has burnt their Timber all away.

KING. Enough: The vast Idea fills my Soul;
I see them, yes, I see them now before me.
The monst'rous, ugly, barb'rous Sons of Whores,

Which, like as many rav'nous Wolves, of late
Frown'd grimly o'er the Land, like Lambs look now.
O *Thumb*, what do we to thy Valour owe!
The Princess *Huncamunca* is thy Prize.

QUEEN. Ha! Be still, my Soul!

THUMB. Oh, happy, happy Hearing!
Witness, ye Stars! cou'd *Thumb* have ever set
A Bound to his Ambition - it had been
The Princess *Huncamunca*, in whose Arms
Eternity would seem but half an Hour.

QUEEN. Consider, Sir, reward your Soldier's Merit,
But give not *Huncamunca* to *Tom Thumb*.

KING. *Tom Thumb!* Odzooks, my wide extended Realm
Knows not a Name so glorious as *Tom Thumb*.
Not *Alexander*, in his highest Pride,
Could boast of Merits greater than *Tom Thumb*.
Not *Caesar*, *Scipio*, all the Flow'rs of *Rome*,
Deserv'd their Triumphs better than *Tom Thumb*.

QUEEN. Tho' greater yet his boasted Merit was,
He shall not have the Princess, that is Pos'.

KING. Say you so, Madam? We will have a Trial.
When I consent, what Pow'r has your Denial?
For when the Wife her Husband over-reaches,
Give him the Petticoat, and her the Breeches.

And then in comes a fellow named Noodle.

NOODLE. Long Health and Happiness attend the General!
Long may he live, as now, the publick Joy,
While ev'ry Voice is burthen'd with his Praise.

THUMB. Whisper, ye Winds! that *Huncamunca's* mine;
Ecchoes repeat; that *Huncamunca's* mine!
The dreadful Bus'ness of the War is over,
And Beauty, heav'nly Beauty! crowns the Toil.
I've thrown the bloody Garment now aside,
And *Hymeneal* Sweets invite my Bride.
So when some Chimney-Sweeper, all the Day,
Has through dark Paths pursu'd the sooty Way,

At Night, to wash his Face and Hands he flies,
And in his t'other Shirt with his *Brickdusta* lies.

And we'll end the scene there.

Some things that I would love to point out, is it's actually surprising, if you notice, there are some bits that feel much more, actually, like heroic drama, feel a little sincere, such as the king's

KING. Thy Modesty's a Candle to thy Merit,
It shines itself, and shews thy Merit too.
Vain Impudence, if it be ever found
With Virtue, like the Trumpet in a Consort,

You can even hear the iambic pentameter. Well, later on, it's fascinating using heroic drama, which uses rhymed couplets so that when the queen says, "Oh no, don't marry him to Huncamunca," the king comes back with couplets, which, to this audience, would indicate highness, would indicate seriousness, would indicate heroic drama, such as

KING. Say you so, Madam? We will have a Trial.
When I consent, what Pow'r has your Denial?

But do you hear that? There's actually a difference in the rhythm. It's not actually iambic pentameter. It's

KING. Sáy you so, Mádam? Wé will háve a Tríal.

So BAH-ba-ba BAH-ba, which is using forward-facing, I believe... Gosh, I'd have to look at it again. I believe it's dactyl and a trochee, and then

Wé will háve a Tríal.

BAH-ba BAH-ba BAH-ba. It's not iambs. It's not ba-DUM. It's trochees, and in the trochaic family, I would say. We will talk about this even more in seasons to come. But for the moment, you can also go back and listen to the scansion episode.

When Í consént,

Now we're in iambs.

what Pów'r has yóur Deníal?
For whén the Wífe her Húsband óver-réaches,
Give hím the Pétticóat, and hér the Bréeches.

What we have there as well, though, is an inversion of heroic drama, because all of a sudden we have a little sexy joke there, a little gender fun. Then later, Tom Thumb actually ends his piece, again, with those rhyming couplets which were so Dryden-esque. And yet, perhaps we're... We've got the voice that we're using on this podcast of Tom Thumb sounding rather like Dudley Do Right, rather John Wayne-esque. "Huncamunca's mine." It's possible, as well, to perhaps use a little voice, although that may be insensitive, which is why we've not chosen to do so. If you think, again, going to Eddie Izzard, though, perhaps there's something like, (laughs) if you think about her whole riff on why Darth Vader just is only imposing if Darth Vader has a low voice. So there are different comedic choices to be made, but what we see here is not fully burlesque. This is not fully satire either. It has motions towards that, and apparently Jonathan Swift laughed out loud at viewing the one-act version of this play, which apparently Jon Swift, who you may know as the author of *Gulliver's Travels*, was not someone who laughed a lot, which is an interesting thing for a satirist. But this play made him laugh.

Let's see what happens when it's expanded. And, again, it'll be just me doing all the voices. Once again, we have the king, we have the queen, we have Tom Thumb. We also have the character of Glumdalca, who is the Queen of the Giants, and then in this case the wily person is called Foodle, because why not? This is Act I scene 3, just as the previous one was Act I scene 3, the first court scene, but now of the expanded version of Henry Fielding's *The Tragedy of Tragedies, or The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great*. So, the king speaks first.

[musical flourish]

KING. Oh! welcome most, most welcome to my Arms,
What Gratitude can thank away the Debt,
Your Valour lays upon me?

QUEEN. [Aside.] — Oh! ye Gods!

TOM THUMB. When I'm not thank'd at all, I'm thank'd enough,
I've done my Duty, and I've done no more.

QUEEN. [Aside] Was ever such a Godlike Creature seen!

KING. Thy Modesty's a Candle to thy Merit,
It shines itself, and shews thy Merit too.
But say, my Boy, where did'st thou leave the Giants?

TOM THUMB. My Liege, without the Castle Gates they stand,
The Castle Gates too low for their Admittance.

KING. What look they like?

TOM THUMB. Like Nothing but Themselves.

QUEEN. And sure thou art like nothing but thy Self.

KING. [Aside.] Enough! the vast Idea fills my Soul.
I see them, yes, I see them now before me:
The monst'rous, ugly, barb'rous Sons of Whores.
But, Ha! what Form Majestick strikes our Eyes?
So perfect, that it seems to have been drawn
By all the Gods in Council: So fair she is,
That surely at her Birth the Council paus'd,
And then at length cry'd out, This is a Woman!

TOM THUMB. Then were the Gods mistaken. — She is not
A Woman, but a Giantess — whom we
With much ado, have made a shift to hawl
Within the Town: for she is by a Foot,
Shorter than all her Subject Giants were.

And then the giantess, Glumdalca, enters.

GLUMDALCA. We yesterday were both a Queen and Wife,
One hundred thousand Giants own'd our Sway,
Twenty whereof were married to our self.

QUEEN. Oh! happy State of Giantism — where Husbands
Like Mushrooms grow, whilst hapless we are forc'd
To be content, nay, happy thought with one.

GLUMDALCA. But then to lose them all in one black Day,
That the same Sun, which rising, saw me wife
To Twenty Giants, setting, should behold
Me widow'd of them all. — My worn out Heart,
That Ship, leaks fast, and the great heavy Lading,
My Soul, will quickly sink.

QUEEN. — Madam, believe,
I view your Sorrows with a Woman's Eye;
But learn to bear them with what Strength you may,
To-morrow we will have our Grenadiers
Drawn out before you, and you then shall choose
What Husbands you think fit.

GLUMDALCA. — Madam, I am
Your most obedient, and most humble Servant.

KING. Think, mighty Princess, think this Court your own,
Nor think the Landlord me, this House my Inn;
Call for whate'er you will, you'll Nothing pay.
I feel a sudden Pain within my Breast,
Nor know I whether it arise from Love,
Or only the Wind-Cholick. Time must shew.
Oh Thumb! What do we to thy Valour owe?
Ask some Reward, great as we can bestow.

TOM THUMB. I ask not Kingdoms, I can conquer those,
I ask not Money, Money I've enough;
For what I've done, and what I mean to do,
For Giants slain, and Giants yet unborn,
Which I will slay —if this be call'd a Debt,
Take my Receipt in full — I ask but this,
To Sun my self in Huncamunca's Eyes.

KING. Prodigious bold Request.

QUEEN. [Aside.] — Be still my Soul.

TOM THUMB. My heart is at the Threshold of your Mouth,
And waits its answer there — Oh! do not frown,
I've try'd, to Reason's Tune, to tune my Soul,
But Love did overwind and crack the String.
Tho' Jove in Thunder had cry'd out, YOU SHAN'T,
I should have love'd her still — for oh strange fate,
Then when I lov'd her least, I lov'd her most.

KING. It is resolv'd — the Princess is your own.

TOM THUMB. Oh! happy, happy, happy, happy, Thumb!

QUEEN. Consider, Sir, reward your Soldiers Merit,
But give not Huncamunca to Tom Thumb.

KING. Tom Thumb! Odzooks, my wide extended Realm
Knows not a Name so glorious as Tom Thumb.
Let Macedonia, Alexander boast,
Let Rome her Caesar's and her Scipio's show,
Her Messieurs France, let Holland boast Mynheers,
Ireland her O's, her Mac's let Scotland boast,
Let England boast no other than Tom Thumb.

QUEEN. Tho' greater yet his boasted Merit was,

He shall not have my Daughter, that is Pos'.

KING. Ha! sayst thou Dollalolla?

QUEEN. — I say he shan't.

KING. Then by our Royal Self we swear you lye.

QUEEN. Who but a Dog, who but a Dog,
Would use me as thou dost? Me, who have lain
These twenty Years so loving by thy Side.
But I will be reveng'd. I'll hang my self,
Then tremble all who did this Match persuade,
For riding on a Cat, from high I'll fall,
And squirt down Royal Vengeance on you all.

And then Foodle says:

FOODLE. Her Majesty the Queen is in a Passion.

KING. Be she, or be she not — I'll to the Girl
And pave thy Way, oh Thumb — Now, by our self,
We were indeed a pretty King of Clouts,
To truckle to her Will — For when by Force
Or Art the Wife her Husband over-reaches,
Give him the Peticoat, and her the Breeches.

TOM THUMB. Whisper, ye Winds, that Huncamunca's mine;
Echoes repeat, that Huncamunca's mine!
The dreadful Bus'ness of the War is o'er,
And Beauty, heav'nly Beauty! crowns my Toils,
I've thrown the bloody Garment now aside,
And Hymeneal Sweets invite my Bride.
So when some Chimney-Sweeper, all the Day,
Hath through dark Paths pursu'd the sooty Way,
At Night, to wash his Hands and Face he flies,
And in his t'other Shirt with his Brickdusta lies.

[musical flourish]

All right, so that's the expanded version. Interesting. It's now Foodle. We have some expanded plot. We actually meet the queen of the giants, which is exciting, and we also have the queen, beyond just being Queen Dollalolla, King Arthur's queen in this, besides just being "Oh, Tom Thumb is so hot," is taking an active part in, "I do not want my daughter to be with Tom Thumb. In fact, I want Tom

Thumb for myself.” We also have the intimation that perhaps the king is into this giantess.

Once again, it’s really interesting to see – and the text is available on hamlettohamilton.com – to see what he keeps and what he changes. So that petticoat-breeches line, he maintained that, but he made small edits that are smart. He took down some of the longer speeches. For example,

KING. Thy Modesty's a Candle to thy Merit,
It shines itself, and shews thy Merit too.

is a two-line version of what had been a five- or six-line speech by the king beforehand. And speaking from inside the character, when I was reading that part of the king in the first version when it was a longer little speech, I actually blacked out. This is something for any of you playwrights and any of you actors, I frequently will ask actors or give the feedback if I’m the actor of places where I black out, of places where I’m just reading a script but I don’t really know what I’m saying, even on a cold read. Those are places that the playwright, or the dramaturg will want to tell the playwright, “You probably want to cut that down.” You’re doing too much poetry and not enough plot, which maybe that’ll be the title of Season 3 when we’re going to be looking at dialogue and looking at scene study. “Too much poetry, not enough plot” is the number one offender for verse drama. It’s fascinating to see that Fielding fell into that. He had too long of a speech, and when he revised it, he revised it down to two lines.

He also uses more shared lines in this version, so it’s very clear that he learned from the first draft what was actually working for the audience, what was actually working for his actors, the importance of shared lines to keep that rhythm going. But even so, he actually expanded the bit, if you noticed, where he goes on about Alexander, where he goes on about the different nations. So he didn’t just cut things down, he also expanded. And once again, you hear that we are dropping into rhyme whenever we’re sort of making fun of things. But even so, we’re not quite yet at the level of hilarity that we were when the three of us were doing that final iteration.

You could even hear, as we’re about to look now at the first *Opera of Operas*, you can hear that there were places that kind of wanted to be music, because if you remember from Season 1, when we speak normally, then we’re in prose. This is the general rule of thumb. Again, you can do whatever you want, but the general rule of thumb - (laughs) of Tom Thumb – is when you speak in prose, you’re kind of at a base-level state. If you have more emotion than that, for our purposes, that’s when you go into verse. If you have more emotion than that, that’s when you break into song, which we’re about to see. And if you have more emotion than that, you break into pure action, which, again, if you want to see versions of this and you are a fan of Joss Whedon’s work – perhaps not of the man, but of his work – it is worth it to see how he used silence in the Season 4 of

Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Season 4 episode of “Hush,” where he uses silence because everything has gone beyond. Then he honestly perfected that in his musical episode, “Once More With Feeling” in Season 6 where people broke into song whenever there was heightened, even greater heightened emotion.

So let’s move on from this. I’m not going to say too much more about the scansion. It’s very similar. He’s playing a little bit fast and loose with iambic pentameter, and bravo to him. He’s even getting away... Henry Fielding, it felt like he was getting away from having to make fun of heroic drama and just start writing his own piece. But let’s see what happens when Eliza Haywood and William Hatchett, two years later in 1733, rewrite Henry Fielding’s great hit and do their version of it – in the same theatre, by the way. These are all being performed at Haymarket, so, I mean, that’s a baller move. That’s a flex. So Eliza Haywood, ooh, female writer. I mean, this is the time of Aphra Behn, again, Franny Burnie. The female writer, the female journalist, the female novelist, the female playwright, ooh. I mean, we’ve already had now the female actor. This is all quite liberating stuff.

They come along and they rewrite it, and we’re going to have King Arthur, Queen Dollalolla, Tom Thumb. Glumdalca is kept. She’s the queen of the giants. Then our random person is Doodle. We’ve had Noodle, Foodle, and now this person’s called Doodle, and there we are. Why not? When it comes to the places – they’re called airs – when it comes to a song, I will just make up a tune. I do not know what the actual tunes are. This is something that could be looked up. All it says is “Air,” as in “To be sung.” So for the moment, I will just make something up. All right, here we go. *The Opera of Operas*, what happens when you take a verse play and start musicalizing it. The king speaks first.

[musical flourish]

King. O welcome! most welcome to my arms!
What gratitude can thank--away the debt,
Thy valour lays--upon me!

Queen. Oh! ye gods! [Aside.]

Thumb. When I'm not thank'd at all, I'm thank'd enough;
I've done my duty, and I've done no more.

Queen. Was ever such a god-like creature seen! [Aside.]

King. Thy modesty's a candle to thy merit;
It shines itself, and shews thy merit too--
But say, my Boy--
Where didst thou leave the *Giants*?

Thumb. My liege, without the castle gates,
The castle gates too low for their admittance.

King. What look they like?

Thumb. Like nothing but themselves.

Queen. And sure thou'rt like to nothing but thyself. [*Aside.*]

King. Enough! the vast idea fills my soul.
I see them--yes, I see them before me--
The monstrous, ugly, barb'rous sons of whores!--
But, ha!
What finish'd piece of human nature strikes us!
Sure she was drawn by all the gods in council!
Who paus'd, and then cry'd out--this is a woman!

Thumb. Then, were the gods mistaken--
She's not a woman, but a giantess,
A High-German Giantess.

And I guess I'm changing my accent. Glumdalca, the now High-German giantess, speaks:

Glumdalca. We yesterday were both a queen and wife;
One hundred thousand *Giants* own'd our sway,

My apologies to all my German forbearers.

Twenty whereof were marry'd to ourself.

Queen. Oh! happy state of giantism!

And then we have our first song. You ready? The queen sings:

AIR III.

*Our Passions are of Giant kind,
And have to th' full as large a sense;
'Tis hard to one to be confin'd,
When with a score we could dispense.*

Glumdalca. But then to lose full twenty in one day!

Queen. Madam, believe,
I view your sorrows with a woman's eye,
But be as patient as you can,

To morrow we will have our Grenadiers
Drawn out before you, when you may chuse
What Husband you think fit.

Glumdalca. Madam, I am your most obedient Servant.

King. Think, lovely princess, think this court your own,
Nor think my house an Inn, myself the landlord;
Call for whate'er you will, you'll nothing pay.
I feel a sudden pain within my breast;
Nor know I whether it proceeds from love,
Or only the wind-cholick--time must shew, [Aside.]
Oh! *Tom!* what do we to thy valour owe?
Ask some reward, great as we can bestow.

Thumb. I ask not kingdoms, I can conquer those;
I ask not money, money I've enough;
If what I've done be call'd a debt,
Take my receipt in full--I ask but this;
To sun myself in *Huncamunca's* Eyes.

King. Prodigious bold request!

Queen. Be still my Soul! [Aside.]

Thumb. My heart is at the threshold of your Mouth,
And waits it's answer there.

King. It is resolved--the princess is your own.

Thumb. Oh! happy, happy, happy *Thumb!*

Queen. Consider, Sir,--reward your Soldiers merit,
But give not *Huncamunca* to *Tom Thumb!*

King. *Tom Thumb!*
Odzooks! my wide extended Realm
Knows not a name so glorious as *Tom Thumb!*

And being the king, he will now sing an air. It is Air IV, so we've heard number three and number four thus far, and he sings:

AIR IV
*Your Alexander's, Scipio's,
Inferior are to Tommy,
While others brag of Mac's and O's,*

Let England boast of Thummy.

*A Title is an empty name,
Like many we have knighted;
His merit bids us aid his fame,
So Tom shall not be slighted.*

Queen. Tho' greater yet his boasted merit was,
He shall not have my daughter, that is pos!

King. Ha! sayst thou *Dollalolla*?

Queen. I say he shan't.

King. Then, by our royal self we swear you lie

Queen. Who but a dog--who but a Dog
Wou'd use me thus?
But I will be reveng'd, or hang myself.

Or in this case, she'll sing the fifth air. I feel we need to do something rather operatic. Ready? We'll go Queen of the Night.

AIR. V.

*Then tremble all, who ever weddings made,
But tremble more, who did this match perswade;
For riding on a Cat, from high I'll fall,
And squirt down royal vengeance on you all. [Exit Queen.*

Then Doodle says:

Doodle. Her majesty, the queen, is in a passion.

King. Be she, or be she not--now, by ourself
We were indeed a pretty king of clouts,
To truckle to our consort's will,

And indeed, he sings the sixth air. He sings:

AIR VI.

*We politic Kings,
Know far better things
Than e'er to our consorts stoop;
For once you give way
To Petticoat sway,
You may for your Breeches go whoop.*

King. Come *Thumb*--I'll to the girl, and pave thy way.

And that's the end of the selection.

[musical flourish]

(laughs) So a couple things. At the very beginning, it was so fascinating to do all these scenes, and if you want to, I highly suggest reading all these scenes aloud and seeing what stays, what goes, what sort of sticks to the bones of this piece. You've heard now some of the same jokes. You've heard some of the same lines. In the very beginning here, though, it was very strange. Some of the edits that Eliza Haywood and William Hatchett did actually broke the meter. There was at least a sense of, maybe not repeated rhythm. He's playing with more in the family of trochees, not just in the family of iambs. But he tends to stick to a repeated beat, even if it's not a repeated meter, and when he does break it, he does it for comedic effect.

For example, let's take a look at the very, very, very first line. In the one-act version, 1730, we have:

KING. O wélcome, ever wélcome to my Árms,

ba-BUM-bum ba-ba-BUM-bum ba-ba-BUM.

KING. O wélcome, evér welcóme to my Árms,

doesn't feel right, so we've got sort of a waltz time.

KING. O wélcome, ever wélcome to my Árms,

Okay. But you have a musicality there. One, two, and three. Even though it's in trimeter, it's got a musicality and it's using multisyllabic feet.

Then in the 1731 expanded version by Fielding, we have:

KING. Oh! welcome most, most welcome to my Arms,

is now the opening line.

KING. Oh! wélcome móst, most wélcome tó my Árms,

Interesting. We go from the waltz time in trimeter to

KING. Oh! wélcome móst, most wélcome tó my Árms,

to perfect iambic pentameter. And honestly, both of them were fun to say for different reasons, but both of them have a nice rhythm to them. The next line is:

What Grátitúde can thánk awáy the Débt,
Your VáLOUR láys upón me?

In this third version, we have:

King. O wélcome! most wélcome to my árms!

So we're back to version one.

What grátitúde can thánk—

But then there's a hyphen

awáy the débt,
Thy váLOUR láys--upón me!

I felt like I was starting and stopping. There were a couple places where they did this, mostly with the king, because, again, the king in the original version was kind of behaving like a Dryden-esque, heroic dude in his language. They've cut it down even further, and they're leaving – if you look at the piece, you'll notice right away they're leaving unfinished lines of verse. If you are a dramaturg or if you're a director that's ever done your own dramaturgy, then you know that if you've cut down Shakespeare – or at least I hope you know – if you cut down Shakespeare, it's often encouraged that, really, you need to keep an eye on maintaining the scansion. That is, that if you cut out half a line, unless he originally wrote it as a dangling half line – which we'll talk about in the future what those lines are, how they work, etc., because that's not my intellectual property, and honestly, it's a very cool thing and I'm waiting for it to be published so that I don't step on anyone's toes. But Shakespeare will occasionally leave a hanging half line, but it's for a purpose. If you leave a dangling half line in verse just because, when you're cutting someone else's verse, you've interrupted the rhythm. It's rather similar to all of a sudden you've switched a piece of music to be from consistently in 4/4 to having one measure of 1/4 and it feels weird. That's what these people do here.

We have... Remember we cut down the king's speech, the modesty speech, and we have now the expanded version's just two-line version, which is:

KING. Thy Modesty's a Candle to thy Merit,
It shines itself, and shews thy Merit too.

But then, rather gracelessly, it's:

But say, my Boy,

There's, like, half a line, and then

where did'st thou leave the Giants?

That's awkward, and we've got a similar thing later:

KING. The monst'rous, ugly, barb'rous Sons of Whores.
But, Ha!

And, I mean, that kind of works. “But, Ha!” ends up being its own line, but what this says to me is that the people who were cutting this – rather, actually, like we saw Dryden complaining about Purcell doing – as much as the people cutting this are musical, so they're looking for places to take a few lines and to musicalize them. Where are the highest emotions that we want to turn into these really short ditties that just sort of pop up? Although, good for them. It's pretty close to a book musical. It's not, “We now interrupt your program to sing you a song.” They're keeping things going. But while they care about the music, they don't care about the musicality of the verse. And while I would suggest that Dryden is a good enough verse writer that when Purcell was essentially pushing him in *King Arthur, or The British Worthy*, which we looked at last time, pushing him to not be subject and enslaved to iambic pentameter, and Dryden apparently had an existential crisis over that. (laughs) But the verse that Dryden wrote was still musical, was still good. Sure, sometimes it was in tetrameter rather than pentameter. Most of it was in blank verse, not in rhyming. But he maintained a musicality throughout. Fielding, whether he's in a swung waltz tetrameter or he's using the trochaic family rather than the iambic family, whether he's in pentameter or in tetrameter or any variation, he still keeps a musicality. His verse has a forward musicality. But these guys, Haywood and Hatchett – that's a great team name – in cutting this down, they are not listening to the musicality of the verse, is the major problem I'm finding here. They add in the added line of:

Thumb. Then, were the gods mistaken--
She's not a woman, but a giantess,
A High-German Giantess.

That is just all over the place. I mean, you don't have to have a repeated meter, but the thing that they're taking from had swung rhythm, repeated beat, so it was in a semi-repeated meter, and they're just taking that and not noticing it at all. So:

Thumb. Then, wére the góds mistáken—

It feels so short. In fact, it's trimeter all of a sudden that Tom Thumb is saying when the previous lines were all:

Who páus'd, and thén cry'd óut--this ís a wóman!

are all in pentameter, and then all of a sudden we're in trimeter for no reason. So:

Thumb. Then, wére the góds mistáken—

Trimeter with a sort of extra syllable. I'm not going to call it a feminine line ending. Listen to "Heresy" from Season 1 if you want to know why that's absurd. But it's got an overflowing beat.

She's nót a wóman, bút a gíantéss,

All of a sudden we're back in pentameter.

A Hígh-Gérman Gíantéss.

And that's... We're in the trochaic family, but who cares? It's just there, honestly, to be jingoistic, frankly.

Let's take a look, actually, in the previous one at what Tom Thumb said, because it was just much better. Tom Thumb has... Yeah, this is really interesting. What these guys did was they put line breaks after the... Basically they got rid of the enjambment. In the original, in Fielding's expanded version, we have:

TOM THUMB. Then wére the Góds mistáken. — Shé is nót
A Wóman, bút a Gíantéss — whom wé
With múch adó, have máde a shíft to háwl
Withín the Tówn: for shé is bý a Fóot,
Shórter than áll her Súbject Gíants wére.

And you could hear he's playing with rhythm a little bit in there, but it's all strict pentameter. Much of it is iambic. If you remember back to and listen to the first line endings episode from Season 1, we've got some beautiful enjambing here that actually made the joke work because it was enjambled. Because the line ends on "She is not" and then we come back in with "A woman," the joke sounds like this in the Henry Fielding:

TOM THUMB. Then wére the Góds mistáken. — Shé is nót
A Wóman, bút a Gíantéss — whom wé
With múch adó, have máde a shíft to háw

and so on. It works because basically he cut on the schwumpf. He cut on the turn. "She is not... A woman, but a giantess." Because we've got that little caesura between the lines, the little uvriel between the lines – go back and listen to the "Schwumpf" episode to know what an uvriel is – we get the joke. But the

way that it was done in the opera by Haywood and Hatchett is they did the line endings like this:

Thumb. Then, were the gods mistaken--
She's not a woman, but a giantess,
A High-German Giantess.

And that's just not as funny. It's just not as funny, and the rhythm's all off and therefore there's no lead-up to the joke. The punch line is not on the following line. There's no lead-up to the punch line.

TOM THUMB. Then wére the Góds mistáken. — Shé is nót
A Wóman, bút a Gíantéss

is funny.

Thumb. Then, were the gods mistaken--
She's not a woman, but a giantess,

is not amusing in any way. It's just, "Here's some exposition."

Fascinating to see. I give Haywood and Hatchett a thumbs down for not knowing how verse drama works. But I am going to give them a thumbs up that they did sort of find all the places in the book, which is what we call the... In musical theatre and opera, the book is the story part. It's not the lyrics. They found the places where the book wanted to have lyrics, wanted to have songs, and not just songs that weren't important to the piece, but songs that, in fact, are important to the piece. I super dig, as well, that with the songs, they are playing with rhythms, and suddenly they're playing with what sort of rhyme is it?

For example, the first one:

AIR III.
*Our Pássions áre of Gíant kínd,
And háve to th' fúll as lárge a sénse;
'Tis hárd to óne to bé confín'd,
When wíth a scóre we cóuld dispénse.*

We have an ABAB there. It's all in... I mean, it's probably in 4/4, right? We have it in tetrameter. There is a play with the rhythm. It's nice. It's actually nice verse to be sung.

The fourth air:

AIR IV
Your Álexander's, Scípío's,

*Inférior are to Tómmy,
While óthers brag of Mác's and O's,
Let Éngland boast of Thúmmy.*

We're in dimeter for this, right?

*A Títle is an éempty name,
Like mány we have kníghted;
His mérit bids us áid his fame,
So Tóm shall not be slíghted.*

And so we've got... I mean, there was a flow to that. We've got up to, what, four-syllable feet in this dimeter, so very cool. Again, we've got ABABABAB, but it's not the same as the previous AB. It has a different feel to it.

The next air is

AIR. V.
Then trémbles áll, who éver wéddings máde,

Which is actually in five, in pentameter.

*But trémbles móre, who díd this márch perswáde;
For ríding ón a Cát, from hígh I'll fáll,
And squírt down róyal véngéance ón you áll.*

So we're in iambic pentameter and we're in, actually, heroic drama. These are closed rhyming couplets, AABB iambic pentameter. And that's is the queen's, and as you saw or as you heard, I felt inclined to do something actually rather dramatic – well, Austrian – sort of very Queen of the Night. It's very cool.

And then we have the next air.

AIR VI.
*We pólitic Kíngs,
Know fár better things*

We're back to dimeter to begin with, but this is going to be a compound meter.

Than é'er to our cónsorts stóop;

So dimeter, dimeter, trimeter.

*For ónce you give wáy
To Pétticoat swáy,
You máy for your Bréeches go whóop.*

(laughs) Trimeter. And we have AABCCB.

So any of you who are composers or lyric writers, when you are working on verse drama, you just need to bring over all the freedoms that you feel in playing with scansion, that is playing with rhythm, playing with beat, playing with juxtaposed stuff, playing with what each character sounds like, what their poetic scansion would be, but you need to bring that over to the stuff that's spoken as well. Something that these guys did not quite get.

But finally, we come to – and I know we're going long today, but I think it's worth it. We come to what we heard before. *Tom Thumb the Great, A Burlesque Tragedy in Two Acts, Alter'd, From Fielding*, by Kane O'Hara, Esq., somewhere between 1805, 1810. Now, you've heard most of this, but where I stopped it was, of course, Tom Thumb doing

Tom. O happy Tommy! super-happy Thumb.

So I'm actually going to go through this one more time just myself and point out the differences, and then we're actually going to continue the scene, because this, too, is an opera. It is a burlesque opera, is a verse drama with music. So Kane O'Hara, Esq. wrote some airs as well, and we will see what those are like. Let's see how well he does maintaining spoken verse and sung verse. Here we go. As always, the king speaks first.

[musical flourish]

King. Welcome, thrice welcome, mighty Thomas Thumb!
Thou tiny hero—pigmy giant queller!
What gratitude can thank away the debt
Thy valour puts upon us. [*Takes him up and embraces him.*]

Queen. Oh! ye gods! [*Aside.*]

Tom. When I'm not thank'd at all I'm thank'd enough—
I've done my duty, and I've done no more [*Bows.*]

Queen. Was ever such a godlike creature seen?

King. Thy modesty's a flambeau to thy merit;
It shines itself, and shows thy merit too.
O Tommy, Tommy Thumb! what to thy prowess do we owe!
Ask some reward—great as we can bestow.

Tom. I ask not kingdoms, I can conquer those;
I ask not money, money I've enough:

Who, having made a lucky hit beyond their journey-work,
Cry'd out—"This is a woman!"

Glum. Then were the gods confoundedly mistaken.
We are a giantess—I tell thee, Arthur,
We yesterday were both a queen and wife;
One hundred thousand giants own'd our sway;
Twenty whereof were wedded to ourself.

Queen. Oh, bless'd prerogative of giantism! *[Aside.]*

King. Oh! vast queen!—Think our court thine own;
Call for whate'er thou lik'st—there's nought to pay,
Nor art thou captive, but thy captive we. *[Takes off her chains.]*

And he takes off her chains. How reversely kinky! And the queen says:

Queen. *[Aside.]* Ha! Arthur faithless!
This gag my rival, too, in dear Tom Thumb!
Revenge!—but I'll dissemble—
Madam, believe that with a woman's eye
I view your loss—take comfort—for, to-morrow
Our grenadiers shall be called out, then choose
As many husbands as you think you'll want.

Glum. Madam, I rest your much obliged and very humble servant.
[Exit.]

And she leaves.

[drum beat]

So interesting. Different places. We don't have the queen singing now a Queen of the Night song. We actually have kept Tom Thumb's speech from Fielding and actually turned it into a song rather than a speech. I would also say that Kane O'Hara, two thumbs up. He managed to, as much as he was taking and some of the lines are exactly the same, although that first line is different.

King. Welcome, thrice welcome, mighty Thomas Thumb!

Is different from

King. O welcome! most welcome to my arms!

or from

That's been pretty consistent throughout. Then the king pauses, and in that pause, that's actable. The king can think about whether he's going to say yes or no, and then

King. *[After a pause.]* It is resolv'd
The princess is thy own! [To THUMB.]

And even though that "The princess is thy own," that's only a trimeter, because it's such a big declaration, you get the sense that it still fills up the line of verse.

I kind of wish he'd had more songs, to be honest. I'm also still fascinated, though, if we take a look at his lyrics. We have:

AIR.—**TOM.**

As whén the chímney-swéeper
Has, áll the líve-long dáy,
Through dárksome páths a créeper,
Pursúed his sóoty wáy:

So we're in trimeter for this. Once again, we have ABAB CDCD, although I don't know that "water" and "tatter" really rhyme, but whatever. Fine. I'm fascinated that early musicals, really early burlesques, musical comedies, operas, that they would just have, like, two lines that you'd sing. (laughs) And that's the whole song. That's it. I'm just thinking what a relief it is, if you were writing a full opera and knew that you, just every once in a while, maybe two lines, turn it into eight lines of lyrics and very simple trimeter or very simple ABCD, whatever it may be, and congratulations, you're a lyric writer. There you go. You don't have to do these big – it doesn't have to be like *Sweeny Todd's* epilogue or anything like that. Just a little song. Happy little song, like Bob Ross and his happy little clouds.

So if you're interested in maybe doing your own version of an early British opera/burlesque, happy little songs. Happy little airs. Take a few lines that you feel are heightened text in whatever you're working on and have them sung. Why not? (laughs) See what happens. It's kind of delightful.

So that is the saga of Tom Thumb, all the way from 1630 to 1810. That's quite a long reign. After this, that's the last we're going to hear of Tom Thumb, because after this, there's a certain Alfred, Lord Tennyson that starts writing some *Idylls of the King* and some beautiful stuff about Guinevere and Lancelot, and that's going to inspire quite a lot of verse drama, and you're going to get to hear it. Thanks for joining this time. We will see you next time. And in the meantime, I hope you're as happy, happy, happy as Tommy Thumb. Bye now.

[music]

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