

HAMLET TO HAMILTON

Season One, Episode Five *So You Think You Know Scansion?*

TEXTS

Simple Repeated Meter: *King Richard II*, William Shakespeare (Act III, Scene 2)

RICHARD. For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings;
How some have been deposed; some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed;
Some poison'd by their wives: some sleeping kill'd;
All murder'd: for within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king...

Compound Repeated Meter: *The Second Shepherd's Play*, The Wakefield Master (Act I, Scene 1)

FIRST SHEPHERD. Lord, but it's cold, and I'm wretchedly wrapped.
My hands nearly numb, so long have I napped.
My legs creak and fold, my fingers are chapped;
It is not as I would, for I am all lapped
In sorrow.
In storms and tempest,
Now in the east, now in the west,
Woe is him has never rest
Middy nor morrow!

But we poor shepherds that walk on the moor,
We're like, in faith, to be put out of door;
No wonder, as it stands, if we be poor,
For the tilth of our lands lies fallow as a floor.
As ye ken.
We are so lamed,
So taxed and shamed,
We are made hand-tamed
By these gentlery-men....

Gib, look over the row! Full deafly, ye stand.

SECOND SHEPHERD. Yea, the devil in your maw—ye blow on your hand.
Saw ye anywhere, Daw?

FIRST SHEPHERD. Yea, on a lea-land
I heard him blow. He comes here at hand,
Not far.
Stand still.

SECOND SHEPHERD. Why?

FIRST SHEPHERD. I think he comes by.
He'll trick us with a lie
Unless we beware.

Sprung Meter (Sprung Beat, Repeated Rhythm): *The Mother of God Visits Hell,*
Daniel Guyton (Act I, Scene 2)

*(A heavy door opens. MICHAEL and MARY enter
SATAN'S lair.)*

MARY. Hello? Is anybody here?

MICHAEL. Nay, step behind me quickly, Lady, for I smell Beezlebub is near.

SATAN. Well! Speak the devil's name, they say, and soon he shall appear.

Sprung Meter (Sprung Rhythm, Repeated Beat): *The Other, Other Woman,*
Emily C. A. Snyder (Act IV, Scene 12)

BEAUDEMONDE. *But she is!* I can't stand it! And now—

LEBOEUF. You're perspiring?

BEAUDEMONDE. No, dammit, I'm not! I have *feelings!* I'm *crying!*
By *GOD!* I'M A MAN! I feel pain, I feel pleasure,
My emotions extend more than my penis can measure.
And I won't be denied! Yes, Jeanette is much better.
I shall leave here at once. I shall write her a letter!

Minor Juxtaposed Meter: *The Table Round*, Emily C. A. Snyder (Act II, Scene 1)

GUINEVERE. What wouldst thou, Camelot? Thou call'st me hither,
Whither I would not be, but that thou call'st me: Queen.
I *am* a Queen, of a country thou hast ruined;
Monarch of a mangled people thy "Holy" King
Hath deemed less worthy than his own to stay alive.
And here am I, summoned to sleep within his bed...

(Kneeling. Touching the ground.)

GUINEVERE. I cannot feel the Earth. The Magic
Of my ancestors, the roar of that Red Dragon
Are muffled here in Camelot, buried
Beneath the stone and steel that weigh unnatural
Upon our fragile land. What wouldst thou, Camelot?
I feel myself am conquered, here, already.
Trapped between these standing stones—that *he*
Hath built to other gods than mine. And yet:
I'll be no beggar here, constrained by war to wed,
But make proud Arthur bend the knee, and beg me to his bed.
By all *my* gods, I swear it.

(Later.)

ARTHUR. Your pardon, lady. Believe you are well-met.
Although our greeting here was—*hearty*,
And rough as may befit a bachelor court,
Believe ourselves are gentle as the lamb.
Upon our shield we bear no beast but this:
The Virgin Mary pregnant with her Christ.
And child-like, we here lay by—*yea, all of us*—
Those arms we bear, unbloodied by our guests;
That with: *(Doing so:)* *bare arms*—we may embrace
The Queen of Wales, whose golden crown
We hope shall grace this azure field of ours,
And make a triple crown to quell all Britony,
And bring this warring isle beneath one blessed Hand.
Hail, Guinevere. Well met.

Major Juxtaposed Meter: *The Other, Other Woman*, Emily C. A. Snyder
(Act II, Scene 15)

- GENEVIEVE.** Your reputation proceeds you as a virtuous soul:
The paragon politician who exerts self-control.
A man who is honest—and who, without complaint,
To his wife remains faithful. In short, sir, a saint.
- VALENTINE.** I doubt that conclusion. But thank you, your Grace.
- GENEVIEVE.** Genevieve, my good sir. At least in this place.
Won't you be seated?
- VALENTINE.** *Merci.*
- GENEVIEVE.** *De rien.*
So tell me, monsieur, what makes you the man?
- VALENTINE.** ...For?
- GENEVIEVE.** Making new laws. And enforcing them, too.
- VALENTINE.** I'm simply a lawyer. That's not what I do.
I'm practiced in law, but this town's clientele
Largely wants contracts.
- GENEVIEVE.** For their businesses?
- VALENTINE.** *Well...*
For their *business*, or rather—to say: to outline their diversions.
What one lover will do or not do, and with how many persons.
Who gets what money, progeny, custody from those...excursions.
In short, your/H...
- GENEVIEVE.** *Genevieve.*
- VALENTINE.** ...*Genevieve.* I outline their
perversions.
- GENEVIEVE.** (*Heavenward.*) Praise the Lord.
- VALENTINE.** ...You *approve*?
- GENEVIEVE.** Of their actions? *Pas de tout.*
But if I understand correctly: neither do you.

VALENTINE. I'm just their lawyer—

GENEVIEVE. Indeed, you were forced.
 You chose before choosing, which is not an endorsement
 Of the things that they do.
 Indeed, Valentine, if it were all up to you:
 What laws would you pass? Regarding marriage and s...uch?
 You needn't fear to expose your true heart to my/[~~touch~~]...

VALENTINE. Can we speak like people?

(A pause.)

VALENTINE. ...I know it's not the custom, but:
 It's been a long morning. A never-ending dawn
 That never *quite* rises: like fog or thick goose feathers
 Through which one can almost—*squinting*—
 Believe the distant burning speck will not recede
 Beneath earth's heavy counterpane again.
 It's difficult to believe the sun will rise
 When every dawn it teeters on th'horizon.
 Sick, and full of daily obligations. Of promises
 You're sorry that you keep—I speak too freely.

GENEVIEVE. No. No.
 —'Tis strange to speak so freely, and yet:
 There's something in you invites a confidence.
 I would change the world.

VALENTINE. Are not afeared?

GENEVIEVE. Am petrified!

Free Meter: *Murder in the Cathedral*, T. S. Eliot (Act I, Scene 1)

CHORUS.

Here let us stand, close by the cathedral. Here let us wait.
Are we drawn by danger? Is it the knowledge of safety that draws our feet
Towards the cathedral? What danger can be
For us, the poor, the poor women of Canterbury? what tribulation
With which we are not already familiar? There is no danger
For us, and there is no safety in the cathedral. Some presage of an act
Which our eyes are compelled to witness, has forced our feet
Towards the cathedral. We are forced to bear witness.

ADDITIONAL READING

T. S. Eliot

- [*T. S. Eliot: The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950*](#)

Daniel Guyton

- [*The Mother of God Visits Hell*](#)

The Wakefield Master

- [*The Second Shepherd's Play*](#)
- [Gutenberg Edition](#)

William Shakespeare

- [*Richard II*](#)

Emily C. A. Snyder

- [*The Other, Other Woman*](#) on New Play Exchange
- [*The Table Round and The Siege Perilous*](#) on New Play Exchange

Meter and Scansion

- [Wikipedia list of metrical feet](#)

Music

- [*The Alphabet Song*](#), Mozart (Repeated Meter)
- [*Una Voce Poca Fa*](#), Rosini (Sprung Meter)
- [*Think Of Me*](#), Andrew Lloyd Weber (Minor Juxtaposed Meter)
- [*Heaven On Their Minds*](#), Andrew Lloyd Webber (Major Juxtaposed Meter)
- [*Goodnight My Someone/Seventy-Six Trombones*](#), Meredith Wilson (Major Juxtaposed Meter)
- [*Salve Regina*](#), Anonymous (Free Meter)