

HAMLET TO HAMILTON

Season Two, Episode Four: Defenestrating Lancelot!

EMILY. This is *Hamlet to Hamilton: Exploring Verse Drama*. I'm your host, Emily C. A. Snyder. You're listening to Season 2, Episode 4: "Arthur Through the Ages," today looking at Lancelot and Guinevere, those forbidden passions, and those terrible puns.

[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. Welcome back to Season 2 of *Hamlet to Hamilton*. This season we're looking at King Arthur plays through the ages from 1587 through to 2019, and today we're going to really get into the meat of things. I'm very excited about this episode.

So, a few pieces of housekeeping up front. Unlike Season 1, which you were encouraged to listen to chronologically as it was a full introduction course to how to write verse drama, Season 2 you can hop around and sort of pick up wherever you like. This season will be produced chronologically, meaning that we're looking at King Arthur English-language verse plays that features Lancelot and Guinevere scenes, and we're going through those chronologically. However, you can listen in any, whatever wibbly-wobbly timey-wimey order that makes your soul sing. As mentioned, we are looking at Lancelot and Guinevere scenes as best as we can, and up to this point, we have not really had Lancelot and Guinevere scenes. We've had 1587's *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, which begins after everything has sort of been sorted out and just gets to the meat of the final bit of the Arthurian myth with Mordred versus Arthur, so we did a Mordred-Guinevere scene, which was the closest that we could get. That was in iambic pentameter blank verse. Then in the 1600s, we looked at John Dryden, who, because he was coming out of the Puritan Commonwealth and was also working against the Restoration drama or Restoration

comedy, so he's sort of caught between a Puritan and Restoration comedy (laughs) sort of what he's caught between. He had developed heroic drama, which is iambic pentameter rhyming couplet verse. But for his King Arthur offering, he did it as an "opera," which we would recognize as a verse play with music. Since he was working with composer Purcell, he was encouraged to actually break that strict meter, to not necessarily have repeated beat or repeated rhythm, but to jazz things up a little bit. Still, his heroic drama meant that he only wrote about how great Arthur was, and it seems that for that, he created an entirely new queen named Emmeline, whom Arthur could win and woo, and there'd be no hint at all of scandal or anything like that, nothing Restoration-y whatsoever. This, of course, was made fun of in the 1700s with Henry Fielding in his *Tom Thumb the Great*, where... Now, he, too, did create a different queen, Dollalolla, for King Arthur, and we had Tom Thumb instead of Sir Lancelot. It was just all absurd and ridiculous, and that, too, was made into an opera, which we would recognize as a verse drama with occasional song, since this piece was rewritten and rewritten and rewritten by other people and then put on in the same place that it had originally been performed. Go take a listen to those three episodes to hear sort of the buildup to today's episode.

As always, you're welcome to read along with us by going to hamlettohamilton.com, and you can get all of the scripts and texts that we look at there, as well as getting full transcripts, generally about a week after the show. If you're enjoying *Hamlet to Hamilton*, we highly recommend that you give us some boosts. You can give us a shout out on Twitter with the hashtag #hamlettohamilton, or you can tag us there @hamlet2hamilton or you can become a patron over on patreon.com/hamlettohamilton and help support this podcast directly. You'll get access to such things as invitations to private Zoom parties and hangouts, as well as access to the super secret Facebook group, so you can find that over on patreon.com/hamlettohamilton. Other ways you can support us, is you can give us a five-star rating and a review on Apple Podcasts. That really goes a long way to helping other people find our work. So thank you so much and let's get into today's steamy – and punny – episode.

[brief music]

Today we're going to enter into the 1800s, and from here on out, we're going to be looking at just Lancelot and Guinevere scenes. The reason for this is because there are over 65 English language verse plays dealing with various parts of the King Arthur myth, but in order to do what I'm most excited about, which is to see how using the same sort of story beats, and even the same tools of writing – in this case – verse drama, how different authors examined the same thing and would write completely, completely different works. This is one of the most fascinating things to me, because two people can write, for example, a Cassandra play – in fact, with Turn to Flesh Productions, our theatre company that helps develop new plays in heightened texts with vibrant roles for women and those underrepresented in classical art, we have several authors who have written in verse or in heightened text, different versions of the Cassandra myth, and they come out wildly different. If

you're working on something yourself, what you're hearing in this season should really encourage you that even if you know someone else that's also, perhaps, pulling on the same myth or similar ideas, you are going to be creating a completely unique work, even so. That's going to be true even if you steal plot points from other people's versions of the drama, as today we're going to hear someone whose work, I believe, ends up being fairly influential throughout his century, even though this piece was never produced.

Let's get, as always, a little bit into the history and then we'll be getting right into the text. We have with us, as always, the wonderful Nick Ritacco, who will be joining us as Lancelot. I'll be taking the role of Guinevere, and our own Colin Kovarik will be playing a multitude of roles today, of various people who find the lovers. One of the interesting things about verse drama and literature is that it seems that to every generation, there is some author who will put out a fiction version of King Arthur, which then re-sparks interest in dramatists to write something for the stage inspired by that work about King Arthur. It could take anywhere from about a hundred years to, in the case of today, just a few decades between the fiction work and then the dramatic work.

For example, you can make an argument – a pretty good argument, in fact – that Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, which was written about 1485, or certainly published around 1485, and then a hundred years later in 1587, you have Sir Thomas Hughes with *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, again focusing on the very end of the Arthurian myth, in the final Battle of Camlann and Mordred's betrayal and Guinevere and Lancelot having just sort of finished their affair and bits of the grail myth, things like that. We are going to see, in fact, that the Thomas Malory is still going to be important up through 2019. Many, many, many of our modern dramatists pull directly from *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Interestingly, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, while, again, most everything was in verse, is a piece that is in prose. It was originally written in ungrammatical Middle French, and it means "The Death of Arthur," so... But *Le Morte d'Arthur* certainly seems – it's plausible that it influenced that first verse play in 1587. Then we saw last time that *Tom Thumb* was directly inspired by the 1630 publication of *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb*, which was in verse, and that's what inspired Fielding, a hundred years later to the decade, 1730, to write *Tom Thumb the Great, a Burlesque Tragedy* for the stage.

So something happened, then, in the 1630s. I don't know what it is, but everything sort of like, first half of the century, and then a century later. In this case, though, it's a little bit closer. From 1833 to 1885, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who you may know from such greats as, for example, "The Lady of Shalott," or one of my favorite poems of his, "Ulysses." Alfred, Lord Tennyson wrote what's known as *The Idylls of the King*. Again, he wrote this over a span of about fifty years, from 1833 to 1885, wrote and also published. Rather like *Tom Thumb the Great*, these are poems, published poems, telling various snippets of the Arthurian myth and written, interestingly, in a variety of styles. While most people point to the fact that yes, in fact, he wrote quite a few of his poems in blank verse iambic pentameter and they are dramatic narratives,

so it'll be things like "He said, she said," written out as a story. Again, think of *Beowulf*. Think of *The Iliad*, in that sort of fashion. They are not dramas. There are no stage directions. It's not written out or formatted or meant to be performed. It is meant to be literature. It is written as literature.

However, his *Idylls of the King* seems to have sparked this huge re-interest in the Arthurian myth, particularly as we have it from Malory in the 1400s, and then earlier than that from Geoffrey of Monmouth. We start getting Lancelot and Guinevere scenes, which is really fascinating because Tennyson actually didn't write much about Lancelot and Guinevere. He did write about Lancelot and Elaine, which we are going to be seeing crop up more and more in the plays that we have today. That is, we're going to be seeing the introduction of Elaine as a possible romantic foil to Queen Guinevere and Lancelot, so just sort of keep that in the back of your mind.

Things to note about the English-speaking world at this time: America is now its own nation and Australia has been getting a large influx from England, and we also have the reign of Queen Victoria begins in 1837, so just five years after Alfred, Lord Tennyson starts publishing his Arthurian-inspired poetry.

I want to take a moment to actually read to you a little bit of what Tennyson wrote about Lancelot and Guinevere. It is very small. It is a fragment that he never finished. Then we're going to take a look at what he wrote to sort of conclude his *Idylls of the King*, where he wrote a paean to Queen Victoria, because I think it's interesting. That's why. Let's start with a little stanza from his version of Lancelot and Guinevere. This is from "Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere" – the names and the spellings of the various people in the Arthurian myths changes all the time – by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. This is one of his earliest attempts at writing one of these idylls, and it is unfinished. In fact, thanks to, again, The University of Rochester and The Camelot Project, which houses most of what we've been able to find on Arthurian verse drama. So many thanks to them. You can read the whole piece, and what they say is that this was written perhaps as early as 1830. I'm going to read just one stanza and we'll take a look at the scansion for it.

Then, in the boyhood of the year,
Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere
Rode thro' the coverts of the deer,
With blissful treble ringing clear.
She seem'd a part of joyous Spring;
A gown of grass-green silk she wore,
Buckled with golden clasps before;
A light-green tuft of plumes she bore
Closed in a golden ring.

There will be no surprise that Tennyson is writing at the time of the Romantic poets, at the same time as Coleridge, for example. He's writing at the time of all the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, who also were fascinated by King Arthur. The picture that

this immediately conjures up is something that certainly could have been a Waterhouse painting, right?

A gown of grass-green silk she wore,
Buckled with golden clasps before;
A light-green tuft of plumes she bore
Closed in a golden ring.

It's all very pastoral and quite lovely. But you will notice that this is not iambic pentameter and this is not blank verse, and this is also one of his very early pieces. It makes me so sad that playwrights and poets really feel that the golden ring is blank verse iambic pentameter, and so their early stuff, or like with John Dryden when he was altering his work at the behest of Purcell, there seems to be a sense of, "Ooh, don't let me experiment. I'm doing something wrong." And it's like, no. There's no wrong way to do poetry. There's effective and less effective ways to do poetry. There are more effective meters, depending on what you're doing, but there's no right or wrong here. This is not a moral issue.

This is quite lovely. Again, this is quite pastoral. We've got... Once again, we have a compound meter. If you don't know what I'm talking about, go back. Listen to the episode on scansion or take a look at the glossary at hamlettohamilton.com. But we have a compound meter because we have a variety of rhythms and beats. Let's see:

Then, ín the bóyhood óf the yéar,

That's four.

Sir Láuncelót and Queen Guínevére

That's four and a half. It depends on how you sort of trip the rhythm. But you can hear that the rhythm gets played with, right?

Rode thró' the cóverts óf the déer,

This is still tetrameter.

With blíssful tréble rínging cléar.
She séem'd a párt of jóyous Spríng;

But the fact that it's AAAAB and then CCCB, so let's listen to the second part of the stanza. Thus far, we've been in tetrameter but we've been mixing up our rhyme and playing a little bit with our rhythm.

A gówn of gráss-green sílk she wóre,
Búckled with gólden clásps befóre;

And once again, you heard that BUP-ba-ba, búckled with. So again, we're playing with rhythm.

A líght-green túft of plúmes she bore

So we're all tetrameter for, let's see, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight lines, but

Closed ín a gólden ríng.

We end with trimeter. So again, this is a compound meter. It uses minor juxtapositions of rhythm and of beat, but then it's going to be repeated in each stanza, so each stanza will be eight lines of tetrameter finished by one line of trimeter with a sort of sprung rhythm off of the iambic family and then with the rhyming pattern of AAAAB CCCB. This is delightful. This is utterly charming and delightful, and it reminds me, in fact, a little bit of "The Lady of Shalott."

But let's fast forward now to the piece that he wrote towards the end of his life. He wrote an epilogue to his *Idylls of the King*, and this is, in fact, called "Epilogue to the Queen," and it is written to Queen Victoria, but he sort of mentions why he never did the Lancelot/Guinevere part of it all. He says... Let's see here. Okay.

Rather than that gray king, whose name, a ghost,
Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain peak,
And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still; or him
Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleor's, one
Touched by the adulterous finger of a time
That hovered between war and wantonness,
And crownings and dethronements: take withal
Thy poet's blessing, and his trust that Heaven
Will blow the tempest in the distance back
From thine and ours:

And then he goes on and on and on. But I find that fascinating, that he references the pieces that inspired him, which include Geoffrey of Monmouth and Malory, who we just mentioned, from the 1400s. Those are the people that he's drawing from. But then he was saying that there's a problem with their work, in that one of them really got into the adultery and the other one "hovered between war and wantonness, crownings and dethronements." He's saying, "Please take these as my poetical blessing." Again, we're stuck between Puritans and Restoration. This just seems to be where we live. Puritans and Restoration forever and ever amen, and somehow verse dramatists try to thread the needle between them.

This is sort of fascinating. Now, again, to take a look, as you can hear, this is in verse, and it's interesting because it's in blank verse, so it's not rhymed, and it

includes enjambments to its blank verse, because it is in iambic pentameter. So, for example,

Ráther thán that gráy king, whose náme, a ghóst,

Wow. Did you hear that sprung meter? I mean, what is that meter? It's trochee-iamb-trochee-iamb, something like that. Doesn't matter.

Streams líke a clóud, man-sháped, from móuntain péak,

Pure iambic pentameter blank verse.

And cléaves to cáirn and crómlech stíll; or hím

But that's an interesting line ending, right? It doesn't have an endstopped line. It has an enjambed line ending. So I would read it:

And cléaves to cáirn and crómlech stíll; or hím
Of Géoffrey's bóok

Go back to "Line Endings" to hear about line endings from Season 1. But it's interesting to see that by the end of his life, he re-popularizes good old iambic pentameter blank verse. I would say that, frankly, just taken as verse, this is less evocative verse, to be quite frank. There were places where I as an actor, or as a speaker in this case, blacked out, where I kind of had to work harder to say, "Hold on, what are you saying? Hold on, who are you talking about?" Whereas his previous one, although, yes, it was a bit sing-songy because it's in tetrameter – which we, in the English ear tend to hear as sing-songy – yes, it was a bit sing-songy because it had a very strict repeated compound meter with a very strict, highly structured rhyme. Sure, yes, but I followed it and it elicited something in me.

I say this only because from here on out, with very few exceptions, we're going to be seeing nothing but iambic pentameter blank verse in our verse dramatists, and I do think that since Tennyson is someone whose work influences so many of the people following him, it's sad to see that he started one way, finished another, and that we keep to that. I just want to encourage you, once again – and this is something we'll be talking about in Season 3 when we look at using verse for dialogue and for scenes – if we limit ourselves to just one tool from our tool boudoir, we are unnecessarily limiting ourselves, and I do think we're going to kind of see that.

That said, for the purposes of comparison, it's going to be fascinating to see who uses the strict tool of only, or at least using the iambic family, of using pentameter, and of using, by and large, blank verse. We're going to be hearing that today, and then we're going to be hearing someone who kind of throws that out the window and goes back to having fun, and we're just going to remain between this hard place between puritanism and Restoration comedy, between high and low, between

sanctimonious and bawdy, between those two masks, friends, of tragedy and comedy. So let's get into the two plays that we're going to be looking at today, right after this break.

[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]

One of the first plays to be written that seems to have been inspired by this resurgence in the interest in the Arthurian myth is *Launcelot of the Lake: A Tragedy, in Five Acts*, by C. J. Riethmüller. What little I could find about this fellow: he lived from 1813 to 1895, so roughly concurrent with Alfred, Lord Tennyson. He was born in London and he did marry, but he had no children, and he worked primarily as an actuary in London. On the side, he wrote poetry. He wrote, it seems, just this one drama. He also seemed to be interested in doing historical biographies. He has one on Alexander Hamilton, which is kind of neat. His novels and his works don't seem to have had a lot of success. However, we do have this really interesting – he seems to have come close to success with *Launcelot of the Lake*, and I would argue, especially as we're going to hear in the following weeks' episodes, I think a lot of people ended up reading his *Launcelot of the Lake* and then writing their own versions. You'll see what I mean when we get to it.

But there's a really interesting note when this piece is published. This was published on the 1st of July in 1843, and he has this note at the very beginning that I will read in full. It goes:

The following Tragedy, founded upon a celebrated Romance of the Middle Ages, was offered to the late management of Drury Lane Theatre, and reserved by Mr. SERLE (from whom the Author received the utmost politeness and attention)...

I just love that. (laughs) Anyway:

... for the perusal of Mr. MACREADY.

So Mr. Serle was the fellow at the Drury Lane Theatre who was interested in this script and offered it to one of the leading actors of the day, Mr. Macready. The prologue goes on:

But before it could be submitted to the last-named gentleman, the season was brought to a close, and our greatest living actor retired from the direction of that stage, which he had laboured with so much earnestness to exalt and purify.

Once again, between a Puritan and a Restoration comedy.

Under these circumstances, with the gloomy prospects of the drama in general, any attempt to procure the representation of this play seemed for the present hopeless. The Author was therefore advised to run the risk of publishing; and it now only remains for him to return his sincere thanks, both to his friends, and to many before unknown to him, who have kindly sent him their names to be placed on his list of subscribers. In the difficult career of the drama, he is fully aware of the hazard of a first step: and, if he do not trouble the reader with any lengthened preface, it is because he feels, that the success or failure of a work of this kind, must depend after all on the text, and cannot be influenced by the commentary.

That's his delightful little letter, and actually, at the end of this book – and we will link not just to where the script is on The Camelot Project, but also to the Google Books, because at the very end, he has a list of subscribers and how many copies they bought. So, for example, on this very first page, Richard Baxter, Esq. bought five copies and Richard Davies, Esq. bought twenty copies. We have, let's see, one, two, three, four – four full pages with two columns each of subscribers. So, friends, he had an early Patreon. By the way, if you enjoy our work, please head on over to patreon.com/hamlettohamilton and be one of our subscribers. We'd greatly appreciate it.

All right, so let's jump in and let's take a listen with Nick Ritacco, myself, and Colin Kovarik to a little bit of text from *Launcelot of the Lake* by C. J. Riethmüller.

[brief music]

EMILY. Let's just jump in. Let's see... Morgan le Fay will have a line. I will do a different voice for Morgan le Fay. All right, here we go. Act II, scene 1. Take it away.

LAUNCELOT. What, if it were -- she never can be mine.
Reason itself disowns the idle thought;
Yet, spite of reason, it will oft return,
To haunt me with its brightness. O my heart!
Hast thou forgotten all thy many wrongs?
Was she not false?
 Ha! -- ladies -- pardon me!

I knew not, that I strayed so near your walk.
Permit me to withdraw! (*Going.*)

MORGAN LE FAY.

Not so, Sir Launcelot!
The queen has sent me with a message yonder,
And till I come again, desires thy company. (*To*
GWENEVER.)
Now is the time! -- Speak -- or be silent ever! (*Exits.*)

SIR LAUNCELOT.

(*After a silence.*) If there be aught, which thou wouldst tell
me, madam,
I wait upon thy pleasure.

(*A long silence.*)

SIR LAUNCELOT.

Heaven is my witness,
I did not seek this interview. Many days
Have I gone wandering up and down these gardens,
Like a poor, troubled ghost -- but never once
Did I attempt to cast my gloomy shadow
Across thy sun-lit path.

Why should I do so?
Art thou not happy?

GWENEVER.

Happy!

SIR LAUNCELOT.

Other women
Regard thy lot with envy. No advancement
Could raise thee higher than thou art. A queen
Of earthly queens -- a hero-monarch's bride --
Loved, honoured, almost worshipped -- what is wanting
To make thee happy?

GWENEVER.

Cruel! *thou* sayest this!

SIR LAUNCELOT.

And wherefore not? Is it for me to dwell
Upon the past? Did I first break the charm,
That clothed our life in beauty, and adorned
This common world with radiance not its own?
Did I tear down the temples of old faith,
Turning to mockery all things sacred else
By that one profanation? -- 'Twas thy choice --
Thy free, unfettered choice -- to barter love
For gems and gewgaws of imperial state.
If it were wise (and who shall doubt its wisdom?)
Thou shouldst be happy now!

GWENEVER.

Hold! I will answer thee.

Not that I would recall the past -- the dead --
But that hereafter thou mayst think of me
Without reproach or bitterness. Let's be frank
With one another! Both perchance have erred.
When first thou camest to my father's court,
I was a very foolish, innocent girl,
Who ne'er suspected harm; in thee I saw
The young, bright hero of a maiden's dream,
And trusted thee, and gave thee all my heart.
Nor did I stay to question, if such love
For an unknown adventurer, without sanction
Of friends or parents, could be counted wise,
Or blest of heaven.

SIR LAUNCELOT.

This then is all thy grief --

That thou didst love unworthily.

GWENEVER.

No -- ah, no!

My instincts did not err: I had chosen well.
But was it prudent -- was it kind -- to shroud
Thy ways in mystery, and thus leave me dubious
Of my own fate? Has lordly man the right
To ask a woman's fealty, yet keep back
His perfect confidence? Hadst thou but spoken
The simple truth -- hadst thou declared thy name --
My father would have pledged his kingly word,
And we should now be . . .

SIR LAUNCELOT.

Can this justify

A breach of faith?

GWENEVER.

I seek not to defend,

But to extenuate. Hear me -- and then judge!
Dost thou remember when we parted last?
Month after month I waited thy return,
Still hoped, and still believed; yet time rolled on,
And brought no tidings. What though my cheek grew pale,
I kept our secret in my aching breast,
And stifled my despair. At length it chanced,
That Erin's mighty chief assailed our coast
With such a force as made resistance vain,
Escape impossible: in his great need,
My father sent to beg King Arthur's help,
And like a thunder-bolt the monarch flew
To crush our haughty foes. The land was saved!

How could we ever hope to pay the debt
We owed the generous victor? All our gold
Would have been light, when weighed with such a service.
He was content with less: he only asked
For this one little hand.

SIR LAUNCELOT.

And I not there!

GWENEVER.

What could I do? I sought on every side
Excuses for delay, and still postponed
The fatal moment -- but my father urged
Obedience to his will, and all men prayed,
That I would grant their great deliverer's suit.
Could I have spoken out, I might have trusted
To the king's honour; but, even for maiden shame,
I durst not plead a rash, unauthorised love
For one, who (judging by his lengthened silence)
Had ceased to think of me.

SIR LAUNCELOT.

No more! no more!

Thy words are like swift arrows to my soul.
Leave all recrimination! What is done
Is done. Eternity will not undo it.

(MORGAN LE FAY *in the background, listening.*)

SIR LAUNCELOT.

And is it then a crime to love thee, Gwenever?
And shall the past be void of memories,
The future without hope? Will it be sin,
To bear thy image ever as of old
In my heart's core, to worship thy sweet looks,
Wait on thy footsteps, kiss the hallowed ground
Where thou hast lingered, dream of thee in sleep,
And wake to bless thy name? O dearest love!
I'd freely shed my life-blood, drop by drop,
To save thee from a pang -- but never think,
That I can gaze on thee as I do now,
And yet feel nothing here!

GWENEVER.

Alas for me!

Alas for both of us! I will not feign
To marvel at these words. I too am weak;
And, being a woman, it were doubly strange,
If I could wish thee to forget so soon
All that once made us happy. 'Twas the hope
Of living in thy memory some few years,

That led me to explain the doubtful past:
But for the future -- Launcelot! -- gentle friend!
I am a wife -- the king, thy master's wife --
And may not, must not hear of love.

SIR LAUNCELOT. O misery!

GWENEVER. If thou couldst do me a great service, Launcelot,
Wouldst thou refuse me for the dread of toil,
Or sacrifice, or danger?

SIR LAUNCELOT. I refuse thee?
Not if it cost a world!

GWENEVER. I ask not much;
Yet more than I have any right to claim,
Save from thy pity. Leave us for awhile --
Quit Arthur's court -- get thee to thy own lands,
Or seek adventures on a foreign shore --
But come not here again, till time has healed
The wounds that now bleed fresh!

SIR LAUNCELOT. Mine must bleed on!

GWENEVER. Not always -- for the peace of a good conscience
Will be thy balm. Let's bear our destiny
With patience: we shall have no guilt to bear.

SIR LAUNCELOT. I will obey thee. Though the strife be hard,
The victory shall be won. To-morrow sees me
Far from this palace -- far from these haunted bowers --
Far from the dangerous witchcraft of thy presence.
This interview...

GWENEVER. Shall be our last.

SIR LAUNCELOT. Thou hast said it.
Farewell! farewell! May blessings fall like dew
Upon thy head; may heaven's bright angels guard thee,
And holiest thoughts make music in thy soul!
Reach me the hand I ne'er may clasp again;
Let me for one brief moment hold it fast,
And press it thus to my love-fevered lips!
Here, on the brink of parting, this at least
May be permitted me!

GWENEVER. *(Disengaging herself.)* Enough, dear friend! The worst is over now.
Depart while it is time! As thou art merciful,
Prolong not this dread anguish!

SIR LAUNCELOT. I have done.
But who shall say, that we have seen the worst?
A black foreboding weighs upon my spirits,
And will not thence. O 'tis most horrible,
If life have keener agonies yet in store
To pierce our souls withal!

GWENEVER. Do what is right;
And, for the rest, leave it to heaven's high wisdom!
Go -- I conjure thee, go!

SIR LAUNCELOT. Farewell to love!
And, love being gone, farewell to hope and fear!
When I have passed yon portals, think of me
As of the dead! -- Henceforth my heart is stone. *(Exit.)*

EMILY. All right. We're going to go on to the next scene, where they are discovered. There are some stage directions that Colin will give us, and we're going to jump right in, and then we're going to talk about what this extremely early Victorian play felt like to us. All right, here we go. Act II, scene 4. *The Tragedy of Launcelot.*

GWENEVER. Have I grown selfish?
Or lacked I power to thank this lady's kindness?
Well! sorrow best agrees with solitude;
I will make fast my door -- and then to bed!
Silence at least is there -- and sleep may come.

(As she goes to the door, SIR LAUNCELOT appears at the open window. In returning she perceives him, and utters a faint shriek.)

SIR LAUNCELOT. Hush! it is I.

GWENEVER. O madness!

SIR LAUNCELOT. *(Entering.)* Be not frightened!
Have I not answered to my true love's call?
Bid me draw near!

GWENEVER. What dreadful mockery's this?

SIR LAUNCELOT. (*Advancing.*) Nay, shrink not from me with so wild a gaze!
See! I am at thy feet!

GWENEVER. Imprudent! Cruel!
Was this thy promised faith?

SIR LAUNCELOT. What have I done?

GWENEVER. What! -- is it nothing then to put in jeopardy
A woman's honour -- nothing, at dead of night,
To break upon her privacy, and give
Her name to every slanderous, ribald tongue,
To bruise and mangle?

SIR LAUNCELOT. Didst thou not send for me?

GWENEVER. Send for thee!

SIR LAUNCELOT. Yes! and leave thy casement open,
Place the rope-ladder ready for my steps,
Fling down the rose?

GWENEVER. Alas! we are both beguiled.
I never sent for thee. O gentle Launcelot!
Some wicked plot is laid against our lives.
If thou didst ever love me, prove it now!
Fly! Save thyself and me!

SIR LAUNCELOT. Dearest and best!
Forgive me, if I wronged thee for a moment
Even by a thought!

GWENEVER. All is forgiven -- all:
But from delay worse mischief may ensue.
Haste to the window! Fly!

SIR LAUNCELOT. The ladder's gone!

GWENEVER. Then we are lost!

SIR LAUNCELOT. No! I may yet leap down.

GWENEVER. Thou wouldst be dashed to pieces: and see there!
Dark figures glide across the silvery lawn,
To hem the fugitive.

SIR LAUNCELOT. Once on the ground,
My sword should cleave a passage.

GWENEVER. No, in heaven's name!
It were to add the crimson hue of blood
To the foul scandal. Rather try the door!
It is our only chance.

SIR LAUNCELOT. Be not dismayed!
No power on earth shall harm thee.

GWENEVER. Save *thyself!*
It is thy presence, which endangers all.
Lose not another instant!

SIR LAUNCELOT. Now for the proof!

*(He unfastens the door, which immediately flies open;
and, as SIR LAUNCELOT steps back, enter KING
ARTHUR with knights.)*

KING ARTHUR. We are well met.

EMILY. (sings ominously) Dun-dun-DUN.

NICK. Yeah, we are well met. (laughs)

EMILY. (Darth Vader breathing)

NICK. All right, all three of us in a room. Funny how that happens.

EMILY. (laughs) It looks like – because this is the only other Guinevere/Lancelot scene, it looks like-

NICK. That's the only scenes they get in the play.

EMILY. Yeah, and Morgan le Fay is basically setting them up to take the fall and make it look like they've been having an affair.

NICK. I figured.

EMILY. Yeah, so they don't even have a kiss. He kisses her on the hand, and it's all like, "I wanted to marry you but I couldn't, and now I'm faithful and bad, bad, terrible people are saying we're having an affair." (laughs)

NICK. (laughs)

EMILY. Which makes sense for early Victorian, right?

NICK. Yeah. I mean, the... Yeah, this, to me, felt very... The dramatic irony of the audience knowing what Morgan is up to and, “Oh now, we’re going to find the... Oh, no, the two lovers have been set up, and yet they meet anyway.”

EMILY. Right, right, right.

NICK. And the language being as it is...

EMILY. O misery! (laughs)

NICK. O misery, yeah. I mean, Lancelot is really dramatic here.

EMILY. Well, but she says cruel – I think she says cruel twice towards him. “Oh, cruel!” (laughs) Just...

NICK. Yeah, especially in their first scene, it just feels to me like oozing with stakes, right? Oozing with...

EMILY. Well, the first scene was a little rough because there was so much exposition as well.

NICK. Mm-hmm.

EMILY. And that was all in a chunk, and Guinevere was carrying it. She was carrying the entire “previously on.” (laughs) You know?

NICK. I was with it, though, in a way that... I was with this text in a way that I wasn’t with the 1500s text. Does that make sense?

EMILY. Super, yeah.

NICK. Yeah, I was like, “Okay, this... I’m getting there. Wow, we have history already. We have... Something is framing their relationship.” This is an interesting piece of the canon, as if they had a relationship prior to Arthur being in the picture, which is...

EMILY. Is there something like that in one of the...

NICK. Maybe in one of the different renditions?

EMILY. (laughs)

NICK. One of the renditions. One of the many.

EMILY. Well, it’s in this rendition.

NICK. In this rendition, heck yeah. But I never... Not in a lot of the famous ones, in the ones that we constantly are reading. I don't think Lancelot and Guinevere have this prior googly-eyed romance.

EMILY. (laughs)

NICK. But it just doesn't work out, and Arthur comes to save the day, you know?

EMILY. Right, yeah. Well, and this is the first I've heard of her being Irish, not Welsh, which is interesting.

NICK. Yeah.

EMILY. And that they're being invaded, and so basically she's being given away as a prize, which explains that, right?

NICK. Yeah. She is the reward that Arthur gets to... Or Arthur gets to pick his reward and he picks her, yeah.

EMILY. Well, speaking of the exposition, this is the thing: I was never unsure about what was happening in this scene.

NICK. Yeah, 100%. I'm with you there, yeah, yeah, definitely.

EMILY. Yeah, even when I was like, "Okay, I'm giving a lot of backstory for the sake of the audience." It's very much a, "As you know, Lancelot..." (laughs)

NICK. As you know, because you've lived it before...

EMILY. Right. (laughs)

NICK. (laughs) Let me just remind you.

EMILY. Yeah, but I never blacked out and was going, "What am I arguing? What do I mean?" Even though the first scene begins with sort of chunks of text, but he also has interesting line endings.

NICK. Yeah.

EMILY. Not all of them worked for me, but a lot of them did.

NICK. A lot of them did, and they share so many lines, you know.

COLIN. Yes. I wanted to bring that up.

EMILY. Yeah, go for it, Colin.

COLIN. I was wondering if we were entering... So the piece we read before was 1805. The is 1843 here.

EMILY. Yes.

COLIN. I was wondering, as the verse scholar, if you were kind of, if you know whether or not we're kind of entering a new trend?

EMILY. Well, the cool thing about this is that it's not a burlesque, right? They're not making fun of verse as a form. Even today, one of the most popular verse plays that people will do is *The Seussification of Romeo and Juliet*.

COLIN. (laughs)

EMILY. Yeah, which is... A lot of educational companies do that. It is written in ba-DUM ba-DUM ba-DUM ba-DUM. It's written in four, I believe, and is silly and rhyming couplets, etc. Then there's been this movement to take it seriously. I think, actually, this guy, it looks like he would have studied Shakespeare, it looks like, and seen the sharing of lines. Because Moliere doesn't share as much as Shakespeare does.

NICK. Sorry, did I say there were a lot of shared lines? There are, like, three lines that aren't shared.

EMILY. Did you just re-look at everything? You're right.

NICK. I just re-looked at all of it. There are maybe three lines that are not shared, and that's including Morgan le Fay being involved as well.

EMILY. (laughs) Right, yeah.

NICK. (laughs) But I'm looking back now. There's one or two blocks of texts that the lines actually match up with the beginning of the next line, and Lancelot's "O misery" gets a whole line to itself. But pretty much everything else, they are sharing lines. They are constantly... They are vibing with each other. They are responding to each other. They are in tandem, in beat with each other. I think it's interesting that Arthur starts a new line as he enters.

EMILY. Ooh, yes.

NICK. That, I love it. I was like, "Is that shared with Lancelot?" And it was like, no, it's not. Arthur's on his own new line now. "We are well met."

EMILY. Yeah.

COLIN. Oh yeah.

EMILY. That's so cool. But yeah, it tells you how enmeshed everyone is, but also, even looking at this first page with Lancelot saying, "Art thou not happy?" Guinevere has an interstitial line. She takes one foot of that verse where she says, "Happy!" and he picks up with "Other women regard thy lot with envy."

SIR LAUNCELOT. Art thou not happy?

GWENEVER. Happy!

SIR LAUNCELOT. Other women
Regard thy lot with envy.

So that you've got the, envy is contrasted to happy. So we're doing stichomythia thing of picking up each other's words and responding to each other, so that later scene, which I was so excited to do, where he's jumping in the window – in the casement, even – which tells me, again, because there's the whole... Shakespeare uses "leave the casement open" in several different plays, *Romeo and Juliet* and I think it's also in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. He's constantly leaving windows open, which makes you wonder how he did his own, you know...

NICK. How he did his own lovin'?

EMILY. Uh, yeah. I'm thinking there was a lot of casement love. (laughs)

NICK. How did he, yeah. You know, leave the old casement ajar.

EMILY. I think he was real intimate with rope ladders (laughs) because it shows up in two different plays.

NICK. Yeah. We also do have the lovely moment where Guinevere reminds us all, including Lancelot that, as you know, I am a woman.

EMILY. Oh God.

NICK. I love how that just comes up in every play where there is a woman that, for some reason, needs to remind everyone that she's a woman. Obviously, possibly male actors, but still...

EMILY. No, this wouldn't have been male actors by now, because in the 16, 1700s with Charles II, that's where, like, if you've seen *Stage Beauty*...

NICK. That's it.

EMILY. Yeah, that's when they started having women playing women. But even so, it's not just remind them I'm a woman, because in the previous line, she says, "I'm weak and I'm a woman," and it's just like, just stop. (laughs)

NICK. (laughs) Yeah. We get it. (laughs) Yeah.

EMILY. I mean, I was about to say Romeo, but this is so *Romeo and Juliet*. Lancelot jumps in the casement. I mean, who's the one who's weak here?

NICK. Yeah.

EMILY. You know? He's like, "There's a ladder. She must want me." (laughs)

NICK. But also, he's the one that's like, "I'm going to jump out the window," and she's like, "No, no, no, don't do that. Actually, you probably are going to die." And it feels to me like he has this crazy, up and down rhythmic pattern to him here in all these scenes.

EMILY. Yeah.

NICK. And she's like, "Why are you so crazy?" (laughs)

EMILY. But it was fascinating, too, because it's actually fairly light on the poetry.

NICK. Mm-hmm.

EMILY. There's just a few lines that actually read as poetry. Guinevere has some in the second scene.

GWENEVER. Dark figures glide across the silvery lawn,

As opposed to, "Holy crap, there are people on the lawn," or something. (laughs)

NICK. Yeah.

EMILY. And then later

GWENEVER. It were to add the crimson hue of blood
To the foul scandal.

and then she goes right back to

Rather try the door!

It is our only chance.

NICK. What? Not the window? Don't jump out the window?

EMILY. (laughs) Stop jumping out the window, dude. (laughs)

NICK. Yeah. (laughs)

EMILY. But which is to say, it's fairly plain language.

NICK. Mm-hmm.

EMILY. It's got a slight height, but we're not stopping and having long stretches of poetry.

NICK. Agreed, yeah.

EMILY. Which keeps the plot moving.

NICK. Definitely, and especially in the second scene. I mean, we're not hitting each other with paragraphs. These are a lot of shared lines, thoughts bouncing back and forth very fast.

EMILY. Urgency.

NICK. Yeah.

EMILY. I am fine with exposition in the first act when you have to – it's exposition. It has to go somewhere. But yeah, this is towards the end of the whole play. This should be the time that we're like, "I'm leaping in windows. I'm getting out of doors." (laughs)

NICK. Mm-hmm.

EMILY. And this whole thing, I mean, the longest group of lines is maybe four lines grouped together.

NICK. Yeah. Yeah. This second scene is...

EMILY. Flies.

NICK. ... you know, lightning quick. It's flying back and forth. The first scene is a little, obviously, yeah, "Previously on..." and we talk for a while.

EMILY. Right. Well, but it picks up. The first scene picks up once we stop giving the "Previously on" and we just start talking to each other about the now.

NICK. Yeah.

EMILY. And the switch is actually, I think, on the “O misery” or somewhere in there.

NICK. Yes, yeah, it’s after Guinevere’s got her long... Where is it?

EMILY. Well, she’s got that great:

GWENEVER. I am a wife -- the king, thy master's wife --
And may not, must not hear of love.

That’s great.

NICK. Yeah. “Launcelot – gentle friend!” You know, we’re friend-zoning him hard.
And then

SIR LAUNCELOT. O misery!

Beat, beat, beat, beat. (laughs)

EMILY. And he uses hyphens – which is really interesting – within a single person’s speech so that you’re given space like you’re supposed to have white space. You’re supposed to emphasize this. He’s telling you with his punctuation.

NICK. Mm-hmm.

EMILY. Yeah, as well as using...

NICK. Emphasize this, yeah.

EMILY. Yeah, yeah. This was very easy. I found this very easy to read.

NICK. Me too. This felt very easy in my mouth. I knew exactly what we were doing.

EMILY. Yep.

NICK. Also, because of how easy it was, it kind of gave me a sense for where the two of them are at in terms of... I have not, obviously, read the other parts of this play. I was like, “All right, I know which scene this is,” and then we definitely know what the last scene is as well.

EMILY. Right.

COLIN. Yeah, I wanted to make the observation, just as somebody who has the pleasure of watching you two, we remarked that with the first piece from 1587, it was plodding. Lots of text. Very difficult to share the energy. And this, we’re moving into a

zone where the energy's thrown by the text for you because of all the shared lines. And because there's all these interruptions, the energy is naturally zipping back and forth.

EMILY. Yeah.

NICK. Mm-hmm. It naturally felt fueled by emotion, you know? Wow, wild. What a wild concept. Compared to that first scene, which felt as if it didn't have any at all.

EMILY. And yet, while it felt as fast as the *Tom Thumb* one, and while I was giggling that some of these emotions were over the top, it was very clear that this was genuine. And the language didn't feel fan fiction-y in that. I mean, it felt over the top. (laughs) It felt extra.

NICK. Yes, but not quite fan fiction, you know. I mean, he picks and chooses his moments of "O misery" and "I'll jump out the window," you know? Everything is a little more measured than fan fiction, the way it felt, yeah.

EMILY. Yeah. It wasn't trying too hard. I think that's it.

NICK. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

EMILY. Yeah.

[brief music]

Now, something that we did not know when we were recording this was just how many plays that we're about to see in future episodes include Lancelot jumping out of a casement upon discovery. So keep an ear out for that. I think there is an argument to be made that since this was published, even more than it was performed – although it would have been performed at The Drury Lane Theatre with the preeminent actor of the day, presumably as Arthur – one wonders if there wasn't a greater circulation of this text, because through not fault of its own, it ended up as a closet drama, which is kind of cool. So keep an ear out for jumping out of casements as we move through the 1800s. It does seem that C. J. Riethmüller may have been the one to invent that and a lot of other people will be taking up – or jumping out – of it. Anyway, doesn't matter.

We're going to be taking a look now, going from something that, while melodramatic, is meant to be serious to something that is meant to be comical. We're going to see the heir to the burlesque as we also get our first non-British author when we come back.

[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. We're going to conclude today's episode with a delightful piece in rhyming couplets from William Mower Akhurst – Ache-hurst? – I do wish these fellows were around so they'd tell me how to pronounce their names – also known as W. M. Akhurst or Ache-hurst. Regardless, he lived from 1822 to 1878, so, again, roughly the same dates as Tennyson, roughly the same dates as Riethmüller. He is an Australian colonial actor, journalist, and playwright, who is perhaps best known for the fact that he wrote fourteen pantomimes. He wrote burlesques. He wrote things that ran and ran and ran and ran. When he returned to England, apparently in 1870, he wrote more pantomimes for Astley's, for The Pavilion, The Elephant and Castle Theatre. He did very well. He wrote a pantomime of *Gulliver's Travels*, and he also wrote two versions – rather like Henry Fielding – two versions of his King Arthur burlesque. The first one in 1868 he titled *King Arthur, or Launcelot the Loose, Gin-Ever the Square, and the Knights of the Round Table, and Other Furniture. A Burlesque Extravaganza*. He then rewrote it and represented it just a handful of years later in 1871 as *King Arthur, or The Knights of the Table Round and Other Funny-ture. A Burlesque Extravaganza*. The cool thing about this is that it's written in rhyming couplets, and let's just dive right into what myself, Nick, and Colin thought of this piece.

[brief music]

EMILY. This is-

NICK. Can't wait for your first line. I can't wait. (laughs)

EMILY. Okay, and Colin, if you wouldn't mind, please give... Even Guinevere's going to have a... Don't do the asides, but go ahead and do every other stage direction, because we're now moving into the age and the era as well, in the late 1800s, of people saying, "Oh, we can actually write in a stage direction and tell people what to do," and so we're going to be getting increasing stage directions. Some of them are quite fun and should be read. So ready, everybody?

NICK. Let's do it.

EMILY. Yeah? Okay.

Guen. If Launcelot is false there's no wight blacker.
What's that? A horse? His nag? It is his-knack-er

(Enter Launcelot; he rushes to Guenever, who repels his advances.)

Launc. My love, my Guenever, excuse my fussiness –
Give us a buss.

Guen. *(Loftily.)* Stand back, sir, what's your business?

Launc. Is this my welcome?

Guen. Oh, sir, we are well met –
Where's the girl's sleeve you wore upon your helmet
When at the jousts?

Launc. Eh! what's that, may I ask,
A piece of a-parrel, madam, on my casque,
A sleeve!

Guen. A sleeve – with you words I won't bandy,

Launc. I'll not tell you a fib. *(Aside.)* I haven't one handy.
Lady, I wore that sleeve outside my brain
At the suggestion of the fair Elaine.

Guen. At her *suggestion*, oh you artful dodger,
You were at her, *sir, jesting!*

Launc. Her pa's lodger.
I was at Astolat a day or two,
That precious sleeve she gave me.

Guen. Yes!

Launc. For you.

Guen. This story's difficult, sir, to believe,
And yet an empty sleeve's an empty sleeve.

Launc. You see there was no *'arm* in it.

Guen. Just so!
Why wear it all around your hat?

Launc. You know
We haven't any pockets in our armour.
'Twas thine, I wore it as thy knight, my charmer.

Guen. You love me then.

Launc. Dearly, like pie, or dearer.
You're my sweet tart.

Guen. That's *pudden* the case clearer.

EMILY. (laughs)

COLIN. (laughs)

NICK. Oh, man, that is, that is... That is something else. (laughs)

EMILY. That is. This, again, I believe this is their only scene together, but the entire play is like this. Just for the listener, if you don't take a look at the script, the puns are all italicized in the script. (laughs)

COLIN. Yes, he's very adamant that you see them.

EMILY. Yeah.

NICK. You hit this word.

EMILY. Or if it's a strained rhyme – blacker, knacker – he puts in a little en-dash, a little hyphen so that we know to hit it and to hit it harder. Yeah. (laughs) Oh my gosh, Lancelot is a jerk in this.

NICK. I know, he's such a player. He's a jerk. He's a...

EMILY. He's back to Tom Thumb.

NICK. Yes, he's Tom Thumb, but if Tom Thumb were... Tom Thumb didn't feel shady to me. Tom Thumb just felt like an arrogant jerk.

EMILY. (laughs)

NICK. This Lancelot feels like he's talking to a lot of girls.

EMILY. Little bit. Little bit.

NICK. Yeah, this felt different to me. Tom Thumb to me felt sort of...

EMILY. He was sincere.

NICK. Charming, sincerity, boisterous. This guy's a jerk. (laughs) A complete jerk.

EMILY. What's fascinating is... So I've done a few plays in rhyming couplets, and typically, actually, I find rhyming couplets shove you through faster. They're sort of a ba-da-da-da-da-da-da-da. And this, the rhymes were actually so strained you had to really slow down.

NICK. Yeah, agreed.

EMILY. Yeah.

NICK. This does not push us forward or quickly. (laughs)

EMILY. No, because it... While there definitely was character and plot, like that was all there, this really was a showcase for incredibly bad rhymes.

NICK. Yes.

COLIN. (laughs) Yeah, this was not Moliere. This was not *Tartuffe*.

EMILY. No.

COLIN. Or even a lot of *Tartuffes* that I've read, the reason it's so fun to do is that the rhyme pulls you forward.

EMILY. Yes. Yeah. But this one, the star of the show really is what is the next pun he's going to make?

NICK. Yeah.

COLIN. Absolutely.

NICK. It's a pun showcase. It's a rhyme showcase. You know, how bad can we do it?

EMILY. Yeah. And there was one moment when I looked up at you, Nick – because we're also recording this on Zoom – and, I don't know, you had this look of, "I'm going to say my pun now." (laughs)

NICK. (laughs) Yeah. Don't mind me.

EMILY. You almost have to. (laughs)

NICK. (laughs) Yes. Oh dear. I remember there was one I couldn't make it through. I can't remember which one.

EMILY. Oh, really? (laughs)

NICK. Yeah, I was like...

EMILY. Oh, the piece of apparel?

NICK. No, her pa's lodger. Yeah.

EMILY. Oh yeah.

NICK. At her suggestion, sir, jesting. (laughs)

EMILY. Yeah.

NICK. Her pa's lodger.

EMILY. It's so... (laughs)

NICK. Artful Dodger, pa's lodger.

EMILY. And you can tell this was actually written... This is where I thought this... Before I looked him up, I thought this guy was from maybe New Zealand or Australia or something, because you've got that one line, the art?

Launc. You see there was no *'arm* in it.

As in "harm," right?

NICK. Mm-hmm.

EMILY. And I was like, "Oh, this is so meant to be done in a very particular accent that we are not going to have." (laughs)

NICK. Yeah. Yeah, sorry. Yeah, that's right.

EMILY. But I love that. I love that he was writing, not just for a generic audience or for Shakespeare voice or something.

NICK. Mm-hmm.

[brief music]

EMILY. So that is just absolutely delightful. As those of you who listened to last week's episode may very well know or be wondering, yes, in fact this burlesque extravaganza is a true burlesque, which is to say in this case we would recognize it as a verse drama in rhyming couplets, but with music. So, for example, right before the scene that we looked at, there is a duet between Guinevere and Mordred called "Lucia." Once again, I will sing something for it. I don't know what the actual music was, but so you can hear a little bit of what the music was. Then we'll take a look at what the scansion meter is like for this air. As before, the airs, the songs for burlesques are incredibly short. This one is one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen lines, and at the end there's the idea that it either repeats or fades out. This is a duet, but they take turns singing. (laughs) So it'll be Guinevere and then Mordred. And Guinevere sings:

Guen. Oh, don't you see these saline tears
A rolling down my cheek,
And can you be so in-hu-man
As words like those to speak.
I love him wildly, desperately,
And not another cove,
Except, perhaps, my hus-a-band
Shall ever be my love.

Then Mordred sings:

Modred. Oh, yes, I see those saline tears,
A trickerling down her cheek,
But (when a [crammer](#) doesn't pay)
The truth I'm bound to speak.
She loves him, &c.

Because it just says, “She loves him, &c.” It’s pretty simple here. The rhyme pattern is ABAB CDC – whoa. CDED, but every other line is rhymed. So you have, as well, something that this author seems to do is whenever he wants you to really parse out the syllables is he puts dashes, en-dashes, short dashes in between. So, for example, we have “in-hu-man” is put out as three, and “hus-a-band” is the way that you’re meant to, I guess, sing it. You also have “trickerling,” which is, I guess he’s coming up with words unless, any Australian listeners, let me know if “trickerling” is something that is frequently said down under. Yeah, and then Mordred exits and Guinevere meets Lancelot (laughs) so... Once again, this is, in fact, a burlesque or a verse drama with brief music.

Right. So next time, we’re going to go even further into the 1800s, into the time of melodrama, and we’re coming up to my new favorite verse dramatist, as well as to a very exciting year where there were three major King Arthur plays all in the same year, 1895, with some casement jumping. And that’ll be coming up next, but it’s good. We’re finally into Lancelot/Guinevere verse drama, friends, and it’s nothing but jumping out of casements in iambic pentameter from here on out. See you next time.

[music]

EMILY. *Hamlet to Hamilton* is a special project of [Turn to Flesh Productions](#) audio division. Turn to Flesh is a theatre company in New York City that develops new plays in heightened text with vibrant roles for women and those underrepresented in classical art. In other words, we create new Shakespeare plays for everybody Shakespeare didn’t write for. *Hamlet to Hamilton* is hosted by [Emily C. A. Snyder](#) with audio engineering and sound design by [Colin Kovarik](#) and original music by Taylor Benson. Special thanks to our patron Madeleine Farley for helping to produce this episode. Special thanks to [Esther Williamson](#) for transcripts.

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