

Foreshadowing Disaster: *A Coming Storm*

Evander Price

It was by one of those great coincidental phenomena that America's greatest writer, thespian, painter, and politician, were each separately, unwittingly and inexorably linked by a single prophetic painting: Sanford Gifford's *A Coming Storm*. Gifford (1823-1880) completed *A Coming Storm* in 1863 and it was purchased by Edwin Booth nearly two years before John Wilkes Booth would commit arguably the most atrocious assassination in American history. By complete chance, Edwin loaned the painting back to Gifford in April, 1865, to be added to an exhibition of his works at the National Academy—on the fourteenth of that very same month, Lincoln was assassinated by Edwin's infamous brother. Soon after, Herman Melville himself attended the exhibition and was struck by the fact that Edwin purchased this particular painting in light of the national tragedy that had just occurred. This paper analyzes Gifford's tragic landscape, and how Melville then interpreted these events in his poem "The Coming Storm."ⁱ

"The Coming Storm" is one poem in a series that Melville compiled into a book of Civil War poetry, *Battle-Pieces*. The poem ponders why exactly Edwin found this landscape so captivating, and argues that Edwin's own mental landscape was reflected abstractly onto the dark elements of this portentous painting. Melville was keenly aware that Edwin Booth was the foremost Shakespearean actor of his time, most famous for his role as Hamlet, and therefore employs references to particular scenes in *Hamlet*, specifically Act II.ii, in which Pyrrhus slays Priam, and Act III.iii, in which Hamlet decides not to slay the praying Claudius. The choice of these two scenes is no coincidence. Melville is implying that Edwin, as America's greatest master of Hamlet, must have understood the dark side of Shakespeare better than anyone. By recalling these scenes of murder, and focusing on the crucial moments of pause before the action (or inaction) of the protagonist, Melville calls into question Edwin Booth's own role in Lincoln's assassination as brother to John Wilkes. Through these parallels to Shakespeare, Melville aligns Gifford's painted landscape with the political landscape of the Civil War, the tragic landscape of the Lincoln assassination, and the psychological landscape of Booth's mind, in order to convey the tragedy of Booth's role as the unfortunate brother to outrageous infamy. To understand how Melville constructs these implications, it is necessary to first begin with an analysis of the painting itself and its formal elements.

Analysis of *A Coming Storm*

A Coming Storm (Fig. 1) exists in three different versions, a 10" x 18" painting, a 12" x 18" study, and a final 28" x 42" finished work. Unfortunately, exactly which one of these three was on display at the 1865 National Academy exhibition is not yet known. For the purposes of this essay, I will follow the assumption of art historian Ila Weiss, who supposes the third is most likely the one purchased by Edwin Booth, on account of its being the largest and most polished of the group. The difficulty is that Gifford re-purchased and repainted it sometime around 1880.ⁱⁱ Weiss posits that it is likely this third painting was originally darker and considerably more foreboding than it is in its current state.ⁱⁱⁱ Curators Kevin Avery and Franklin Kelly corroborate Weiss' suggestion that the darker colors of the 12" x 18" study are truer to what Booth and Melville originally saw.^{iv}

A Coming Storm depicts Lake George right before the onset of a tempest. The vantage point makes the viewer feel as if he were standing on the surface of the placid lake, looking across at two enormous glacial erratics that draw the eye. The highlights on the two boulders

lead the eye from one to the other, from the larger, down to the smaller, and back again. They are illuminated by a swathe of sunlight that severs the darkness and ignites the surrounding trees painted in hairy, febrile, energetic brushstrokes of scarlet, persimmon, gamboge and amber, which kindle the fiery energy of the left half of the painting. There is beautiful control of value on the shady side of the larger boulder, where Gifford's sensitivity to the light within the shadow gives dimension to its form. The illuminated mountain-boulder exists in fixed, hefty defiance to the turbid, boiling clouds, and between them is a no-man's-land filled with a soft, suffusing, slate mist, captured on the lambent surface of the lake. Rich blacks are found in the storm shadow on the lake's serene surface, which serves as a passive observer, silently reflecting upon the events above.



Figure 1 *A Coming Storm*, Sanford Gifford. Oil on canvas, American, 1863, retouched and redated in 1880 28 x 42 inches (71.1 x 106.7 cm) Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of the McNeil Americana Collection, 2004

The right side of the painting, by contrast, is dark and filling with ominous, billowing clouds. Here the trees are diminished in size at the foot of steeply sloping mountains whose heads are already obscured by the imminent storm. The tension is palpable among all the painting's elements: the torrential wind of the menacing storm; the earth of the noble, world-weary boulder; the fire of the trees; the tranquil water of the lake and halcyon rain. Gifford has carved out the load-bearing corner of the large boulder, and though stable for the moment, it seems off-balance, as though it might teeter into the lake with its little brother at any moment. The trees support the large boulder, holding it in place, embedding it into the mountain. But we wonder how it would stand without their support. All this builds tense anticipation of the storm, and we, the viewers, stand on the lake. We too reflect upon the scene; we too will be sucked into the whirlwind when the storm descends, and we must wonder: when flurries swirl and the tempest engulfs all of the view, will the trees be extinguished?—will the ponderous boulder be dethroned?—what, at last, will remain?

Melville's Description of *A Coming Storm*

Melville precedes "A Coming Storm" with a prefatory note explaining the context in which the poem was inspired. This note states that the poem is named after "A Picture by S.R. Gifford, and owned by E.B. Included in the N.A. Exhibition, April, 1865." Melville adds this line because the information it conveys (the painting, the owner of the painting, and the date of the exhibition) is crucial to any proper understanding of the poem, and without which the sense irony (and tragedy) would be lost. The poem then begins with Melville's imagining of Edwin's first, unsettling encounter with this painting:

All feeling hearts must feel for him
 Who felt this picture. Presage dim—
 Dim inklings from the shadowy sphere

Fixed him and fascinated here.

A demon cloud like the mountain one

Burst on a spirit as mild

As this urned lake, the home of shades.^v

(Lines 1-7)

Melville imagines the extraordinary event of Edwin's empathic response. We might imagine Edwin in this harrowing moment, blanched, "fixed...and fascinated" by "dim— / Dim inklings" of tragedy to come, trying with all his might to understand fully what these abstracted elements mean within the landscape of his own life—trying, and perhaps failing to understand, or failing to accept an understanding so devastatingly true that it is unspeakable.^{vi}

One of the clear influences on *A Coming Storm* is, as Avery and Kelley point out, the dramatic style of Thomas Cole, in which the individual elements of the landscape (trees, rocks, lakes, mountains, etc) are anthropomorphized into actors on a stage.^{vii} Trying to decipher who plays what role is a difficult task, and Melville's reading of the painting is complex. If we read the "demon cloud" as the demoniac John Wilkes Booth, then we can imagine the landscape as an allegory of the assassination itself, the verb "Burst" reminding us of the discharge of Booth's gun into the back of Lincoln's head as he calmly sat in the theater, placid and "mild as this urned lake." But these signifiers are not set in stone. Melville's ambiguity is deliberate, and it has been the fault of the few critics who have taken up this painting and poem to reduce it by specifying exactly whom or what each aspect of the landscape represents, or alternatively, by discussing the formal elements in such vague terms that little or nothing is achieved. A balance must be found somewhere between excessive simplification and deliberate vagueness in interpreting these works.

For example, if we take the "spirit as mild / As this urned lake" to represent Edwin Booth rather than Lincoln, then we too become co-spectators in the painting. Though we physically stand in the art gallery, our vantage point puts us on top of the lake, quietly reflecting on the painting just as Booth and Melville did, and just as the placid lake does to the sky, clouds, and mountains. By extension, the Union States become the fiery trees supporting the grand, wise, old Lincoln-boulder, his strength daring to oppose the tempestuous cloudburst that is the oncoming storm of war from the South, supported by the obscured, dark mountains on the right of the painting. The storm not only threatens to topple the great Lincoln-boulder, but to destroy the whole landscape—to obliterate America entirely. Melville is suggesting that Edwin Booth saw "inklings" of a coming tragedy in the landscape, perhaps not specifically the assassination of Lincoln, but amorphous tragedy in the symbolism and relationships of the elements.

It is also of note that Melville has slightly tweaked the title of his poem from the title of the painting by switching the indefinite article 'A' *Coming Storm* to the definite article 'The' *Coming Storm*. History seems to have forgotten exactly which article was used in titling the painting during the 1865 N.A. Exhibition that Melville attended, but the consensus among Art Historians is the painting was either exhibited as *A Coming Storm* or simply *Coming Storm*. Regardless of whether the indefinite article was omitted or retained, Melville's use of the definite article remains significant. This switch is significant because it indicates that right from the start this poem is referring not to a general, ambiguous coming storm, but to a more specific storm. The most direct possibilities for what Melville is referring to is, as described above, the storm of the Civil War descending upon America, or the storm of assassination descending on Lincoln and America, or even, perhaps, the storm of Northern vengeance descending on the South after the assassination:

The Avenger wisely stern,
 Who in righteousness will do
 What the heavens call him to,
 And the parricides remand;
 ...
 But the People in their weeping
 Bare the iron hand:
 Beware the People weeping
 When they bare the iron hand.

In the above final stanzas of Melville’s “The Martyr”, which immediately precedes “The Coming Storm” in *Battle-Pieces*, Melville predicts the knee-jerk reaction of the stunned North to wreak a righteous vengeance on the South. Though the iron hand was never brought down on the South in the way that was initially expected, it certainly was brought down with a stormy vengeance upon those affiliated with John Wilkes Booth—the lot of them were hanged or imprisoned. Even the doctor, Samuel Mud, who set Booth’s leg and was ignorant of the assassination entirely, was imprisoned for four years before receiving pardon.

Melville’s Use of Shakespeare in “The Coming Storm”

It was common knowledge that Edwin Booth was the foremost Shakespearean actor of his time, second to no one except, it may be argued, his dashing younger brother John Wilkes. In fact, in testament to the familial bond among the Booths, Wilkes, Edwin, and their Father Junius acted together in an acclaimed staging of *Julius Caesar* on November 25, 1864, a mere five months before the Lincoln assassination.^{viii} But where John Wilkes’ most acclaimed role was Richard III, and ironically, the tyrant toppler Brutus, Edwin’s most famous role was the subtle Hamlet (see Fig. 2).^{ix} The night after *Julius Caesar* closed, Edwin began a run of *Hamlet* productions that would turn into an unprecedented one hundred consecutive performances, a record he described as a “terrible success”, and which Melville very well may have seen himself.^x Though Edwin grew tired of his unbroken string of performances, his reviewers claimed the quality and clarity of his performance might well enable one to abandon reading any commentaries of Shakespeare, and simply see Edwin’s performance again.^{xi} Melville was well aware of this fact:



Figure 2 Edwin Booth as Hamlet (ca. 1870), image from Wikimedia Commons

...But Shakespeare’s pensive child

Never the lines had lightly scanned,
 Steeped in fable, steeped in fate
 The Hamlet in his heart was ware,
 Such hearts can antedate.

No utter surprise can come to him
 Who reaches Shakespeare’s core;
 That which we seek and shun is there—
 Man’s final lore.
 (Lines 8-16)

Here Melville likens Edwin Booth to Hamlet, “Shakespeare’s pensive child”, but Melville himself was also a child of Shakespeare. Though Melville didn’t come to fully embrace Shakespeare until 1849, when he purchased a seven-volume set of his works, the resulting meeting of minds compelled Melville to refer to Shakespeare as “the divine William”.^{xii} F.O. Matthiessen notes that at this time Melville had “just begun to meditate on Shakespeare more creatively than any other American writer has. The meditation brought him to his first profound comprehension of the nature of tragedy.”^{xiii} It is this intimate understanding of Shakespeare, both on the part of Melville and Booth, that fuels part of the brilliance of this poem; that is, Melville’s use of vocabulary specific to *Hamlet* to recall relevant scenes, passages, and imagery. Line 10, for example, uses the peculiar word “Steeped,” a word that occurs only once in *Hamlet*:

510 Who this had seen, with tongue in venom **steep'd**,
 511 'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have pronounc'd.
 512 But if the gods themselves did see her [Hecuba] then,
 513 When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
 514 In mincing with his sword her husband's [Priam's] limbs,
 515 The instant **burst** of clamor that she made,
 516 Unless things mortal move them not at all,
 517 Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,
 518 And passion in the gods.
 (II.ii)^{xiv}

It is no coincidence that Melville summons lines that depict one of history’s most outrageous war crimes: the pitiless murder of King Priam by the “malicious sport” of the bloodthirsty Pyrrhus, son of Achilles. Vergil does even bloodier justice to this crime, describing in detail the frailty of wise old Priam dressing himself for an honorable death, only to be ruthlessly dragged across the floor, slipping in the blood of his children, and sacrilegiously beheaded on his own altar.^{xv} Melville uses this scene to create a parallel to the Lincoln assassination, the role of Pyrrhus given to John Wilkes, that of the defenseless Priam to Lincoln, and that of Hecuba, the passive observer of outrageous misfortune “Who this had seen... / ‘Gainst Fortune’s state would treason have pronounc’d”, to Edwin Booth.^{xvi} Hecuba/Edwin's position is tragic in its powerlessness; the gods have turned their eyes away, and both must live on as witnesses to tragedy they could not prevent.

But Melville’s analogy extends further. Only a few lines before, Shakespeare describes the moment of pause before Pyrrhus slays Priam:

477 Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear; for, lo his sword,
 478 Which was declining on the milky head
 479 Of reverend Priam, seem'd i' th' air to stick.
 480 So as a **painted tyrant** Pyrrhus stood
 481 And, like a neutral to his will and matter,
 482 Did nothing.
 483 But as we often see, **against some storm**,
 484 A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
 485 The bold winds speechless, and the orb below
 486 As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
 487 Doth rend the region; so after Pyrrhus' pause,
 488 A roused **vengeance** sets him new a-work;
 489 And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
 490 On Mars's armor forg'd for proof eterne

491 With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
492 Now falls on Priam.
(II.ii)

Both Gifford and Shakespeare have tapped into the very same universal symbolism of storm imagery in lines 483-487. Many of the phrases in these lines might just as well be used to describe Gifford's landscape, for example: "bold winds speechless, and the orb below / As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder / Doth rend the region". Melville connects these two scenes, the moment of leaden calm that suffuses the air in the center of Gifford's painting, and the hesitation of Pyrrhus "like a neutral to his will" before he commits the final act of decapitation. Line 482, with its three and a half empty feet, reflects in meter the physical action of Pyrrhus' hesitation and makes painfully clear the moment of decision, the calm before the storm, the ultimate moment of pause before all hell breaks loose, the last opportunity during which someone, anyone, *deus ex machina* or otherwise, might have jumped out to save the suppliant Priam—yet no one does.

The most interesting reference of all, however, is achieved by Melville's use of the word "scanned," another word that turns up only once in *Hamlet*^{xvii}, in Act III, Scene iii:

73 Now might I do it pat, now 'a is a-praying;
74 And now I'll do't. And so 'a goes to heaven;
75 And so am I reveng'd. That would be **scann'd**:
76 A villain kills my father; and for that
77 I, his sole son, do this same villain send
78 To heaven.
(III.iii)

In this scene, Hamlet soliloquizes about murdering Claudius who, in that moment, is praying. As Hamlet approaches the opportune moment to kill King Claudius, he pauses over the praying King, who is genuflected in a pose that certainly recalls the delay of the seething, brazen Pyrrhus over the suppliant Priam. In both III.iii and II.ii, Shakespeare indicates this moment of pause with a literal end to the line after the words "No"^{xviii} and "Did nothing,"^{xix} respectively, leaving the rest blank, a line of stony silence, a heart-beating hiatus from the meter in which the attentive reader should hear the empty thumps of the missing iambs. Melville is thus connecting three moments of pause, Pyrrhus pausing over Priam, Hamlet pausing over Claudius, the pause of calmness before the onset of a storm, and Melville's imagined fourth moment—the pause of Edwin Booth before the painting that "fixed and fascinated" him. Each of these moments one of quiet contemplation before disaster. Samuel Johnson describes this scene as approaching the realm of the *infandum*, the unspeakable:

This speech, in which Hamlet, represented as a virtuous character, is not content with taking blood for blood, but contrives damnation for the man that he would punish, is too horrible to be read or to be uttered.^{xx}

This hesitation is the calm before the storm, in which both will soon thereafter commit a great sin: Pyrrhus in his gruesome, heartless murder; and Hamlet, who in that moment believes he can control the fate of another man's soul, ironically contrasted by the hubristic decision *not* to murder. If we take Edwin Booth together with Hamlet, these two pensive children of Shakespeare who "Never the lines had lightly scanned" (though they certainly scanned them darkly) and his brother John Wilkes together with the machinating King Claudius, both

murderers of the true Kings, then it is possible to read Melville's use of *Hamlet* as implying that Booth ought to have stopped his brother somehow, as Hamlet in that moment ought to have murdered Claudius; the tragedy in both cases results from inaction. Yet to make such a connection without consideration of the rest of "The Coming Storm" would be to miss Melville's greater point concerning the nature of tragedy, which Melville alludes to in the final stanza.

Melville must have had III.iii on his mind when he wrote Chapter 123 of *Moby-Dick*, "The Musket," in which Starbuck himself takes pause as Hamlet did, standing over the monomaniacal King Ahab, who—even in sleep—sinks deeper into his unholy obsession of murdering the white whale, muttering somniloquent curses to Moby Dick. Here Starbuck has a similar dilemma:

But shall this crazed old man be tamely suffered to drag a whole ship's company down to doom with him?—Yes, it would make him the willful murderer of thirty men and more, if this ship come to any deadly harm; and come to deadly harm, my soul swears this ship will, if Ahab has his way. If, then, he were this instant – put aside, that crime would not be his.^{xxi}

Starbuck's soul, by some divine prognostication, has sensed the ultimate whirling, watery doom of the *Pequod*. Yet he also finds himself unable to kill Ahab, even given the opportune moment (as Hamlet was), and even with the assumed knowledge that doing so would save the lives of all the crew. He is likened to Jacob, "wrestling with an angel,"^{xxii} as he leaves the cabin, unable to grapple with difficult philosophical and moral questions: does he have the right to kill? Is this a just killing? The primary difference in this scene is that Starbuck, like Edwin—and unlike Hamlet—didn't have the ghost of his father roaming around at night calling for the immediate murder of the king. Starbuck therefore ultimately fails to kill Ahab as he wrestles with questions of morality, and thus dooms the whole crew of the *Pequod*, handing them over to the whims of a madman, just as Hamlet's hubristic failure to kill Claudius in III.iii leads to the death of just about every character in the play, except Horatio.

It is Edwin's own intimate knowledge of Shakespeare that Melville touches upon in the final stanza of "The Coming Storm":

No utter surprise can come to him
Who reaches Shakespeare's core;
That which we seek and shun is there—
Man's final lore.

(Lines 13-16)

The idea here is that anyone who understands the heart of Shakespeare understands the universe and human nature on a transcendent level—that is "Man's final lore." In his essay "Hawthorne and his Mosses", we see Melville's deep respect for Shakespeare "as the profoundest of thinkers", probing the depths of the nature of man:

...it is those deep far-away things in him [Shakespeare] those occasional flashings-forth of the intuitive Truth in him; those short, quick probings at the very axis of reality;—these are the things that make Shakespeare, Shakespeare. Through the mouths of the dark characters of Hamlet, ... he craftily says, or sometimes insinuates the things, which we feel to be so terrifically true, that it were all but madness for any good man, in his own proper character, to utter, or even hint of them.^{xxiii}

"That which we seek and shun" are the answers that we as human beings strive to understand, as well as the answers that are too true for us to handle. Melville implies that it is

this truth that Edwin Booth saw in Gifford's *A Coming Storm*: a truth so overwhelming, so terrifying, that he likely was not capable of comprehending it fully. One might compare Booth to Ishmael in Chapter 3 of *Moby-Dick* in which Ishmael stands before a portentous painting of an enormous whale hurling its bulk onto a ship:

A boggy, soggy, squitchy picture, truly, enough to drive a nervous man distracted. Yet was there a sort of indefinite, half-attained, unimaginable sublimity about it that fairly froze you to it, till you involuntarily took an oath with yourself to find out what that marvelous painting meant.^{xxiv}

Ishmael, like Edwin, is captivated by this image whose formal elements aren't readily recognizable and whose meaning is not easily discernible, though he too will ultimately find his fascination with the sublime portentousness of the painting is indeed well-founded. Melville must have imagined Edwin as he imagined Ishmael, a nervous man driven to "distraction," moved by "dim— / Dim inklings" that unnerved him and compelled him to buy the painting, take it home, and undoubtedly stare at it for many haunting hours more, trying to get answers out of the ominous, astonishingly mute image.

It is easy to point fingers at Edwin Booth as a passive accomplice to the assassination of Lincoln—Melville almost does so himself. How could this brilliant thespian, this master of Shakespeare, this man who must have understood the human spirit on a profound level—how could he not have seen that his own brother was about to commit an unspeakable act? Yet it would be wrong to interpret this poem as a condemnation of Edwin Booth for his failure to prevent a national tragedy. Melville's mention of "fate," "fable," "lore," and being "fixed" all reference the hand of fate in his writing of the story of this national tragedy. It is the impossibility of stopping the tragedy while it takes place, compounded with the retrospective view of how the situation could have been saved if only... if only...—this is the stuff of tragedy. Rather than condemn Edwin, Melville asks us to sympathize with him, to "feel for him" as we would feel for Hecuba, Starbuck, and all the Cassandra's of history who have been witnesses to tragedy; we must have pity on the man fated to play a role that was thrust upon him.

Melville was describing Shakespeare in the following passage, but his phrase applies equally well to the genius who painted *A Coming Storm*: "...the immediate products of a great mind are not so great, as that undeveloped, (and sometimes undevelopable) yet dimly-discernable greatness, to which these immediate products are but the infallible indices."^{xxv} At the heart of his painting Gifford touched on a universal human sentiment. He could not have known that his painting would represent, to Edwin Booth, the coming assassination of the President, though perhaps he intended it more generally to reflect the tides of the Civil War. He could not have known that Melville would see his painting and recognize the unlikely contingency that connected all these artists. Melville saw that Gifford created in a landscape the unspeakable darkness that Shakespeare found in *Hamlet*, and the unimaginable tragedy that was America's loss of Lincoln.

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NOTES

ⁱIla Weiss, *Poetic Landscape: The Art and Experience of Sanford R. Gifford*, (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1987), p. 102-3.

ⁱⁱ Entry 718 in the Sanford Gifford Memorial Catalog mistakenly titles the third painting, "A Coming Storm in the Catskills". The entry notes that it was "First painted and sold about 1863, but subsequently bought back, repainted, and dated 1880."

ⁱⁱⁱWeiss, p. 238-239. A black and white reproduction of the 12" x 18" oil sketch is available on pg. 238 as well.

^{iv}Kevin J. Avery, and Franklin Kelly, *Hudson River School Visions: The Landscapes of Sanford R. Gifford*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003), p. 148-53. Of particular note is the preparatory sketches reproduced on p. 151.

^vAll citations from Melville's *Battle-Pieces* follow the punctuation and formatting of the Northwestern-Newberry Edition, *Published Poems*.

^{vi} Melville had employed the phrase “fixed and fascinated” some sixteen years prior in “Hawthorne and his Mosses”; in the essay he connects Hawthorne to Shakespeare with regard to their greatness, and their mutual understanding of the “blackness” of man.

Harrison Hayford, Ed., Alma A. MacDougall, Ed., G T. Tanselle, Ed., and Merton M. Sealts, Ed., *The Piazza Tales: And Other Prose Pieces, 1839-1860*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1987) p. 244.

^{vii} Avery and Kelly, 150-51.

^{viii} Eleanor Ruggles, *Prince of Players: Edwin Booth*, (New York: Norton, 1953), a facsimile image of the Shakespearean family together in Roman costume is available on the page facing 165.

^{ix} Booth and Wilkes were often compared as actors, and even Walt Whitman had an opinion on the matter, stating that Edwin “had everything but guts...Edwin was never supreme, perhaps his one defeat was that he did not let himself go...” and a review in the *Boston Post* judged that:

“Edwin has more poetry, John Wilkes more passion; Edwin has more melody of movement and utterance, John Wilkes more energy and animation; Edwin is more correct, John Wilkes more spontaneous; Edwin is more Shakespearean, John Wilkes more melo-dramatic; and in a word, Edwin is a better Hamlet, John Wilkes a better Richard III.”

Quoted in Gordon Samples, *Lust for Fame: The Stage Career of John Wilkes Booth*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, Inc., 1982) p. 89.

^x Stanton Garner, *The Civil War World of Herman Melville*. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993) p. 386.

^{xi} Charles Shattuck, *The Hamlet of Edwin Booth*, (University of Illinois Press: 1969) p. 59.

^{xii} Jay Leyda, *The Melville Log: A Documentary Life of Herman Melville, 1819-1891*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951) p. 288.

^{xiii} F.O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance; Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*, (London: Oxford University Press: 1941) p. 189.

^{xiv} All lines of Shakespeare used are quoted directly from the Riverside Press edition.

^{xv} Clyde Pharr, Ed., *Vergil's Aeneid: Books I-VI*, (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Co., 1964) Book II, 550-553.

^{xvi} According to Edward Shattuck, Booth claimed that the Pyrrhus-Hecuba speech “affords the best actor good opportunity to display some of his best powers.”

Quoted in Shattuck, p.174.

^{xvii} Shakespeare employs the word “scanned” in two other instances outside of *Hamlet*, namely in *Macbeth* (III.iv:139) and in *Comedy of Errors* (II.ii:150). The usage in *Macbeth* is particularly relevant:

158 More shall they speak; for now I am bent to know,
159 By the worst means, the worst. For mine own good,
160 All causes shall give way: I am in blood
161 Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,
162 Returning were as tedious as go o'er:
163 Strange things I have in head, that will to hand;
164 Which must be acted ere they may be **scann'd**.

^{xviii} *Hamlet*, III.iii: 87.

^{xix} *Hamlet*, II.ii: 482.

^{xx} Samuel Johnson, ed., *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, (London, 1765), VII, 236.

^{xxi} Herman Melville, *Moby-dick; Or, the Whale*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981) p. 518.

^{xxii} The comparison to Jacob reminds us Melville's famous poem "Art", in which Melville discusses the matter of creating art, uniting opposites, and wrestling with the divine forces of creation.

^{xxiii} Melville, *The Piazza Tales: And Other Prose Pieces, 1839-1860*. "Hawthorne and his Mosses", p. 244.

^{xxiv} Melville, *Moby-dick; Or, the Whale*, p. 12.

^{xxv} Melville, "Hawthorne and his Mosses", p. 244.

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