

Rough Magic: The Theatrical Life of John Wilkes Booth

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of Hull

by

Deirdre Lindsay Kincaid, B.A.

August 2000

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page no.
Acknowledgements	iv
<u>Introduction</u>	1
<u>Part A: Apprenticeship</u>	
Chapter 1: 'The royal tree hath left us royal fruit'	11
Chapter 2: Through the Stage Door	29
Chapter 3: Philadelphia 1857-58: The Foot of the Dramatic Ladder	55
Chapter 4: Richmond 1858-60: A Man of Promise	77
<u>Part B: Star Career</u>	
Chapter 5: 1860-62: With the Suddenness of a Meteor . . .	120
Chapter 6: New York 1862-Boston 1863: A Confident Expectation of Greatness	151
Chapter 7: Philadelphia 1863-Cleveland 1863: Youngest Star in the World	183
Chapter 8: Winter and Discontent: Leavenworth, 1863 to the End	218
<u>Part C: Some Star Roles</u>	
Chapter 9: Richard III: A Savage and Kingly Monster	253
Chapter 10: Other Significant Roles	299
<u>Conclusion</u>	351
Appendix: Chronology of Performances	365
Bibliography	393

ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
	no
The young John Wilkes Booth	10
Sites of Montgomery Theatre, Montgomery and St. Charles Theatre, New Orleans	119
John Wilkes Booth as Hamlet	296
The Booth brothers in <i>Julius Caesar</i>	297
Two possible costumes	298

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due first of all to my husband, Arthur Kincaid, for sparking my interest in John Wilkes Booth, and for helpful advice and much emotional and practical support during the writing of this thesis; and to my supervisor, Professor Donald Roy, for unfailing encouragement and support. Among the many others who have helped me, I owe a particular debt to Michael W. Kauffman, James O. Hall, Arthur F. Loux and Jeannine Clarke Dodels.

I would also like to thank the following institutions: Alabama State Library, Montgomery; the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; Boston Public Library; the Boston Athenaeum (Jill Erickson); the British Library; the Brooklyn Historical Society; Brooklyn Public Library; Buffalo Public Library; University of Chicago Library (Special Collections: Dan Gallegan); Bradley Memorial Library, Columbus, Georgia (Joan Emens); Dallas Public Library (Robert Eason, Theatre Librarian); Detroit Public Library; Emory University Library; Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC; Ford's Theatre (Frank Hebblethwaite); Free Library of Philadelphia (Geraldine Duclow, Head of Theatre Collection); Helen Kate Furness Free Library, Wallingford, Pennsylvania (Sandy Nailor); Georgetown University Library (Special Collections: G. M. Berringer and Nicholas Sheetz); University of Georgia Library, Athens; Harvard Theatre Collection (Martha Mahard, Joe Keller); John Hay Library, Brown University (Jennifer Lee); Channing Pollock Theatre Collection, Howard University, Washington, DC (Fé Guzman); Illinois Historical Society Library, Chicago; Indiana Historical Society Library (Alexandra Gressitt); Indiana State Library; Indianapolis Public Library; the Library Company of Philadelphia; the Library of Congress (Clark Evans, Gayle T. Harris, Robert R. Shields); Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore; Massachusetts Historical Society (Virginia Smith); Missouri Historical Society; Museum of the City of New York (Kathryn Mets, Theatre Department); Nashville Public Library; New York Historical Society; New York Public Library (Billy Rose Theatre Collection: Dorothy Swerdlove; and Rare Books and Manuscripts Division); New York State Library, Albany (Rare Books: Fred Bassett); the Peale Museum, Baltimore (Mary Markey, Reference Center Supervisor); Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Library (Rare Book Room and Furness Shakespeare Library: Georgianna Ziegler); The Players, New York (Louis Rachow and Raymond Wemmlinger); Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore; Princeton University Library (William Seymour Collection: Nora Lin; De Coppet Collection: Ann Van Arsdale); Rhode Island Historical Society; Rhodes House, Oxford (Linda Williamson, Allan Lodge, and Alistair Ricketts); St Louis Public Library; the Surratt Society; Swarthmore College Library; University of Tampa (Stanley Kimmel Collection); University of Texas, Austin (Humanities Research Center: Cathy Henderson, Research Librarian); McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa (Special Collections: Lori Curtis and Julie Carlson); the Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia (Lacy Dick, Teresa Roane, Greg Kimball, and Barbara Batson); Virginia Historical Society (Frances Pollard); Virginia State Library; Yale University Manuscripts and Archives (William Massa and Ben Lee), and Youngstown State University Library.

Thanks are due to many individuals: to the Booth enthusiasts (you know who you are!) for a most generous sharing of their own research and ideas, and to these and others for advice, encouragement and hospitality. They are (with apologies if anyone has been left out): Terry Alford, John F. Andrews, my late parents Biddy and Clyde Barber, Sandy and Paul Binder, Liz and Gabor Boritt, Carolyn Cooper Bream, the late John C. Brennan, Agnes Bushell, Sally and Chuck Campbell, Martha and Roy Chamlee, Suzanne and Bob Cook, John DeMis, Jim and Jeannine Clarke Dodels, David Dodds, Betty and Donald Dow, Joan Jefferson Farjeon, Christopher Fowler, Ulla and Earl Fowler, David Grimsted, Richard and Kellie Gutman, James O. Hall, Gayle T. Harris, Lynn Heberling, Franklin J. Hildy, my aunt Sheila Hopkin, my mother-in-law Flora Binder Jones, Michael W. Kauffman, Cynthia and Richard Keil, Bernice Kliman, Jeltje and Alfred Koumans, Gene Landis, John K. Lattimer, Arthur F. Loux, Caroline McCurrie and her flatmates, Eileer

and Douglas Mantz, Louis Marder, Sarah and Pierre Morenon, Lisa Mullins, Roger J. Perry, William S. Peterson, Laurette Rosenstrauch, Bobbie and Warren Ruby, Myra-Anne Rutledge, Elizabeth Segal, Richard Sloan, George Stieler, Elizabeth Vandiver, Fina and John Waterston, Penny and Bill Wells, the late Danna Whorton, and Bruce Woodruff. And to my school history teacher: you were right, Mrs. Holden, history is fun!

INTRODUCTION

'History, said Ernst Toller, is the propaganda of the victors.'

(Claud Cockburn, *In Time of Trouble: an Autobiography*, p. 41)

When John Wilkes Booth shot Abraham Lincoln in Ford's Theatre in Washington on the evening of April 14, 1865, he destroyed any possibility that his reputation as an actor would be dispassionately assessed for the foreseeable future. A bitter, fratricidal war was drawing to its close, and Northern newspapers were not interested in being fair; opprobrium was heaped on Booth's name, beginning in the press the following day. Twelve days later he was dead, shot during an attempted arrest. In 1890, his fellow-player Clara Morris asserted hopefully, 'At this late day the country can afford to deal justly with John Wilkes Booth.'¹ That time had not yet come: in fact, some of the worst--and silliest--slanders have been perpetrated in the twentieth century. But surely now, over a hundred years later, it should be possible to set aside that April evening and look dispassionately at Booth's career in the theatre of his time.

As well as extending simple justice to a man who seems to have been extremely likeable and idealistic, and an actor interesting enough to deserve study, such a reassessment may serve to correct a distortion which the 'mythologized' view of his career has created: the idea that Edwin Booth was the *only* promising young tragedian in the early 1860s, which falsifies both Edwin's career and the period in general. Moreover, John's entire career covered a mere ten years, and his four full seasons as a star occurred during the Civil War, an under-researched period. The necessary concentration on so brief a time-span allows a more detailed treatment than would be possible in examining a career of average length, which may in turn illuminate some broader aspects of American theatre during an unsettled and transitional period.

¹ 'John Wilkes Booth: Clara Morris Answers Messrs. Nicolay and Hay', *Boston Herald*, Jan. 10, 1890.

In re-examining Booth's career, much misinformation must be dealt with. Although the main source of this has been a wilful distortion and manufacture of evidence in order to denigrate Booth after the assassination, this in itself has created an inverse distortion. His friends and admirers, defending him later, may have exaggerated in their turn: since it was thirty or more years before they dared speak out, and they were remembering not only their own youth, but a period by then known as 'the palmy days of the Drama', they were inclined to romanticize the talent of one who had died young. That this was also connected with a nostalgia for the stock company system will be suggested in Chapter 2.

Furthermore, John was not only an assassin, but the brother of Edwin Booth, acknowledged head of the profession in later years. Edwin, who according to Terry Oggel, was 'deified' in the last years of his life and afterwards,² arguably became the subject of a personality cult: the tragic incidents in his life (death of two wives, bankruptcy and loss of his theatre, and of course his brother's assassination of the President) combined to make him difficult to criticize. For one thing, his biographers have tended to follow his own tendency towards self-pity and have sought someone else to blame for every setback--and John has been an obvious figure to use as a scapegoat, or a negative contrast. Unfortunately familiar is the view of the two brothers given in one obituary of Edwin: travelling with their father as dresser and minder, he 'led a life worse than that of a hired servant', while John 'was looked upon as the one who would carry the family name to farther heights of greatness.' The apotheosis of this version of the Cinderella story is perhaps the film made of Eleanor Ruggles's *Prince of Players*.³ Bruce McConachie suggests that '[h]istorical understanding of [Edwin] Booth's acting has been hampered because so much of his relation to his bourgeois critics and audiences hinged

2 L. Terry Oggel, 'Edwin Booth and America's Concept of Shakespearean Tragedy', doctoral diss., U. Wisconsin, 1969, pp. 112-13.

3 Clipping, *Morning Journal*, June 7, 1893, in Harvard Theatre Collection; *Prince of Players*, 1954, screenplay Moss Hart and Eleanor Ruggles, dir. Philip Dunn and Eli Dunn, perf. Richard Burton, John Derek, distr. Films, Inc.

on their need to sacralize representatives of high culture.⁴ In keeping with his respectable image, Edwin in later life somewhat 'edited' his own history, abetted by his early biographers;⁵ and in a strange way, Edwin's early wildness seems to have been transferred to John: in reputation today he is often the drunken, debauched, undisciplined actor that in reality Edwin was at the age of 19 or 20.⁶ In fact, he became the scapegoat for the whole family's peculiarities, taking on his brother Joe's moodiness and tendency to drift, and their father's drinking bouts and unbalanced behaviour. Another effect of Edwin's eminence is that writers have tended to backdate his later reputation, asserting that with his first star tour he 'was at once recognized as . . . the future head of the American stage.'⁷ That this view, which clearly leaves no room for John at all, is an oversimplification can be seen in contemporary criticism of Edwin from the 1850s and 60s.

A further, minor contribution to the misinformation has been made by the complete ignorance on the part of some twentieth-century writers of the theatre of that day, or indeed of any day: Lloyd Lewis and Stanley Kimmell⁸ are particular offenders. Kimmell misunderstands the theatre as a race that only one star tragedian could win: he pictures John Wilkes Booth hoping that 'by a swift decisive blow, he could capture all the laurels [Edwin Booth and Edwin Forrest] had won' (p. 170). His 'Wilkes' had to beat Edwin to succeed, or feel beaten by him. The fact that melodrama, now being revalued, was thoroughly out of fashion when Lewis and Kimmell wrote (1929 and 1940 respectively),

4 Bruce A. McConachie, *Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre and Society, 1820-1870* (Iowa City: U. Iowa Press, 1992), p. 239.

5 Asia Booth Clarke *The Elder and the Younger Booth* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1882), and William Winter, *The Life and Art of Edwin Booth* (New York: Macmillan, 1906).

6 Edwin wrote in 1863, 'Before I was eighteen I was a drunkard, at twenty a libertine.' For this letter and his irresponsibility as an actor, see Charles H. Shattuck, *The Hamlet of Edwin Booth* (Urbana: U. Illinois Press, 1969), pp. 8-9.

7 Adam Badeau, 'Edwin Booth on and off the Stage', *McClure's Magazine* 1 (1893): 258.

8 *Myths after Lincoln* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929), and *The Mad Booths of Maryland*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1969).

probably added to their disdain for one whose repertoire contained several examples of this genre.

The myths, which, unfettered by serious scholarship, can grow to entertaining proportions, construct John Wilkes Booth as deviant, or even monstrous. Less than a week after the assassination, on April 20, 1865, the *Rochester Evening Express* maintained that Booth spent his nights 'singing rebel songs in company with abandoned women'. The same year, Dion Haco claimed that he was a member of a secret society, the Knights of the Golden Circle, under the name of Sir Hector of the Golden Sock and Buskin. A medical journal in 1901 classified Booth's ears as the 'Satanic type', and in 1916 a psychiatrist diagnosed from an anecdote of one onstage fluff a 'form of brain weakness' which could end in 'aphasia'. An article published as recently as 1954 suggests that one bad newspaper review 'must have left Booth in a mental state from which he did not soon recover' and thus contributed to Lincoln's death. As a 'mad matinee idol' in a book published in 1972, Booth 'rode horses across the proscenium [*sic*], fell off cliffs, jumped into the audience' and was 'carried off the stage' by women. And it still goes on: in 1992 a respected Lincoln scholar, David H. Donald, claimed that Booth's 1860 draft speech showed 'his disorderly, incoherent state of mind' (presumably because it *was* a draft and unfinished), while Robert Giroux, the speech's so-called 'discoverer', declared that he could 'usually tell a paranoid person just by looking at his handwriting' and that Booth was 'obviously nutty as a fruitcake'. As Booth wrote in this speech, 'Show me a [news]paper and for one word of truth you can find a hundred lies.'⁹

⁹ *John Wilkes Booth, the Assassinator of President Lincoln* (New York: T.R. Dawley, 1865), pp. 15-20; *Medical Monthly Journal* quoted by Rufus Woods, *The Weirdest Story in American History: The Escape of John Wilkes Booth* (Wenatchee, WA: n. publ., 1944), p. 17; Dr. Allan McLane Hamilton, *Recollections of an Alienist* (New York: Geo. H. Doran, 1916), p. 347 and see my Chapter 3 for this fluff; 'Booth's Appearance in Washington, November 1863', *Lincoln Lore*, March 15, 1954 (see Chapters 7 and 9 for this review); David Carroll, *The Matinee Idols* (London: Peter Owen, 1972), p. 32; *Washington Times*, April 15, 1992; Booth's speech, well known to scholars long before 1992, was finally published in *Right or Wrong, God Judge Me: The Writings of John Wilkes Booth*, ed. John Rhodehamel & Louise Taper (Urbana: U. Illinois Press, 1997), pp. 55-64. The speech is not in the least incoherent.

None of this would perhaps matter if it were not that the myths have made their way into the work of serious scholars. Because there is no reliable account of Booth's theatrical career, writers of the stature of George S. Bryan, Charles H. Shattuck and Terry Oggel repeat misinformation often dating back to the earliest newspaper slurs. Shattuck, after noting that 'wild living might have been [Edwin's] ruin', can say that John 'ran much the same course', which he decidedly did not. Neither was he 'usually unfavorably' compared to Edwin, as Oggel says. And Bryan, after a sound summary of John's work, nonetheless characterizes his career as 'without control or purpose.'¹⁰ So little serious attention has been given to John Booth that the illogical passes unchallenged, such as the statement of the *Dictionary of American Biography* that he had pronounced bow-legs and hid them by wearing a long cloak in the street--as if this stratagem would be of any use to a tragedian who spent half his working life in tights.¹¹ *The Oxford Companion to American Theatre's* single paragraph on him contains eight errors of fact.¹²

One of the earliest and most persistent myths is that Booth was a bad or unsuccessful actor. This became linked to another early *canard*, that he had a morbid desire for fame; together they produced a motive for the assassination, with or without an admixture of 'insanity'. Thus, to show that he was not unsuccessful on the stage is to reopen the question of his motives, an enquiry with repercussions outside the realm of theatre history. This thesis will not do more than glance at its subject's political life, and will aim only to demonstrate that much of what passes for accepted fact about John Wilkes Booth is without foundation, while tracing his theatrical career in as much detail as possible. That the detail may appear at times excessive is a measure of the corrective counterweighting required to provide the sort of balanced, dispassionate study which can

¹⁰ *Hamlet of EB*, p. 9; *The Letters and Notebooks of Mary Devlin Booth* ed. L. Terry Oggel (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), p. xxiii; George S. Bryan, *The Great American Myth* (1940; reprint, Chicago: American House, 1990), p. 96.

¹¹ 1929 ed., entry on JWB by Ernest Sutherland Bates, 1:448. See Chapter 4 for a comment on his (slight) bow-legs, and the costumed photograph on page 297. This slur is interestingly close to the Tudor disparagement of Richard III on the grounds of an imaginary deformity.

¹² Ed. Gerald Bordman, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

be used in the future as a much-needed basis for generalization. This thesis will likewise not attempt to analyze the myths about Booth--a study in themselves--beyond assessing their claim to be fact, and suggesting briefly what purpose they may serve.

Any such undertaking brings the writer into confrontation with Stanley Kimmel, whose underdocumented *Mad Booths of Maryland* has unfortunately been accepted as authoritative. Because this book contains some useful research on other members of the family, its distorted picture of John has acquired a spurious legitimacy, and it has been uncritically accepted by other writers.¹³ However, the very form of *Mad Booths* gives the lie to its factual pretensions. It creates a seamless narrative by indiscriminately using reliable and unreliable sources and filling gaps with imagined motives and conversations. It is concerned to portray the Booth family as (unlovable) eccentrics--deviants to be regarded with slight contempt. Materials in Kimmel's own collection contradict his conclusions in his book: he discards almost everything favourable to John Booth, while using nearly all the vilifications from the 1865 newspapers. Thus Kimmel's 'Wilkes' is a cowardly braggart athirst for notoriety and a crude, ranting actor with not much intelligence, though perhaps not mad. Kimmel recycles later myth, too: Lewis's notion that John was a spoilt mother's boy, a lazy untrained actor expecting fame 'at one bound'; and the common supposition that he was pathologically envious of his brother Edwin's fame.¹⁴ Kimmel's theory that John's career came to a halt because his voice failed has a superficial plausibility which has gained it wide acceptance, but it will be argued here that this idea is but a sophisticated version of the 'craved fame, failed as actor, therefore shot President' scenario, put forward to trivialize Booth and his motives.¹⁵

13 Particularly by Nan Wyatt Withers, 'The Acting Style and Career of John Wilkes Booth', doctoral diss., U. Wisconsin-Madison, 1979 (University Microfilms 8007581); Eleanor Ruggles, *Prince of Players: Edwin Booth* (New York: Norton, 1953); Gordon Samples, *Lust for Fame: The Stage Career of John Wilkes Booth* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co. 1982); and numerous articles.

14 Lewis, pp. 167-68; George L. Stout in the *Baltimore American*, July 7, 1893 offered the opinion that John's 'desire to make himself as famous as his brother inspired him to commit his dreadful deed', but he may not have been the first to suggest this.

15 Because of the number of references to Kimmel's book, it will here be identified by page number only.

The sources for any attempt justly to assess John Wilkes Booth present a number of problems. After the assassination, much material was destroyed as friends and relatives repudiated Booth. His sister, Asia Booth Clarke, was hampered in writing his biography by the fact that 'all information [on JWB's career] contained in criticisms, letters, playbills and theatrical records, has been lost in the general destruction of papers and effects belonging to Wilkes Booth. All written or printed material found in our possession, everything that bore his name, was given up'¹⁶ Some of his friends never broke their silence about him. Booth's surviving letters are not very self-revealing, mostly being written hurriedly on tour about business matters. Little can be recovered about his business practices (how he contracted engagements, his terms as a star, etc.): many arrangements would have been made verbally or by telegraph, leaving no surviving documentation. The lack of a full-length biography of Edwin Booth which is not hagiographic is a serious obstacle to the attempt to set John in his context and compare him with his most important contemporary. Anything written after the assassination is informed by the knowledge of that deed, and must therefore be treated with extreme caution. Reminiscence by Booth's friends and fellow actors may be the most reliable, but as well as being slanted by nostalgia as suggested above, it may pass on newspaper myth. When speaking of matters not in their personal experience, these people tend to repeat all-too-recognizable post-assassination calumnies. Even Booth's sister Asia seems to have picked up a few of these, notably the fabrication that John's career was mainly confined to the 'South' and 'West'.¹⁷

The only sources that cannot be viewing John's career as a prelude to assassination are those antedating that event: that is, mainly, newspaper reviews immediately following his performances. And yet there are pitfalls even here: with careful selection and editing, a quite misleading impression can be created, as Kimmel's book proves. There has also

16 Asia Booth Clarke, *The Unlocked Book: A Memoir of John Wilkes Booth by his Sister*, ed. Eleanor Farjeon (London: Faber, 1938), p. 108. Ironically, some material was preserved because it was taken away from relatives by the government.

17 Clarke, *Unlocked Book*, p. 110. This was written in 1874.

been a tendency on the part of some writers to ignore regional papers and deal only with New York--and while Booth's New York reviews were good, he gave very few performances there. Rosemarie Bank points out that because of a lack of basic research on the theatre business in antebellum America, 'attention is skewed in the direction of the northeastern quadrant of the United States and, among urban centers, favors New York over the other large cities of that era.'¹⁸ The complacent New York opinion of the day that that city was the only arbiter of taste needs to be challenged, too: some very perceptive reviews came from the West, which New Yorkers believed to be inhabited only by unsophisticated rant-lovers.¹⁹ A thorough account of his career must follow him all over the country and attempt to gain a sense of how he was received everywhere, and how this changed over time. Hence this thesis will be based mainly on contemporary reviews, well and badly written, favourable and unfavourable, and will use frequent quotation to obviate the danger of mistaken interpretation. The sheer volume of reviews used should ensure that any individual bias is cancelled out.

Chapter 1 of the thesis will sketch in the aspects of Booth's childhood relevant to his career in the theatre, taking him up to the age of nineteen when he took his first job in a stock company. Chapter 2 will then set him in his context by giving some background on the American theatre of the day. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with his apprenticeship in two stock companies, and Chapters 5 to 8 continue his story chronologically, tracing his star career engagement by engagement and using the more general comments of local reviewers to assess his acting style and popularity. In Chapters 9 and 10, individual plays in Booth's star repertoire are considered in more detail, and an attempt is made to chart his development of these characters: Chapter 9 deals with Richard III, by far Booth's most popular role; Chapter 10 with the rest of his Shakespearean characters, and with the two

¹⁸ Rosemarie K. Bank, *Theatre Culture in America, 1825-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1997), p. 3.

¹⁹ The *New York Evening Post's* (April 15, 1865) statement that Booth was 'quite popular in Western and Southern theatres' and that his last engagement had been in Chicago (it was in Boston) was no doubt intended to denigrate him along these lines, but probably originated the misapprehension that Booth played in the Confederacy during the War.

other parts which he can be said to have made his own. The Conclusion uses comparisons of John with Edwin and Junius Brutus Booth and Edwin Forrest to assess his style and his contemporary status, looks at the later history of the styles of this transitional period, and speculates on how Booth might have developed had he lived. An Appendix listing all known professional performances by Booth with dates and venues supplements the chronological chapters.

A few final points. To distinguish John Wilkes Booth from the rest of his family, he will sometimes be referred to here by his forename. Since all the evidence indicates that he was known to his acquaintance as 'John' and not, as some have assumed, as 'Wilkes', 'John' will be used. This is partly intended as a corrective to other writers' use of 'Wilkes': since that is a surname--and the surname of a famous radical--'Wilkes' seems more distant, perhaps more dangerous, or more pretentious than 'Edwin' or the very ordinary 'John', and thus the name has become part of a persona constructed for Booth by hostile writers. Secondly, the term 'the West' is employed here as it was in the 1850s and 60s, to refer mostly to the area known today as the mid-West; and the theatrical term 'combination' is used as in that period rather than in its later meaning of a wholly self-sufficient company touring a single play. Finally, actresses of the period will be referred to as 'Miss' or 'Mrs.', since a bare surname would in those days have denoted only a parlourmaid or a criminal.



The young John Wilkes Booth (date uncertain), photographed by Silsbee, Case and Co. in Boston. Published in Richard J.S. Gutman and Kellie O. Gutman, *John Wilkes Booth Himself* (Dover, MA: Hired Hand Press, 1979), p. 39. This pose ('Gutman 3') is one of his earliest extant photographs.

CHAPTER 1

'The royal tree hath left us royal fruit'

Accounts of John Wilkes Booth's childhood have been as clouded by myth as any other part of his life. Writers from George Alfred Townsend to the present day have wished to portray him as wayward, undisciplined and over-indulged by doting parents.¹ Very few anecdotes have any basis in fact: George Bryan's *The Great American Myth* refutes many, while giving an excellent general introduction to Booth's real life and background.² Many alleged facts remain to be challenged, but this chapter will attempt mainly to examine the theatrical aspect of Booth's childhood: his work in the amateur theatre, and his acquisition of accomplishments which proved useful in the profession.

John Wilkes was born on May 10, 1838, the ninth of the ten, and fifth of the six surviving children of Junius Brutus Booth and Mary Ann Holmes, on the family farm near Bel Air, Maryland. His eldest brother Junius Jr. (known as June) was 17 years older than he, and his elder sister Rosalie 15 years older; after a long gap occasioned by the death of four siblings, Edwin was the eldest of a 'second family' at four and a half years John's senior; then came Asia, John and Joseph at roughly two-yearly intervals.

Their father was a famous actor, but the children did not have an upbringing at all typical of a theatrical family. Between tours, Junius Brutus relished the rural peace of the farm, and life there was very quiet indeed. Edwin Booth remembered:

Contented within his family circle, he could not appreciate the necessity for any extraneous element there; hence, his wife and children became isolated, and were ill at ease in the presence of other than their own immediate relatives.³

1 George Alfred Townsend, *The Life, Crime, and Capture of John Wilkes Booth* (New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1865), and articles.

2 Chapter 4: 'The True John Booth', especially pp. 76-84.

3 'Some Words about my Father', in *Actors and Actresses of Great Britain and the United States* ed. Brander Matthews & Laurence Hutton (New York: Cassell, 1886), 3:96. Edwin, unlike John and Joseph, never went to boarding school, so the isolation may have affected him more than the others.

This view is confirmed by Asia, who said that her father's 'idea of *home* was a sacred circle wherein few were admitted save the immediate family.'⁴ From about 1840, the family spent the winter months in a Baltimore townhouse,⁵ which would have given the children more opportunities for a social life. It would not be an exaggeration to say the young Booths were brought up more as children of a gentleman farmer than of an actor. Certainly, Junius Brutus, as the son of a London solicitor, was of a higher class and better educated than most actors of that time.

The elder Booth was firmly opposed to his children going on the stage, not, according to Edwin, because he thought it unworthy, 'but because its effect on his nervous system caused him so much distress'; and when the children were young, 'everything connected with his profession was carefully avoided' lest it 'engender romantic desires for excitement'.⁶ Most actors of the period both married within the profession and put their children to work in it from their earliest years: Mrs. John Drew's debut at 12 months carried onstage by her mother was typical.⁷ By contrast, neither of Junius Brutus Booth's wives was an actress, his daughters did not enter the profession, and he seems to have accepted with reluctance his elder sons' doing so. Booth's attitude may reflect his middle-class origins as much as his profession's emotional effect on him: the stage had not been an obvious--or suitable--occupation for him, and paradoxically his success would have enabled him to help his sons escape it. '[N]o respectable parent', says Michael Baker, would have encouraged his children to go into the arts; 'an attitude which prevailed even among artists themselves who commonly sought to direct their own children to a more regular and gainful means of livelihood.'⁸

⁴ *Elder and Younger Booth*, p. 112.

⁵ Stephen M. Archer, *Junius Brutus Booth: Theatrical Prometheus* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), p. 160.

⁶ Edwin Booth, 'Some Words about My Father', p. 98 and Clarke, *Elder and Younger Booth*, p. 112.

⁷ Louisa Lane Drew, *Autobiographical Sketch of Mrs. Drew* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1900), p. 6.

⁸ *The Rise of the Victorian Actor* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 21. Baker's study deals with Britain, but the history of American theatre is very similar.

However, their father did permit the children to go to the theatre occasionally, though they were 'never allowed a free indulgence' in all kinds of plays. He took the whole family to see Macready's *Werner*, presumably when the British actor was at Baltimore in December 1848. Asia could 'remember only a sombre man with peculiar brows and guttural voice, dragging through what seemed to her a very dismal tragedy; but Mr. Booth pronounced it "a most exquisite performance."'9 John, who was ten at this time, would have retained an even hazier impression. Junius Brutus also read plays aloud to the children: Asia was particularly impressed with his *Coriolanus*.10 The children were clearly acquainted with Shakespeare from an early age: friends remembered the Booth boys declaiming passages from Shakespeare while sitting in a cherry tree near the farmhouse, whose branches 'separated like five great fingers from a hand'.11 This would not of itself indicate theatrical ambitions: in this period Shakespeare was a part of everyone's culture, and speeches were memorized and recited at school as part of the study of rhetoric in an age when oratory was a popular art.12

Seeking to interest the boys in other hobbies and careers, their father 'had a workshop erected in the garden' for John and Joseph, 'stored with lumber and the necessary tools,' and 'strove to excite in their minds a love of mechanical pursuits'. He wished both these sons to become farmers,13 but his efforts were in vain with three of his offspring. His namesake followed him into the profession, and from an early age Edwin and John took part in amateur theatricals.

In later years, fellow-members of these troupes (a large number of whom had also gone into the profession) related many and bewilderingly contradictory stories about their boyhood efforts. There seem to have been essays into tragedy, melodrama, farce,

9 Clarke, *Elder and Younger Booth*, p. 113.

10 Asia Booth Clarke, *Personal Recollections of the Elder Booth* (London: privately printed, n.d.), p. 15.

11 Ella V. Mahoney, *Sketches of Tudor Hall and the Booth Family* (Bel Air, MD: Ella V. Mahoney, 1925), p. 13.

12 Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 37.

13 Clarke, *Elder and Younger Booth*, p. 112, and *Unlocked Book*, pp. 51-52.

minstrel shows and at least one circus. Venues included a summerhouse in the garden of the Booths' Baltimore townhouse, a cellar near the farm, and various cellars in Baltimore. Edwin Booth was the focus of most of these stories, whose purpose was the (mostly) good-natured fun to be had from the idea of the future great tragedian in blackface strumming a banjo; and probably for this reason, John was rarely mentioned. As a much younger boy, he may, in any case, have been excluded from the earlier projects. On one occasion, he was said to have laughed at the other boys when he discovered them rehearsing or performing in a cellar near the Booths' Bel Air home, whereupon one participant, Theodore Micheau, 'more in play than anger', threw an oyster shell at him. It struck his head and left a scar 'which remained with him to his death'.¹⁴ Stanley Kimmell, in order to characterize Booth as disruptive, presents this incident as one of many: his 'Wilkes', a persistent nuisance to the older boys, has to be placated by being given some things to do in the show (p. 69). Multiplying some reported incident into a regular occurrence is a technique frequently used to denigrate John Wilkes Booth, as we shall see. However, a different slant is given by Stuart Robson, later to be a celebrated comic actor. According to Robson, he, John and others were preparing to present a play called *Alessandro Massaroni, or, The King of the Bloody Thieves* in a Baltimore basement when Edwin Booth and his friend and future brother-in-law John S. Clarke 'offered to join our troupe for one-fifth of the gross receipts.' Edwin was only two years older than Robson, 'but my! how he did look down on us.' Edwin and Clarke took the leading roles and the play seems to have been given a number of performances. When the younger ones 'chafed under the patronizing of Edwin Booth and John Clarke' the members of the original troupe 'went into the circus business.'¹⁵

Echoes of this story can be found in the accounts of George L. Stout, who also grew up to be an actor, and in an article by Celia Logan which may draw on the memories

14 Mahoney, p. 47. Her informant was Dr. Micheau's daughter. Mrs. Mahoney also says that a neighbour, Mrs. Rogers, dressed the wound, and later identified John's body by the scar (p. 29).

15 Alonzo J. May, 'May's Dramatic Encyclopedia of Baltimore' (MS 995, Manuscripts Division, Maryland Historical Society Library), 1851 B14-16.

of either Stout or Robson.¹⁶ In Logan's account, Edwin Booth founded the original company, which had one precious piece of second-hand scenery, and when 'disaffection' caused a split, 'John Wilkes Booth and [Theodore] Hamilton broke into [the cellar theatre] and stole the set piece', and set up a rival company. According to Stout in 1903, Stuart Robson and Hamilton were the culprits. Since all these stories have clearly been elaborated for maximum entertainment value, none is completely reliable, but they must reflect real events, however imprecisely. Information is scarce on John's performances: Robson's obituary states that he had 'played "theatre" as a boy with Edwin and John Wilkes Booth in a stable on South street [Baltimore]',¹⁷ and Robson gave the only detail when he said, 'I once sat in a black-faced circle in which Edwin Booth was the interlocutor. Theodore Hamilton was the tambourine, and I played the bones. John Wilkes Booth played the triangle and sang [""]The Heart Bowed Down[""] [from *The Bohemian Girl*]' John, who was eleven at the time, also sang other 'melancholy ballads': we know from his sister's biography that he was fond of sad songs.¹⁸ According to Robson, this performance was given 'several times, before admiring friends in the city of Baltimore.'

As well as taking part in these entertainments organized by the boys themselves, John participated in drama and recitations at school. He attended several schools, though the dates are unclear. Along with Edwin and Asia, he went first to a school for boys and girls in Baltimore, kept by a Miss Susan Hyde.¹⁹ A female classmate, perhaps from this school, remembered the brothers later: John Wilkes, she said, 'was the better declaimer and a boy of greater promise. . . . Edwin was more delicate and developed more

16 Edwin Booth's obituary in *Baltimore American*, June 7, 1893 and 'Knew the Booths in Boyhood Days', *Baltimore American*, July 27, 1903 both quote Stout; Celia Logan, 'These Our Actors', unidentified newspaper clipping in Harvard Theatre Collection (probably late 1880s).

17 'Stuart Robson is Dead', *Baltimore Sun*, April 30, 1903.

18 Alonzo May, 1850: B56; *Unlocked Book*, p. 67.

19 Laurence Hutton, in *Edwin Booth* (New York: Harper, 1893) names this school as Edwin's first (p. 14.); Asia (*Unlocked Book*, p. 45) says 'my brothers and self' attended school together 'under the same mistress'.

slowly.²⁰ Later, Edwin, John and Joe, the youngest, studied under Martin J. Kerney, who kept a school on Exeter Street, Baltimore, down the road from the Booth townhouse. Kerney 'encouraged dramatic performances among his pupils',²¹ but no details survive. John's next school appears to have been Bel Air Academy, near the farm, which he attended as a day boy while Joe boarded. Their headmaster, Dr. Edwin Arnold, remembered their being at the school for about five years. Both brothers belonged to a debating club at this school: a reflection of the popularity of oratory.²² This school was perhaps identical with the 'first public school' in the area, attended by Elijah Whistler, a country neighbour of the Booths, who remembered John as handsome, kind and gentle. At the end of one term,

the pupils gave a play and Johnnie was selected to take the leading rôle. When he stood on the stage speaking his lines his black eyes sparkled with intensity. Every one could see that he would some day be a great actor like his father.²³

We can be more sure of the next stage in John's education, for he appears in the 1850 census (as 'J.M. Booth'), aged 12, a resident at Milton Boarding School, Baltimore County, Maryland,²⁴ which he probably entered at the start of the academic year in 1849. That this Quaker school for boys was not under the care of a particular Meeting perhaps gave the headmaster greater leeway in designing the pupils' activities, for it was most unusual in those days for Quakers to engage in drama. Yet Asia has left us a vivid account of an end-of-term performance in which John distinguished himself. Families of pupils were invited to an outdoor lunch followed by a prize-giving and recitations; Asia and her mother were surprised to hear a boy give a speech from *Othello*:

Wilkes stood near, watching his classmate with a nervous, pale face. The reason was obvious when, after a pause, Wilkes himself came upon the little stage with all the fury of old Shylock.

20 Augustus White Long, *Son of Carolina* (Durham, NC: Duke U. Press, 1939), p. 185.

21 James O. Hall, 'John Wilkes Booth at School', *Surratt Courier* 16, no. 7 (July 1991): 3, quoting James J. Williamson, a schoolmate; Hutton, *Edwin Booth*, pp. 14-15.

22 Notes in Kimmel Collection, Merl Kelce Library, Tampa U., Florida.

23 Kimmel, p. 67: no source is given.

24 1850 Census, Baltimore County, Maryland, Dwelling no. 327, National Archives of the United States.

'I say my daughter is my flesh and blood!'

A master, who stood screened by the boys nearest the platform, read out Salarino's, the servant's, and Tubal's lines [from III, i], and Shylock had the stage to himself. The storm of passion, the lull of despair, the wild hysterical rejoicing . . . were most earnestly given, and the doleful murmur of torture at the loss of the turquoise . . . with that dreary shaking of the head, as more remembering departed days than grieving for his loved jewel . . . was provocative of a sadness which was rudely dispersed by his venomous tirade--'I'll have the heart of him if he forfeit!'

The audience, of about three hundred--pupils, families, teaching staff and other employees--were held:

The general impression created by this scene was visible in each countenance, and in the stillness which followed the wild exit of Shylock. A swift torrent of applause recalled the young actor, who smiled, and blushed, and bowed repeatedly.²⁵

This perhaps partial account is confirmed by Mary Lamb Cox, daughter of the headmaster John Emerson Lamb: nearly the same age as Booth, she remembered him as 'rather distinguished looking and fond of declaiming and acting. His acting then was of a very high order and he took the principal roles in Plays that were produced at the School.'²⁶

After two or three years at Milton, John was sent to St. Timothy's Hall in Catonsville, Maryland. Described by Asia as a 'finishing school',²⁷ this resembled a contemporary British public school in being rather spartan, and was attended by boys from some of the most prominent Southern families. They wore military uniform, were drilled regularly and learnt to use muskets,²⁸ a skill that would stand John in good stead a few years later, in 1859 (see Chapter 4). Asia tells us that '[t]he oratorical powers of the cadets of St. Timothy's were, without doubt, encouraged and cultivated; stump-speaking was the delight of those youths who longed to make their voices heard throughout the

²⁵ *Unlocked Book*, pp. 55-56.

²⁶ Letter to David Rankin Barbee from Mary's children, Esther L. Cox and George E. Cox, Aug. 31, 1940, in David Rankin Barbee Papers, Special Collections Division, Georgetown University Library.

²⁷ *Unlocked Book*, p. 59.

²⁸ Erick Davis, 'Saint Timothy's Hall', *History Trails* 11 (1977): 12; 'Found Few Comforts in School Winter Season Fifty Years Ago', *Baltimore Sun*, Mar. 29, 1923.

country.'²⁹ This would have been good training for an actor as well as a politician. A reminiscence by a fellow pupil relates:

[W]e had a dramatic association at the college, and Booth was one of the most active members. We gave regular exhibitions and entertainments on holiday occasions, and they were largely attended by people of the surrounding country. . . . On all such occasions, Booth was in his element.³⁰

But the carefree days of John's childhood were nearly over. In November 1852, his father died of fever on a steamboat from New Orleans, returning from an acting trip to California. Edwin had gone with him, but had remained in California to gain experience performing under the management of his brother June and others. The baptismal register of St. Timothy's Church lists John and Joe among six baptized on January 23, 1853; presumably they finished the academic year at the school, but by April the next year John was writing to a friend, 'I have been from school so long that I have forggot [*sic*] how to spell and writ ght'.³¹ At the age of 15, his formal education was over, except perhaps for occasional visits to Bel Air Academy, when farm work allowed.³²

Booth had not been an outstanding student academically. His Bel Air headmaster remembered that though 'not deficient in intelligence nor brain', he was 'not devoted to his studies.'³³ His sister tells us that he 'was not quick at acquiring knowledge, he had to plod, progress slowly step by step, but that which he once attained he never lost.' He also had a very useful attribute for an actor, a visual memory: 'What he had once learned remained, as he said, *stamped on the sight of his mind*, for he not only recollected, but saw it'--and could recall it years later. Asia characterizes him as 'slow and steady, his well-balanced brain comprehended and applied what it had acquired.'³⁴

He had been taught other skills useful for an actor:

The leader of the orchestra at one of the theatres in Baltimore gave Wilkes lessons on the flute, and a Mr. J.R. Codet, a stage dancer . . . was the dancing

²⁹ *Unlocked Book*, p. 60.

³⁰ A Marylander, 'John Wilkes Booth: His School-Day Dreams and Constant Study--His Thoughts of Greatness' Philadelphia *Press*, Dec. 27, 1881.

³¹ To T. William O'Laughlen, April 30, 1854, Rhodehamel & Taper, p. 37.

³² In a January, 1854 letter to O'Laughlen, he writes 'I am going to school in Bel Air to morrow if nothing happens' (ibid.).

³³ Notes in Kimmel Collection.

³⁴ *Unlocked Book*, pp. 45, 47.

master who gave Wilkes lessons in the Highland Fling, Sailor's Hornpipe, and a difficult Polish dance. This was to give grace and ease of deportment.³⁵

At a time when plays such as *Black Eyed Susan* were still in the repertory, a sailor's hornpipe was a particularly useful acquisition. The contemporary *Guide to the Stage* points out also that certain characters in the standard drama could not be played without dancing. Likewise, singing was necessary for Iago and Edgar, as well as in light comedy; and the *Guide* advises that the ability to recognize tunes and count bars is essential in melodrama, where entrances, exits and actions were timed with the music. The actor Walter Leman tells a story of a veteran of the London minors who 'had never played anything in all his life except *to music*', and who had the following exchange at rehearsal: "'That's your cue, Mr. Cartlitch," "Well, where's the music? I can't come on without music; Mr. Holloway, please play three bars from the hurry in "Mazeppa."' The *Guide* also recommends learning an instrument in order to 'create a voice, and correct a bad ear.'³⁶ Booth was 'passionately fond of music', and would sing with his sister as well as playing the flute.³⁷

Fencing was a particularly important skill:

The meanest utility man knew the secrets of 'round eights,' 'shoulder cuts,' 'preems' and double 'preems.' If he were very proficient he could fight a broadsword combat lasting half an hour, make sparks fly from his opponent's sword, and work the gallery into a state of enthusiastic frenzy.³⁸

For a leading actor it could be crucial, as the *Guide* (p. 21) warned: 'Edwards' failure in Richard [III], at Covent Garden, was decided by his wretched combat. I need not add how Kean's was enhanced by his excellent one.' Laurence Olivier points out that Shakespeare often lets a climactic duel 'provide him with his denouements'.³⁹ The *Guide*

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 58-59.

³⁶ Leman Thomas Rede, *The Guide to the Stage*, ed. Francis C. Wemyss (New York: Samuel French, 1863), pp. 18, 20, 21; Walter M. Leman, *Memories of an Old Actor* (repr. New York: Benjamin Blom, [1969]), pp. 149-50.

³⁷ *Unlocked Book*, pp. 67, 75.

³⁸ *Daily Music & Drama* (New York), Dec. 27, 1882, speaking of 'twenty years ago'.

³⁹ Introduction to William Hobbs, *Techniques of the Stage Fight* (London: Studio Vista, 1967), p. 6.

advised that the use of the broadsword 'is essential in Macbeth, and in all melodramas' (p. 22), and recommended studying 'under a brother performer, rather than a professor'. Edwin Booth remembered later that their eldest brother Junius had 'taught us boys . . . and we got most of our knowledge of it from him.' June was at one time a pupil of Col. Thomas H. Monsterey, a master of fencing.⁴⁰ John, naturally athletic, would later be famed for his stage fighting.

Had he yet made up his mind to become an actor? He had clearly shown both interest and competence in acting, but he was also involved in the local branch of the American Party, or Know-Nothings, although he was not old enough to vote. Asia remembers urging him to decide between acting and politics, 'for I felt that he had great love for both, and believed him capable of adorning either station'.⁴¹ For the moment, however, he had no choice. Although a famous actor, Junius Brutus did not die a wealthy man. A few years later, Edwin wrote:

After my Father's death, and during my stay in California, my poor Mother (unknown to me--as I too thought my Father a man of means) was obliged to support and educate a family of three [*sic*] out of a few hundreds that were left standing in her name after the estate was all settled.⁴²

John and Joe left the prestigious St. Timothy's, where fees for the session 1853-54 were \$250 (\$300 with 'extras'),⁴³ and the family rented out the townhouse and lived all the year round on the farm. It is clear from *The Unlocked Book's* pages that John was heavily involved in running it, and a letter from Asia in autumn of 1854 says, 'Joe goes to school in Elkton[,] Cecil county. John is trying to farm.'⁴⁴ With Junius and Edwin in California, John found himself the eldest man of the family, with responsibilities to match.

40 *Francis Wilson's Life of Himself* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), pp. 131, 135.

41 *Unlocked Book*, pp. 91-92 and 104.

42 EB to Lawrence Barrett, Jan. 13, 1860, Otis A. Skinner, *The Last Tragedian* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1939), p. 133. Rosalie, Asia, John and Joe were all living at home at the time.

43 Circular, St. Timothy's Hall, 1853, Maryland Diocesan Archives.

44 Asia to Jean Anderson, '14th, 1854' [*sic*], ML 518, The Peale Museum, Baltimore City Life Museums, Baltimore, MD.

Much has been made by Edwin's biographers of his lonely boyhood, travelling with his father and acting as dresser/minder to the eccentric tragedian; but John has been given little credit for his four years as a reluctant but hard-working farmer. Instead, writers have filled this obscure period with inventions which construct him as irresponsible: Kimmel's John 'had gone on several sprees' and his 'efforts to assist in [the farm's] operation were negligible'; Eleanor Ruggles's 'handsome, idling, unruly' John 'thrashed his schoolmates and got drunk at sixteen. . . . their mother spoiled him.'⁴⁵ In fact, as Asia makes clear, his duties included travelling afar to sell livestock and grain, buying tools, and supervising the hired white and resident black labourers; and John himself wrote to his friend, William O'Laughlen, 'have had so much work all day and am so tired that I can not find time to write.'⁴⁶

He chafed against his lot. At an age when Edwin had begun his theatrical career, John wondered, 'How shall *I* ever have a chance on the stage? Buried here, torturing the grain out of the ground for daily bread, what chance have I of ever studying elocution or declamation?' And he grumbled to O'Laughlen, 'I am getting very tired of the country', and joked, 'I am thinking of moveing [*sic*] to Sebasterpol [*sic*] you know there is some excitement there.'⁴⁷

Together, he and Asia researched for a biography of their father, which Asia finished and published after John's death.⁴⁸ John trained himself as best he could, working on his voice and deportment: 'He found an old book of his father's and tried to learn, from its signs, the inflection and guidance of the voice. We carefully read together *Dr. Rush on the Voice*, but concluded that little could be effected without a master.'⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *Mad Booths*, p. 113; Ruggles, p. 72.

⁴⁶ *Unlocked Book*, pp. 63, 80, 89; letter, Nov. 8, 1854, Rhodehamel & Taper, p. 40.

⁴⁷ *Unlocked Book*, p. 66; letter, Sept. 14, 1855, Rhodehamel & Taper, p. 42. See Chapter 4 for John's soldiering ambitions: perhaps this reference to the Crimean War was not altogether a joke.

⁴⁸ *Unlocked Book*, pp. 69-72; their work was published as *Booth Memorials: Passages, Incidents, and Anecdotes in the Life of Junius Brutus Booth, the Elder* (New York: Carleton, 1866), under Asia's name alone.

⁴⁹ *Unlocked Book*, p. 66. Presumably this was Dr. James Rush's *The Philosophy of the Human Voice*, which went through six editions between 1827 and 1867, and discusses

Perhaps it was as well that John could not study elocution: several of his eminent contemporaries later felt that it was of limited value, if any. Advising would-be actors in the 1880s, the tragedian Lawrence Barrett stated flatly: 'No school of elocution, no training outside the theater can I regard as at all valuable'. Maggie Mitchell felt that 'training in elocution or gesture' too often proved to be an obstacle rather than a help, producing 'woodenness and jerkiness'. The comedian Joseph Jefferson III thought it useful 'taken in homeopathic doses and with great care': '[b]etter be pedantic and mechanical than indefinite and careless.'⁵⁰ Instead, and as advised by the *Guide to the Stage*, Booth 'practised every day in the woods, letting his deep strident tones die away in echoes'. Asia told him that 'his voice was a beautiful organ, with perfect music in it', but could not advise him further.⁵¹

She felt herself 'a better judge of ease and deportment', and could encourage her brother, who felt graceless, 'jerky and stiff, and too awkward for the stage.' To practise, he improvised a 'toga' from a shawl, and once put on a trained dress of Asia's and paraded before the mirror, 'declaring that he would succeed as Lady Macbeth in the sleep-walking scene.' He went into the fields dressed as a young lady, and was delighted when the workers took off their hats to him because his 'elegant deportment' had fooled them. Another time he dressed as Charlotte Cushman playing Meg Merrilies in *Guy Mannering*, and terrified both Asia and the black servants with his impression of the eldritch gypsy woman.⁵²

Most actors of the day agreed that there was only one way to learn acting, and that was to join a stock company in a humble capacity and work one's way up. However, before undertaking this, some made their debuts in more important, even leading parts 'for one night only'. This was the practice of stage-struck amateurs, of whom no more was heard, but successful actors such as E.L. Davenport, William Warren, James E. Murdoch

the physiology of the voice as well as elocution.

⁵⁰ John McCullough and others, 'Success on the Stage', *North American Review* 135 (1882), pp. 590, 592, 596.

⁵¹ Rede & Wemyss, p. 27; *Unlocked Book*, p. 67.

⁵² *Unlocked Book*, pp. 66-67.

and John W. Albaugh also began in this way.⁵³ Saying nothing to his family, John 'went for a brief visit to Baltimore' in August of 1855, and on his return exclaimed to Asia, "[G]uess what I've done! . . . I've made my first appearance on any stage, for this night only, and in big capitals." . . . His face shone with enthusiasm, and by the exultant tone of his voice it was plain that he had passed the test night.⁵⁴ 'BOOTH! BOOTH!' shouted the advertisement in the Baltimore *Sun*:

The *debut* of a son of the late
Junius Brutus Booth,
 which takes place at the
Charles Street Theatre to-night,
is now the
*"Town Talk."*⁵⁵

He played Richmond in the last act of *Richard III* to the Richard of Mr. William Ellis, in a farewell benefit for John S. Clarke, who was about to go to Philadelphia to join the Arch Street Theatre company as First Low Comedian (*Sun*, Aug. 13). Booth was seventeen years old. His boyhood friend George Stout, already a professional actor, remembered, 'I dressed him for the part and missed my own part, for which I lost a week's pay.'⁵⁶ Contrary to Kimmel's assertion that '[t]he critics, remembering his father, were kind' (p. 149), there was no contemporary comment on his performance, but the vacuum was filled, with Booth exemplifying hubris punished: 'unprepared' for this 'leap into the family profession', he was said to have 'played so badly that he was hissed', or to have 'floundered piteously'.⁵⁷ However, Asia's account makes clear that he had not failed, and that he now began to plan for the future:

53 Edwin F. Edgett, *Edward Loomis Davenport: A Biography* (New York: Dunlap Society, 1901), pp. 8-10; Anon, *Life and Memoirs of William Warren, Boston's Favorite Comedian* (Boston: James Daly, 1888), p. 10; intro. by J. Bunting in James E. Murdoch, *The Stage; or, Recollections of Actors and Acting from an Experience of Fifty Years* (1880; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969), p. 15; Henry Pitt Phelps, *Players of a Century: A Record of the Albany Stage* (Albany, NY: Joseph McDonough, 1880), p. 307. Warren was of a theatrical family, and the other three had done amateur work previously, as had Booth.

54 *Unlocked Book*, pp. 105-06.

55 Tuesday, Aug. 14, 1855.

56 'Knew the Booths in Boyhood Days'.

57 Kimmel, p. 149; Townsend, *Life, Crime, and Capture*, p. 21; Lewis, p. 168. For a fuller discussion of Townsend, see Chapter 3.

We sat in the old swing-seat late that night, indulging romantic fancies. 'He could never hope to be as great as father, he never wanted to try to rival Edwin, but he wanted to be loved of the Southern people above all things. He would work to make himself essentially a Southern actor.'⁵⁸

It was a modest ambition, but one he could as yet only dream about: for the time being, it was back to farming. In leisure hours, John and Asia continued to struggle with the biography of the elder Booth, and John began to learn the parts he hoped one day to play: Richard the Third and Shylock proved easier to memorize than Antony. 'We were very studious', remembers Asia. 'The seriousness of life had come'.⁵⁹

Things began to change just over a year later, when Edwin returned from California. He had spent the four years since their father's death learning his trade in various companies, and had returned to the East for a tour as a star (see Chapter 2), after which he expected to 'sink into the position of leading man at one of the New York theatres'.⁶⁰ By 1856, the peak of the Gold Rush had passed, and there was too much theatre in California for the demand; Ben Baker, then a prompter, had suggested that they go East with himself as Edwin's agent: 'Now that your father is dead, you will be the coming tragedian'.⁶¹ A cynical construction of this might be that Baker and/or Edwin hoped to cash in on the fact that audiences were missing the elder Booth. It certainly implies that Edwin would follow in his father's footsteps and style, which he did to begin with. In retrospect, a more romantic picture was accepted as the truth: 'From the far West a youth had come who bore a magical name the younger generation seeking for their ideal found it in this dark-haired, brown-eyed youth, who had seized the sceptre of the stage with an audacious hand'.⁶² The star season was so successful that Edwin never returned to the less remunerative position of stock employee. It was presumably the extra income thus brought into the family that enabled them to give up the farm, and finally set

⁵⁸ *Unlocked Book*, p. 106.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 106-07.

⁶⁰ *Elder and Younger Booth*, p. 146.

⁶¹ Alfred L. Bernheim, *The Business of the Theatre. An Economic History of the theatre 1750-1932* (1932; repr. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964), p. 18; J.J. McCloskey, 'Edwin Booth in Old California', *Green Book Album*, June 1911, p. 1327.

⁶² Lawrence Barrett, *Edwin Forrest* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1881), p. 97-98.

John free to pursue his chosen career. Following Edwin's first starring year, an advertisement was placed in a local newspaper in the summer of 1857:

FOR RENT - The splendid and well known residence of the late J.B. Booth, in Harford County, about three miles from Bel Air on the road leading to Churchville. This place will be rented to a good tenant if immediate application be made. There is 180 acres of land, 80 of which is arable.
Address

JOHN BOOTH
Baltimore, Md.⁶³

It hardly needs a Lawrence Barrett to tell us that 'Every gift, both mental and physical, that a bountiful nature can bestow upon a man will be found of use to the successful actor.'⁶⁴ John had, in addition to his intelligence, what all observers regarded as quite remarkable beauty. Slightly taller than his father and Edwin at five feet seven or eight, he was more athletic than his brother. Asia recalled his vaulting into the saddle without touching his stirrup, and more prosaically the actor Charles Krone tells us: 'John Wilkes Booth possessed a slender and graceful figure like his brother Edwin, though apparently somewhat taller and more closely knit and wiry, revealing a larger amount of animal spirits and love of action.'⁶⁵ Dr. Arnold, headmaster of Bel Air Academy, remembered his 'clear cut lineaments . . . with slightly aquiline nose and altogether magnetic expression of countenance', and noticed an improvement in his personal appearance every time he visited after becoming an actor; Arnold concluded that he 'gave [the] matter much attention'.⁶⁶ John's beauty was striking enough to draw comment from both women and men. Clara Morris remembered:

My! what a dashing, elegant, handsome fellow he was, with his perfectly formed figure, graceful in every movement, his pale, dark face and his big flashing dark eyes, which had all the lights and changes which are supposed to be possible only to the deeper blue eyes.

Elsewhere she added that 'there was generally a flash of white teeth behind his silky mustache, and a laugh in his eyes.'⁶⁷ The theatre manager John T. Ford described him as

63 *Southern Aegis* (Bel Air), July 18-Aug. 15, 1857.

64 McCullough and others, 'Success on the Stage', p. 591.

65 *Unlocked Book*, p. 104; Charles A. Krone, 'Recollections of an Old Actor', *Missouri Historical Society Collections*, 4:221.

66 Notes in Kimmel Collection.

67 'John Wilkes Booth'; Clara Morris, *A Life on the Stage* (New York: McClure, Phillips, 1901), p. 98.

'one of the handsomest men I ever saw', and Michael Leavitt later wrote, 'Matinees were not given in those days, but if they had been he would have been what is now called a "matinee idol."' ⁶⁸ But Booth's presence was even more striking than his beauty: 'As he passed, four out of five on the street would turn to look at him again,--such was his personal magnetism'; and another friend remembered, 'You could not resist his captivating manners, his genial smile and his personal magnetism.'⁶⁹ Two of his acquaintance compared him to a splendid horse: 'You have seen a high-mettled racer with his sleek skin and eye of unusual brilliancy, chafing under a restless impatience to be doing something. It is the only living thing I could liken him to', said a fellow actor in New York; while the manager John Ellsler was 'reminded of a blooded colt' by Booth's acting, 'full of action, full of fire, necessitating a master hand to hold him in check'.⁷⁰ He seems to have conquered any early awkwardness, for the actor Charles Pope recalled, 'I was struck with his easy movements of alluring, springy grace', noting that 'his frame was compactly knit and instilled with virile life in every fibre.'⁷¹ Even after the assassination, lyrical descriptions of Booth abounded in newspapers: he was

one of the handsomest young men whom the writer of these lines has ever seen--a cross between Endymion and Antinous. Tall and slender, broad-shouldered and slim-waisted, the noble pale face rendered more striking by fiery, perhaps unearthly eyes, Booth was the pet of the women, and had won many a heart. His black moustache was carefully cultivated, and he possessed a natural elegance and refinement of appearance, which, without effort or affectation, gained the goodwill of all. His dress was simple, but well chosen, unpretentious, and show[ed] the man of good taste and modest manner, quiet, without arrogance, so that he pleased every one who made his acquaintance.⁷²

⁶⁸ Baltimore *American*, June 8, 1893; M.B. Leavitt, *Fifty Years in Theatrical Management* (New York: Broadway Publ. Co., 1912), pp. 80-81.

⁶⁹ John T. Ford, 'Behind the Curtains of a Conspiracy', *North American Review* 148 (1889): 448; William A. Howell, 'Memories of Wilkes Booth', *Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 23, 1899.

⁷⁰ 'Wilkes Booth as an Actor', unidentified newspaper clipping, Harvard Theatre Collection; John Adam Ellsler, *The Stage Memories of John A. Ellsler* (Cleveland: Rowfant Club, 1950), p. 124.

⁷¹ Charles Pope, 'The Eccentric Booths', *New York Sun*, March 28, 1897.

⁷² Transcript of *Detroit Free Press*, April 22, 1865, quoting New York *Belletristisches Journal*, in Barbee Papers. Attempts to portray Booth as a flashily-dressed fop (e.g. *New York Tribune*, Apr. 28, 1865) are contradicted by his acquaintances as well as by other newspaper descriptions.

The need to construct John Booth as deviant and Edwin as normal has led to a misconception of John's apprenticeship in the theatre. John may have regretted that he never toured with their father,⁷³ but this gave Edwin no substantial advantage over him.

Another contemporary book for would-be actors advised:

If you have fully determined to embrace the theatrical profession, as a means of livelihood: the first, and I think the best step to be taken, is to get into some respectable theatre, or regular dramatic company. . . . by beginning at the foot of the dramatic ladder, and learning the business, as a soldier learns the art of war, by regular, gradual systematic drilling.⁷⁴

This 'best step' was the one John was about to take. Far from thinking, as Kimmel maintains, that 'he could attain by some royal road the perfection of the greatest tragedians' (p. 149), he now embarked on his career in the way recommended by almost everyone. Edwin, too, had entered a stock company as a teenager, either before or after his 'official' debut on tour with his father,⁷⁵ but had not been very successful: Asia admits that 'in minor characters and in inferior plays he proved awkward, confused, and apparently a failure', and an audience member recalled, 'One could not have seen in the nervous young man of these occasions, the brilliant artist of a later day.'⁷⁶ This was not surprising given his age, but it is interesting to note that when John took the same route, he departed from his brother's example in two ways: he did not choose a company in his home town, Baltimore, and he did not act under the famous family name. Thus he was able to learn his trade and make the inevitable mistakes in obscurity and away from people he knew. He may also have remembered his mother's sentiments on his debut in 1855: 'She thought . . . that he had been influenced by others who wished to gain notoriety and money by the use of his name.'⁷⁷

73 Clarke, *Unlocked Book*, p. 109-10.

74 *The Amateur By a Retired Performer* (Philadelphia: Fisher, [c.1852]), p. 5.

75 Different accounts give the dates as 1847-48 or 1850-51, when Edwin would have been 14 or 17 years old (e.g. *Philadelphia Press*, June 7, 1893; Alonzo May, 1847 B44; *Baltimore American*, June 8, 1893; typescript by William Seymour in 'Booth Clippings' Folder, William Seymour Theatre Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Libraries).

76 *Elder and Younger Booth*, p. 130 and Alonzo May, 1847 B44 (Recollection of Henry Wagner).

77 *Unlocked Book*, p. 106.

The same August in which the farm was put up for rent, John Wilkes Booth began his first regular job in the theatre, as a member of the stock company at the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia.

CHAPTER 2

Through the Stage Door

In the course of the nineteenth century, American theatre underwent a radical change in its methods of production. The stock company, continuing from the eighteenth century, was still the basis of the system during John Wilkes Booth's career; but by the end of the century it was to be displaced by travelling companies touring single plays, cast *ad hoc* in New York. Misunderstandings and prejudices as well as nostalgia therefore colour accounts of the stock system written after its demise and these must be taken into account when dealing with an actor like Booth, whose career was passed entirely within it.

The growth in America's population over the nineteenth century accounts for many of the changes in its theatre. Five million at the beginning, it had reached 23 million by mid-century, with immigration bringing in 240,000 people per year.¹ 'At first', says Edward William Mammen, 'stock companies had to tour several neighboring towns in order to fill out a season.'² Theatres in less populous areas continued to do this up to the Civil War.³ According to Mammen, by 1825 'there were probably sixty theatres in the country, perhaps twenty of them housing permanent acting organizations.' He estimates that in 1850 at least 35 stock companies were operating, by 1860 'probably more than fifty.'⁴ Each one of these companies was 'a self-contained producing unit, functionally independent of all other units, and independent of all outside influence.' Except in a few (and poorer) 'commonwealth' companies, the manager was in control: 'He owned all the properties, sets and equipment, and he either owned or leased the theatres in which he played.' The actors, hired by the season, were on weekly salaries plus benefits, while the

1 Garff B. Wilson, *Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973), p. 131.

2 *The Old Stock Company School of Acting: A Study of the Boston Museum* (Boston: Trustees of the Public Library, 1945), p. 10.

3 See Chapter 4 for the touring undertaken by the Richmond Theatre company in 1858-60.

4 Mammen, p. 10. G.B. Wilson, p. 146) endorses the 1860 figure.

manager 'was responsible for all expenses and entitled to all profits.'⁵ Carpenters, scenic artists, machinists, property men and costumiers were employed in each theatre, so that most of the physical components of the presentations were constructed and maintained on the premises, with no dependence on outside investment or supply houses. Although a copyright law gave some protection to American playwrights from 1856, there was no international law, and as Bernheim says, 'English and other foreign plays were available for the cost of the printed copies.'⁶ No doubt partly for this reason, much of the mid-century repertory originated in Europe.

The star system has been blamed for the final disappearance of the independent stock companies, though it seems likely that a number of factors were responsible. It began in Britain, where actors from the London patent houses made individual arrangements with provincial theatre managers when their own theatres were closed; from the early years of the century British stars began to visit America, and homegrown stars (or permanent immigrants like Junius Brutus Booth) soon joined them. The star played his or her own choice of leading roles, displacing the lead or first comedian of the supporting stock company. For the starring actor, the advantages were obvious: he or she 'escaped the danger of contempt that is bred by familiarity [a star] only moderately successful could earn as much, with far less effort and under more congenial circumstances' as his/her own master than as an employee.⁷ 'The star system', says Douglas McDermott,

represents the shift from autonomous, self-governing communities to industrial entrepreneurship, in which individuals compete with each other for the loyalty of supporters or consumers. Like politicians and revival preachers, stars represent the aspirations and values of those whom they serve. The star . . . models the upward social and economic mobility that was the path to prosperity in the expanding nation.⁸

5 Bernheim, p. 20.

6 Ibid., pp. 20-21.

7 Bernheim, pp. 26-27.

8 'Structure and Management in the American Theatre from the Beginning to 1870', in Don B. Wilmeth, ed., *Cambridge History of American Theatre* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998) 1: 192.

Bruce McConachie links stars with hero worship: while some actors were

taking charge of their own careers audiences were turning to great men and women to give order to their lives. . . . Theatrical stardom had the same economic base and psychosocial dynamics as charismatic political leadership Audiences had respected Betterton and Horace Walpole; they worshipped Forrest and Andrew Jackson.⁹

He points out that virtuosity was also emerging in music at the same time, with artists such as Paganini and Liszt: 'the virtuoso-star symbolized "the uniqueness of the self as the source of value"',¹⁰ a concept central to Romanticism. Another explanation for the star's popularity is that '[i]n an age in which the repetitive factory task was becoming the norm, stars expressed the lost cultural idea of unlimited personal possibility.'¹¹

One consequence of the star system was the diminished status of stock actors, and the star himself could be instrumental in the exploitation of his fellow-players. Edwin Forrest 'usually demanded and received a clear half of the receipts of the night, leaving the manager to pay salaries and expenses as best he or she could.'¹² Forrest was unusual: other stars, including John Wilkes Booth, shared with the manager the excess over an agreed sum; some theatres paid a fixed fee. Playing with a star could certainly reduce the stock company to an ignominious supporting chorus, as Edwin Booth's friend Adam Badeau noted:

If a star is rehearsing, he gives his orders how he shall be supported, tells this poor devil when to approach and when to go, the other subordinates how to emphasize that line, so that the star may not lose his point, and arranges matters generally so as to suit himself, and produce the greatest effect; which is all very proper, but cannot be extremely agreeable to the second-rate people, as they may be supposed to have sensibilities, if not position or talent.¹³

Moreover, audiences would often desert the theatre after the main play, since the star did not normally appear in the afterpiece; Harry Watkins rejoiced when 'the entire audience stopped to see [his own farce], something unusual when a star is playing.'¹⁴ No wonder,

9 McConachie, p. 74. Edwin Forrest's position was unique, however: see below.

10 Ibid, pp. 74-75, quoting Morse Peckham.

11 McDermott, 1:193.

12 McConachie, p. 80.

13 *The Vagabond* (New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1859), p. 192.

14 *One Man in his Time: The Adventures of H. Watkins, Strolling Player 1845-1863 from his Journal* ed. Maud & Otis Skinner (Philadelphia: U. Penn. Press, 1938),

then, if the more talented stock actors made haste to become stars themselves, with the result that stock companies were progressively debilitated. Stardom became the pinnacle of the actor's career path--with all its disadvantages. Edwin Booth expressed the dilemma in 1860: 'I'd rather there was no such thing as *starring*--I'd rather stay in one place & have a home, but, of course, I'd like to stand *A.1.* in my trade. . .'.¹⁵ As a freelance, a star also took his own financial risk: if he failed to 'draw' he could have his engagement terminated early, since 'there was always the stock company to fall back upon'.¹⁶ George Alfred Townsend's opinion of a star as 'an advertisement in tights who grows rich and corrupts the public taste' (see Chapter 5) seems evidence of an envious resentment of stars' earning powers which would not have made audiences any easier to satisfy. Scepticism was expressed by reviewers such as 'Erasmus' of the *National Intelligencer* (Feb. 24, 1865), who asserted that 'there are very few "stars" who are capable of holding a first-class position in a fine stock company. These people, in many instances, are second or third-rate actors, who succeed by the sheer force of quackery.' Bernheim sees the deterioration of the stock companies as the reason why stars began to take one or two supporting actors on tour with them, and suggests that this further weakened the companies. The logical development of this practice was the combination: a whole company touring.¹⁷

The term 'combination', first employed in 1859,¹⁸ was used in 1862 of an alliance between the manager Henry C. Jarrett and the actors E.L. Davenport, J.W. Wallack, Jr. and (at first) William Wheatley.¹⁹ This toured successfully for several seasons with a core company only. Later, the term came to designate an entire company travelling with its own scenery, a development not feasible before the extension in railway track mileage during and after the Civil War.²⁰ The *Brooklyn Standard* (Oct. 31, 1863), complaining

p. 184.

¹⁵ Skinner, *Last Tragedian*, p. 136. The only escape was managing a theatre, which Edwin also tried.

¹⁶ Phelps, p. 345. This clearly happened to Adah Isaacs Menken, and perhaps to Harry Watkins, in Richmond and Petersburg (see Chapter 4).

¹⁷ Bernheim, p. 29.

¹⁸ Mammen, p. 10.

¹⁹ Leavitt, p. 83.

²⁰ 'The Union had the industrial ability to execute the army's demand for more

that *Richard III* by J.W. Booth's combination at the Brooklyn Academy of Music was 'mounted shabbily', added: 'I do not blame Mr. Booth's management. It is hardly to be expected that he shall carry a complete theatre over the country with him.' A few decades later, managers would be doing exactly that. By 1886, says Lawrence W. Levine, 'almost three hundred combination companies were touring the country';²¹ whereas Bernheim surmises that only seven or eight stock companies were left by 1880.²² Because 'American entertainment was shaped by many of the same forces of consolidation and centralization that molded other businesses',

The actor-managers who had dominated the nineteenth-century theater were replaced in the twentieth century by the producer-booking agents centered in New York City. Broadway and the American theater became more and more inseparable, the repertory of the former becoming the standard fare of the latter.²³

The country was now divided into 'New York' and 'the road'; previously, although the bigger, Eastern cities were more prestigious places of employment, no one town could be all-important. Because combination productions were designed for long runs, actors could be type-cast and rehearsals longer. Writing home from England in the late 1840s, E.L. Davenport remarked, 'We [in America] can play Shakspeare almost *without* a rehearsal';²⁴ before long, this semi-improvized performance style would be looked back on with disdain. When James H. McVicker disbanded his Chicago stock company in 1879,

At first newspapers were critical of the new system [combination touring]; doleful warnings appeared frequently. Very quickly, however, newspaper opinion changed. Within two years the old stock system was severely criticized: 'The mingled horrors and atrocities,' said the *Tribune*, 'that were perpetrated on the people of the community in the guise of stock companies survive in the memories of playgoers only as disorganized nightmares.' The people of Chicago, it added, had no interest in going to the theatre to see 'raw

efficient rail transportation in order to supply its troops.' By 1870 there were 50,000 miles of track (McDermott, 1:205).

21 *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, p. 78.

22 Bernheim, p. 31; Rosemarie K. Bank points out that this figure may not be reliable ('A Reconsideration of the Death of Nineteenth-Century American Repertory Companies and the Rise of the Combination', *Essays in Theatre* 5(1) (Nov. 1986): 68.

23 Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, pp. 78, 79.

24 Edgett, p. 30.

and half-baked' actors being trained 'at the expense of a vast aggregated woe among their auditors.'²⁵

Rosemarie Bank quotes the *New York Dramatic Mirror* in 1880 deploring 'the bellowing exponents of the pump-handle style of acting', which it ascribed to the stock companies.²⁶ Actors writing their memoirs after this radical change had to explain the old stock system to their younger readers, and were inclined to be defensive about it in the face of criticism such as this. With the transfer of theatrical power to businessmen, the stock/star period began to be known nostalgically as 'the palmy days' of acting; both these factors must be taken into account when assessing professional reminiscence.

One of the ways in which old actors reinforced their self-confidence was to exaggerate the workload in the stock system. It certainly meant hard work: John McCullough warned the beginner, 'It is a grievous mistake to think the actor's life an easy one'. John Ellsler recalled that the 'study, selection, and preparation of costumes, together with long rehearsals, was a treadmill process to which Sunday offered the only respite.'²⁷ Casting for the following day was sometimes notified 'between the play and farce, or earlier, on evenings of performance', although Olive Logan tells us that in 'badly regulated theatres . . . no actor knows whether he is to play in the piece until he comes to the first rehearsal', leaving even less study time when the part was new to him.²⁸

Dion Boucicault thus described the actor's day in 1860:

His daily labor commences at ten, when he hurries to rehearsal. . . . At two he is released, most frequently too late for dinner While he eats what he can get, he studies his part, and is immersed in it until six. At that hour he turns to the theatre, where, without intermission of a moment, he is employed until midnight. Weary and jaded he travels home, to sleep? No--to sit up poring over the morrow's performance, for usually he plays two or three parts nightly.²⁹

25 Jay F. Ludwig, 'James H. McVicker and his Theatre', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 46 (Feb. 1960): 23.

26 Bank, 'A Reconsideration', p. 64.

27 'Success on the Stage', p. 581; Ellsler, p. 78.

28 *Guide to the Stage*, p. 23, from the rules of Laura Keane's Theatre in New York; Olive Logan, *Before the Footlights and Behind the Scenes* (Philadelphia: Parmelee & Co., 1870), p. 71.

29 'The Life of an Actor', *New York Clipper*, Dec. 1, 1860. The *Clipper* was a weekly newspaper devoted to sport and theatre throughout the country.

Boucicault's purpose, however, was defensive: 'What have [these actors] done during this long, weary, weary day of labor', he concluded, 'to call down the contempt of mankind, the anathemas of the church, and your gall?' In reality, there were some respites: Mammen points out that 'work was very unevenly divided in a stock company', and that over one season at the Boston Museum one actor had 103 roles and another seven. The 'second' of any line played less often than the first, but even the leads rarely appeared in afterpieces 'and sometimes had days off when a star came to visit.'³⁰ The actor Harry Weaver remembered that 'the advent of a legitimate star was hailed with delight, for we had no study': each actor already knew his words in 'the standard drama', and needed only to read them over.³¹ This would not apply to a beginner who did not yet have a line of business, or any familiarity with the 'standard' plays; but his or her parts would mostly be very short.

Penalties were prescribed by each theatre for breaches of discipline, as the comedian William Davidge relates:

Observe the two gentlemen who are looking at the printed list of rules and regulations posted on the wall beside the glass case, wherein the calls for rehearsals are placed. It is a terrible document, and sets forth at length the several acts of insubordination any member of the company may commit, with the amount of pecuniary punishment consequent thereon

However, he explains that since actors were generally responsible, 'the forfeits are but seldom enforced', and Charles Krone confirms this.³² In this connection it is significant that the actor Francis Wilson said of John Wilkes Booth that 'there is no evidence or tradition among managers or actors that he was insubordinate or not amenable to the laws of the theater.'³³

One of these rules was that 'A Performer refusing a part allotted by the Manager, forfeits a week's salary, or may be discharged.'³⁴ This brings us to the question of Lines

30 Mammen, pp. 24-25.

31 Unidentified newspaper clipping, June 16, 1893, Harvard Theatre Collection.

32 *Footlight Flashes* (New York: American News Co., 1866), pp. 135, 180; Krone, 3:299.

33 *John Wilkes Booth: Fact and Fiction of Lincoln's Assassination* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1929), p. 146. Wilson began his career during the Civil War.

34 O. Logan, p. 65.

of Business, especially relevant because John Wilkes Booth's position, or line, in each of his stock companies is problematic. James Burge sees the lines of business system as compensating actors for the change from the commonwealth stock company to a 'capitalistic, theatre-producing organization with a clear division between management and labor':

Over the course of its three-hundred-year history, the stock company organization spawned two adjunctive systems--the actor's benefit and the lines of business casting procedure. Both must be seen, ultimately, as accretions of theatrical labor-management relations, for both were responses on the part of the actor to the change from a communal to a capitalistic stock structure.³⁵

Despite constant mention of lines of business from the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries in diaries, letters, journals and reminiscences, Burge noticed that 'rules and regulations of theatres and many actor contracts which survive from this same period suggest [that] the authority to cast and distribute parts rested solely with management.' Practice, however, differed from policy, and 'observing the tradition [of lines] was seen as a form of back-stage etiquette'.³⁶ Thus, though the impression is given by many writers that the lines of business system was fixed and rigid, in fact it functioned more flexibly as a basis for negotiation by the actor, with the contractual right of the manager to make the actor play 'as cast' being used only as a last resort.³⁷ The impression of rigidity given by actors' memoirs may arise from their oversimplifying, in order to explain to laymen a system gone for ever--or perhaps from a defensive desire to portray that old system as efficient, working with clockwork precision. The actor John Barron, for instance, in his series of articles in 1906-07, gives the usual list of lines, saying that actors 'were engaged for certain specified lines of parts'; but later contradicts himself in describing his own rather vaguer position in 1857-58: 'I was engaged as first

35 James C. Burge, *Lines of Business: Casting Practice and Policy in the American Theatre 1752-1899* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), pp. 1-2.

36 Burge, pp. 4-5, 98.

37 William Davidge confirms that it was a 'very rare case' that an actor refusing a part would 'have to quit the theatre' (p. 192).

walking gentleman and to share the juvenile and light comedy parts with Edwin Adams.³⁸ His reflections on his own career show the system as practically applied:

I found after I had acquired a knowledge of the actor's art, in the school of experience, that to be able to play anything I was cast for made me a more valuable member of the profession than if I remained a specialist, and though I was known as an exponent of the ardent lovers of the standard drama I was many times called on to transform myself into characters the very antithesis of those in which I reveled.

What I have written of myself may be applied in a general sense to all the young actors of the time. We were expected to be proficient as lovers, as villains or in pronounced characters entirely out of our spheres.³⁹

Casting was certainly not predictable enough to obviate disputes. Harry Watkins's diary contains many instances of rival actors, and particularly actresses, claiming the same parts, and while working as Stage Manager for one company, he writes testily, 'It is palpable that Hanley is resolved I shall have nothing good if he can claim it as leading man. Therefore I shall hold him strictly to his engagement and make him play *all* the leading parts.'⁴⁰ A piece in the *New York Clipper* (Jan. 29, 1859) notes Mrs. Bowers' company at the Walnut Street, Philadelphia, squabbling over what parts they would and wouldn't play. Mammen tells us that leading actors 'sometimes [had] the right to refuse roles', which would allow them to safeguard their dignity by not appearing in inappropriate or trivial roles, and management would normally cast on the same principle. Mrs. G.H. Gilbert explains: 'When I signed with [Mrs. John Wood in New York], it was for "first old woman's" parts, and any character they thought not quite good enough or long enough for me was given to my second.' She was also able to reclaim one such role, in which she saw possibilities; her right as First Old Woman seems to have been first refusal of a role. This right can be seen in a piece of inter-actor negotiation from 1846:

[T]he part of Bob Acres . . . belonged by right to Mr. Warren, and in accordance with the terms of his engagement; but [W.H.] Crisp, the leading man, who was originally cast for Sir Lucius O'Trigger, expressed a desire to change parts with Mr. Warren. The latter, in the kindness of his disposition, yielded⁴¹

38 Baltimore *Sun*, Nov. 25 and Dec. 30, 1906 respectively. Barron was briefly a member of the Richmond Theatre company during Booth's stay there; see Chapter 4.

39 Baltimore *Sun*, Jan. 20, 1907.

40 Skinner, *One Man in his Time*, p. 181 and *passim*.

41 Mammen, p. 21; Anne Hartley Gilbert (Mrs. G.H.), 'The Stage Reminiscences

For the lesser members of a company, especially beginners who had as yet no particular line, casting was even more flexible, and adjustments higher up the ranks could be to their advantage: McDermott notes that in John Ellsler's Cleveland company,

An actor could refuse a role in his or her line, forcing the manager to press one of his four ballet girls into the part. Such substitution was Clara Morris's upward path, especially since Mrs. Ellsler disliked appearing as second lady to visiting female stars.⁴²

Jerome K. Jerome, working in an English stock company, wrote to a friend:

Sometimes there's a row over the cast. Second Low Comedy isn't going to play old men. That's not his line: he was not engaged to play old men. He'll see everybody somethinged first.--First Old Man wants to know what they mean by expecting him to play second old man's part. . . . Juvenile Lead has seen some rum things, but he is blowed if he ever saw the light comedy part given to the Walking Gentleman before. . . . The general result, when this sort of thing occurs, is that the part in dispute, no matter what it is, gets pitched on to me as 'Responsibles'.⁴³

In the following chapters, Mammen's analysis of the casting of beginners will be used to compare John Wilkes Booth's experience with that of his sample.

With the great change in the producing system, the actor, much later than workers in industry, became proletarianized:

The effect of the theatrical revolution in the last half of the nineteenth century . . . was systemic: when the stock company went, its underpinnings--the actor's benefit and the lines of business tradition--went with it. The concessions and advantages hard won by the actor were swept away in the rapidly changing conditions, and it was not until he threw his lot in with the rest of American labor in collective bargaining that he would again have safeguards in the marketplace.⁴⁴

The lines of business system persisted as long as it did partly because there was at mid-century no huge pool of unemployed actors ready to undercut the established conditions. Mammen says, 'As late as 1866, "job actors" could still be regarded as a group of unfortunates, confined to the large cities.'⁴⁵ The fact that, just after the Civil War broke out, the *New York Clipper* (May 11, 1861) regarded as newsworthy the fact that '[t]here

of Mrs. Gilbert', ed. Charlotte M. Martin, *Scribner's Magazine* 29 (Feb. 1901): 181; *Life and Memoirs of William Warren*, p. 10.

42 McDermott, 1:201.

43 *On the Stage--and Off* (1885; repr. Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1991), p. 90. Jerome was acting in the late 1870s: this company was by then old-fashioned.

44 Burge, p. 2; see also McConachie, p. 160.

45 Mammen, p. 20.

are actors, actresses, minstrels, and show people almost without number in the city at present, looking out for chances for engagements' shows how unusual a state of things this was. Jobbing actors survived on the growth of the long run, which made it expedient to hire them for a single play.

At the same time, the repertoire itself was undergoing a profound change:

By the turn of the [twentieth] century Shakespeare had been converted from a popular playwright whose dramas were the property of those who flocked to see them, into a sacred author who had to be protected from ignorant audiences and overbearing actors threatening the integrity of his creations.⁴⁶

Previously, Shakespeare, the 'old English comedies',⁴⁷ and other 'standard dramas' had been played in a mixed programme that usually included an afterpiece (often a farce) and dancing, singing or orchestral performances between plays or acts of plays. The repertoire remained similar all over the country, partly owing to the need to support the same travelling stars. Most of the latter 'played within an expanding tragic repertoire built around *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Merchant of Venice*',⁴⁸ with other, more modern legitimate plays, including those of Kotzebue, Edward Bulwer Lytton, James Sheridan Knowles and Dion Boucicault. The elder Booth had passed his career at a time when Shakespeare was 'part and parcel of popular culture', playing Jerry Sneak in *The Mayor of Garratt* immediately after *Richard III*,⁴⁹ but things began to change in his sons' time. The tragedian E.L. Davenport complained to a friend around 1874:

There are no actors any more No nine changes of bill a week; no mastery of a new part in 48 hours; . . no bills to show a man's versatility. Why, I've played an act from 'Hamlet,' one from 'Black-eyed Susan,' and sung 'A Yankee Ship and a Yankee Crew,' and danced a hornpipe, and wound up with a nigger part all in one night. Is there anyone you know of today who can do that?⁵⁰

46 Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, p. 72.

47 These included *The School for Scandal*, *The Rivals*, *She Stoops to Conquer* and *London Assurance* among others less often produced now (Burge, p. 189).

48 McDermott, 1:192.

49 Lawrence W. Levine, 'William Shakespeare and the American People: A Study in Cultural Transformation', *American Historical Review* 89 (Feb. 1984): 41.

50 Edgett, p. 118.

What had been to Davenport the essence of his craft was to the writer of Edwin Booth's obituary Davenport's 'wasting his fine talents in undignified versatility'; as Charles Shattuck comments, 'the gentlemanly Hamlets of the 1870s could not afford such antics.' The earlier notion that Shakespearean leads 'did not unfit one for other roles and other tasks; they were not elevated to a position above the culture in which they appeared' had passed into history.⁵¹

This sacralization of Shakespeare and other 'high art' was facilitated by a growing tendency for theatres to specialize in fare either for élite or for popular audiences. The trend was seen first in New York, which during the first half of the century 'became the largest city in the nation' with a population of more than half a million by 1850.⁵² As early as 1830, Thomas S. Hamblin, manager of the Bowery, deliberately set out to attract 'the lower-class native American' to his theatre by using American talent and playing a repertoire that avoided the 'English comedy, tragedy, opera, and ballet' favoured by the 'carriage trade' while emphasizing melodrama.⁵³ At the other end of the scale, from 1852 the actor-manager J.W. Wallack, Sr., specialized in high comedy and romantic melodrama appealing to the 'refined, educated and affluent segment' of New York's audience.⁵⁴ This separation was not possible in smaller towns, especially those with only one theatre: there, as the actor Charles Krone remembered of the St. Louis Theatre, performances were 'patronized by all classes of the community from the lowest to the highest'.⁵⁵ In such a theatre, the audience was arranged hierarchically, with the 'most expensive seats [being] those which displayed their occupants to best advantage, usually the first circle of boxes.' The ladies and gentlemen in these seats 'formed only a thin circle of elegance between the masses in the pit and in the galleries.' Moreover, the 'best

51 Baltimore *American*, June 7, 1893; Charles H. Shattuck, *Shakespeare on the American Stage: From the Hallams to Edwin Booth* (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1976), p. 117; Levine, 'William Shakespeare', p. 41.

52 G.B. Wilson, pp. 41-42.

53 Theodore J. Shank, 'Theatre for the Majority: Its Influence on a Nineteenth Century American Theatre', *Educational Theatre Journal* 11 (Oct. 1959): 190-91, 193.

54 Burge, pp. 188, 190.

55 Krone, 4:117.

test of a fashionable or an elegant house was the number of ladies present.⁵⁶ In the St. Louis Theatre, says Krone,

The noisy and enthusiastic pit audience was separated by a low railing from the orchestra seats, which were occupied by a no less interested but a more sedate company, which consisted chiefly of professional or literary men, reporters, merchants, artists and men of leisure. . . . The gallery as a rule was the resort of the boys. The country men also seemed to prefer this high and isolated position from where they could look down upon the entire audience and rest their feet cased in dirty boots upon the balustrade until the cry of 'Boots,' 'Boots,' from below and a punch from the bouncer's cane awoke them from their revery [*sic*]. The dress and family circle as usual were occupied by the fashionable and well-to-do citizens with their families⁵⁷

Segregation was practised in both North and South, black audience members being confined to their own gallery and boxes.⁵⁸ Also in the gallery, or 'third tier', of many theatres could be found the prostitutes, who were there partly to make assignations in the bar adjoining. Theatres hoping for a select audience would exclude these women and dispense with a bar, as well as transforming the whole pit into 'orchestra' or 'parquet(te)' and relegating the 'noisy and enthusiastic' pittites to the gallery, farther from the actor.

The old pittites, from regular playgoing,

became familiar with not only the relative merits of the actors but with the text of the plays then given, including Shakespeare, to the extent that they were able and often did supply the forgotten line or word in an audible voice to the luckless one⁵⁹

In such a mixed audience, a 'constant buzz, walking about, going in and out, while the play is going on, and whistling, halooing [*sic*], thumping with sticks and shouting for applause are always done by a few inconsiderate persons.'⁶⁰ The background noise and the audience's habit of interacting with the stage naturally conditioned acting style, as did the size of the theatres which specialized in working-class audiences: the Bowery held

56 Joseph Patrick Roppolo, 'Audiences in the New Orleans Theatres, 1845-61', *Tulane Studies in English* 2 (1950): 122, 124-25.

57 Krone, 4:116-17.

58 For instance, the Arch Street, Philadelphia, advertised 'Gallery for Colored Persons, 25c' and 'Private Box in Gallery . . . 38c' (Playbill, Sept. 14, 1857, Historical Society of Pennsylvania).

59 Ellsler, p. 25.

60 *Weekly Confederation* (Montgomery), Oct. 26, 1860; see also *New York Clipper*, Oct. 23, 1858, and Chapters 4 and 5.

'4,000 after its 1845 renovation'.⁶¹ Laura Keene's eminently respectable New York theatre (1856) seated only 2,500; of these, 'about 1,000 were in the parquette, with 750 in each of the dress circle and family circle balconies.' Parquette seats cost 50¢ and from 1857 were reservable. Wallack's 1852 and 1861 houses were both 'small but elegant'.⁶² The bourgeois audience was quieter; what Karen Halttunen calls 'the genteel performance, a system of polite conduct that demanded a flawless self-discipline practiced within an apparently easy, natural, sincere manner', forbade fidgeting or energetic gesturing. Bourgeois 'personal conduct ha[d] been shaped to demonstrate virtue in the form of the complete self-restraint of bodily processes.'⁶³ The 'shrill whistles, catcalls, and cries' indulged in by some of the clown G.L. Fox's fans at his Olympic Theatre (1867) were regarded 'unanimously' by contemporary critics as being usual at the Bowery, but not on Broadway.⁶⁴ In the theatres patronized by the middle class, 'the private manners of the genteel parlor . . . overtook the public behavior of traditional theatregoing by 1870'.⁶⁵

The editor of *Harper's Magazine* thus described a Niblo's Garden audience for Forrest in 1863: 'the great, the eager, the delighted crowd', including young women 'not refined or intellectual They were, perhaps, rather coarse. But they cried good hearty tears [at Forrest's Damon]'.⁶⁶ By contrast, at the Winter Garden, where Edwin Booth was playing Iago, 'The house was comfortably full, not crowded. The air of the audience was that of refined attention rather than of eager interest. Plainly it was a more cultivated and intellectual audience. . . . '⁶⁷ These 'refined' and quiet spectators preferred a more

61 McConachie, p. 113.

62 McConachie, p. 203. Before this time, there had been little reservable seating; tickets were mostly queued for on the day.

63 *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1982), pp. 93, 97.

64 Laurence Senelick, *The Age and Stage of George L. Fox, 1825-1877* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1988), p. 139. Senelick also quotes the *Spirit of the Times* on the 'loud, ringing, hearty laugh' of the Bowery audience.

65 McConachie, p. 246.

66 George William Curtis, 'Editor's Easy Chair', *Harper's Magazine* 28 (Dec. 1863): 131-33, quoted in Shattuck, *Shakespeare on the American Stage*, pp. 86-87. See below for further discussion of Forrest.

67 Quoted in Levine, 'William Shakespeare', p. 59. McConachie (p. 239) thinks

refined and quiet acting style, but John Booth did not live to see the older, symbolic, rhetorical type of acting stigmatized as 'ham' and relegated completely to working-class melodrama houses. A variety of attitudes to acting can be detected in his reviews across the country from 1860 to 1865, as we shall see; furthermore, as with the change from stock to combination, the final victory of 'naturalistic' acting was to condition accounts of this period in hindsight, including the style of John Wilkes Booth.

Within the period itself, writers used a number of criteria to discuss the art of acting: they spoke not only of 'refined' versus 'ranting', 'Boweryish' or 'Western' (or, depending on their tastes, 'tame' versus 'impetuous'), but they also used rather different terms. In practice, the art was also defined by the conditions in which acting took place, i.e. the stock/star system. The *Boston Post* (May 26, 1862) theorized:

The great actor, taking an ordinary man with common tones and talk as his basis, *creates* out of him a mightier, more majestic, more lovely or more terrible man. . . . [E]very actor . . . who is able truly to feel in his own heart the emotions of a higher manhood than common life affords, and who has the power to embody those feelings and make them palpable to us, confers a consolation on humanity.

This notion clearly owes much to a Romantic sensibility, as does the idea of genius, a word which constantly recurs in criticism of the period. 'Genius' was often contrasted with 'talent', as in a review in the *New York Leader* (March 23, 1861) of *Macbeth* with Edwin Booth and Charlotte Cushman. Cushman had talent, Booth genius; 'one knows how to act, the other feels how.' At times 'seeming almost possessed of *Macbeth*', Booth was nonetheless uneven, whereas 'Miss Cushman never disappoints you'. When inspired, genius does the right thing by instinct: 'then action and utterance are directed by something within and beyond [Booth]', which makes study and research redundant. Cushman's 'talent' here sounds like professionalism plus intelligence, and it is interesting that a year later, when he was more experienced and probably less uneven, Edwin Booth could be described by the *Boston Post* critic quoted above (same date) as a man of 'talent', contrasted with the 'genius' of John Wilkes Booth. An actor needed both qualities, the

that 'Curtis probably exaggerated the differences between the tragedians and their spectators.'

Cleveland *Plain Dealer* reminded John on December 1, 1863: 'Genius of itself cannot win the highest rank without the aid of talent, which we take to be another name for toil'.

Given this ideal of something 'higher than common life', while we find actors praised for their 'naturalness', it was felt that this quality could go too far. Neither the older style, with its 'highly conventional system of poses and gestures which physicalized states of emotion', nor the new style exemplified by Edwin Booth's 1875 Hamlet, which was 'acted "in an ideal manner, as far removed as possible from the plane of actual life"'⁶⁸ aimed at reproducing everyday behaviour naturalistically. Atypically, Matilda Heron, whose acting of Camille caused a sensation,

made no attempt to idealize or refine her characters; she did not even select and arrange her effects, but included commonplace business of every sort, no matter how awkward or distracting it appeared. Finally, she portrayed physical and clinical reactions that were rarely if ever exhibited on the stage at that time.⁶⁹

This ran the risk not only of revolting the audience (perhaps an attitude that can be seen in objections to John Booth's ugliness or untidiness as Richard III) but also of banality.

Edwin's wife Mary Devlin cautioned him:

. . . but now could you see [Matilda Heron]! she gives you so much of "Mrs John Smith"--endeavors--or rather labors to walk so very commonplace--that 'tis simply ridiculous "Art" must be seen too--for nature upon the stage would be most ridiculous.⁷⁰

A retrospective commentary explained the style of acting current when Edwin Booth came to the stage: as in contemporary oratory, it said,

So our actors used to pay the closest attention to elocution. They tried to make an emotion clearly understood by exaggerating it. They often reserved their strength for such moments so as to make the contrast greater, and people judged them by the amount of passion which they could throw into such scenes as King Richard's last fight, or by the oratorical delivery of such speeches as Hamlet's 'To be or not to be,' or Marc Anthony's 'Friends, Romans, countrymen.' Now the desire is that a player should act and speak on the stage exactly as one would in similar circumstances in real life. That is what is called the natural method.

68 McConachie (p. 112), who may place too much reliance on acting manuals; William Winter in the *New York Tribune*, quoted in Michael A. Morrison, *John Barrymore, Shakespearean Actor* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), p. 7.

69 G.B. Wilson, p. 109.

70 To Edwin, Feb. 11, 1860, *Letters and Notebooks*, p. 35.

'Mr. Booth', it concluded, 'combined both manners.'⁷¹ Edwin, praised for 'naturalness' early in his career, came at last to seem conventional to at least some observers: 'reviewers sometimes accused Booth of excessive posing, of "making statues all over the stage"', while Henry Phelps, writing in 1880, asked, 'who that sees him ever forgets that he is acting, or believes for a moment that he *is* the character he represents?'⁷²

Another criterion invoked in contemporary criticism was the relative virtue of originality and tradition. The young John Booth, discussing with Asia the actors he admired, regretted that 'These are not as father was to Edwin', and Asia notes that John 'had no master to form his style upon.'⁷³ The idea that it was valid to follow a master, alien to modern actors and their critics alike, must be acknowledged if we are to see Booth as his critics saw him.⁷⁴ It had its origins both in the conditions of performance (see below) and in the eighteenth-century premiss that the best interpretation was the original one, directed by the author; thus acting should be based on tradition, 'and the closer the imitation of the older actor by the younger, the better was his presentation of the part.'⁷⁵ Edwin Booth apparently took this view when he claimed that 'Tradition, if it be traced through pure channels, and to the fountain head, leads one as near to Nature as can be followed by her servant, Art'.⁷⁶ In 1826 the *New York Evening Post* had praised John R. Duff for playing Richard III 'throughout in the manner of Cooke The public may be assured that it is no caricature, but a fine delineation; the copy of a master by a pupil of the first order.' The critic exhorted Duff 'to call to mind his great archetype

71 Unidentified newspaper clipping, Harvard Theatre Collection, probably dating from after EB's death.

72 Shattuck, *Hamlet of EB*, p. 26; Phelps, pp. 400-01. The later career of Edwin Booth will be discussed in the Conclusion.

73 *Unlocked Book*, pp. 109-10.

74 The primacy of originality may be connected with the sacralizing of art charted by Levine: the 'ethos that judged art and culture to be the sacred, unique products of the rare individual spirit' (*Highbrow/Lowbrow*, p. 161); it may also be regarded as a legacy of Romanticism.

75 Lily B. Campbell, 'The Rise of a Theory of Stage Presentation in England during the Eighteenth Century', *PMLA* 32 (1917): 164-65.

76 Quoted in Alan S. Downer, 'Players and Painted Stage: Nineteenth Century Acting', *PMLA* 61 (1946): 566. Downer feels that Edwin's mature style owed much to the classicist J.P. Kemble (p. 532).

Cooke himself, and paint, with the countenance, the deep but *inaudible* workings of the soul.⁷⁷ More than a generation later, a profile of Edwin by Thomas Allston Brown in the *New York Clipper* (Aug. 31, 1861) argued in remarkably similar terms that 'the successful copyist is equal to the creator', because to 'imitate exactly and with identical effect the work of another, demands appreciation of the material, and sympathy with the mood in which that work was wrought.' Hence Edwin, as a 'second edition' of his father, should enjoy 'an equal celebrity'. The *Spirit of the Times's* review of John's Richard, quoted in Chapter 9, took the same attitude, as did the *Cincinnati Enquirer* (April 13, 1865) reviewing Junius Brutus, Jr. Yet both Asia and the *Clipper* writer recognized 'how much Edwin has to contend with, being called an imitator of father';⁷⁸ clearly, some saw this approach as mere mimicry. A perceived originality usually evoked more enthusiasm: for this reason the *Clipper's* portrait of John predicted greater things for him than for his brother (see Chapter 5), while the *Philadelphia Press* (June 7, 1858) urged John S. Clarke to '*originate* The truly good player, even in a hackneyed character, will throw tradition overboard, and act, not as Mr. So-and-So did, but as his own creative genius suggests'. The *Guide to the Stage* deplored the fact that some actors 'never trouble themselves to move from the beaten track', but warned against 'straining after originality': following tradition 'will be found less annoying than a sacrifice of sense to novelty.'⁷⁹ As might be expected, actors themselves took a middle view: William Warren thought that 'all acting is based on tradition', with actors evolving their own styles after copying a famous player, while John McCullough commented:

The 'traditions of the stage' are a body of rules containing much that is true and artistic, and not a little that is false and artificial. No actor who hopes for eminence can afford wholly to disregard or despise them, and as little can he afford to be rigidly bound by them. . . . Original conception grafted upon knowledge of the past is the true method of evolution in stage art.⁸⁰

77 Quoted in Burge, p. 118.

78 *Unlocked Book*, p. 110.

79 Rede & Wemyss, pp. 58, 40.

80 Warren and McCullough, 'Success on the Stage', pp. 600, 582.

One practical reason for not breaking with tradition too radically was the working environment of the stock system: the single rehearsal for a standard play enforced a certain uniformity, both for the company members and for stars. What George Taylor says of Henry Irving's first Hamlet applies equally well to any of John Wilkes Booth's performances with a stock company:

Irving would, of course, have to keep to the general structure of the usual Manchester production The rest of the cast would expect him to make the same 'points' as previous Hamlets, or, at least, to restrict his originality to the same key passages, where they might anticipate a pause, a gesture or a bit of byplay.

Taylor conjectures that a stock actor would acquire 'a repertoire of gestures and movements, which he could call on almost instinctively'.⁸¹ There would be a danger here of lapsing into cliché and acquiring cheap, if effective tricks; the shortness of Booth's apprenticeship, while a disadvantage in some ways, could possibly have saved him from this pitfall.

Rehearsals were certainly not intended for the exploration of character; their main purpose was blocking. Actors 'marked' their parts: Adam Badeau described 'Desdemona sitting down in a chair in the fifth act, and saying in ordinary tones, "Oh! oh! oh!"[,] these being the rehearsal of her death groans'. He noted that 'they rehearse only the words and the positions'.⁸² Professional actors, says *The Amateur*, 'seldom indulge in *acting* or loud speaking at rehearsals; this part of their duties merely consists in going correctly through the *situations* and pantomimic *business* of the pieces, and of *running* . . . through the *dialogue*.' In standard plays, actors cut long speeches to cue, 'simply settling and regulating the peculiar points, *positions*, cuts, and *cues*' (pp. 58-59). Scene-shifters, musicians and anyone else 'who has to do with the production of the piece at night' also attended rehearsal⁸³. Anna Cora Mowatt describes the stage for rehearsals as 'lighted by a single branch of gas, shooting up to the height of several feet in the centre of the

⁸¹ *Players and Performances in the Victorian Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester U. Press, 1989), pp. 4, 20.

⁸² *Vagabond*, pp. 191-92.

⁸³ O. Logan, p. 71.

footlights.' Known as a T-piece, this 'sent forth a dim, blue, spectral light ' The prompter's table was on the right and the stage manager's on the left of the stage. The prompter held the book, while it was 'the duty of the stage manager to watch the movements of the players, and direct them if they are guilty of any ungraceful or ill-timed movement; to instruct them when to sit and when to rise'.⁸⁴ The two worked in concert: one actor described a rehearsal in which the stage manager arranged tableaux while the prompter told actors 'when, and how, and where to move'. Prompt books 'show that the stage manager was careful about one thing only, places of entrance and exit.'⁸⁵ While the standard plays were rehearsed once on the day of performance, a new play might receive up to six days' rehearsal: James Burge believes that a total of three or four was the national average.⁸⁶

'Points', mentioned by the acting manual above, and looked for by critics, had become an inescapable part of a star performance. Taylor defines a 'point' as

a particular theatrical moment when the actor, by making a gesture, striking an attitude, or changing the tone of his voice created the impression of a new passion, whether it was a moment of sudden recognition--a start--or a gradual change of emotion--a transition.⁸⁷

The Guide to the Stage (p. 40) was critical of this development: 'making *points*, instead of playing the character as a whole' had led 'some of our most popular performers . . . rather to play tricks with certain characters than to act them.' This was probably aimed at Kean or his imitators, for Kean 'performed each passion distinctly and vigorously, even at the expense of consistency of characterisation.'⁸⁸ As will be seen, both the elder Booth and John, though noted for electrifying moments, also took care to build consistent characters. William Winter, reviewing Edwin Booth's Hamlet in 1862, said that 'From first to last, he not only does not make points where points are usually made, but he does not make a point at all.'⁸⁹ This is unlikely to have been strictly true at that date; what Winter was

84 Burge, p. 114, quoting Mrs. Mowatt's *Autobiography*; O. Logan, p. 123.

85 Mammen, p. 55.

86 Burge, p. 113 and note.

87 Taylor, p. 34.

88 Ibid.

89 *The Albion*, Oct. 4, 1862, quoted in Shattuck, *Hamlet of EB*, p. 48.

seeing was probably a performance so careful throughout, and whose points were so subtle that they blended seamlessly into the characterization.

Edwin Forrest, the massive figure dominating the American acting profession in the middle years of the century, was a point-maker *par excellence*. He had been influenced by the grand declamatory style of Thomas Abthorpe Cooper, and by Kean (with whom he had acted), but his development had been conditioned partly by his own muscular frame, his figure 'suggestive not only of perfect health and herculean strength, but of a certain kind of grandeur.'⁹⁰ As the first homegrown American star, he acquired and nurtured a nationalistic image: the self-made, self-reliant American, contrasted with European decadence. This was both an on- and an off-stage persona:

Forrest's reputation for sincerity, and the near identity between his own public image and the image of the protagonists in his heroic melodramas . . . allowed him to collapse the distinction between his self-expressive and his representational modes in performance.

He drew attention to himself, as distinct from his role, by such means as 'display[ing] the physical exertion sustaining his performance.'⁹¹ The result, for one unimpressed critic, was that 'whatever he played he was the same man. One remembers him, not as *Macbeth*, nor even as *Spartacus* or *Metamora*, but as the Great American Tragedian.' During Forrest's career, the same point was made with more venom:

Mr. Forrest has not the power to win sympathy for the characters he personates; he is always too desirous of gaining attention to the actor, to win it for the part. To him the best part he plays seems to be merely the train-bearer of his greatness. Shakspeare himself is but an intellectual horse-block, from which Mr. Forrest mounts his galloping ambition.⁹²

Forrest may, in fact, have been the first star to be the subject of a personality cult; by contrast, other actors, including John Wilkes Booth, were praised for 'abandon': the ability to sink themselves in their roles, apparently losing self-consciousness. After a scandalous divorce and the bloodshed of the Astor Place Riots, the middle classes had begun to desert Forrest. In 1855 he had been ridiculed in a series of reviews in the *New*

90 G.B. Wilson, p. 82; McConachie, p. 83, quoting John Foster Kirk.

91 McConachie, p. 114.

92 Charles T. Congdon (in 1880), quoted in Barrett, *Edwin Forrest*, p. 136; Philadelphia *Sunday Dispatch*, Feb. 22, 1863.

York Tribune by William Stuart, and others had followed suit: the *Columbus Enquirer* (Oct. 11) reprinted a comic piece on Forrest's Hamlet ('Hamlick') from the *New York Sunday Mercury*, saying he was like a 'roarin' lion'. George William Curtis, describing Forrest and his audience in *Harper's* (Dec. 1863), seems to regard him with something between grudging admiration and amused condescension. Forrest for him is an institution which has stood the test of time: 'people are grandfathers now who used to see him play in their youth. Yet there he is--the neck, the immemorial legs--the *ah-h-h-h-h*, in the same hopeless depth of guttural gloom.' His success is 'genuine' and 'permanent':

We may crack our jokes at it. We may call it the muscular school; the brawny art; the biceps aesthetics; the tragic calves; the bovine drama; rant, roar, and rigmarole; but what then? Metamora folds his mighty arms and plants his mighty legs, and with his mighty voice sneers at us 'Look there!' until the very ground thrills and trembles under our feet. . . . And he moves his world nightly. . . .⁹³

Adam Badeau also gave Forrest his due:

I know it is the fashion to decry him; I know that his audiences, though large, are not generally composed of cultivated people; but they are sometimes as good judges of acting as the scholars and thinkers who affect to despise them. No acting is great which does not please more than a class.

Though Forrest ranted, roared and bellowed, and conceived his parts differently from Edwin Booth, said Badeau, he had 'power to move me.' On the other hand, Forrest never 'elevate[d] nor refine[d] by his performances'; he could not be called a tragedian.⁹⁴ For William Winter, Forrest was 'a vast animal, bewildered by a grain of genius.' His 'distinguishing excellence . . . was a puissant animal splendor and ground-swell of emotion. He was tremendously real.'⁹⁵

Seen in hindsight, when he emerged from a retirement of nearly four years in 1860, Forrest confronted 'a changing taste, a new era, and a new rival', Edwin Booth; he was 'beginning to lose his grasp of the scepter which he had held so long.'⁹⁶ His 'puissant

⁹³ Quoted in Shattuck, *Shakespeare on the American Stage*, p. 86.

⁹⁴ *Vagabond*, pp. 71, 73, 287.

⁹⁵ *The Wallet of Time* (1913), quoted in Montrose J. Moses & John Mason Brown, eds., *The American Theatre as Seen by its Critics 1752-1934* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1934), pp. 84-85.

⁹⁶ Barrett, *Edwin Forrest* pp. 95, 98; *Baltimore American*, June 7, 1893.

animal splendor' was beginning to succumb to gout and middle age. But for many, Forrest was still *The American Tragedian*. His position was secure enough to make him worth attacking.⁹⁷ We know that John Booth admired him⁹⁸--probably Forrest's energy and athletic style appealed to his temperament. The *Spirit of the Times* neatly summed up the current polarization of opinion in 1863:

There is a large class of critics who cry 'calves!' and think they have done for Mr. Forrest. . . . There is another class who are blind to all his faults, who consider everything that he does most admirable, and who praise him up to the skies on all occasions (Sept. 19).

Neither of the younger Booths ever acted with Forrest, but his presence is woven into their story by the explicit or implicit rivalry of Forrest himself and the advocacy of his enthusiasts, as will be seen.⁹⁹

Although Charles Kean's 'archaeologically correct' productions had been staged in America, it was not until the late 1860s that this style much affected settings and costumes in American theatres. Edwin Booth's 100-night *Hamlet* at the Winter Garden in late 1864 was an early example: Booth wrote that '[e]very scene, every dress, every chair & table . . . will be new. . . . I doubt if Kean did anything like it.'¹⁰⁰ The long run, initiated in melodrama, had made it feasible to create scenery and costumes especially for a production, and had perhaps created a demand for this approach. 'Historically accurate' costumes and settings could help justify the theatre as educational and thus uplifting while they also gave pleasure as spectacle. Looking back at the older system, Charles Krone, who began his career some time in the 1850s, said that stage dress

was comparatively simple and [the actors] rather sought to make picturesque and beautify the historical costume than strictly to follow it. The rage for the historical in plays which strictly taken are anything but historical first began during the sixties. Up to that time the stage dresses were strictly defined for different periods of the English classic drama, as follows: Roman, Semi-Roman or mediaeval; Spanish of the Sixteenth Century and the Rococo of

97 The urbane 'Erasmus' of the *National Intelligencer* was a 'sincere admirer' of Forrest, but hoped 'he [would] not continue on the stage one day beyond the endurance of those remarkable powers which rank him among the first actors of the world' (Feb. 6, 1865). For attacks, see the Philadelphia *Sunday Dispatch*, above and in Chapter 7.

98 *Unlocked Book*, p. 109.

99 Forrest's posthumous reputation and the survival of the point-making style will be discussed in the Conclusion.

100 Shattuck, *Hamlet of EB*, p. 55.

Louis the 14th and 15th. Which by actors were known under the general terms of 'shirts', 'shapes' and 'square cuts.'¹⁰¹

Better theatres had a tailor (male), others a dressmaker (female), with assistants,¹⁰² to outfit the male actors, but company members had to provide part of their own wardrobes, while a star, of course, would own all his or her costumes. *The Amateur* and *The Guide to the Stage* provide different lists of the absolute necessities. However, it was advisable to acquire anything extra that one could afford, for as the *Guide* observed wryly, 'my readers need not be informed that a dress, calculated to fit every body, never does, actually, fit anybody, and that which everybody may wear, no one can bear to be seen in' (p. 47n). In this connection, a story about John Booth, apparently fabricated by Stanley Kimmel, alleges that when Edwin returned to the East for his first starring tour,

He had anxiously examined his father's wardrobe, selecting costumes he had told [his agent] Ben Baker he could obtain, but was informed by his mother that she was saving them for Johnnie. She seems to have been totally oblivious of the fact that her decision endangered the career of her son at a time when he most needed such material encouragement and assistance.¹⁰³

This incident serves Kimmel's determined portrayal of John as spoilt by a doting mother, but Ben Baker himself recalled that '[t]he widow of old Booth gave Edwin her husband's wardrobe after a time, and . . . we managed to make that serve for everything.' Edwin later sent a friend of his father's 'the cloak worn by my Father as Richard, duke of Gloster', and at one time seems to have worn his father's Richard costume himself.¹⁰⁴ Most likely, John, who had not begun his career at this time, was given only what remained after Edwin had taken his pick. In any case, Junius Brutus's wardrobe may not

101 Krone, 2:35-36.

102 [Tom Ford], *A Peep Behind the Curtain. By a Boston Supernumerary* (Boston: Redding & Co., 1850), p. 29.

103 *Mad Booths*, p. 135. This is closely paraphrased by Eleanor Ruggles (p. 81), but this writer has not found the story in any earlier source.

104 Newspaper clipping, 'Some Stories of Booth', *The Star*, n.d., in Harvard Theatre Collection; EB to 'Natt' [Levin?], Charleston, March 26, 1859, Hampden-Booth Theatre Library, The Players, New York (the club founded by Edwin Booth for his fellow actors); *Spirit of the Times*, June 10, 1893. Otis Skinner's story of the burning of John's costumes by Edwin (including a Richard III 'shirt' and 'robe' supposedly inherited from Junius Brutus) may be the germ of Kimmel's account; for the literal untruth of Skinner's story, see Chapter 8.

have been of much more than sentimental value: he was, according to a fellow actor, 'what is termed in the profession "a bad dresser"'.¹⁰⁵

Scenery consisted of wing flats in grooves and shutters, which could be changed in view of the audience in a matter of seconds; the curtain was dropped only at the ends of acts.¹⁰⁶ Clearly, some built pieces were used (see the discussion of Booth's *Othello* in Chapter 10), and more elaborate scenes could be set upstage of closed shutters in the second grooves while a scene was played in front of them (see Chapter 9), but cumbersome scenery and consequent 'waits' between scenes were still in the future. Scenery was often re-used from previous productions, and provided it was not wildly inappropriate, critics did not object: for instance, a scenery list for some of Booth's repertoire at the Boston Museum assigns 'Eily's Cottage' (from *The Colleen Bawn*) to *The Robbers*, and something described as 'Vampire Gothic' to *Macbeth*.¹⁰⁷

The theatre's relationship with the press could be a source of contention. Some authorities hold that theatre reviewing at this time was entirely corrupt: David Grimsted argues that by the late 1840s almost all theatres put their own puffs in the newspapers, and the public regarded all criticism as paid for.¹⁰⁸ However, this seems to be an over-generalization. Certainly Booth in his star career received notices bristling with crowded houses, chaste and artistic renderings, merited applause and other clichés, which could easily have been written without the trouble of attending the theatre at all; yet others show, by their detail and by their mixture of approval and criticism, that their authors were observant and independent commentators. The *New York Clipper* ensured its own impartiality by refusing free seats, and commented scornfully on other papers' lack of integrity: when a New York theatre suspended its free list, 'press and all', the press in

105 Murdoch, p. 188.

106 A.S. Gillette, 'American Scenography: 1716-1969', in *The American Theatre--A Sum of its Parts* (New York: Samuel French, 1971), pp. 183, 185.

107 List of scenic requirements for various plays drawn up by Boston Museum staff, from the Donald P. Dow Lincoln Collection.

108 *Melodrama Unveiled: American Theater and Culture 1800-1850* (1968; reprint, Berkeley: U. California Press, 1987), p. 40; also Elliot Norton, 'Puffers, pundits and other play reviewers' in *The American Theatre--A Sum of Its Parts*, p. 317.

return 'suspended all favorable notices'. Conversely, it reported, the Gaiety Theatre of New Orleans had struck reviewers from the *Delta* off its free list for 'having expressed their opinions in a fearless manner.'¹⁰⁹ Other examples of such clashes of expectation will be seen in following chapters.

Olive Logan, who acted from economic necessity, writes of having gone unwillingly to her work in the Arch Street Theatre one night:

[T]he musty, fusty odor of the thousand and one articles used for different purposes behind the scenes, met my revolted nostrils, the paint pots, glue, canvas, gilding, wood, gas, blue fire, old dresses, some smelling of camphor, some of . . . the humanity which was wearing them¹¹⁰

She could not understand the stage-struck tyro she met there, who said that he loved it all. John Wilkes Booth, entering the theatre from choice, was probably nearer to his point of view than to hers as he stepped through the same stage door a few years later.

109 *Clipper*, Jan. 30, Feb. 6, June 19, 1858. This paper is therefore treated as more reliable in these pages, especially where local papers contradict each other.

110 O. Logan, p. 167.

CHAPTER 3

Philadelphia 1857-58: The Foot of the Dramatic Ladder

WHEATLEY'S ARCH ST. THEATRE, PHILADELPHIA. NOTICE:- The Ladies and Gentlemen engaged at this establishment are requested to meet in the GREEN ROOM, on WEDNESDAY next, August 12, 1857, preparatory to the opening, on Saturday, August 15.

WM. S. FREDERICKS
STAGE MANAGER¹

John Wilkes Booth was one of those gentlemen engaged at the Arch in 1857. He was nineteen when he began his apprenticeship, older than his brother had been, but within the average age-group.² In the opening bill of the season and in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* for August 12-14 he is listed among the company as 'Mr. J.B. WILKS - From the N. York Theatres, his 1st appearance in Phila.' He had reversed his middle and last names to gain anonymity: the actor E.A. Emerson remembered Booth explaining that 'if he turned out a failure, he did not want the family name to be entangled in it.'³ There was around that time an acting family in Philadelphia named Wilks, and the spelling of Booth's *nom de guerre* may have been influenced by this name.⁴ There was a Mrs. Wilks at the Arch in 1852, and a Miss Wilks in 1855,⁵ in 1863 a Master Wilks was to appear as 2nd Apparition to Booth's *Macbeth*, and the callboy E.P. Wilks would sign Booth's copy of *Richard III*.⁶ He was to play as 'Wilks' throughout the season, with one exception. Three other members of the company are listed simply with the annotation, 'his 1st appearance here', including Booth's fellow-beginner, the later famous tragedian John

1 *Philadelphia Public Ledger & Transcript*, Tuesday August 11, 1857.

2 The beginners at the Boston Museum analyzed by Mammen were mostly between 17 and 20 (p. 36).

3 John S. Mosby, Jr., 'The Night that Lincoln was Shot', *Theatre Magazine* 17 (June 1913): 180. Emerson refers this to Richmond, thinking that Booth's first appearance was made there. John Sleeper Clarke and Samuel Knapp Chester had formed their stage names in the same way, but in their cases the change was permanent.

4 I am indebted to Arthur Kincaid for this suggestion.

5 Arthur Herman Wilson, *A History of the Philadelphia Theatre, 1835-1855* (Philadelphia: U. Pennsylvania Press, 1935), pp. 122, 712.

6 Promptbook, Harvard Theatre Collection.

McCullough. Who originated the fiction that 'Wilks' had played in the New York theatres is a mystery.

Sources for this, the vital foundation year of Booth's career, are unfortunately sparse: none of his letters seems to have survived, and few reminiscences by fellow actors can help us, despite the fact that John McCullough remained a friend of Booth for the rest of his life. Newspaper reviews do not concern themselves with small-part players. We have as primary source only the playbills for the season, an almost complete set of which is in the Channing Pollock Theatre Collection at Howard University, Washington, DC,⁷ and small numbers in several other libraries. The only other major source, and a very influential one, is George Alfred Townsend's *Life, Crime, and Capture of John Wilkes Booth*, first published in 1865. This small book was a reprint of a series of articles Townsend wrote for the *New York World* after Lincoln's assassination. In 'Letter III. The Murderer', dated April 27, the day after Booth was killed, Townsend offers a thumbnail biography which has been heavily used by later writers. His discussion of Booth's stock career in Philadelphia has been much quoted--with or without acknowledgement--and embroidered on, but little questioned. It is therefore worth considering Townsend's credentials for the task he set himself.

Townsend was born in 1841 and his family settled in Philadelphia after 1855, when he went to the Central High School. He graduated in 1860 at the age of nineteen, and went to work on the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and then *The Press*, where he did the 'dramatic writing.'⁸ He says of himself, 'I was not allowed to go to the theater till I could make my own living . . . '⁹--but then goes on to claim that he witnessed McCullough's getting his first round of applause, as Artemidorus in *Julius Caesar*. *Julius Caesar* was performed on

⁷ These are from the collection of the actor Roland Reed, who was employed at the Arch in 1863 (Lewis Clinton Strang, *Famous Actors of the Day* (Boston: Page, 1899), p. 303. I am indebted to Michael W. Kauffman for drawing my attention to this invaluable source.

⁸ Charles David Abbott in *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. 18, ed. Dumas Malone (New York: Scribner, 1936).

⁹ 'Gath' [G.A. Townsend], 'John McCullough, the Actor', *Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 2, 1885.

October 28 and 31, 1857, and a McCullough biographer reports this incident under that year, when Townsend would still have been at school. However, the bill for the 31st lists McCullough as 'Servius'.¹⁰ Townsend says mysteriously, 'I then had a little paper of my own, which gave me admission to the theater . . . ' and elsewhere, 'My connection with a small weekly paper gave me free access to the theaters in 1857-59'.¹¹ A school paper, perhaps? He had 'dabbled in the editing and publishing of several school papers',¹² and the *New York Clipper* mentions a 'High School Journal', started recently, run by very young men and published at Philadelphia.¹³ At any rate, Townsend was in Philadelphia in the crucial year, and himself asserts, 'I saw John Wilkes Booth during the whole period of his connection with the Arch-street Theater, six or seven years before he killed the President.'¹⁴ His piece on John Wilkes Booth was published less than a fortnight after the assassination, giving him little time for research; and since some details can be proven accurate, he may well have been relying on memory. Thus we cannot discount his evidence. However, it must always be remembered that he was a Union man writing for a Northern paper just after the assassination; he is likely to be telling the public what he thought they wanted to hear.

Philadelphia was a good place in which to start one's apprenticeship. John McCullough, giving advice to would-be actors in 1882, drew on his own experience to say: 'As to place of beginning, the best is, of course, where the best examples of the art are to be seen, and that is in the large cities.'¹⁵ Though New York was 'the first among equals' in theatrical reputation,¹⁶ Philadelphia and Boston were close on its heels. From

10 Susie Champney Clark, *John McCullough as Man, Actor and Spirit*. (Boston: Murray & Emory, 1905), p. 34; playbill, Pollock Theatre Collection (the bill for the 28th is missing).

11 Townsend, 'John McCullough'; 'A Philistine's Diary', unidentified newspaper clipping, April 30, 1882, in scrapbook in Townsend Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

12 Harold R. Manakee, introduction to new ed. of G.A. Townsend, *Katy of Catoctin* (Cambridge, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1959), p. 3.

13 January 30, 1858.

14 'A Philistine's Diary'.

15 'Success on the Stage', pp. 581-82.

16 Grimsted, p. 47.

1830 to 1860, Philadelphia was undergoing a change from provincial town to big city. The population expanded from 161,410 to 565,529 in these years, with much immigration: by 1860, 30% were foreign-born.¹⁷ The new middle class created by the change to industrialization was prosperous enough to 'attend the increasing variety of offerings of commercial downtown entertainment.'¹⁸ These, according to the *Ledger* (Aug. 12, 1857), ranged from Thomeuf's Varieties at a 10¢ admission to the Arch at 75¢-13¢ per seat. The 'new, lavish, 2,900-seat opera facility', the Academy of Music, opened at the beginning of 1857¹⁹ to compete with the Arch, the Walnut Street Theatre and the National. The theatres were in the downtown area, along with restaurants, newspaper offices, banks, and many shops and factories. Arch Street ran through the middle of this district; the Theatre, at nos. 609-615, had been opened by William Wood in 1828.²⁰

Many sources²¹ state that the Arch in 1857 was managed by William Wheatley and John Sleeper Clarke, but playbills list Wheatley as 'sole lessee'²², and the *New York Clipper* of July 10, 1858 announced that Clarke would join Wheatley in its management 'next season.' The Acting and Stage Manager was William S. Fredericks, who was 'noted as one of the most careful and judicious stage managers in the country.'²³ Wheatley had rescued the theatre from a decline: in 1853 when he and John Drew, Sr., took it over, it was one of the poorest theatre properties in the USA;²⁴ it was, according to the *New York Clipper*, 'hardly fit to lodge cattle in, so dirty had it become'. The management, eschewing stars, and engaging an excellent company, had 'opened under the title of the

17 Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth* (Philadelphia: U. Pennsylvania Press, 1968), pp. 49, 50, 57.

18 Ibid., pp. 56, 66.

19 Weldon B. Durham, ed., *American Theatre Companies, 1749-1887* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 535; John Thomas Scharf & Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884* (Philadelphia: Everts, 1884), 1:724.

20 Warner, p. 58; Scharf & Westcott, 2:979; Irvin R. Glazer, *Philadelphia Theatres, A-Z* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 61.

21 E.g., Clark, p. 32-33; Louisa Drew, p. 105-06, and Samples, p. 19. J.S. Clarke first *appeared* at the Arch in 1855 (A.H. Wilson, p. 124), which may have caused confusion.

22 E.g., playbill for September 16, 1857, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

23 Clark, p. 32.

24 William Dickey Coder, 'A History of Philadelphia Theatre', diss., U. Pennsylvania, 1936, p. 5.

"Star Company"--and had set a fashion for 'star companies' all over the country. Wheatley had made the Arch into a 'first-class theatre in every sense of the word. Nothing but purely legitimate plays have been produced, and it takes rank with the leading theatres of the country'.²⁵ In 1857-58, still priding itself on the quality of the ensemble, the Arch advertised its 'unapproachable cast'. Mammen names the Arch as one of 'the small group of better theaters which were rich enough in resources and personnel to offer truly outstanding productions.'²⁶ Wheatley's 'proverbial liberality' in *mise-en-scène* also drew praise: 'Mr. Wheatley appears to make a point of having every thing--scenery, costume, accessories--of the most suitable description. He has his reward in the great popularity of his theatre', said *The Press* on October 26, 1857. Audience comfort was catered for, too: during the summer closure in 1857, 'the entire premises have been (regardless of expense) remodelled and improved; Repainted, Papered, Decorated, Carpeted, &c.' There was no pit, but 'Orchestra Stalls', which had been 'enhanced in comfort'.²⁷ There is no mention of a bar. All these refinements before and behind the curtain indicate the genteel and respectable audience whom Wheatley hoped to attract. The 1857-58 season ran for 44 weeks, during which the company gave 542 performances; an average of two plays per night. 176 different plays were acted, the longest run being 23 nights, and the next longest 18.

Townsend assumes that Booth's position in the company was due to influence: 'Wilkes induced John S. Clarke, who was then addressing his sister, to obtain him a position in the company.'²⁸ Clarke was indeed courting Asia Booth (he married her in 1859), but it might just as well have been he who persuaded Booth to join the company as the other way round. Edwin Booth made his first appearance at the Arch on June 1, 1857: perhaps the idea was mooted then. About a quarter of Edward Mammen's Boston Museum beginners also had relatives or friends connected with the company.²⁹

²⁵ *New York Clipper*, March 2 and April 20, 1861.

²⁶ Mammen, p. 10.

²⁷ *Ledger*, Aug. 12.

²⁸ Townsend, *Life, Crime and Capture*, p. 21.

²⁹ Mammen, p. 37.

Townsend also says that Booth was paid \$8 a week (while his fellow-beginner McCullough, a distinguished amateur, received only \$6 or \$4);³⁰ if true, this seems inexplicable, unless it is linked to Booth's fictitious New York background. Townsend gives Booth's position as 'Third Walking Gentleman', though two other sources give it as Utility.³¹ Mammen's study shows male actors in this period entering the company as either supers or utilities, with 'a few . . . lucky enough to begin as responsible utilities'.³² Walking Gentleman is therefore an unlikely position for him; furthermore, there would probably not have been a third in this line at all, let alone filled by a beginner:³³ since the second of any line played less often, it would have been wasteful to have a third who would frequently be idle on full salary.³⁴ It is possible that Townsend felt 'Third Walking Gentleman' sounded to the layman a more ignominious title than Utility and attributed it to Booth to belittle him: certainly the parts Booth played this season fit the Utility description of anything and everything minor, with a few good roles, as we shall see.

On the opening night, Saturday, August 15, the Arch was competing with George Christy & Wood's Minstrels at the National Theatre, and the 'Little Actors', a children's company, at the Walnut Street Theatre.³⁵ In the opening night's programme, Booth was cast as 2nd Mask (a part of two lines) in Hannah Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem*. The lead was Mrs. E.L. Davenport ('late Miss Fanny Vining, from the Theatres Royal, London, her 1st appearance at this theatre'³⁶), and McCullough played the servant

30 'John McCullough' (\$4) and *Life, Crime and Capture*. In both these pieces, Townsend systematically contrasts Booth with McCullough, to the former's discredit.

31 *Life, Crime and Capture*, p. 22; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, April 17, 1865; unidentified newspaper clipping in Owen Stanley Fawcett's scrapbook on John Wilkes Booth, Box 38, Pamphlet Collection, Yale University. (However, the latter also contains wrong information.)

32 Mammen, p. 38. There was apparently one walking *lady* beginner.

33 James Burge states that large companies could have a third of any line (p. 98), but this writer has yet to find mention of one in any contemporary material or first-hand reminiscence.

34 Mammen, p. 24: in 1851, the First Old Man had 75 roles, the Second 68, while the First Low Comedian had 98, the Second 40.

35 *Philadelphia Daily Evening Bulletin*, Aug. 15, 1857.

36 *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, Aug. 12, 1857.

Thomas. The weather was uncomfortably hot, but the house, which was now 1/5 larger than before its renovation, was full. The company was warmly greeted.³⁷ The *Ledger* felt the performances were 'creditable', and *The Press* noted after the play a 'complimentary call for the company': the curtain was raised, and the 'tableau received a good deal of applause.' The *New York Clipper* (Aug. 22) sounded another note in its usual irreverent style:

Wheatley's Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, opened for the season on the 15th. The house was crowded. As an 'eye-opener,' the manager gave a free blow to the press, and the press, as in duty bound, will feel obliged to give many a free blow in return.

This hint that Philadelphia's dramatic criticism was not always as disinterested as it should be had some foundation, as we shall see later in the season with reference not to the Arch but to another theatre.

The second night introduced E.L. Davenport, the leading man, new to the company but not to Philadelphia audiences: this 'able tragedian, rated at this time as second only to Forrest, had long been . . . an established favorite in Philadelphia'; and Booth himself admired Davenport 'for finish and correctness'³⁸ Another actor remembered Davenport as 'an absolute gentleman, urbane and considerate of others, who really seemed to take pleasure in assisting and teaching the younger actors and actresses what to do to produce the greatest effects.'³⁹ This informal teaching by the experienced actors was a large part of the 'training' supplied by the stock company.⁴⁰ Booth had a small role; Townsend says: 'He had to play the *Courier* in Sheridan Knowles's "Wife" on his first [*sic*] night, with five or ten little speeches to make; but such was his nervousness that he blundered continually, and quite balked the piece.'⁴¹ But whatever Booth in fact did with the ten lines this part consists of, the performance seems to have gone well, *The Press* on August 18 reporting that Davenport was enthusiastically greeted, and made a speech at the end.

37 *Ledger*, Aug. 17, and *The Press* (Philadelphia), Aug. 17.

38 Coder, p. 68; Clarke, *Unlocked Book*, p. 110.

39 John M. Barron, 'Actors of Days Gone By; A Record of Impressions', *Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 11, 1906.

40 Mammen, p. 56.

41 Playbill, Pollock Theatre Collection; *Life, Crime and Capture*, p. 21.

If Booth was indeed nervous, so was someone else: John McCullough had to hold Davenport in his arms while he died, and 'it was noticed that the supporter was much more shaky in the scene than the dying man, and nearly dropped the prospective corpse.'⁴²

The season continued well. *The Press* on August 21 reported the Arch full the previous night, and the *Ledger* on the 24th said it was 'crowded nightly with visitors,' and that Davenport was 'very well supported.' Davenport's second performance of Richard III was even more popular than his first.⁴³ The *New York Clipper* (Aug. 29) conceded that the Arch had been 'doing a fair business during the past week.' On August 28, Booth appeared again in the playbill as Stefano Lodori, Controller of the Army, in *St. Marc*, a play by John H. Wilkins first produced by Davenport at Drury Lane.⁴⁴ On August 31, while the Indian Mutiny and the Kansas elections were being reported in the *Bulletin*, William Wheatley played the lead in *The Stranger* when Davenport was indisposed. *The Press* (Sept. 1) praised him as 'always "up"' when the stars were down: it was a useful accomplishment to have a range of parts by heart in case of such an emergency.

On September 9 the first warnings begin in the papers of something that was to affect the theatres: a financial crisis. Its causes were obscure; they may have included the inflation and speculation that followed the increase in the world gold supply from discoveries in California and Australia.⁴⁵ It hit Philadelphia with the closing of the Bank of Pennsylvania on September 25; two other banks suspended cash payments. 'The alarm caused by these events spread quickly through all classes of society. . . . Before the middle of October there was a general suspension of labor in mills and factories. The streets were soon full of unemployed men.'⁴⁶ The city put money into public works to relieve the unemployment, and an unexpectedly mild winter lessened the suffering; and in

42 Clark, p. 34.

43 *The Press*, Aug. 27, 1857.

44 Playbill for Aug. 28, 1857, Pollock Theatre Collection; Edgett, p. 52.

45 Austin E. Hutcheson, 'Philadelphia and the Panic of 1857', *Pennsylvania History* 3 (July 1936): 184.

46 Scharf & Westcott, 1:726.

the event, the distress was not so severe or long as that caused by the crash of 1837.⁴⁷ But inevitably, the theatre suffered: Lawrence Barrett says the panic 'closed the theatres, or at all events . . . ruined the managers and beggared the actors.'⁴⁸ He may be exaggerating; the Arch stayed open, and the *New York Clipper* on October 3 said that it was doing better than its rival, the Walnut. It is not recorded whether the actors continued to be paid at the same rate: the *Clipper* on October 17 reported that some New York theatres were paying two-thirds salaries to their actors in an attempt to survive the crisis.

Meanwhile, Booth had acquired the part of the Earl of Oxford in the season's third performance of *Richard III*,⁴⁹ and Guildenstern in the first *Hamlet*, advertised as containing 'novel and legitimate effects.'⁵⁰ One of the former must have been the disappearance of the Ghost, which *The Press* (Sept. 19) found 'almost magical,' assuming it must be 'a device' obtained by Davenport during his recent English visit. The paper added that the 'general merit of the company [was] brought out most happily' in *Hamlet*. Praise such as we often find for the Arch's stock company was not given indiscriminately: for example, the *Ledger* said that in Burton's National Theatre company, the men were better than the women, and the *Press* that a star at the Academy of Music was 'wretchedly supported' but for one stock company member.⁵¹

The *New York Clipper* of October 10 noted ominously, 'The times begin to touch our places of amusement, and it will take uncommon managerial tact to provide suitable entertainments to force patronage, and to thereby weather the storm in safety, if not profitably.' But on October 12, the *Philadelphia Ledger* remarked, 'The Arch continues to be well attended, in spite of the times', and the *Press* of October 14 stated, 'the Arch street is the only actually *paying* theatre now in Philadelphia. Night after night it is well filled,

47 Ibid.; Hutcheson, p. 193.

48 Barrett, *Edwin Forrest*, p. 95.

49 Mr. Brooks, who originally played Oxford, disappears from the bills after October 9; he also played Jane Shore's servant. It is reasonable to assume that he left, and that JWB was promoted to his parts (Pollock playbills).

50 Playbill for Sept. 16, 1857, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

51 *Ledger*, Sept. 1, 1857; *Press*, Oct. 31, 1857.

partly owing this to liberal management, and partly to the strength of its stock company'. On October 30, the *Ledger* announced that Wheatley was to give a benefit for the poor, i.e. those hit by the depression. The *Press*, taking stock of the city's theatres on November 2, said the Arch 'appears to be the best-paying house in Philadelphia.' Besides good scenery and wardrobe, this was due to the company:

Mr. WHEATLEY has the amusing weakness of advertising his as 'the great Star company'--though, with the exception of himself, Mr. and Mrs. DAVENPORT and Mrs. BOWERS, there is not one in that company who could play as a 'star' and pay expenses. But it is more. It is a capital working company, every member of which is fairly entitled to the praise of 'respectable'--some of which . . . would be acquisitions anywhere

Nonetheless, on November 10, following the Walnut, Wheatley was finally obliged to reduce prices to keep the house filled: he announced, 'Old Prices Restored to Suit the Times, viz. 25 Cents to all parts of the House.'⁵²

A round of benefits began in late November and December, and just after Christmas the company opened one of the season's 'blockbusters', *The Last Days of Pompeii*, which ran for 18 consecutive performances. This play had run for a record 29 nights at the Bowery Theatre in 1835,⁵³ and may have been chosen in an attempt to widen the theatre's appeal during the crisis. It was followed by 12 performances of *Fraud and its Victims; or, The Poor of Philadelphia*. This was a further adaptation of Stirling Coyne's version of *Les Pauvres de Paris*, played against the National's production of Boucicault's *Poor of New York*, from the same source.⁵⁴ With *Pompeii* and other historical dramas such as *Ambition; or, The Tomb, the Throne, and the Scaffold* (about Catharine Howard), and *The Declaration of Independence*, the latter 'produced, as the manager tells us, "at a cost exceeding any previous dramatic representation in America"',⁵⁵ Wheatley may have been trying to attract the crisis-hit public with novelty, spectacle and a colourful stage picture. With *Fraud* and *Declaration* he was raising the

52 Playbill for Nov. 10, 1857, Pollock Theatre Collection. By Dec. 29, however, most prices had been raised again to former levels (playbill, Special Collections, Van Pelt Library, U. of Pennsylvania).

53 McConachie, p. 124.

54 *Press*, Jan. 11 and 16, 1858.

55 *New York Clipper*, March 13, 1858.

morale of Philadelphians with stage pictures mirroring their city back to them, no doubt in a flattering light. The money panic may also have been the reason why Wheatley was to book stars later in the season for his traditionally non-star theatre.

An interesting row now blew up between the *Press* and the Walnut Street Theatre, run since December by Mrs. D.P. Bowers. On December 7 the *Press* had complained that some theatres thought themselves entitled to a daily notice, 'from six lines a day to sixty!' On January 18 the critic complained of rudeness from front-of-house staff at the Walnut, and supposed the cause to be

that, from the opening of Walnut-street Theatre, by Mrs. Bowers, we have uniformly refused to publish, as our own critical opinion, any of the daily--sometimes even twice-a-day--puffs showered down upon us with remarkable pertinacity, from . . . 'The Treasury' of this Theatre.

Mr. Wheatley, by contrast, had 'never yet taken the liberty of sending us cut-and-dry notices of his performances'. The critic then threatened to publish the next Walnut puff in full--'announcing the *impartial* source which may have supplied it.' The next day, the Walnut's advertisement vanished from the *Press*, not to reappear that season. This exchange proves that although some newspapers of the period were indeed, as noted in Chapter 2, content to print press releases as criticism, the *Press* was among those which jealously guarded their independence; and Wheatley was among the managers who were content to rely on the quality of their productions for good notices.

As an actor, Wheatley pleased 'the gods' in the early February run of Knowles's *Brian Boroihme*: he 'had to maintain a combat, single-handed, with four Danish warriors,' said the *Press* (Feb. 5), 'and each time that his sword struck a spark from any weapon of his opponents the gallery applauded vehemently.'

Mr. and Mrs. E.L. Davenport left the company suddenly on February 20; the *New York Clipper* (March 6) reported, 'Mr. Davenport gave up his engagement owing to some difficulty with Mr. Wheatley, and that manager has entered suit against him for not fulfilling the terms of his engagement.' William Coder (p. 69) notes Wheatley's change of policy in the spring:

With the exception of the week of February 22, when Mrs. George P. Farren and Hermann Vezin were hastily engaged to fill in the breach created by the sudden departure of the Davenports, the Arch held steadfastly to its traditional policy of operating as a stock company theatre until April 26' [*sic*: actually April 20].

Though Mrs. Farren's engagement was 'profitable', the *Press* felt that her acting was 'not adapted to these latitudes': it had 'not been improved in the South and West, where she has long been a favorite. We last saw her at the Bowery Theatre, in New York, and, even there, her acting was exaggerated' (Feb. 22, March 1). This opinion was not that of New York: it seems that Philadelphia may have been especially sensitive to what it called 'exaggerated' acting. After April 20, stars were booked solidly until the end of the season: first James H. Hackett, famous for Falstaff; then Boucicault and his wife Agnes Robertson, who provided the season's biggest 'blockbuster', *Jessie Brown; or, The Relief of Lucknow*, founded on a true story of the Indian Mutiny of the year before. After them came the legendary Charlotte Cushman, on her first tour since a retirement of a few years; tragedian Charles Coudock; John Brougham, comedian and playwright; and in the last week of the season Master Alfred Stewart, the 'Young Irish comedian,'⁵⁶ and Frank Drew were added to Brougham.

Visiting stars could also help an apprentice actor. J.L. Saphore remembered 'when we boys--I was a "utility man"--could enter the green room, seek our corner and stay there quietly, listening to the great ones talk--learning our business.'⁵⁷ Jerome K. Jerome enthused after a star's visit to his (mediocre) stock company:

He infused a new spirit into everybody, and, when he was on the stage, the others acted better than I should ever have thought they could have done. It is the first time I have played with any one who can properly be called an actor, and it was quite a new sensation. I could myself tell that I was acting very differently to the way in which I usually act. I seemed to catch his energy and earnestness; the scene grew almost real, and I began to *feel* my part. And that is the most any one can do on the stage.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *Ledger*, June 14, 1858.

⁵⁷ Mammen, p. 56; 'Portrait of J. Wilkes Booth', *Detroit Free Press*, n.d., in Owen Fawcett's scrapbook, Box 38, Pamphlet Collection, Yale University. Saphore claimed Booth's acquaintance at the Arch, but does not appear in playbills for this season; he played Marcellus, Tyrrell, etc. during Booth's 1863 star engagement there.

⁵⁸ Jerome, p. 125.

The star, displacing the stage manager, would take rehearsals; Edwin Booth was taken to task later in his career for avoiding rehearsals and thus failing in his responsibility to teach young actors.⁵⁹

Returning to Booth's own fortunes, we find that after the run of *Ambition*, he was billed for the first time at Philadelphia under his own name. Townsend notes:

Clarke was to have a benefit one evening, and to enact, among other things, a mock *Richard III*, to which he allowed Wilkes Booth to play a real *Richmond*. On this occasion, for the first time, Booth showed some energy, and obtain[ed] some applause.⁶⁰

The Pollock Collection playbill for February 19 shows Clarke as Richard III in scenes from the play, and 'Mr. Wilks Booth' as Richmond, though without any indication that he was of *the* theatrical Booth family. Regular playgoers, however, may have guessed after this who 'Mr. Wilks' was, which lends interest to Townsend's next anecdote. It was Booth's regular practice from now on to act benefits, his own and others', under his real name. If he did succeed here in attracting his first applause, it was most likely because this was his first part of any weight, rather than the first he had made any effort with, but it is revealing that the hostile Townsend allows him a success at all. He may be trying to account for Booth's meteoric career over the next few years, though he also tries to undercut his own praise by continuing, 'But in general, he was stumbling and worthless', and alleging that Booth fluffed continually, was hissed, and lacked the enterprise to learn parts in case their usual interpreter was 'off'.⁶¹ Clarke's choice of Booth for Richmond again, after his 1855 benefit in Baltimore, also gives the lie to Townsend's report that Booth was hissed there (see Chapter 1). This is presumably the reason why Townsend does not name Clarke as the Baltimore beneficiary, calling him simply 'a young actor'.⁶²

⁵⁹ *Spirit of the Times*, June 10, 1893.

⁶⁰ *Life, Crime, and Capture*, pp. 21-22. Possibly Clarke got the idea from John E. Owens or Joseph Jefferson, who both played spoof Richards for their benefits in Baltimore (Mary C. Owens, *Memories of the Professional and Social Life of John E. Owens* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1892), p. 158-59; *Baltimore Sun*, May 29, 1855).

⁶¹ *Life, Crime, and Capture*, p. 22.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

The next day Mrs. Farren and Hermann Vezin arrived, and the week's bills contained plays with strong parts for a middle-aged actress. One of these was *Lucretia Borgia*, an adaptation of Hugo's play. Townsend says:

[Booth] undertook the part of one of the Venetian comrades in Hugo's 'Lucretia Borgia,' and was to have said in his turn -

'Madame, I am Petruchio Pandolfo;' instead of which he exclaimed:

'Madame, I am Pondolfo Pet- , Pedolfo Pat- , Pantuchio Ped- ; damn it? what am I?'

The audience roared, and Booth, though full of chagrin, was compelled to laugh with them.⁶³

Booth's part was actually Ascanio Petrucci.⁶⁴ After four lines in the first scene, in the fifth he has to say, 'I am Ascanio Petrucci, madame, the cousin of Pandolfo Petrucci, Lord of Sienna [*sic*], murdered by your command '⁶⁵ It would be an easy line to spoonerize; and Townsend's account, including the inaccuracies, sounds like a genuine memory--with, perhaps, a little embroidery. However, according to Townsend, that was not the end of the matter:

The very next night he was to play *Dawson*, an important part in Moore's tragedy of 'The Gamester.' He had bought a new dress to wear on this night, and made abundant preparation to do himself honor. He therefore invited a lady whom he knew to visit the theater, and witness his triumph. But at the instant of his appearance on the stage, the audience, remembering the Petruchio Pandolfo of the previous night, burst into laughter, hisses, and mock applause, so that he was struck dumb, and stood rigid, with nothing whatever to say. Mr. John Dolman, to whose Stukely he played, was compelled, therefore, to strike *Dawson* entirely out of the piece.⁶⁶

Townsend is constructing Booth as an over-confident, lazy actor, and the 'build-up' of this occasion is a literary device to make his deserved humiliation seem greater. Townsend cannot possibly have known Booth's social and wardrobe arrangements, and Dawson is hardly an important part, but the smallest in the play, with two scenes and a total of nine lines. It is not easy to believe that 'the audience' would have been as focussed on a small-part player as this story suggests, and in any case, playing Ascanio,

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Playbill for Feb. 25, 1858, Pollock Theatre Collection. The bill for February 23, the date of this incident, is missing.

⁶⁵ Victor Hugo, *The Dramas of Victor Hugo* (London: Nichols, 1896). This is not, of course, the translation the Arch company would have used.

⁶⁶ *Life, Crime, and Capture*, p. 21.

he had had a chance to live down his fluff with nine more lines in two further scenes. A few gallery boys may have given him the reception described; but it is unlikely that an actor would be struck dumb by any audience reaction after six months' solid repertoire playing. To render it more plausible, and to present Booth as invariably incompetent, Townsend moves this incident, placing it 'soon' after the season's start and his Courier anecdote. As these blunders in *Lucretia Borgia* and *The Gamester* were said to have occurred the very next week after the revelation of Booth's identity in the *Richard III* playbill, it is perhaps strange that no other playgoer later remembered and corroborated Townsend's story. Booth was entrusted with two other parts in the two remaining days of Mrs. Farren's engagement, as well as repeating Ascanio Petrucci: Elphior in *Ingomar the Barbarian* and Lord Gardiner in Hugo's *Mary Tudor*, which suggests that he continued to be regarded as reliable by the management. Though the latter has only four lines, questioning a prisoner, it requires authority, and could ruin the tension of the scene if incompetently played.

After the departure of Mrs. Farren and Vezin, 'Wheatley attempted to bolster the strength of the company . . . by persuading Mme. Ponisi of the Walnut [Street Theatre] to transfer, and adding Susan Denin, from Burton's Theatre, at the same time.' Mrs. Bowers later 'retaliated . . . by persuading [the Arch's] exceedingly popular soubrette Anna Cruise to join her company in April 1858.'⁶⁷ On March 29, *Ugolino*, by Junius Brutus Booth, was performed, but his son's name does not appear on the playbill. When James H. Hackett came for a week, Booth played Prince John of Lancaster, and Hortensio in Garrick's *Shrew* adaptation, *Katharine and Petruchio*. It must have been good experience to act with the greatest Falstaff of the day.

Jessie Brown, a 'great hit in New York, . . . [which] played night after night to crowded houses' (*Ledger*, April 26) was given throughout the engagement of Dion Boucicault and Agnes Robertson, with Boucicault as the villainous Nena Sahib. Booth is not listed in the cast, though his friend McCullough played 'Achmet, Valkeel to the Nena

67 Coder, p. 69; Durham, p. 535.

Sahib'.⁶⁸ On the second Monday of the run, May 3, the *Ledger* announced, 'New tableau in "Jessie Brown" to-night--the arrival of General Havelock.' 'Secure your seats!' it advised, reassuring its readers that there was no advance in prices. While the Arch enjoyed this success, the *Ledger* (May 10) ran an editorial on the failure of the Philadelphia opera season, which had just closed, perhaps a casualty of the depression.

During Charlotte Cushman's engagement, Booth was cast as First Apparition in *Macbeth*, Capucius in *Henry VIII*, and also as Silvius in *As You Like It*⁶⁹--not a part in which one would cast an incompetent actor, and certainly not with such a Rosalind.⁷⁰ His parts for the remainder of the season are unremarkable, and seem to be mainly in comedy.

After the regular season ended on June 19, Coder tells us: 'The theatre remained open until the usual closing date of July 5 and filled in the interim with the Keller Troupe and their tableaux' (p. 69). The Troupe, led by M. Louis Keller, were not actors: their 'forte was the posing of living pictures', including 'Birth of the Flowers', 'Battle of the Amazons', and Rubens's picture 'The Crucifixion', to 'packed and incredulous houses.'⁷¹ For this engagement, the Troupe was 'increased to sixty artistes, (a ballet corps included)';⁷² this total presumably incorporated the members of the Arch's regular company, including 15 men, hired to eke out their own strength.⁷³ John Booth was not among them; and Townsend uses this fact to suggest that Booth made no progress in his year at the Arch: 'He still held the part of third walking gentleman, and the third is always the first to be walked off in case of strait The Kellers arrived; they cut down the company, and they dispensed with Wilkes Booth.'⁷⁴ It would hardly be surprising if

68 Playbill for May 4, 1858, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

69 Playbills for May 25, 26, 1858, Pollock Theatre Collection, and May 28, Crawford Theatre Collection, Yale University.

70 The promptbook of *As You Like It* 'as played by Miss Cushman at New York 1859' (Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC) shows some cuts in the part of Silvius, but he remains an important supporting character.

71 Richard Fawkes, *Dion Boucicault, a Biography* (London: Quartet, 1979), pp. 88-89.

72 *Press*, June 21, 1858.

73 Pollock Theatre Collection playbills.

74 *Life, Crime, and Capture*, p. 22.

Booth kept the same position--whatever it was--over the course of one season, and the Kellers 'dispensed with', or rather did not hire, about half the male Arch actors as well as Booth.

So ended the 1857-58 season at the Arch. The statistical record shows that its longest run had been *Jessie Brown* at 23 nights, the next *The Last Days of Pompeii*, 18. *Fraud & Its Victims; or, The Poor of Philadelphia* ran for 12 nights. *Jack Cade* also received 12 performances, but may have proved expensive in the long run: the *Clipper* reported (Oct. 24, Dec. 12) that Edwin Forrest, who toured in the role and claimed ownership of the manuscript, was suing Wheatley for producing it. *The Declaration of Independence* had 11 performances, *The Toodles*, containing a popular part for John S. Clarke, was played in whole or part 12 times, and the old favourite, *Black Eyed Susan*, with Davenport, a famous William, nine times. *Ambition*, *The Scalp Hunters*, and *The Brigand* played eight nights. Of these, *Pompeii*, *Cade*, *Declaration* and *Ambition* are all big historical dramas, *Jessie Brown* and *Fraud and its Victims* highly topical, and *Toodles* a comedy.

Shakespeare, unsurprisingly, was the most performed author, with 14 plays (two in adaptations: *Katharine and Petruchio*, and *Richard III*). Boucicault scores anything from 7 to 9, Sheridan Knowles and Thomas Morton 5 each, Bulwer-Lytton 4 (including one adaptation), J. Maddison Morton and John H. Wilkins 3 each, and all others 2 or 1. Of course, we are on slippery ground with authors in this period, as their names very rarely appeared on bills, and several versions of some plays were current - hence the uncertainty about Boucicault's contribution. There were many adaptations and translations: from Scott (*The Bride of Lammermoor*, *Guy Mannering* and *Rob Roy*), Hugo (*Mary Tudor* and *Lucretia Borgia*), Dickens (*David Copperfield* and *Dombey and Son*), Bulwer-Lytton (*Pompeii*), Kotzebue (*The Stranger* and *Pizarro*), Scribe (*The Queen of Spades*), Dumas (*Camille*) and Schiller (*The Robbers*).

As for John Wilkes Booth himself, he was listed in playbills as appearing in 224 performances out of 542, and in 81 different plays out of 175,⁷⁵ though he may well have had unlisted non-speaking roles in others. (Playbills are not available for 14 nights of the season. Since it was usual to keep the same part throughout a season, it is assumed here that where a bill is missing, Booth played the same part he had on playbills of near date.⁷⁶) In seven cases, however, he did not play the same part throughout the season. In five of these, he acquired a part in a play in which he had originally not been cast. In the sixth (*Macbeth*) he shifted from 2nd Officer to 1st Apparition (the latter with Cushman)--which does not seem much of an improvement. Finally, in *Richard III*, three performances in August-September passed without him, then he took over the Earl of Oxford for two more performances; then a playbill is missing, and we next find him playing Richmond in scenes from the play. Bafflingly, he is then absent from the cast on April 6, though playing on the nights on either side of this date. Add to these changes the fact that he doubled as Elliot and Officer in *Venice Preserved*, and the total comes to 84 different parts for which he was cast in the course of that season. Only one play remains a mystery: there is no playbill for the one night *Paddy Miles* was performed.

Over the season, Booth played many parts of the order of Messenger, Sentinel, 1st or 2nd Officer, Servant to Camille and to Jane Shore, 1st Lord, Spaniard, and Robber, and two different Waiters. In the armed services, he was two Sergeants, and, climbing the ranks, Lt. Pike, Captains Danforth, Spruce, Tancred and d'Esterre, and Major Desmoulins. He ascended the aristocracy as Sir Thomas Nalvern [*sic*], the Earls of Fife and Oxford, Lords Lounge and Gardiner, the Marquis de Villarceaux, the Duc de Rohan and Prince John of Lancaster. It may be to extrapolate too much from too little information, but the list perhaps suggests that he was reliable when cast as men of rank

⁷⁵ *Out for Thanksgiving* (Nov. 26), in which Booth played a waiter, appears from its dramatis personae to be identical to *A Day Well Spent* (Nov. 30), and the two are treated here as one play.

⁷⁶ Playbills for the two Cushman performances in May of *Guy Mannering* do not list Booth's earlier part, the Sergeant; it is assumed he continued to play it, though there may be some doubt.

and authority; that he had presence and refinement enough to be convincing. A good wardrobe would have helped here, too, and his sister notes that Booth 'was always well dressed'.⁷⁷

We are on firmer ground when looking at the parts he played in accessible plays. Aside from Richmond, which was a special case as a benefit performance and spoof, his best part was probably *Silvius*, a very respectable role for a beginner, and one that indicates the position he had attained by the end of the season. *Augustus Fogg* in *Fashion*, a permanently bored member of an old family and described in the cast list as 'a drawing-room appendage', says very little, but could be funny in the right hands. Dawson is the smallest part in *The Gamester*, but he has a scene of compassion and remorse which an actor could make something of. In Shakespeare, Booth also played *Guildenstern*, *Metellus Cimber*, *John of Lancaster*, *Burgundy*, *Solanio*, *Conrade*, *Capucius* (*Henry VIII*), and *Antonio* in *Othello* (whoever he is). *Hortensio* in Garrick's adaptation is a much reduced part, most of his lines being taken from *Tranio* in the wedding scenes. *Ascanio Petrucci* is always on with several others who have the same function, and would not have much chance to make an impression. *Lord Gardiner*, as indicated above, has only four lines, but needs authority. *Watchall* in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* is not a promising part. *Elliot*, one of the conspirators in *Venice Preserved*, is, again, one of a crowd. *Lamp*, the barnstorming theatrical manager in *Wild Oats*, has one and a half substantial scenes. *Rodolph* in *William Tell* is the most important of a group of officers, and says the most. The *Courier's* one appearance in *The Wife* comes after a highly dramatic scene, and could be funny, as he fences verbally with someone trying to pump him. *Lt. Pike* in *Black Eyed Susan* displays authority when he is seen arresting smugglers, and compassion when he says farewell to William and has to escort him to execution; he also pretends to be a Frenchman, displaying an accent, with comic

⁷⁷ *Unlocked Book*, p. 105: she describes an occasion before he began his stage career.

possibilities. The First Courtier in *Richelieu* requires only authority and aristocratic bearing.

Booth's experience can be seen as fairly typical when compared with Mammen's sample of Boston Museum beginners. Few of these had taken acting or elocution lessons, but, like Booth, 'a goodly proportion had had previous experience in amateur theatricals.' Their fathers included actors (and farmers), and some had friends or relatives in the company. Over a year they played about 100 roles, some with no lines. Booth was atypical in not being local, and in class--Mammen's group were 'mostly from the lower middle classes.' Most of them, like him, changed a few roles during the season, and were added to casts. The 'utility men always had a few fair-sized roles', and 'a goodly portion of their longer roles' were played 'on the benefit nights of other actors'. Booth's roles were better than some which Mammen gives as typical: Guildenstern, for instance, when the 'beginner' roles were Francisco, 2nd Actor or a sailor (McCullough played Bernardo); Silviu instead of William. McCullough's 'good' roles were Duncan and Tubal, the latter acquired during the season.

[T]he basic theory of the first year seems to have been that through the chance castings of an entire season a beginner would receive a taste of almost all the sorts of work that actors did. His parts were so small that failure could bring little disgrace to the theater. At the same time, they were large enough to provide broad training of an elementary nature⁷⁸

Booth's parts, played with a good company and a selection of visiting stars, would have served him in this way. Moreover, during this season, 20 parts he would later play as a star had been performed by Davenport or other actors, a few more than once: he could have witnessed the Romeos of William Wheatley, Mme. Ponisi and Susan Denin. Whether or not he was cast in these plays, he could have learned much by watching rehearsals and performances: Mammen tells us that beginners picked up 'movement, business, and readings' for roles this way. 'Watching from the wings was a common practice' (p. 57).

78 Mammen, pp. 36-37, 39-41.

'He is remembered in Philadelphia by his failure as in the world by his crime.'

'During the season he appeared in a variety of characters and became a general favorite with the audience.'

'He was generally cast in subordinate parts, and did not make any figure at all during his engagement.'⁷⁹

These three summings-up of Booth's Arch Street season are in such violent contrast that they can only support the truth of the last assertion: he did indeed, as one would expect in his position, make no figure at all. Playing the sort of parts that were usually his due, he escaped notice and was not remembered, for in most tiny parts it is not possible to make an impression by acting well. The desire to construct Booth as deviant has led to the misrepresentation of this typical apprentice year as a chapter of accidents, or as a 'failure' to get better parts. Without denial or corroboration for Townsend's assertion that he was 'stumbling and worthless' throughout the season, the best evidence that he was filling his place satisfactorily is the increase in the number and size of his roles as time went on.

The *Philadelphia Bulletin* apparently confused John's apprentice year with his later starring engagement when it alleged, after the assassination, that he had played at the Arch under the name of Wilkes, 'but his acting was bad and his engagement only lasted six nights.'⁸⁰ Later writers have accepted and elaborated Townsend's version. Lloyd Lewis, followed by Carl Sandburg, claimed that 'Philadelphia's critics . . . went easy on him for the sake of his family',⁸¹ thus proving they had not read the newspapers; while the motif of Booth's obsessive ambition appears in the reminiscence of a 'gentleman in Philadelphia':

Twenty-odd years ago I was an inmate of a boarding-house in Arch Street . .
 . . The most ambitious and the most idle among us was a young fellow . . .

⁷⁹ Townsend, *Life, Crime and Capture*, p. 22; *Detroit Free Press*, April 28, 1865; *Ledger*, April 17, 1865 respectively.

⁸⁰ April 15, 1865; also *Inquirer*, same date. Booth's 1863 star engagement lasted 12 nights.

⁸¹ Lewis, p. 169; Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939), 4:312.

who was known on the stage as E. Wilkes. . . . [H]e was both lazy and inordinately vain, and absolutely refused to make any effort.

He did not care to become a useful or a good man, or to bring real merit into his work, but simply to be known. 'I must have fame!--fame!' he would often say. This desire for notoriety grew into a devouring passion with him.⁸²

This piece, including a story of Booth's challenging another boarder to a duel, was used by Stanley Kimmel, and thus given wide circulation.⁸³ However, another post-assassination piece, in the midst of copious borrowings from Townsend, includes this sharply contrasting view of Booth's character:

An employ  of the Arch Street Theatre thus described him: 'He was not a bad man and after all, was an innocent kind of fellow who would not do a mean action, for the love of meanness. No son ever loved a mother more fondly, and he always spoke of her with the greatest admiration.'⁸⁴

There is at least one reliable judgement on Booth's Arch Street acting career extant, in a letter from his mother to Junius: 'Sleeper [John Sleeper Clarke] says he thinks, he will make a very good actor--nothing great.' This is followed by the sincerest compliment, a job offer: 'Wheatley & Sleeper are together next season at the Arch St- \as managers,/ & Sleeper wants John to continue there but he dont want too [*sic*].'⁸⁵

John did not continue at the Arch. The same edition of the *New York Clipper* that announced Clarke's partnership with Wheatley reported that 'Geo. Kunkel and T.L. Moxley, managers of the Richmond, Va., Theatre, arrived in this city on the 11th inst., recruiting for the fall and winter campaign' (July 17). We do not know whether Booth attended this casting call or obtained his post by letter, but in September 1858 he joined the stock company at Richmond, Virginia, where he was to remain for two years.

82 Unidentified newspaper clipping, Harvard Theatre Collection.

83 *Mad Booths*, p. 150. Kimmel ignores the fact that the wrong initial was used with Booth's stage name--a possible confusion with the Philadelphian Wilks family, which included an E.P. Wilks (see above).

84 *The Great Conspiracy* (Philadelphia: Barclay, 1866), pp. 22-23.

85 Mary Ann Booth to Junius Brutus Booth, Jr., in Harvard Theatre Collection. See Chapter 4 for discussion of the date of this letter.

CHAPTER 4

Richmond 1858-60: A Man of Promise¹

Some time before the beginning of the 1858-59 season, Mary Ann Booth wrote to her son Junius a letter which has only partially survived, and this fragment begins intriguingly, ' . . . go to Richmond.' She went on, 'Sleeper wants John to continue at the Arch but he dont want too [*sic*], he is for trying another City.'² A mysterious hint follows: 'I think John wishes he had been something else now--but he wont [*sic*] acknowledge it.' This may tie in with a remark made by Asia in an undated letter to her friend Jean Anderson, 'John is crazy or enthusiastic about going for a soldier. I think he will get off. It has been his dearest ambition, perhaps it is his true vocation.'³ It would be most interesting to know whether it was written before or after Booth's involvement with the John Brown raid.

After leaving Philadelphia, John appeared with his brother Edwin for the first time, as Richmond to his Richard, at the Holliday Street Theatre in Baltimore, on August 27, 1858. There are unfortunately no reviews of this performance. However, the actor J.H. Stoddart remembered: 'Both performances were superb. I shall never forget the fight between *Richard* and *Richmond*, in the last act, an encounter which was terrible in its savage realism.'⁴ Edwin himself was more laconic in a letter to his niece Blanche DeBar: 'John played *Richmond* for my benefit the other night, and surprised every one. I think he'll make a good actor.'⁵ And an audience member wrote, 'He made me feel what a tyrant Richard had been. I seemed actually to be living at that time instead of in this quiet

1 A version of this chapter was published in *Theatre Symposium 2: Theatre in the Antebellum South* (Tuscaloosa, AL: U. Alabama Press, 1994), pp. 113-29.

2 Harvard Theatre Collection. The letter is filed as part of one dated Feb. 3, 1859, but is obviously part of a separate letter. From the internal evidence cited here and in Chapter 3, it is clear that it was written either towards the end of the 1857-58 season or during the summer.

3 ML 518, Peale Museum. Written after Asia's marriage and before Edwin's, its date must be between May 1859 and June 1860.

4 J.H. Stoddart, 'The Recollections of a Player', *Century Magazine* n.s. 42 (1902): 290.

5 Transcript, undated, in David Rankin Barbee Papers.

century. As for his appearance--well, he looked like a new blown rose with the morning dew upon it.⁶ Mary Ann Booth commented ambiguously, 'He is more like Edwin than anybody else.' She went on to say, 'Joe has a job in the box-office of the Holiday [*sic*] St. Theatre, where he gets four dollars a week. John gets eleven.'⁷

Presumably she meant John's salary in his next stock engagement, for he was not a company member at Baltimore. In September he joined the company at Richmond, Virginia, still playing under the name J.B. Wilkes: he told an acquaintance, George Crutchfield, that 'when he made a reputation as an actor, he would take back his family name.'⁸ It is often stated that John received \$20 a week at Richmond, but this figure seems to derive solely from Townsend.⁹

In 1850, Richmond had a population of 27,570, rising to over 37,000 by 1860. It was a thriving town, having recovered from a recent economic depression.¹⁰ 'Richmond was the leading commercial and industrial center of Virginia; by 1860 it ranked thirteenth of all cities in the United States in the value of its manufactures.'¹¹ In 1860 'Richmond seemed to be unusually prosperous: a good deal of building was going on and large enterprises were projected.'¹² The Richmond and Petersburg Railroad had enabled the theatre company to play a one-night stand in Petersburg the previous season, returning the same night.¹³ There were cultured people among the citizens of Richmond:

Here were no brutalized and brutalizing planters, ignorant and bigoted, such as the Abolitionist press was fond of describing, but cultivated gentlemen,

6 Clarke, *Unlocked Book*, p. 108. The audience member was a 'Quakeress who had never entered a theatre before'.

7 Mary Ann to Junius, in Quincy Kilby, 'Some newly-collected facts about John Wilkes Booth,' n.d., William Seymour Theatre Collection.

8 George Crutchfield to E.V. Valentine, July 5, 1909, Valentine Museum, Richmond.

9 *Life, Crime and Capture*, p. 22; Lewis, p. 169, Kimmel, p. 151, and Samples, p. 25 give this figure, which, if not entirely fanciful, is more likely to represent his salary in the second season rather than the first.

10 Fuller, 'Kunkel and Co.', p. 30; and Patricia Catherine Click, *The Spirit of the Times: Amusements in Nineteenth-Century Baltimore, Norfolk, and Richmond* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), p. 10.

11 Click, p. 14.

12 William Asbury Christian, *Richmond: Her Past and Present* (Richmond: L.H. Jenkins, 1912), p. 208.

13 Fuller, 'Kunkel and Co.', p. 104.

many of them graduates of Northern colleges and not a few polished by travel abroad and study at European universities.¹⁴

Richmond supported one theatre, the Marshall, usually known at this date as the Richmond Theatre, and several places for occasional and less 'legitimate' amusement.¹⁵ The Theatre since the spring of 1856 had been run by the firm of Kunkel and Company: George Kunkel, Thomas Moxley, and John T. Ford. George Kunkel had been an Ethiopian Minstrel, latterly running his own troupe, Kunkel's Nightingales. John Thompson Ford had been the agent for this troupe on at least two occasions. Little seems to be known of Moxley except that he had been a female impersonator in Kunkel's Nightingales. After 1857, Ford withdrew from active management, remaining a lessee, and was not present in either season that John Wilkes Booth acted there.¹⁶ The management was both successful and ethical: during the money panic of the previous season, said a company member, 'our gentlemanly managers, Messrs. Kunkel & Co., never failed to pay FULL SALARIES up to the present date.'¹⁷

It can be conjectured that Booth left Philadelphia for Richmond to get experience in a different sort of theatre: the Richmond, as the only regular theatre, offered a wider range of entertainment, as we shall see, and hosted many more visiting stars. The company was smaller, too, and would therefore offer better parts. The *Washington Post* (March 9, 1895), noting that Booth had worked there, said the theatre was once 'the home of the best stock company in the U.S.', though others would also lay claim to that title. The *Guide to the Stage* lists Richmond among those places where 'a school is found to learn the profession before appearing before an audience in Metropolitan Cities' (p. 17).

The most important sources for the two seasons John Wilkes Booth stayed at Richmond are the newspapers, of which four are wholly or partly extant: the *Whig*,

14 Alfred Hoyt Bill, *The Beleaguered City: Richmond, 1861-1865* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), p. 4.

15 Metropolitan Hall, Oddfellows' Hall, and the Mechanics' Institute hosted minstrel shows and the like, and, rarely, drama.

16 Fuller, 'Kunkel and Co.', pp. 32-37.

17 *New York Clipper*, Feb. 20, 1858. Their correspondent, 'J.M.B.', was very likely John M. Barron, of whom more later in this chapter.

Examiner, Enquirer and Dispatch.¹⁸ Only a handful of playbills have survived, a fact perhaps not unconnected to the burning of much of the city in 1865 at the end of the Civil War, and of the theatre on January 2, 1862. One letter from Booth and a few from other family members mention events at Richmond, and then there are reminiscences by people who knew him or saw him act there--or who claim to have done so.

Because of the lack of playbills, we know of comparatively few parts played by Booth (some of these in plays which are not extant); hence the difficulty is increased of analyzing his progress and assessing what lines of business he played in his two seasons.

The first season: 1858-59

The season opened on Saturday, September 4 with *Town and Country* and *1000 Milliners Wanted for the Frazer River Gold Diggins* [sic]. The theatre, according to the *Daily Dispatch* (Sept. 6), was 'uncomfortably crowded' with the largest audience on an opening night for four years; the paper thought the company 'about fifty per cent better' than last season's. Some lines of business are known: Mrs. I.B. Phillips was leading lady, H.A. (Harry) Langdon leading man, D.H. Harkins juvenile man, T.B. Johnston comedian, S.K. Chester heavy, W.H. Bailey and R. Meer old men, Mrs. Reid old woman, Mrs. Ada Proctor juvenile lady, Miss Kate Fisher chambermaids, Mrs. Jenkins and Miss Herman walking ladies, Mrs. Johnson utility, Miss Kate Pennoyer danseuse.¹⁹

On September 10, John wrote to Edwin (quoted in his own spelling):

Dear Ted,

I would have written to you before this, but I have been so busily engaged, and am such a slow writer that I could not find time. I am rooming with H Langdon, he has stoped drinking and we get along very well together. This climate dont agree with me, I have felt ill ever scince I have been here. I called on Dr Beeal soon after I arrived here. He and his Lady seem a very nice couple. I like them very much. He has put me under a course of

18 The *Dispatch*, which cost 1¢, had the highest circulation by 1859. It was apolitical, while the *Whig* represented 'the older planter class and the conservative merchants' and the *Enquirer* was Democratic. Non-extant papers include the *National American*, possibly *Know-Nothing*, *Richmond Index*, *Morning News*, and *The South* (Lester J. Cappon, *Virginia Newspapers 1821-1935* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1936), pp. 4, 7, 169, 171, 176, 178, 179, 184).

19 *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, Sept. 4 and 6, 1858; *New York Clipper*, Feb. 19, 1859.

medicine, the same I have been subject to before. I understand it is that that makes me so languid and stupid. I have played several good parts, scince I have been here, Cool in London Ass[urance] last night. I believe I am getting along very well. I like the people, place, and management, so I hope to be very comfortable. There is only one objection and that is I believe every one knows me already. I have heard my nam\e/--Booth--called for, one or two nights, and on account of the likeness the papers deigned to mention me. How are you getting along. I had hoped to hear from you before this. Give mother my Love. For I may not be able to write to her this week, as they are casting Miss Mitchells peices, and I will have much to study. Excuse this dull letter. God bless you, write soon, and believe me I am ever your affectionate Brother

John.²⁰

Perhaps because Richmond was a smaller town than Philadelphia, with a different attitude to actors, he was already, after less than a week, known to some of his audience by his real name. (The papers which 'deigned to mention' him, because of his likeness to Edwin, and perhaps to his father, have not survived.) His objection suggests that he was quite sincere in wishing to serve his apprenticeship in anonymity. It is not known what parts he had played by then, apart from Cool, but clearly they were noticeable enough to evoke calls. Edward M. Alfriend says he played Sir Benjamin Backbite in *The School for Scandal*,²¹ which was done on September 6, but he may be thinking of the following year. Dr. James Beale, as his daughter later remembered, was to have much social as well as professional contact with John Wilkes Booth during his time in the city: he had probably met Edwin in the spring of 1858 (if not before), when both were at a champagne supper following a benefit for the Mount Vernon Association.²²

Maggie Mitchell, mentioned in the letter, was the first star of the season, beginning in its second full week. Her repertoire was largely unique to herself, and would be completely new to Booth. With unfamiliar plays, says the actor John M. Barron, 'The parts of the play would be sent ahead [of the visiting star], so that they could be allotted to the members of the company. Of the context we would know nothing.' Barron, who

20 Hampden-Booth Theatre Library, The Players.

21 'Assassin Booth Idealized in the Recollections of Edward M. Alfriend', *Sunday Globe*, Washington DC, Feb. 9, 1902.

22 Mary Bella Beale in *Philadelphia Daily News*, Dec. 31, 1887, transcript in Barbee papers. (excerpted in *The Constitution*, Atlanta, same date); and *New York Clipper*, March 20, 1858.

supported Miss Mitchell in 1855, found that her plays 'involved an enormous amount of labor, especially at rehearsals; but that meant perfect performances, and before rehearsals were dismissed she was sure that every member of the cast was letter perfect in the words and business'.²³ Harry Langdon, Booth's room-mate and the leading man, confirmed Asia Booth Clarke's observation that Booth found learning lines difficult (see Chapter 1).²⁴ Maggie Mitchell played a fortnight, 'and left our city youth mad with rapturous excitement' (*Richmond Semi-Weekly Examiner*, Oct. 1). Some of the excitement was expressed rather indecorously; the *Enquirer* (Sept. 22) complained, 'ardent boys and verdant men help to make matters disagreeable by whooping, whistling and applauding at the *wrong* time'. Audience behaviour would be much discussed during these two seasons, in contrast to the silence from the Philadelphia papers; the Theatre catered for the whole spectrum of Richmond society, from the highest to the lowest.

The next star, arriving on September 27, was Edwin Booth, already a favourite in Richmond. His first performance received applause

heartily and long continued--not that kind of furious greeting kept up by a few admirers and friendly claquers to sustain the wavering reputation of mediocre talent--but that earnest and cordial expression of appreciation of true genius which bursts spontaneously from a whole audience.²⁵

He stayed nearly three weeks, playing in *The Apostate*, *Richelieu*, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, *The Iron Chest*, *Katharine and Petruchio*, *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Othello* (as Iago), *The Merchant of Venice*, *King Lear*, *Brutus* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Ten of these thirteen had been played by his father,²⁶ and eight would also be in John's star repertoire. He also gave two performances of *Henry V*, apparently the play's American debut.²⁷ John again played Richmond to Edwin's Richard, for the latter's benefit, and

23 John M. Barron, 'Actors of Days Gone By; A Record of Impressions', *Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 11, 1906. This was one of a series of articles on the theatre.

24 George Alfred Townsend, 'Lincoln's Assassination', unidentified newspaper clipping in Lincoln Library and Museum, Fort Wayne, IN (kindly brought to my attention by Myra-Ann Rutledge); and Clarke, *Unlocked Book*, pp. 45 and 106-07.

25 *Dispatch*, Sept. 29.

26 Stephen M. Archer, *Junius Brutus Booth: Theatrical Prometheus* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), pp. 243-45.

27 William Winter, *The Life and Art of Edwin Booth* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893), p. 5.

was announced in the newspapers as Wilkes Booth (by the *Enquirer* (Oct. 1) as Junius Brutus Wilkes Booth), in accordance with his usual practice of dropping his alias when playing benefits. The papers did not review his performance, but the *Examiner* (Oct. 1) took the occasion to print a long piece analyzing Edwin's acting, adding that:

Among the stock, there are some worthy o[f] special notice. . . . There is in the company a young gentleman named WILKES, a good deal like EDWIN BOOTH both in face and person. He is a man of promise, and might, with the approbation of the audience, be cast for a higher position than he usually occupies.

Considering what the reviewer said about some of the others, this may not be as high praise as it sounds; he continued:

The rest of the stock . . . sometimes forget what they should say or do[,] leave the text, murder the King's English, rant and rave when there is no need, or growl out their sentences in indistinct undertones, play gentlemen in soiled gloves and dirty boots; and, altogether, seem more desirous of getting to the end of the piece than of doing well the part allotted them. These little matters deserve correction.

Alfriend says that John played Horatio to his brother's Hamlet, and that 'his name was given in the bills as John Wilkes Booth', but this is not corroborated by the newspapers. At the end of the play, says Alfriend, when Edwin was called for, 'he came down the stage leading John Wilkes by the hand, pointed to him and said, "I think he has done well. Don't you?" The response from the audience was cries of "Yes!" "Yes!" and thunders of applause.' However, there is no direct evidence that John played Horatio on this occasion, though he certainly did so the following season, and it seems more likely that this incident refers to John's performance as Richmond. Some time after this engagement Edwin wrote to Junius: 'John is getting along well in Richmond, Va. The folks know him there and like him--He'll make a good actor, but he says he's not comfortable--he don't like the study.' And in another letter, he told Junius, 'I don't think he will startle the world . . . but he is improving fast and looks beautiful on the *platform* [*sic ital.*].'²⁸

28 Dec. 12, 1858, Harvard Theatre Collection; Francis Wilson, *John Wilkes Booth*, p. 17. Wilson gives the date only as '1858'.

After Edwin's departure for Baltimore on October 16 (*Enquirer*), the theatre continued starless for the next fortnight. One of the attractions now was the spectacular drama, *The Sea of Ice*, revived 'with all the splendid scenic effects which gave the piece such "a run," here, two years ago.' (*Dispatch*, Oct. 19). Booth made friends with the child in the cast: Mrs. Beale, the doctor's wife, said that 'he was so loving to the little thing that she would nestle in his arms in the wings until her time came to go on the stage', according to Mary Bella Beale. On October 25 the theatre advertised, as a 'Novelty for fair week', *David Copperfield*, with J.B. Wilkes as Traddles.²⁹ A reminder that the newspapers may not always be infallible is provided by the entry in Edward V. Valentine's diary for October 30. Valentine, a young sculptor, had created a bust of Edwin during his engagement, and knew John too. 'In the evening took a walk--Met John Booth--He told me he was going to Lynchburg with the Company. At night went to the theatre--they played "La Tour de Nesle".'³⁰ The newspapers, however, had announced *Dombey and Son* and *The Mysterious Panel*.

The company did indeed go to Lynchburg (Dudley Hall), while the New Orleans English Opera Troupe was playing in the Richmond Theatre. They began with Shakespeare and standard drama (*The Wife*, *David Copperfield*, *School for Scandal*), then gave a four-day run of *The Sea of Ice*, including an unusual Saturday matinee. Of this play, the *Lynchburg Daily Virginian* said somewhat enigmatically, 'For the first time in the history of Lynchburg, we are to be favored with a drama bearing resemblance to the incredulous' (Nov. 10). It went on:

This drama differs from that which is classed *legitimate*. Its sound morality renders it a favorite with those who never attend theatre--indeed, during its performance in Richmond, divines of all denominations, saying nothing of members of churches, gladly bore testimony to its value as a strong auxiliary to the cause of virtue and morality.

Its romantic scenery and deep pathos--its thrilling incidents and morality, cannot but recommend it to all. It opens in Mexico and ends in Paris, and will contain *five beautiful tableaux*.'

²⁹ *Dispatch*, Oct. 25.

³⁰ Valentine Museum, Richmond.

As a non-legitimate, 'pure entertainment' play, *The Sea of Ice* was felt to need justification as a moral spectacle; however, this notice seems schizophrenic in its desire to sell the play on its scenery and exotic locales as well as its virtue.

Back in Richmond on November 15, the company had as star the young tragedienne, Avonia Jones, who had local connections. She had been tutored for the stage by Anna Cora Mowatt, now married to W.F. Ritchie, editor of the *Enquirer*.³¹ One of the few surviving playbills gives J.B. Wilkes as Paison in *Adrienne the Actress* and Her[r] Cheroot, a student, in the farce *Jenny Lind*.³² Audiences were thin, however, as the *Enquirer* of November 19 noted. The opera, preceding this engagement, had been popular, and had perhaps exhausted some playgoers' entertainment budgets.

On November 29 J.W. Wallack, Jr., began. The *Dispatch* of that date called him a 'polished and refined performer', but thought 'he may be excelled in passionate delineations.' Among his largely romantic repertoire was *Richard III*, advertised as 'Cibber's adaptation, with further restorations from the text of Shakespeare.'³³ After noting Wallack's engagement at Richmond, the *Clipper* reprinted from the *Cincinnati Enquirer* a piece which 'would seem to imply that [Edwin Booth] has already taken the first step that leads to a speedy downfall': he had been so drunk that he had failed to get through even one scene of *Richelieu*.³⁴ With this reproof in the trade paper, the whole acting profession was informed of Edwin's weakness. After Wallack, the tragedienne Julia Dean Hayne played a week. Gordon Samples (p. 32) states that a special performance was given during her engagement at the Powhatan House hotel on December 18, but the present writer could find nothing to support this. He also states that the company went to Petersburg for a short season on December 20, basing this presumably on Leonard Grover's reminiscence of having seen the company there 'in the latter part of

31 Eric Wollencott Barnes, *The Lady of Fashion: the Life and the Theatre of Anna Cora Mowatt* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 276.

32 Valentine Museum.

33 *Dispatch*, Dec. 4.

34 *New York Clipper*, Dec. 4, 1858, quoted in Chapter 8.

1858';³⁵ but this engagement took place in the new year (see below). John Wilkes Booth was certainly in Richmond at that time: on December 22, reported the *Whig* (Dec. 24):

The farce [*Our Gal*] was near being turned into a tragedy by the skirt of [Miss Kate Fisher's] merino dress taking fire from the footlights. The ignition being observed by some of the audience, several voices made known the actress'[s] peril to Mr. Wilkes Booth, who promptly extinguished the fire, and the performance progressed as if nothing had happened.

The combination of unprotected footlights and crinoline could be deadly, and the following season a similar incident was to occur. Despite his alias, Booth was being referred to by his real name in the Richmond papers, except in the theatrical advertisements and, sometimes, the notices.

This accident happened during the visit of the next star, Mlle. Louise Wells and her Dramatic and Equestrian Troupe of three men and accompanying horses, who played with the assistance of the company. It may have been mortifying to the management--and to aspiring tragedians--that this engagement was more successful than the preceding three: 'The rain, which quite washed out the legitimate drama, a week or two since, doesn't seem even to dampen the "Horse Opera" "Baby Blanche" floated where the "Iron Mask" and "Italian Wife" sunk'.³⁶ The troupe continued over Christmas, with the company in a pantomime for a special Christmas Day matinee, and the Wells Troupe in the evening. The house had been full rain or shine, said the *Dispatch* (Dec. 31), often 'to a disagreeable excess.' Next, a round of benefits began, and performing between the evening's plays were Signor Felix Carlo and his family and Herr Spingalen in what the *Enquirer* (Jan. 4) called 'Acrobatic "Operas"'.

Sometime in 1858, Mary Ann Booth wrote to Junius, 'John is doing well at Richmond. He is very anxious to get on faster. When he has a run of bad parts he writes

³⁵ Leonard Grover, 'Lincoln's Interest in the Theater', *Century Magazine* 77 (1909), 943.

³⁶ *Dispatch*, Dec. 22. *The Iron Mask* was played by Wallack, *The Italian Wife* by Mrs. Hayne.

home in despair.'³⁷ In his current position in the theatre, he could not be sure of having interesting parts all the time: stage managers didn't cast for educational purposes.³⁸

The tragedian A.J. (John Andrew Jackson) Neafie was the star for the next week. 'Here was a man of iron will and of nerves of steel--a made actor, not a born one . . . the incarnation of rapid-fire acting.'³⁹ Then 'The Monster Spectacle' of *Monte Cristo* ran for eight consecutive nights, with J.B. Wilkes as Danglars; the play had giants, trained animals, a real circus,⁴⁰ 'entirely new (and much of it very beautiful) scenery, an unusually large number of auxiliaries,' and 'good acting'.⁴¹ Booth's part, one of the hero's enemies, must have been fairly substantial, for the *Richmond Whig* commented on Jan. 28, 'The principal characters are cleverly sustained by . . . Messrs. Langdon, Harkins, Bailey and Booth.'⁴² On January 31, Campbell's Minstrels opened at Metropolitan Hall, a rival place of entertainment, and that evening *Monte Cristo* included Ethiopian minstrels in the Carnival scene.⁴³ This scene was used by itself as part of Kate Fisher's benefit the day after the run ended. Despite local press assertions of its popularity, the *New York Clipper's* information (Feb. 12) was that *Monte Cristo* 'did not prove "a go."'

On February 7 Maggie Mitchell returned to play a week in Richmond and then travel with the company to Petersburg. This time the Richmond Theatre was closed while the company was absent.

John Barron, in his series of articles for the Baltimore *Sun* in 1906-07, described the Petersburg theatre as it was when he played there in 1856:

Phoenix Hall was as well equipped as to scenery as most of the Southern places of amusement in those days. It had castle gates, a center-door fancy

37 Francis Wilson, *John Wilkes Booth*, p. 18.

38 Mammen, p. 41.

39 John M. Barron, 'Acting in the South in the Drama's Palmy Days', *The Sun*, Baltimore, Dec. 9, 1906. Neafie, who had been leading man at the Bowery in the 1840s, spent much time touring the South and West (Bordman, p. 501).

40 *Dispatch*, Jan. 24.

41 *Dispatch*, Jan. 25.

42 This could not, of course, have been the version played by James O'Neill, which introduced the Dantès-Danglars swordfight, but was probably George H. Andrews's dramatization, played by Lester Wallack in 1848 and not now extant (Myron Matlaw, 'English and American Dramatizations of *Le Comte de Monte Cristo*', *Nineteenth Century Theatre Research* 7 (1979): 40, 43.

43 *Dispatch*, Jan. 31.

chamber, a two-door plain chamber, a Gothic library, light and dark woods and a kitchen, with a ham painted next to the fireplace. All these scenes had wings to match, and on the back of one was painted the Rocky Pass.

Both auditorium and stage were dimly lighted. Plain hard chairs were the only seats. There was no gallery and no parquet--just a plain hall. To act and give an effective performance, the most critical will concede, required dramatic talent of superlative merit.⁴⁴

Furthermore, according to the Petersburg *Press* (Dec. 23, 1859), it was 'an old, inconvenient rattle-trap concern. . . . too distant from the business portion of the city'. Petersburg welcomed Maggie Mitchell with enthusiasm, and the *Daily Express* (Feb. 17) praised her support: 'The company is a decided improvement upon the old stock of a year since Mr. J.B. WILKES possesses fine histrionic talent, conducting himself invariably in a manner which seems to say, "Excelsior!"' Clearly the Petersburg papers were not aware of Booth's real identity. It must have been during this engagement that Leonard Grover, later manager of Grover's Theatre in Washington, saw him in *Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish*: 'In the cast appeared the name of John Wilkes, playing the character of *Uncas*, an Indian. He seemed the most talented actor in the company'.⁴⁵ For her own Grand Complimentary Testimonial, Maggie Mitchell played Romeo, with John, announced as 'J.B. Booth' (*Press*, Feb. 25), as Paris. Female Romeos were not uncommon in this period, the most famous being Charlotte Cushman, but the *Daily Express* (Feb. 25) felt that though 'she possesses a fine appreciation of her part', 'its rendition is far beyond her power.' The performance was repeated to re-open the Richmond Theatre in a complimentary benefit to Thomas Moxley, one of the managers, and the *Enquirer* (Feb. 28) confirmed the verdict: 'Let some kind friend of Maggie Mitchell tell her never to act "Romeo" again, not even for effect.' The company returned from Petersburg with a new actor, Frank Hardenburgh,⁴⁶ who was later employed in Boston and became a friend of Booth's.

⁴⁴ Barron, Dec. 9, 1906.

⁴⁵ Grover, p. 943. As noted above, Grover mistakenly placed this engagement earlier in the season, in 1858. According to Leavitt (p. 157), Grover edited a 'Southern newspaper' from 1857 to 1860.

⁴⁶ This is the usual spelling of his name; the Virginia papers called him 'Hardenberg'.

Next arrived John Sleeper Clarke and William Wheatley, now joint managers of the Arch Street, Philadelphia, with the latest sensation, *Our American Cousin*, which had run 140 nights in New York and would go on to take London by storm. With 'several rehearsals' it was expected to go smoothly (*Dispatch*, Feb. 28), and it ran for nine nights, the longest so far this season, with Clarke as Trenchard and Wheatley as Dundreary. Though a star did not normally perform in afterpieces, titles familiar from Booth's year in Philadelphia suggest that Clarke may have played his favourites here. The *New York Clipper* of March 12 says Wheatley and Clarke 'have done well with "Our American Cousin" at Richmond, Va. . . .'

James E. Murdoch, famous as an elocutionist as well as a tragedian, played a week and a half. Murdoch, Asia tells us, was her brother's 'ideal of grace and perfect elocution',⁴⁷ and Barron calls him 'an excellent and most conscientious actor and teacher. . . . It was an education to be with Murdoch'.⁴⁸ On the following Monday (March 26) came Mr. and Mrs. W.J. Florence, the 'Irish Boy and Yankee Girl' comedians, playing their farewell engagement before going to Europe (*Dispatch*, March 29). Then another spectacular drama was revived: *The Naiad Queen*, with 'pretty music, fine scenery, and female warriors', had had a great run two years before,⁴⁹ when Joseph Jefferson and Mary Devlin had featured in it. A Saturday matinee was scheduled, but had to be postponed because of rehearsal for Barry Sullivan's pieces. Extra rehearsal before the star's arrival was unusual, since Sullivan's programme contained nothing that was not in the standard tragedy repertoire. Sullivan, then making his first tour of America, had a reputation as a martinet, which may account for the care taken: Barron says, 'a brother actor had to be just so far from him--so far up the stage or down the stage, as the case might be. The slightest deviation from the exact position made Mr. Sullivan furious . . .'

47 Clarke, *Unlocked Book*, p. 110.

48 Barron, *Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 25, 1906.

49 *Dispatch*, April 7

If, as Sillard states, Sullivan changed the usual business in *Hamlet*, the company would need careful rehearsal of the new exits and entrances.⁵⁰

Edwin Booth returned on April 18, heralded as 'Richmond's favorite actor'.⁵¹ He played a week, then was re-engaged for three nights in Richmond, and Thursday and Friday in Petersburg. In the event, he played on Saturday as well, and the engagement was a great success.⁵² John Wilkes Booth did not go with the company to Petersburg; he was in Baltimore attending the wedding of his sister Asia to John Sleeper Clarke.⁵³ On the company's return, the first night of the spring season was celebrated by a 'Grand Re-opening!', when John took his first-ever benefit, billed as J. Wilkes Booth, as Othello to Edwin's Iago.⁵⁴ Mary Bella Beale says, 'His *Othello* is remembered by the grey beards of Richmond as a noble conception, and his brother Edwin . . . had to look to his spurs, to hold his own during the play.' T.W.M. O'Flynn states, 'The terrific sensation this performance caused only abated with the final passing of the generation who remembered it.'⁵⁵

Mrs. W.C. Gladstane played next, Booth supporting her as Lord Tinsel in *The Hunchback*. The last night of the season at Richmond, May 16, was a 'Grand Festival in honor of the KNIGHTS TEMPLAR' from Massachusetts and Rhode Island, who were visiting their brothers in the South. After the play, a 'Tableau of Washington' showed that hero supported by young ladies representing the thirteen original states:⁵⁶ a celebration of the Union ironic in view of events soon to come.

50 Robert M. Sillard, *Barry Sullivan and his Contemporaries* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901), 2:205; Barron, *Baltimore Sun*, March 3, 1907; Sillard, 1:165-66. See below for discussion of Sullivan's style.

51 *Dispatch*, April 18.

52 Petersburg *Daily Intelligencer*, April 29 and May 2; Petersburg *Daily Express*, same dates.

53 *New York Clipper*, May 7, 1859; *Unlocked Book*, p. 109.

54 *Dispatch* advertisement, May 2.

55 'Promptbook of the Tragedy of King Richard III . . . compiled by T.W.M. O'Flynn (Thomas F. Tracey)', Billy Rose Theatre Collection, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. As noted in Chapter 9, O'Flynn got much of his information from old actors, including S.K. Chester, this season's 'heavy'.

56 *Dispatch*, May 16.

The company then went to Lynchburg again to play for a month, including *The Naiad Queen* for eight performances. In the latter, 'Mr. WILKES accredited himself handsomely in the part of Amphibio [the chief demon], in which part he excels', said the *Lynchburg Daily Virginian* (May 30). 'He is a promising young actor.' Maggie Mitchell joined them on June 6 for the rest of their stay, which ended with a successful testimonial benefit to Kunkel and Moxley (*Virginian*, June 15). On June 17, the company opened with Maggie Mitchell in Petersburg for eight nights. The Petersburg *Daily Express* (June 22) found Miss Mitchell 'greatly improved', and noted that 'the best decorum and good order' prevailed in the theatre (not always the case), and that 'the costumes and scenery are *unique*' (this was presumably a compliment). At last the company, still with Miss Mitchell and including Edwin Adams, from Boston, who was to be next season's leading man, returned to Richmond for one more performance, for Kunkel's benefit on June 27.

From this season, we know 14 parts that Booth played, and two more possibilities. Six are in plays the present writer has been unable to find, including the villain Danglars. Of the others, Cool, Sir Harcourt's valet in *London Assurance*, is a quite showy small part. Count Florio in *The Wife* is a secondary villain, appearing in five scenes, but not initiating any scheming or revealing much motivation. Lord Tinsel in *The Hunchback* is a satirical portrait of a shallow snob, and has one scene which he dominates, and another with occasional lines undercutting the romantic attitude of the heroine. Gaspar in *The Lady of Lyons* has one scene, smarting at his treatment at Pauline's hands. Herr Cheroot (properly Scheroot) in *Jenny Lind*, the only afterpiece in this list, has five lines in all and joins in singing with other students. Booth also played Paris in *Romeo and Juliet*. When Edwin Booth was starring, John played higher than his position in the company would normally allow, as Richmond, and, for his own benefit, Othello. The possibilities are Horatio and Sir Benjamin Backbite, both of which seem fairly likely.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Edward Alfrend mentions both; 'Great casts', clipping in Owen Stanley Fawcett's scrapbook on John Wilkes Booth, Pamphlet Collection, Yale University, says he played Horatio to Edwin's Hamlet.

This is not a large enough sample to analyze, but the parts are varied, and with the exception of Scherroot, are certainly larger than most of those he played in Philadelphia. It may be safe to conjecture that his position was that of Walking Gentleman: Mammen names Paris as a Walking Gentleman part (p. 41), and Alfriend's statement that Booth 'was the second juvenile man of the theatre, and played small parts' could be interpreted as describing this line. A rather dubious source, however, states that he played 'utility business' that first season:⁵⁸ Responsible Utility, being tried out with some Walking Gentleman parts, is a possibility.

It was probably when he went to her wedding that Booth discussed his progress with Asia. 'He was become very popular in the South, yet he sadly felt the need of a less enthusiastic school', she recalled. 'They loved him "for his father's sake", and he yearned for criticism, no matter how severe, if just.'⁵⁹ He had had a few complimentary mentions in the papers, but this remark shows him as concerned to improve, not just to rely on a popularity partly due to his looks and his parentage.

George Alfred Townsend interviewed Harry Langdon in 1883. 'I taught John Booth the rudiments of acting', claimed Langdon:

At that time John Wilkes Booth was a country looking boy. His clothes, style and everything were countryfied [*sic*]. . . . I took a fancy to him. He had a manly side to him. I showed him how to read, got him a grammar, and made him commit every day a certain number of words from the dictionary and pronounce and define them. It was very pleasing to see his growth. He always had trouble committing his lines to memory. When we got through the season, I said to him, 'Now, John, you go off into the farther south and take your father's name.['] . . . So he went off there⁶⁰

Langdon's assumption of the role of mentor to a hayseed Booth must be taken with a pinch of salt. Booth came to Richmond after a year of stock, and had a fairly good general education, so he hardly needed 'rudiments of acting' or reading lessons. However, it is noticeable from his letters that his spelling improved after he left school, so that may have been the real purpose of the dictionary. As noted in Chapter 3, he already dressed

⁵⁸ Joseph E. Whiting, letter in *Detroit Free Press*, Jan. 5, 1897.

⁵⁹ *Unlocked Book*, p. 109: no date is given, but wedding and discussion are mentioned in successive paragraphs.

⁶⁰ Townsend, 'Lincoln's Assassination'.

well,⁶¹ and his probable line of Walking Gentleman demanded a smart modern wardrobe. And he remained at Richmond for another season before taking Langdon's advice. We do not know if he considered joining a different company for his third year in the profession: no letters have survived which relate to this decision. Presumably he stayed at Richmond because he was promised better parts the following season; and as far as we can tell, he got them.

The second season: 1859-60

Charles Franklin Fuller notes a trend in this season's programming away from legitimate and toward 'more "popular appeal" shows';⁶² this trend would eventually be overdone. The season's other trend was an expansion of the company's operations. In 1858-59 they had made five trips to two other towns; in 1859-60 they made seven trips to three towns. Six of these involved only part of the company, the rest playing in Richmond meanwhile. It seems that Kunkel and Co. were developing a circuit, a local theatrical empire; and it would be interesting to know how it would have progressed, had not the war intervened and driven the managers north. From the actors' point of view, a split company must have offered larger parts than could be hoped for when the company was all together.

The *New York Clipper* of August 20 lists the company, without lines of business but presumably in rough order of importance. The men are: I.B. Phillips, SM; E. Adams, J. Collier, B.G. Rogers, W.H. Bailey, J.B. Wickes [*sic*], J. Dillon, W. Johnson, L.K. [*sic*] Chester, R. Meer, G. Wren, T. Durand, O.B. Mason, P. Jackson & L. Moore. This season opened on September 3, with *The Heir-at-Law*, John Wilkes Booth playing the eponymous heir, Henry Moreland. Old favourites, we are told, received 'tumultuous

⁶¹ *Unlocked Book*, p. 105, and see the photograph of the young JWB on page 10. Equal scepticism should be applied to J.L. Saphore's statement that 'Harry Langdon . . . taught [JWB] the sword combat in Richard III' (clipping, 'Portrait of J. Wilkes Booth', Fawcett Scrapbook, Yale Pamphlet Collection).

⁶² Fuller, 'Kunkel and Co.', p. 143.

applause' (*Dispatch*, Sept. 5). The *New York Clipper* commented on Sept. 17, 'a very brilliant season is anticipated.'

On September 6, the American premiere of Stirling Coyne's *Everybody's Friend* was presented, with Booth as Mr. Icebrook,⁶³ and on the 10th, *Richard III*, with the new leading man, Edwin Adams, in the title role 'for the first time'. The *Richmond Daily Whig*, September 12th, was not overwhelmed:

Forbearing to criticize, we will only say, in general terms, that the rendition was quite creditable, under the circumstances. The personation of *Gloster* is a severe test of the capabilities of any actor, and he who gains renown by his success therein, must have had the advantage of long practice and assiduous study.

Edwin Adams had been in the Richmond company in the 1856-57 and 1857-58 seasons,⁶⁴ and would later be one of the main rivals of Edwin and John Wilkes Booth during the latter's star career.

The season's first stars were Mr. and Mrs. Waller, with tragedies and a musical burletta, *Midas*, which drew praise for the Richmond company's versatility: 'We doubt whether any theatre in the country could produce this Opera in the stock company with the same effect, and singing all the music', commented the *New York Clipper* of October 1. A 'courtezan' was charged with disorderly behaviour after leaving the theatre, where she had been drinking, giving the *Richmond Whig* (Sept. 22) occasion to warn that the presence of prostitutes must be keeping respectable families away from the theatre; its bars were considered even less justifiable.

Next came tragedienne Jane Coombs, said by the *New York Clipper* of October 8 to be doing well. She was re-engaged until Friday of the second week. Maggie Mitchell returned on October 10 with her usual repertoire. On October 12, the *Daily Dispatch* reported that the Richmond Grays, a militia company soon to be important in Booth's life, were to parade on the 19th. The time when the function of these volunteer companies was mainly social and decorative was rapidly drawing to a close. The *Clipper* of October

⁶³ *New York Clipper*, Dec. 7, 1859.

⁶⁴ Fuller, 'Kunkel and Co.', p. 57; Barron, *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 20, 1907.

22 noted that 'Mr. Edwin Adams is making as favorable impression on the F.F.Vs [First Families of Virginia] as he did on the "hubs of the Universe," Boston, Mass.'

The following week a part of the company played in Lynchburg, while Maggie Mitchell continued at Richmond. John was with the touring half, as the *Lynchburg Daily Virginian* (Oct. 17) tells us, listing the company as 'Messrs. Wilkes, Phillips, Johnson, and other favorites'⁶⁵ On October 18, they were playing three short comedies to catch the fancy of visitors to the annual exhibition of the Lynchburg Agricultural and Mechanical Society, when news began to break of an attack on Harper's Ferry. A slave insurrection was being attempted, led by John Brown. The First Regiment of Virginia Volunteers left Richmond for the trouble-spot that morning; however, the revolt, much smaller than rumour had pictured, was quickly quelled, and they returned the next day. John Wilkes Booth has been criticized, in view of his later loyalties, for failing to go with the First Regiment on this occasion. Stanley Kimmel (p. 155) predictably hints at cowardice as the motive: along with most other writers, he is ignorant of the fact that Booth was so far from Richmond that it would have been impossible for him to join the soldiers.

The company returned to Richmond and played starless through the next week, that of the Agricultural Fair. During this week, Gordon Samples believes,

After the close of *Heir at Law*, Tuesday, October 25th, he hopped the train for Boston. There he joined his brother Edwin for the last three nights of a two-week run at the Howard Athenaeum. Billed as "Mr. Wilkes," . . he played the small part of Blount to Edwin's Richard, and . . . followed with other walk-ons (p. 38).

This seems to confirm the common picture of Booth as capricious and irresponsible; however, the playbill collection in Boston Public Library shows a Mr. Wilkes playing small parts between October 19, 1859 and January 5 the following year. Since Booth is

⁶⁵ This list does not include the leading man, juvenile or heavy, and thus may represent the 'B Team', or junior contingent--perhaps led, if the order is significant, by Booth. Phillips was the SM, but played rarely.

documented in Richmond for many dates during this period, the Boston Wilkes must have been a different actor.⁶⁶

From October 31 to November 5, part of the company went to Petersburg, but this time Booth remained in Richmond, supporting Barry Sullivan in his second engagement there. Robert M. Sillard, Sullivan's biographer, says John played Dawson in *The Gamester*, Baradas in *Richelieu*, Edmund in *King Lear*, Horatio in *Hamlet*, and Don Pedro in *Much Ado About Nothing*.⁶⁷ The *Dispatch* confirms him as Horatio and Dawson (Oct. 31, Nov. 2), and a curious anecdote follows about Don Pedro, but there is no direct evidence for the others, though they are plausible. Sullivan, says his biographer, took pains at rehearsal to direct everything and everyone; he was 'not only a great actor, but a great teacher'.⁶⁸ For J.M. Barron, Sullivan was 'the greatest of all the foreign players--not excepting Macready--that ever came to America. He was . . . very like Irving in his stilted mannerisms and harsh drawling voice, but with all his physical defects he was a great actor.' The *Richmond Whig* (Nov. 2) complained of the 'stagey strut to which Mr. S. has become habituated' in *Hamlet*. At his dying scene in *The Gamester*, his New York audience had 'held their breath in mute horror'; Barron agrees that here 'no one could approach him'.⁶⁹ Later, he dropped out of London fashion, G.B. Shaw calling him a 'splendidly monstrous performer', but his Richard III remained popular in the provinces until his death in 1891.⁷⁰

Some of the audience, complained the *Examiner* (Nov. 2) during Sullivan's run, 'laugh, and shout, and grunt, and shuffle with their feet, and indulge in a barbarous horse-

66 Fuller's statement that Joseph Jefferson and Mary Devlin returned on October 24 to play in *The Lost Ship* ('Kunkel and Co.', p. 141) citing the *Richmond Whig*, is likewise a misunderstanding. The bound volumes of this paper photographed for the Virginia State Library's microfilm include three issues from 1856 (October 7, 21 and 24) in place of those for 1859.

67 Sillard, 2:23.

68 Ibid., 2:204-05.

69 Ibid., 2:1, quoting *The States* (1858); Barron, March 3, 1907.

70 Julie Hankey, ed., *Richard III*, Plays in Performance (London: Junction Books, 1981), p. 60.

laugh, and cheers, and beastly bellowings'. Kunkel and Co. should 'cause their officers to prevent loud talking in the passages.'

J.M. Barron devoted one of his Baltimore *Sun* articles to John Wilkes Booth. He tells this curious story about him:

John and I boarded at the same house, with rooms adjoining, borrowed each other's wardrobe One day we had rehearsed 'Much Ado About Nothing.' John was Don Pedro and I was Don Claudio After rehearsal we wended our way homeward and fixed up our dresses for the evening's play. About 4 o'clock John suddenly turned to me.

'You play Don Pedro tonight,' he said.

I looked at him in amazement.

'I do not,' I replied. 'I play Claudio, as I rehearsed it. What do you mean?'

'No matter what I mean,' he exclaimed, 'you go and tell "Old Phil" (Stage Manager Phillips) that you play Don Pedro and he plays Claudio.'

I was dumfounded [*sic*], but I knew my man. To argue with him would have been as effective as trying to widen the Royal Gorge of the Colorado by whistling in it.

'I am going to Petersburg,' he said, and he left me.

Phillips was about as much like Claudio then as I am now; but I played Don Pedro and Phillips read Don Claudio. Of course the performance was marred. We did not see John for two or three days, when he walked through the stage door as cool as if he had not absented himself.⁷¹

The performance of November 10 with Sullivan was the only time *Much Ado* was given that season. This incident has been adduced as one example among many of Booth's capricious unreliability. Fuller comments, 'It has been noted that John Wilkes apparently inherited the unpredictable temperament of his famous father', and suggests that this was why he was not given bigger parts at Richmond.⁷² 'Had he not been one of the Booths,' opines Kimmel, 'it is probable he would have been tossed back into the street [when he returned]' (p. 154). Since the incident is so often quoted as fact, and Booth's character deduced from it, it is valuable to examine it closely.

The company had recently split, with a portion of it going to both Lynchburg and Petersburg, and nine days later Booth certainly did absent himself, going to Charlestown

⁷¹ Barron, 'With John Wilkes Booth in His Days as an Actor', Baltimore *Sun*, March 12, 1907.

⁷² Charles Franklin Fuller, 'Edwin and John Wilkes Booth: Actors at the Old Marshall Theatre in Richmond', *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 79 (1971): 482. This article, which compares Edwin as a star with John as a stock actor, ignores company hierarchy in order to portray John as the 'unsuccessful' brother.

with the militia (an episode Barron does not mention). It is therefore possible that Barron, after 48 years, had become confused; and indeed, he set the story in the wrong season, 1860-61, after Booth had left Richmond. Barron himself is noted by the Richmond newspapers only once, as Rosencrantz, on October 31, while the *New York Clipper* mentions him at each end of the season as a member of the Holliday Street, Baltimore, company.⁷³ John T. Ford, manager of the Holliday and a member of Kunkel & Co., may have 'lent' Barron to Richmond for a time--perhaps just for Sullivan's engagement (which immediately followed one at the Holliday)⁷⁴ while some of the company were at Petersburg. There is no confirmation of the story in other sources, though it represents rather outrageous behaviour, and Sillard's statement that Booth played Don Pedro would seem to weigh against it, though he gives no source for his certainty. It is completely illogical for Booth to insist on *two* parts being switched; Barron presents him as mysterious, determined, and as so charismatic that Barron and the Stage Manager obey him in defiance of reason. Barron's casting as Claudio is curious. J.W. Collier played the traditional juvenile/2nd lead parts this season, such as Richmond, Laertes, and Lewson in *The Gamester*;⁷⁵ it seems highly unlikely that Barron, a temporary member, playing Rosencrantz the week before, should be entrusted with so important a part as Claudio, unless Sullivan had especially asked for him.

Barron appears to have liked Booth, whom he calls 'generous as the balmy air on a glorious summer eve[, m]odest as a maiden, gentle, kind and considerate',⁷⁶ and is therefore unlikely to have wanted to denigrate him; but he does see him as unbalanced. His Booth, who makes his own rules and gets away with pranks by the force of a bewitching personality, is similar to the posthumous portrayal by counsel for his fellow-conspirators: a man no-one could be expected to disobey.⁷⁷ Regarding Booth as mad

73 Aug. 20, 1859, and May 26, 1860

74 Sillard, 2:20.

75 *Whig*, Sept. 12; *Dispatch*, Oct. 31 and Nov. 2.

76 *Baltimore Sun*, March 12, 1907.

77 Ben Perley Poore, *The Conspiracy Trial for the Murder of the President* (Boston: J.E. Tilton, 1865), 2:234-35; and see Hanchett, p. 126.

seems to have been a charitable and apolitical way for his friends to understand the assassination, and many shared this view, as we shall see. It is tempting to conclude that Barron is confusing some other incident with Booth's departure for Charlestown the following week, but this cannot now be either proven or refuted; the story remains in doubt.

On November 14, the famous low comedian W.E. Burton arrived as star with Mrs. Hughes. Burton was ailing, and died soon after, but he filled the houses at Richmond.

Rumours began to fly on November 17 that an attempt would be made to rescue John Brown, imprisoned at Charlestown,⁷⁸ and on the 18th (Friday), 'The city was in an excited condition all day The bulletin boards were constantly surrounded by crowds'. Richmond was 'the scene of intense and unusual excitement on Saturday night.' Shortly after 6 o'clock, Governor Wise received a message from Charlestown: 'Send 500 men immediately. A large force, armed with pikes and revolvers, is marching from Wheeling.' The Governor ordered the militia to go immediately to the station ('depot') of the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad Co., which was on Broad Street just opposite the theatre.⁷⁹ The signal for this was the tolling of the bell in the old tower in Capitol Square, just behind Booth's hotel. By 9 o'clock the various companies were assembled in the station, and before 10 the train was on its way--and John Wilkes Booth was on it in a borrowed uniform of the Richmond Grays.⁸⁰

George Libby, a member of the Grays, was with the acting Captain, Louis J. Bossieux, in the baggage car, when

Booth appeared at the door of the car and asked if he could go with us. . . . We informed him that no one was allowed on that train but men in uniform. He expressed a desire to buy a uniform Bossieux and I each gave him a portion of our uniforms, took him in the car, and carried him with us.

⁷⁸ *Examiner*, Nov. 18.

⁷⁹ *Dispatch*, Nov. 19 and 21.

⁸⁰ *Dispatch*, Nov. 21; George W. Libby, 'John Brown and John Wilkes Booth', *Confederate Veteran* 38 (1930): 138; 'Wilkes Booth Story,' *Richmond Dispatch*, Feb. 2, 1902, the reminiscence of Dr. Joseph W. Southall.

Joseph Southall may have seen the moment when Booth made his decision. Going to the depot with other medical students,

I noticed Wilkes Booth was walking just ahead of me on his way to the theatre. . . . Just before we got as far as the theatre I saw Booth, who had been walking at a brisk pace, stop suddenly as if he had forgotten something. Just as our group reached the spot where he had stopped, Booth deliberately turned back. . . . I have ever since been convinced that when he stopped and stood for a moment in thought that he then and there decided that his duty to the State had first claim on his allegiance in an emergency like that, and that when he turned back he had made up his mind as to his course.⁸¹

Booth was not the only person from the theatre to leave on that train. The *New York Clipper* on December 3 carried a piece about Miles Phillips, a box-keeper, going to Charlestown with his company, which conveys the sense of emergency which Southall mentions:

Of course the feeling was intense, for not knowing the exact nature of the summons, and supposing that actual fighting was going on at Charlestown, Va., the parting of the volunteers from their families had all the semblance, and in fact, reality, of the departure of soldiers to a *bona fide* acknowledged and declared war.

The train with its excited crowd of citizens upstaged the theatre. 'Most of the audience in the Theatre came out to witness the proceedings, leaving the performers to play to vacant seats.' As the train began to move, 'The windows of the Theatre were crowded with spectators. . . . Even BURTON'S inimitable acting had failed to attract. Everybody's mind was fixed upon Charlestown and the expedition.'⁸² Before the train left, Booth said something that hints at his mood: 'He was in the cast for that night's play & when asked how Kunkle [*sic*] the manager was going to get along without him, replied "that he didn't know & didn't care."⁸³ We do not know what he should have played that night, if anything: the bill for November 19 was *The Fillibuster* and *The Toodles*. He may well have expected to be back in Richmond in a few days' time. In the event, he remained with the Grays at Charlestown until Brown was hanged on December 2, returning on December 5.

81 *Richmond Dispatch*, Feb. 2, 1902.

82 *Dispatch*, Nov. 21 and 25.

83 Crutchfield to Valentine, July 5, 1909, Valentine Museum.

Lloyd Lewis, Carl Sandburg and Stanley Kimmel use this episode to depict Booth as a cowardly braggart, loudly declaiming against Abolitionists while being careful not to associate with the Grays until he knew the danger was over⁸⁴--a wilful misunderstanding of the situation as perceived at the time. Kimmel quotes a letter written by the theatre's leading man, Edwin Adams, saying that Booth 'forced himself upon the cars, having been repeatedly pushed off by the soldiers and armed with pistols and knife secreted himself in the baggage car',⁸⁵ which sounds like a garbled version of Libby's story which Adams may have heard at the time, and portrays Booth rather as dangerous and determined than as a Bobadil.

At Charlestown, Booth seems to have fulfilled the duties assigned him, and used his acting skills to entertain his comrades and the townsfolk. Edward Alfriend says,

Nearly every night before taps Booth would entertain us with dramatic recitations from different plays. He was very fond of reciting, which he did in such a fiery, intense, vigorous, brilliant way as to forecast that great genius he subsequently showed on the stage.

Alfriend particularly remembered Booth's giving one of Brutus' speeches from *Julius Caesar*, 'and with what fervor he rolled out the line "My ancestor that did from the streets of Rome the Tarquin drive."' ⁸⁶ George Libby found Booth 'a remarkably handsome man, with a winning personality', and remembered that he 'would regale us around the camp fire with recitations from Shakespeare.' Apparently, he also gave public recitations. The wife of the rector of Zion Church wrote in her diary that Booth 'has been giving Shakespearan [*sic*] readings each evening in the Episcopal Meeting House, to quell the population.' 'Since the townspeople were in an alarmed state', says a local historian, 'and the situation was very tense, Booth sensed the need for diversion and entertainment.'⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Lewis, pp. 170-72; Sandburg, 4:313; Kimmel, pp. 154-55.

⁸⁵ Edwin Adams to 'Reakirt', April 17, 1865, M599, Reel 2, Frames 0059-62, National Archives.

⁸⁶ Act II, sc. i: 'My ancestors did from the streets of Rome / The Tarquin drive, when he was call'd a king.' Alfriend's memory of this may be influenced by his belief that Booth 'in his insanity, lost his identity in the delirious fancy that he was enacting the role of "Brutus," and that Lincoln was his "Julius Caesar."'

⁸⁷ John Shadrach Alfriend, *History of Zion Episcopal Church* (Charlestown, WV, 1973), n. pag.; Millard Kessler Bushong, *Historic Jefferson County* (Boyce, VA: Carr Publ. Co., 1972), p. 197. I am grateful to Roger J. Perry for bringing this to my attention.

Meanwhile, at the theatre, the *Clipper* (Dec. 3) tells us, Burton should have played another week, but continued illness prevented him, and he went 'quite suddenly', leaving the stock company to soldier on alone. The excitements had affected houses, 'though not to the extent that might have been anticipated--the business being "good" where it might have been "excellent"'. During that starless week, there was also competition from the Empire Minstrels, the Carlo Family, and a company of 'Acting Monkeys, Dogs and Goats' at rival houses (*Dispatch*, Nov. 21). On November 28 arrived Harry Watkins and Mrs. Charles Howard to star in a series of plays adapted by Watkins from stories in the *New York Ledger*,⁸⁸ and they were still there when the Grays came home to Richmond on December 5.

Edward Alfriend writes that when Booth returned to the theatre, the managers 'discharged him . . . and on this becoming known a large contingent of the First Virginia Regiment marched to the theatre and demanded that he be reinstated, which the managers did.'⁸⁹ Kunkel would certainly have been within his rights to dismiss Booth; he may have bowed to popular feeling in taking him back. The *Richmond Examiner* had inveighed on November 26 against employers who had threatened to sack militiamen absent at Charlestown, warning them

that we will expose their names and hold them up to public odium In the hour of national danger every man is expected to obey his country's call, and any man who then permits his own private interests to absorb all his thoughts . . . is not fit to be among us

And faced with a mission from the Regiment, Kunkel may well have decided that there was public relations value in reinstating Booth. The episode may also have increased Booth's own popularity.

We do not know how long it was before Booth made his reappearance, since Watkins's own plays would have been cast without him. The whole company, with Watkins and Mrs. Howard, went to Petersburg on December 12, while the Marsh

⁸⁸ Skinner, *One Man in his Time*, p. 228.

⁸⁹ No other account mentions Booth's dismissal and reinstatement, but it seems very likely.

Juveniles played the Richmond Theatre (*Dispatch*, Dec. 12). Booth was with them, for the Petersburg *Press* announced 'Adams, Bailey, Wilkes, Rogers, and the entire company' in the plays that evening, December 20. The *Press* (Dec. 14) was not impressed with Watkins, feeling he had been puffed:

Mr. H. Watkins has been heralded as a "star." We fear that it would take one of Lord Rosse's telescopes to discover his brilliance. There are many better actors to be found amongst the strolling bands of Ethiopian minstrels that infest the country.

Even a small town could be highly critical of the entertainment it was occasionally offered. The engagement finished on Thursday 22nd, and perhaps should have gone on to the Saturday: the *Press* (23rd) regretted the closing, commenting that the management 'have not been supported as they should have been'. The Marsh Juveniles were in the Richmond Theatre until the 24th, and on the 26th (Monday), the company repossessed it and played the last week of 1859 with Watkins and Mrs. Howard. A playbill survives for Edwin Adams's benefit on December 27, showing Booth as Lord Arthur Brandon in Palgrave Simpson's *Dreams of Delusion* and Lamp in *Wild Oats*.⁹⁰

1860 began with a brilliant engagement of Peter Richings and his daughter Caroline. Their 'grand operatic spectacle',⁹¹ *The Enchantress*, played 11 performances. The scenery, costumes, 'and other accessories' were magnificent,⁹² and the *Enquirer* noted on January 13 that the house was crowded '--as crowded as we have seen the Theatre in the days of Jenny Lind's triumphs!' The Richings played until January 28, an engagement without precedent in success or duration, according to Richmond's 'old playgoers'.⁹³ On January 27, another accident was averted: the danseuse Miss Salome's dress caught fire from the footlights as she danced a quadrille, but the flames were extinguished by Mr. Richings and Mr. Hill.⁹⁴

90 Harvard Theatre Collection.

91 *Examiner*, Jan. 11, 1860.

92 *Whig*, Jan. 16.

93 *New York Clipper*, Feb. 4.

94 *Ibid.*, Feb. 11.

James Murdoch returned for a week on January 30. Playing Alfred Evelyn in *Money*, a part John Wilkes Booth would later play, he was praised by the *Dispatch* (Feb. 2):

There was not an unnatural gesture or intonation of the voice in the whole play; and in the scenes with *Clara Douglas*, in which actors so often make the "judicious grieve," by the lover's rant, the acting of Mr. Murdoch was infinitely superior to that of any artist who has ever performed on our boards, in its exhibition of that bitter grief so strongly portrayed by Bulwer.

Booth supported him as Dawson in *The Gamester*, playing Mr. Glimmer in *The Buzzards* the same evening.⁹⁵ The *Clipper* said tersely of Murdoch's engagement, 'business only moderate' (Feb. 11): perhaps a reaction after the free spending on the Richings.

Around this time, Booth must have been discussing with his family his plans for next season, for Mary Devlin wrote to Edwin on March 1, 'Mr. Jefferson, promises to write to John--for though he may not be in management himself he can always procure, him, an engagement.'⁹⁶ A stock engagement seems more likely, but a star booking may have been envisaged.

A fortnight with several benefits and no star followed, and then the tragedian J.B. Roberts opened for a week. Barron says Roberts was 'a good actor, . . . who delighted to humor himself with the idea that he was not only the rival of the elder Booth, but his legitimate successor. Mr. Roberts was about the only one who thought so.'⁹⁷ This week he played *The Apostate* (under the title of *The Moors in Spain*), rather a Booth family speciality. Then Julia Dean Hayne returned for her farewell engagement; among parts Booth played in her support was the villain in *Evadne*. His sister Rosalie wrote to Edwin, 'He played Ludovico the other night for Julia Dean Hayne's benefit, and was the only one called before the curtain and had a 6 minute call. [H]e seems very much pleased at it.'⁹⁸

After this, it may have been a come-down when Mlle. Louise Wells and her Equestrian Troupe arrived again on March 5. One member of her troupe was D.H.

⁹⁵ *Dispatch*, Feb. 2.

⁹⁶ *Letters and Notebooks*, p. 45.

⁹⁷ *Baltimore Sun*, Dec. 9, 1906.

⁹⁸ Rosalie A. Booth to Edwin Booth, March 12, 1860, Billy Rose Theatre Collection.

Harkins, who had been the juvenile man at Richmond the season before. The *Dispatch* (March 10) defended their less legitimate offerings on moral grounds: of *Jack Sheppard on Horseback*, it wrote, 'This extraordinary drama may be the means of warning youth against vice, by pointing out its horrors and the punishment that naturally follow crime.' From March 19 until March 24, part of the company played with the Wells Troupe at Petersburg, and from March 26 or 27 to 31 at Norfolk, Virginia, a new venue for the Kunkel company. The *Dispatch* of March 28 says, 'The Wells' Equestrian Troupe is doing a fine business in Norfolk, assisted by a portion of the Richmond Theatrical company.' Booth remained in Richmond during this portion's Norfolk date, being listed in a playbill for March 31,⁹⁹ and it is therefore probable that he did not go to Petersburg either. The Richmond week of March 19 - 24 featured John S. Clarke as star, without Wheatley this time.

The whole company was back in Richmond by April 2, when Lucille and Helen Western opened as stars. These sisters had the previous year been members of the Marsh Troupe of Juveniles,¹⁰⁰ and a few years later Lucille would be famous for her Lady Isabel in *East Lynne*. The *Examiner* of April 4 said carefully that the 'dramas in which they figure to the most advantage cannot properly be termed legitimate', but always filled the house. In their hit play, *The Three Fast Men*, as 'Mozis Addums' explains in his own spelling,

we git a vue uv Miss Hellin Westun and vayus uthur ladis drest arfter the fashin uv a Bowry boy, in a red shirt, boots, and britchis, and a smoakin uv a seegar. And in this vue uv the subjeck, it must be confest, in refrunce to the afosed [aforesaid] Miss Hellin mo ptickly, that her dimenshuns is good, oncommon good.¹⁰¹

Between April 23 and 28 part of the company was again in Petersburg, with the Westerns; Booth is listed with them in two playbills.¹⁰² After a successful week, they

99 Playbill for *Rake's Progress / Solitary of the Heath; or, a Tale of Blood*, with JWB as Fred Florid / Sieur Arnaud, Harvard Theatre Collection.

100 Playbill for Dec. 12, 1859, Harvard Theatre Collection.

101 Mozis Addums [George W. Bagby], *Richmond Dispatch*, April 26, 1860.

102 Playbills for April 25 and 27, Harvard Theatre Collection.

left for Norfolk, Virginia on Monday, April 30,¹⁰³ Booth presumably accompanying them. The Norfolk Opera House, says Barron, 'was anything but palatial--being built on the canal-boat style of architecture. Those who occupied the parquet had to sit sidewise in order to see the stage.'¹⁰⁴ During the Petersburg week, the star at Richmond was none other than the later notorious Adah Isaacs Menken, playing under her then-married name, Mrs. John C. Heenan. She played the same sort of repertoire as the Westerns, but her advertised week ended abruptly on the Thursday. The *Richmond Whig* (April 27) sternly pointed out the reason:

THEATRE.--This place of amusement has presented so little of strictly intellectual [*sic*] amusement for some time past, that a large number of most respectable patrons have kept away from it. It would appear that nothing but sensation actresses were to occupy the boards as 'stars,' but, after the experience of last week, we presume that the managers will be less trustful of their powers of attraction. Mrs. J.C. Heenan was engaged for "one week only," but audiences of forty and fifty persons didn't *pay*, and last night, Mrs. Heenan made her "positively last appearance." The managers are not so much to blame, in one aspect for the present low condition of the drama in this city. They cater to the tastes of their patrons and finding the Maggie Mitchells, the Baby Blanches, the Westerns, and others of that ilk, very popular with the mass of play-goers, they have only responded to the seeming desire of the public, by engaging others of the same professional rank.

Kunkel and Co. did indeed have to 'cater to the tastes' of *all* their patrons, and had been concentrating on only one segment of them recently. Those patrons (perhaps the majority) had finally had too much of a good thing. The *Whig* was keen to reform the Theatre, not just to ensure a good box-office: it returned to its attack of the previous September on the "'third tier" nuisance'. To become respectable, the Theatre needed not only to engage 'first class *artistes*', but to suppress its 'assignation facilities' by keeping men out of the third tier and closing the bars. 'If the Theatre can't succeed under reforms such as these, then it ought not to succeed.' Prostitutes, though, should not be excluded:

[W]e would not deprive them of the conditional privilege of witnessing the 'moral drama.' The chief argument in support of the Theatre, has been that it afforded an intellectual recreation, and presented impressive moral lessons.-- Though this argument can be advanced with less force, now, than formerly, it is still true that the deformities of vice are occasionally portrayed on the

103 Petersburg *Press*, April 30. I am grateful to Arthur Kincaid for drawing this to my attention.

104 Barron, Dec. 9, 1906.

stage, and as it is the sick who require medicine, it would be . . . improper to advocate the exclusion of the vicious of either sex from the Theatre'.¹⁰⁵

The *Whig*, in being prepared to tolerate the presence of the vicious, provided they were not plying their trade, showed considerable faith in the drama's power for good.

The Richmond portion of the company played for a week with comedian Frank S. Chanfrau as star, and on May 7 announced a week's suspension, the theatre to re-open on the 14th with the Western Sisters. Fuller speculates that this closure may have been because 'Dan Rice's circus was then in town and drawing heavily on the entertainment budgets of Richmond's citizens.'¹⁰⁶ Another possible explanation is that the Richmond company may have gone to Norfolk to help support the Westerns for their second week there. However, the 'week' ended early: the *Dispatch* of May 12 says,

We perceive by our Norfolk papers that the engagement of the Star Sisters Lucill[e] and Helen Western, was prematurely brought to a close on Tuesday evening owing to the severe illness of Miss Helen, who was obliged to return to her home, being incapacitated from fulfilling her engagements.

The whole company was therefore idle for the rest of the week.¹⁰⁷

Helen Western's illness obliged the stock company to find their own attractions: *The Three Guardsmen* was produced on May 14 with John Wilkes Booth as Aramis, but despite several spectacular offerings in the following fortnight, the *Examiner* commented on May 26: 'this establishment . . . of late has not met with the brilliant success which attended the more exciting, popular, refined and intellectual performances of the circus.' (The circus did not advertise with the *Examiner*.) The official season closed on a testimonial benefit to Kunkel on May 29, with a raffle of 'four magnificent oil paintings', including one of 'Edwin Booth as Richard III'.¹⁰⁸ The *Examiner* said, 'We do not believe the management have done well this season in a pecuniary sense' (May 28), but the *Enquirer* riposted, 'Manager Kunkel has had *his* benefit, besides his share in the

105 *Whig*, April 27 and May 5.

106 Fuller, 'Kunkel and Co.', p. 130.

107 The Norfolk newspapers for these weeks are not extant, and no details of this engagement could be found.

108 *New York Clipper*, June 2.

profits of the season, which, all grumbling to the contrary notwithstanding, must be worth looking after' (May 31).

It was an early close to the season compared with the previous year, and an extension was planned: 'the players leave soon for Baltimore', said the *Examiner* of May 31, and quoted the *Baltimore Clipper* of May 29 on Kunkel's leasing of the Front Street Theatre for a short season with the Westerns, supported by 'a fine dramatic company'. Helen Western's illness must have continued, however, for there is no mention of the company in the *Baltimore Clipper* in succeeding weeks, the theatre apparently remaining dark until the Democratic Convention began there on June 18. But there was one more event in the Richmond dramatic calendar.

On May 31, John Wilkes Booth took his final Richmond benefit, jointly with J.W. Collier.

These two popular young actors offer their names for a benefit to-night, at which their fellow artistes have volunteered their services. Both of them during the season have played well their parts and deserve a substantial token at parting. The bill is an admirable one. The first piece is the last act of Richard III, in which Mr. Booth appears as Richard and Mr. Collier as Richmond. There are recollections which crowd around the name of Booth, when connected with Richard III, which will attract all to see in the character a promising son of the great master of the stage, struggling up by study and perseverance into the path trodden by his father. . . . Let these young actors be encouraged to-night in a profession in which they have already made such rapid steps.

We may add that these young artists--the regular season having closed--are giving this entertainment at their own risk, which is an additional incentive to their friends.¹⁰⁹

Presumably Booth and Collier were having to hire the theatre, and hope that the proceeds would cover the cost. The *Enquirer* (May 31), in the longest piece it had printed on a benefit in Booth's two seasons, hoped they would have a full house:

Pray do, reader, encourage them; for though to Booth we would say, 'a little more grape, Captain Bragg'--that is, have a little more confidence . . . we would yet maintain that they are good actors, and good fellows too. Indeed, our stock company has not been appreciated, even by manager Kunkel himself, as they ought to have been. People have been brought here as *stars* to whom parts were assigned which would have been more ably filled by members of our stock company.

In the event the house was 'well filled', said the *Enquirer*, giving Booth on June 4 the fullest review he had yet received:

Booth has proved, as we always thought he one day would, that he inherits no small share of his father's genius, but he has never had sufficient confidence in himself to show it.¹¹⁰ On Thursday night, however, he got over *that* to a considerable extent, and his success was proportionate, as was manifested by the hearty and sincere applause bestowed on him. But Booth is young in years, and as he grows older he will gather more pluck, and pluck more laurels. Collier, too, was much applauded. Why has not a full night been given to each of these actors?

We know of 26 parts played by John Wilkes Booth this season, and 6 more possibilities. 11 are in plays the present writer failed to track down. 4 he had played before: Lord Tinsel and Cool from the 1858-59 season, and Dawson and Lamp from Philadelphia. Horatio may also be in this category if he did indeed play it in the previous season. Of his 15 parts in known plays, some are 'straight': Henry Moreland (*The Heir at Law*) is a rather bland, nice young man with considerable feeling but no humour; Claudio (*The Broken Sword*), is a friend of the hero/villain, with some good emotional opportunities; and there are Paris (*Romeo and Juliet*) and Horatio (*Hamlet*). (No doubt Aramis, in an elusive adaptation, would fit into this category too.)

There are rather more comic parts. Mr. Icebrook, in *Everybody's Friend*, is a shy suitor who emerges from his shell to defy a rival, finally pops the question, and later pretends to court his friend's wife to encourage him to appreciate her. It is a good high-comedy part, which John was to play once as a star. Mr. Glimmer in the afterpiece *The Buzzards* (or *Whitebait at Greenwich*), is an improvident inventor of uncertain age, doting on his secretly-married wife. He is fourth in importance of a cast of five. Romeo Jaffier Jenkins in *Too Much for Good Nature* would also be in John's star repertoire, and, as his name suggests, is a golden opportunity for mock-tragedy. He is one of many fellow-boarders who ask the help of the good-natured central character, and his problem is that his beloved's mother forbids her to meet him. Lord Tinsel and Cool have been discussed,

¹¹⁰ This suggests that there may be a grain of truth in Townsend's statement that at the Arch, Booth 'protested . . . that his want of confidence ruined him' (*Life, Crime, and Capture*, p. 21).

above. Trueworth in *The Love-Chase* is quite a pivotal part, being about fourth in importance among the male characters. As a moral arbiter, though not a haranguing one, he has several long and important speeches, comic opportunities when he pretends to be in love, and a moment or two of pathos.

Among the villains, the greatest (apart from *Richard III*) is Ludovico in *Evadne*. He dominates the first act, displaying a Richard III-like passionate sincerity when lying. His scheming shapes the whole plot. He flatters, goads, insinuates like Iago, and has wonderful purple speeches of ambition and love. By the end he seems three-quarters mad, and dies impotently threatening his killer. He is one of the two most important male characters, and it is no wonder the audience called for Booth, as his sister Rosalie tells us. He would also play this as a star. Dawson in *The Gamester* has been discussed in Chapter 3. Glavis in *Lady of Lyons* is a sidekick to the villain Beauseant. He is vaguely comic, being not very bright, and keen on his food. He has no ideas of his own, and appears in four scenes.

The parts possibly played by Booth are Backbite, discussed above, Edmund in *King Lear*, Baradas in *Richelieu*, Don Pedro,¹¹¹ Buckingham,¹¹² and Lord Dundreary in *Our American Cousin*:¹¹³ again, a preponderance of villains and comics. Baradas is the chief villain of *Richelieu*, as important a part as the juvenile lead, de Mauprat. He is similar to Ludovico, without having the same stature; his love for the heroine provides a compelling motivation, and ambition another. He also has a brief sword-fight. It would have been possible for Booth to play Dundreary, during Clarke's engagement, if he in fact remained in Richmond. During the previous season, the part had been performed by William Wheatley, accompanying Clarke; the *Whig* called his 'caricature . . . *exquisitely* presented' (March 4, 1859). As built up by E.A. Sothern, Dundreary had become the leading comic role, but Clarke's version of the play was different (Barron says less

111 Sillard, 2:23.

112 Research of the late Dr. Constance Head, from Arthur F. Loux, 'John Wilkes Booth Day by Day', unpublished manuscript, 1991, p. 145; Samples, p. 203.

113 'Great Casts', Fawcett scrapbook.

amusing),¹¹⁴ and presumably featured Asa Trenchard, the part Clarke played. The clipping from an unknown Richmond newspaper which ascribes Dundreary to Booth is fairly accurate in other respects, and also says he was renowned for 'dashing, rollicking, and fop characters'; but the other part it names for him is Mercutio, which he could not have played. His playing of Dundreary must therefore remain an intriguing possibility.

We must beware of generalization from such a small sample, but the diversity of these known and possible parts is striking, and does not make it any easier to assess Booth's line of business for this season. Sources contradict each other: 'he remained two years, rising rapidly and becoming the juvenile man of the theatre'; 'he played "second business," with Edwin Adams as leading man'; 'John Wilkes Booth played light comedy and walking gentleman';¹¹⁵ Edward Alfriend, we have seen, calls him the 'second juvenile man'; and a rather unreliable article calls him 'walking gentleman and general business manager', the second part of which is certainly wrong. He has also been called 'manager or stage manager' and 'leading man', but these are impossible;¹¹⁶ and as we have seen, J.W. Collier played the main juvenile parts this season.

Several of Booth's parts are identified as Walking Gentleman roles: Paris, Horatio, and Henry Moreland.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, Mammen notes that walking gentlemen, as well as playing 'feeders of lines' and friends of the hero, also had roles of the 'juvenile', 'light comedy', or 'fop' types (pp. 20, 25, 47), which would explain many of Booth's roles. Mammen found that walking gentlemen could be very busy, and 'frequently played more often than actors in higher ranks' (p. 25). However, the villainous parts do not fit a walking gentleman hypothesis: Buckingham would normally be played by the first or second heavy (p. 21), and S.K. Chester, the 1858-59 heavy, was still in the company in

114 *Baltimore Sun*, Feb. 10, 1907.

115 *Boston Saturday Evening Gazette*, May 10, 1862, in preliminary publicity for Booth's Boston debut; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, April 17, 1865; 'Great Casts', Fawcett scrapbook.

116 Fred R. Wren, 'Reminiscences of an Old Actor', *Pittsburg Gazette Times*, Aug. 4, 1907; *Illustrated American* 19 (1896): 521, cited in Fuller, 'Kunkel and Co.', p. 107; and Izola Forrester, *This One Mad Act* (Boston: Hale, Cushman & Flint, 1937), p. 165.

117 Mammen, p. 41; Barron, Dec. 9, 1906; *Guide to the Stage*, p. 23.

1859-60. As noted in Chapter 2, the lines of business system was somewhat flexible, especially for beginners: '[t]he apprentice moved upward part-step by part-step, and the work of any one season was intimately connected with that of the season before and the season after.' After their first year, 'apprentices were tested much more by being given parts in a line of business other than their own.' Furthermore, even after the apprentice period, 'actors sometimes doubled in two or more lines' (pp. 45, 21). Thus it is not inconceivable that Booth may have been engaged as First Walking Gentleman or Second Juvenile, and also have played Second Heavy parts, if there were no Second Heavy in the company. The versatility that was a feature of his eventual star repertoire can be seen developing here.

Whatever his formal position, he is remembered in a variety of accounts for his acting. Even post-assassination accounts intended to denigrate Booth have to concede him some success in Richmond: Townsend says that after his two seasons there, Booth 'left in some esteem'; one career sketch in a newspaper says he 'became one of the greatest favorites in the theater'; and another that 'he was regarded . . . [as] a young man of promise in his profession.'¹¹⁸ Edward Alfriend recalled that Booth in his 'fiery, intense, vigorous, brilliant' Charlestown recitations, 'possessed a voice very like his brother's, melodious, sweet, full and strong, and was like him, a consummate elocutionist'. Like Leonard Grover, Jennings Wise singled Booth out of a cast for praise on one occasion:

One night we attended the play of 'East Lynne' at the old Richmond Theatre. The performance was poor enough, to be sure, to [Jennings,] a young man fresh from Paris On our way home, he remarked that the only performer of merit in the caste [*sic*] was the young fellow John Wilkes Booth. In him, he said, there was the making of a good actor. . . .¹¹⁹

In the Stanley Kimmel Collection at Tampa University is a page of notes Kimmel took on a visit to a Confederate Old Soldiers' Home in Richmond in 1936. Ed. B. Willis,

¹¹⁸ *Life, Crime and Capture*, p. 22; St. Louis *Daily Press*, April 23, 1865; and *New York Herald*, April 21, 1865.

¹¹⁹ John Sergeant Wise, *The End of an Era* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1902), p. 93. O. Jennings Wise was co-editor with 3 others of the *Enquirer* between 1858 and 1860. He was killed in action as captain of the Richmond Blues in 1862 (Cappon, p. 171). The play cannot have been *East Lynne*, which was not produced until 1863; no date can therefore be assigned to this performance.

aged 91, told him he had seen Booth play many times. "'Everyone knew him--he was the handsomest man in Richmond, and a fine actor--stood out in the stock company here--didn't play all the time--belonged to a company and traveled.'" Kimmel wondered if he were confusing John with Edwin, but he said, "'No, I remember Edwin too; he was Wilkes' *father*.'" This description of a stock actor, who would not always be cast, and who toured with his company, refers fairly certainly to John despite the mistaken relationship. S.K. Collier 'remembered seeing JWB play in Richmond "a few times; he was a fine young actor then.'"

The actor Arthur Byron remembered his father, Oliver Doud Byron (listed in the bills as 'O.B. Mason'¹²⁰) telling him 'that he shared a dressing room with Booth in the theatre [in 1859-60], that they shared a room in the boarding house where they lived. He considered Booth a really fine actor and he was fond of him.'¹²¹ Given all these positive impressions, it would seem that Booth was one of the 'few' for whom the stock company was 'a good school of acting': Mammen believes that while most beginners 'copied blindly, [and] learned the tricks of the trade', the 'exceptionally talented youngster' would learn to understand the reasons behind what actors did, becoming 'a creative artist in his own right'.¹²²

The South's attitude to actors socially was different from that of the North. Townsend, an apologist for the theatre, explains:

I have never wondered why many actors were strongly predisposed toward the South. There, their social status is nine times as big as with us. . . . We place actors outside of society, and execrate them because they are there. The South took them into affable fellowship¹²³

Barron confirms this friendliness from his own experience.¹²⁴ Later denigrators of Booth were thus able to explain away his acting success as a function of the South's partiality for actors. In Richmond, says Lloyd Lewis, 'social if not artistic success met

120 Barron, Jan. 20, 1907.

121 Arthur Byron to David Rankin Barbee, March 11, 1939, Barbee Papers.

122 Mammen, p. 69.

123 *Life, Crime and Capture*, p. 22.

124 Jan. 20, 1907.

him. Richmond's critics might pointedly ignore him, but Richmond crowds did not hiss him. Southern people liked actors generally.'¹²⁵ The implication is that they liked bad ones too, or could not tell the difference. The 'uncritical Southerners' who, Eleanor Ruggles asserts, 'flattered and petted' John Wilkes Booth when he acted in Richmond¹²⁶ are part of a complex myth of the South. On the one hand, it was seen as an anachronistic society, hierarchical, 'chivalrous', given to duelling and other honour-based practices, with a lordly agrarian aristocracy and an ignorant peasantry; on the other, it was the seat of rebellion, a hotbed of traitors. Both constructions define it as dangerously 'Un-American'. Following the Civil War, the destruction of the South's economy made it a backwater, and audiences may well have become more unsophisticated and uncritical. To link John Wilkes Booth with the South, therefore, is to taint him with both these negative associations and may explain why detractors allowed him success there (see above).

It is not surprising, then, to find that success given as the source of his political opinions and acts, which are thus trivialized by being attributed to a purely personal, irrelevant cause. Townsend was first in the field with his equation: 'as Edwin Booth made his success in the North and remained steadfast, Wilkes Booth was most truly applauded in the South, and became rebel', and others have elaborated:

[At Richmond] Booth received more favorable attention than he had ever been accorded elsewhere, and came to feel a real identity with Richmond and with the Southern people who had befriended him. As a result, he emotionally embraced the Southern viewpoint on every issue¹²⁷

Francis Wilson, though basically sympathetic to Booth, continues this argument, proposing that being cut off by the War from his Southern audiences was so intolerable to Booth that he resolved on assassination to end it.¹²⁸ Cate's and Wilson's explanations

125 *Myths after Lincoln*, p. 169. As we have seen, critics did not ignore him more than his subordinate position in the theatre warranted.

126 Ruggles, p. 100.

127 *Life, Crime and Capture*, p. 40; Wirt Armistead Cate, 'Ford, the Booths, and Lincoln's Assassination', *Emory University Quarterly* 5 (1949): 17; see also Charles E. Holding in Mary Cherry Allen, 'Assassin's Local Play Dates Pinpointed', *Petersburg Progress-Index*, July 11, 1965.

128 Francis Wilson, *John Wilkes Booth*, p. 40. See also 'The True Reason Why John Wilkes Booth Shot President Lincoln', *Atlanta Constitution*, March 11, 1888.

construct Booth as pathetically grateful for a success that he did not deserve, and thus permanently dependent on its source; this would only hold water if he had never been successful except in the South, which as we shall see was not the case. Booth, brought up in Baltimore--culturally a part of the South--had probably formed his political opinions already, and did not need his Richmond audience to form them for him. Meanwhile, he was gaining experience and landing larger parts, and it was not a regional difference which led to his getting more notice and encouragement in Richmond than in Philadelphia, but the smaller size of the town and company, and his own improvement.

Booth certainly made an impression socially as well as on stage, as Edward Alfriend remembered:

He was as handsome as a Greek god. . . . In Richmond . . . he was a great social favorite, knowing all the best men and many of the finest women. . . . With men John Wilkes was most dignified in demeanor, bearing himself with insouciant care and grace, and was a brilliant talker. With women he was a man of irresistible fascination by reason of his superbly handsome face, conversational brilliancy and a peculiar halo of romance with which he invested himself, and which the ardent imagination of women amplified.

One of Kimmel's old soldiers, Captain Williamson, remembered him "'very well . . . a handsome young man. I never knew him nor spoke to him, but I saw him around town a good deal.'"¹²⁹ George Crutchfield knew Booth 'quite well':

He was a man of high character & sociable disposition, & liked by every one with whom he associated. Was considered very handsome having coal black hair & eyes, & frequently wore, when on the streets a fur trimmed over-coat . . . His intimate associates often joked him about his bow-legs.¹³⁰

This is in striking contrast to the picture painted by the *New York Herald* on April 21, 1865, foreshadowing both Jekyll and Hyde and Dorian Gray:

Like his father he bade fair to become a confirmed drunkard. He was intensely vicious and perverse, and . . . combined every other habit of dissipation that the most depraved could indulge. He was then young and handsome, according to the recollections of others, and might readily move in society of tone where his habits were not known.

¹²⁹ Kimmel's notes in Kimmel Collection.

¹³⁰ Crutchfield to Valentine, July 5, 1909. The fur-collared coat appears in several photographs of JWB: see Richard & Kellie Gutman, *John Wilkes Booth Himself* (Dover, MA: Hired Hand Press, 1979) pp. 55, 59.

As we have seen, it was Edwin who then seemed to be following their father into alcoholism. The spoiled-brat Booth appears in the account of Edwin Hunter: 'He was the pet of Richmond and led a very wild life there, being allowed to do almost as he pleased.'¹³¹ He did have one recorded fight, on a matter of honour: 'it was with a man named Pat. Redford or Redman in the Box-office who had insulted him several times before but he did not say what the insult was', his sister Rosalie reports. F. Pat Redford ran the ticket office.¹³²

Given Booth's fascination for women, noted by Alfrend above, it would not be surprising to find traces of love affairs during his two-year sojourn in Richmond. The story of his involvement with Izola D'Arcy as told by his supposed 'granddaughter', Izola Forrester, is an entertaining fiction.¹³³ However, an intriguing suggestion was made in 1881:

The favorite wig of John Wilkes Booth . . . was made of the hair of his sweetheart, a Miss Becket, of Richmond, Va. She died of typhoid fever, but her head was shorn before death, and her lover had the beautiful light brown hair woven into a wig.¹³⁴

Booth's later empathy with a fellow actor who had lost his young wife (see Chapter 6) suggests that there may be some truth in this story. Conversely, Booth was then, as later, the object of infatuations: Mary Bella Beale relates that 'a young lady, well born and wealthy . . . lost her head completely' and begged him to elope with her. He asked Mrs. Beale for advice on refusing her without hurting her feelings, and later told the doctor's wife 'how he had sent her back to her father's house a wiser virgin.'

By the end of his two seasons in Richmond, Booth had played four of the parts he would later play as a star, and a portion of a fifth (Othello, Romeo Jaffier Jenkins, Mr. Icebrook, Ludovico, and the fifth act of *Richard III*). While he was there, other actors had

131 'The True Reason Why JWB shot President Lincoln'. Hunter claimed to have been in the company with Booth, but no such name can be found in bills or newspapers.

132 Rosalie to EB, March 12, 1860; *Dispatch*, Feb. 4, 1859.

133 Joyce G. Knibb & Patricia A. Mehrtens have shown in *The Elusive Booths of Burrillville: An Investigation of John Wilkes Booth's Alleged Wife and Daughter* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1991) that they could not possibly have met in Richmond.

134 'Behind the Curtains', *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 4, 1881.

played 19 of the star parts he would assume, some more than once: *Richard III* was done by Edwin Booth, J.W. Wallack, Sullivan, Roberts, Adams, presumably by Langdon and also by the Wells Troupe on horseback; *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* five times each, *The Stranger* four times, *Richelieu*, *Katharine and Petruchio*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Marble Heart* and *The Lady of Lyons* three times, *The Apostate*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *William Tell*, *Don Caesar de Bazan*, *Othello*, and *Money* twice, *The Wife*, *Evadne* and *The Robbers* once. These, with the parts he had seen played in Philadelphia, covered all but two (*Corsican Brothers* and *Raffaelle*, *The Reprobate*) of the roles he would play more than once as a star; he was now well placed to choose his repertoire and work on it. Of the repertoire of other stars, he would play nine parts also played by Edwin Booth (all but one of these, *Richelieu*, inherited from their father) and six by Murdoch, whom we know he admired.

Mammen identifies a 'four-year course in acting' provided in effect by stock companies; 'at the end of four years most of the beginners at the Boston Museum had either started work towards or had attained definite types of work in the theatre.' After *Walking Gentleman*, further steps meant 'a definite movement toward more specialized work.'¹³⁵ John Wilkes Booth's apprenticeship, typical of the time up till now, did not progress to a fourth year; perhaps, having discovered his range, he did not wish to specialize further, but launched himself as a star in order to choose his own parts.

Booth certainly seems to have retained a fondness for Richmond over the years, though he never again acted there. Asia calls it the 'idealized city of his love', and a few days before the assassination, he said, apparently with regret, 'I will never go to Richmond again'.¹³⁶ In 1862, he stayed on at Baltimore after an engagement in order to participate in a complimentary benefit to George Kunkel, his old manager, after the Richmond Theatre had burned down (see Chapter 5). John Barron apostrophizes the city in terms with which John would no doubt have agreed:

¹³⁵ Mammen, pp. 46-47, 45.

¹³⁶ *Unlocked Book*, p. 118; M599, Reel 6, item 102, National Archives: evidence of George Wren.

Within your gates we lived many happy days, enjoying your delightful hospitality and with your generous applause urging us to achievements which otherwise would not have been ours. No city in the Union was ever dearer to the heart of the young aspirant for dramatic fame No people ever paid more devoted homage to dramatic art than the citizens of Richmond.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Barron, Jan. 20, 1907.



photo: Deirdre Kincaid

The building which once housed the Montgomery Theatre (on the first floor); then as now, the ground floor was occupied by shops.



photo: Deirdre Kincaid

A more typical fate for theatres in which Booth played was demolition: this is the site of the St. Charles Theatre, New Orleans, now a car park.

CHAPTER 5

1860-62: With the Suddenness of a Meteor . . .

The chief reason why John Wilkes Booth embarked on a star tour in 1860-61 after such a short apprenticeship must have been that his success in Richmond had been great enough to encourage this step. No doubt the independence of the position attracted him; and perhaps a subsidiary consideration was that Edwin had married in the summer of 1860, and with a wife to support, there would be less money left over for their mother and unmarried sister Rosalie. It was a good time for John to step into the gap by taking on a riskier, but potentially much higher-earning line of theatrical work. He may have seen the move as experimental, as Edwin had with his first tour.

October 1, 1860, found him beginning his star career in Columbus, Georgia, with the theatrical company of Matthew W. Canning. Canning had also leased the new theatre at Montgomery, Alabama, and intended after a few weeks at Columbus to play a full season at Montgomery, but this plan was to fall victim to politics. Canning was from Philadelphia,¹ and may conceivably have met Booth there: in 1857 he had been treasurer for John Drew's National Theatre;² but a more likely connection is that, during the previous season, Edwin Booth had played a week at Columbus under the management of Crisp and Canning (W.H. Crisp in 1860 was running other southern theatres). Canning had also been in New York in July to recruit his company, and may have seen potential stars as well.³ Furthermore, the company included the Richmond 'heavy', S.K. Chester. Whether it was Canning's or Booth's initiative to make the actor a star cannot now be determined. Even with his family contacts, Booth, as an unknown quantity, cannot have had a large choice of theatres in which to make his star debut; but Columbus was a highly

1 Brief manuscript biography of John Wilkes Booth found on Canning when he was arrested on April 15, 1865; from Judge Advocate General's Office, as transcribed by Stanley Kimmel in Kimmel Papers.

2 *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, Aug. 10, 1857.

3 *Clipper*, July 14, 1860. The actor Charles Pope remembered meeting JWB in New York the summer before his engagement with Canning, though he gives the date as 1858 ('The Eccentric Booths').

suitable choice, if indeed it was his choice. Far away from the major theatrical centres of the East, a failure would have had little impact; he could quietly have entered a stock company for the rest of the season and continued his apprenticeship. Edwin's first star season had included Baltimore, Boston and New York, heralded by a ballyhooing agent 'who does him more harm than good';⁴ as with John's alias, this may be an instance of his learning from Edwin's mistakes.

It has occasionally been said that Booth was the leading man of this company, or even that it was 'his' company;⁵ but Canning's own account and newspaper advertisements make clear that he was engaged as a star. However, J.M. Barron calls him a 'stock star',⁶ a term which the *Indianapolis Journal* (Dec. 24, 1861) explained with reference to two local favourites: 'it means that they will play here all the spare time they have when not fulfilling engagements in other cities; of course when not particularly needed here'. This hybrid arrangement would provide some security for the star and a semi-resident attraction for the manager; if Booth was indeed hired on these terms, the confusion might be explained. He was still billed and reviewed as Mr. Wilkes, though, as at Richmond, his identity seems to have been an open secret: the *Columbus Daily Times* referred to him on October 13 as 'Mr. John Wilkes (Booth)' and both the *Montgomery Weekly Mail* (Sept. 10) and the *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser* (Sept. 12), announcing the upcoming season, describe him as 'brother of Edwin Booth', the latter paper adding:

Perhaps some little explanation might be deemed necessary in regard to Mr. John Wilkes. He is a brother of the eminent young tragedian, but to avoid confounding their names, and thereby creating misunderstanding amon[g]st theatre goers, he has consented to be known simply as John Wilkes.

Although the *New York World* would state on April 17, 1865 that Booth got this and other engagements on 'the strength of his father's name', it would seem that, once employed, he was trying *not* to use his father's name--but that this intention was thwarted

4 Shattuck, *Hamlet of EB*, pp. 10, 16; *New York Clipper*, April 25, 1857.

5 The *New York Herald*, April 16, 1865; Ellsler, p. 129; Leavitt, p. 80 and Withers, p. 72 name him as the lead; Lewis (p. 174) says he was 'head of his own stock company' at Montgomery.

6 March 17, 1907.

either by an inquisitive journalist or by Canning, who might understandably have wished to trade on Booth's famous connections. The manager was taking a risk in opening both his theatres with this unknown star, however much confidence he felt in Booth's talents--or his genes.

George Alfred Townsend, at this point in his story of Booth's career, explained the technical meaning of 'star', adding: 'A stock actor is a good actor, and a poor fool. A star is an advertisement in tights, who grows rich and corrupts the public taste. Booth was a star'⁷ Thus he connects Booth with all the evils of the star system, making him complicit in them. Stanley Kimmel concurs, quoting the passage without comment, and then misquotes Townsend to say that John "'resolved to transform himself from a stock actor to a Star'" when he read in the Montgomery *Daily Post* 'that Edwin had just received five thousand dollars as his share of the profits for a month's engagement in Boston' (p. 157). Such a report did appear in this paper on October 16, 1860--though John was then in Columbus--but since he had begun his star career over a fortnight earlier, it could hardly have influenced his decision, even supposing that he did not yet know how much a star could earn.⁸ Kimmel thus adds to Townsend's portrait of a showy, shallow Booth his own keynote: John's envy of Edwin and his rash attempts to copy him.

Columbus, then a rising manufacturing town with a population of little more than 9,000, could not support a full theatrical season, and the dramatic criticism of its newspapers was not of high quality. Inevitably, John was compared with Edwin, seen there the previous December; the *Daily Sun* (Oct. 3) found him 'not so much experienced as Edwin, but bids fair soon to Equal [*sic*] him. He has all the promises, and in personal appearance is handsome and prepossessing.'⁹ Announcing Booth's benefit, his first performance of *Richard III*, on October 5, the *Daily Times* directed the notice of 'a

⁷ *Life, Crime, and Capture*, p. 22.

⁸ In a letter to Lawrence Barrett, in January of 1860, Edwin says that 'for the past 3 years I have been in receipt of over \$10,000 annually' (Skinner, *Last Tragedian*, p. 133). If he told a friend what he earned, he would surely have informed his brother.

⁹ Quoted in Helen B. Keller, 'The History of the Theater in Columbus, Ga. from 1826 to 1865', M.A. thesis, U. Georgia, 1957, p. 142.

community somewhat noted for its intense Southern feeling' to the fact that he had helped 'defend Southern honor and Southern homes' by serving during the hanging of John Brown. By October 10, the paper could say that Canning's 'company . . . are fast growing into popular favor. The audiences have increased nightly, both in quantity and quality'. The usual quality of Columbus audiences is perhaps implied by the paper's adding that 'this growth has been attended by a spirit of order and decorum', and by a satirical piece beneath on how to behave in a theatre, including the advice:

Whenever an actor or actress does anything you fancy 'good' you will immediately make all the noise of which you are capable, by whistling, stamping, yelling and beating with your sticks. Whistling and yelling, if loud and shrill, is considered the very highest style of criticism.

Booth and the company were to have played three weeks in Columbus before proceeding to Montgomery, but on October 13, the newspapers announced the first of his notorious accidents. The *Sun* gave the fullest account; he had been

seriously wounded last night by the accidental discharge of a pistol in the hands of Mr. Canning. He was loading the pistol and when pressing on the cap it discharged, the contents entering Mr. Booth's thigh, causing a severe wound. Fortunately the ball took a downward direction and escaped the important vessels lying near its course.¹⁰

Booth was to have played Hamlet that night for his second benefit; John Albaugh, the leading man, played the part instead. Both the *Daily Times* (Oct. 13) and the weekly *Columbus Enquirer* (Oct. 16) placed the accident in Cook's Hotel; accounts more distant in space and time have added confusion. The *New York Clipper* (Oct. 28) reported it as happening 'in a shooting-gallery'; Stanley Kimmel (p. 156) 'in [Booth's] dressing room'. Kimmel also preferred to believe the St. Louis *Daily Press*'s assertion that Booth had been 'shot in the rear' (April 23, 1865), presumably since that sounded more undignified; Canning himself remembered that he had shot Booth 'in the side'.¹¹ After the assassination, this mishap became confused with a later occasion on which Booth had had a growth removed from his neck: in a quarrel, Booth 'was shot in the neck', the ball re-

¹⁰ Quoted by Keller, p. 147.

¹¹ Manuscript biography.

emerging years afterward.¹² Later vagueness about the dates of Booth's sojourn in Montgomery allowed Lloyd Lewis to portray Booth as a coward, who 'announced that he had suffered a wound in the foot and must go home' in order to escape conscription into the Confederate Army.¹³ In fact, Booth left the South before there was a Confederate Army, or indeed a single seceded state.

The company continued without Booth for the last week in Columbus, though audiences declined;¹⁴ he had recovered enough to recite Mark Antony's oration for his benefit on their last night, October 20, though it would be another week before he could sustain a whole play. The *Times* (Oct. 20) bade him a rather fulsome farewell, as 'one who, upon the first rounds of the ladder of fame, has given earnest [*sic*] of talents and merit which must eventually raise him to the summit of reward and reputation.'

The building which contained the Montgomery Theatre still stands (see picture on page 119), on the corner of Perry and Madison Streets. Then as now there were shops on the ground floor; the theatre was a large hall with a raked auditorium and one gallery on cast iron columns.¹⁵ Canning, who had run a short season the previous spring in another venue, announced that he had 'made ample arrangements for Stars--the first in the country.'¹⁶ These included Edwin Booth, although the *New York Clipper* had said on August 11 that he would probably not visit the South and West that season. And though Canning had also announced in the *Weekly Mail* (Sept. 10) that he had hired 'one of the best stock companies that ever played in the South', it is clear from hints in the papers that they were sometimes found wanting. On November 10, the *Daily Mail* said that the previous night's play had not been well cast, 'even according to the strength of the company'; worse, on Nov. 27 it reported that some of the stock 'did only tolerable [*sic*],

12 *New York World*, April 17, 1865; *Washington Daily Constitutional Union*, April 18. See Chapter 7 for the neck operation.

13 Lewis, p. 174, combining denigratory pieces from *Cincinnati Commercial*, April 17, 1865 and *New York Herald*, April 16, 1865.

14 *Columbus Daily Times*, Oct. 17 and 20.

15 La Margaret Turnipseed, 'The Ante-bellum Theatre in Montgomery, Alabama, 1840-1860', M.A. thesis, Auburn (Alabama) Polytechnic Institute, 1948, pp. 71, 73.

16 *Montgomery Weekly Mail*, Sept. 10.

one or two of them being almost totally "off their feet," and having no conception whatever of their parts.' But on the whole the papers were full of praise: they had campaigned for two decades for some legitimate drama in Montgomery¹⁷ and must have wished to encourage its prospects.

The new theatre opened without Booth on October 22; to a crowded house, the whole company sang 'The Star-Spangled Banner',¹⁸ one of the last occasions on which the national anthem would be heard in Alabama for a few years. Booth, unable to travel until the 23rd,¹⁹ was announced for that evening, but proved not fit enough to open until the following Monday (29th). After a small house on Saturday, 'a very fair audience greeted Mr. JOHN WILKES' in his first appearance, as Pescara (*Daily Mail*, Oct. 30). The town's 15,000-odd population was swollen that week by visitors to the State Fair; the next night the theatre held 'a rousing crowd . . . decidedly the largest audience [of] the season', and the following, Canning's 'large theatre was full from pit to dome' for John's Hamlet, despite competition from a ball and two separate political demonstrations. There was 'another jam', and '[s]till another large audience' on November 2 and 3 (all *Daily Mail*). The *Daily Post* published a more thoughtful comparison with his brother on October 30:

Mr. Wilkes is a young man, of very fine appearance, resembling very much his talented brother, Edwin Booth; true, his manner is not so graceful, his voice is not so full, nor his enunciation so distinct as that of his brother, but this may be attributed to his limited practice, rather than to any inferiority of ability.²⁰

On November 3, Booth's engagement came to an end, but he remained in Montgomery and appeared as Romeo for the farewell benefit of Kate Bateman, the next star, on November 16. The *Daily Mail* that day advised that 'as full dress as possible will be desirable', for this would be '*the* fashionable night of the season'. Although Miss Bateman had suffered thin houses that week because of a circus playing nearby, her benefit drew

17 Turnipseed, p. 80.

18 *New York Clipper*, Nov. 4.

19 Keller, p. 151.

20 Quoted in David Rankin Barbee, 'Lincoln and Booth', Barbee Papers.

'the best fashionable attendance we have yet seen, at a time when there were few strangers in town'--in other words, since Booth's engagement the week of the Fair. Clearly, he drew the classes who could afford to be 'fashionable', as well as the crowds.

Booth was still in Montgomery on December 1, when the star was his Richmond acquaintance, Maggie Mitchell. The *New York Clipper* reported on December 15, 'A complimentary benefit was given on the 1st to John Wilkes Booth, on which occasion Miss Mitchell generously volunteered. Mr. B. was greeted with a good house. He left for the north on the 3d.' In the *Montgomery Daily Mail* (Dec. 1), he was billed officially for the first time as J. Wilkes Booth, his usual benefit practice. He had acquired some popularity in Montgomery: the *Mail* reported on the 2nd that 'he was called before the curtain amidst loud cheering, when he returned his thanks in a very neat but short speech'.

The *New York Clipper* had said on November 24,

Mr. Booth's engagement was very successful, and his friends predict for him a brilliant future. Nature has done much for him, and if a close application to study (for he works hard) be rewarded, he will soon be on the uppermost round of the ladder.

The Philadelphia *Public Ledger* would later claim (April 17, 1865) that this engagement 'was neither profitable to the actor nor manager [*sic*].' The manager disagreed: Canning, also writing after the assassination, called it 'a highly successful engagement', adding that Booth had gone on to become 'one of the most successful and popular stars traveling'.

Booth's tarrying in Montgomery for a month after the end of his engagement may have been due to his wound; and he may have needed the complimentary benefit to raise money to travel home.²¹ However, a reminiscence by one Louise Wooster suggests another reason: he was having a serious affair with her. She claimed he was teaching her to be an actress so that she could accompany him, but that he 'had foolishly expressed himself in regard to the rebellion . . . He loved the union . . . his love for the union was one of his strongest passions.' One evening, he said to her, "'I must go home tonight or I cannot get away at all. . . . Such a glorious country as ours cannot be broken up by a few

21 We do not know what his financial arrangements were with Canning after his accident.

fanatics." . . . He was as bitter against secession as he was against abolition.²² One may feel that Miss Wooster, who later ran a disorderly house in Birmingham, Alabama,²³ perhaps exaggerates Booth's honourable intentions toward her; but the odd detail of Booth's Unionist sentiments at that time suggests that there might be a grain of truth in the story. John Ellsler, theatre manager and friend of Booth's, states that he had 'from the lips of the manager [Canning] himself' that Booth's

sympathy for, and utterances on behalf of the Union were so unguarded in their expression that his life was in jeopardy, and it became necessary for the manager of the theatre to resort to strategy and spirit Wilkes Booth out of the city to save his life.²⁴

And in Philadelphia over Christmas that year, Booth wrote the draft of a speech which he must have intended to give in that city, urging the North to make all compromises necessary to keep the southern states in the Union. Events got ahead of him, and he never finished the speech.²⁵

Whether or not he left Montgomery one step ahead of vengeful secessionists, he came home to Philadelphia, where his mother and sister Rosalie were boarding. Asia, who also lived in Philadelphia with her husband J.S. Clarke, wrote to a friend on December 16, 1860: 'John Booth is at home. He is looking well but his wound is not entirely healed yet--he still carries the ball in him.'²⁶ He seems also to have been in a disillusioned mood, from a comment by Edwin in a letter to Lawrence Barrett on December 23:

Don't turn up your nose at the stock, Larry Starring about the country is sad work--a home is better; my brother, John, successful as he was--is sick

²² *The Autobiography of a Magdalene* (Birmingham, AL: Birmingham Publ. Co., 1911), pp. 51-52, 56. The author seems to set this incident at the beginning of the war, as does Ellsler, below.

²³ R.B. Henckell, 'The Course of Our History Might Have Been Different', *The Birmingham News Magazine*, n.d., in Stanley Swift Collection, Tulsa U.

²⁴ Ellsler, p. 129, saying this was '[a]t the time the war broke out'. He or Canning may have exaggerated Booth's danger somewhat.

²⁵ MS draft, Hampden-Booth Theatre Library, *The Players*, published in Rhodehamel & Taper, pp. 55-64.

²⁶ Asia to Jean Anderson, ML 518, Peale Museum; Arthur F. Loux ('The Accident-Prone John Wilkes Booth', *Lincoln Herald* 85 (1982): 265) doubts that the bullet remained in John's flesh, and it does indeed seem unlikely.

of it and is determined to go into the stock and there make a stand--the wisest plan.²⁷

John changed his mind about returning to stock: he spent the rest of his career as a star. We cannot know how he had intended to spend the rest of the season, had secession fever not affected the South. If he was indeed a 'stock star' with Canning, he would have returned between star engagements to Montgomery; or perhaps he would in any case have come North, to play whatever dates he could get. He was billed from now on as John Wilkes Booth: after his success in Columbus and Montgomery, he must have decided that his apprenticeship was finally over.

The theatre he was entering was destined to become rather different from the one in which he had trained. The event of the 1860-61 season was the emergence of Edwin Forrest from retirement, announced by a typically egotistical manifesto published by his friend James Rees: 'thousands are so sickened, and in some instances disgusted, at the present state of the drama,' it asserted, 'and the paucity of genuine talent in our midst, that a change . . . is most anxiously desired.'²⁸ It is hard not to see this as a direct attack on Forrest's new young rival, Edwin Booth. Playing in New York that autumn at the same time, both had good houses, but the growing divergence of their styles and audiences ensured that partisans of Forrest and of Edwin Booth would attack each other's heroes. John Booth, as we shall see, was to be caught up in the quarrel.

The fear of war was a looming shadow. In New York, Edwin Booth's audience cheered his line as Richelieu, 'The pen is mightier than the sword. Take away the sword . . . ', applying it, as the *New York Clipper* (Dec. 15) reported, to 'the present disturbed state of the country.' On December 22, the *Clipper* noted that northern audiences were falling away; the panic had hit the South earlier. There were empty benches in New York. In Montgomery, during a complimentary benefit to Canning on December 19, Maggie Mitchell allegedly trampled the United States flag underfoot: 'the first overt act of

²⁷ Skinner, *Last Tragedian*, p. 136.

²⁸ Barrett, *Edwin Forrest*, p. 94.

treason in the South.'²⁹ The next day, South Carolina became the first state to secede from the Union.

Booth's next engagement began on January 21, 1861, at the Metropolitan Theatre, Rochester, NY. The *Rochester Evening Express* announced him that day, as 'the young American Tragedian', along with the twin sisters Henrietta and Maria Irving, who would share leads during Booth's engagement. Presumably all three were starring; but reviews gave more space to Booth, perhaps because of his novelty value. He and the Misses Irving were staying at the Osburn House, according to the *Daily Democrat and American* (Jan. 19), which may be relevant to a later incident. So may the description of Henrietta in the *Spirit of the Times* (March 26, 1864) as 'graceful and beautiful, with splendid eyes, [and] a slight but tall and queenly form'. Booth's name drew out the 'elite' of the theatre-goers on his first night, as *Romeo* (*Express*, Jan. 22). A 'severe cold' hampered his voice for several nights, but he played the taxing Richard III for his benefit, perhaps also appearing in the afterpiece, *Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady*.³⁰ Houses were full enough for Booth and the Misses Irving to be re-engaged for a second week.³¹

Not mentioned in the Rochester papers was the first of Booth's on-stage accidents: the *New York Clipper* (Feb. 9) noted that during the *Richard III* fight, Booth's Richmond, Mr. Miles, 'was severely injured by the breaking of Richard's sword, the point of which struck Mr. Miles just above the eye, inflicting quite a wound.'

The *Union* noted that Booth had played to 'full and crowded houses, at a time when theatricals were languishing' due to other attractions: 'moonlight evenings, sleighing and skating' (Jan. 26, Feb. 1). The *Express* (Feb. 4) concluded that '[h]is brother Edwin must look to his laurels.'

Booth opened in Albany, NY, as sole star, on February 11. Only the next night, in *The Apostate*, another two accidents occurred: he inflicted a slight sword-cut to the head

²⁹ *Clipper*, Jan. 5, 1861; Frank O'Brien, 'Passing of the Old Montgomery Theatre', *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, Spring 1941: 10-11.

³⁰ *Express*, Jan. 23, 24, 26. The other two papers do not mention the casting of the afterpiece; the *Express* said Booth would appear in it, but does not name his role.

³¹ *Rochester Daily Union and Advertiser*, Jan. 26.

of the leading man, Mr. Leonard, and then when dying at the end, fell on his dagger and cut the muscles under his right arm to between one and three inches in depth.³² These mishaps have been inflated to portray Booth as dangerous and uncontrolled: he had 'cut [Mr. Leonard's] head open and also cut his hand' because, 'when excited,' he was 'quite "off his balance," and acted like a wild man' (*Albany Times & Courier*, April 17, 1865). According to the *Albany Morning Express* of the same date, he was 'carried away at times by the earnestness of his acting' (as his father was said to have been), and 'in a scene where he is supposed to stab himself, he actually struck the blow, inflicting a severe and painful wound.' Since he was not, in fact, supposed to stab himself, but be stabbed by the Hemeya,³³ it is possible that the accident was not Booth's fault at all, and that the dagger slipped from the hand of Mr. Leonard. In any case, it caused him to lose five days of his engagement; he reappeared the next Monday (18th) in the same role 'with his right arm tied to his side, but fencing with his left, like a demon'.³⁴ Edwin Booth once suffered an accident in the same role: his Hemeya stabbed him in the hand which he raised to protect his chest, with a dagger which had not been blunted. He also appeared next with his arm in a sling, fencing left-handed.³⁵ On the day of John's reappearance, 'amid the roar of artillery from Observatory hill, President-elect Lincoln arrived in Albany The Twenty-fifth regiment was under arms, and crowds of citizens thronged the streets'.³⁶ Lincoln was on what the *Albany Atlas & Argus* (Feb. 13) sourly called a 'royal progress' to Washington to take up office. Booth had deplored the break-up of the Union, but now that secession was a fact and the Confederacy had elected its own President, he was opposed to any attempt to force the seceded states back into the Union by war. Thus he could be described by Henry Pitt Phelps (p. 326) as being 'a violent secessionist' at this

32 *New York Tribune*, Feb. 13, 1861; *New York Clipper*, Feb. 23, 1861; Phelps, p. 325.

33 See Chapter 10 for a summary of the play.

34 Phelps, p. 326.

35 Clarke, *Elder and Younger Booth*, pp. 168-69.

36 Phelps, p. 324.

time. As the theatre's treasurer, J.C. Cuyler, remembered, this immediately got him into trouble:

[Booth] never attempted to conceal his views, and in several conversations with him while in our city he avowed himself as unequivocally opposed to the Government and a Rebel at heart. . . . [However,] with one exception, we never knew him to make a public avowal of [his views]. And that was at Stanwix Hall, where he engaged in a controversy with two or three gentlemen about our national troubles.

Cuyler happened to come in when Booth 'was greatly excited, and uttering the most objectionable sentiments.' To avoid a scene, Cuyler got Booth away 'by a pretence of business', and in the actor's room, 'cautioned him against indulging in such remarks, assuring him that they would not be tolerated by our people, and that if he persisted in so doing he would be compelled to leave the city.'³⁷ In Phelps's account of this incident, Booth protested: "'Is not this a democratic city?' . . . 'Democratic? yes; but disunion, no!'" was the reply.'³⁸ Here, the word 'Democratic' must be understood as referring to the party, rather than the philosophy. Democrats were for States' Rights as opposed to a strong Federal government; the Democratic paper in Albany, the *Atlas & Argus*, feared that Lincoln would 'inaugurate a military despotism' (Feb. 13), and make the Federal Government 'an in[s]trument of force, instead of opinion' (March 5). Booth had made the mistake of assuming that everyone in Albany agreed with the *Argus*, whereas feelings ran equally high on the other side.

Booth's opinions, according to Kimmel (p. 158), were not even his own, but were 'slave-state slogans' parroted for effect as Booth 'indulged his desire for notoriety'. Kimmel does not allow Booth the dignity of an honestly-held conviction, even one which history has labelled 'wrong'. According to Cuyler, Booth then

seemed to regret that he had been carried away by his feelings, and promised to avoid difficulty during the remainder of his sojourn in the city. This promise he sacredly kept, and after the occasion above related he was seldom seen in the street, spending most of his time in his room.³⁹

³⁷ *Albany Morning Express*, April 17, 1865. At this date, Cuyler was one of the editors of this paper.

³⁸ Phelps, p. 326. Phelps may well have had this account from Cuyler himself.

³⁹ *Albany Express*, April 17, 1865.

Partly, he kept his room to nurse the injury to his ribcage noted above: the *Albany Times & Courier* described him on March 2 as 'having been an invalid nearly all the time since his arrival here', though he was 'visited at his hotel by hundreds of persons'.

After his first fortnight's engagement, Booth stayed in Albany, and after a further week was re-engaged on March 4, and again on March 11.⁴⁰ On Friday, March 15, the *Times & Courier* summed up:

He is possessed of all the requisite qualities which go towards making the finished actor, and with few--very few--years of experience will be one of the brightest ornaments of the American stage. He is yet young in years, but with close attention to all the details of his arduous profession we predict for him a brilliant future. . . . We hope to see Mr. Booth among us again soon, when the pulse of our drama-loving element beats not so sluggishly as at present.

The last sentence suggests that the unsettled times were having their effect on audience numbers. Booth left the next day for Portland, Maine.

At the Portland Theatre he was supported by the Western Sisters, step-daughters of the manager, for whom he had played small parts at Richmond; and, at his first benefit (*Macbeth*), by his old friend from Philadelphia, John McCullough, then a member of the stock company at Boston's Howard Athenaeum. He was re-engaged for a second week;⁴¹ he then remained in Portland and appeared the following Friday with the succeeding star, Mrs. Farren, at her benefit in *The Stranger*, and also *The Hunchback*, presumably as the romantic lead Clifford.⁴² They both appeared throughout the following week: Booth was presumably the subsidiary star, since he took his benefit on Wednesday and left Mrs. Farren the usual Friday. He had come a long way in the three years since he had supported her at Philadelphia. Nine performances were crammed into this week, Booth adding Act V of *Richard III* to *The Wife* for his benefit, and playing the two-acter *Raffaello the Reprobate* after *The Corsican Brothers* on Saturday afternoon (the Puritan city council did not allow performances on Saturday evening). An audience

40 *Atlas & Argus*, March 2 and 11, 1861.

41 *Portland Advertiser*, March 22 and 25, quoted in Loux, 'John Wilkes Booth Day by Day', pp. 225-226.

42 *Advertiser* April 5, in Loux, 'JWB Day by Day', p. 227.

member later recalled a hitch that showed how important stage machinery was in a play like *The Corsican Brothers*:

[Booth] was to be slid across the stage under an illumination of red fire. I suppose he stood on a plank which had not been properly greased, for it would stop, then start, with a jerk so pronounced, that he or his shirt could not stand without a sympathetic movement each time, which destroyed the impressiveness of the scene.⁴³

An extra matinee was added on Thursday, April 11, the State Governor having proclaimed a day of fasting and prayer in response to the deadlock over Fort Sumter.⁴⁴ For those who preferred to do their fasting and praying in a theatre, Booth gave his only performance of *William Tell*, followed by *Macbeth* in the evening (*Advertiser*, April 11). The following day the first shots were fired at Sumter, and the Civil War had begun.

Townsend supplemented his definition of a star, quoted earlier, with this information: 'Booth was a star, and being so, had an agent. The agent is a trumpeter who goes on before, writing the impartial notices which you see in the editorial columns of country papers and counting noses at the theater doors.' M.B. Leavitt gave, in retrospect, a less tendentious definition: 'The so-called press agent of to-day was known in former times as the "advance" or "working" agent.' He would 'furnish papers with live and pertinent matter' and 'make contracts, post bills', etc.⁴⁵ From Portland comes one of only three contemporary references to an agent employed by Booth, in an unfortunate context. After mentioning that 'the reception he met with was no doubt most flattering to his professional pride', the *Portland Advertiser* (April 29) went on:

During his engagement here, he contracted, through his agent, a small bill at this office for advertising and printing. . . . Just before his departure, we called on him for the amount of his indebtedness, but were referred to his agent. The agent referred to his principal; the principal back to the agent; and so like a shuttlecock our collector was batted backward and forward between their falsehoods To cut the story short, we have not yet seen the color of the gentleman's money . . .

43 [Nathan Gould], 'John Wilkes Booth's visit to Portland', *Portland Sunday Telegram*, April 13, 1902.

44 Loux, 'JWB Day by Day', p. 228.

45 Leavitt, p. 272, probably describing the post of agent for a minstrel troupe or combination; less would be required for a solo star.

That this was a misunderstanding and not a deliberate attempt to defraud is suggested by the failure of any similar story to emerge--and of this one to re-emerge--after the assassination, when anything disparaging was eagerly sought. It seems strange that Booth, and not the theatre, should have been responsible for his advertising. No letters from him have survived for this season, which may indicate (since most of his letters are about business) that he was not arranging his own engagements; but since so few overall have survived, it may be coincidence. Canning was stated to have been 'at one time agent' for Booth in a report written when he was arrested after the assassination.⁴⁶ His being with Booth for part of that season could perhaps explain why a notice of Booth's self-injury at Albany appeared in the *Montgomery Post* (Feb. 18, 1861). Booth later briefly employed his brother Joe as advance agent, and a different one for his New England tour (see Chapters 6 and 7).⁴⁷

On April 19, a riot occurred in Baltimore when the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment crossed the town en route for Washington: Confederate sympathizers surrounded them, shots were fired and a few soldiers and civilians were killed. In the 1880s, an acquaintance claimed that John Wilkes Booth had 'said he had been engaged' in these riots.⁴⁸ Booth has also been charged with taking part in the burning of railway bridges under the direction of the Baltimore police chief, Marshal Kane, on April 19, 20 and 21.⁴⁹ His complicity is just possible as both incidents occurred in the week between his

46 Transcript in Kimmel Papers from National Archives (microfilm M599-V-49). Capt. John H. Jack, who interviewed Canning, was himself an actor when not in uniform, and thus must have used theatrical terminology accurately.

47 He once had discussions with an 'agent' in a different sense--a middleman between star and theatres (Clipping, 'Portrait of J. Wilkes Booth', Fawcett Scrapbook, Yale Pamphlet Collection). Negotiations foundered when Booth asked for '\$100 a week with a half clear benefit in each city' of a proposed tour of seven cities. The unnamed agent does not give a date. In 1863-64 Booth received \$300 a week for a circuit of three venues.

48 F[rank] A. B[urr], 'Wilkes Booth, the Assassin of President Lincoln', *Atlanta Constitution*, ?Dec. 17, 1881, in George Alfred Townsend's scrapbook on the Civil War and the assassination, no. 2165, Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Burr's informant was William Garrett, of the family Booth was staying with when he was cornered and killed.

49 Bryan, p. 75, citing W.G. Snethen in *The Commonwealth*, Boston, April 22, 1865.

Portland and his second Albany engagements, i.e. April 14-21, though it seems unlikely that he should have made such a brief visit to Baltimore--unless the need for sabotage of Union routes to Washington had already been foreseen.

Booth opened again in Albany on April 22, supported by Henrietta Irving, one of his Rochester co-stars. He was not the only star: Signor Canito, the Man Monkey, played afterpieces. Larger events were casting their shadow, and audiences were staying away: 'The war, the mustering of soldiers, and the leave takings of relatives and friends, swallowed up every thing else', said the *Clipper* at the end of that week (27th). The theatre staggered on for a few days; on Wednesday, *Evadne* and *Jocko, the Brazilian Ape* were announced, but what happened after that is unclear. The *Evening Journal* announced *Evadne* for the next three nights; the *Atlas & Argus* carried advertisements naming no play on the 25th and 26th, and none on the 27th; and the *Times & Courier* had no advertisement on the 26th or 27th. On May 4, the *New York Clipper* reported that 'the Albany Theatre has closed for want of patronage, notwithstanding two stars were playing there'. *Evadne*, an old play, was unlikely to draw for four nights in succession, and the manager presumably forgot to cancel the entries. At some point during the week, then, the struggle was given up and the season came to a premature conclusion. Thus ended, anticlimactically, John Booth's first season as a star; but not before one further incident.

All for Love and Murder.--Miss Henrietta Irving, well known as an actress in Buffalo, entered the room of J. Wilkes Booth, at Stanwix Hall, Albany, last Friday and attacked him with a dirk, cutting his face badly. She did not, however, succeed in inflicting a mortal wound. Failing in this, she returned to her own room and stabbed herself, not bad enough to 'go dead,' however. The cause was disappointed affection, or some little affair of that sort.⁵⁰

The *Clipper* also reported this, adding that 'Mr. Booth, it is said, trifled with her affections'.⁵¹ After the assassination, this incident became garbled, and possibly confused with Booth's Columbus accident: one paper said that a jealous woman 'threaten[ed] him with a pistol'; another that she shot him, 'the ball hitting him in the

⁵⁰ *Madison Courier*, May 11, 1861, as transcribed in Barbee Papers.

⁵¹ May 25. The date of the stabbing is unclear; the *Clipper* gives 17th, perhaps a misprint for 27th; Phelps (p. 327) says 'the fourth day of the engagement'.

hand.⁵² A newspaper correspondent, A.D. Doty, even reversed the incident: Booth, 'in a fit of insane jealousy, entered her room at deep midnight and struck her with a dagger in the side. She . . . in turn wounded him.'⁵³ In 1864, Booth pointed out to a friend one scar 'which I think he said a "lady" made' among many relics of stage fights.⁵⁴

Kimmel says that Booth 'boldly proclaimed his admiration for the rebels' during this engagement, which 'so enraged some of the residents that they threatened him with violence' (p. 160). In this he follows Doty, whose letter also claims that the angry citizens of Albany 'compelled [Booth's] hasty departure from the city'.⁵⁵ However, there is no reason to disbelieve Cuyler's statement, quoted above, that the actor 'sacredly kept' his promise to 'avoid difficulty'. He seems, in fact, to have learned the lesson well, and subsequently to have been careful in discussing his views, even to the point where he could be taken for a 'strong Union man in sympathy'.⁵⁶

Booth was never to return to Albany; for the rest of the War the theatre was used for 'non-legitimate' entertainments. He seems to have been genuinely liked and admired there: the *Times & Courier* (March 2) declared he had 'made scores of friends--not only among the patrons of the Theatre, but in more private circles, which the gentility and high literary taste of the actor has drawn around him'; and the *Morning Express* echoed this on March 6. This may, of course, have been puff; but the good opinions continued to be expressed even after the assassination. Cuyler in the *Morning Express* (April 17, 1865) remembered that he had been 'very greatly admired for his genius and his really extraordinary abilities. . . . He was always devotedly attached to his profession, ambitious, impulsive . . . ', and the *Times & Courier* of the same date agreed:

⁵² *Buffalo Daily Courier*, April 18, 1865, possibly quoting *Albany Atlas & Argus*; and *St. Louis Daily Press*, April 23, 1865.

⁵³ Quoted in Lafayette C. Baker, *History of the United States Secret Service* (Philadelphia: L.C. Baker, 1867), p. 549-550. The letter was addressed to the editor of the *Chronicle*, presumably of Washington.

⁵⁴ Letter from H.C. Young, M599, Reel 2, Frames 33-35, National Archives. Young thought he remembered the scar being on Booth's arm.

⁵⁵ L.C. Baker, p. 550.

⁵⁶ *Missouri Republican*, April 17, 1865. Phelps also states: 'Booth accepted the situation, and thereafter kept quiet' (p. 326).

In 1860 [*sic*], he was sober, studious and ambitious of only one thing--fame in his profession. . . . Booth was well known and well liked in this city. He was the last man in the world that we supposed could be induced to commit a murder.

Booth's first season as a star had unfortunately been marked more by sensational incidents than by discerning criticism. Most of these incidents would be used against him later. He had not managed to fill his engagements book for the whole season, and had apparently undertaken many dates at short notice, as opportunity offered. He had sometimes shared star billing, or accepted a secondary position. He had experimented with his repertoire, playing 23 parts, only 12 of which he would continue to play for all four of his full seasons as a star; of the remaining 11, he played eight once only, and another (Raffaello) only during this first season. Four of these parts were probably adopted in support of female co-stars (Mrs. Farren and the Irving sisters). But he had shown himself capable of filling houses, had received some flattering notices on his promise, and had acquired enough credibility to book up a fuller second season.

This would not be so easy as in previous years. All the theatres in the country were now affected by the War. The *Clipper* reported (May 4) that Edwin Booth's engagement at the Winter Garden had done bad business, and even Forrest had had to cut short his run at Niblo's Garden. Emilie Cowell wrote in her diary for May 10 that 'New York is very dull.--All the Broadway Theatres, but Laura Keene's and the Winter Garden closed, and trade very dull.'⁵⁷ Things were even worse in the South. The Richmond Theatre had closed, and some of the Montgomery company had arrived in New York. All members of the profession who could headed northward: by May 11, there were 'actors, actresses, minstrels, and show people almost without number in the city . . . looking out for chances of engagements.' The exodus continued: 'From the South, from the East, and from the West, "people" are daily pouring into New York, many of them in utter destitution' (May 18). By September, however, things in the North were looking up--for the

57 [Emilie Cowell], *The Cowells in America: Being the Diary of Mrs. Sam Cowell during her Husband's Concert Tour in the Years 1860-1861*, ed. M. Willson Disher (London: OUP, 1934), p. 338.

managers, at least. Audiences were returning, and business was improving. Managers could engage better companies because of the unprecedented pool of unemployed actors.

The *Clipper* predicted, correctly, on September 7 that actors

who have been accustomed to engage for Southern theatres will remain in the North The South will be almost barren of amusements of a legitimate character, for few persons will give their time and services where there is no prospect of getting anything in return but ill-usage and 'Confederate Bonds.' Thus, the bulk of the theatrical and show profession will remain in the North

What was true for stock actors was also true for stars: that there would now be more people chasing fewer engagements in the limited field remaining. Further, as the war progressed, audiences turned to the lighter amusements: an evening of music-hall, minstrelsy, or, in a theatre, a good new melodrama or an extravaganza featuring female legs was more attractive to many than a classic tragedy they had seen many times before. Booth himself deplored this tendency: on November 23, 1861, he wrote, 'I am sorry [Forrest's] bus:[iness] is not better, for it is rough to see such trash (as Barney Williams produces on the stage) get the better of the legitimate, but *sich* is life.'⁵⁸ The success of John and Edwin Booth as tragedians must be seen in the context of this troubled era.

When he finished at Albany, Booth went to Baltimore and spent some time sharing a room with a friend, William A. Howell, who was in the company at the Holliday Street Theatre there. Howell remembered that Booth 'was suffering from a wound from a knife inflicted by an infatuated, jealous and angry girl.' War fever was running high, and infected the two young men: 'J. Wilkes proposed that he would go to Harford county, Maryland . . . and get up a company to take to Richmond.' Howell was to be lieutenant, with Booth presumably as captain. Booth did indeed go to his native county to recruit, but before they could organize the company, 'and while we were waiting for instructions from Richmond [now the Confederate capital], the Federal troops took possession of Baltimore and cut off all communication with the South'.⁵⁹ This thwarted scheme may

⁵⁸ Letter to Joseph H. Simonds, Rhodehamel & Taper, p. 75. Barney Williams was an 'Irish' comedian.

⁵⁹ 'Memories of Wilkes Booth', Baltimore *Sun*, Nov. 23, 1899.

be the basis for a story in the *Missouri Republican* of April 17, 1865, which Lloyd Lewis repeats (p. 174), inverting Howell's account to suggest cowardice: Booth was asked by some old companions to join a company they were forming for Stonewall Jackson's brigade, but declined. Had the young actors' plan succeeded, it would have spelt the end of Booth's theatrical career--at least until after the War. Baltimore was occupied on May 13;⁶⁰ later, in June, Booth was once again in Harford County, on the old family farm. Asia wrote that he was 'pursuing his studies'.⁶¹ He frightened one old servant with his preparations for the coming season: she took his 'ravings', 'recitations' and 'brandishing of theatrical swords' to be reality, not rehearsal.⁶² In August, Edwin Booth and his wife set sail for London, where Edwin had secured an engagement at the Haymarket Theatre. He would remain in Europe all season.

It may reasonably be asked: why did John not enlist in the Confederate army, given his fervour for the cause? Edwin once asked him that question, and 'he replied: "I promised mother I would keep out of the quarrel, if possible, and I am sorry that I said so."' ⁶³ John, whose 'word was his bond', and whose love for his mother was well known to all his friends,⁶⁴ held this promise sacred, though he seems to have tried to persuade her to release him from it. According to John T. Ford, 'He frequently begged his mother to allow him to go South' and, when she refused, 'he exclaimed "Oh Mother You [*sic*] are no Roman mother or You would bid me go!'" However, Ford thought, 'very likely' John 'fretted at the thought that, after all his warlike talk, he was acting like a coward in the eyes of the world'⁶⁵ He seems eventually, though, to have found another way to aid the Confederacy, in secret (see Chapter 7).

60 Everette B. Long & Barbara Long, *The Civil War Day by Day* (1971; New York: Da Capo, 1985), p. 74.

61 June 27, 1861 (misdated 1862), ML 518, Peale Museum . The letter reads, 'his studies or', here a section is missing from the letter.

62 Adam Badeau, 'Dramatic Reminiscences', *St. Paul & Minneapolis Pioneer Press*, Feb. 20, 1887.

63 Edwina Booth Grossmann, *Edwin Booth: Recollections by his Daughter* (London: Osgood, McIlvaine, 1894), p. 227.

64 Ellsler, p. 127; Morris, 'John Wilkes Booth'; Mrs. Gilbert, p. 57.

65 'The Booth Family', draft letter to 'Gazette', [1867], Ford's Theater, Washington, DC, Papers, MS 371, Manuscripts Division, Maryland Historical Society Library; 'John

1861-62 Season

The *Clipper* reported on November 2 that audiences were not so good as in the previous season; nonetheless, the Providence (Rhode Island) Theatre, where Booth had opened his second star season, was 'doing a fair business'. A writer for the *Providence Daily Post* met Booth, and reported him 'young, modest and of prepossessing appearance'; in conversation he showed 'much cultivation, and also knowledge of his arduous profession' (Oct. 21). On its front page that day, the *Post* carried a review reprinted from *The Times* (Oct. 1) of Edwin Booth at the Haymarket, expressing rather cool approval of his Shylock. John seems to have been making his own arrangements for engagements this season: on October 9, he had written to his Boston friend Joe Simonds: 'for the last month I have been so closely occupied, with so meny [*sic*] business letters to answer . . .'⁶⁶

At Buffalo, NY, said the *Daily Courier*, Booth's engagement fell at 'an unfortunate time, when war and politics [local elections] so completely absorb the public attention'; 'distracting events have prevented Buffalo from testifying more cordially her appreciation' of the actor (Nov. 1, 8). Booth wrote to Joe Simonds that his 'second week in Buffalo was so, so.'⁶⁷ However, his benefit on the 7th had attracted an 'excellent' house, and his Richard 'was much better than on the previous occasion':⁶⁸ he was probably demoralized by the earlier poor attendance. The *Morning Express's* (Oct. 29) verdict after his first night was becoming familiar: John shared 'inherited genius' with Edwin Booth, and needed to work hard: 'His powers are yet scarcely developed from their germ, and a patient task lies before him in their cultivation and training; but there is no mistaking the force that gives energy and inspiration to his acting.' While at Buffalo, Booth asked Thomas Duncan, the stage carpenter, to make him a platform for *Othello*, as he wished to depart from the usual stage business in one scene. The changes he made will be

T. Ford's Recollections', *Baltimore American*, June 8, 1893.

66 From Philadelphia, Donald P. Dow Lincoln Collection.

67 Nov. 23, Rhodehamel & Taper p. 74.

68 *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, Nov. 8.

discussed in Chapter 10. For Harry Weaver, to whom Duncan told this story, it proved that Booth 'at this time was putting forth all his endeavors to earn distinction in his profession, and that he did not rely on his physical qualifications alone'; Weaver felt that 'with his natural advantages[,] had he persistently pursued this course he would have reached the end he aimed at to be regarded as one of the great ones in his profession.'⁶⁹

George P. Goodale of the Detroit *Free Press* remembered Booth from his week's engagement there as 'a splendid fellow, bright and genial'.⁷⁰ John Patton, sometime mayor of Detroit, thought him 'very graceful in his manner and having an exceptionally agreeable voice, even when tested to its utmost limit.' Patton liked Booth's Richard and Hamlet, but not his Macbeth. "'However, he was a very versatile actor, and much more than acceptable in whatever I saw him play.'"⁷¹ John Albaugh, who had supported him in Columbus and Montgomery, was the leading man at the Metropolitan Theatre, whose account book affords a rare glimpse of Booth's terms and earnings: 'He was to share equally with the management after \$60.' *The Wife* on the first night 'drew \$80.80, Booth's share of which was \$10.40. . . . For these seven nights Booth's share of the takings was \$116.92.' This compared quite favourably with the takings of Maggie Mitchell and Kate Bateman, the preceding and following stars, at a time when, because of the War, 'theatricals had touched bottom'. Booth himself called it 'a good Bus:[iness]'.⁷² He performed an extra Monday, because Kate Bateman had been delayed (*Free Press*, Nov. 17). Booth's voice impressed the *Daily Advertiser* (Nov. 12) too: 'the tones smooth and silvery, with no twanging or inarticulation of words, and no disposition to rave or rant, yet at times he electrifies his audience with powerful expressions of deep passion.'

Booth received his first perceptive general criticism in Cincinnati. Wood's Theatre had recently re-opened after a chequered career, and the manager, George Wood, set out

69 Harry A. Weaver, Sr., 'No. 2 Bullfinch Place', *Sunday Inter-Ocean* (Chicago), August 27, 1893.

70 Unidentified newspaper clipping, Barbee Papers.

71 Clipping, 'Portrait of J. Wilkes Booth', Fawcett Scrapbook, Yale Pamphlet Collection.

72 Clipping from *Detroit Free Press*, n.d. (1888), pasted into Alonzo May typescript, p. 1026; JWB to Simonds, Nov. 23, Rhodehamel & Taper, p. 74.

to provide 'superior entertainments' for 'lovers of the drama'.⁷³ The weather as well as the War was against Booth during his fortnight there; and among the competing entertainment at three other houses was the tragedian A.J. Neafie, whom he had supported in Richmond. This, for some, was a surfeit of 'the legitimate': the *Daily Gazette* (Dec. 7) thought 'the masses of amusement-seekers take but little interest in mimic tragedies, when so many real ones are being enacted, almost at their own doors.' They would prefer 'showy scenery, good music, and pretty girls'. The *Enquirer* (Dec. 8) advised the manager of Pike's Opera House, where Neafie was playing, to bring out 'the red and blue fire' and forget the classics. Booth himself was 'doubtful as to my success', although 'they count high on me'.⁷⁴ Yet the *Daily Commercial* remarked on December 6 that '[d]uring Mr. Booth's engagement attendance at Wood's Theatre has constantly increased'; the fine house for his second benefit was a 'deserved compliment' to him (Dec. 7). According to the *Clipper* (Dec. 14), Booth had played 'a very fair engagement', whereas Neafie's had 'not been as profitable as he could desire'. The *Cincinnati Gazette* (Dec. 7) was blunter: Neafie's had not made a profit; and though the actor had improved, he was 'still exceedingly heavy, and seldom does anything that rises to the dignity of criticism.' Though he 'would make an excellent leading man in a melo-dramatic company', he should not play Shakespeare. 'Get thee to the Bowery', the paper advised. Booth's engagement, on the other hand, had been 'moderately successful--more so, indeed, than we believed a fortnight of the legitimate could be made.' The *Commercial* gave a first impression of Booth on November 26:

Mr. Booth is a rapid reader, full of fire, exhaustless in energy, and, though hurried on by the heat of his own emotions, never forgetful of the art, without which the actor fails of the highest realizations of his art. If lacking in anything, it is in physical force and vocal power. It is sometimes difficult, when his energies are wrought up to their full tension, for the listener to catch his language, though the force of his acting never fails to clearly interpret his meaning.

⁷³ *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, Oct. 20, Dec. 15.

⁷⁴ Rhodehamel & Taper, p. 74.

Summing up the first week on November 30, it pointed out that 'due allowance should be made' for Booth's unevenness in that he had a leading lady who was 'far from letter perfect', which must 'sensibly affect an actor' (the *Gazette* said the company was 'much better calculated for comedy' (Nov. 26)). The *Commercial* then described him in detail in a much-copied passage:

Mr. Booth is no common genius. He has the natural advantages of a good figure, a musically full and rich voice, of rare compass and modulation, 'a face that talks,' and an eye that expresses tenderness and love, malice and hate, pleasure and sorrow, as perfectly as the language he utters, or the tone in which it is conveyed. His transitions are absolutely electrifying, and in this respect those who have seen the elder Booth observe a 'family resemblance.' To these material aptitudes he adds a very clear perception of character, with the ability to assume it, to enter into and become part of it. He is evidently a close student, and not forgetful of those minor graces of art which complete and make perfect the interpretation of character. Like most young actors who wish to stamp with their own individuality the parts they assume, he varies frequently from the 'old business,' and gives them original phases, which, while they may be characterized as experimental, may eventually meet with critical approval.

The *Gazette* (Dec. 7) was not so happy about this 'family resemblance', and urged Booth to greater originality:

Mr. Booth has in him the elements of a good tragedian, if he be not that already; but much of his acting is marred by poses, starts, gesticulations and readings peculiar to the 'blood and thunder' school, which must be discarded ere he can hope to reach the pinnacle of histrionic fame. Moreover, he should let go the skirts of his father and Edwin, and strike out for himself. The efforts to imitate them, if directed in another channel, would make of him a much better actor.

The poses and starts disliked by the *Gazette* may have been the electrifying transitions praised by the *Commercial*, which seems, from its temperate assessment of Neafie, to have been more tolerant of the 'blood and thunder school' which he represented. However, the *Gazette* did not tell *Booth* to get him to the Bowery: it saw his staginess as an excrescence upon his talent, and removable.

The actress Mrs. G.H. Gilbert remembered Louisville, Booth's next date, early in the War:

[T]here was bitter feeling everywhere, separating friends and families. . . . and there was a good deal of quarrelling and free shooting. . . . It got so that no one minded; they simply said: 'Another man shot,' and went about their business (p. 178).

The *Louisville Daily Democrat* (Dec. 9) recommended Booth to its readers not only for his family connections but because 'he is said to be an Adonis in person'. Like the *Cincinnati Gazette*, it noted at first 'some apparent imitations of other actors' (Dec. 10), but on December 15, Booth was 'the most original actor we have seen for a great many years', and by the 18th 'guided by his genius alone', a Romantic view--or cliché. Houses were said to be good, 'both in quality and quantity' (Dec. 11), and perhaps the most valuable observation the critic made was to note the 'breathless silence' in which 'many passages' of Booth's Richard were heard (Dec. 13). Booth was 'prevailed on' to stay one extra night to repeat *The Marble Heart*, before going on to his next engagement.⁷⁵

The end of 1861 found Booth at Indianapolis, in the theatre built in 1858, and still run, by Valentine Butsch. Though the city had a population of about 20,000, the Metropolitan was its first purpose-built theatre,⁷⁶ which perhaps accounts for the naïve superlatives of its drama criticism. Once again Booth was reunited with John Albaugh, who had moved there after the Detroit Theatre closed. Booth was not very well known yet, and there was a little confusion over who he was--the *Daily Sentinel* referred to him on Christmas Day as 'J.B. Booth'. He followed another tragedian, Charles Couldock, who 'made more than a success' according to the *Journal* (Dec. 24); nonetheless, the *Sentinel* could say after three nights that Booth, young as he was, was 'the greatest actor that has yet trod [*sic*] our boards' (Dec. 28). The *Journal* was slightly more critical, noting his 'redundancy of passionate exclamations and gestures', but also how clear he made the sense of Shakespeare (Dec. 28). When Booth left, after a 'literally jammed' house for his benefit, the *Journal* pronounced him 'beyond doubt, the most promising young actor of the day' (Dec. 31, Jan. 4). A young man, Albert Porter (later to be Governor), saw Booth both on and off stage during one of his engagements in Indianapolis: with a 'clear, ringing voice of good range (compass), + of rich and melodious tone, he was easy, graceful,

⁷⁵ *Democrat*, Dec. 22. It was perhaps this extra Monday which led Gordon Samples to state erroneously that Booth stayed on to appear in the pantomime, *The Fairy and the Demon* (pp. 65, 214).

⁷⁶ 'Tick-tock Goes the Clock Marking Time's End for the Old Park Theater', unidentified newspaper clipping, Indiana State Library.

vivacious, active, and singularly free from rant and staginess'. After the play, Porter and his party saw Booth in an establishment 'where an elegant hot lunch was spread every night at about 11 o'clock'. Like most actors, Booth ate after the show: he 'soon came in and fell to with apparent good appetite, and we had a good opportunity to "sift him" Dressed with modest but becoming taste in plain citizen's garb . . . he appeared to be a thoughtful, self-possessed gentleman.⁷⁷

By the end of 1861, Booth was 'on the map' in one way--the photographers D.G. Cunningham, who advertised in the *New York Clipper* pictures of actors including Edwin Booth, on November 30 were offering J.W. Booth as well. At a time when young ladies collected *cartes de visite* of famous people, this says much about his growing popularity.

From the beginning of the season, Booth had had his sights set on an engagement in a far more prestigious city than he had yet played: Boston. In his October 9 letter to Simonds, he wrote that he had been approached by E.L. Davenport, who was then managing the Howard Athenaeum in Boston: 'he wants me some time in November but I am sure we shall not be able to agree about terms'. He asked Joe to tell people connected with the rival Museum that 'Davenport wants me bad, but that the engagement is not ratified yet, and that its [*sic*] doubtful whether it will be', and 'others' that he was eager to play the Athenaeum, 'which is all true. It will be a little move to bring our Friend D-- to terms. He thinks me a novice, crazy to play in Boston and that he will get me for nothing, (which to tell you the truth is nearly as much as he has offered me[]).'⁷⁸ Clearly, Booth did not much mind which theatre he appeared at, and, knowing his own commercial worth, was unwilling to be exploited. This scheme to invite the Museum and Athenaeum to compete for him shows a canny business sense, and must eventually have paid off. Negotiations were still going on at the end of the year, with Booth being announced in both the *New York Clipper* (Dec. 21) and the *Spirit of the Times* (Dec. 26) as one of the

77 'Recollections of John Wilkes Booth', transcribed by Michael W. Kauffman from Albert Gallatin Porter Manuscript Collection, Indiana Division, Indiana State Library. I am grateful to Mr. Kauffman for sharing this with me.

78 Philadelphia, Oct. 9, Donald P. Dow Lincoln Collection.

first stars of the new year at the Athenaeum; however, when he finally played Boston in May of 1862, it was at the Museum.

'Seneca' wrote from St. Louis in the *Clipper* of January 11 that the people of that city were 'slow in running after new actors, but let them once prove favorites, and they are always sure of a good welcome.' Booth wrote to Simonds on the 10th that his business there so far had been 'fair';⁷⁹ but 'Seneca' reported it 'very good, and considering the times remarkably so' (Jan. 18); in fact, Booth had played 'one of the best engagements of the season', despite weather below zero (°F) (Jan. 25). Before Booth left St. Louis, he booked up a further fortnight later in the season (Feb. 1). Ben DeBar, who ran the St. Louis Theatre, was Booth's ex-brother-in-law: his sister Clementina had once been married to Junius Brutus, Jr. He was a British citizen and a 'known Southern sympathizer',⁸⁰ as were many in Missouri. After the assassination, Col. H.L. McConnell claimed that he, as Provost Marshal General in St. Louis, had

administered the oath of allegiance to one *J. Wilkes Booth* who volunteered to take it after having been under arrest and fined for disloyal expressions, which were that 'he wished the whole damned Government would go to hell' or something to that effect⁸¹

McConnell does not give a date for this event. However, David Rankin Barbee's research uncovered a John W. Booth of Calloway County, Missouri, who was several times under investigation and took the oath at least once, on March 26, 1862--when J. Wilkes was in New York.⁸² Given no contemporary mention of a star actor being arrested, it seems more likely that it was the local Booth who uttered these sentiments, though the incident has subsequently been used against the actor.⁸³

⁷⁹ Jan. 10, 1862 (dated Dec. 10 in error), De Coppet Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Libraries.

⁸⁰ Grant M. Herbstruth, 'Benedict de Bar and the Grand Opera House in St. Louis, 1855-79', Diss., State U. of Iowa, 1954, p. 94.

⁸¹ Transcription in Kimmel Collection, from Judge Advocate General's Office.

⁸² Barbee's transcript from National Archives: War Department Records, in Barbee Papers.

⁸³ For instance by Kimmel (p. 175), who arbitrarily places it at the end of the 1862-63 season (see Chapter 7).

McVicker's Theatre in Chicago was the only legitimate house in the city during the War. Edwin Booth had played there in 1858, to a 'flattering' press;⁸⁴ so it is strange, during John's engagement there, to find him compared only with his father and not his brother as well. Reviews appeared only in the *Tribune* and the *Evening Journal*: the theatre did not advertise in the *Times*, which may account for that paper's neglect of his performances. The *Tribune* (Jan. 21) was inclined to 'pronounce him a genius':

Possessing in a remarkable degree the mobility of features, the energy, the fire, the action of his father, . . . a voice though rather sharp yet fully under control he must become a popular and worthy artist. He has also excellent study, yet his action and elocution do not smell of the lamp, but seem to be in every way natural and involuntary.

The *Evening Journal* (Jan. 23) thought his elocution 'as near faultless as could be His voice is light, but decidedly pleasant to the ear, and is attuned to the most delicate modulations'. The paper noted Booth's 'thin, sinewy figure, his cat-like movements, his full, dark eye, his strongly marked features, and above all, his wonderful "facial art"'. Jean Hosmer, his leading lady in Chicago, said in later years:

I consider him a greater actor than his brother. He better represented the genius of his father, the first Junius Brutus Booth, and he played with such fire and vigor, that he made us in his company actually fear him. But he did not have the refinement, grace and crystal clearness of elocution possessed by Edwin.⁸⁵

In *Richard* on January 20, according to the *Tribune* of the following morning, Booth 'broke the heavy stage sword used by Richmond and for a moment one half of the audience supposed he would kill the actor himself.' This last point was disputed by the *Evening Journal* of the same date: 'unless, indeed, the aforesaid critic and his huge notebook, ostentatiously displayed, were the one-half referred to.' Booth was twice mentioned by the *Spirit of the Times* (Feb. 1, 8) as drawing crowded houses (the theatre held at least 2,000); and he would visit Chicago again later that season.

Booth wrote to Simonds from Baltimore on February 18: 'Opened here last night a big house in spite of rain snow &c outside show shops! But I do not think my success

84 Jay F. Ludwig, 'James H. McVicker', p. 15; A.T. Andreas, *History of Chicago from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1884), 2:599.

85 Unidentified newspaper clipping, Harvard Theatre Collection.

here will be very great as one's native place is the last place in the world to look for such a thing.⁸⁶ He was wrong. One large and fashionable audience was followed by another for three weeks, until the *Spirit of the Times* (March 15) could call it a 'very successful engagement'. The Holliday Street Theatre was run by John T. Ford, once the absentee manager of the Richmond Theatre, who was an acquaintance of the Booth family. John Hill Hewitt, a fellow Baltimorean, writes that through 'the tact and energy of Mr. Ford', the old theatre 'became one of the most popular and fashionable places of amusement in the city.'⁸⁷ Ford saw that Booth was well supported: Mrs. Farren, whom he had last met as her subsidiary star, was re-engaged for this purpose.⁸⁸ There was some truth in the communication to the *Baltimore Clipper* (Feb. 17) that 'we have in [Edwin's] younger brother an actor that with the suddenness of a meteor now illumines the dramatic horizon with a blaze of light'.

Much has been made of Booth's being billed under the heading 'I Am Myself Alone' for this engagement--especially by those who, like Kimmel, wish to portray John as jealous of Edwin, and 'out to capture the Booth laurels in Edwin's absence'.⁸⁹ Clearly it was an attempt to get John a hearing on his own merits and distinguish him from his famous family; but it is not known whether this billing was his own idea, or John T. Ford's; and it was at all events used only for this engagement.⁹⁰

Two minor accidents were noted in Baltimore, though only by the theatrical papers: as Romeo, in the friar's cell, 'in falling upon the stage . . . he was so unfortunate as to break his nose; notwithstanding, he played the part, with his back to the audience, blood streaming from his nose.' (*Spirit of the Times*, March 8, 1862). One doubts that he had

86 Published in Parke Bernet Catalogue, 1980.

87 *Shadows on the Wall* (1877; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1971), p. 173.

88 *New York Clipper*, Feb. 22.

89 *Mad Booths*, p. 166; Ruggles (pp. 123-24) follows Kimmel's line; Constance Head ('J.W.B.: I Am Myself Alone', *Surratt Society News* 5, no. 11 (1980): 6); and Gordon Samples, (p. 71) do not state that John envied Edwin.

90 *The Guide to the Stage* (p. 58) provides another context for this well-known, indeed cliché phrase from Cibber's *Richard III*: 'an actor, in the true sense of the word, reads the play with attention . . . until he discovers what the author means, and does what Kean directed Sherwin to do, however he may have been led to admire a reigning favorite--"Forgets the god, and is himself alone."'

actually broken it; but the congestion caused by the nosebleed may have been the reason the *Baltimore American* (Feb. 20, 1862) thought Booth was 'laboring under a severe cold'. During his last *Richard* performance, as the *New York Clipper's* Baltimore correspondent 'Jerry Blossom'⁹¹ reported (March 22), 'on rushing from the couch to the footlights, the sword which [Booth] wields wildly about broke, the blade severing from the handle, and flew over in the orchestra', but did no damage. Among many rather puffy compliments in the press, the *Sun's* (Feb. 24) definition was apt: 'There is a freshness, energy, physical vigor, earnestness and dash in his personations which challenging and defying the austerity of criticism delight the audience and commend the artist to popular favor.' The austere criticism came not from the papers but from a friend of Edwin's, who wrote to his wife that he did not like John in *Macbeth*, thinking him a ranter.⁹² This distinction between critical and popular approval in response to Booth will be met with again. The young men of the city gave Booth a testimonial benefit on March 7: advertised as 'A Bootherian Festival', it consisted of *The Robbers* and scenes from *The Merchant of Venice* (*Sun*, Mar. 7). Booth stayed on in Baltimore to appear at the Front Street Theatre on Tuesday March 11 for the benefit of the manager, his old Richmond boss George Kunkel, who had lost much property by the burning of the Richmond Theatre at the beginning of the year. He played the last three acts of *Othello* to the Emilia of his Richmond leading lady, Mrs. I.B. Phillips; Maggie Mitchell was also in the bill.⁹³

On March 1,⁹⁴ the *New York Clipper* published a sketch of Booth by T. Allston Brown in its occasional series 'Our Portrait Gallery'. It borrowed liberally from the *Cincinnati Commercial* review of November 30, 1861, quoted above ('Mr. Booth is no common genius'), and predicted that he 'will, ere long, become the greatest native-born actor ever seen on the American stage'--no small vote of confidence. Of Edwin

91 Identified as the actor C.H. Clark in the *Clipper*, March 26, 1864.

92 Winchester, March 14, 1862, Letter 63, p. 183, Letters of Capt. Richard Cary, 2d. Mass. V.I., July 11, 1861 - August 2, 1862 (typed transcripts), Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA. See Chapter 10 for more detail.

93 *Baltimore Sun and American*, both March 11, 1862 and *New York Clipper*, March 22, 1862.

94 This issue is dated Feb. 29, but in error: the leap year was 1864.

Booth, Brown had said only that he was likely to become as good as his father: a 'second edition' who would have 'a very proud place in the histrionic ranks'; and of another aspiring tragedian, Edwin Adams, that there was 'no reason why he should not achieve a proud eminence' and become 'a shining light' to his profession.⁹⁵ This highly complimentary notice in the trade paper may have helped in getting Booth his next engagement, one he had certainly not expected--in New York. Writing to Simonds from Baltimore, he had said that he had time open after his engagement there, and wondered about going straight on to Boston then. And the *Spirit of the Times* on March 15 listed his dates as Louisville, April 7; St. Louis, April 21; and Cincinnati, May 5. But fate was now to intervene, in the shape of an actress's illness.

⁹⁵ *Clipper*, August 31, 1861 and April 27, 1861 respectively.

CHAPTER 6

New York 1862-Boston 1863: A Confident Expectation of Greatness

The theatre that had been the first home of J.W. Wallack's stock company in New York had fallen on evil times since the company left in April 1861. This excellent ensemble, 'whose repertoire was . . . attuned to the city's upper middle class' had moved uptown 'to keep the theatre near its audience' when its address, 483/485 Broadway, near Broome Street, ceased to be fashionable.¹ The next month it was reopened as the Broadway Music Hall. In this incarnation, it was 'kept as a "pretty waiter girl" concert saloon', a notorious type of venue, described by one journalist as 'something like a cross between a tavern, a negro minstrel hall and a *maison de plaisir*'; 'the resort of low thieves, blacklegs, horse jockeys and pickpockets, to say nothing of the painted and musted doxies in abbreviated crinoline and filthy chemisettes'.² This closed in January 1862, and after a short-lived German opera season, George Ryer and John Lewis Baker reopened it on March 1 with a production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, presumably intended for a long run: it closed on March 6.³ As a moral reform melodrama, *Tom* was eminently respectable; the managers had presumably hoped that it would raise the theatre's public image. Mary Provost, an actress with a Californian and Australian reputation, and/or her husband Samuel Colville, who had managed in those places, now joined Ryer and Baker in the management, whereupon the theatre was renamed Mary Provost's.⁴ Again, perhaps the use of a woman's name was intended to confer the sort of respectability that Laura Keene's theatre enjoyed; but as we shall see, the theatre's recent associations were not so easy to shake off. At least a physical cleansing could be attempted: stage and auditorium,

1 Thomas Allston Brown, *A History of the New York Stage, 1732-1901* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1903), 1:508; McDermott, p. 202; Mrs. Gilbert, p. 182.

2 'Mephistopheles' in *Sacramento Daily Union*, April 8 and 21, 1862.

3 T. Allston Brown, *NY Stage*, 1:508-09.

4 *Clipper*, March 15; *Sacramento Daily Union*, April 8 and 28; T. Allston Brown, *NY Stage*, 1:509; Leavitt, p. 91. A playbill gives Colville as 'Acting Manager' and Ryer as 'Stage Manager' (William Seymour Theatre Collection).

said the *New York World* (March 24), were 'contaminated with nigrescent and ful[i]ginous decoration. Miss Provost has had it washed.'

Presumably she intended to open it herself, but illness seems to have prevented her.⁵ At very short notice, therefore, another attraction had to be found. As a manager in California, George Ryer had employed both Edwin Booth and Junius Brutus, Jr. in the past,⁶ which may have influenced their choice of John Wilkes Booth: 'deeming him a strong card to play,' says a member of the company, they 'lost no time in seeking him out'.⁷ This last suggests that it was the management who made the approach to Booth: because of the short notice involved, this seems likely. As a result of this chain of circumstances, then, he was enabled to make his New York debut.

It was not easy for a new star to get a hearing in New York. The city might have more theatres than others, but most were not open to travelling stars. Laura Keane's and Wallack's stock companies played without visitors, and many other theatres did not produce legitimate plays at all. Edwin Booth had contrived before the War to gain a foothold at the Winter Garden, and now played there whenever he went to New York;⁸ and Niblo's Garden also hosted stars, as did the Old and New Bowery theatres.⁹ The fact that John Booth played neither the plebeian Bowery nor the more middle-class Winter Garden might indicate that his own status as an actor was undecided: without an obvious or exclusive appeal to one class or another, he suited a theatre like Mary Provost's that

5 The clipping 'Wilkes Booth as an Actor' in Harvard Theatre Collection is incorrect in saying that she played a few weeks before becoming ill--a mistake repeated by Kimmel (p. 167).

6 Barton Hill, 'Personal Recollections of Edwin Booth', *New York Dramatic Mirror*, n.d., in Harvard Theatre Collection; unidentified newspaper clipping, 1857, 'Booth Clippings' Folder, William Seymour Theatre Collection.

7 Clipping, 'Wilkes Booth as an Actor', Harvard Theatre Collection (also reprinted in John Joseph Jennings, *Theatrical and Circus Life; or, Secrets of the Stage, Greenroom and Sawdust Arena* (St. Louis: M.S. Barnett, 1882), pp. 484-91). Because of other inaccuracies, this account cannot be regarded as wholly reliable. The actor interviewed was almost certainly J.J. McCloskey, author of articles on Edwin Booth in California which are likewise inaccurate in details; in the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, Aug. 15, 1896 McCloskey stated that he met JWB at 'the New Broadway' (a later name for Provost's), when G.L. Fox managed it (see below).

8 Edwin's New York debut had been made in William E. Burton's Metropolitan Theatre, which was renamed Winter Garden by the next management.

9 Senelick, pp. 92, 93.

had an uncertain status. An intriguing suggestion from the company member quoted above is that Mary Provost opened her theatre in order to introduce 'several stars who had made a reputation throughout the West and South, but . . . were unable to obtain a hearing' in New York; one of those 'tabooed' being Miss Provost herself.¹⁰ If so, it was a pity the venture did not prosper.

New York was conscious of its position as the most important theatrical city in America (see Chapter 2). Booth's reviews were filled with references to 'metropolitan' audiences, honours, reputation, contrasted with 'the provinces', where he had appeared till then. These 'provinces' were 'a bad school in which to educate an actor': there, 'discrimination is not a part of criticism, and noise and buncombe [*sic*] are the *aut nullus* of the stage', whereas New York was 'the stage that tries men's brains'.¹¹ This was, of course, a gross oversimplification: the Bowery theatres were famed for noise, while some critics in 'the provinces' were to be more stringent with Booth than any New York ones. Baltimore, Providence, and other cities where Booth had played were hardly 'the West',¹² either; but the papers were making their point that they were not about to be impressed by Booth's success elsewhere: if it had not been made in New York, it was not a reputation. Within the profession, too, there was a prejudice that 'nothing could exist outside of New York', as Mrs. G.H. Gilbert discovered when she joined a company there in 1864, before she realized 'how strong--and how narrow--the New York theatrical clique was' (p. 180). Later, the *Boston Post* (May 10, 1862) claimed that Booth had 'extracted praise' from New York critics who 'had fully prepared themselves to "write him down"', and this may well be true.

10 Clipping, 'Wilkes Booth as an Actor'. It may be significant that Boothroyd Fairclough, normally a 'provincial' actor, played under Miss Provost's management on April 14 (George C.D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1927-49), 7:417).

11 *New York Evening Post*, March 18; *New York Times*, March 19; *New York Evening Express*, April 5; *New York Herald*, March 18; *Times & Messenger*, March 23; and *Sunday Mercury*, March 30.

12 *Evening Post*, March 18, transcript in Barbee Papers.

And extract praise he did, though not without reservations. Reviews of his first two nights, as Richard III, contained many observations on his likeness to his family, his originality, and his voice, which will be covered in Chapter 9. The *Times* (March 19) summed him up as 'a very valuable addition to the limited list of tragedians now on the stage', and for the *World* (March 24), at the end of the first week, Booth was 'a star of real magnitude, and singular, though fitful brilliancy.' William Winter, writing in the *Albion*, noted his 'emotional power and personal magnetism', but thought his acting was 'rugged, uncouth, gross'. He was "'an uncultured genius" who needed training and experience to be seriously regarded as an actor of the first rank.'¹³ He required 'that polish', said the *Sunday Dispatch* (March 30),

which is given by attrition and study Time and study are the two potent agents which will give a steady flame to this fire and chasten the flashes of this genius. . . . When this shall have been done the younger Booth may justly claim the position of one of the greatest artists of the age.

Two papers, the *Herald* and the *Spirit of the Times* (March 25 and April 5), said he was most at home in melodrama--not using the term in a derogatory sense; and the *Spirit* added on April 12 that he had 'the capacity of becoming very great in the more tempestuous sort of tragedy and melodrama. But all his rude strength wants toning, refining, and educating into tractable harmony.' The *Sunday Mercury* (March 30) thought that Booth was using his natural attributes in an inappropriate way:

By his facile, nervous lineaments, soft, and almost womanish voice, and sensitive temperament, he is made to produce great effects, like Kean, by the magnetism of subtle gesture, and the electrical influence of strongly-defined expression of face. . . . But he does nothing of the kind. . . . With a countenance adapted to the utmost delicacy of expression in all its features, he expresses like an actor whose magnitude of eyes is the only sign of respectable intelligence about him; with the low, rich voice of an Orpheus, he aims to thunder like a boanerges, or Lord North.

--Or, the paper might have added, Forrest. This misjudgement it ascribed to Booth's having played to 'country audiences'; now he might 'subside . . . into his proper self', and with the right teaching, become 'a better actor than his brother Edwin, and quite as good a

13 Tice L. Miller, *Bohemians and Critics: American Theatre Criticism in the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1991), p. 92.

one as his father ever was'. Booth's admiration for Forrest together with the demands of his earlier audiences may indeed have influenced his style; and one may perhaps see, in the increasing references to subtlety and pathos in his reviews, that he learnt to do as the *Sunday Mercury* wished. Reviewing his *Robbers*, the *Evening Express* (March 20) could already find 'considerable pathos' in 'the softer passages of the play'; since the paper considered Booth's 'a very brilliant impersonation', we may infer that he had 'avoid[ed] the many opportunities afforded for rant.' There were only two quite negative opinions: one from Walt Whitman, to be discussed in Chapter 9, and the other on his Shylock, from the *Herald* (April 3):

We had occasion to greatly praise Mr. Booth's Richard, but we must greatly blame his Shylock. He reads carefully and makes an occasional point well, but neither looks, conceives nor acts the character in a style to increase his reputation or satisfy his audience. Youth is an excellent apology for so unfinished a rendition, but none for offering it to the public.

But, *en masse*, the critics would probably have agreed with the *World* (March 21) that Booth's 'faults are those which will readily yield to experience and training; his excellences those which no teaching or training can supply.'

Booth's houses in New York are more of a vexed question: their fullness seems to have been exaggerated at the time, and their emptiness in 1865. The *Spirit of the Times* said on March 29 that he had made a 'sensation', had 'a crowd' for two nights, then 'pretty good houses for the remainder of the week'; and the *Clipper* of the same date agreed that houses were 'good'. The *Sacramento Union's* 'Mephistopheles', reporting when Booth was playing Hamlet (Monday, March 24), asserted that 'the house is filled every night, though "orders" are liberally distributed about town amongst "the boys" to produce this effect' (May 1). This column, though, was slightly malicious about the whole profession. Booth was expected to play only a fortnight because of 'pressing prior engagements' (*Herald*, March 26): he was booked for Louisville from April 7. He succeeded in cancelling this commitment, however, and was announced for a further week in New York: Mary Provost's 'continuing indisposition, and the success of Booth, have evidently caused a change in the programme', said the *Clipper* (April 5). This last-minute extension was

probably a mistake, for 'business during the week was bad', said the *Clipper* the following Saturday (12th). The *Evening Express* (April 5) called Booth's houses 'moderately fair', and advised: 'The "heavy business" must not be overdone. Two weeks it pays, the third week, change, or the treasury will suffer.'¹⁴ The *Clipper* and the *Times* (April 12, March 31) both thought Lent was the culprit, as other theatres had been suffering too; and the *Spirit of the Times* (April 5), regretting that 'Wilkes Booth did not have the attention that his unquestioned talents entitle him to', blamed the theatre's history: 'It is hard work to bring a house so used as this has been back to the attention and patronage of the people.' Though Asia wrote on April 8 that 'Wilkes is doing excellently in New York', Booth himself was more modest: 'My success in New York continued fair'.¹⁵ Edwin's first attempt on New York had resulted in only 'a fair business': he had the same diminishing houses and less enthusiastic reviews.¹⁶

Inevitably, whatever their explanation, the less-than-full houses were later used in an attempt by the papers to dissociate themselves from their enthusiasm for Booth. Though the *Tribune* (April 17, 1865) allowed that he had had 'moderate success', the *Leader* (April 22, 1865) stated flatly that he 'attracted no audiences'. This paper, which had said of his Richard that '[e]very original touch . . . showed the hand of genius' (March 22, 1862), now described this as his best part, but 'not very good. It was chiefly remarkable for the ferocity with which he fought in the last scene. . . . If he had acted in that style in one of the Bowery theatres, he would have been acting there yet.' The *Herald* (April 16, 1865) misquoted its own Shylock review (above), and gave the impression that the New York engagement had lasted a few nights rather than three weeks.¹⁷ Booth's success may be said to have been partial in that his Richard dominated the repertoire, played three and four times each week. Yet he had good reviews in five other roles, and

14 Transcript in Barbee Papers.

15 To Jean Anderson, ML 518, Peale Museum; JWB to Joe Simonds, Philadelphia, April 13, 1862, Collection of Richard Siegel, published in Rhodehamel & Taper, p. 79.

16 *Clipper*, Sept. 12, 1857; Shattuck, *Hamlet of EB*, p. 16.

17 Lloyd Lewis adds a further distortion by misapplying this review to Booth's opening night as Richard, in order to characterize the whole engagement as: 'Failure again, prompt and unanimous' (p. 175).

The Robbers (another melodramatic role) was played three times. Much the same thing had happened to Edwin in 1860-61: he played Richelieu nine times while the rest of his repertoire, including *Hamlet*, made little impression.¹⁸ From the perspective of a year later, the *Spirit of the Times* (March 7, 1863) remembered that John had 'played two or three weeks with indifferent support and meagre houses, but played his unrivalled Richard and several other notable characters with true Boothian vigor and talent.'

It was unfortunate that the most spectacular of Booth's stage accidents, and the one that caused most injury, should have occurred in New York in the full blaze of publicity. On Friday, March 21, Booth's first benefit, the fight scene in *Richard III* ended with E.L. Tilton (playing Richmond) in the orchestra pit, luckily while the orchestra were absent. Details vary in different reports,¹⁹ but Tilton seems to have dislocated his shoulder and perhaps broken his right arm. He may well have 'accidentally stepped off the stage' as Allston Brown asserts;²⁰ but the idea that Booth forced him off gained currency after the assassination, when the incident was used as evidence that Booth (like his father) could not always distinguish dramatic fiction from reality: Junius Brutus Booth fencing his Richmond out into the street is an oft-told tale. 'In acting he often became madly frenzied' said the *Albany Atlas and Argus* (April 18, 1865), citing this accident, and the New York lady correspondent of the San Francisco *Evening Bulletin* (May 20, 1865) claimed to have seen Booth become 'so excited that he fenced Richmond headlong off into the parquette. He looked on that occasion as mad as any man out of Bedlam.' Fred R. Wren, in his dubious 'Reminiscences of an Old Actor' (*Pittsburg Gazette Times*, Aug. 4, 1907) says ambiguously that Booth 'acted the part of a madman. Tilton . . . fought back with all his strength and finally escaped Booth by leaping from the stage into the orchestra.' By 1891, when the idea had been established that Booth was mad when he shot Lincoln, he had become homicidally deranged: 'Booth became in his excitement

18 Shattuck, *Hamlet of EB*, p. 38-39.

19 E.g., *New York Tribune*, March 24, 1862 (Barbee); *New York Clipper*, March 29, 1862; and *Sacramento Daily Union*, May 1, 1862.

20 *History of the American Stage* (New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1870), p. 362.

totally oblivious of the surroundings. He was, indeed, Richard, fighting for his kingdom and his life.' He 'forced' Tilton 'over the footlights and fairly hurled him into the orchestra. Then he madly tried to kill his fallen foe'²¹ Tilton himself, according to the actor Harry Weaver,²² believed his arm was broken 'by a blow from Booth's sword and not from the fall', which sounds more like a good actor's story for late at night in the pub than the sober truth. Tilton had been Booth's Richmond at Baltimore during his previous engagement: like Mrs. Farren, he accompanied him to New York to strengthen the company. He and Booth were therefore used to fighting each other, and it seems likely that one or both had grown careless and overconfident of knowing the routine. For the rest of the run, T.J. Ward had to take over Tilton's fighting roles.

Booth had other worries than his metropolitan success. His youngest brother Joseph, who was with him in New York as his agent, had disappeared after a quarrel about Joe's not attending to business.²³ John wrote to Simonds on March 22, 'No news yet of Joe have hunted every place I can think of. I cant [*sic*] tell what to do poor mother will take it so hard'; and on April 13, 'No news yet from the runaway . . . he is doubtless at sea.'²⁴ Joe, then 22, had as yet been unable to settle on a profession. During the 1859-60 season he had toured with Edwin, playing small parts, but evidently had no talent as an actor.²⁵ He had then begun to study medicine at Charleston, South Carolina in the autumn of 1860, but the attack on Fort Sumter had interrupted his studies and forced him to come north. Though he eventually took up medicine again, he did not then enrol in another college, but seems to have drifted.²⁶ John had guessed correctly: Joe

21 William Cauldwell, 'Memories of the Metropolis', clipping from *Sunday Mercury* (presumably New York), 1891, Harvard Theatre Collection.

22 'No. 2 Bullfinch Place'.

23 Examination of Joseph Adrian Booth before Maj. Gen. Dix, May 12, 1865, quoted in John C. Brennan, 'John Wilkes Booth's Enigmatic Brother Joseph', *Maryland Historical Magazine* 78 (1983): 27.

24 Letters respectively in De Coppet Collection, and the collection of Richard Siegel.

25 Mary Devlin Booth, pp. 18-24. The actor S.K. Chester saw him as Orson in *The Iron Chest*, and apparently thought that 'Joseph would never have made an actor' (Alonzo May, p. 910).

26 Brennan, p. 22.

had embarked for Europe, whence he would go on to California. He did not return east until 1865, and he and John were never to see each other again.

A glimpse of Booth at this time is given by a member of the cast.²⁷ Coming on to the stage for the first rehearsal, Booth reminded him of 'a high-mettled racer', full of energy. He began the rehearsal 'with a sharp, jerky manner', probably caused by nervousness; soon he was telling the company 'not to be affrighted at night, as he might (he said, with a smile) throw a little more fire into the part than at rehearsal.' The War was discussed, but '[n]ot a word of politics was ever heard from Booth during the first week of his engagement'. The actor seems to agree with George Ryer, who stated after the assassination: 'Booth played an engagement under my management, during which his manner was quiet and reserved, and I have now no recollection of a disloyal, or any other expression, upon which I could form an opinion of his political belief.'²⁸ However, the actor did remember one outburst from Booth, when he heard of the arrest and incarceration without trial of Baltimore police chief George P. Kane. 'It was not the matter of what he said, it was the manner and general appearance of the speaker, that awed us', he says.

Mary Provost played a week in her own theatre before becoming ill again, and on April 21 the house reopened as G.L. Fox's Olympic, dedicated to 'spectacular dramas, vaudevilles, farces, etc., etc.'²⁹ Fox, who had just given up management of the New Bowery, hoped to attract 'a more refined and well-heeled public' on Broadway, but takings were slim;³⁰ the theatre's unsavoury past may still have been damaging its prospects. Mary Provost reclaimed it until July 1862, and it continued to change hands and uses, hosting German opera and a circus among other things, 'with a pretty steady lack of success, growing out of many reasons'.³¹ John could not, as Edwin had done, return to the house that had engaged him before. Clearly, though, he had been at least as

27 Clipping, 'Wilkes Booth as an Actor'.

28 *Albany Evening Journal*, April 17, 1865.

29 Odell, 7:417; *New York Leader*, April 12, 19.

30 Senelick, pp. 104-05.

31 T.A. Brown, *NY Stage*, 1:511; Mrs. Gilbert, p. 182.

successful as Edwin at his first attempt; why he never played in New York again, except for the Shakespeare benefit in 1864, is a mystery. The shadows of negotiations can be glimpsed in the *Clipper* from time to time, but nothing materialized. We may well ask why Edwin, as a 'regular', did not use his influence to secure for John a run at the Winter Garden.³² One remark by Asia may throw light on this enigma: she says that this New York engagement was

the first wearing away of family affection, and although [John] by no means ever sought to place himself in opposition to Edwin, he felt it rather premature that Edwin should mark off for himself the North and the East, and leave the South where he no longer cared to go himself, to Wilkes. He felt that he had not had a chance in New York (*Unlocked Book*, p. 110)

George L. Stout may be relating a reliable piece of theatrical gossip when he says, 'Edwin then was making all the success of the family, and he was unwilling for Wilkes to come to New York', although 'Wilkes was really the better actor.'³³ He gives no exact date and may be referring to the whole of John's career. However, there is evidence that throughout his career John relied less on family connections than Edwin (or Joe) did; he may have avoided the Winter Garden to allow Edwin his own sphere.

During his New York run (which may have helped to clinch it), Booth finally managed to arrange a date in Boston, at the Museum. He would have preferred to go directly there, but hit a snag: he wrote to Joe Simonds on March 22, 'DeBar wont [*sic*] let me off, so if I come to Boston it must be for the two weeks commencing May 12\th/. So tell Keach to write at once, that I may answer Milwaukee and Cincinnati'. (E.F. Keach was the Museum's acting manager.) In the end, Booth was obliged to make the long trip to the West solely for one engagement. He wrote to Simonds from Philadelphia on April 13: 'I will start in a few days for S\t/ Louis dont [*sic*] you pity me'.

Ben DeBar's political sympathies had recently got him into trouble, and the Provost Marshal had warned the management that 'should any more jokes (gags) or sentiments of

32 Edwin, with John S. Clarke and William Stuart, took over the management of that theatre in summer of 1864 (Shattuck, *Hamlet of EB*, p. 54); John, however, did not seek engagements for 1864-65.

33 Baltimore *American*, July 27, 1903. Stout was a boyhood friend of both brothers (see Chapter 1).

a secession character be used upon the boards of the St. Louis Theatre, the person so offending will be arrested, and the theatre closed' (*Clipper*, April 5). One of the offenders had been the low comedian, Stuart Robson, boyhood acquaintance of the Booths. During his fortnight there Booth was puffed as the 'greatest tragedian now in America', and said to be attracting 'the most fashionable audiences of the season'.³⁴ His New York run must have helped his prestige. The *Clipper* (May 10) reported that he had 'made a sensation' in *The Marble Heart*, described by the *Missouri Democrat* as the 'most decided success of the season' (April 29); it was played three times.

Booth had been eager to play Boston because, after New York, it was the most prestigious theatrical date; and since he managed in two years to gain great popular and substantial critical esteem there, it may be useful to consider the city's cultural identity. Adam Badeau explained: 'The peculiarity of the intellectual people there [Boston] is not, perhaps, that they are more intellectual than the literary men and women here [New York], but that they have more influence.' In New York, success was all-important; in Boston, intellect. 'The most cultivated and talented people there make it their duty to support the drama They listen to a play as carefully as they would read a poem or study a picture.'³⁵ The English theatre manager Alfred Bunn, visiting Boston in the early 1850s, had noted that 'every class' was 'highly intellectual', including the ladies.³⁶ Charles Shattuck describes the city less kindly:

Boston complacently regarded itself as America's brain center . . . It presumed to arbitrate taste in literature and the arts. The half-dozen great Boston newspapers were served by well-grounded theatrical reviewers who vied with each other in bringing in discriminating judgments.³⁷

The Boston Museum had been so named to circumvent the Puritan prejudice against theatres which prevailed in New England, and it still contained exhibits as well as an auditorium. It was above all respectable: 'The visitor there has no rowdyism to fear', and nothing on stage or in front would 'offend the most fastidious'. There was no bar, and

34 *Daily Missouri Republican*, April 20, 22-24.

35 *Vagabond*, pp. 329-332.

36 Bunn, pp. 21, 23.

37 *Hamlet of EB*, p. 10.

no smoking or liquor was allowed even in the Green Room.³⁸ Moses Kimball, its manager, 'knew well both his Boston and his theater finance': the long success of the Museum 'was due simply to the coupling of artistic worth with an unusually sound business policy.' He paid his actors slightly less than at comparable theatres, 'kept his company strong and did not use many stars; the latter 'were not allowed a percentage of the profits but had to accept stipulated sums'. By 1860, the Museum had become 'distinguished for its consistently high standards'.³⁹ Beginning in the 1840s with moral reform melodramas such as *The Drunkard*, it had broadened its appeal: as well as John Wilkes Booth, with his morally ambiguous *Marble Heart*, it hosted the British comic singer Sam Cowell.⁴⁰ Kimball had instituted regular Wednesday and Saturday matinees to encourage the patronage of women and children, and the average evening audience 'may have included almost as many women as men'.⁴¹ The Museum ran 'a close second' to the Boston Theatre, built in 1854 'to provide quality entertainment for Boston's burgeoning middle class'.⁴² Edwin Booth usually played the Theatre when in Boston, as did Forrest at least twice. According to his correspondence with Simonds, John never tried to obtain an engagement there; perhaps evidence of a wish to avoid direct competition with his brother.⁴³

After his first night--as Richard--on May 12, before an audience described as 'large', 'fashionable', 'intelligent', 'cultivated', 'brilliant', 'critical', but also 'sympathetic' and 'enthusiastic', Booth had a drink with his Richmond, W.H. Whalley, and 'expressed in

38 Mary Caroline Crawford, *Romantic Days in Old Boston* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1910), pp. 260, 264, 270. The author quotes from *Boston Sights and Strangers' Guide*, 1856 ed.

39 Mammen, pp. 11-12, 12n.

40 Cowell, p. 5 (1860).

41 McConachie, pp. 164-65. McConachie asserts, on the basis of what he admits is 'little direct evidence' that the Museum's audiences were 'predominantly native-born families of moderate means, . . . orientated toward Protestantism' (pp. 163, 165). Leavitt, however, calls Kimball 'a rich and influential citizen,' saying 'many of [the Museum's] patrons were also of that class' (p. 55).

42 A.F. Norcross, 'A Child's Memory of the Boston Theatre', *Theatre Magazine* 10 (May 1926): 37; Durham, p. 94.

43 Both, however, played the Howard Athenaeum: Edwin in 1859 (*Boston Daily Courier*, Oct. 19, 1859), John in 1863.

language more emphatic than polite the great fear he had in appearing before a critical Boston audience'.⁴⁴ A playgoer later recalled another mishap in the fighting scene: 'The fencing with Richmond had just begun when Booth's sword blade broke close to the handle. With a quick movement he picked up the blade and fought on, raining blows with expert and steady skill upon his opponent's guard.'⁴⁵ The glowing New York reviews which had preceded him had filled the house, but also raised expectations--and scepticism--which he must meet: the *Advertiser* on May 12 hoped the critics of New York had dealt 'fairly' by Booth and the public. The *Transcript* (May 14) pointed out that in Boston 'the handsome Edwin Booth has a host of friends, who consider him without a peer': John could expect comparisons as well as exacting standards. The *Transcript* went on to say that 'under these circumstances the success achieved was very flattering', the *Post* and *Journal* agreeing.

He was praised as a 'conscientious student and a resolute worker' (*Courier*, May 20), but other qualities made him stand out: the *Journal* (May 15) noted 'more traits of the father in him than Edwin, more vivacity and other qualities that greatly interest the spectator.' The *Saturday Evening Gazette* (May 17) marvelled that he had 'learned so much' in his short career; though 'crude and uneven', he had 'full power over an auditor's sympathies', a most important quality. This paper and the *Transcript* (May 13) granted him 'genius', the latter adding 'impassioned earnestness'. A long piece in the *Post* on May 26 expressed the fullest appreciation of this quality.⁴⁶ Thinking 'Wilkes Booth the *Genius* of the family, and Edwin Booth the Man of talent of the family', the critic expanded:

His capital defect is his voice; his capital commanding excellence is his *intensity*. . . . [H]e has the intense, passionate, conquering temperament of

44 Adjectives from *Boston Daily Courier*, May 13, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, May 14, *Boston Post*, May 13, *Daily Evening Transcript*, May 13; anecdote from *Boston Herald*, May 21, 1916. According to New Orleans's *Daily Picayune*, Mar. 17, 1864, the *Post* was 'respectable Democratic and conservative', the *Transcript* Republican.

45 'Wilkes Booth. His first appearance on the Boston Stage'. Unidentified newspaper clipping, Booth file, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. This seems to have been written about thirty years later.

46 The dramatic critic of the *Post* was Richard Montgomery Field, later manager of the Boston Museum (*Spirit of the Times*, Feb. 20, 1864).

genius, and this made visible to the eye, will more than compensate the occasional disappointment of the ear. . . . And this quality, *passionate intensity*, is the quality without which no acting is worthy to be called "great."

His intuition had enabled him to succeed so early:

Wilkes Booth's conceptions of the character [*sic*] are singularly correct for one so young, and he seems to know intuitively what to do to express them: he is always in the right place by instinct, and doing just the thing that nature would have him do. . . . He grasps the real basi[c] thought of the author, too, with a singular perspicacity. . . . [H]is mind is of the fiercely dynamic order, and its flame burns suddenly out, without a great deal of experience and study.

The critic was aware that this could lead to excess, or could seem excessive when viewed coldly:

Some may think him extravagant and 'Boweryish,' but none will think so who will suffer themselves to go along with his feeling. . . . [W]e wouldn't give sixpence for an actor or orator who was not, on his first attempts, fervid and florid and *extravagant*.

The approval was conditional: he expected Booth to tone down his extravagances as he matured, but meanwhile he could enjoy them, based as they were on genuine feeling. In this, he was flying in the face of fashion: he had written on May 15 that Booth was

certain to be popular with the multitude, though possibly he may not be at first with people of taste; for he appeals to the passions more than to the taste; and everybody can *feel*, while only a few are tasteful; and of that *tasteful* few, some strong natures are still human enough to be sensible of the pulses of their own original and unextinguishable sources of power.

The critic's irritation with this emotional snobbery seems to reflect what Karen Halttunen notes as a change of attitude among the genteel in the 1850s. 'Inner virtue was yielding to good taste as the touchstone of personal worth: "Taste is the discriminating talisman, enabling its owners to see at once the real merits of persons and things, to ascertain at a glance the value of individuals."⁴⁷ For the *Post*, Booth's potential lay in his combination of emotional and intellectual abilities: 'possessed of this great fountain of many powers--fervid intensity, and showing at so early an age such correctness of conception, we have for this youngest Booth the most confident expectation of greatness.'

47 Halttunen, p. 160, quoting *Godey's Lady's Book*.

Another long review, in the *Daily Advertiser* on May 19, has assumed importance as the basis of Stanley Kimmel's theory that Booth misused his voice to the point of destroying it. In view of this, it is worth studying this piece carefully. The *Advertiser's* critic on May 12 had set forth his expectation that John Booth 'should be by this time a master of the mechanism of his art'. The next Monday, having seen him as Richard, Romeo, Hamlet and Charles de Moor, he announced himself 'greatly pleased and greatly disappointed.' He took a stern view of the critics who preferred to dwell on Booth's good points only:

We believe that Mr. Booth has in him the making of a great actor, and we therefore consider it an unkindness and a wrong to him that he should be told that he is already a great actor, and that time will cancel his insignificant errors. No time will cancel them except the present, and even now they cannot be removed unless by his own determined exertion. Before he becomes confirmed in speech, bound to fancies and impressions which are stiffening into habits, and has arrived at years when neglect of study cannot be repaired, . . he must strengthen himself in all excellence and free himself, although with toil and pain, from all faults,--now or never.

The critic's view of what Booth had 'for capital in his profession' was similar to the *Post's*. A figure 'well-proportioned, and well knit, supple and nervous', though 'not great'; he added, with a dig at Forrest, 'the world does not longer believe that only a big man can be tragic'. His features were 'symmetrical and mobile; the mouth and eyes instinct with passion.' The *Post* (May 26) agreed, with more enthusiasm: 'The scarlet hue of his cloak in Richard is not more striking than the crimson or pallid hue of his expressive face as passion plays upon its canvas.' The *Advertiser* continued:

He is gifted in mind, also. He has a certain ready intuition of the dramatic wealth shut up in the poet's words, and he divines a means to snatch it forth . . . He has the originality of expressive gesture, which was one of his father's greatest gifts, and when he moves, he does so with that aptness of motion, which forbids the observer to define it . . . He has, above all, an absolute power, which is most impressive, and which . . . compels even the critical, while under the spell of its sway, to acknowledge as genuine what their reflection and judgment can but condemn as 'from the purpose of playing.'

This last remark echoes the Baltimore *Sun's* observation about Booth's 'challenging and defying the austerity of criticism' (see Chapter 5), and suggests that the critic was split between his emotional and intellectual responses to the performance. Some of Booth's

later critics, like the *Post*'s '*tasteful few*', would be unable to understand his emotional appeal to the majority of the audience. The *Post* agreed with the *Advertiser*'s verdict that Booth had "'that within which passeth show," because he is not sufficiently master of himself to develop it', noting 'in the delivery of many beautiful sentences, whose beauty this young actor manifestly felt, how strong yet ineffectual his effort to express them was.' But they differed as to the reason. The *Advertiser* thought Booth's voice was 'naturally of good compass and decided quality', while the *Post* thought it 'thick and guttural, and not so good as Edwin's.'

Kimmel, omitting the *Advertiser*'s positive comments, quotes the following (p. 168), saying that it 'should have warned Wilkes that he was striding toward an abyss':

In what does he fail? Principally, in knowledge of himself,--of his resources, how to husband and how to use them. He is, apparently, entirely ignorant of the main principles of elocution. We do not mean by this word merely enunciation, but the nature and proper treatment of the voice, as well. He ignores the fundamental principle of all vocal study and exercise,--that the chest, and not the throat or mouth, should supply the sound necessary for singing or speaking. . . . When Mr. Booth wishes to be forcible or impressive, he produces a mongrel sound in the back of the mouth or top of the throat, which by itself would be unintelligible and without effect; by a proper use of his vocal organs he might draw from that fine trunk of his a resonant, deep tone whose mere sound in the ear of one who knew not the language should give a hint of the emotion to be thereby conveyed. In this connexion we need simply say that his proclivity to a nasal quality is most apparent, and bodes great harm to his delivery if not checked at once.

'Had Wilkes heeded this advice,' Kimmel comments, 'the story of the Mad Booths of Maryland might have been less tragic.' He does not explain what he understands this passage to mean. It is in fact impossible to produce the voice from anywhere but the chest. If Booth had been breathing shallowly at the top of his lungs, he would not have been audible at the back of a theatre; if he had shouted, straining his vocal cords, he would have lost his voice the first or second night he attempted a long part. He would certainly not have progressed to a second season as an acclaimed rising star, playing leading roles six nights a week. The critic may be referring to a habit of using a glottal stop to control air flow; and Booth's 'mongrel sound' may have been his resonating his voice too far back in his mouth, so that it sounded indistinct. This last may have been

what the *New York Dispatch* (March 23) had described: 'a sudden cadence takes him from clear full and round tones down to a guttural [*sic*] enunciation'. At other times, it seems, he used his nose too much as a resonator: the *New York Tribune* (March 21) had noted his speaking 'as if he had a cold'--and added that 'Mr. Edwin Booth does the same thing'. Edwin's 'peculiar nasal twang' had reminded the Boston *Traveller* of his father in 1857, and the New York *Morning Courier* the same year complained of his 'guttural [*sic*] utterance'.⁴⁸ Edwin shot no presidents and therefore his reviews have not been scrutinized for portents of disaster.

Kimmel does not mention the long piece in the *Boston Post* on May 15, which would have offered him more ammunition: the *Post* critic noted that Booth 'expresses the vehemence of his feelings, often in sounds unintelligible', and concluded that he was 'not a master of the mechanics of voice', but without going into details. If this fault were not cured, he predicted 'bronchitis or throat troubles'. The nineteenth century was prone to strange medical theories, and the idea that an actor could inflame the tubes to his lungs by resonating his voice in inappropriate places seems about as sensible as the contemporary idea that wearing corsets caused consumption. We shall return to Kimmel's theory later; for the present it should be noted that other Boston critics in 1862 merely compared John's voice with his brother's: the *Journal* (May 13) said it was 'the same voice to a tone', and the *Courier* of the same date found it very like 'in tone and quality, though somewhat more powerful and always more certain'.

The *Advertiser's* critic also noted enunciation 'often extremely inelegant and inaccurate', and listed some mispronunciations and mis-emphases. 'These are not trivial faults', he explained, for 'the cultivated . . . are not wont to be so moved by what fills the eye, as by what satisfies the mind.' Admiring 'Mr. Booth's fine talents', he warned him not to 'grow careless of trifles'. The *Saturday Evening Gazette* (May 24) seemed to answer for Booth: 'We . . . incline to the belief that the young actor is well aware wherein

48 Quoted in Shattuck, *Hamlet of EB*, pp. 13, 16.

he is lacking and is not indisposed to devote himself to . . . study'. Apparently taking up the *Advertiser* on its sternness with him, it makes some useful comparisons:

To claim perfection for Mr. John W. Booth would be absurd. He has much to learn. But where amongst the profession in this country are there young men who possess an equal amount of fervent enthusiasm with Edwin and John Booth, or the same magnetic power over an audience? Nowhere. Mr. Edwin Adams is the only YOUNG actor we have who gives the least promise of attaining *eminent* professional distinction

Watching someone like Booth, 'we are so surprised at the progress made in a wonderfully short time that we are rather inclined to congratulate him and bid him onward' than lecture him on 'what it is not fair to expect he should know' so early in his career.

And indeed Mr. Booth has accomplished great things since he first trod the boards. That all must concede. Let a friendly wish follow him, good reader. You can crush him if you like, but, our word for it, few such men arise to be crushed out in one generation.

Houses were good. The engagement, said the *Advertiser* (May 15), 'excites constantly increasing interest', with Booth 'rapidly gaining in popular favor' (*Transcript*, May 16). 'Crowds', the *Saturday Evening Express* (May 17) reported, 'have rushed to the Museum nightly': no wonder the engagement had been 'a success pecuniarily' (*Courier*, May 22). The *Post* called the engagement 'exceedingly brilliant' (May 23). Booth's last performance was the Saturday matinée: as a 'deacon's theater', the Museum did not play on the 'Sabbath eve', although Saturday evening shows were by then permitted by law.⁴⁹ He played the romantic Claude Melnotte and naturally drew out the ladies, who could respectably go to matinees unaccompanied by men. After the assassination, the *Saturday Evening Express* (April 15, 1865) remembered 'the enthusiasm he awakened' during his first Boston engagement. On this last afternoon:

a number of ladies in the audience, at the conclusion of the performance, surrounded the exit door of the stage, and were so strenuous in their endeavors to force their way to him, that Mr. Keach, then the acting manager, was compelled to come forward and request them to desist.

49 Mammen, p. 14; the Massachusetts legislature had repealed the Act prohibiting Saturday evening theatrical entertainments with effect from April 26, 1858 (*Clipper*, April 10, 1858).

But intellectual Boston had given the same treatment to at least one other favourite. A few years earlier Agnes Robertson had had to be smuggled out of her dressing room at the Museum to avoid crowds; the gender of the crowds on that occasion is not specified.⁵⁰

After Booth's first night, the *Transcript* had thought him 'perhaps the most promising young actor on the American stage'; at the end of the engagement, the *Saturday Evening Express* and *Gazette* (both May 24) looked forward to his return: Boston would 'regularly claim' him for 'a month or two each year', said the *Gazette*. The *Post* (May 16) prophesied: 'J. Wilkes Booth is sure to find a host of friends wherever he goes, but in no city will he have a greater permanent popularity than in Boston.'

Described as being at this time 'a bright, handsome, cheery, lik[e]able young man',⁵¹ Booth made friends offstage as well. A small girl, a member of the eminent Mestayer acting family, remembered him in later years as a visitor to her home, where he was often to be found 'curled up in a chair devouring some book from my father's library':

Wilkes Booth was extremely popular with everybody. Simple and democratic, he joked with everyone he came in contact with, even the girls in the laundry where he left his collars and cuffs. They always saw to it that Mr. Booth's package was ready when he came for it, and vied with each other as to who should have the honor of delivering it. He joked with the cabmen at the stand corner of the Tremont House. He loved a jest and in his quiet, quizzical way made friends everywhere.⁵²

Booth's return engagement at Chicago had, by the Monday of the third week, become 'the success of the season', the *Chicago Tribune* (June 16) adding that he might 'consider himself one of Chicago's greatest favorites.' At a charity fair, he was 'asked for his autograph by a young lady', who, when he protested that he would not like to give her something worthless, 'assured him she could sell all he could write for twenty-five cents each'.⁵³ An amusing on-stage incident not related by the papers is described in a later book:

⁵⁰ Crawford, pp. 265-66; see Chapter 8 for further discussion of Booth's female following in Boston, and of attempts to devalue his success there.

⁵¹ *Boston Herald*, May 21, 1916.

⁵² Norcross, p. 37.

⁵³ Andreas, *History of Chicago*, 2:599-60.

During the balcony scene . . . the balcony broke down, landing Juliet prostrate at Romeo's feet. He picked her up and retired behind the scenes. The manager came forward, explained and apologized; the balcony was repaired and the act was resumed amid the cheers of the audience.⁵⁴

Both the *Clipper* (May 31) and the *Spirit of the Times* (June 7) announced that Booth would go home for the summer after his Chicago engagement, but in fact he went on to Louisville, a visit perhaps arranged when he had cancelled the earlier engagement. He was announced for Monday, June 23, but suffered what the *Spirit* called 'a serious illness' (July 19) and had to stay in Chicago a few days more. Perhaps the stresses of this ground-breaking year had told on his constitution. He stayed an extra Monday at Louisville, giving five performances in all; the *Louisville Democrat* (June 26) said he had a 'large and delighted audience', and was 'pleased to see so many ladies present': their patronage would have indicated the respectability and culture of the entertainment.

So ended Booth's second star season, on June 30, 1862. He had played more important dates than in his first year, including New York and Boston, the top cities. He was from now on an established figure on the theatrical scene. He had begun to make return visits to some towns, a sure sign of his popularity. As a 'new' actor to many cities, he had been treated to detailed criticism, and though his faults were noted, he benefited from the critics' surprise and delight at finding such a promising, *young* tragedian, and their willingness to make allowances for his inexperience. The detail in which his faults were discussed indicates the high standard by which he was being judged, and the assumption that these faults were eradicable. He had refined his repertoire, playing 13 parts from the previous season, and only one new one, Romeo Jaffier Jenkins. With the latter, he was following his father's example: Junius Brutus had favourite parts in two farcical afterpieces. Mainly because of his New York debut, Richard III received by far the most performances: 46, against 18 of the next most performed, Charles de Moor. In all, he had given about twice as many performances as in his first star season.

⁵⁴ Weston Arthur Goodspeed, *History of Cook County, Illinois* (Chicago: Goodspeed Historical Assoc. [c. 1911]), 1:598.

By 1862-63 he was a 'known quantity' to many of the places he played, and thus criticism was sometimes perfunctory or nonexistent. Also, whereas in 1861-62 adverse criticism had been for details or specific parts, he would in the coming year occasionally receive totally negative and sometimes savage general criticism: perhaps he was now established enough to be thought a legitimate target for attack.

1862-63 Season

This year there were even more would-be stars competing for dates. The *Clipper* (Oct. 18) reported that managers were having trouble getting together even 'tolerable' companies for theatres outside New York, because so many actors were now in the army. As a result, many managers were 'compelled to play stars' in order to attract business, and many 'fair stock people' became stars to take advantage of this opportunity. At the end of the season, the *Clipper* commented again (July 4):

Stars are manufactured very rapidly at present; if a man or a woman makes a hit in the leading or other business of a stock company, they at once come to the conclusion that they have had a 'call' A few succeed, while most of them go under, bitterly denouncing an ungrateful public

This may have served to make audiences and critics even more sceptical of 'stars' than before. However, business had picked up: in New York there was no sign that there was a war on, and the *Chicago Times* (Dec. 8, 1862) added that the entertainment industry was flourishing in Chicago as well as Boston, Philadelphia and Washington. Edwin Booth returned from Europe in August; though his Haymarket engagement had not been particularly successful, the trip had earned him kudos with the Europhile middle classes who were his particular admirers.

John was busy during the summer booking up his season. He dealt first with the important places: to Keach of the Boston Museum, who had clearly been waiting for an answer from him before confirming dates, he wrote on July 25: 'Your humble servant accepts the time you propose, four weeks, beginning Jan\ry/ 19\th/ 1863. And sincerely

hopes that that **big thing** may be made of it.⁵⁵ He then filled in with the smaller towns, writing to Valentine Butsch of the Metropolitan, Indianapolis, on August 3 that 'my time till after March, is all filled up' except for two separate weeks. Butsch had apparently booked a Miss Thompson for one of these weeks, but Booth was important enough for Butsch to ask her to make way for him, and clearly she did, for Booth played both the dates proposed. His terms were 'Share after eighty dollars, and half clear benefit.'⁵⁶

Edwin Booth opened in New York at the Winter Garden at the end of September, with Forrest in opposition at Niblo's: the *Clipper* (Oct. 11) said that he 'finds it rough work to battle against the great tragedian', and recorded a poor audience for the younger actor. Again his Richelieu dominated. The *Clipper* (Oct. 18) gave him the same verdict that John had often received: 'With experience, he must become one of our first tragedians'. The same issue noted that John was in town, before leaving to fulfil engagements: 'Doubtless we shall have him at some of our city theatres soon.' The *New York Tribune* (Oct. 6) was more specific: there was a 'report, of the accuracy of which we know nothing, that the brothers will appear together, on some special occasion, before the expiration of [Edwin's] present engagement.' Neither of these rumours proved true, but they may reflect the existence of some plan or negotiation.

John went West, and after Lexington, Kentucky, and Louisville, where he played a new scene in *The Marble Heart* specially written for him,⁵⁷ opened at Cincinnati--this time at the National Theatre. As in the previous season, the *Daily Enquirer* (Oct. 19) was saying that 'the taste of the day is not with the legitimate'.⁵⁸ During September, Confederate advances had brought fighting to Kentucky, and theatres in nearby Cincinnati had been ordered to close (*Clipper*, Sept. 27). Despite, or perhaps because of the alarms, people were spending freely and places of amusement were crowded. Booth

55 Philadelphia, Herndon-Weik Collection, Library of Congress. I am grateful to M.W. Kauffman for drawing this to my attention. Booth's 'reverse italics'--upright letters contrasting with his usual sloping hand--are here represented by bold typeface.

56 Philadelphia, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

57 Discussed in Chapter 10.

58 This was *apropos* Adah Isaacs Menken, the preceding star at the National, who had been performing legitimate drama.

was covered only by the *Enquirer*, which gave him a puffy send-off at the end of his engagement on November 23: 'Coming among us a stranger'--the paper seemed unaware that this was his second visit--he had played 'a brilliant engagement', etc. After his benefit, to the usual 'full and fashionable house', he had been presented with two swords, together with a speech by Captain Wilson, U.S.A., and '[c]hampagne, supper, &c., closed the scene.' However, a very different view appeared in the same paper two days later, in a column signed 'Ubiquitous Allabout':

The manager of the National . . . has given us two weeks of the legitimate. He should have credit for it, though I fear he'll not find much to credit in his empty cash account, for there has been a beggarly account of empty seats nearly every night of J. Wilkes Booth's engagement.

Our's [*sic*] is a fickle public, that there is no telling what will gratify its dyspeptic taste. . . . Mr. Booth and the entire dramatic force did their best to fill the bill.

The best they could do was not the best that can be done.

Booth had been playing against Mr. and Mrs. F.B. Conway, who had had 'densely-crowded houses' (*Enquirer*, Nov. 23) at Pike's. After criticizing the stock company, 'Allabout' went on:

Mr. Booth may be a great actor, but he failed to sustain his reputation as such, in his late engagement. He is the possessor of talents for dramatic personation of no mean order, however, but should not be starrng it. He would make an admirable leading man, and there is a woeful lack of that commodity here, at this present writing.

Unfortunately, he did not specify the qualities he felt were lacking in Booth which were necessary for stardom but not for a high stock position.

Harry Weaver, one of the company, spent some time with Booth, who impressed him 'very favorably.' Booth asked Weaver to join him and W.H. Hamblin (the Chateau Renaud) in the next-door bar after the rehearsal for *The Corsican Brothers* (Nov. 13), 'saying that we would have a jolly time for an hour or so.'

We discoursed on literature and art, poetry and the drama, touching on every subject but the war that was raging around us I remember Booth laughed heartily when Hamblin gave us the salient points of Oliver Wendell Holmes' humorous article, wherein he describes an asylum for decayed punsters. . . . The three of us remained together until time to go to the theater.

The recollection of that day is to me a most painful one; it conjures up a vision of what might have been⁵⁹

Weaver was sure that Booth 'at that time was sincerely devoted to his profession', in which he 'might have achieved honor and renown'.

At Indianapolis, where Booth played the following week, the *Journal* had changed its critic and its tune. The previous year, the paper had pronounced him 'the most promising young actor of the day'; now it felt his audience had 'treated him better than he has them.' Criticizing his *Othello*⁶⁰ on the last day of Booth's engagement, November 29, the reviewer was clearly using Forrest as a reference point while never referring to him outright; for him, to paraphrase the *Boston Advertiser*, only a big man could be tragic, at least in certain roles:

It may be no just disparagement of a man's talents that nature has not given him a strong voice, or an imposing appearance, but it certainly indicates . . . in what paths he should seek to exhibit his talents. Unless there is the magic of real genius to blind the eyes to physical unfitness, it is a hazardous step to set the eyes to comparing notes with the imagination.

Though other critics had no quarrel with Booth's height and build, many had mentioned the other faults the *Journal* critic now enumerated: 'husky voice, indistinct articulation, exaggerated action, and constant straining to get up to that strength of passion which makes a strong man seem stronger'. This reviewer had made much the same comment on the tragedienne Jane Coombs a few weeks before: 'In vehement passages she reaches the climax too suddenly, and all her efforts to reach a higher degree of passionate expression end only in an unnatural straining of the voice'. He concluded, in accord with the Cincinnati critic, 'We don't admire Mr. Booth, and by what art he became a "star" is more than our astronomy can explain.' The other papers had no chance to reply to this onslaught, but would have their say during Booth's next engagement a month later. Despite this attack--or perhaps causing it--the engagement was apparently successful, the *Spirit of the Times* (Dec. 13) calling it 'brilliant'.

⁵⁹ Weaver, 'No. 2 Bullfinch Place'.

⁶⁰ See Chapter 10.

Booth may well have seen *The Times* of London's strictures on Lincoln and his party, reprinted in the *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel* on November 29 opposite the advertisement for his *Robbers*: they had

governed twenty millions of their countrymen with a revolutionary freedom from the trammels of law. They have seized their political opponents, dragged them from their beds at night, hurried them on to military prisons, and kept them there for months without even informing them of their crime.

Booth had ordered some new costumes, and he now wrote to Joe Simonds and to E.F. Keach from Chicago that he had 'rec\nd/ dresses, am much pleased with them', and that he was 'highly delighted with the Romeo's.'⁶¹ To Simonds he continued:

Poor Frank Hardenburgh I have been wanting to write him every day, but know not how to do it. . . . I do not like to write him, for fear of opening his wounds afresh, yet would not have him think me indifferent to his misery. For I am sure there is no one, except himself, who can appreciate his sad bereavement more than I.

The death of Hardenburgh's wife, the Museum actress Oriana Marshall, aged 17, had been reported in the *Clipper* on November 29. Booth's sympathy with his old Richmond colleague suggests that he, too, may have had a romance cut short by death.

A new critic made known his opinions on Booth's third Chicago engagement, for the theatre was now advertising in the *Times*, a vehemently Democratic paper. Criticizing Booth as sternly as his newspaper criticized the Government, the reviewer was taken to task for it by the *Evening Journal*, but his comments were by no means all negative. According to the *Journal* (Dec. 8), the *Times* critic was younger than Booth, who was then 24; he was new to Chicago, having 'imported his opinions from Detroit[,] in the ninepenny theatre of which he doubtless shone as a brilliant critic' (Dec. 4),⁶² and

61 To Simonds, Dec. 6, 1862, De Coppet Collection; to Keach, Dec. 8, 1862, Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA. The costumes were made by 'Joyce': Thomas Joyce was a Museum actor and for years its costumier (*Life and Memoirs of William Warren*, p. 14. He may be the same Joyce who made costumes for Edwin Booth's 1871 production of *Julius Caesar*.

62 Helen Elizabeth Breckenridge ('The *Chicago Times* during the Civil War', M.A., Dept. of History, U. Chicago, 1931) says that Wilbur F. Storey, editor from June 1861, had previously edited the *Detroit Free Press* (notably Democrat), and had brought many of the latter's staff with him: presumably the young critic was one of these (pp. 7, 10).

his 'recent prison-life' had 'soured his disposition' (Dec. 8). This last may have meant that he had disagreed with the Government publicly enough to be arrested for his pains.

While arousing the *Journal's* wrath for arguing that Booth was too young, and not coolly villainous enough for Richard III, the *Times* critic nonetheless conceded him qualities which indicate his genteel tastes: 'grace and dignity', 'pathos and passion in abundance', and a pleasing voice: 'There is a mellow cadence in his voice, that rings in modulated strains through the memories of his hearers, long after the tones have ceased' (Dec. 3). After Booth's first week, he offered a general assessment with which most of Booth's critics would have concurred:

We award him the position of a rising actor, with a promising future. He has many faults which time will correct, many extravagances which later judgment will modify, and many misconceptions which experience and knowledge of the world will change for the better. Yet, with all, for one so young he displays surpassing talent. He can hold an audience enchained in some of his finer delineations, and he has real merit enough to draw them night after night to witness his efforts. That a certain amount of this attraction is due to his name, cannot be doubted. The immense audience which flocked to witness his Richard the Third never would have gone to hear him had not his father achieved a portion of his fame in the same character, but having gone, they found enough to justify the going (Dec. 8).

The *Evening Journal* of the same date complained that the critic had 'insulted the very large and intelligent audiences' for Booth 'by declaring that it is his name alone which draws them, as though a Chicago audience could be so imposed upon more than once.' The *Times* critic had said nothing of the sort; as with the *Journal's* misunderstanding of the *Times* review of Booth's *Apostate*,⁶³ the *Journal* seems to have used this pretext to attack a paper to whose politics it was radically opposed.

Booth was certainly enjoying success. In his letter to Keach on December 8, his second Monday there, he put it in colourful terms: 'My goose does indeed hang high (long may she wave.) I have picked up on average this season over \$650 per week. My first week here paid me [over]\near/ \$900. And this week has opened better.' He had recently sent \$800 to his mother: he was helping support her and Rosalie, while much of Edwin's income must have been taken up with a wife, a house and a new daughter. But

63 See Chapter 10.

perhaps the best testimony to his popularity, since a circus in town usually spelt death to legitimate theatre, is a mention in the *New York Clipper* (Dec. 20) that Mabie's Circus was doing 'passably well in Chicago, although they have J. Wilkes Booth, who is a favorite there, playing against them at McVicker's.'

A sombre reminder of how sensitive theatrical business was to the War which it seemed to be ignoring appeared in the *Clipper* a week later (Dec. 27). Nearly every theatre had experienced a drop in income,

. . . and in two or three theatres the receipts fell off nearly one-half. What caused this check? We answer, the disastrous news of the repulse of our forces at Fredericksburg. . . . The news of Burnside's repulse created an immediate downward tendency in business, and our places of amusement were among the first to feel the shock.

The Battle of Fredericksburg had been fought on December 13, and perhaps accounted for the fact that the audience for Booth's second *Apostate* on the 16th was 'the smallest of the past two weeks' (*Times*, 17th), though the reviewer ascribed it to the play's being 'too much for its delineators'.

After finishing the year at St. Louis, where he was, according to the *Clipper* (Jan. 3, 1863) 'to the full as great a favorite . . . as his brother Edwin', John returned to Indianapolis, where the *Sentinel* and the *Gazette* proceeded to defend his Othello from the attacks mounted five weeks earlier by the *Journal*.⁶⁴ The *Gazette* summed up on January 7, 1863:

Booth has *some* defects--who has not? Though in truth we are bound to say his major faults upon the stage are of such a character that to designate them in an unfriendly criticism would be ungenerous, to say the least.

His voice and enunciation are not as clear and effective as Murdock's [*sic*] or Forrest's, and his *physique*, perhaps, would not serve as a model for a Dying Gladiator.⁶⁵ But in the rendition of the 'Moor of Venice,' and other master creations of the immortal bard, the latter is no sort of objection

Picking up the *Journal's* reference to Forrest, the *Gazette* was refusing to accept him as an ideal, though it conceded him vocal superiority. James Murdoch's delivery was considered exemplary, while for one auditor, 'Forrest's voice is magnificent, the lower

⁶⁴ See Chapter 10.

⁶⁵ A reference to Forrest's famous role as Spartacus.

tones are like those of an organ, and very sweet; while the metallic upper notes rather resemble the clang of a trumpet.⁶⁶

On January 19, Booth opened his second engagement at the Boston Museum, the one that he and Keach had hoped could be made a 'big thing'. Edwin Booth had played for four weeks in November and December at the Boston Theatre under his own management (*Clipper*, Nov. 29)--an experiment which John, too, was to try later that season, at Washington. Edwin's developing style was not to all tastes: the *Gazette* (Jan. 17) now recommended John's 'fire and impetuosity' to those 'who thought that Edwin Booth had grown tame during his year abroad'. Edwin and Mary were at home in nearby Dorchester when John opened, and they saw him play. Mary was not impressed with John's Corsican brothers: unlike most of his critics, she felt he 'lacked character he can't transform himself.' She went on:

The combat was strictly 'gladitorial' [*sic*] --the muscles of his arms--for his sleeves were rolled up--eclipsing everything else besides. 'Look at his arm'--every one exclaimed--& highly delighted the audience seemed at this exhibition.

He was more melo-dramatic than I have ever seen him--& no better--if quite so good--as [Edward] Eddy & a host of others I have seen in the same part.⁶⁷

Here, the term 'melo-dramatic' does seem to be pejorative; and yet *The Corsican Brothers* is a melodrama, and would have to be played in appropriate style. The Museum playbill advertises 'The Terrific Encounter' in quite large letters at the end of a synopsis: it was the climax of the piece, and would have to be 'worked up' accordingly.⁶⁸ A contemporary reviewer called Eddy, who had been leading man and manager at the Bowery, the best of the melodramatic actors: he 'fully understands that his art consists in manifesting feeling rather than power.' Performers who were 'noisy and rough', said the critic, 'have brought [the genre] into disfavor, and caused a general opinion that melo-dramas are of necessity mediums for the exhibition of bad acting.'⁶⁹ If Booth was as good as Eddy, he too may

⁶⁶ Cowell, p. 247.

⁶⁷ *Letters and Notebooks*, pp. 105-06. See Chapter 10 for Edwin's opinion of John's Pescara during this engagement.

⁶⁸ Bill for Feb. 9, 10 and 11, William Seymour Theatre Collection.

⁶⁹ Philadelphia *Sunday Dispatch*, Feb. 22, 1863.

have 'avoid[ed] the fault of being too boisterous'. The *Boston Saturday Evening Gazette* (Feb. 14, 1863) felt that he 'thoroughly understands . . . the peculiar, supernatural spirit of the piece,' and held 'the attention and the sympathies of his auditors'. Looking back on this engagement, the *Boston Daily Advertiser* (May 23, 1864) hoped 'that Mr. Booth will manage to preserve his resemblance to himself better than he did last year, when half the audience failed to recognize him half the time, which of course spoiled the joke': for them, Booth's assumption of character had been too good.

The engagement was certainly a big thing in terms of audiences. The *Boston Post* (Jan. 20) noted two thousand people present for the opening *Richard III*, and the crowds persisted: at the beginning of John's fourth week, the *Advertiser* reported:

[T]he Museum is densely packed every night with contented-looking people who are compressed into spaces which the crinoline times apparently would forbid; indeed, the correspondent of the New York Programme says that 'the carpenter of the establishment has it in contemplation to put a row of hooks and pegs around the lobby and gallery, for the late comers to hang from' (Feb. 9).

The next day, the critic asked if anyone was planning to build 'an elastic theatre'. In the last week, a special Wednesday matinée of *The Marble Heart* was put on, which the *Journal* (Feb. 4) attributed to the request of people from neighbouring towns, 'who find it inconvenient to attend evening entertainments.'

Many of the critics noted an improvement in Booth's art since his last engagement ten months before, the *Journal* (Jan. 26) adding that 'he now ranks deservedly among the best actors in the profession--an honor to American culture.' The *Post* (Jan. 20) and *Gazette* (Jan. 24) ascribed his improvement to 'study' and 'application', and the *Express* (Jan. 31) found Booth 'studiously careful and conscientious in his acting. Each character exhibits ample evidence of thought and pains-taking.' The *Advertiser*, a stern critic on Booth's earlier visit, admitted that he had 'made improvements'; though

not all that we could wish, nor in many particulars wherein he ought, but still his progress is plain. We like as little as ever the occasional slovenliness of his elocution which mars many a passage of the quieter sort that does not sweep away criticism of details by its intensity o[r] by a stroke of genius in acting. . . . Let us commend again his spirit and his freshness, his striking

mastery of histrionic effects, his attention to costume and his well-sustained power and interest in his parts (Jan. 26).

The *Gazette* (Jan. 17) also thought Booth's 'most apparent fault' was his 'carelessness in pronunciation'. The *Advertiser* did not repeat its strictures about Booth's vocal delivery, nor did any critic detect a deterioration: one paper, the *Traveller* (Jan. 30), reported an apparent 'hoarseness' on one night, presumably a temporary affliction or a consequence of the demands made by the part (Charles de Moor).

The critics were fairly unanimous on one point, namely that Booth should stick to tragedy. The *Journal* (Jan. 26) wished he would not play Claude Melnotte; the *Advertiser* (Jan. 21) concurred, 'since [in this part] his best characteristics are crushed down to make way for sentimentalism.' The *Post* (Jan. 29, Feb. 7) thought it a waste for him to play Alfred Evelyn or Raphael. Audiences, however, did not agree: Booth played *The Marble Heart* five times in the third week, including the matinée, to immense houses. The *Gazette* concluded on January 31: 'though in certain things he may not entirely please the conscientious critic, it cannot be denied that he has found his way to the popular heart.' Here again is the theme, noted earlier in Baltimore and Boston, of a dichotomy between critical and popular approval. It is visible in the *Advertiser's* summing-up on February 16:

Mr. Booth has ended a month's engagement which must have been most gratifying to him in every way. He does not add that elegance to his energy which we could hope, and he cannot stand in the highest position of actors until he shall be willing to perfect his elocution as thoroughly as his sword-play. He may be very great, if he will, and we hope he will not relax his efforts because he is a popular favorite.

The paper expected him to please both elements, and to this end his swordplay was no less important than his elocution, nor his energy than his elegance. For the *Express* (Feb. 14), Booth was now a 'truly splendid actor' who would 'henceforward rank with his brother Edwin, than which he need to aspire to no higher distinction.'

The *New York Clipper*, perhaps misunderstanding a mention in the *Boston Post* (Jan. 17) of Edwin and John's Richmond performance of Iago and Othello, reported on January 31 that it was 'probable' they would play these parts at John's farewell benefit.

But by the time John's engagement at Boston ended, Edwin had opened at the Winter Garden again--and was not doing very well. He had begun to yield again to his weakness for alcohol, restrained since his marriage, and had apparently set foot on a downward path from which only personal tragedy saved him. His performances were suffering. The *Spirit of the Times* (Feb. 21), noting that John had 'achieved a high artistic reputation' in Boston, was 'disappointed' in Edwin:

The public had a right to expect that, after a year's absence, he would return to us with many evidences of improvement I am provoked almost to railing. He seems to have lost his ambition; he has no heart in his work; he appears to be becoming spasmodic and mechanical--is lazy, or careless, or reckless, and (to my mind) has by no means the fire and soul that once entranced his audiences.

The *New York Herald* went further: 'Seldom have we seen Shakspeare so murdered as at the Winter Garden during the past two weeks' (Feb. 23). Edwin's friends had been taking turns guarding him to keep him from drink, but he eluded them, and one night the management had to consider ringing down the curtain in the middle of the play.⁷⁰ John, passing through New York on his way to his next engagement, reported to Edwin that Mary had a cold. The cold developed into pneumonia, and she died on February 21. Edwin cancelled his engagements for the rest of the season, and John, who was to have opened in Philadelphia on February 23, went instead back to Boston together with John S. Clarke for the funeral and to comfort Edwin. A playbill explained the delay to the Philadelphia public.⁷¹

Although Edwin had not known that Mary was acutely ill until several telegrams arrived on the night of her death, a ready-made excuse for his erratic acting was now to hand. The *Herald* (Feb. 22) explained that anxiety for her had preyed on his 'peculiarly sensitive' temperament so much as to 'render him unequal to the performance of his duties'. The *Clipper* (Feb. 28) carried a similar face-saving piece. Edwin, devastated by Mary's death, never again let alcohol interfere with his work.

⁷⁰ Mrs. Thomas Bailey Aldrich, *Crowding Memories* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), pp. 31-33, 35.

⁷¹ George S. Bryan Papers, New York Public Library.

Those who wish to believe, with Kimmel, that John's life was shaped by his envy of Edwin's success, should consider the two brothers at this moment. John, four-and-a-half years younger, was in his third season as a star and rapidly becoming established; he was prosperous enough to be able to save money and prudent enough to invest it, as his letters to Joe Simonds bear out.⁷² Edwin, by contrast, seemed to be standing still--or regressing, under the influence of alcohol. The friction which Asia notes concerning John's New York engagement looks like a little jealousy on Edwin's part about his own position. In fact, neither of them needed to worry: already, their acting styles were developing in different directions and each had his own appeal.

But though John was steadily rising in his profession, all would not be plain sailing yet, as his very next engagement would prove.

⁷² For instance, those of Feb. 28 and March 1, 1863 from Philadelphia (De Coppet Collection), in which he asked Simonds to invest \$1,500 and \$2,000 for him.

CHAPTER 7

Philadelphia 1863-Cleveland 1863: Youngest Star in the World

The prestigious New Chestnut Theatre had been opened on January 26, 1863 by William Wheatley, with Edwin Forrest, playing his usual three nights a week, as the 'principal attraction'. Forrest was to remain most of the season,¹ and was in mid-run when John Wilkes Booth arrived at the Arch for his engagement: the only time that these two actors played in opposition in the same city. Kimmel would have it that his obsessively competitive Booth invited this rivalry: encouraged by his Boston reception, he 'decided to pursue Forrest to Philadelphia' (p. 170). Since Booth had booked himself up to the end of March 1863 by August the previous year (see Chapter 6), this is unlikely to be true. Nonetheless, direct competition with Forrest, and in Forrest's native city too, was now thrust upon him. That both actors played Macbeth for their Friday benefits in Booth's second week can hardly have been coincidence.² Given Forrest's jealousy of his position, one would guess that it was he who initiated this most blatant rivalry: indeed, he had done much the same thing to Edwin in New York in 1861.³

Although he was clearly expected by the management to 'do business'--seats were available six days in advance⁴--Booth himself felt that he had not arrived at a propitious time. Writing to Joe Simonds on March 1, he told him: 'I open here to-morrow I dont expect to do much the Theatres here seem filled nightly with empty benches' (*sic* punctuation).⁵ The *North American Gazette* felt that there had been rather too much of the same thing recently:

Miss Jane Coombs has struggled wearily through two weeks of the 'legitimate' drama and gives place to Mr. J. Wilkes Booth, who will give us

1 Durham, p. 211; Leavitt, p. 83.

2 Forrest played Macbeth for the first time in that engagement the previous night, March 12 (Philadelphia *Sunday Dispatch*, March 15).

3 Shattuck (*Hamlet of EB*) states (p. 42) that Forrest scheduled *Richelieu* for the same dates as Edwin, who broke off his run so as not to compete. In 1843-44 he had followed Macready round the country, playing in opposition (Shattuck, *Shakespeare on the American Stage*, p. 78).

4 *Sunday Dispatch*, March 1.

5 De Coppet Collection.

another week of it. If we do not get enough of these old tragedies, it will not be for want of opportunities. Richard the Third catches it again this evening. We have had Forrest and Eddy in it, and, being a very refreshing and entertaining play, Mr. J. Wilkes Booth will give us two nights more of it this week.⁶

But this piece, published on February 23 when John was originally due to open, was not just pointing out a glut of the classics. It was partisan: 'To Mr. Forrest's personation of these characters we can cheerfully go, as to those of a ripe scholar, an actor of genius, and one whom study and experience have made the best representative of the drama of the past age.' To the writer's mind, it seems, no younger tragedian had a right to compete with Forrest at all:

But we respectfully beg Mr. Booth to prove his talent in something else. If he inherits any of his father's ability, how much more creditable it would be to him to take up and illuminate some of the plays of the present age, where he would not be met at every step by traditions of great actors long since dead and gone. About the only two pieces he plays this week which have not been worn threadbare are 'The Apostate' and 'The Robbers.'

The 'plays of the present age' were not tragedies, but melodramas, romances, comedies--and Booth's repertoire included these genres, too. His Shakespearean roles (Hamlet, Richard, Macbeth, Othello, Shylock) were a part of every tragedian's repertoire, and matching oneself against 'great actors long since dead and gone' was a necessary part of establishing a reputation. Saying that he should not attempt these test roles was tantamount to saying that he had no right to set up as a tragedian at all. This attitude, which was virtually that of Forrest himself, makes it extremely unlikely that any criticism from the *North American Gazette* would be impartial.

But a war of words had already been commenced, in which the *Gazette's* obsequious approval was being challenged by the *Sunday Dispatch*, whose wittily acid critic had the previous day called Forrest 'an actor who has the habit of disappointing just expectations' and charged him with the egotism of reducing Shakespeare to a vehicle for self-display.⁷ This critic barely mentioned Forrest's well-known muscularity or huge voice: his predominant impression was of dullness. Forrest's Hamlet was full of 'apathy

6 As transcribed by David Rankin Barbee, Barbee Papers.

7 Feb. 22; quoted in Chapter 2.

and weariness', his performances were 'stale', his manner 'tedious and drowsy', his pauses had elongated into 'senseless delays'; it was 'impossible to put into words the slowness, dreariness and solemnity of these "evenings with a great tragedian."'8 The deferential puffery which Forrest was receiving in Philadelphia irritated the critic, who ascribed a similar complacency to the star: 'The old actor fondly imagines that he is greater than he ever was, that he is now the glass of theatric fashion and the mould of dramatic form--the *Sir Harcourt Courtley* of solemn tragedy' (March 15). It is not surprising that Booth was drawn into this battle. Attacked even before he opened by the *Gazette*, he was held up as a contrast to Forrest by the *Dispatch*:

Booth is young, ambitious and underdeveloped. Forrest is old, tenacious of his whilom reputation, but overdeveloped and falling. With the one faults may be reformed, and natural genius be improved by study and practice. With the other defects are chronic, and vicious fancies ossified and hard. . . . There can be no fair comparison between the rising and the setting star (March 15).

The *Dispatch*'s writer was an exacting critic, however: his reviews of Forrest are clearly argued, if hostile, and he did not whitewash other actors in order to damn the older star. He thought Edward Eddy's Richard III 'bad', and Kate Denin 'intensely stagey' and 'Western' (Feb. 22). His first impression of Booth made some familiar points:

[He] has the advantage of youth, a graceful figure, a classic countenance and a finely expressive eye. To these personal excellencies he adds the valuable theatrical qualities of mobility of countenance, facility of expression and an easy manner. His principal physical defect is in the voice, the tones of which are husky. At times his words are indistinct. . . . His readings are judicious, and he seems thoroughly to understand the meaning and the philosophy of his author (March 8).

Though he disagreed with Booth's conception of Richard III,⁹ the critic felt that Booth 'deserves a hearty encouragement. He has good stuff in him, and will make his mark, or we mistake him.'

The only other extant paper to review Booth at length was the *Press*. By March 5, its critic could judge that he was 'a good actor, and may become a great one.' With a good figure and expressive face, but without 'Edwin's culture and grace, and without that

8 *Sunday Dispatch*, March 1, 22.

9 See Chapter 9, and Chapter 10 for Booth's and Forrest's *Macbeth*.

glittering eye that gives so much life to his *Iago* and *Pescara*, Mr. Booth has far more action, more life, and, we are inclined to think, more natural genius.' His voice, or 'tone', was like Edwin's, and like him, John 'occasionally minces his words, and uses quaint pronunciation.' On March 9, the critic added that 'his voice, inclined to huskiness, which causes an imperfect enunciation, might be much improved', although he does not seem to have noticed any huskiness until the *Sunday Dispatch* pointed it out on the 8th.

For the rest, reviewers contented themselves mainly with a few lines of bland puffing. The *Sunday Mercury* (March 8) thought his debut 'singularly successful', and, like the *Press*, that John 'possesse[d] more legitimate talent than Edwin does.'¹⁰ The *North American Gazette* stated that he had 'made a profound sensation', and there were more sensations, full and fashionable houses, true genius and other clichés in the *Bulletin* and *Inquirer*, while the *Public Ledger* did not review him at all. The *Bulletin* on March 7 claimed that Booth was 'rapidly rising in public favor', which may mean that his houses were not yet all that could be hoped; but given such poor coverage it is difficult to tell how popular he really proved. This is unfortunate in view of the assertions made by the *North American Gazette* at the end of his engagement.

Waiting until Booth had safely left town, a writer for the *Gazette* (presumably not the author of the puffs) launched an extraordinarily spiteful attack printed on the front page on March 16:

Mr. J. Wilkes Booth has concluded his two weeks' engagement at the Arch street theatre, for which the managers of the theatre and the general public have reason to be about equally thankful, the managers on account of the extreme unprofitableness of the engagement, and the public on account of Mr. Booth's abominably bad acting.

Opining that Booth's 'Macbeth, Richard, etc.' were 'atrocious', and his *Pescara* even worse,¹¹ the writer offers an explanation for his hostility, including Edwin Booth in his condemnation:

Were Mr. Booth an ordinary pretender we should be content to let him off unnoticed, but he passes current by virtue of the name of Booth, as his brother Edwin has done, and has been made the subject of the most

¹⁰ Barbee transcript, Barbee Papers.

¹¹ See Chapters 9 and 10.

outrageous puffery. We are positive were his name Smith or Mulligan instead of Booth, he would be booed off the stage.

This was an inevitable charge against any son of a great actor, and the more effective because it contained a grain of truth. It had been levelled at Edwin by New York's *Dispatch* in 1861: 'If his name were Smith instead of Booth he would pass unnoticed.'¹² If there is any truth in a denigratory piece published in 1916, Forrest was personally hostile toward John Booth: when John T. Ford suggested that he support Forrest in Baltimore in 1864, Forrest snarled that he 'would not "tread the boards with the G-- d-- spad [dandy]" and that he had seen him try to act in Philadelphia, etc.'¹³ It would have been typical of Forrest to check up on his competition on his off-nights.

Between puff and pan, there is little reliable information on Booth's houses. Both *Clipper* and *Spirit of the Times* (March 14) reported a good reception in his first week; on March 21 the *Clipper* noted mildly that Booth's 'engagement did not prove a great success', leaving in doubt whether it had been a small success, a disaster, or something in between. Forrest 'did not attract a continued series of large houses' either (April 18), though of course he played for much longer. Townsend, hardly impartial but perhaps with local knowledge, says tersely of Booth, 'In Philadelphia his earlier failure predisposed the people to discard him, and they did',¹⁴ though in fact the city seems not to have known or cared that he had begun his apprenticeship there. The *Ledger* of April 17, 1865, however, claiming failure for Booth's other engagements, merely adds, 'He also played a star engagement in this city', and it might be asked whether, if he had failed completely, there would have been any reason for the *Gazette's* attack. The recent glut of tragedy cannot have helped, while two of Booth's lesser-known plays, *The Marble Heart* and *Money*, had also been presented at the Arch during the week's delay before his appearance there.¹⁵

12 Shattuck, *Hamlet of EB*, p. 41. That critic thought Edwin's Macbeth 'atrocious', too.

13 James W. Shettel, 'J. Wilkes Booth at School', *New York Dramatic Mirror*, Feb. 26, 1916. Forrest never forgave Edwin Booth for acting with his ex-wife in California.

14 *Life, Crime and Capture*, p. 23.

15 *Inquirer*, March 3 (Edwin Adams as Raphael), and *Bulletin*, Feb. 23 (Barton Hill

In any case, Philadelphia afforded a notoriously difficult audience, especially for new actors: Junius Brutus Booth's first engagement there in 1823 had not been a success, his reception 'extremely lukewarm'. In 1833, the Irish actor Tyrone Power had found that Philadelphians listened hard, but applauded little. For John McCullough, the first 'real hearty word of encouragement' from the press in the city of his apprenticeship came in 1877, for an engagement 'only fairly profitable': he was accepted in other cities much more readily.¹⁶

Booth himself has left us no remarks on his audience, though clearly he remembered the newspaper attacks: writing to his brother Junius two years later, when June was about to play a star engagement at the New Chestnut, he said ruefully, 'I don't know how the Philadelphia papers will use you, but if they are as kind to you as to me, why God help you, say I.'¹⁷ Certainly Junius proved unsuccessful on that occasion, the *Clipper* reporting that the management had had to add a fairy spectacle in a desperate attempt to improve houses (Feb. 4, 1865). Perhaps the advertising of *Rob Roy* as an added attraction to John's Pescara on his last night is evidence of a similar problem; on the playbill the afterpiece's title is, unusually, printed at the head as well as below the cast for *The Apostate*. Two nights before, the afterpiece was *The Lost Ship*, a drama in three acts, rather than the usual one-act farce.¹⁸ The most telling fact, however, may be that John never played Philadelphia again.

Socially, at least, his stay would have been rewarding: his old friend John McCullough was supporting Forrest, as was J.W. Collier, with whom he had shared a benefit in Richmond and played in New York. The Arch company had John Albaugh as second lead. Booth's mother was still in Boston with Edwin, but his sisters Rosalie and Asia saw him in *The Marble Heart* on March 3, unfortunately leaving their opinions

as Evelyn).

¹⁶ Scharf & Westcott, 2:973; Power, *Impressions of America during the Years 1833, 1834, and 1835* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1836), p. 88; S.C. Clark, p. 170.

¹⁷ Washington, DC, Jan. 17, 1865, De Coppet Collection.

¹⁸ *Inquirer*, March 14; Playbills for March 12 and 14, Library Company of Philadelphia.

unrecorded. Somewhere on his Western tour this season, he had entered a raffle, and to his embarrassment had won a suit of baby clothes which he had sent to Asia for her new baby.¹⁹ He now made friends with Asia's children, rolling about the floor with them like a child himself.²⁰ And he made a good impression on another small boy: the future comedian, Roland Reed, who was employed at the Arch:

Of all the throng of celebrities who passed in and out of that historic old back door, John Wilkes Booth impressed me most by the elegance of his dress and manner, and by his handsome face, which was so striking that no one could fail to be impressed by it. . . . Once, in passing out, Booth looked closely at me, and seeing what a small boy I was for such a position, turned back, shook hands with me, leaving in my palm a substantial present²¹

As Booth began his Philadelphia engagement, Asia wrote that he was due to go on to Baltimore afterwards,²² although the *Boston Post* on January 29 had stated that he would then open in New York. The fact that he played only one week in Baltimore and then had a break of nearly three weeks before opening in nearby Washington may indicate that negotiations for a second New York visit fell through, and that John T. Ford secured him at short notice. (A date in New York so soon after Edwin's last engagement there would have produced interesting comparisons.) Ford publicized him heavily enough to make up for lost time, however; there is a suspect uniformity about reviews as well as announcements in all the papers during this engagement, as if echoing a series of press releases. Booth was advertised as 'The most gifted and promising tragic actor of the age the youngest "star" artist in the world' (*Gazette*, March 13). His age the previous year had been correctly stated as 24; now he was described as 'just beyond the years of majority' (*American*, March 12), having 'but lately bid adieu to his teens' (*Gazette*, March 12). Perhaps the emphasis on his youth was intended to counter any unfavourable reports about his Philadelphia engagement; but Booth was genuinely popular in Baltimore: an extra matinée of *The Marble Heart* 'at cheap prices' was added on Saturday (*American*,

19 *Unlocked Book*, p. 111. Booth had hoped this child would be called after him, but it was a girl, Adrienne. Asia only tells us he won the clothes 'in the South'; in a letter to Jean Anderson (March 3) she says 'out west'.

20 Asia to Jean Anderson, March 3, 1863, ML 518, Peale Museum.

21 Strang, p. 303.

22 To Jean Anderson, March 3, 1863.

March 20) , and according to the *New York Clipper* (March 28), he enjoyed 'excellent houses during the week'.

The large first night audience and the actor's vaunted youth stirred the *Sun* (March 17) to lyricism: 'there was', it said, 'a broad popular confidence in the rising genius, the ascending star, and the people, the *élite*, the intelligent'--that is to say, all classes--'assembled *en masse* to witness its bright particular radiance in the freshness of its dawn.'

Better, for the *Gazette* (March 17), than the size of the audience was the fact that it was

eminently a Baltimore audience, and one which brilliantly reflected the grace, the intelligence and the social respectability of our society. We saw citizens present on the occasion, who had not previously attended for years a dramatic representation, and whose presence we doubt not was appreciated in its proper significance by the young Baltimorean so notably honored.

Booth's appearance was the occasion for a celebration of Baltimorean solidarity, and it was not only his talent which was being recognized, but himself, as a native of the area; and, perhaps, as one who shared a banned but widely-held political viewpoint. The pro-Southern *Gazette's* piece before his benefit (March 20) advised that a large audience would show State pride, and would 'establish beyond question the fact, that we have independence enough to set our own stamp upon talent, emanating from our midst, and sufficient liberality to reward and foster it.' Claiming Booth as one of the few 'Southern artists' of eminence, it then gave a brief summary of his career which had him beginning in Richmond and going on to star in the South. He was 'an immense favorite throughout the South, where he is regarded in the light of a *protege*'. The paper then mentioned his involvement with the Richmond Grays at the time of the John Brown raid. This was probably as near as the *Gazette* could safely go toward recommending Booth to Confederate sympathizers, and throws an interesting sidelight on John T. Ford, who may well have provided the information, and who publicly remained neutral throughout the War. Baltimore, in the border state of Maryland, was watched especially closely: the day before John's engagement began, the editor of *St. Mary's Beacon* had been arrested and his paper closed down for printing anti-Lincoln editorials; and in the two preceding weeks, the sale of 'secession music' and pictures of Confederate generals and statesmen

had been prohibited.²³

Booth's next engagement, at Grover's Theatre, Washington, began unusually on a Saturday--perhaps further evidence that he was filling in an unexpected gap in his schedule. As at Baltimore, his youth was stressed: a playbill described him as the 'YOUNGEST TRAGEDIAN IN THE WORLD / who is entitled to be denominated / A Star of the First Magnitude!'²⁴ Annette Ince, a minor star, was his leading lady the following week, and the company also included Susan Denin, whom Booth had supported in stock at Philadelphia, Ben Rogers, the low comedian at Richmond and J.M. Ward from the Montgomery company. The federal capital was not noted for its culture. Alfred Bunn wrote in the 1850s that 'it would puzzle a conjuror' to find any 'refinement of manner, elegance of pursuit, and purity of taste' there; one of 'the dirtiest cities imaginable', its streets were alternately mud and dust.²⁵ So it is hardly surprising that the theatre criticism was not incisive, tending to cliché apart from the *Morning Chronicle's* comment (April 14) that Booth was a 'nervous, intellectual actor' and that the part of Raphael did not suit him.

The following day, Wednesday, the paper marvelled that 'notwithstanding the painful operation performed upon Mr. Booth on Monday', he had acted every night since. The operation to remove a fibroid tumour on the back of Booth's neck, which had begun to show above the collar of his theatrical costumes, was carried out by Dr. John Frederick May, who wanted him to suspend his engagement while his skin healed. Booth was adamant that he must continue. Dr. May remembered later that the actor asked him to say that he had removed a bullet from his neck;²⁶ and Booth himself wrote to Joe Simonds that the 'doctor had a hunt for my bullet', complaining that he had 'a hole in my neck you could run your fist in.'²⁷ Whether this was a private joke, or evidence of a growing

23 Daniel Carroll Toomey, *The Civil War in Maryland* (Baltimore: Toomey Press, 1983), p. 72; Long & Long, pp. 327 and 328.

24 Playbill for *Richard III*, April 11, 1863, in William Seymour Theatre Collection.

25 Bunn, p. 126. See also Senelick, p. 99, for G.L. Fox's impressions.

26 'The Mark of the Scalpel', *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* 13 (1910): 53.

27 Washington, April 19, 1863, De Coppet Collection.

uneasiness with his non-combatant status, it may be the source of later confusion. The *New York World* (April 17, 1865) linked this incident with the gunshot wound at Montgomery (see Chapter 5): 'The ball remained imbedded in the flesh for a period of perhaps two years, and came out unexpectedly during his first engagement at Grover's Washington Theater'.

Certainly the War seemed to be impinging on theatre in the capital: Grover's playbill for *Richard III* quoted Richmond's lines, cut from the acting version, beginning, 'Then if you fight against God's enemy ' and, directly above the cast list, his couplet, 'Let them not live to taste this land's increase / That would with treason wound this fair land's peace!' Since Grover would later claim that his theatre was the 'loyal' and Ford's the Southern house,²⁸ no doubt Richmond's rhetoric was meant to be read as pro-Union; yet the other side could identify with these sentiments too, including the ominous lines, 'If you do sweat to put a tyrant down, / You sleep in peace, the tyrant being slain'. Accounts of Lincoln (regarded as a tyrant by the Democrats) seeing Booth in *Richard III*, however, seem to be fabricated.²⁹

Making his professional debut at Grover's was an actor later to be famous: Charles Wyndham, who had been serving in the Union Army as an acting assistant surgeon under his real name, Culverwell.³⁰ He struck up an acquaintance with Booth at the *Hamlet* rehearsal on April 14, when Wyndham, the Osric, committed a *faux pas* by sitting in 'an advantageous position at a little table' which turned out to be the star's. Booth, however, merely 'smiled' to see him there:

The courtesy and kindness shown me by John Wilkes made way for friendship between us, and we frequently were together after the play. He was a most charming fellow, off the stage as well as on, a man of flashing wit and magnetic manner. He was one of the best raconteurs to whom I ever have listened. As he talked he threw himself into his words, brilliant, ready,

28 Grover, p. 949.

29 Alexander Hunter and J.H. Polkinhorn (*New National Theater, Washington, DC: a Record of Fifty Years* (Washington: R.O. Polkinhorn, 1885), p. 47) claim that Lincoln was present, while a cast member, Joseph E. Whiting, says that 'during the combat scene, Mr. Booth accidentally knocked James Ward . . . over into President Lincoln's box' (unidentified newspaper clipping in William Seymour Theatre Collection).

30 George Rowell, 'An Acting Assistant Surgeon', *Nineteenth Century Theatre Research* 12 (1984): 25-38.

enthusiastic. He could hold a group spellbound by the hour at the force and fire and beauty of him.³¹

In tune with the consensus of his time that Booth was unbalanced, Wyndham remembered that in his conversation there were 'startling breaks, abrupt contrasts, when his eccentricity and peculiarity cropped to the surface'. 'As an actor,' on the other hand,

the natural endowment of John Wilkes Booth was of the highest. His original gift was greater than that of his wonderful brother, Edwin He was one of the few to whom that ill-used term of genius might be applied with perfect truth. . . . At all times his eyes were his striking feature, but when his emotions were aroused they were like living jewels. Flames shot from them. His one physical defect . . . was his height. He was a trifle too short, but he made up for the lack by his extraordinary presence and magnetism.

In another interview, Wyndham said that with the right circumstances, Booth 'would have achieved a world-wide reputation', having 'strong nerves, intensity and a whirlwind of passion', though these were 'ill-directed'. Wyndham's opinion that Booth had begun starring too soon, so that 'all his efforts were crude', also echoed a common posthumous judgement, though he agreed with contemporary Baltimore and Boston reviews that 'they carried with them a conviction which bore down all criticism.'³²

Booth's seven nights at Grover's 'did a very fair business' (*Clipper*, April 25), and he himself called it a 'fine engagement' in his April 19 letter to Simonds. Facing another gap in his schedule, he went on: 'I am idle this week but stay here in hopes to open the other Theatre next Monday for a week or two before going to Chicago.' The 'other' was the Washington Theatre, which would be characterized tersely by the *National Intelligencer* on February 23, 1865 as '[b]adly located, an awkward old building, a small auditorium, a little stage, and comparatively no stock of scenery'. The *Clipper* noted on May 9 that there had been 'some trouble among the managers of the Washington Theatre' and that 'J. Wilkes Booth now holds the reins.' This was John's first and only venture into managing a theatre, following Edwin's short management of the Boston Theatre the

31 'Recollections of John Wilkes Booth by Sir Charles Wyndham', *New York Herald*, June 27, 1909.

32 'Comedian Wyndham's Career', *The World* (New York), Dec. 1, 1889. See Chapters 5 and 6 for these reviews.

previous year. It may not be too fanciful to connect these projects with a rumour that was reported in the *Clipper* on April 18:

It is expected that Mr. Junius Brutus Booth, Junr., will leave California within the present month, and come once more among his Boston friends. It is said that Mr. Booth will be the lessee of the new theatre to be erected in Boston, and with which, it is also understood, his two brothers and his brother-in-law, J.S. Clarke, have pecuniary interests.

Were Edwin and John gaining a little experience to prepare for their share in the management of this theatre? John had recently bought some land in Boston and may have been intending to build a house and live there.³³ In the event, the plan fell through: the *Clipper* announced on July 4 that business had prevented Junius from sailing as planned on May 23, and the 'Boston proprietor' had the option of withdrawing his offer. He must have done so, for no more was heard of the venture.³⁴

Although only Booth's name appeared on the bills as 'Lessee and Manager', his old associate Matthew Canning was later said to have been his partner in the Washington management.³⁵ It would have been a sensible move to bring in someone like Canning, with the relevant experience. He hired a strong company, including Alice Gray, a local star of sorts who had been his leading lady recently at Baltimore, his old friend S.K. Chester, and W.H. Bailey, who had been the Old Man at Richmond. Charles Wyndham

33 JWB to Simonds, Philadelphia, April 3, 1863, De Coppet Collection: Booth asks Simonds or Orlando [Tompkins] to bid for land on Commonwealth Avenue at an auction on April 9. Unidentified newspaper clipping, JWB Folder, William Seymour Theatre Collection, Princeton U. Library: 'lot on n. side of Commonwealth ave. sold for \$8192 to "O. Tompkins" acting for "JWB of Philadelphia"'. Since Booth wrote that any purchase *not* on Commonwealth Ave. would 'only be on specula[tion]', it is reasonable to assume that he planned to occupy the site he succeeded in buying. See also Richard and Kellie Gutman, 'Boston: A Home for John Wilkes Booth?', *Surratt Society News* 10, no. 9 (1985), p. 1.

34 Junius did come east the following year (see Chapter 8), and Edwin and John Clarke later managed theatres in partnership, but John Booth was not involved (*Clipper*, May 14, 1864). According to Leavitt (p. 169), June was stage-manager at the Academy of Music, Providence, RI, for the managers of the Boston Theatre from 1864; he worked for Edwin and Clarke as 'resident manager' of the Boston Theatre in 1866-67 and took the lease himself in 1867 (Durham, p. 95).

35 Unidentified newspaper clipping, 'By the Way', Fawcett Scrapbook, Yale Pamphlet Collection. C.D. Hess, Grover's managerial partner, was probably the source of this information. Canning himself did not mention this later to the authorities, but this may have been from an understandable desire to conceal any involvement with Booth in Washington, the scene of the crime.

later recalled that Booth had asked him to join his company when Wyndham was sacked from Grover's, but he 'had already made other arrangements.'³⁶ The *National Intelligencer*, which had ignored his Grover's run, reviewed Booth favourably, remarking at the end of his engagement on May 9 that 'wherever any thing can be exhibited to the eye in illustration of passion, Mr. Booth reigns supreme', and that 'this young actor plays not from stage rule, but from his soul, and his soul is inspired with genius.' This paper's notices during the week were probably by another hand, and included on May 8 a whole sentence plagiarized from the *Boston Saturday Evening Gazette* of January 24 that year, and on April 30 a passage which suspiciously resembles one from the *Boston Post* of May 26, 1862. Booth must have sent out copies of his earlier reviews; he also quoted from them on his playbills.³⁷

Given this imperfect coverage, it is difficult to ascertain how he really fared. Kimmel cites no evidence for his statement that 'box-office receipts fell off the second week, as a result of the Union defeat at Chancellorsville'; his Booth, ever under-prepared and over-confident, had not considered 'the experience necessary for an undertaking of this kind', and made 'no other attempts to act under so pretentious a billing' (p. 174). What Kimmel finds pretentious about it he does not say, though he may be taking his cue from the *Clipper*'s crack on May 16:

'Washington Theatre; lessee and manager, John Wilkes Booth. Last night but five of the distinguished and youthful tragedian, John Wilkes Booth.' So reads the advertisement in the Washington, D.C., papers of May 4. He might have added after distinguished, the word modest.

Gordon Samples assumes that a drop in receipts was the cause of Booth's relinquishing two successive nights to Grau's Italian Opera Troupe, but this company had been playing the Washington for two nights a week for some time, and had been advertised the previous Saturday.³⁸ According to the *Intelligencer* (May 9), Booth's audiences had been

36 'Comedian Wyndham's Career'.

37 Playbill of *The Robbers*, May 9, from Harvard Theatre Collection, reproduced in Samples, p. 111, quotes a Baltimore review.

38 Samples, p. 113; *Washington Morning Chronicle*, April 14 and 20 and May 2, 1863.

'always appreciative, and generally large', despite 'bad weather and rains'.

It must have been during his fortnight at the Washington that Booth presented himself in Dr. May's surgery with his operation wound torn open. According to Dr. May, Booth maintained that this was the result of a rough onstage embrace from the actress Charlotte Cushman.³⁹ Miss Cushman was of course not a member of his company; if the accident did happen in this way, the culprit must have been Alice Gray or Effie Germon, who were supporting him. Two years later, May used the resulting scar to identify Booth's body; in Booth's wallet were photographs of these actresses as well as three other ladies.

As Booth began at the Washington, Edwin Adams opened as a star at Grover's. It had taken him longer than Booth to reach this status, and he would only begin full-time starring in the following season (*Clipper*, Aug. 1). He was greeted in Washington with comments very similar to those which Booth had received in his first and second seasons: he created 'intense excitement', and was 'highly estimated' by those who had seen him 'as the rising young actor of the day' (*Chronicle*, May 2). Adams in *The Dead Heart* crowded Grover's (*Chronicle*, May 5), in much the same way that Booth usually did in *The Marble Heart*. The *Sunday Chronicle* went further: 'There is no reason why Mr. Adams should not in a very short time be the great actor of America.' With good looks, grace and ease, he had, like Booth, a wonderful 'mobility of feature' (May 3).

As he had planned, Booth finished his management of the Washington in time to travel to Chicago for his next booking. Subsequently, the theatre continued to change hands: later that year Susan Denin leased it for 'a few nights' (*Chronicle*, Sept 1). Before Booth left, an acquaintance sent him a copy of the poem, 'Beautiful Snow', with notes on its origin. This lament for lost innocence became one of Booth's 'party pieces', and it would be interesting to know if this was his introduction to it.⁴⁰

Relations between McVicker's Theatre and the *Chicago Times* had deteriorated

³⁹ J.F. May, p. 54.

⁴⁰ James Andrew Wise to JWB, Washington, May 11, 1863, Hampden-Booth Theatre Library, The Players. The poem is by J.W. Watson.

since Booth's last appearance there. Noting a 'wholesale' and 'undeserved' condemnation of A.J. Neafie by the *Times*, the *New York Clipper* (April 18, 1863) claimed that this was because the editor had been 'refused a complimentary for his family, on the ground that eleven individuals from the *Times* establishment were already admitted free'. Moreover, the theatre no longer advertised in this paper. Thus it may not be surprising that Booth was 'artistically handled, without gloves' (as the *Spirit of the Times* put it on June 27) by the *Times* critic. However, given this critic's tastes, his dislike of Neafie may have been his own, uninfluenced opinion, and he did not condemn Booth indiscriminately, but made more acidic attacks than before on what he disliked, while allowing Booth considerable virtues. Thus, while Booth's 'adherence to stage forms' made 'a farce of his *Richard the Third*', his 'native talent . . . often show[ed] itself' (May 21). Ranting was 'a chronic fault, and a most distasteful one', but he showed his 'real strength' in 'emotional passages' (May 27); there was 'an emotion, an earnestness, a pathos in the very tones of his voice' (June 5). Summing up at what should have been the end of the engagement on Monday June 1 (see below), he was at pains to stress Booth's 'mediocrity':

Time may remedy some of his defects, but as a general thing inherent failings become chronic with experience. The elements of a great actor do not belong to him, and he will consequently never become a great actor. His brother never made, at his age, the displays of mannerism and bad taste which mark a large portion of his acting

Many of Edwin's reviewers would have disagreed with this; and by implication with his assertions that 'no actor who . . . indulge[d] in stereotyped extravagances in early career ever attained celebrity' or that only 'actors of a medium calibre' supposed 'that passion cannot be interpreted without violence of manner and voice.' Unlike the *Boston Post*, which had welcomed John's extravagances as a sign of promise, the *Times* critic took them to mean he was incorrigible. Idealizing Edwin or the quiet style he was coming to represent, the critic forgot that he, like other young actors, had been accused of excess and of copying others: the *New York Herald* in 1860 called Edwin's Hamlet a product of 'complete mastery of the tricks by which actors tickle the fancy of the public', and in both

1860 and 1863 complained of his overacting and gesticulating too much.⁴¹ The *Times's* remarks may have been a riposte to the *Tribune's* assertion (May 21) that John would in time become great:

That there are faults and blemishes in Mr. Booth's acting, no one will deny; but did they not exist with the father, and all great actors at his age? In every part he plays, the auditor will perceive the marks of the student, and this being so, errors of judgment must be eradicated with time and experience. Since his advent in Chicago, some eighteen months ago, no one who has attended his performances can fail to see an improvement, and we predict ere he has attained his thirtieth year, he will be as great in his delineations as his honored predecessor.

The *Tribune's* ideal was Junius Brutus Booth, and its view of John was correspondingly higher.

Booth had been booked for a fortnight at Chicago, but was invited to stay on for another week.⁴² Thus events gave the lie to the *Times* critic's assertion that he had not done well because he had been seen too often at Chicago of late: 'The highest order of talent will scarcely warrant the familiarity which the public acquires by such frequent engagements, and Mr. Booth does not possess that degree of attraction' (June 1). The *Times* claimed (May 22) that Booth was 'drawing moderate audiences', but the *New York Clipper* rated his first two weeks' business as 'very good indeed' (June 6). The *Evening Journal* had remarked on his opening night (May 18) that Booth was so well known in Chicago that 'neither praise nor censure will affect him in the estimation of the public'--effectively telling the *Times* that it had no power to keep audiences away, whatever it said.

Nonetheless, the *Times* may have been responsible for a diminution in the last week's audience for another reason. For criticizing the arrest and trial of Clement L. Vallandigham,⁴³ the paper was ordered by General Burnside to be suppressed. On June

41 Shattuck, *Hamlet of EB*, pp. 42 and 51. In autumn of 1863, Edwin was nearly thirty.

42 In a letter to Ben DeBar from Washington, April 17, he hopes DeBar can book him for St. Louis from June 2, since 'I don't want to lay [*sic*] idle two weeks'. In the event, he played at Chicago until June 6, and had only one week 'idle' before opening at St. Louis (De Coppet Collection).

43 The former congressman Vallandigham led the Democrats opposed to the war; he had been convicted of 'expressing treasonable sympathies' and banished to the

3, when Booth was playing *The Marble Heart*, a mass meeting of citizens of both parties was held to protest against the closure, put into effect that day. The Illinois state legislature also condemned it, and Lincoln reversed the *ukase* on June 4.⁴⁴ The next day, the *Times* critic noted that the audience for *Romeo and Juliet* had not been large, though Romeo was 'one of Mr. Booth's best personations'; perhaps the political issues were deflecting people's energies from theatregoing. The *Spirit of the Times* reported the whole engagement as only 'quite successful' (June 27), and Booth or McVicker may finally have agreed with the *Times* that the star had been overexposed in Chicago, for they arranged no engagement in the following season. Booth's mixed feelings can only be imagined, as the paper which criticized his acting so sharply suffered for upholding the rights of free speech in which he believed so passionately.

Down the Mississippi at St. Louis, Booth opened to 'a splendid house' on June 15; the next day T.L. Conner, who had played 'seconds' to him in earlier engagements, was arrested and imprisoned for 'uttering disloyal sentiments' (*Clipper*, June 27).⁴⁵ At the end of his first week, the *Missouri Republican* (June 21), which usually puffed him, criticized Booth's acting as 'not suited to the tastes of a majority of our theatre-going people.' Though a good actor, 'it is unfortunate that in his youth he so overtaxed his voice as to have robbed it of all melody or capacity of modulation. This defect places him at great disadvantage in some of the parts he would otherwise render with excellent effect.' He lacked Hamlet's recommended 'temperance' in passionate speeches: 'If Mr. Booth does not sometimes cause the "unskillful" to smile, he must certainly make the "judicious grieve."' For the intellectual and critical playgoer, it has been demonstrated that *rant* is about "played out.'" Coming so soon after the Chicago *Times*'s commendation of his voice for emotion, earnestness and pathos, this criticism suggests that Booth may have been playing more broadly than he did elsewhere for St. Louis's tastes--or those of part of

Confederacy. He believed the intention of the War was to establish a Republican dictatorship (Long & Long, pp. 349, 355).

44 Breckenridge, pp. 55-57; Long & Long, pp. 360-61.

45 Kimmel (p. 175) states that Booth was arrested with Conner, but no newspaper mentions this; for a discussion of this alleged incident, see Chapter 5.

his audience. The *Republican* called his houses 'fair', but, according to the *Clipper* (July 4), he played nearly two weeks to 'a very good average of audiences'. He then relinquished the last night of his engagement to an amateur, Mr. R.J. Morgan, for a consideration of \$50; Morgan duly 'made his first appearance on any stage' as Sir Giles Overreach.⁴⁶ Conner was soon released after giving 'proof of his loyalty'; but the St. Louis Theatre was again in trouble in July for interpolating 'secesh sentiments and puns' into the variety spectacle, *Seven Sisters* (*Clipper*, July 18).

The season was nearly over. Booth headed back eastward, traversing Illinois, Indiana and most of Ohio to play just four nights (Tuesday to Friday) for his first engagement at Cleveland, Ohio, in the penultimate week of the company's season. The manager, John Ellsler, had known Booth as a schoolboy in his home town, Baltimore, but had not seen him since:

I was surprised to see what he had grown to be. His figure was of medium height, lithe and symmetrical, well developed and apparently in good condition. Upon his shoulders nature had placed as handsome and intellectual a head as ever crowned her handiwork. . . . His eyes were large, dark, and expressive; full of animation even when engaged in ordinary conversation, but when he walked the stage, in either [*sic*] of his different characters, the sparks of genius flashed from those orbs with an effect electrical.

No wonder then, that those who saw him still speak of him as an actor who, had he lived, would have stood head and shoulders above all the artists of his time.

It is no disparagement to them to say so, yet it must be understood that young Wilkes was not a finished actor. Far from it, he lacked age, experience, and discretion; attainments only to be acquired by time, study, and conscientious labor.⁴⁷

Booth impressed the ladies of the company at least as much as the manager. His leading lady, Rachel Noah, recalled later:

The charm of mind and person which distinguished Wilkes Booth at this time has become a tradition of the stage. . . . He was handsome as Adonis, courteous and clever. To play the opposite part to this young genius was the dream of every ambitious young woman of the stage.

She remembered being 'an object of envy' to the other actresses and ballet girls:

No sooner did I make my exit after a love scene than [Clara Morris] and the

⁴⁶ *Spirit of the Times*, July 11; JWB to Morgan, St. Louis, June 22, 1863, Illinois State Historical Society, Chicago, IL.

⁴⁷ Ellsler, pp. 123-24.

other girls would gather round me with a chorus of 'Isn't he lovely?' and while on the stage, if he had to embrace me I was conscious of a volley of 'oh's,' and 'ah's' from Clara and the others in the entrance.⁴⁸

The *Clipper* (July 11) reported an 'overflowing house' for Booth's benefit in *The Robbers* on July 3.

While Booth played Cleveland, the decisive Battle of Gettysburg was being fought. He arrived in Buffalo, New York, to find general rejoicing at the Union victory, and also riots at the docks by Irish labourers resentful at black workers undercutting their wages: once again, as in his previous appearance in Buffalo, there were outside events to distract from his engagement and occupy column inches which might otherwise have held reviews. In the scanty space left, the critic of the *Daily Courier* (July 8) wrote that although Booth's acting lacked 'tone'--presumably meaning refinement--he was 'impressed with the immense original power lying back of all [Booth's] attempts.' The *Commercial Advertiser* (July 7) agreed: Booth possessed 'the ring of the true metal', and though 'a crudeness' sometimes appeared, this was 'counterbalanced by the frequent flashes in which the true genius, inherent in him, manifests itself'. The next day it added, 'We believe Mr. Booth is destined to occupy a rank in his profession second to none in the country.' After the assassination the paper remembered only the 'crudeness' (inexperience or a willingness to entertain the gallery) and forgot the 'genius': then Booth had been 'by no means a good actor--belonging to what is known as the acrobatic school' (April 17, 1865). The *Courier* of the same date agreed again: Booth's 'tendency was to "tear tragedy to tatters,"' and 'his school was counted bad'. The *Morning Express* had a different disparaging story to tell after the assassination: on April 24, 1865, it reminded its readers that

some three years ago, one of the large plate glass windows of O.E. Sibley's jewelry store, in which were exhibited a lot of rebel trophies, swords, pistols, pikes, etc., was shivered to atoms one night by some miscreant whose name never reached the public.

Now the paper identified Booth, playing an engagement there, as the culprit: he 'was

48 F. Lauriston Bullard, 'Boston's Part in Lincoln's Death', *Boston Sunday Herald*, April 11, 1915. For Clara Morris's own recollections, see below.

arrested, settled the damage done, paid a fine of fifty dollars, and the thing was hushed up'. However, his engagements in Buffalo were four and two years before the assassination rather than three, and, as with St. Louis, one would expect to find more evidence if a prominent actor had been arrested. It looks as if Booth is here functioning as scapegoat for an unexplained anti-Union act.

This engagement, 'a successful one' according to the *Commercial Advertiser* (July 13), finished Booth's season. He had been attacked, strongly and spitefully, but also praised for improvement. He had played four new cities, and longer dates in four of those he had visited the previous season. His sell-out month in Boston was the high point of the year, but he had been fairly successful everywhere except Philadelphia, which is doubtful. He had been enough in demand to book much of his season well in advance; signs of improvisation from March onward may have been due to a New York date falling through. His repertoire remained much the same as in the previous season, but he dropped Julian St. Pierre in *The Wife* and Jenkins in *Too Much for Good Nature*, and replaced them with roles in two comedies: *Money* and *Katharine and Petruchio*. Lawrence Levine links the afterpiece's falling out of favour with Shakespeare's 'being divorced from the broader world of everyday culture';⁴⁹ in New York at least it may also have had to do with the problems of public transport home to the suburbs. Certainly it went out of fashion in New York first: Emilie Cowell noted that '[s]carcely any remained' for the afterpiece one night at the Winter Garden in 1860, though the star, Julia Dean Hayne, played in that, too.⁵⁰ Booth's dropping *Too Much* may reflect either of these issues, or he may simply have tired of the part. *Katharine and Petruchio* was also an afterpiece, but could be seen as more consistent with the rest of his repertoire.

This had been the first season in which he had competed with his brother on more or less equal terms: in 1860-61 he had played out-of-the-way places, and Edwin had been absent during 1861-62. He had found that audiences and critics were quite happy to

49 'William Shakespeare', p. 48, and see Chapter 2.

50 Cowell, p. 120.

welcome *two* sons of the great Booth, and to discuss their diverging styles. John had even been pronounced the equal of his more established brother--positively in Boston, negatively in Philadelphia.

During July, John was visiting Edwin in New York when Adam Badeau, wounded in action for the Union, was brought there to convalesce. Badeau recalled that John 'nursed me tenderly, dressed my wounds, gave me my medicines, and . . . bore me in his arms daily up and down the stairs.' John himself recalled wryly, 'Imagine me helping that wounded soldier with my rebel sinews!'⁵¹ It was the time of the riots against the draft in New York: four days in which an estimated 1,000 people were killed, many of them blacks.⁵² During this time, said Badeau, Booth said nothing to indicate sympathy with the South, and 'spoke with detestation of the burning of houses, shooting Union officers, and murdering inoffensive negroes.' Badeau seems to assume that any sort of mayhem should please a Confederate sympathizer. Booth 'proposed that Randall [Badeau's young black servant] should be hidden in the cellar' and 'declared that he would protect the boy at the hazard of his life, if the mob came after him.'⁵³ Randall had to stay there 'nearly a week'.⁵⁴ Overall, John made a favourable impression on Badeau:

He was excessively handsome, even physically finer than Edwin, but less intellectual in his manliness. I never saw him on the stage, but under Edwin's roof I thought him very captivating, though not so thoroughly distinguished as his greater brother.⁵⁵

Booth may have been active in other ways during his vacation. After defeats at Gettysburg and Vicksburg in July, Confederate hopes looked bleak, and the authors of *Come Retribution* believe that 'possibly in mid-1863, [Booth] was drawn into Confederate clandestine operations.'⁵⁶ If this is true, it may account for some of his choices of engagement for the coming season.

51 Badeau, 'Dramatic Reminiscences'; *Unlocked Book*, p. 116.

52 Long & Long, p. 384.

53 Badeau, 'Dramatic Reminiscences'.

54 'EB on and off the Stage', p. 264.

55 Ibid.

56 Long & Long, p. 379; William A. Tidwell with James O. Hall and David Winfred Gaddy, *Come Retribution: The Confederate Secret Service and the Assassination of Lincoln* (Jackson: U. Press of Mississippi, 1988), p. 259.

1863-64 Season

In this, the last full season that Booth played, he took several new tacks. He experimented with management again by taking out a 'combination' tour, he travelled farther West than he had ventured before, and he played two of the captured Confederate towns. He began and ended his season in his favourite city, Boston: but he opened on September 28, 1863 not at the Museum but at Willard's Howard Athenaeum.

Described as 'a small and inferior theatre' when Edwin Booth played it in 1859,⁵⁷ the Athenaeum had changed hands twice since John had negotiated with E.L. Davenport for an engagement there. Wyzeman Marshall had improved the company, scenery and costumes (*Boston Daily Advertiser*, Jan. 19, 1863), and had begun to target a particular audience: according to the *Boston Post* (May 19, 1862), 'The HOWARD has done a comfortable business with its melo-dramas by judiciously catering to the means as well as to the tastes of the masses the manager enjoys a fair measure of success.'⁵⁸ Willard had taken over when Marshall went on to manage the Boston Theatre. Booth's new leading lady was the local favourite, Julia Bennett Barrow, who had also supported Edwin in New York and Boston the previous autumn. Playing 'seconds' was Harry Langdon, Richmond leading man in 1858-59. Booth's engagement there was perhaps connected with the tour that followed, but the exact arrangements are not known.

Critical comment was scanty, perhaps owing to the somewhat lower status of the house as well as to the fact that Booth was playing only parts that Boston had seen before. The usual full houses were mentioned (*Courier*, Oct. 2, *Evening Express*, Oct. 3). The *Transcript* (Oct. 1) and *Post* (Oct. 10) noted a marked improvement in Booth's art, and the *Gazette* of October 3 thought that 'Mr. Booth was, as a general thing, in good voice, and has certainly never acted better.' Yet Booth's enthusiastic, but strict, critic on the *Advertiser* was not satisfied:

His popularity does not wane, and he evidently exerts his great energies as steadily as ever to maintain it, throwing into his scenes that strong, fiery

57 Adam Badeau, 'The Representative Art', *Atlantic Monthly* 5 (June 1860): 691.

58 Prices for Booth's engagement were dress circle and parquet 50¢, family circle 25¢, gallery 15¢ (playbill Oct. 2, Boston Public Library).

power for which he is so eminent. We can see but little improvement in those particulars upon which we commented at length when he first played in this city; with talents such as his are, and gaining strength as he does, it is wrong in him to take no more pains to give that polish and delicacy to his impersonations which they lack (Oct. 5).

On October 9, reviewing Booth's Pescara, the critic was exasperated: 'the plain indication of Mr. Booth's positive faults seem[s] to produce but little reformation,--so little indeed that we may be pardoned for our curiosity to know whether he tries to improve.' During his last Museum engagement, 'we thought that we could trace in his style the result of efforts . . . to add to his boldly hewn figures that polish which the careful chisel and not the free-swung axe must contribute.' But his Pescara showed 'the same great blemishes' Booth had had at his debut. The critic would no longer make allowances for inexperience: 'these blemishes in the young aspirant grow to inexcusable faults in the actor who claims to hold a position in the front rank of tragic actors.' Rant was unworthy of Booth, who was 'gifted with genius', and who 'owe[d] it to himself to keep a close watch upon himself lest he fall into so deep a mire that he cannot retrieve his errant steps and to achieve all of which his talents afford a promise.' Pescara was hardly the part in which to look for polish and delicacy (see Chapter 10); but the critic may have missed the point. An actor must please his audience, and here, in a theatre for the 'masses', Booth may have broadened his style further than his Museum audience would have liked. About a fortnight earlier, the *New York Herald* (Sept. 22) had similarly accused Edwin Booth of overacting for the gallery, and 'insisted that he abandon these false histrionics and address himself solely to the intellectual part of the audience.'⁵⁹ Neither critic considered the impracticality of his advice: the 'intellectual part' must be a minority of most, if not all audiences.

Since this was not the Museum, there was a Saturday evening performance (of *Richard III*), and in addition, a matinée (*The Marble Heart*, popular with the ladies) on his last day. The *Post* (Oct. 10) found his fortnight's visit too brief, and assured Booth that he had 'no better, warmer or more enthusiastic friends anywhere than are to be found in this

59 Shattuck, *Hamlet of EB*, p. 51.

city'. Although he was at a rival house, he visited his Museum friends: writing later to Moses Kimball, he asks Mrs. Kimball to forgive him 'for keeping her husband out so late at night. I guess she is glad I am gone.'⁶⁰

He was not going far to start with. With Julia Bennett Barrow, his Athenaeum leading lady and a core company, he now embarked on a combination tour of New England towns too small to support full stock companies of their own, plus Brooklyn, NY. Although the *Clipper* (Oct. 31) referred to it as the 'Booth-Barrow Combination', it seems clear from the advertisements that Booth alone was its manager.⁶¹ His company included the beautiful Fanny Brown, with whom he was to be linked romantically (see below). She had been described feelingly in the *Clipper* (Sept. 20, 1862) by T. Allston Brown: 'each movement of [her] rounded and glorious form shows the perfection of its Grecian contour', he enthused; 'her eyes, dark as the night, beam with lightning flashes of happiness'. Of course, she also had 'great talents as an actress'. For his second experiment in management, Booth took a very limited repertoire of four plays (one, *The Marble Heart*, performed only twice) to a total of six towns: Worcester and Springfield, Massachusetts; Providence, Rhode Island; Hartford, Connecticut; Brooklyn; and finally New Haven, Connecticut, playing two or three nights in each.⁶² Announced for two nights only in Providence, the company was invited to stay on for a third; similarly, they returned to Springfield by request the week following their two nights there for Booth to present *Hamlet*.

Conditions in some of these touring theatres were not of the best. The grandiosely-named Academy of Music in Providence was in fact 'long and narrow, had only a

60 St. Joseph, Jan. 2, 1864, Samples, p. 134.

61 For instance, the one in the *Worcester Daily Transcript*, Oct. 10, signed by 'W.A. Moore, Agent for Mr. Booth.'

62 The *Clipper* (Oct. 17) states that the combination was to visit Albany, NY, as well, but this writer could find no trace of them; Phelps (p. 400) notes that Edwin Booth played Tweddle Hall, Albany, from Sept. 14, 1863. Laura Keane had taken her company round 'a Providence/Hartford/New Haven circuit operated by Henry C. Jarrett' in the summer of 1863 (Bank, 'A Reconsideration', p. 65 and note); it is possible that Jarrett was involved in Booth's touring.

parquette and gallery, and the entrance was up two flights of stairs.'⁶³ The *Springfield Republican* (Oct. 24) complained that the scene shifting for Booth's *Hamlet* had been 'bungling', and the play had included 'some fine talk in total darkness, caused by something the gas company can perhaps explain.' *Richard III* was 'mounted shabbily' by the Brooklyn Academy of Music: 'Banners, dresses, scenery, furniture, everything would have discredited a third-class theatre', said the *Brooklyn Standard* (Oct. 31), and the *New York Clipper* (Oct. 31) added 'a company of second rate artists [and] a similar style of orchestra' to the list of the Academy's shortcomings. At New Haven, both the *Palladium* and the *Morning Journal & Courier* (Oct. 29) recommended oil for the stage machinery as 'beneficial to the nerves of spectators' (*Journal*), while the *Daily Register* (same date) observed that the Bosworth scenes had the stage manager in 'pretty much the condition Rosecrans was on the Chickamauga day' (referring to the Union defeat in this battle). Supernumeraries were also a problem: at New Haven the *Palladium* complained of 'lubberly soldiers' in *Richard III* (Oct. 29), while at Brooklyn, the 'military effects were ludicrous *Richmond's* army numbered four men, rank and file, and *Gloster's* five' (*Standard*, Oct. 31). Perhaps too many supers were now in the real armies. The New Haven *Journal* (Oct. 30) praised the costumes of the touring troupe as 'remarkably good', which must have shown up any shabbiness in the locals.

Kimmel's assertion that at Boston and during the tour, reviews said that Booth's 'performances were marred by hoarseness' (p. 177) has its genesis in a single reference in the *Clipper* (Nov. 7) to Booth's 'hoarseness from a severe cold' during the Brooklyn *Richard III*. It is possible that this cold was the reason for Booth's substituting *Marble Heart* for *Richard* on the opening night at New Haven, the date following Brooklyn; but since the first announcement of the change appeared on the same day as the Brooklyn *Richard* performance,⁶⁴ it is equally likely that the company found it more convenient to give two consecutive performances of *The Marble Heart* at Brooklyn and New Haven on

⁶³ George O. Willard, *History of the Providence Stage 1762-1891* (Providence, RI: News Co., 1891), p. 165.

⁶⁴ Evening edition of *New Haven Daily Palladium*, Oct. 24.

Monday and Tuesday, October 26 and 27. Whatever the reason, informing the press of the change was bungled by Booth or his agent W.A. Moore, and contradictory announcements and advertisements appeared in the three local papers. Consequently, some of the audience were disappointed not to see *Richard III*; and to make matters worse, one of the cast did not turn up and his part had to be read by another actor (*Journal*, Oct. 28). Perhaps this chapter of accidents accounted for Fanny Brown's 'uncontrollable merriment' in her pathetic part, frowned on by the *New-Haven Daily Register* (Oct. 28).

This venture into management seems to have been quite successful. Large houses are reported, sometimes despite bad weather; the exceptions were at Hartford, where audiences dwindled from 'large' to 'good' to 'rather thin', according to the *Evening Press* of October 21-23; and New Haven, with audiences 'not as large as the merits of J. Wilkes Booth and Company should call out' (*Palladium*, Oct. 29). At Brooklyn, the house was only 'half full' for *The Marble Heart*, but then there had not been a full house there all season (*Clipper*, Nov. 7); however, the *Brooklyn Programme* (Oct. 26) thought the *Richard* audience 'a good paying house', and the *Standard* (Oct. 31) that it was 'as good as could have been expected', given weather 'exceedingly unpropitious'. A rare comment on the composition of Booth's audience at Brooklyn suggests again that his appeal, even in Shakespeare, was at least as much to popular taste as to the educated or refined:

The upper circle was well filled, the deities of the gallery turning out in force, and making an unusual demonstration in the scramble for tickets. Such a scene of pushing, crowding and jamming, mingled with expressions more vigorous than polite, is not often witnessed in the classic precincts of the Academy, and reminded me of the crush and turmoil when some ear-splitter is announced in the 'Corsican Brothers,' or a new ghost drama is produced. . . . The 'terrific broadsword combat,' as it was sensationally described on the bills, was intensely gratifying to the gallery . . . (*Brooklyn Standard*, Oct. 31).

Booth impressed at least one critic with his versatility: the *Providence Daily Post* (Oct. 19, 20) marvelled rather naïvely at the difference between 'his deformed and misshapen Gloster, sweating for blood, foaming with hate and unbridled fury', 'the open, magnanimous, but misguided Claude', and the 'quiet unassuming scholar', Hamlet. The

New Haven *Morning Journal and Courier* (Oct. 29) remarked, 'He is not Edwin by any means, but he is making rapid strides toward that eminent tragedian's fame.' One audience member thought she had seen him at Springfield: 'The character, with its rich costumes, was eminently fitted to set off his dark beauty. . . . As I recall him, he was certainly a very picturesque figure.' However, she places this appearance 'just before or early in the Civil War' and gives the part as Don Caesar de Bazan. The likelihood is that she was remembering Edwin in this part; but possibly it was John as Claude Melnotte.⁶⁵

There were rumours in two places that the company would shortly return: the *Worcester Daily Transcript* (Oct. 14) confidently stated that Booth and Mrs. Barrow 'expect to appear again before the Worcester public in about three weeks', and the *New Haven Palladium* (Oct. 30) more tentatively that 'the manager intends to bring the troupe, or portions of it, here again soon.' On November 2, Booth opened at Ford's Theatre in Washington; confirming this engagement on September 17, Booth had said that he would 'keep the two following weeks *open* a time longer' in case Ford wanted him for Baltimore, or to continue at Washington.⁶⁶ In the event, he went to Cleveland, but may have considered a revival of the combination tour before making this arrangement with John Ellsler. A last echo of this tour was the rumour, reported in the *Clipper* on November 18, 'that J. Wilkes Booth will shortly lead to the hymenial altar the beautiful and fascinating Fanny Brown.' Needless to say, he didn't; but this report adds some credibility to a post-assassination account of an affair between the two during the tour.⁶⁷

As at Philadelphia, Booth was given a bad press before he even opened at Ford's in Washington. A columnist calling himself 'Bizarre', who claimed to be 74 and not a regular critic, wrote in the *Sunday Chronicle* on November 1, the eve of John's appearance:

65 Letter from H. Annette Poole, *Springfield Republican*, Feb. 12, 1909. John played Don Caesar only once, in his first season.

66 New York, Sept. 17, 1863, Rhodehamel & Taper, p. 90.

67 Dr. L.L. Stevens, *Lives, Crimes, and Confessions of the Assassins* (Troy, NY: Daily Times Steam Printing Estab., 1865), pp. 20-22, from transcript in Barbee Papers. Allston Brown's *Clipper* piece (Sept. 20, 1862) states that Fanny Brown was married but separated.

We do not regard Mr. Booth as an eminent tragedian; we can scarcely call him a tragedian. Unless he has improved very much since we last saw him, he is little more than a second-class actor, who, as the possessor of a great name, and with a fine presence, sweet voice, and much natural and uncultivated ability, has seen proper to come upon the stage as a representative of tragedy. It is possible that Mr. Booth will in time become a great actor; and his career is one that we have followed with interest. We shall study his performances carefully during his present engagement, and give him all the praise he deserves.

Ford, meanwhile, was again playing the 'youngest star' card in his publicity for Booth, 'who has sprung into fame as a tragedian at an age when many are struggling to master the novelty of stage business', and had engaged 'a really strong and excellent company' to support him (*Sunday Chronicle*, Nov. 1). This included Booth's old friend S.K. Chester and an English couple, George de Vere and Belle Vaughn, who had sailed from London in a blockade-runner which was captured before it could reach Richmond.⁶⁸ Booth would later do these two a favour. Ford's Theatre was brand-new: the former converted church on the site having burned down, the redesigned Ford's had opened at the beginning of the season with a specially-written address which included the lines, 'Your grand "King Richard," [J.B. Booth] true, has ceased to reign, / His sons survive--he lives in them again!'⁶⁹ Since it is very unlikely that Junius Brutus Jr. is referred to here, this is another example of John and Edwin being equated as worthy successors to their father. John was even placed ahead of Edwin in a puff on the front page of the *National Intelligencer* (Nov. 7), presumably emanating from Ford: described as the "'fair rose and the expectancy" [*sic*] of the American stage', John, who shared equally with Edwin the inherited genius of their father, had been 'more careful than [Edwin] in the distribution of its power--more zealous of its dignity and fame.' Thus, his efforts 'exhibit more of the enthusiasm of the artist--the perseverance of the student' than Edwin's. This sole example of John's being praised at Edwin's expense in an advertisement may perhaps refer obliquely to Edwin's episodes of onstage drunkenness, which must have been common knowledge among theatregoers.

68 'Eye Witness Tells of Lincoln's Assassination', interview with William J. Ferguson, *Baltimore Sun*, Feb. 9, 1913.

69 *Clipper*, Sept. 12, 1863.

'Bizarre' of the *Sunday Chronicle* took issue with John's Shylock on November 8: only the trial scene made him feel that 'in time [Booth] may be what he certainly is not now--an eminent tragedian.' Meanwhile, the paper's daily sister panned his Richard III on November 4.⁷⁰ It is possible that these two critics were one and the same: there are verbal echoes, and certainly their views were similar--views which were not popular with other newspapermen. Following the theatrical section of the *Evening Star* on November 3 appeared the announcement, 'PERSONAL--Mr. Damphool is not dead. He is writing theatrical critiques for the *Chronicle*.' Perhaps theatrical politics were to blame for these attacks on Booth: earlier in 1863, he had been puffed by the *Chronicle* when playing at Grover's and the Washington. It is even possible that theatrical overlapped with national politics: the suggestion has already been touched on that Ford's was patronized mainly by Confederate sympathizers⁷¹--and the *Chronicle* was a strong supporter of Lincoln. In this connection, the advertising of Booth's *Robbers* may be significant: the *National Republican* reported on November 14 that the play 'will be given entire, for the first time on the modern stage and all those parts and lines which political bias have cut away will be produced and no doubt have a telling effect.' This hint that contemporary political parallels might be drawn is amplified by the article published earlier by the *National Intelligencer* (Nov. 4):

To those . . . who know to what lengths humanity may be goaded by a systematic series of studied wrongs, the piece seems to bear much truthfulness every line expresses a true reliance on a holy devotion to the principles of political freedom.

One passage marked as being cut in performance in an American edition of the play contains these words:

This ruby I drew from the finger of a minister whom I cut down at the chase, at his prince's feet. He had built his fortune on the miseries of his fellow creatures, and his elevation was mark'd by the tears of the fatherless and the widow.--This diamond I took from a treasurer-general, who made a traffick

70 See Chapters 9 and 10 for further details.

71 Grover, p. 949. See above for discussion of John T. Ford's own possible loyalties.

of offices of trust, and sold honours, the rewards of merit, to the highest bidder.⁷²

Since Lincoln's first cabinet was notoriously corrupt, and war profiteers flourished during the earlier years of the Civil War, this passage could have been read as a covert message to those who believed that they were suffering a 'systematic series of studied wrongs'. If this was the intention behind the 'full version', it was presumably a collaboration between Booth and John T. Ford, who could have supplied or suggested the newspaper announcements. This possibility throws an interesting sidelight on how Booth's political opinions could have interacted with his stage career.

As with Booth's previous visit to Washington, criticism in the other papers was not of a particularly high standard. The *National Intelligencer*, however, printed a defence of his Richard on November 13 which appears to contain a genuine opinion rather than a covert advertisement from Ford (see Chapter 9), and pointed out that the performance received 'no inconsiderable applause.' Both daily and Sunday *Chronicle* had to admit that houses were good, 'Bizarre' opening his notice on November 8 by saying, 'Mr. J. Wilkes Booth has given us a round of characters to full houses.' 'Bizarre's' column appeared only twice (Nov. 1 and 8), and much of the second one was taken up with sneering at his correspondents, who had objected to his dislike of their favourites, Maggie Mitchell, the Florences and Lucille Western. Possibly his opinions proved so unpopular that the column was axed.

Lincoln's only authenticated visit to one of Booth's performances occurred during this engagement, when he and a party saw *The Marble Heart*.⁷³ It was inevitable that Lincoln in myth should have become a great admirer of Booth; Townsend was probably first in the field on April 19, 1865, when he claimed that 'Mr. Lincoln saw Booth play more than once and particularly admired him. He once applauded him rapturously' (*New York World*).

⁷² *The Robbers. A Tragedy. . . . The second American edition, as adapted for representation by Mr. Marriott* (New York: Samuel Campbell, 1795), p. 49.

⁷³ See Chapter 10 for John Hay's opinion of the performance.

John T. Ford remembered the engagement as a profitable one, though he gave conflicting figures for it. In the statement he made while incarcerated in the Carroll Prison after the assassination, Ford said, 'He played with me--I cannot be positive about dates-- . . . he played last season \$500 for six nights.' Ford may have been confusing the Washington engagement (12 nights) with Booth's week at Baltimore the previous season, unless he meant one week of the fortnight. In 1893, he reported, 'I paid him \$700 a week in his engagement with me in '64 [*sic*].'⁷⁴

William J. Ferguson, the call-boy at Ford's, about fifteen at the time, remembered: 'The first line I ever spoke on the stage was to John Wilkes Booth'. He had been 'called into emergency service' as an attendant to Henry VI's corpse.⁷⁵ Booth had 'a personality of remarkable charm', and 'so endeared himself to all of us that he could have asked extraordinary favors and had them done for him gladly.'⁷⁶ Photographs of him, says Ferguson,

disclose him as saturnine. They show little of his quick excitability, nothing of his love of fun, no trace of his joyousness. For these qualities . . . I held him in admiration and high esteem. With me the extent of my regard and respect for Booth fell nothing short of hero-worship. . . . To me he was a marvelously clever and amusing demi-god. Practical jokes of his invention appealed to me as the quintessence of humor. His verve and fire as an actor made him stand high in the scale of my ideals.⁷⁷

Booth demonstrated his expert swordsmanship offstage as well as on: Ferguson 'saw him, after a rehearsal, take on two men at once with the foils and disarm them both within a few seconds.' He also, '[w]ith little effort . . . jumped over a piece of scenery standing on edge on the stage, and more than five feet in height'. When, during a performance of *Richard III*, the prompter failed to give the cue for a flourish of trumpets, Booth threw a scenery wedge at the wall an inch above the prompter's head: 'The prompter collapsed in fright, and from the floor he frantically waved the signal.' Ferguson, often victim of the

74 Kimmel transcript, 'From the Statement of John T. Ford, examined by Colonel Olcott, Carroll Prison, Washington, April 28, 1865', Records of the Judge Advocate General's Office, National Archives; Baltimore *American*, June 9, 1893.

75 *I Saw Booth Shoot Lincoln* (1930; reprint, Austin, TX: Pemberton Press, 1969), pp. 12-13.

76 *The Sun*, Feb. 9, 1913.

77 *I Saw Booth Shoot Lincoln*, pp. 13-15.

prompter's practical jokes, was especially delighted.⁷⁸

Booth arrived in Cleveland on November 23, but did not open until Thanksgiving, the 26th, following the Couldocks as star.⁷⁹ He was welcomed back with a 'brilliant ovation The house was not only crowded--but crowded with one of the most fashionable audiences of the season (*Daily Plain Dealer*, Nov. 27). With 'patient detail', Booth would be 'one of the most gifted actors on the stage' (Dec. 1).

The composer and pianist Louis Gottschalk saw Booth play in Cleveland, and with post-assassination hindsight remembered being 'struck at that time with the beauty of his features, and at the same time by a sinister expression of his countenance. I would even say that he had something deadly in his look.'⁸⁰ It would be interesting to know which part Booth was playing. But this ominous description is more than offset by the eulogy accorded to Booth by Clara Morris. Later to be a famous 'emotional actress', she was then a teenaged ballet girl, earning 50¢ a night, and occasionally playing small parts. Booth himself suggested her for the Player Queen in his *Hamlet*, and she appeared as a statue in *The Marble Heart* (see Chapter 10). 'It was impossible to see him and not admire him,' she recalled. 'It was equally impossible to know him and not love him. . . . He was a gentleman in speech, manner and thought as he was in bearing. He was a great favorite with the men and the women adored him.'⁸¹ She was particularly impressed by his behaviour to the Cleveland company: 'when we remember that stars are not generally in the habit of showing their brightest, their best side to the company at rehearsal, we cannot help feeling both respect and liking for the one who does.'⁸² In the *Boston Herald* she gave more details: he was 'ever gentle, considerate and kind. The sorrowing heart of many a struggling, disappointed and poor young actor has quickened with pulsations of

78 Ibid., pp. 15-17.

79 Cleveland *Leader*, Nov. 23, transcribed by Barbee in Barbee Papers; *Leader*, Nov. 25.

80 *Notes of a Pianist*, ed. Jeanne Behrend (1881; repr. New York: Knopf, 1964), p. 282. Gottschalk was playing in concerts at Brainard's Hall during Booth's engagement.

81 Morris, 'John Wilkes Booth'. Miss Morris was interviewed just after reading the denigratory remarks on JWB in the reminiscences of Lincoln's secretaries Nicolay and Hay, which no doubt accounts for her somewhat effusive, defensive tone.

82 Morris, *Life on the Stage*, p. 97.

hope as he spoke words of kindly encouragement'. He commended her performance of the Player Queen: 'Only the young actress can understand what that compliment was to me. Too few of our great stars think of performing these little acts, which mean so much'.

One night, everything went wrong; the performance was 'distressingly bad', and

Mr. Booth's best scenes and greatest situations were utterly ruined. Every one expected a storm and some vigorous language when the curtain fell, and Manager Ellsler of the theatre was present expecting his share of the censure. To the surprise of all, who had seen other stars in similar circumstances . . . Mr. Booth simply said to Manager Ellsler, 'It's too bad, John, too bad; you must do better for me tomorrow.' His kindly heart would not permit him to berate the poor actors who had done their best, even though their best had made him appear at his worst.

In *Richard III* on his third night, according to the *Cleveland Leader* (Nov. 30), Booth's sword was broken in the fight with Mr. McCollom, his Richmond. 'He caught it by the blade But his grasp was necessarily a loose one, and on the next blow from his opponent the sword flew back cutting his forehead severely above the eye.' Clara Morris, who was watching from the wings, gave a different version of the event in her book: McCollom 'forgot he had struck the full number of head blows' and brought his sword down again on Booth's unguarded head. 'A cry of horror rose, for in one moment his face was masked in blood, one ey[e]brow being cut cleanly through.' Booth, who at rehearsal had urged McCollom to 'Come on hard!', 'flinging the blood from his eyes with his left hand, said, as genially as man could speak: "That's all right, old man! never mind me-- only come on hard, for God's sake, and save the fight!"'⁸³ They fought the scene out, 'its effect being greatly heightened by the accident' (*Leader*, Nov. 30). 'There are not many men who can receive a gash over the eye in a scene at night,' Clara Morris commented, 'without at least a momentary outburst of temper'; but Booth showed none, and was afterwards concerned to put his hapless fellow actor at ease.⁸⁴

It was not only the women in the company itself who were charmed by Booth.

Miss Morris gives us a glimpse of a normally hidden side of Victorian celebrity:

Booth's striking beauty was something which thousands of silly women could not withstand. His mail each day brought him letters from women

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 97-98.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

weak and frivolous, who perilled their happiness and their reputations by committing to paper words of love and admiration These fond epistles were seldom read. He instructed his dresser to burn them. Many of them were signed with the real names of the foolish women who wrote them. The dresser one day boasted that a certain lady, moving in high social circles, had written a compromising letter to Mr. Booth. The statement was treated as an absurd lie, and, to prove that he had not been boasting, the dresser displayed the letter, which he had not burned as he had been instructed to do. Mr. Booth's anger was terrible when he learned the facts, and the dresser was dismissed, and ever after that the signatures to these letters were torn into tiny fragments by the actor, and he made certain himself that they were destroyed. He had a chivalrous nature and a soul above petty meanness.⁸⁵

As she makes clear in her book (p. 99), all actors did not behave this way, but often passed their 'mash notes' around for others to laugh at. It is not clear whether the dresser belonged to the theatre, or travelled with Booth; later this season Booth did indeed have a servant touring with him, perhaps the replacement for this indiscreet dresser. Harry Ford, brother of John T., confirmed Booth's tact with effusive missives: at Ford's in 1865, he saw him reading some: 'He'd never leave any of them lying around, or let anybody else see them. That morning, when I'd look over at him, I'd see him kind o' flush, and then tear a letter into little pieces.'⁸⁶ Another acquaintance spoke of Booth's 'unexpected embar[r]assment when he was introduced to some ladies who were "yearning" to meet him.'⁸⁷

As to his acting, Miss Morris repudiated the view that Booth's 'value as an actor lay rather in his romantic beauty of person than in any talent or industry he possessed. . . . In his soul the fires of genius burned brightly and he promised to top them all in the profession into which he was born'.⁸⁸ That this was not only her own 'young and ignorant' opinion she was at pains to stress:

I remember well hearing the older members of the company express their opinions. Mr. Ellsler, who had been on terms of friendship with the elder Booth, was delighted with the promise of his work. He greatly admired Edwin's intellectual power, his artistic care, but 'John,' he cried, 'has more of the old man's power in one performance than Edwin can show in a year. He has the fire, the dash, the touch of *strangeness*. He often produces unstudied

85 Morris, 'John Wilkes Booth'.

86 Clara E. Laughlin, *Traveling Through Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), p. 105.

87 Bullard, 'Boston's Part'.

88 'John Wilkes Booth'; Nicolay and Hay (see above) had taken this dismissive view.

effects at night. I question him, "Did you rehearse that business to-day, John?" [H]e answers: "No, I didn't rehearse it, it just came to me in the scene, and I couldn't help doing it; but it went all right, didn't it?"⁸⁹

This is a revealing insight into Booth's approach: such spontaneity onstage must have been a major component in the excitement he generated in his audiences. Like most, though, Ellsler felt that Booth's work needed to be refined: "'Full of impulse, just now, like a colt, his heels are in the air, nearly as often as his head, but wait a year or two till he gets used to the harness, and quiets down a bit, and you will see as great an actor as America can produce!'"⁹⁰ And speaking from her own experience, Clara Morris testified: 'I know how effective he was with the public, as many nights I have stood upon the stage in a humble capacity, and wondered at his power to move and thrill vast assemblages'.⁹¹

There seem, in fact, to have been vast assemblages to thrill. Both the *Cleveland Leader* (Dec. 5) and the *New York Clipper* (Dec. 19) noted the success of the engagement; the *Clipper's* correspondent, who did not regard Booth 'as even a passable candidate for admission to the circle of stars', had to admit that 'the people here formed a different impression, if the attendance may be taken as a criterion.' Audiences had come despite bad weather: the *Leader* on November 30 reported rain, 'the wind fierce and cutting . . . thermometer falling. At night the weather grew colder and then came the snow.' It was the ominous beginning of a terrible winter.

⁸⁹ *Life on the Stage*, p. 103.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* Ellsler said much the same in his own book: see above.

⁹¹ Morris, 'John Wilkes Booth'.

CHAPTER 8

Winter and Discontent: Leavenworth, 1863 to the End

Before setting off for his next engagement, Booth visited Venango County, Pennsylvania, with John Ellsler: oil had been found in that region, and these two, with Thomas P. Mears, made a small investment in some land.¹ From there, Booth had a long journey westward to Leavenworth, near the eastern border of Kansas. While he could have travelled via Chicago, and thence south, there is another route he may have taken: a letter signed 'J. Wilkes' and dated Louisville, December 1863, told of a wagonload of medicine, being sent south through the blockade. The Confederate guard who showed this letter to a Union prisoner-of-war had been talking of men in the North who aided the South and had particularly mentioned J. Wilkes Booth as 'a firm friend'.² Booth could easily have travelled via Louisville for the express purpose of arranging this shipment. He told his sister that he smuggled quinine, a medicinal drug much in demand in the South, and rejoiced that he could afford to buy it: "'my beloved precious money--oh, never beloved till now!--is the means, one of the means, by which I serve the South.'"³

He was to have opened his engagement on Saturday December 19, but somewhere in the long journey he was delayed, probably by snow. At that time of year, Leavenworth cannot much have resembled the lyrical picture painted of it in the *Spirit of the Times* (Oct. 3, 1863):

a little, busy, bustling bee-hive of a place, snugly ensconced among green hills, sliced off on one side by the magnificent stream of the Missouri, and bounded on all the others by verdant hills, copped with cool, rustling trees, and cut up with winding, picturesque roads

1 Joseph H. Simonds stated that Booth first acquired an interest in December, 1863, or January, 1864, but Booth was in the West in January. Given in Ernest C. Miller, *John Wilkes Booth in the Pennsylvania Oil Region* (Meadville, PA: Crawford County Historical Society, 1987), p. 53.

2 Statement of Henry C. Higginson, M599, Reel 2, Frames 162-69, National Archives.

3 *Unlocked Book*, pp. 114-15; no date is given for the conversation. This was presumably the reason why Booth 'hoarded, saved, grew miserly at last' (p. 112).

With 7,429 people in 1860, it was Kansas's biggest town and had been swollen since by the military stationed there;⁴ yet it seems a rather out-of-the-way venue for a rising star like John Wilkes Booth. On the other hand, stars such as Charles Couldock, Kate Denin, A.J. Neafie, Jean Hosmer and Edwin Adams had played there,⁵ and there may have been another consideration. Leavenworth, says James Malin, was 'a city Democratic in politics and reputedly Proslavery in sentiment':⁶ Booth could have combined his engagement there with some secret work for the Confederacy.

Although *Richard III* attracted 'a large audience' on his delayed first night, Tuesday December 22 (*Clipper*, Jan. 9, 1864), the bad weather was against him. The *Daily Conservative* (Dec. 30) complained, 'Our citizens do not half appreciate the jewel they have in Wilkes Booth',⁷ and the *Clipper* (Jan. 23, 1864) bluntly noted that the 'engagement was not a successful one, owing to the weather being very stormy.' The theatre was advertised as 'thoroughly heated' (*Conservative*, Dec. 20); yet the *Daily Times* (Dec. 24) reported laconically, 'Hamlet had a cold--and so did the audience.'⁸

Booth left with a critical encomium, though with less money than he might have expected. The *Conservative* (Jan. 1) summed up, 'We have enjoyed the performances of this brilliant and intellectual young artist as we have done that [*sic*] of no other actor who has ever visited our city, with the exception, perhaps, of Mr. Couldock.' Many years later, a young scene painter wrote his 'Recollections' of Booth in very unflattering terms: a mannerless oaf, Booth was drunk on stage, bullied the backstage people and was 'cordially hated' by the time he left. The fact that this account misnames manager, theatre, preceding star and opening play suggests that a faint or nonexistent memory has

4 James C. Malin, 'Theatre in Kansas, 1858-1868', *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 23 (Spring 1957): 11, 14.

5 Malin, p. 33, 37; *Spirit of the Times*, Oct. 3, 1863.

6 Malin, p. 12.

7 All quotations from the Leavenworth *Daily Conservative* as transcribed by David Rankin Barbee, Barbee Papers.

8 Transcription by Constance Head, kindly brought to my attention by Jeannine Clarke Dodels. In her article 'John Wilkes Booth, 1864: Prologue to Assassination' (*Lincoln Herald* 85 (1983): 255) Head ominously deduces 'some respiratory troubles'; but the *Conservative* (Dec. 23) reported that Booth's 'elocution is faultless'.

been augmented with one of the familiar post-assassination stereotypes. It flatly contradicts most other testimony, such as that from Cleveland.⁹

As Booth wrote later, 'It was hard enough to get to Leavenworth but coming back was a hundred times worse.'¹⁰ He seems to have celebrated the New Year with friends at Fort Leavenworth, arriving with a frostbitten ear. In leaving, he had to run four miles to the river, where he helped cut the ice to allow the ferry to get to shore. He reached the Pacific Hotel in St. Joseph, Missouri, 'a dead man. Got to bed as soon as I could where I have been ever since', he wrote the next day.¹¹ On January 3, the *St. Joseph Morning Herald* reported, 'We have had no through train on the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad, for a week, and are not likely to have an arrival before Tuesday or Wednesday next.' Eight trains were stuck in the snow between St. Joseph and Breckinridge. The width of Missouri stood between Booth and his next engagement at St. Louis, due to begin on January 4.

Stalled in St. Joseph, he was also running out of money.¹² Luckily, or possibly at his own suggestion, he received a petition from some citizens and other stranded travellers to give a reading: this was printed, with his reply, in the *Morning Herald* on January 5. 'I have gained some little reputation as an actor,' he wrote, 'but a dramatic reading I have never attempted.' This was not strictly true, if the report of his public reading at Charlestown is reliable (see Chapter 4); perhaps the statement was meant to forestall criticism, for he had misgivings: in a reading, he went on, 'it is impossible to identify ones-self [*sic*] with any single character.' Since sinking himself in his characters was one of Booth's strong points, while his elocution was often criticized, he was less confident of success. In the event, the *Herald* (Jan. 6) was full of approbation: Booth's

9 'Recollections of J. Wilkes Booth, in Leavenworth, Kansas, in December, 1863' by F.E. Jerome, 1886, Manuscripts Dept., Kansas State Historical Society (Topeka), kindly brought to my attention by Arthur F. Loux.

10 Letter to John Ellsler, from Louisville, Jan. 23, 1864, in John A. Ellsler Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society.

11 To Moses Kimball, Jan. 2, 1864, Samples, p. 134.

12 In his letter to Ellsler, Jan. 23, 1864, he says, 'I was down to my last cent', but this is probably an exaggeration.

'selections were all rendered in a capital style, but we were particularly pleased with "Once I Was Pure,"¹³ and the "Charge of the Light Brigade"'. He had a sterner critic in one of the signatories to the petition, Col. M.F. Tiernan. Tiernan met Booth on the day of the reading and 'elicited from him an animated and really interesting criticism on the eminent tragedians of Europe and America', but he did not endorse Booth's judgement:

His high appreciation of and decided preference for Forrest, as contrasted with Macready, afforded only another evidence of that national prejudice which the superior genius, elegant culture and unsurpassed elocution of the great English tragedian so often rebuked, but could never overcome.¹⁴

Booth's admiration for Forrest is known from his sister's memoir, but he cannot have seen Macready since he was ten,¹⁵ so he was not ideally placed to compare the two actors. At Booth's request, Tiernan gave his own views on elocution, which he regarded as a very difficult art in which few were proficient. That night, said the Colonel, 'The room was uncomfortably cold, and the audience restless, and at times annoying'; the *Morning Herald* (Jan. 6) wondered why 'full grown men will go about a hall . . . stamping like elephants'. The Colonel disliked the *Hamlet* speeches, finding Booth's voice 'good, but deficient in training', without 'that soft and touching modulation, that wonderfully thrilling power of intonation, that distinguished the performances of his gifted father.' The *Chicago Times* would not have agreed here. Tiernan's description of Booth's 'tragic starts, stage mannerism, and unseemly contortions of face' may be other critics' electrifying transitions and 'wonderful facial art'; while his calling Booth's voice a 'stately stride . . . always pompous and unnatural' is puzzling in the face of frequent references to his rapid and colloquial speech.¹⁶ Tiernan summed up, 'This young man has some

13 Otherwise known as 'Beautiful Snow'; see Chapter 7.

14 'Ten Years Ago: A Reminiscence of the Visit of J. Wilkes Booth to St. Joseph', copied in the *New York Clipper*, Feb. 21, 1874, from an undated issue of *St. Joseph Morning Herald*, purports to be an extract from Tiernan's diary. However, certain details, including a verbal echo of a description common after Booth's death, incline this writer to suspect that the original entry was somewhat expanded for publication, and the adverse criticism perhaps rendered more damning.

15 *Unlocked Book*, p. 109, and see Chapter 1.

16 For instance, the *New York Tribune*, March 21, 1862, contradicts Tiernan in his own words: '[JWB] is not amenable to the charge of pompous diction and laboriously unnatural sounds.'

histrionic talent, but not one spark of genius. On the stage his personal appearance is prepossessing, and his mien graceful and manly. The performance, with this exception, was a disappointment throughout.' Booth's misgivings had perhaps been justified (it may be telling that the *Herald's* favourites were not dramatic extracts); or perhaps Tiernan's enthusiasm for the art of elocution blinded him to the fact that acting requires both more and less than reading does.

Below the *Morning Herald's* review on January 6 appeared the following news item: 'The terrible snow storm, believed to be the heaviest ever known on the plains, has caused immense suffering. Cattle have died by the hundred on the whole route to Denver and Santa Fe.' Artistically successful or not, Booth's reading had earned him \$150,¹⁷ but he had to stay in St. Joseph for the next two days, perhaps hoping for a train. On January 8, the *Herald* reported: 'No trains are running on this end of the Hannibal & St. Joseph road, and none on the other end that we know of. The middle of the road is one vast snow drift.' The North Missouri line, however, which connected at Macon and ran to St. Louis, was open. Some recently-arrived travellers thought that 'no train can get through [in] *under ten days*': they had found themselves 'effectually blockaded' at Breckinridge. The same day, Booth hired a four-horse sleigh, paying \$100 of his reading profits, and left for Breckinridge, 60 miles away (*Herald*, Jan. 9).

It is not easy to piece together Booth's epic journey through the snows; he himself may have subsequently muddied the waters with some 'tall tales'. In his letter to Ellsler later that month, he wrote that he 'hired a sleigh and came 160 miles over the plains. Four days and nights in the largest snow drifts I ever saw. . . . I never knew what hardship was till then.' Many years later, the telegraph operator at Cameron, Missouri, 35 miles east of St. Joseph, claimed that Booth had stayed with him in his flat at the station. Though this account is full of inaccuracies, it contains a lifelike picture of Booth: he talked of literature to his host and had snowball fights with the local children. 'I have never beheld another man,' the telegraph operator remembered, 'whose face could express so many

17 JWB to Ellsler, Jan. 23, 1864.

varied emotions. From a look that was the picture of sunshine and joy, his face could change instantly to one of the deepest dejection and woe'¹⁸--a faculty which Booth's critics had often remarked on. Booth's host claimed that he stayed 'nearly two weeks', which cannot be true, since he reached St. Louis in four days. Probably he pushed on after a night or two, following the railway line until he reached Breckinridge or Macon, where the track was clear, and finished the journey by rail.

A more highly coloured account is given by Mrs. McKee Rankin (the soubrette/dancer Kitty Blanchard), who was in the company at Louisville and met Booth when he arrived there after his St. Louis engagement. According to her, she heard Booth regaling John Albaugh, once again playing 'seconds' to him, with the story of his journey. Times, places, and methods of transport are mostly inaccurate in her account. A grain of truth is suggested by the presence of a coloured servant, whom Booth himself mentions in connection with the loss of a precious flask of spirits in his letter to Kimball (Jan. 2): Mrs. Rankin's account may contain a garbled version of the same story. As a final Gothic touch, the hapless travellers are beset by wolves. If Booth actually told any of this story, it may have been for the benefit of Mr. Benson, the English stage manager, who was 'very much prejudiced against everything American'.¹⁹ Edwin Adams later wrote that Booth, telling him of the journey, had boasted 'of having threatened a conductor's life, who had stopped his train on account of the great depth of snow, and that by placing a pistol at his head, [he] made him continue his journey.'²⁰ If this was not, likewise, a test of Adams's gullibility, it may represent a memory edited to present Booth as unpredictable and violent.

Booth arrived in St. Louis in time to play on Tuesday, January 12, having lost a week and a day of his engagement. In the coldest weather on record, a family had frozen

18 'Snowbound with John Wilkes Booth at Cameron, MO', *The Republic* (St. Louis), Aug. 4, 1901. The author, 'W.F.B.', anachronistically has Booth travelling with a full combination, arriving on a train with a whole theatrical company. He gives the year as 1862-63.

19 'The News of Lincoln's Death', *American Magazine* 67 (1909): 259-61.

20 Letter to 'Reakirt', April 17, 1865, M599, Reel 2, Frames 59-62, National Archives. Booth met Adams at Louisville later that month.

to death in their wagon, and the Mississippi was ice from shore to shore (*Daily Missouri Democrat*, Jan. 4 and 5). Houses were full for Booth, though (*Democrat*, Jan. 13, 14), despite competition from the hugely popular General Tom Thumb at the Mercantile Library Hall with three other midgets (*Republican*, Jan. 17). Anticlimactically after his eventful journey there, the local papers offered no new insights into Booth's art, barely mentioning the performances of this established favourite. Charles Krone, a member of the stock company, described Booth as 'worn out, dejected and as melancholy as the dull, grey sky above us'. This was due, Booth 'smilingly' explained, to 'the rough experience he had passed through lately'; he had made 'the greater part of the journey [to St. Louis] in sleds'.²¹ His acting, Krone remembered, was 'more forcible' than Edwin's, 'and manifested itself in stronger colors and bursts of passion. His speech was musical like his brother's, but stronger and more rapid, though clear and distinct.' Krone also claimed that, playing Henry VI, he had saved himself from injury by moving when Booth's Richard made 'a violent thrust' at his side. 'Thinking that he had stabbed me [Booth] was so frightened that while I was speaking the dying speech, he stood trembling and repeatedly asked me if I was hurt.' Booth was 'highly delighted' to find only 'a small hole in the cloak'.²²

Booth, says Krone, was 'very much liked by his colleagues, as his manner of directing and sociability was frank, manly and cheerful' (4:221). Krone also relates that Booth recommended to De Bar the English actor George de Vere, with whom he had played at Washington, whereupon De Bar engaged him as leading man.²³ It may have been during this engagement that Booth presented a broken sword to William C. Gleason, who kept the tavern next to the theatre where the actors came after morning rehearsal.

21 Krone (4:343) places this meeting in Louisville during the following season, which is impossible; conceivably it occurred in Louisville on Sunday Feb. 14, when Booth was en route from Nashville to Cincinnati (Krone says he was changing trains); or even in April when en route from New Orleans to Boston; but the likeliest possibility seems to be during this St. Louis engagement, which was nearest to the events described.

22 4:223. This memory may be coloured by his belief that Booth was unbalanced.

23 William V. Brumby, 'Veterans Tell of Great Players in the Old Days of Drama in St. Louis', *The Republic* (St. Louis), April 19, 1903, and see Chapter 7.

'Booth had broken the sword in a fencing scene,' Gleason remembered, 'and at my request he brought the hilt and upper part of the blade to me.' Gleason often played billiards with Booth, who was fond of the game and an expert player.²⁴

Booth's next three engagements represented a new venture--playing a circuit for a guarantee of \$300 per week (*Clipper*, Feb. 20). Duffield and Flynn, managers of the Nashville Theatre (Tennessee), had also leased the Wood's Theatres at Louisville and Cincinnati (*Clipper*, June 27, 1863), and booked stars for them, advertising their theatres as 'first class' (*Clipper*, July 18, 1863). Booth engaged with them rather late (October, 1863), and it is impossible now to fathom whether his first visit to a captured Confederate city (Nashville) was merely to fill up his season, or had to do with his sympathies or his smuggling activities.²⁵

Booth's previous appearances at Louisville had been at the Louisville Theatre. Under George Wood, from 1863, Wood's Theatre 'was truly launched on its briefly brilliant career . . . catering to the war-time crowds of amusement seekers', and under Duffield & Flynn, its prosperity continued.²⁶ Charles Krone gave this description of the city, which contained a POW camp, army hospital and many refugees from the South, as he saw it the following season:

And during all this misery of sickness, death and exile from home, the fiddles were playing their merriest in concert dives, saloons and the two theatres which were filled with elegantly attired and jovial crowds, for money was plenty [*sic*] and with it a rage for amusement and luxury.²⁷

At Wood's, Booth followed Edwin Adams, who had played there for four weeks with no diminution in audiences (*Louisville Daily Democrat*, Jan. 14). The *Louisville Journal* (Jan. 4) had described Adams as the 'rising actor of our country, who is to fill the place heretofore occupied by Forrest and Murdoch'--provided he studied closely and was not

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ In a letter to Ellsler, Oct. 18, 1863, he offers the weeks of Feb. 1 and 8 for Ellsler's theatre in Columbus, Ohio, 'but let me hear from you at once, as I must answer Nashville.' (The letter, (Rhodehamel & Taper, p. 92) is headed 'New York', but this seems to be Booth's error for 'Providence'.) Original in Harvard Theatre Collection.

²⁶ John Jacob Weisert, *Mozart Hall: 1851 to 1866* (Louisville, KY: n. pub., 1962), pp. ii, iii.

²⁷ Krone, 4:326.

spoiled by praise. Booth, according to the same paper, was already established: 'He stands at the head of the list of American tragedians' (Jan. 19). Bad weather did not deter audiences, whose numbers were twice described as 'unprecedented' (*Journal*, Jan. 20, 28). The *Democrat* (Jan. 21) thought Booth had 'improved wonderfully since his last appearance here', and was now 'one of the most classical and correct artists on the boards.' Avonia Jones was playing the rival Louisville Theatre at the same time, and it is noticeable that on Booth's benefit night he did not follow *Money* with the usual *Katharine and Petruchio*: Miss Jones was playing Katharine for her own benefit, and presumably he wished to leave her a clear field. Likewise, he did not play *Lady of Lyons* here or at Nashville, his and Miss Jones's next date: this play was also in her repertoire (*Nashville Union*, Feb. 8). Booth relinquished his second-week benefit to his old friend John Albaugh, the leading man, giving his first performance of Damon (a part for which Forrest was renowned) to Albaugh's Pythias in Banim and Sheil's *Damon and Pythias*,²⁸ and took his own benefit on the Saturday.

According to Mrs. McKee Rankin, Booth's performance of Richelieu, on Monday, January 25, was the occasion of a 'serio-comic incident':

Mr. Booth had been dining out and arrived at the theater late, barely in time to get on the stage for his first scene. . . . his colored valet found it necessary to lift him, place him on his feet, and lead him to the entrance for every scene he played. Once there he got through fairly well, when closely watched by the prompter.²⁹

Unfortunately, the prompter was absent during Act II, scene ii, when Booth, onstage with a nervous actress, 'went fast asleep, breathing so heavily that Miss Miles in alarm, believing him to be in an apoplectic state, tried in vain to signal the prompter'. Finally, she shook him awake, and

started to repeat her last line, stuttering and stammering painfully, at which Mr. Booth looked at her and said, "Wha's s'matter, don' you know your lines yet?" and settled himself more comfortably in his chair to resume his nap. The prompter rang down the curtain and rang in the orchestra. The audience gave a round of questionable applause, accompanied by one or two shrill whistles from the gallery, when Mr. Booth suddenly arose from his chair,

28 Damon's speeches denouncing the military dictator Dionysius would have appealed to the democratic sentiments of both Forrest and Booth.

29 'The News of Lincoln's Death', p. 261.

ordered the curtain rung up again, resumed the scene, and played it beautifully to the end.³⁰

It is not surprising that this, the sole anecdote representing Booth as drunk on stage, has been seized upon as evidence of habitual debauchery. Lloyd Lewis generalized from it: 'Often . . . he was so drunk that his negro servant had to lift him from dressing-room to stage'.³¹ However, the inaccuracies noted above in Mrs. Rankin's story of Booth's journey, together with the fact that there is no corroboration of the *Richelieu* episode, suggest we should treat her whole testimony with caution. The *Louisville Democrat* is unfortunately not extant for the relevant date, but the *Journal* (Jan. 26) remarked only that the 'house was crowded' and there was 'loud applause'. Moreover, the *Journal's* army news editor, Hamilton Busbey, mentioned in a memoir that he had seen Booth 'in every act [*sic*]', but not that Booth had ever disgraced himself.³² A telling contrast to this newspaper silence is the treatment meted out to Edwin Booth in 1858 by the *Enquirer* of nearby Cincinnati, oddly enough when Edwin had been playing the same part:

Mr. Edwin Booth was to have opened last evening in the character of Richelieu, and did attempt the part, but failed so completely that the curtain fell upon the second scene of the first act. When he fails in a personation in which he has gained such distinction, those knowing his high gifts and his father's unfortunate proclivity, need not be told the reason. Mr. Booth is one of the most talented and promising actors on the American stage and has already acquired a reputation equaled by few among the oldest in the dramatic art, and that he should mar all that Nature has done for him is a pity and a shame. . . . He is a decided favorite here, but cannot be, if the scene of last night be repeated. This is his first offence with us; let it be his last.³³

Given the eager search after the assassination for disparaging stories about Booth, it is strange that such a public incident should have taken until 1909 to see print. So completely unknown was it to the theatrical grapevine that one post-assassination piece,

30 Ibid., pp. 261-62.

31 Lewis, pp. 177-78.

32 'Recollections of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War', *The Forum* 45 (March 1911): 287; in Norman Hersell, 'A Former Actress in "Our American Cousin" Tells the Story of the Assassination of Lincoln', *Minneapolis Journal*, April 27, 1914, Busbey said he saw Booth 'nightly' and that he was 'a gentleman and a man of culture'.

33 Quoted in the *New York Clipper*, Dec. 4, 1858. I, ii is the first scene in which Richelieu appears. As noted in Chapter 4, the entire profession could have read this.

using information from Booth's 'personal friends', explicitly states that he 'never' became so drunk 'as to prevent his coming on the stage in a condition of decent sobriety.'³⁴

From Louisville, Booth wrote to Ellsler about their oil investments (Jan. 23). He also wrote to E.F. Keach at the Boston Museum, asking for 'exact Time[,] Terms etc.' for a planned Boston engagement, and hoping Keach was well by this time; just over a week later, he was writing to Moses Kimball, 'Poor Keach, I heard of his death by telegraph, and sincerely mourn him'.³⁵ Before Keach died, he had arranged with Booth an engagement to begin on April 25: it was to be the triumphant swan-song of Booth's regular career.

When Booth arrived in Nashville, two years of occupation by Union troops were about to end and elections were to be held in March (*Nashville Dispatch*, January 31). The papers which reviewed his performances, the *Union* and the *Dispatch*, together with the *Press* which merely puffed, had been founded during the occupation: 'All news, of course, was favorable to the North.'³⁶ Nashville's population, which had stood at 17,000 in 1860, had swollen to 70,000, not counting the soldiers, and the city had become the leading supply depot for the Union armies in the Midwest.³⁷ It was a demoralized place: streets were potholed and flooded, their trees destroyed; rats and crime abounded, and smallpox was increasing. Union soldiers looted the library at the State Capitol.³⁸ But as usual, amusements were in demand: the Nashville Theatre had been remodelled by Duffield & Flynn, and was 'now one of the handsomest theatres in the southwest' (*Clipper*, Aug. 22, 1863), and during John's engagement Avonia Jones was the star at the rival New Theatre.

³⁴ *Boston Saturday Evening Express*, April 15, 1865.

³⁵ JWB to Keach, Jan. 30, 1864 (Theatre Ephemera Collection, McFarlin Library, U. Tulsa); JWB to Kimball from Nashville, Feb. 9, 1864 (W.E. Hill Collection, Fine Arts Division, Dallas Public Library).

³⁶ Alfred Leland Crabb, *Nashville: Personality of a City* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960), p. 63.

³⁷ Charles E. Holding, 'John Wilkes Booth Stars in Nashville', *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 23 (1964): 76-77.

³⁸ Crabb, p. 65-66; *Nashville Union*, Feb. 2; Claude Ahmed Arnold, 'The Development of the Stage in Nashville, Tennessee, 1807-1870', 1933, Nashville Public Library.

Louisville's leading lady, Ada Gray, accompanied Booth to Nashville to strengthen the company. Sarah Jane Hill, a visitor to Nashville, overheard them in her hotel:

I was disturbed by what appeared to be a terrible quarrel between the occupants of the adjoining room. A man and woman who seemed almost to come to blows. . . . It was John Wilkes Booth and his leading woman, who was also his mistress, and they were rehearsing some of their scenes. It was very realistic and sounded more like a drunken row.³⁹

The scenes may well have been from *Katharine and Petruchio*, which Mrs. Hill later saw in performance (see Chapter 10); this and *The Merchant of Venice* were the only plays Booth had not already performed with Miss Gray at Louisville. The assumption about their relationship may have been based on the fact that they were in a hotel bedroom together, a breach of etiquette which might have been for professional reasons only. Mrs. Hill, probably writing some time after the events, adds that her impression of Booth after seeing him act 'was that he was of a wild undisciplined nature and inclined to dissipation, that he liked to pose and was theatrical'.⁴⁰ This judgement of a man she had never met sounds like a précis of the main post-assassination newspaper sketches.

The *Nashville Union* could find no fault in Booth's playing: 'Nothing of late years, equal to [his Richard] has been seen here' (Feb. 2); 'he seems to grow better and better with each successive performance' (Feb. 6); his engagement was the 'most brilliant of the season so far' (Feb. 10). The paper summed up on the day of his second benefit:

Mr. Booth came amongst us a stranger, his reputation as a rising star having preceded him Nobly did he fulfill expectations, and establish himself a favorite. . . . In no part has he failed. . . . the time is not distant when he will attain the highest niche of professional fame. His engagement . . . [was] the best played here during this most wonderful and eventful of dramatic seasons (Feb. 12).

The *Dispatch* was less convinced. Reviewing Booth's Pescara, it called him 'too violent by half', explaining that it preferred the 'quiet school' which let an actor 'speak and walk and act naturally' (see Chapter 10). It conceded, however, that houses had been good

39 Sarah Jane Full Hill, *Mrs. Hill's Journal: Civil War Reminiscences*, ed. Mark M. Krug (Chicago: Donnelley & Sons, 1980), p. 225.

40 Ibid., p. 231.

(Feb. 5, 6, 10, 11). On leaving, Booth was given a banquet by officers of the Union Army, and presented with a sword 'as a tribute to his genius'.⁴¹

Booth's last date on the Duffield & Flynn circuit, Cincinnati, has provided speculators with more fuel for their theories. Kimmel (p. 179) asserts that he suffered there 'a return of the bronchial trouble which had been hovering over him for months', and Constance Head that 'his throat was giving him serious trouble'.⁴² Certainly he was ill, but the nature of the illness was not specified in the newspapers. He substituted Iago for Richard III on his first night because of 'partial illness', managed to get through Pescara on the Tuesday, but on Wednesday, when announced in *The Robbers*, 'Mr. Booth was so ill . . . that his physician positively prohibited him from leaving his room' (*Cincinnati Commercial*, Feb. 16 and 18). It is reasonable to assume that his recent travels in such harsh conditions had lowered his immunity; and his recent exposure to smallpox in Nashville may have caused him and his doctor some anxiety. He completed the first week's performances, ending with Richard on Saturday, and on Monday wrote to the new manager of the Boston Museum, 'I have been very sick here, but am all right again, thank God.'⁴³ The *Commercial* had thought it 'evident' that he had not 'fully recovered' on February 19; but the next day, from his 'spirited and impassioned' acting in *Money*, judged him quite well again. After playing to 'good business' (*Clipper*, March 5), he completed his engagement on Friday, February 26, intending to set off on Saturday for New Orleans, his next date.⁴⁴ Since he did not reach New Orleans until 13 days later, he may have remained longer in Cincinnati; or he may have had secret business elsewhere.

Booth probably travelled by boat down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, collecting *en route* a pass signed by General Grant to go through the Union lines.⁴⁵ On March 10,

41 James R. Harvey, 'Recollections of the Early Theatre', *Colorado Magazine* 17 (1940): 163.

42 Head, p. 256.

43 Letter to R.M. Field, Feb. 22, 1864, De Coppet Collection.

44 Ibid.

45 *Unlocked Book*, p. 114. When confessing to his blockade-running activities, Booth told his sister that Grant had 'given me freedom of range without knowing what a good turn he has done the South.'

the *New Orleans Times* reported that he had arrived on the river steamer Olive Branch. His engagement in New Orleans, first mentioned in the letter to Kimball from Nashville, may well have been negotiated during his January engagement in St. Louis, since Ben de Bar was also the lessee of the St. Charles Theatre, New Orleans. This theatre had closed soon after the war began, and had only just reopened, de Bar sending a stock company down from St. Louis to resume performances on February 5.⁴⁶ Familiar faces to Booth were G.D. Chaplin and Mrs. Walters from Leavenworth, whose theatre had burned down shortly after his appearance there (*Clipper*, Feb. 6), and Ben Rogers, the comedian from Booth's second Richmond season. The rival Varieties Theatre, run by Booth's former New York manager, Lewis Baker, had as leading man and partner Lawrence Barrett, later considered inferior only to Edwin Booth; this was the ambitious Barrett's first season in leading tragedy roles.⁴⁷

The St. Charles Theatre, rebuilt in 1842 as 'the largest and finest theatre in the country',⁴⁸ had been the site of Junius Brutus Booth's last performances in 1852, but New Orleans was sadly changed since then. Captured early in the war, this great port, the largest city in the South, had been subjected to the military rule of General 'Beast' Butler, and later General N.P. Banks. Both had attempted to destroy the 'external evidences of secessionism' by banning Confederate songs and flags, and by purging 'disloyal' clergy and teachers,⁴⁹ and had, of course, only created a smouldering resentment. The *Daily Picayune* on March 18 complained that theatres were not so 'thronged' as they once were: a whole class was absent--the leaders of society, now in straitened circumstances. Many of the Union army and navy were also away at that time, and it was Lent, traditionally a bad time for theatres. In the paper's opinion, though, another reason was 'the poorness of the performances' in all the theatres in comparison with those of 'days gone by'. The *Bee*

46 John Smith Kendall, *The Golden Age of the New Orleans Theater* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State U. Press, 1952), pp. 495-96.

47 Ibid., p. 395.

48 Leavitt, p. 86.

49 Elizabeth J. Doyle, 'Civilian Life in Occupied New Orleans' (Diss., U. Pennsylvania, 1936), pp. 188, 310.

(March 16) was sceptical of advertisement and criticism, unwilling to 'trust the placarded reputation of a new "star," or even the newspaper praise of his matchless lustre We must regard each one, however lauded, as on trial--to such a pass has pseudo-criticism and indiscriminate "puffing" brought dramatic fame!' If New Orleans reviewers would not be easily impressed, neither would audiences: to 'an unknown or unproved actor they could be cold And to an accepted star who failed to live up to past performances they could be heartless.' At the St. Charles in early 1859, the curtain had fallen on Act III of Edwin Booth's *Hamlet* 'literally in perfect silence.' Edwin 'was in bad voice, he was sometimes careless and indifferent, and he took "indefensible liberties" with the text.'⁵⁰

John was expected to do reasonable business: the *Daily True Delta* (March 15) announced that seats were bookable three days ahead, and that the free list, except for the Press, was suspended. He should probably have opened on March 7 (the *Times* and *Picayune* on March 5 having said he would 'shortly appear'); in the event he began with the usual *Richard III* on Monday the 14th to a full house. All four papers mentioned Booth's 'personal advantages': he had 'a handsome face and fine person' (*Picayune*, March 16), 'commanding presence' (*Times*, March 15), 'something in both face and form that looks tragic' (*Bee*, March 16), while for the *True Delta* (March 15), he was 'a much handsomer and larger man' than Edwin, and 'in no other particular that we could discern last night . . . at all inferior' to his brother. The *Picayune* and the *Bee* were less easily satisfied than their two counterparts: the *Picayune* was 'disappointed' by the performance 'as a whole', feeling that Booth not only 'displayed great redundancy of action' but that his elocution was 'deficient in clearness, and very labored' (March 16). The critic then gave equal column space to a wholly complimentary notice of *The Dead Heart* at the Varieties, although this was not a new production. The *Bee* (March 16), in line with its scepticism, 'took nothing for granted, . . made no concession to [Booth's] name and parentage.' Giving a thoughtful review of Booth's début, it declared that if he had genius, this was

50 Roppolo, p. 126, quoting *Picayune*.

'yet to some extent latent and irregular in its development', and after criticizing his Richard (see Chapter 9), summed up:

But the tragic earnestness of Mr. Booth must be conceded by all. He has not studied in that false school which assumes to place the artist above his art, the professor above his profession, the interpreter above his text. No where does his own personality crop out in ambitious rivalry with his personation.

This point distinguished Booth from Forrest, whose obtrusion of his own personality into his roles was noted by his critics (see Chapter 2). Booth did not 'seek effect either in clap-trap or transcendentalism': if Forrest, or melodrama actors like Eddy, represented claptrap, Edwin Booth, with his 'spiritual' quality, may have typified the other pole. Booth, said the *Bee*, sought only to identify himself with his character, 'to lose himself in it'. He was 'on the high road to great success, if he has not yet greatly succeeded. Let him study, persevere, strive to overcome defects of habit or inadvert[e]nce and be encouraged.' Like the *Picayune*, the *Bee* noted that Booth seemed to 'labor under a partial defect of voice'; this, not remarked on by the other papers, might have been Booth's usual idiosyncratic delivery, or evidence of an incipient cold.

The *Times* continued to applaud Booth, who, it said, had 'stimulated many playgoers into regular nightly attendance' after two years' absence: 'In the intense nervous interpretation of passion, in that consummate art which effects a frequent startling climax, in that intellectual identity of fiction and self, Mr. Booth is peculiarly gifted'. Many of his points were 'as novel as they are excellent.' Armed with 'the first essential of the actor--an intelligent study--he defies precedent and presents original portrayals' which had to be accepted 'by reason of their veracity' (March 16). The *Picayune* did not agree. Replying on March 17, it asserted that Booth's new readings were not all good.

We do not admire a slavish imitation. Originality is commendable as the result of close study. We do not, however, believe in a student paying no attention--no homage--to honored precedent. By such a course the student arrogantly assumes that he is the only true interpreter--that all who have gone before could teach him nothing.

This view in its turn was challenged by the *Delta* on March 20: 'It is true that he has, in some instances, departed from the traditional rendering of passages, and so must do every

man who is an actor and not a mimic.' Booth's great father had varied even from his own readings:

[I]t is probable that [JBB] never enacted the same plays twice precisely in the same manner. We do not pretend that Mr. Booth is the greatest actor on any stage, but we do say that we have yet to find any young gentleman who gives promise of such excellence.⁵¹

The *Bee* reviewed him only rarely, and the *Picayune* became less impressed as time went on: on March 19, Booth was 'as yet an actor of more promise than of actual performance', and on the 20th, he was 'no more successful in comedy than in tragedy', with 'not only much to learn, but much to unlearn ere he can take high rank in his profession'.

At the Varieties, *The Dead Heart* finished its run, not without yet another notice from the *Picayune* (March 17), and Lawrence Barrett was announced for Hamlet, three days after Booth had played the role. The previous night (March 17), Booth's Richelieu had 'attracted a splendid assembly', though (or perhaps because) the public had 'become familiar with the great rendition' of the part by Barrett (*Times*, March 18). The two actors were now in direct competition. The next week Barrett played Charles de Moor two days after Booth and had 'a tolerable house', while on the same night Booth's Othello drew a 'fair' one (*Times*, March 22): competition seems merely to have split a meagre audience between them. Governors Yates of Illinois and Hahn of Louisiana saw Booth's Othello, and 'seemed to be greatly pleased with his performance' (*Clipper*, April 9).

On March 19, the *Times* reviewed Barrett's Hamlet as 'one of his great triumphs', noting that his elocution was 'highly artistic, and mellowed to subserve emotional demands.' In the same column, the critic regretted that Booth was 'at present laboring under a severe hoarseness', and noted the same affliction on March 21, 22 and 24. The *Picayune* (March 24) found Booth's delivery of 'the beautiful passages' in *The Lady of Lyons* 'anything but pleasing', without apparently realizing that Booth was ill. March was one of the worst months in New Orleans for colds,⁵² and to make things worse, the theatres were open then on Sundays as well, so Booth could not rest his voice for a single

51 See Chapter 10 for the newspapers' disagreements concerning Booth's Pescara.
52 Dorothy K. Blackmar to David Barbee, April 27, 1938, Barbee Papers.

night. The St. Charles was unusually large, too, seating 'nearly 3,000 people'.⁵³ Other actors had suffered from these conditions: Edwin Booth in 1859 had had 'a severe Hoarseness' throughout the engagement referred to above, and the *Picayune* had complained that '[h]is utterance was husky'; the next winter, Barry Sullivan was reported to be 'laboring under a severe hoarseness'.⁵⁴ John soldiered on until his benefit on Good Friday, his twelfth consecutive performance, whereupon the following notice appeared in the papers:

The management of the St. Charles Theatre regret to inform the public, that in consequence of the severe and continued cold under which Mr. Booth has been laboring for several days, and at the suggestion of his medical adviser, he is compelled to take a short respite from his engagement (*Bee*, March 26).

After resting over the Easter weekend, he returned; it was evident to the *Times* (March 29) that he was 'still afflicted with hoarseness, but this simply embarrassed and did not conceal [his] talents'. He played through the week, ending with *Richard III* on Sunday, and there the engagement terminated. Booth had written to R.M. Field that he would play five weeks at New Orleans, and have two weeks to get to Boston: assuming, then, that he missed one week at the beginning, the engagement must have finished early. The newspapers showed no surprise, however, the *Times* (March 31) merely remarking that the theatre was 'nightly filled' because it was known that Booth would be leaving soon, and the *Picayune* (March 30) reporting that the succeeding star, Matilda Heron, had already arrived. Booth may have meant 'up to five weeks'; or he may have been misleading Field to cover an extra week in New Orleans for Confederate activities (see below): he wrote to an admirer on April 4 that he would start 'next Saturday' for Boston, so that he did indeed have two weeks to get there.⁵⁵ Aside from the letter to Field, the only evidence for an early closure is a much-copied piece from the *Evening Post* (New York),⁵⁶ which ascribes it to an 'apparently incurable bronchial affection', enabling

⁵³ Leavitt, p. 86.

⁵⁴ Mary Ann Booth to Junius, Jr., Feb. 3 [1859], Harvard Theatre Collection; *Picayune*, Jan. 18, 1859; *New York Clipper*, Dec. 31, 1859.

⁵⁵ To 'My Dear Miss', Rhodehamel & Taper, p. 104.

⁵⁶ April 15, 1865. This, from its verbal echoes of JWB reviews, and local information, clearly relies on the *Picayune*. Its 'bronchial affection', which 'of late . . . has

Stanley Kimmel to paint Booth as a victim of his own foolishness and envy of his brother's fame:

The day of reckoning had arrived. Wilkes' 'hoarseness' . . . was the reprisal from the lack of early study and training in voice control. He knew his future as a star was doomed. He might continue his engagements at intervals, perhaps play a few benefit bills, but soon the curtain would fall before him for the last time and in the dim light of some empty theatre he would make his final exit. The name of Booth would still dominate the boards, but it would be filled in by Edwin--not John Wilkes (p. 181).

Had this been John's final engagement, Kimmel's argument might carry some weight, but it was not: he still had five weeks ahead of him in critical, though appreciative, Boston.

He left New Orleans with generally favourable press judgements. The *Bee* (March 24) found his Claude better than it had expected, since Booth's usual 'excess of tragic action' was here 'toned down'. It admonished him in general:

If Mr. Booth would always observe the Shakspearean maxim not to overstep the modesty of nature, if he would study modulation more, and tragic intensity and violence less, he would shine with a much purer lustre both as artist and scholar.

But later, looking back over the engagement, it concluded that despite his throat problems, Booth had 'performed on the whole a successful season and evinced tragic powers of a high order and of more than ordinary promise' (April 2). The *Clipper's* correspondent had summed up the first two weeks by saying that Booth had the stuff 'of which great ones are made', though he was 'by no means a finished actor' (April 9). The *Times* (April 4) gave him credit for acting despite the hoarseness 'to which most actors would have immediately succumbed'. He had 'proved a great favorite here and we shall be glad to greet him upon our boards again.' The *Picayune* (April 3), which had given Booth faint praise since his weekend off, made amends for its earlier strictures:

Actors are not over prone to praise each other, but we have heard a good actor say that J. Wilkes Booth had quite as decided theatrical talent as any member of his talented family. It is a matter of regret that a physical disability (we trust temporary) prevented his engagement from being so gratifying to himself or to his friends as was desirable, and we look for his return here next season under more favorable auspices.

made almost every engagement a failure' seems to be merely a generalization from the problems noted by the *Picayune*.

Only at first did the papers agree that houses were full. Then the *Picayune*, perhaps suspect because of its apparent partiality for the Varieties, several times mentions 'fair' and once a small house for Booth (March 20, 23, 24, 26, 27; April 1), though the *Times* and *Delta* sometimes contradicted this. The *Clipper's* correspondent, too, wrote at the end of Booth's second week (25th) that while some critics were unimpressed, 'People, however, seem to think differently, and continue to witness and applaud his performances' (April 9). During the third week, houses certainly seem to have picked up again: probably the end of Lent was largely responsible, as the *Picayune* (April 3) noted, conceding 'generally good houses' for both theatres 'for several nights past'. Things were happening in the outside world which may have taken people's minds off playgoing. News began to break on the Friday (18th) of Booth's first week--the first time a 'fair' house for him is mentioned⁵⁷--of a failed Union raid on Richmond; on the body of its leader, Col. Dahlgren, was a speech he had intended to make to his men: 'they would all march together to kill [Jefferson] Davis and his Cabinet' (*Picayune*, March 18). This planned assassination *en masse* of what Confederates regarded as a legitimate government enraged them: the *Bee* (March 22) pointed out that the raid would make reconciliation more difficult, since it had increased southern detestation of the Yankees. The War seemed to have entered a new, more savage phase.

It was perhaps because of this incident that Booth appears to have been more unguarded than usual, and according to post-assassination accounts, 'was known as a most devoted Rebel sympathizer' in New Orleans; calling on a newspaper editor, he had 'warmly expressed his entire accord with secession'.⁵⁸ He apparently also made friends with A.E. Blackmar, a music publisher and composer of the Confederate song, 'Bonnie Blue Flag'.⁵⁹ Another incident was related by Ed Curtis, half-brother of Booth's landlord. Booth and some friends, after playing billiards, were walking down the street:

⁵⁷ *Picayune*, March 20, reviewing the March 18 performance of *Money*.

⁵⁸ *Albany Express*, April 17, 1865; *New York Evening Post*, April 15, 1865.

⁵⁹ David Barbee to Dorothy Blackmar, May 2, 1938, Barbee Papers. After Booth's death, Blackmar composed and published the laudatory song about him, 'Our Brutus'.

Booth was challenged by one of his companions to sing 'Bonnie Blue Flag,' a popular Confederate ditty then forbidden by the military authorities in control of the city. Without a moment's hesitation he broke into the words of the song. The rest of the party was too scared to think. It was treason to sing that song, and so they ran away. But Booth calmly continued to the end of the first verse and then, surrounded by excited Union soldiers . . . managed to escape from their hands, by the exercise of his marvelous power of fascination. He even made the soldiers believe he did not know anything about the law against a song of that kind, and that he sang it just because he had heard it on the streets of this city, and liked the words and the tune.⁶⁰

During Booth's stay, one man was sent to prison for 30 days for singing this song (*Bee*, March 25); it was fortunate for Booth that he was able to charm himself out of danger.

Curtis also remembered that the people of New Orleans were 'enthusiastic in their admiration of [Booth's] work'.⁶¹ So was a young Union midshipman, G.W. Baird, who saw him in *The Marble Heart* (see Chapter 10), and also knew him personally: 'I used to hang about the billiard-room of the Saint Charles Hotel for chances to see him. I admired him immensely'⁶² Booth seemed to him 'a congenial fellow with a sense of humor and I thought [he] was very temperate in his habits, not like his father in that respect.' Despite Booth's illness, Baird admired 'his voice, power of declaiming.' John was clearly still able to be circumspect, for he seemed to Baird 'to have no interest in the war.'⁶³ Booth was remembered in performance at this time by the actor William Seymour, then a child, who had played the Duke of York to his Richard. Seymour believed that if Booth 'had lived and continued on the stage, he would have outstripped in fame, ability and popularity his brother Edwin and any of the tragedians who were his contemporaries.'⁶⁴

Richard Montgomery ('Monty') Field, the new manager of the Boston Museum, had previously been the dramatic critic of the *Boston Post* who gave Booth such perceptive reviews during his earlier visits.⁶⁵ He left a gap, for the *Post's* comments on this engagement were conventional and uninteresting. However, the other papers all had something to say about what proved to be Booth's last regular engagement in Boston, or

60 Quoted in Kendall, p. 498.

61 Ibid.

62 Laughlin, p. 107.

63 Rear-Admiral G.W. Baird to Burke McCarty, Nov. 21, 1921, Barbee Papers.

64 Manuscript transcribed by Robert H. Ball, Barbee Papers.

65 *Spirit of the Times*, Feb. 20, 1864.

anywhere else. Not that they had much room to do so: as the *Advertiser* (May 20) complained, 'The actors upon the political stage strutting for a brief hour in the public eye leave us but little space to celebrate the more permanent glories of the mimic art.' The parties were choosing Presidential nominees, and the battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania were being fought through most of May. Preoccupation with the War showed itself even in the *Transcript's* comment on Booth's first night, that his reception had been 'quite equal to the one given to a successful General fresh from the battle-field' (April 26).

Booth played three new parts which he had been trying out in the West (Damon, Richelieu and Iago), revived *The Wife*, absent from his repertoire since January 1862, and gave for his farewell benefit his only performance in his father's play, *Ugolino*, a pastiche Jacobean verse tragedy, with strong overtones of *The Maid's Tragedy*. Houses, as usual, were good: despite stormy weather for the first few days, the engagement 'opened triumphantly' (*Courier*, April 28); and nearly a month later, the audience for his *Corsican Brothers* was 'one of the largest and most enthusiastic of the season' (*Courier*, May 24). For the latter part of the engagement, Maggie Mitchell was playing at the Boston Theatre; John's brother Junius, just arrived from California, noted in his diary, 'John playing at the Museum. Good but Maggie Mitchell at the Boston', implying that she may have drawn off some of his audience.⁶⁶ The *Advertiser* (May 28) confessed itself puzzled by the warmth of Booth's reception:

Without entirely understanding how it can be so, we recognize the fact that he is one of the most successful and popular actors we have, and bow to the decision of a public, not without intelligence, which has night after night crowded itself to see and hear him.

Some of this popularity may have been due to Booth's playing to the gallery more than the critics thought desirable. The *Transcript* (May 16) took him to task for overdoing the physical aspect of his acting:

Even if this young tragedian possesses natural gifts of a high order, as many aver, a continual overstraining and over-taxing of physical power must sooner or later crush these natural endowments and unfit him for the position

66 Junius Brutus Booth, Jr., Diary for 1864, in Folger Shakespeare Library.

in which assiduous and intelligent study might have placed him. A grievous and glaring fault of Mr. Booth's acting is, that he attempts to reach things beyond his grasp, and strives to win the applause of those in his immediate presence, rather than to give a correct, truthful, and lasting delineation of the creations of the great dramatic writers

It might reasonably be asked: to whom should an actor play, if not to the audience in front of him? But the issue here is the choice between craft and art, or between merely entertaining an audience and interpreting works of literature. The *Boston Advertiser* the previous year, in exhorting Booth to perfect his elocution as well as his swordplay, seemed to think he could do both. His attempt to reach 'things', presumably gestural and vocal effects, beyond his grasp may have produced what New York's *Sunday Mercury* had described: a performance which did not make the best use of Booth's actual face and body. The *Chicago Times* (Dec. 3, 1862) had also complained of 'over-acting . . . a vigorous reaching for effects which are beyond reach'. He must overcome these faults, the *Transcript* went on, before he could take 'a very high position as an artist in the estimations of the truly critical and intelligent patrons of the drama.' At the end of the engagement, the same paper expressed the hope that experience would effect this:

Mr. Booth has played a successful engagement and we hope he will some time return to us, 'toned down,' and more finished in manner and declamation, with some of the crudities which invariably follow young actors completely effaced, and with the natural powers which he evidently possesses rightly developed by careful and intelligent study (May 27, Barbee transcript).

Other critics, however, thought that he had already toned himself down: the *Advertiser* (May 26) found a very great 'improvement in care and refinement of acting' since his first visit, and despite its puzzlement at his popularity, it looked forward 'with a cheerful confidence to a time when we shall be able fully to echo the general applause' (May 28). The *Saturday Evening Gazette* (May 7) thought that

Mr. Booth has it in his power to become one of the foremost actors of our time, but such a result must follow diligent, laborious study, watchful observation, rest of body and heartfelt devotion to the object to be attained. Honor and praise are eminently his due for the rapid progress he has made in four brief years, though crowded with activity and practice; and it is simply because we are [his] sincere well-wishers that we venture to dwell somewhat in detail upon his enaction of [Damon].

On May 15, it repeated this advice: he 'require[d] a great deal of culture yet, which can only be attained through patient rest and diligent study.' The most enthusiastic was the occasional columnist, 'X.Y.Z.', who had written on Booth before. In the same issue of the *Transcript* in which the criticisms of his physicality were published (May 16; see above), 'X.Y.Z.' wrote:

A marked improvement in his acting, since he made his first appearance here--only two years ago--is apparent, much of which is evidently the result of earnest thought and study. The less important scenes more carefully attended to, many speeches more pointedly delivered, new stage business introduced, the unity of character better preserved throughout the play, give evidence to those who have noted his rapid progress that his time has not been spent idly.

Large audiences for Booth's familiar parts, the critic argued, 'attest that they had more in them than the mere charm of novelty', and in his three new characters, 'each widely different from the other', he challenged comparison with the best actors.

He has never acted better than during the past three weeks, and we are most gratified at his success. Although he has faults, and has not yet attained the height which his powers give promise of, yet few actors represent the characters which he assumes more to the satisfaction of the public. . . .

Other papers echoed this opinion. 'Never', in the *Saturday Evening Express's* judgement, 'has this promising actor given such effective and artistic representations' (April 30); he would eventually compare favourably with Edwin, 'in some parts at least' (May 7).

Few reviews mentioned Booth's voice. The *Transcript* (April 26) noticed that he was 'laboring under the effects of a palpable hoarseness' on his first night; the *Advertiser* of the same date complained of his lack of force as Richard (see Chapter 9). The *Evening Traveller* (April 26) described his voice as 'weak and constrained', and thought it due to 'not playing for some weeks and not being in full health.' The illness, described as a 'cold' by the *Transcript* on the 27th and the *Traveller* on the 28th, was no doubt the remains of his New Orleans ailment. No more is heard of hoarseness. The *Gazette's* charge of 'an outburst of rant' in Booth's performance of Damon, 'which actually costs labor to produce' (May 7), suggests that he had recovered his full strength. And although the *Transcript* (May 10) complained that 'A little more distinctness of utterance' would help those in the

back rows, this may have been due to his adopting a voice 'broken with age' for Richelieu,⁶⁷ and a week later (May 17) the paper praised him for improvements in this respect: in *The Marble Heart*, 'He played well, and what is more, he enunciated his words far more distinctly than he has been in the habit of doing in many plays since his present engagement.' The paper then explicitly noted, 'We do not speak of his hoarseness, which was a temporary misfortune, at the commencement of his playing.'

Stanley Kimmel is obliged not only to ignore this comment, but to play down the whole Boston engagement, which the *Clipper* (May 7) called 'brilliant', for both manifestly fail to support his theory. He claims (p. 184) that Booth 'was in constant fear that his voice would fail him', and that he 'knew now that he could not continue--much less succeed--under such a handicap.' Kimmel even shoots a hole in his own argument by contending that Booth 'modified his articulation' to avoid disaster. If he could do that for five weeks, why not for the next thirty years? The *Gazette* (May 22) saw no disaster lurking when it declared there was 'everything in Mr. Booth to encourage. He has youth--voice--person--talent--ambition' (italics added).

In fact, Kimmel and other denigrators are forced to play down all of Booth's Boston engagements, for his success there gives the lie to their portrayal of him as a 'Southern' or 'Western' actor, applauded only by those liking 'noise and buncombe'. Kimmel explains his success in early 1863 by suggesting that while Edwin Booth 'had drawn [his Boston audience] from a select group,' John had drawn his 'more from the daily rabble' (p. 170). If we interpret this as meaning 'the working class', then there is some truth in it: gallery boys did enjoy his 'terrific combats', as we have seen. The *Boston Saturday Evening Express* (May 17, 1862) seems to answer Kimmel by saying that Booth was 'no mere stage strutter appealing to empty heads and noisy canes, but to the intellect and best judgment of intelligent and critical people.' That he may *also* have appealed to empty heads and noisy canes would be rather a bonus than a drawback.

67 'X.Y.Z.' in the *Transcript*, May 16, referring to the same performance.

Writing as they did between the World Wars, Kimmel and Lewis also drew on the theatre of their own time to disparage Booth as a 'matinée idol'. Lewis asserts, 'Even in Boston . . . his audiences were mainly women, a situation that an actor of the '60s felt belittling to his reputation'. The implication is clear--and insulting: these women, incapable of judging acting talent, were there only because they found Booth sexually attractive. No wonder that, according to Kimmel, Booth 'complained' when on one occasion 'their attendance outnumbered that of the men'.⁶⁸ Certainly he was attractive to women, as we have seen; his Museum leading lady, Kate Reignolds, remembered that 'the stage door was always blocked with silly women waiting to catch a glimpse, as he passed, of [Booth's] superb face and figure'.⁶⁹ He was not unique. Edwin Booth, too, had his following, as Mrs. Cowell noticed at the Winter Garden in 1860:

What eyes he has! The most brilliant and expressive I ever saw . . . Nearly all 'the women' are in raptures about him, and I heard many expressions such as 'Well now, ain't he pretty?' 'Oh, there he is again, I don't care for anything when he is not there'--from the surrounding ladies. . . (p. 226).

And indeed, comparing the brothers in 1862, Monty Field in the *Boston Post* (May 15) concluded by predicting, 'Edwin Booth will be the delight of the women, John Wilkes Booth the favorite of the men.' None of this debarred Edwin's claim to high status as an interpreter of classic roles; nor should John's obvious romantic and gallery appeal bias our age, which is trying to move beyond the assumption that only the opinion of white middle-class males is of any weight. Indeed, by ignoring all other critical testimony, the impression can be given that Booth's Boston popularity was due to his looks, as might be inferred from the *Gazette's* comment (May 7):

Mr. Booth's success has been almost phenomenal. His winsome face and agreeable presence ingratiated him at once with the public who elevated him to a prominent position in their regard. While grateful for this acknowledgment of his attractiveness, Mr. Booth should wisely and generously strive to become worthy . . . of the honors he receives

68 Lewis, p. 175, Kimmel, p. 177; neither gives a source for his statement. Harry Weaver ('No. 2 Bullfinch Place'), says of Booth in Boston, 'At that time he was the idol of the hour. Ladies flocked to his performances'; but it is unlikely that he meant that men did *not* attend. Matinéés, of course, were intended to attract ladies.

69 Catherine Mary Reignolds-Winslow, *Yesterdays with Actors* (Boston: Cupples & Hurd, 1887), p. 142.

It was the same paper, however, which commended him with this prophecy, poignantly never to be fulfilled: 'the promise of his early efforts are [*sic*] every day being realized by his later performances. He has not yet ripened and he has a career full of promise before him' (May 1).

Despite having played a fortnight there at the beginning of the season, Booth had found his popularity in Boston robust enough to sustain a longer engagement than he had ever played before.⁷⁰ His season ended there; a rumour that he would act in New York after his Boston engagement (*Gazette*, May 15 and *New York Clipper*, May 21) perhaps reflects negotiations which fell through, though it may represent a misunderstanding of the Booth brothers' plan for a Shakespeare benefit (see below).

The year 1863-64 had shown an actor who apparently had every intention of continuing in his profession: he had carefully introduced three new parts, played eight new towns and new theatres in four towns visited before, and had revisited four of his earlier venues. Indeed, his incessant working and travelling looks almost obsessive: his sleigh journey to St. Louis was surely beyond the call of duty. He was ill at times, and some of his reviews make him sound exhausted; hence, probably, the Boston *Gazette's* recommendation of 'patient rest' as well as 'diligent study' (see above). The next step should probably have been to curtail his touring a little, as Edwin had done, and spend more time in reading, theatregoing, and thinking about his characterizations. His playing so many new towns might be read as evidence of declining popularity, but five of these were stops on the combination tour, in the prestigious Northeast, while New Orleans had long been an important theatrical city. His popularity remained high in revisited cities, especially Boston. It is not clear precisely when he decided not to act during the following season. He had, as we shall see later, begun to book it up, but cancelled at some point. In 1864-65 he played only three performances, all of which were benefits.

70 The arrangement with the Museum was for '*four weeks sure* and for each of us to keep the two following . . . open to continue on, if it paid us mutually' (Letter, incomplete, to Field from Nashville, Feb. 9, 1864, Rhodehamel & Taper, p. 100). One of the two optional weeks was taken up.

In the open letter which he left with the Clarkes, Booth exclaimed, 'O, my countrymen, could you all but see the *reality* or effects of this horrid war, as I have seen them'⁷¹ He had seen the effects in 1864 in Nashville and New Orleans, and whether or not he had deliberately gone there on Confederate business, the savage ruin must have affected him deeply.

Most of Booth's activities during the rest of his life lie outside the scope of this thesis. The intention here is simply to show that the renunciation of his profession was a voluntary act, not forced on him by lack of popularity or vocal trouble. His actions during the summer of 1864 give the impression of a man trying to gallop off in all directions at once. As well as recruiting his first helpers in the plot to kidnap the President, he wrote a series of letters to a young Boston woman, Isabel Sumner, professing a love which she apparently did not reciprocate.⁷² He also visited the oil regions again in June, and invested \$1,000 in another piece of land, bringing his friend Joe Simonds from Boston to manage his affairs there.⁷³ His voice was presumably in good working order the night he was seen in Franklin, Pennsylvania, 'covering the whole sidewalk in a rendition of Richard III'. Using a broomstick for a sword, he 'made more than one bystander overlook [his] condition in their admiration for his acting of the part.'⁷⁴ He was ill during the summer and autumn--not with bronchitis as Constance Head suggests, but with erysipelas in his arm and later a boil or carbuncle on his neck, which had to be lanced.⁷⁵ Visiting the oil regions again in September, he instructed Simonds to dispose of his property there to Junius, Rosalie, and Simonds himself.⁷⁶ In Canada in October on Confederate business, he shipped his theatrical wardrobe south; the trunks were bound for Richmond, but the ship carrying them was wrecked.⁷⁷ Clearly he

71 'To Whom it May Concern', Rhodehamel & Taper, p. 126.

72 Rhodehamel & Taper, pp. 106-117. Unfortunately, her replies do not survive.

73 Simonds statement in Kimmel, p. 350.

74 E.C. Miller, p. 21.

75 Head, p. 258; Junius Brutus Booth's diary, Aug. 28, 1864; *Unlocked Book*, p. 117.

76 Simonds in Kimmel, p. 350.

77 Tidwell, p. 331 and note.

had intended to resume his theatrical career--but in the South. He based himself in Washington from November onwards, living at the National Hotel. There he 'ingratiated himself with ladies of distinction', from whom 'he gathered much to serve his purpose'--spying for the Confederacy--and 'while on desperate work intent he "undesignedly fell in love with a senator's daughter." The attachment resulted in a secret and conditional engagement.'⁷⁸ The lady was Lucy Hale, daughter of John Parker Hale, senator for New Hampshire.⁷⁹

In June 1864, Edwin Booth had written to a friend that John was staying with him for the summer, and that with Junius there also, they planned 'in a week or two' to play *Julius Caesar* to raise money for the statue of Shakespeare to be erected in Central Park.⁸⁰ This event was postponed at least once, and eventually took place on November 25, 1864 in the Winter Garden, now managed by Edwin and John Clarke. 'What a jam there will be to see the Booths together', predicted the *Clipper* (Nov. 26), correctly--there was a black market in tickets, with a box going for \$100. It was a glittering occasion. A souvenir programme was printed on satin, and over \$4,000 was taken at the box office.⁸¹ Mary Ann Booth was there, and as the three brothers 'entered together, at the opening of the piece, it would be difficult to look on three finer types of physical and intellectual perfection, and Mrs. Booth . . . might well be pardoned for exclaiming, with the mother of the Gracchii: "These are my jewels."⁸² John's personal fans were certainly present: Asia, come from Philadelphia for the occasion, heard a southerner say, 'delightedly, "*Our Wilkes* looks like a young god.'" She thought that Edwin 'trembled a little for his own

⁷⁸ *Unlocked Book*, p. 118.

⁷⁹ Bryan, pp. 105, 243-44. Though this attachment was vehemently denied after the assassination, Edwin Booth received a 'heart-broken letter' from his brother's fiancée (*Unlocked Book*, p. 127).

⁸⁰ EB to Emma F. Cary, June 17, 1864, in Edwina Booth Grossmann Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. The statue was dedicated in 1872, and still stands.

⁸¹ 'A Notable Performance', *Castle Square Theatre Magazine*, June 2, 1913; clipping, 'Memorable Night on the American Stage', *San Francisco Chronicle*, n.d. [1899], Harvard Theatre Collection.

⁸² 'A Notable Performance', quoting from *New York Evening Post*, n.d.

laurels.'⁸³ But the excitement of that evening was not all theatrical: it was also the day of the Confederate plot to burn New York, one of the buildings set on fire being the Lafarge Hotel, which adjoined the Winter Garden. As the *New York Times* described it (Nov. 27), 'the panic was such for a few moments that it seemed as if all the audience believed the entire building in flames', but Edwin Booth reassured them in a short speech, and almost all stayed in their seats. John's voice clearly gave him no trouble, for the *Clipper* (Dec. 3) commended the oration as 'a great piece of elocution'.

The day after the performance, John wrote a letter to his mother which he left with the Clarkes, explaining that he must soon go South and begging her forgiveness for breaking his promise to her. His feelings about his own status tumbled out: in the North he was 'a hidden lie among my country's foes', a 'favored slave', having to hear 'every principle, dear to my heart, denounced as treasonable'.⁸⁴ A political quarrel among the three brothers at breakfast on this precise day appears to be an invention of Kimmel's (pp. 192-93), but Edwin later told Adam Badeau that he had had 'long and violent political discussions' with John somewhere around this time, and had finally told his brother that 'he was not at liberty to express [his sentiments] in the house of a Union man.'⁸⁵

Because of the loss of his wardrobe, Booth gave his next (and penultimate) performance in a borrowed costume,⁸⁶ playing Romeo to Avonia Jones's Juliet for her benefit at Grover's Theatre, Washington on January 20, 1865. He drew a rave review from 'Erasmus' of the *National Intelligencer* (see Chapter 10) and took three curtain calls with Miss Jones. This review might have furnished more material for Kimmel, had he noticed it, for 'Erasmus' wrote that Booth 'suffered from huskiness of voice'. Though Kimmel appears to think that long periods of rest would have repaired Booth's voice,⁸⁷ hoarseness is more likely to result from being out of practice. Junius had found it so

⁸³ *Unlocked Book*, p. 120. For discussion of John's performance of Mark Antony, see Chapter 10.

⁸⁴ Original in National Archives, kindly brought to my attention by James O. Hall.

⁸⁵ Badeau, 'Dramatic Reminiscences'.

⁸⁶ Statement of JBB Jr., War Department Archives, transcript in Kimmel Papers.

⁸⁷ *Mad Booths*, p. 191, in connection with the *Julius Caesar* performance.

when he began his starring tour in October 1864 after the summer's rest: his voice gave out in Act IV of *Richard III* on his first night and he remained hoarse all week, having to take a night off in the middle.⁸⁸

Booth's last performance was in *The Apostate*, to the Hemeya of his old friend John McCullough, for the latter's benefit on March 18. McCullough had been touring with Forrest for some time, acting 'seconds' to him; Asia tells us that Booth had 'unbounded admiration' for McCullough as an actor, thinking of him as Forrest's theatrical 'son and heir'.⁸⁹ This performance took place in Ford's Theatre--just over a month later to be the scene of the President's assassination. Booth offered to play also for the benefit of Harry Ford, John T.'s brother, presumably at the end of the season, but it was never to be.⁹⁰

Thus Booth's career came anticlimactically to a close. His friends, in and out of the profession, could not understand why he was acting so little, and he put them off with various excuses, some of which fuelled post-assassination mythology. Most frequently, it seems, he said that he was looking after his oil interests, and he also told John T. Ford that 'he wanted to give Junius a chance' by not competing during the latter's tour, but he informed at least one enquirer that his voice was 'in bad shape'.⁹¹ This last duly reappeared in thumbnail sketches of him after the assassination, often linked with his actual illness in New Orleans, or with an imaginary dissipation, as in the New York *Evening Post* article of April 15, 1865, mentioned above:

But, of late, an apparently incurable bronchial affection has made almost every engagement a failure. The papers and critics have apologized for his 'hoarseness,' but it has long been known by his friends that he would be compelled to abandon the stage. . . . A sort of hoarseness induced by his frequent potations had pretty much destroyed his voice.

This piece was freely copied and plagiarized, appearing in newspapers all over the country. It was but one attempt to discredit Booth: other pieces claim that he failed through being a bad actor or a drunkard, or that he gave up acting because he had been

88 Entries for Oct. 3-7, Diary for 1864, Folger Shakespeare Library.

89 *Unlocked Book*, p. 109n. See Chapter 10 for impressions of this performance.

90 'John T. Ford's Recollections', *Philadelphia Weekly Press*, Dec. 8, 1881.

91 Ford examined by Col. Olcott, April 28, 1865 (National Archives), transcript in Kimmel Papers; Pope, 'The Eccentric Booths'.

seized by oil mania. Such sketches began appearing on the day Lincoln died, and obviously owe little to organized obituary files or reliable sources. Yet upon one or two of these hastily-compiled slurs, Kimmel has built his whole conception of John Wilkes Booth.

The *Post* piece quoted above is correct in one particular: if Booth were being forced to abandon the stage, it would indeed have been known to all his friends. If he had damaged his voice to the extent that Kimmel would have us believe, not only would he have been unable to perform on stage even occasionally, but he could hardly have hidden his disability even in private life. Kimmel imagines Booth rehearsing his lines, which, like Macbeth's 'Amen', 'stuck in his throat. . . . Again and again he repeated *To be or not to be*--that was as far as he could go' (p. 185); while in New York in autumn 1864, 'at times he could not talk above a whisper' (p. 187). Yet there is no mention of this from Edwin, Asia, Junius, their mother, or anyone else who met John at that time--although Junius's diaries for 1864 and 65 are extant. Junius, in fact, wrote to John on April 12, 1865, 'That I hoped he would leave the oil business and follow his profession'.⁹² News of such a misfortune befalling a popular star would have spread rapidly through the theatrical community, yet although actors sometimes repeated the newspaper myth,⁹³ not one spoke of a rumour from before the assassination, let alone of hearing Booth's hoarseness for himself. On the contrary, to the very end he was being requested to act, or asked why he wasn't. In Charles Pope's account (cited above), the point has been missed that Pope began by asking him 'why he did not act': in other words, the reason was not obvious. Clearly Booth had made an engagement for Chicago, for a letter was forwarded to him in Washington early in 1865, in which McVicker asked:

What do you say to filling three weeks with me May 29th?

I have not yet filled your time in January and see no chance of doing so with

⁹² Statement of JBB, Jr.

⁹³ For instance, William J. Ferguson stated that John had retired because of bronchial trouble after his Ford's engagement in 1863! (*American Magazine* 90, Aug. 1920), p. 84.

an attraction equal to yourself--There are plenty of little fish but I don't want them if I can help it.⁹⁴

If any proof were needed that Booth was a 'big fish', surely it is here. Moreover, an embarrassed actor acquaintance, J.H. Young, asked Booth to play Richard III for his benefit at Baltimore in April 1865. Having just been drafted, and with bereaved relatives to look after, Young needed to make a lot of money, and clearly saw Booth as a big draw.⁹⁵ Less than ten days before the assassination, John was in Boston visiting friends and called in at the Boston Theatre where Edwin was playing. His Ophelia, Rachel Noah, had been John's leading lady in Cleveland. She 'asked him if he was going to act any that season. He replied that he might play in New York or Boston or Philadelphia but that he should not travel. Then her cue came and she stepped on the stage. She never saw him again'⁹⁶ The newspaper explanation was challenged even as it was being offered. Townsend, himself a creator of much myth, explicitly stated that there was no foundation to the stories that Booth's voice had gone: 'it was as good when he challenged the cavalrymen to combat as in the best of his Thespian successes.'⁹⁷ George D. Ford, descendant of two theatrical families, explains: 'With the drafty theaters, hotels and trains of those days all actors had laryngitis from time to time, but no actor ever quit the stage because he had a sore throat or had lost his voice. It always came back.'⁹⁸ By way of contrast, we may note that D.W. Waller, leading man at the Boston Museum in the autumn of 1863, who suffered from 'a bad management of voice' and became hoarse before the end of a performance,⁹⁹ had been replaced by the time Booth played the Museum the next spring.

94 McVicker to JWB, Dec. 25, 1864, George S. Bryan Papers.

95 Given in William G. Shepherd, 'They Tried to Stop Booth', *Collier's*, Dec. 27, 1924.

96 Quincy Kilby, 'Some Newly-Collected Facts about John Wilkes Booth', William Seymour Theatre Collection. Bullard gives the date as April 5, 1865.

97 *Life, Crime and Capture*, p. 27. Townsend had met Booth three weeks before the assassination (p. 26).

98 *These Were Actors: A Story of the Chapmans and the Drakes* (New York: Library Publishers, 1955), p. 303. George was the son of Harry Clay Ford and nephew of John T.

99 *Boston Daily Courier*, Oct. 5, 1863; the *Advertiser* and *Gazette* also remarked on Waller's hoarseness.

Two small misapprehensions remain to be dispelled before we can close Booth's story. On April 18, 1865, the *New York Times* reported:

It is stated that J. Wilkes Booth was to have commenced an engagement at the Louisville, Ky., Theatre, March 20, but that he failed to fulfill it without assigning any sufficient reason The cause of his delinquency is now painfully apparent.

This was not an instance of Booth's forgetting to cancel one of his engagements, but the result of a careless reading of one of the Louisville papers. Laid out as follows, the announcement had actually read:

First night of the celebrated tragedian, Mr. BOOTH
ROYD FAIRCLOUGH.¹⁰⁰

Boothroyd Fairclough, a minor tragedian (see Chapter 6), did not arrive that day,¹⁰¹ though his absence did not prevent the *Daily Union Press* (March 21) from reviewing his performance: a *caveat* to all theatre historians.¹⁰²

Booth's theatrical wardrobe was salvaged from the shipwreck to be sold at auction, and a part of it eventually came into the possession of Edwin Booth.¹⁰³ An oft-told tale relates how Edwin burned these costumes, some of which had belonged to their father, late one night in the basement of Booth's Theatre in New York. Otis Skinner wrote this account, first as an article in the *American Magazine* in 1908, then in his book, *The Last Tragedian*. However, John's biographer, Francis Wilson, tells a different story:

Edwin Booth's daughter told the writer, who made enquiries, that her father declared that, together with all his own costumes and those of the Elder Booth, the costumes of John Wilkes Booth were destroyed in the Winter Garden fire M[ar]ch 22-23 1867. . . . Edwina Booth told the writer that directly after the fire her father came home with a piece of burnt cloth in his hand and said to her:

'This is the last of poor John's wardrobe.'¹⁰⁴

This was also the version which Edwin Booth himself told to William Seymour in 1869.

¹⁰⁰ *Democrat*, March 20, 1865.

¹⁰¹ *Louisville Daily Journal*, March 21, 1865, quoted in Edna J. Grauman to David Rankin Barbee, April 25, 1939, Barbee Papers.

¹⁰² See this writer's article, 'The Celebrated Mr. Who? A Small Mystery Solved', *Surratt Courier* 18, no 8 (1993): 4.

¹⁰³ 'The Stage', unidentified newspaper clipping, Box 38, Yale Pamphlet Collection.

¹⁰⁴ Francis Wilson Papers, Billy Rose Theatre Collection.

'I asked Otis S. *why* he had written what he did of the J.W.B. wardrobe', Seymour wrote to Wilson, '--telling him what E.B. had told me--& Otis replied--"Well--it made good reading matter."'105 Unfortunately, therefore, the descriptions of John's costumes in Skinner's vivid account must be regarded as suspect. George Rankin, purchaser of the costumes, recalled inspecting them at the sale, 'shak[ing] out his "Richard the Third" and "Hamlet" costumes, unsheath[ing] his swords and jeweled rapiers ' The water-damaged effects had cost him £213 for 'what at one time must have cost several thousands.'106

But Skinner's story is more than 'good reading matter'. It is a potent allegory of what Edwin Booth actually did in later years: try to suppress all mention of John Wilkes in his presence, destroying his brother's memory at a cost to himself because he still loved him. He was suppressing not only the assassin, but the actor: John, and their father (represented here by his Richard III costume) stood for an acting style Edwin had repudiated. This symbolic act is set in the basement of the theatre 'explicitly advertised as a "temple" of refined art'.107 In the building which staked his claim to respectability and high artistic status, Edwin Booth is portrayed destroying, furtively and by night, all that threatened that claim.

105 Seymour to Wilson, Princeton, May 8, 1927, Francis Wilson Papers.

106 Clipping, 'The Stage'. Rankin also confirms that the costumes burned in the Winter Garden fire.

107 Albert Furtwangler, *Assassin on Stage: Brutus, Hamlet, and the Death of Lincoln* (Urbana, IL: U. Illinois Press, 1991), p. 52.

CHAPTER 9

Richard III: A Savage and Kingly Monster

John Wilkes Booth's Richard III was certainly popular. During his four seasons as a star (1860-64), he performed the role 113 times (not including three performances of Act V only): over twice as many times as his next most popular role, Raphael in *The Marble Heart*. Throughout this time, critics made frequent reference to overflowing houses and audience enthusiasm, even when they themselves had reservations. And audiences knew the play well, as the *Nashville Union* (Feb. 2, 1864) pointed out:

Almost every leading tragedian attempts this character; it has been so often repeated the merest typo [*sic*] in dramatic experience, understands the chief points, and looks for them as notes of comparison, by which he judges the actor before him.

Booth himself, by the end of his second season (1861-62), in which he had almost always opened engagements as Richard, felt that this was his most impressive part, and chose it as the vehicle for a formidable test:

He said he felt timid about appearing before a Boston audience in that character, which had been made famous both by his father and his brother Edwin, and besides he knew that Boston audiences were coldly critical anyway. Still he believed that he could bring out whatever power that [*sic*] was in him better as *Richard*, and make a better first impression in that part than in any other in his repertoire.¹

The acting edition of this period consisted of Cibber's adaptation of the play, with minor alterations made since by actors. The play is two-thirds the length of Shakespeare's original and excises most of the material which demands a knowledge of the three *Henry VI* plays, as well as half the characters, thus becoming streamlined and self-contained. The loss of the moral ambiguity of characters like Margaret, Clarence, Queen Elizabeth and Hastings serves to concentrate the evil in the person of Richard alone. Richard dominates Cibber's play even more than Shakespeare's: he appears in every scene except three, and Cibber adds seven new soliloquies in which Richard shares

¹ J.E. Buckingham, Sr., *Reminiscences and Souvenirs of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* (Washington: Darby, 1894), p. 49.

his plots, triumphs and occasional twinges of conscience with the audience. It is thus a play made for the star system; traditional cuts reinforce this emphasis still further, for instance by cutting all speeches after the king's death. For Levine, it 'could have been written' in the nineteenth-century United States, 'so closely did it agree with American sensibilities concerning the centrality of the individual, [and] the dichotomy between good and evil'.² There was perhaps another reason for the play's popularity. Karen Halttunen's study of advice literature concludes that 'American Victorians condemned hypocrisy as a major social threat', with the 'confidence man' dangerous for his ability to 'manipulate facial expression, manner, and personal appearance in a calculated effort to lure the guileless into granting them confidence'.³ Richard of Gloster, the Renaissance man-on-the-make owing loyalty not even to his own family, may have resonated with a society uneasy with its own social mobility, and his eventual downfall, creating his own hell, would have been reassuring.

While nowadays we see the play as a black farce or political cautionary tale, to Booth's age it was tragedy. Richard was thought of as a tragic hero: evil, but with a certain stature and dignity and charisma: 'he seems to belong to a class above mankind: he is the destroying demon whom we regard with awe and astonishment'.⁴ Cibber's alterations to the last act emphasize this: his Richard is an efficient military leader, whereas Shakespeare's Richard is giving contradictory orders, mistrusting his followers and suffering premonitions of disaster.

A German visitor to London, seeing Richard played at the Soho Theatre by an actor he described as 'not an inch of a king, and six feet of journeyman butcher', nevertheless found 'successful moments' in the performance. 'How much of this was due to the actor himself is an open question: there is a tradition and, so to speak, a recipe, for every major role'.⁵ British and American playgoers would have been familiar with this 'recipe' and

² Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, pp. 43-44.

³ Halttunen, pp. xiii-xv.

⁴ Thomas Barnes reviewing Edmund Kean in *The Examiner*, quoted in Hankey, p. 47.

⁵ Theodor Fontane, *Shakespeare in the London Theatre 1855-58*, trans. Russell

would look to actors to follow it well or surpass it. T.M.W. O'Flynn (see below) notes the traditional Richard 'as a physical type--the evil, insinuating, crook-backed cripple with the gliding, snake-like gait, and arms of unequal length', and regretted that the 'peculiar reptilian glide that was always considered a very necessary part of the actor's characterization, and which lent it much of that baleful, sub-human malevolence that was so terrifying, has . . . disappeared from our stage.'⁶ In America, perhaps following the elder Booth, 'actors of Richard showed a savagery at the end that was quite unimagined in England. English actors always fenced the last fight In America, battle to the death was rougher and bloodier.'⁷ There were accretions of tradition in details, too: in New Orleans, a 'popular air, "Rip Sam"' had been played "'from time immemorial'" in the play as "'Richmond's March'.'⁸

As well as reviews and recollections, two of Booth's promptbooks are extant, in the Harvard Theatre Collection and in the Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin. Unfortunately, we do not know which, if either, is earlier, though the Austin copy is cleaner and more detailed; they may have been used concurrently, being sent on ahead to the next company Booth was to play with. Both are French's, undated but listing Charles Kean's cast at the Park, New York, in 1846. A contemporary promptbook in the Folger Shakespeare Library, signed by J.H. Ring, for many years prompter of the Boston Museum, shows most of the same cuts, which therefore were probably traditional. A set of scenery lists from the Boston Museum, now in the Donald P. Dow Lincoln Collection, includes Booth's *Richard III*. Around 1940, T.W.M. O'Flynn compiled an acting edition of the Cibber/Shakespeare play, containing the business of most of the outstanding old Richards. He had been a young actor in the first decade of the twentieth century, when he had 'gathered from surviving contemporaries of J. Wilkes Booth much authentic, first

Jackson (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1999), pp. 15-16.

6 O'Flynn, from introduction, n. pag.

7 Hankey, p. 53.

8 Roppolo, p. 131, quoting the *Picayune* in 1858. This tradition may well have been country-wide.

hand evidence of his talents and capabilities'.⁹ Those contemporaries included Samuel K. Chester, who played with Booth at Richmond, Columbus/Montgomery, Baltimore, Washington and New York, and Booth's nephew Wilfred Clarke. While second-hand information, written down eighty years after the event, cannot be taken as conclusive evidence, O'Flynn's details are interesting to compare with contemporary descriptions.

Booth's promptbook notations are sparsely practical, showing mainly entrances and exits and occasional groupings of characters. No atmospheric music is specified, but only marches, etc., played from backstage. Sometimes full-stage settings alternate with scenes played before shutters in the second grooves, as with I, i, ii and iii.¹⁰ At one time, Booth must have divided (or considered dividing) III, i into two, beginning a new scene after the exit of the young princes (Harvard promptbook), but this has been crossed out; he ran V, viii and ix (battle scenes) together. Lighting is used to atmospheric effect: after a scene in the Tower in half-dark (IV, i) with shutters in 2, the lights are 'up' for the full-stage coronation scene with Richard in a new costume (both promptbooks, Dow). The Harvard promptbook mentions a 'medium' for the ghost scene, but not the colour; when Richard rushes downstage on awakening, Booth has noted, 'Put footlights up quickly as Richard falls on his knee' (Austin).¹¹ The ghosts appear all together: the Boston lists place them on a platform with curtains in front. Booth has also restored some of Shakespeare's lines: he has written in, 'Is the chair empty? Is the sword unswayed? Is the king dead?' in both books (IV, iv) after Cibber's 'Traitor! the crown!'¹² At the end of Act IV, as Richard goes to deal with the invaders, another hand has written in, 'March on, March on, since we are up in arms / If not to fight with foreign enemies / [Yet to] beat down these rebels here at home'.¹³ Harry Langdon confirms this restoration: he claimed to have

9 O'Flynn, from section at end headed 'J. Wilkes Booth', p. 2.

10 The Dow scenery lists give these as 'Garden', 'Modern Street', and 'Farren Gothic' respectively.

11 Harvard has 'Lights ½ up'.

12 Junius Brutus Booth did this too (Thomas R. Gould, *The Tragedian: an Essay on the Histrionic Genius of Junius Brutus Booth* (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1868), p. 45).

13 Harvard; Austin merely has the enigmatic note, 'Wait for Richard'.

remonstrated with Booth for staying in the North despite his sympathies, and earning money from northerners, even by 'abusing your fellow rebels. Here you have interjected into Richard III the lines about driving these rebels hence, and you give it in such a way as to earn applause.'¹⁴ Booth also suggested a restoration for another actor: he notes at the end of V, iv (Austin): 'N.B. It is better for Richmond to repeat the prayer from the original, and be closed in, kneeling' (the stage directions require him to exit). Further details from the promptbooks will be noted in the chronological survey following.

Since Booth usually opened with *Richard*, a high proportion of his notices must reflect '[t]he disadvantages of a first night in a strange city--entailed in part by the necessity of accustoming one's voice to a new house, and by the embar[r]assments incidental to acting with people entirely new to him', as the *Boston Post* (May 17, 1862) shrewdly realized. Moreover, critics were often coming fresh to him as an actor never seen before--which explains the vast amount and detail of the extant material on this particular role. Perhaps some of the faults remarked upon, including the rant, extravagant gestures, and superabundant energy, were due to Booth's nervousness in a new city, and to his not having yet judged what a given audience wanted.

1860-61

Booth did not play very significant cities in his first season, and consequently did not receive serious criticism. Inevitably, his father's performance of the role was used to advertise him (*Columbus Daily Times*, Oct. 5, 1860) and as a basis for comparison: 'Our oldest *habitués* of the Theatre . . . unite in the opinion [that JWB's Gloster] has never been equalled in this city since the elder Booth played [here]' (*Albany Atlas & Argus*, Mar. 2, 1861). From his third star engagement onwards, portions of Act V were singled out: 'the tent scene and the combat . . . especially, were terrific, and held the audience spell-bound' (*Rochester Evening Express*, Jan. 26, 1861). These scenes were then considered the high-spots of the role and bravura playing was expected. At Albany, when 'the two antagonists

14 Townsend, 'Lincoln's assassination' clipping.

confronted each other, with sword in hand, the most intense excitement prevailed throughout the audience' (*New York Clipper*, Mar. 2). 'He throws his whole soul into his sword,' said the *Albany Morning Express* (Mar. 5), 'giving to the contest a degree of earnestness never approached, even by his father. At the end of the tragedy, three cheers were . . . given with a power that almost took the roof off.' Given the ferocity of the fight, it is not surprising that Booth's first recorded stage accident occurred in this role, during his Rochester engagement in January (see Chapter 5).

Despite the puffiness of much of the comment, some of the main and continuing themes of the response to this role emerged during this season: comparison with his father, large and delighted houses, praise for the tent scene and the combat, and Booth's 'earnestness'--sincerity or life-likeness. Originality was not mentioned: Booth was apparently simply following the 'recipe' with good results.

1861-62

This season, comparisons expanded to include Edwin. At Buffalo, the *Daily Courier* (Nov. 2) said he resembled Edwin, but with 'new and effective touches', the combat scene being '[e]specially great'; for the *Detroit Free Press* (Nov. 17), the fight was the 'best and most thrilling scene' ever produced in that theatre.

In Cincinnati Booth received his first real criticism. The *Daily Gazette* (Nov. 26), noting the resemblance of all three Booths' interpretations of Richard, felt that John's was 'not as finished a piece of acting as Edwin's'. But it nonetheless liked the performance, and noted innovation: 'Some of his readings are new, and we think an improvement', including '[t]he rubbing of the hands and the darting forward toward the footlights' on 'Off with his head! So much for Buckingham'.¹⁵ On November 30, it added that Richard was the best part it had so far seen from Booth's repertory, which was to be a common critical opinion.

¹⁵ Cooke and Kean had played this line with 'contemptuous levity', Kean 'pulling up his glove' (Hankey, p. 222).

He reminded the *Louisville Daily Journal* (Dec. 10) more of his father than Edwin did. The critic (Dec. 11) had never seen the last act played 'with more power, spirit, and originality', and appreciated the fight not just for its technical brilliance, but for the acting: Booth showed 'the very desparation [*sic*] of despairing bravery'. The *Democrat* (Dec. 10), noting that Booth had 'fire, energy, fine personal appearance, and good talent', felt that '[s]ome eccentricities of style and some apparent imitations of other actors, alone marred the beauty of his personation'. Despite these, the reviewer (Dec. 15) noticed 'evidences of originality and boldness of conception'. The response of the house, as the *Democrat* (Dec. 13) described it, is telling: 'in many passages, the breathless silence of the audience indicated the interest with which the performance was regarded.'

Oddly, the *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel* (Dec. 28) seemed to consider Richard an old part (though the historical Richard was not yet 33 when he died) and marvelled '[h]ow so young a man could so perfectly personate the old, crooked-backed tyrant'. This misapprehension was perhaps encouraged by the fact that most of the tragedians currently playing him were much older than the Booth brothers. This critic had actually seen Junius Brutus: 'He was grand, he was great, he was unapproachable. But the son has all the fire of the old man's genius.' Like the Cincinnati critic who had called John a 'rapid reader',¹⁶ he noted the speed of the rendering: 'He is rash and impetuous, and hurries things through with all the ardor of youth, whereas the elder Booth was, more especially in the soliloquies, deliberate'--an example his son should heed. A few weeks earlier, Edwin Booth, in London, had received similar criticism in a review from the *Athenaeum* (Nov. 2): 'As usual, he reserved himself for the traditional points, and got over the level ground as rapidly as possible. Owing to this unseemly haste many a phrase escaped the emphatic utterance to which it is entitled.' 'But', continued the *Indianapolis Sentinel*, 'in the bustle and stir and vigor and life of the play, [John] equalled any actor we had previously seen.' In St. Louis, the *Daily Missouri Democrat* said he had 'all the fire and enthusiasm of his father' with no 'disposition to rant' (Jan. 7), and the reviewer had never

16 *Cincinnati Commercial*, Nov. 26, quoted in Chapter 5.

seen the fight equalled (Jan. 16), while the *Missouri Republican* (Jan. 11) called him 'energetic and spirited'.

Booth met more discerning criticism in Chicago. The *Tribune* (Jan. 21) reported the audience 'agreeably disappointed' not to see the usual 'hackneyed tragedy': 'Nothing more unlike the old-time representation of the hunchback monarch could have been produced. Its old admirers hardly recognized it.' As well as the usual tent and combat scenes, this critic felt Booth excelled in the wooing of Lady Anne. Perhaps the germ of a later myth may be detected in the statement, 'So fully does he become impressed and identified with the character that those with whom he fights the mimic fight fear him.' There had been another accident, though apparently nobody was hurt (see Chapter 5). The *Evening Journal* felt that Richard was not a good choice to open with because it was so much of a character part that it hid what Booth was 'really' like:

The *personnel* of the hunchbacked, crooked, deformed and cruel monarch was not such as is calculated to please the eye. Those essential points of a good actor, a fine, commanding figure, easy carriage, etc., were concealed, if they exist at all, beneath the uncouth exterior of the tyrant Richard. Even the voice . . . can be poorly judged of in the husky soliloquies, the dissembling declarations, or the frantic ravings of Richard.

This description shows Booth's concern with realism in his portrayal; the ugliness, deformity and husky voice would be mentioned again, with and without approval. Edwin's Richard, by contrast, was apparently not particularly deformed (at least at a later date) and could be described as 'a handsome, engaging scoundrel'.¹⁷ Edwin Forrest's, too, was called 'an agreeable villain', with 'grace, and wit, and breeding' (see below). Agreeing with the *Tribune* that the interpretation was original, the *Journal* was less enthusiastic:

If originality is a virtue, Mr. Booth is virtuous to an intense degree. No actor ever displayed more independence of and less regard for the old beaten path than does he. We were never so fortunate as to see his father in Richard III, but those whose judgment we have confidence in say that there is very little similarity in its rendition by father and son. This is indeed a striking instance of originality. However that may be, Mr. Booth certainly delivers the text in a manner that, in one less studied and scholarly, would be pronounced

17 Charles F.L. Wingate, *Shakespeare's Heroes on the Stage* (New York: Crowell, 1896), p. 335 and Edwin Milton Royle, *Edwin Booth as I Knew Him* (New York: The Players, 1933) p. 34. Royle acted with Edwin quite late in his career.

careless.--We give him credit for his contempt of old usages, and warmly welcome to the stage anything that smacks of freedom from hackneyism of the last century.

For the first time a less than enraptured audience response is recorded: they had 'listlessly followed the interminable scene-shifting . . . without deigning a token of applause', but 'went wild over his furious combat' wherein Booth reminded the critic of 'an enraged tiger, goaded to madness'; at this point 'the audience, which had relapsed into coldness, were thoroughly aroused'. Presumably Booth held the audience better in his second Chicago performance, when the *Journal* 'observed a manifest improvement in the general rendering' of the part.¹⁸

The *Baltimore Clipper* printed a 'letter to the editor' on the day of Booth's debut there (Feb. 17), headed 'THE YOUTHFUL BOOTH / "*Richard's Himself Again!*"', which suggests that he was now being identified with the part. At that first performance he was called out at the end of each act (*New York Clipper*, Feb. 29 [*sic* for Mar. 1]) and given 'frequent and cordial applause' (*Spirit of the Times*, Mar. 1). The *Baltimore Sun* (Feb. 19) noticed an '*overworking* of some lineaments of character' consequent upon 'the exuberance of youth' and the actor's energy, but felt that 'the exhibition of great genius, originality and reserved power . . . is manifest and incontestable.' That his power should be described as reserved perhaps suggests that he was learning to husband his resources and develop subtlety.

The house was so full for Booth's New York debut that the *New York Times* critic could not get in (Mar. 18). A rather unreliable account from a member of the cast¹⁹ gives an impression of what it was like to act with Booth, though probably exaggerating the originality of the performance: 'breaking loose from all the old orthodox, tie-wig business of the Richards since the days of Garrick . . . he gave such a rendering of the crook-back tyrant as was never seen before, and perhaps never will be again.' The performance took its toll of Booth: one night, 'the curtain descended, but Booth could not

18 Jan. 25, quoted by Loux, 'JWB Day by Day', p. 269.

19 'Wilkes Booth as an Actor', clipping, Harvard Theatre Collection. This actor was probably J.J. McCloskey (see Chapter 6).

rise.' This Richard, 'who[m] only a few moments before nobody could withstand in his fury', was now 'a limp mass of exhausted nature, his nerves all unstrung, and whom a child might conquer' Booth's Richard was played eleven times in three weeks, quite eclipsing the rest of his repertoire. The injury to E.L. Tilton (discussed in Chapter 6) and the subsequent stories bear witness to the energy and speed of the fighting by both combatants, and perhaps to the vividness of Booth's acting, in that he seemed to be out of control.

The *Evening Express* and *Evening Post* (both Mar. 18) saw a likeness to Edwin, but the *New York Herald* (Mar. 18) thought that 'in the fourth and fifth acts J. Wilkes Booth is more like his father than his brother.' The *New York Clipper's* reviewer (Mar. 29) had seen Junius Brutus in 1838, and was 'vividly reminded of him' by John--more than by Edwin. The *New York Dispatch* reviewer went further: had John 'appeared under another name . . . the dramatic world would have called him a copyist of the elder Booth.' The similarities, he thought, were not deliberately assumed: 'they are simply a part of himself' (Mar. 23).

Much of Booth's criticism in New York and elsewhere is informed by differing views of the virtues of originality (discussed in Chapter 2): the critic of the *Spirit of the Times* (Mar. 29) was wary of originality for its own sake. Booth had 'pretty closely' followed the 'excellent pattern' of his father's Richard:

The fourth and fifth acts are full of the points of the elder Booth--none the less good or great, mark ye, for that. There are actors who, in painful efforts to be entirely original, make asses of themselves. Far better make a respectable copy of Titian than extemporize a whitewasher's daub.

Under this influence, the critic thought, John's performance was 'vigorous and truthful'. But while straining for originality was not likely to produce good results, some critics saw in John the workings of intuition, or 'genius', which made him naturally different from his father and brother. Though equally like both of them, thought the *Times and Messenger* critic (Mar. 23)²⁰, 'Mr. J. Wilkes Booth has an individuality, and a very

²⁰ Quoted on the back of a playbill for the Boston Museum, May 9, 1862, William Seymour Theatre Collection.

powerful one, of his own. It is the creation of no school, but the evident prompting of his genius'. Walt Whitman, writing as 'Velsor Brush' in the *New York Leader* of May 3, judged Booth entirely on his likeness to his father--and was not impressed. His Richard was 'about as much like his father's, as the wax bust of Henry Clay . . . is like the genuine orator in the Capitol, when his best electricity was flashing alive in him and out of him.'²¹

Apart from family likenesses, the New York critics were not at all in agreement as to how original Booth was--or should be--in general. Two felt, as had the *Louisville Democrat* the previous December, that his mistakes came from following convention while his intuition showed him the right path. The *New York Leader* critic (Mar. 22) had seen many eminent actors give 'the regular stage *Richard*' and was 'brilliantly disappointed' when John did not 'trot him out again':

There were faults in the picture--grave faults--but they were all borrowed. Every original touch in it was good and showed the hand of genius. It produced upon me the effect not so much of a careful study as of an improvisation.

The *New York Times* (Mar. 19) found in him, 'thanks perhaps to youth, few conventional vices of the stage', though in the earlier acts he 'displayed a few mannerisms of attitude and gesticulation which were not in keeping with the general independence of his conception of the part'.

Conversely, the *Spirit of the Times* 'did not observe any new readings or new renderings' (Mar. 29); and the *Tribune* (Mar. 21) noted that the 'chief points' in the play 'indeed seem all stereotyped . . . but then, of course, the varieties are as great as those of physical differences and grades of intellectual apprehension.' Booth seems to have observed these traditional 'points': he was 'very effective in all the prominent points of the play' according to the *Clipper* (Mar. 29), and the *Herald* (Mar. 18) said he 'makes all the well known points with ample effect'. The *Tribune* (Mar. 21) could not detect in his

21 After seeing more of John, however, Whitman reconsidered: 'now and then he would have flashes, passages, I thought, of real genius' (*With Walt Whitman in Camden* (Camden, NJ: Haddon Craftsmen, 1938), 4:485). Whitman thought Edwin 'not a genius of the first class--not anywhere near first class, indeed' (4.485).

performance 'anything absolutely new; not even the soiled buff gauntlets, for report says that George Frederick Cooke wore very soiled ones.' His 'lion-hearted' death scene was praised, but not for originality: 'All the old traditions regarding it--of fighting standing or prostrate, returning to the charge, dealing swashing blows, and dying game--he exhibits with vast force.' Yet the *Clipper* printed a long review on April 12,²² emphasizing Booth's originality:

Well, we hardly know how to speak of the man or the performance, so different is he from all other tragedians that we have seen. He has his own ideas about the character, and some of them are very correct, in our judgment. He imitates no one, so far as we could discover, but strikes out into a path of his own, introducing points which older hands at the business would not dare to attempt.

This impression of startling newness seemed to increase with the passage of time; the old actor already quoted²³ remembered in the 1880s, 'Reading entirely new to us, he gave; business never thought of by the oldest stager, he introduced', and William Cauldwell in 1891 could state that Booth's Richard 'utterly differed from the Richard of his father It was in every respect an original performance.'²⁴

What, then, constituted this originality? He seems to have impressed several critics with his realism: he was 'terribly in earnest' (*Tribune*, Mar. 21); and according to the *Leader* (Mar. 22)

he gave us . . . a human being, and . . . a human being very much after the pattern of Shakespeare's own *Richard*. A more life-like picture of the deformed, desperate, defiant, dirty king--nervous, irritable, impatient, coarse-minded, crafty, overbearing--hurrying on from step to step, as if moved by some invisible power--it would be difficult to give.

For the *Times and Messenger* (Mar. 23) 'his combat with Richmond is frightfully real, and he dies very hard, as so savage and yet kingly a monster should.' For the first time in his career, Booth's appearance is remarked on as a novelty: 'in the last act he created a

22 This was probably written by T. Allston Brown, and was much quoted and paraphrased, especially in thumbnail sketches after the assassination (for instance, *St. Louis Daily Press*, April 23, 1865).

23 Clipping, 'Wilkes Booth as an actor'.

24 Clipping, 'Memories of the Metropolis'.

veritable sensation. His face blackened and smeared with blood, he seemed Richard himself' (*Herald*, Mar. 18), and the *Clipper* (April 12) expanded:

Now, with most tragedians, it is the custom to rush upon the stage, while the fight is going on, looking as sleek and well dressed as if they had just come in from a walk on Fifth Avenue. Now, Wilkes Booth makes a terrible feature of this part of the performance. He dashes across the stage as if he 'meant business:' he again appears, 'seeking for Richmond in the throat of death,' and looks like a butcher just come from the slaughter house. His face is covered with blood, from wounds supposed to have been received in slaying those five other Richmonds he refers to; his beaver is lost in the fray; his hair is flying helter skelter; his clothes are all mussed; and he pants and fumes like a prize fighter in 'the longest fight on record;' he makes you believe, almost, that he *has* been fighting, and that he is chasing up Richmond to tackle *him*. It looks so. And when Richmond does confront him, Richard's terrible to behold. He actually seems 'eager for the fray,' and his wearied, bloody and haggard appearance is in striking contrast with Richmond, who . . . does not look as if he had been near the fight at all. There they are, Richard and Richmond; just look at them--the former bruised and mangled and bleeding, with his eyes rolling, and his face indulging in all manner of contortionate exercises; his goodly apparel soiled and mussed, and all awry . . .

Booth's clothes were later remembered as 'bloody and torn' as well; however, neither promptbook mentions a costume change here.²⁵ The *Times* (Mar. 19) objected to his 'untidyness [*sic*] of attire' in 'the earlier acts' as disrespectful to both author and audience. The attitude of this critic and of the *Clipper's* 'well dressed' tragedians is similar to that of an early manager of J.W. Wallack, Sr.: reproving him for dressing realistically as Tressel, he told him:

'Why, sir, you should have entered in a suit of decent black, with silk stockings on and with a white handkerchief in your hand.' 'What! after defeat and flight from battle?' interrupted my father. 'That has nothing at all to do with it,' was the reply; 'the proprieties! Sir, the proprieties!'²⁶

Booth seems to have preferred realism in costuming. For his appearance in the fight, he may have taken a hint from his father's business of applying 'blood for scar' to his brow.²⁷ Junius Brutus believed in such naturalistic touches: Asia relates the story of how, when Edwin first played Tressel to his father's Richard, the latter surveyed his

25 'Memories of the Metropolis'; 'Wait Richard's change' (or similar) is noted in three places, but not after V, vi (the change to armour).

26 Lester Wallack, *Memories of Fifty Years* (1889; New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969), p. 81-82.

27 Daniel J. Watermeier, ed., *Between Actor and Critic: Selected Letters of Edwin Booth and William Winter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U. Press 1971), p. 101 and note.

costume and asked, 'Where are your spurs?' He also played Oroonoko 'with bare feet, insisting that it was absurd to put shoes on a slave.'²⁸ For some, realism could go too far, or could descend to claptrap: Booth's helter-skelter hair recalls Forrest, in London in 1837, 'coming on for the fight "with long and heavy strips of black hair which were fixed in such a way that they came tumbling over his forehead, eyes and face with every barbarous turn and gesture"', which the critic thought a "'wretched" trick'.²⁹

But the New York critics seemed, on the whole, to approve of Booth's conception of Richard. Besides his intuition or 'genius', he also understood the play intellectually: 'He reads the play capitally', said the *Herald* (Mar. 18), and the *Clipper* (Mar. 29) agreed. 'His intellectual appreciation of the part is somewhat wonderful for so young an actor' enthused the *Times and Messenger* (Mar. 23). The *Tribune* (Mar. 21) thought him 'head and shoulders above those who ordinarily attempt Richard III, in intellectual breadth and power of concentration', and approved of his characterization: 'He properly makes Richard III a rough brute'. This did not demand 'grace of gesture or majesty of walk. It argued finely for the perceptions of the young tragedian that he affected neither the one nor the other'. 'His Richard is the shambling, crook-backed, misshapen object whom Shakespeare drew', said the *Dispatch* (Mar. 23), now and then showing 'smoothness and finish . . . simulation of sincerity and the softer passions, . . demonstrations of tenderness and love'. The *Evening Post* (Mar. 18) thought his 'by-play was excellent--and in the bits of satire and sarcasm with which his part abounds, he is wonderfully effective.' For the *Spirit of the Times* (Mar. 29), 'his Richard is about what most thinking people would judge the character to be'. Booth kept Richard's ultimate goal to the forefront: he was

a stirring, active villain, busy with his grand ambition; soliloquizing, scheming, making love, dissembling, are all hastened through with as though they were troublesome stops on the way With a firm step he hastens on from point to point, his eye constantly seeing in the near future the crown, the 'bright reward of ever-daring minds.'

²⁸ *Elder and Younger Booth*, p. 125; Leavitt, p. 168.

²⁹ Hankey, p. 53, quoting John Forster in *The Examiner*. It is unlikely, though, that Booth made a wig change here; see above.

Despite general approval, there were some reservations. The *Evening Express* (Mar. 18) thought a few nights in the city would tone down his 'disposition to rant'; and the *Evening Post* (Mar. 18) that at first he 'was exaggerated and ranted and played in the genuine western style', but that he 'toned down' for the last two acts. The *New York World* (Mar. 21) thought his early acts 'a trifle slow'; and the *Tribune* (Mar. 21) did not admire 'in cunning expressions, that of shutting one eye', which it regarded as comic; nor a habit, shared with Edwin, 'when contemplating, of half-clenching his hand and regarding his finger nails'.³⁰

Booth's vocal delivery came in for more criticism, though the *Times* (Mar. 19) called it 'natural and unstrained'. The *World* (Mar. 21) thought 'his elocution is now and then at fault'. The *Dispatch* (Mar. 23) felt that 'Mr. Booth is a great actor, but he has great and grave faults', which he could mend. 'At times his elocution is greatly at fault: a sudden cadence takes him from clear full and round tones down to a guttural [*sic*] enunciation which, for the time, merges into indistinctness.' For the *Tribune* (Mar. 21) his voice was not 'wonderfully gifted'; but Richard was a very trying part for the voice, with its

huge straining of Anglo-American tempests of tragic wrath, when the actor grows purple with effort, and all the delicate tissues of the vocal chords [*sic*] are jangled into a state of physical desperation. The result is that the voice is rough, dead, and ghastly, in nine-tenths of the scenes of the performance, or those demanding the more subtle, philosophical, endearing and natural traits. If there be any exception to this, among our most intense tragedians, we have not encountered it.

Moreover, the *Tribune* continued, John occasionally spoke through his nose 'as if he had a cold. Mr. Edwin Booth does the same thing'. However, he was not guilty of 'pompous diction and laboriously unnatural sounds', and spoke Richard's lines 'quickly and conversationally'. The performance would improve if he would 'husband his voice a little more in the raving parts.' The *Spirit of the Times* (Mar. 29) felt that his faults of delivery were justified as verisimilitude: 'His soliloquies are full of restlessness, gesture, and

³⁰ The *Boston Post* (Jan. 24, 1863) noting this mannerism in JWB's Pescara, said that JBB shared it too.

declamation of doubtful propriety in artistic view, but then it is Gloster all over . . . he had no minutes for oratory'.

Looking back after thirty years, William Cauldwell asserted that Booth's voice in the wooing scene 'equaled in its grand melody that of Forrest, and made, as in Forrest's case, the scene seem natural'; he also noted that "'Off with his head; so much for Buckingham," was delivered with a mingled rage and scorn never before or since equaled.'³¹ Booth, according to the *Spirit*, carefully built his performance:

This uneasiness, manifest from "Now is the winter," &c., Mr. Booth gradually increases, until, in the last act, it culminates in a whirlwind, a tornado of rapid execution, hurrying the spectator along, with resistless power, to a climax unequalled in thrilling effect by any Richard that I have seen, not excepting the father himself (Mar. 29).

The *Clipper's* verdict on April 12 after describing the fight was: 'It looks a little rough, but it's all natural enough'; and the *New York Leader* (Mar. 22) summed up: the performance

lacked finish, as everything spontaneous is apt to, but it was full of vigor and in parts exhibited a delicacy amounting almost to tenderness. Relieved of certain crudities incident to an unpracticed hand, together with certain extravagances resulting from mere youthful enthusiasm, and certain conventionalisms adopted without thought, and it would then, with a trifle more attention to minor details, be the best portraiture of Richard that has been seen on the American boards. And this, too, from one of the youngest of our artists.

The *Times* (Mar. 19) ended simply, 'We cannot name a better *Richard*.'

Booth's apprehension at facing a Boston audience has been noted at the beginning of this chapter. A member of that Museum audience, writing about thirty years later, remembers that '[e]very seat was occupied, as well as the aisles', and that the crowd, primed with the favourable New York reviews, 'sat with breathless expectation'. 'Scene second closed in', and

there came just that instant of a stage wait that is often so dramatic. A silence that was almost painful rested on the audience, then there suddenly stood upon the stage the figure of Gloster. He stopped close to the left first entrance; or rather he seemed to appear there, for he possessed an ability to

31 'Memories of the Metropolis'. See above for the originality of Booth's delivery of the latter line.

glide on and off the scene with an incomprehensible movement. In his crossed arms he carried his sword.³²

Audience members who had seen his father said he 'brought back strikingly memories of that greatest of *Richards*';³³ particularly, for one, in the 'fierce vigor' of the combat scene.³⁴ The *Boston Saturday Evening Gazette* (May 17) found that 'in the bustling speeches at the close of the fourth act he is very, very like his father.' He was further compared with Edwin, a Boston favourite. 'X.Y.Z.' in the *Boston Daily Evening Transcript* (May 9) thought him 'like and unlike' both his father and brother, with 'a voice very much like Edwin's--the same smooth, silvery tones';³⁵ the *Boston Courier* (May 13) added that John's voice was 'somewhat more powerful and always more certain'. The *New York Clipper* (May 24) judged that 'he reads well, but not quite so smoothly as his brother Edwin.' The comparison was developed by the *Boston Post*: on May 15 it remarked that 'the great and manifest distinction' between Edwin and John was that John

has vastly more intensity and passion than [Edwin]. . . . Now this *intensity* is the basis of all high dramatic excellence This intensity the Old Booth had to the extent of frenzy [*sic*], and he has given it to his son John Wilkes, in far greater measure than to Edwin. It is most seen, at this early stage of his histrionic development, in his stage fighting.

The *Post* analyzed the brothers further on May 17:

The former [Edwin] 'in repose'--i.e. in monologue or dialogue calling for no display of extraordinary power--has certain peculiarities of voice and manner which fascinate, while sometimes they will not bear the test of serious examination; while the latter is the more effective in impassioned scenes, where warm utterances of feeling are required, and if he does not at some points stir an audience as Edwin does, his performances have a more even and a better sustained excellence than do many of the other's. . . . John is consistent from first to last; Edwin will sacrifice many opportunities for fine effect, in order to save his whole strength for a prospective something apparently more important.

32 Clipping, 'Wilkes Booth. His First Appearance on the Boston Stage'.

33 Buckingham, p. 49.

34 John W. Ryan, letter to the *Boston Herald*, May 21, 1916.

35 This piece, which appeared on the eve of John's first Boston appearance, referred to a performance 'in a neighboring city': probably Providence, RI (Oct. 25, 1861), the nearest in time and distance; or possibly Portland, ME (Mar. 18 or 21, 1861) or Albany, NY (Feb. 22, Mar. 4 or 5, 1861).

Presumably the critic meant that John was more consistent in his portrayal of the character, or in his level of energy than Edwin; although the *Saturday Evening Gazette* (May 17, quoted below) said that John also saved himself for the last two acts.

If John came off well in these comparisons with his brother, both fell down compared to Junius Brutus in the memory of 'Iota Sigma', in a letter to the Editor of the *Boston Courier* (May 19). He had been led to believe, he said,

from the criticisms we had read of [John], that he possessed all his father's genius and talent, but really, we failed to discover the first particle. He read some portions of the text very well, but he has a bad habit of acting *at* the audience, a thing his father never did.

Impressed only by John's wooing of Lady Anne, which he felt was 'very fairly rendered', 'Iota Sigma' concluded, 'Edwin is a good actor, nothing more; of John Wilkes, time alone will tell whether he will become even what his brother is There never was but one *great* Booth, and he is in the shades.'

The Boston critics were less concerned than those of New York about the originality of the performance, and equally contradictory. The *Transcript* (May 9), after having had 'no hope of ever again being startled by a new "point"', was 'agreeably surprised' to find Booth 'decidedly an original actor. There is no appearance of imitation in anything he does'. On May 13, the same paper said that his performance was 'in many respects original, and showed a close study and vivid conception of the individuality of the character'; whereas the *Saturday Evening Gazette* (May 17) stated, 'Richard he plays mostly according to conventional ideas, makes some changes and introductions of business, but no glaring innovations.' The *Post* noted a new detail: 'He rushes to his tent . . . to put his armor on, . . . he has the armorer before our eyes actually to close the rivets up'.³⁶ Again, the passage of time seemed to heighten the impression of originality: from the vantage point of thirty years later,

The entire portrayal . . . was a great piece of acting. It differed from that of any other actor ever seen in the part. It was not the splendid picture of

36 May 15; Harry Weaver ('No. 2 Bullfinch Place') also mentions this.

cynical, ambitious, cruel royalty that Edwin Booth gave. It was not the correct, cold, even performance of Davenport. It was all his own.³⁷

What of his concept of the character, and the structure of the performance? For the *Boston Courier* (May 13),

He makes Richard thoroughly the crooked-backed, shambling, ugly, unfashionable mortal whom Shakespeare drew. His conception is not only intelligent, but intellectual . . . and much of his embodiment is powerful and true to the character

However, it felt that Booth was 'too attentive to the minutest details of the text to insure a perfect unity of performance', and that 'the peculiar trick he has of squinting one eye . . . indicates that the aim of Richard is not the grand ambition to attain the throne, but to triumph over the individuals with whom he has to deal'--presumably because this gesture (noted also in New York by the *Tribune*) indicated too much enjoyment of each small victory. The *Transcript* (May 13) saw Booth as digging deep into character:

The physical and moral deformity of Richard, and the connection between the two, were closely represented, and the basis of all his wit and intellect in scorn and malignity, was clearly indicated. Richard's jests are more terrible than other men's imprecations, and the essential wickedness which penetrates his whole character and speech was never lost sight of by Booth for the purpose of making points.

A strong suggestion that Booth shaped his performance toward a climax was provided by the *Saturday Evening Gazette* (May 17):

It is perhaps too apparent during the first three acts that he is saving himself for the last two, but in those two the man exerts to the utmost his full mental and physical powers. Once the war commences, Mr. Booth is terribly in earnest

This was confirmed by one audience member, who added a telling detail: 'It was decidedly a crescendo performance, and there was in it this much, at least, of the great artist, that he conveyed to his auditors a sense of on-coming doom, and a belief that there was to be no halting or falling off until [his death].'³⁸ This sense of doom was also found by the *Post* (May 17) in the pre-battle soliloquy which Cibber imported from *Henry V's* Chorus: 'There was a calmness about the delivery of the monologue in keeping with the

37 Clipping, 'Wilkes Booth. His First Appearance'

38 'Wilkes Booth. His First Appearance . . . '.

stillness of the night itself and in harmony with the dread entertained by Richard for the morrow's dawn.³⁹ As with Cibber's speech on conscience, 'he affected a decidedly refreshing singularity by neither mouthing nor preaching it.' The *Post* liked 'exceedingly' Booth's 'bustling, shambling "Richard"' and noted that though deformed and ugly, he was

still the royal-blooded villain who *can* 'o'erbear and check such as are of happier person than himself.' We see the consciousness of power to execute all which the fertile mind conceives our youthful friend shows that he makes those around him subserve his desires and bow meekly to his will by an overbearing manner and by an assurance which is born of royal blood. He is not your brute-force villain who rides rough-shod over every obstacle, neither is he the smooth-faced '*Iago*' who enjoys the reputation of being virtuous. He does not obtain his influence over men by deceit, but through the employment of a power given by nature which they cannot resist.

'X.Y.Z.' of the *Transcript* (May 9), who may have met Booth, called him 'a deep and earnest student' who had 'made critical analyses of all the characters he plays'. But after this intellectual preparation, Booth's method was intuitive:

His acting belongs to the very best school--that wherein a passion is expressed as the heart, wrought by tumult, itself directs; not that which teaches an actor, after stopping to select his position, to traverse the stage in short shuffling jumps, and throw himself through a series of horrible contortions. In fact, he seems perfectly natural, and is the character itself; so identified with the part, that, for the time, we forget Booth and think only of Richard.

Booth's wooing of Lady Anne was tender and apparently real, 'X.Y.Z.' continued, and his tent scene drew the audience into 'the horrid nightmare.' One auditor remembered Booth as so real in the scene with Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess of York (IV, iv) that 'his rage, sarcasm and blasphemous defiance seemed to make his fellow artists shrink away from him without the necessity of assuming a horror they did not feel.'⁴⁰

The fight scene came in for the usual praise, the *Saturday Evening Gazette* (May 17) noting his 'disordered mien, blood-sprent face, wild glare of the eye, and infuriate plunges at his opponent'. The *Post* (May 15) made an interesting point which prophetically answers later denigrators of Booth as merely a gymnast:

Some people say 'Oh! stage fighting is only *physical*, it does not show the genius of the man.' They might as well say, the awful blaze of a great actor's

39 Kean had 'touched description into pathos' here (Hankey, p. 232, quoting the *Athenaeum*).

40 'Wilkes Booth. His First Appearance . . . '.

eye . . . is only *physical*. The fact is, it is the outward visible manifestation of the inward earnestness; and just so the tiger-like leap of body and stroke of arm, reveal the mighty struggle of the soul, which prompts them in Richard III, he fights, or rather *his soul fights* through arm and eye and body, with indescribable fury.

The critic went on to say that Booth's

stage face and figure do more acting than his voice, and he seems aware of his excellence in all that appeals to the eye in distinction from the ear. . . . he expresses the vehemence of his feelings, often in sounds unintelligible, but with abundance of action,--both hands, shifting eye-brows, incessant movement. . . . Here, in voice, is the youth's greatest defect. He is not a master of the mechanics of voice, and without that no actor can long charm or conquer.

The *Transcript* of May 9 had said his voice had 'smooth, silvery tones, with no nasal twang, no mouthing of words; no disposition to rant', but several other papers joined the *Post* in criticizing his elocution and delivery. The *Courier* (May 13) said, 'his elocution is much at fault, and he halts between the lines of his speeches, as if to receive the applause of the audience.' He also 'declaims to the audience pompously, instead of soliloquising thoughtfully to himself': perhaps this is what 'Iota Sigma' meant by saying he acted '*at* the audience'. The *New York Clipper* had commented similarly on Edwin Booth the previous year (Aug. 31, 1861): in his soliloquies he seemed 'more like one who is 'speaking a piece' rather than communing with himself.' In contrast to his sons, Junius Brutus 'spoke like a man thinking aloud, not as if reciting from memory.'⁴¹

Not surprisingly, many critics thought him crude or unfinished; the *Courier* (May 13) found 'glaring faults, which give us another proof that no young man can grasp the immense conceptions of Shakespeare, which require a life-time of devotion to the work'; a sentiment echoed by 'Iota Sigma'. The New York critics had given far less emphasis to this. The *Courier* also noted that Booth 'sometimes forgets which of his legs is lame', and concluded he had 'much to learn and much to unlearn'. In summing up during the engagement, the *Saturday Evening Express* (May 17) thought his Richard and Hamlet

⁴¹ Gould, p. 40. The *Clipper* item, like the detailed piece on John in New York, was probably written by Thomas Allston Brown.

'finished, thoughtful, scholarly', and the *Post* (May 26) said, 'His two last acts of "Richard" have never been equalled in our day.'

The *Chicago Evening Journal* of June 3 thought Booth had improved since his visit in January, 'though we can scarcely conceive how, inasmuch as his style is all his own, original, bold and masterly'. For this paper, improvement equated to greater originality. Later that year, the Chicago correspondent of the *Spirit of the Times* (Oct. 11, 1862) linked 'Booth's Richard' with 'Sothorn's Dundreary' as attractions which drew 'crowded houses' in Chicago.⁴²

The *Louisville Democrat* (June 26) also found Booth 'greatly improved', while the *Louisville Daily Journal* (June 28) made an illuminating comment on Booth's conception and structuring of his performance: the elder Kean and the elder Booth had 'made startling points and abrupt transitions of voice and passion', but the son did not, or did not *only*, do this:

Wilkes, from the moment the crown is on his head, feels its magic influence; he to the end is 'in man's despite a king,' and never allows an anti-climactic effect until the passionate intensity of his fight expends his life upon the field of Bosworth.

Once again, we have evidence of a deliberate building toward a climax; and also a hint that his Richard was transformed by attaining the kingship, acquiring a sort of grandeur.

1862-63

In Chicago in December, the *Chicago Times*, which had not previously reviewed him, was highly critical of his performance in interestingly detailed notices. The first, on December 3, clearly stated the critic's position: 'The character of Gloster is too deep for the fathoming of a youthful mind. . . . A man . . . must have seen and divined many actual villains before he can thoroughly analyze such an adept as King Richard.' Equating youth with innocence, he argued that none can understand the depth of Richard's evil 'except those who have known the world for a life-time'. This critic, a very young man himself

42 Sothorn's Dundreary in *Our American Cousin* had been an immense hit, and is thus flattering company. 'Booth' must be John, since Junius Brutus had never played Chicago, and Edwin had not appeared there since 1858.

(see Chapter 6), was inclined to revere Shakespeare, and does not seem aware how much Cibber had altered this play (see below). Thus, for him, very few actors 'can do the character any justice'; 'Shakespeare's creation was too deep and subtle for us to hope often to find its counterpart or its counterfeit.' Not surprisingly, then, the inexperienced Booth 'disappoints our expectations now.' He noted, like some other critics of Booth, 'a touch of over-acting in the personation--a vigorous reaching for effects which are beyond reach'. Though he allowed Booth's acting some good qualities, he did not see the 'cool, deliberate, and concentrated villainy' he believed necessary.

He expanded this argument on December 15, saying that he could not understand why Booth 'considers it his strong part', as his choosing it for his benefit suggested:

The character of Gloster is that of . . . a treacherous, dissembling villain--of a villain who smiles and ogles while he stabs; who fondles a prayer-book and whines hypocritical cant, while he aims at murder and sovereignty. Will anybody say that such a one can be a blustering, boisterous, villain; given to outbursting passion, and rage too strong for utterance? We think not! If ever such a perfect specimen of smooth atrocity existed, he was a man who held himself as with a rein of iron--a cool calculating man . . . Yet in the hands of Mr. Booth he is of ferocious, demonstrative purpose; fierce and ardent in pursuit, and riotous in the joy of accomplishment.

He did not consider whether a man holding himself with a rein of iron would be interesting over five acts. He seems to be demanding on the stage the same 'genteel performance' which middle-class Americans expected of themselves: the 'flawless self-discipline', the use of 'etiquette as a cloak for their inner characters';⁴³ Booth's Richard was expected even to 'accept success' with 'unmoved self-gratulation'. Booth's concept, disapproved of here, is recognizably the same one which the *Boston Post* of May 17 had admired: a man who was not notably hypocritical, but used his natural authority to get what he wanted. Predictably, the Chicago critic would have preferred a quieter delivery: he complained that '[t]he poetry of the text is too often merged in rant', and noted a 'tendency to the stereotyped mannerism of the stage', though 'Mr. Booth is not so given over to it as are many'. He complained that Richard 'roar[ed] like a mad bull' the lines,

43 Halttunen, pp. 93, 174; see also Chapter 2, and Conclusion for 'Nym Crinkle' on 'the demands of society . . . for suppression rather than expression.'

'Here pitch our tent, even in Bosworth Field', though the Austin promptbook makes clear that he spoke these lines from offstage over 'Richard's March' and must have needed volume to be heard. The critic's tendency to indiscriminate reverence of anything labelled 'Shakespeare' is betrayed by his horror at Booth's 'destroy[ing] . . . the poetic beauties which the bard instilled into these lines:

"A crown!

Thou bright reward of ever-daring minds

Oh, how thy awful glory wraps my soul!"

--which is a speech of Cibber's; he also thought Booth was going 'far wide of the author's meaning' in his rendering of the 'soliloquy on the field', presumably unaware that since Shakespeare had written it for a different play, the author's meaning was irrelevant. Comparison with the Boston reviews would suggest that Booth was colouring this speech with Richard's sense of oncoming doom: the *Times* critic describes Booth using 'a strained whisper, as though something horrible flitted athwart his mind. . . . it might have been Richard gazing into his own grave.'

Disapproval prompted the critic to give valuable details of Booth's interpretation. 'Was it not possible', he asked, 'to utter three commonplace words like the last of the second act, without an attitude, and such intonation as no ordinary mortal would give:

"Ay, the Tower-r-r-r-r-r"?"

The scene with 'Queen Anne [*sic*]' he regarded as didactic, 'showing the power of soft words to turn away wrath'; Booth had completely misinterpreted it, and 'throw[n] the audience into four successive convulsions of laughter':

Lady A.--'What shall I say or do. Direct me, Heaven.'

Gloster--'Nay, do not pause, for I did kill King Henry.

But 'twas thy wondrous beauty did provoke me.

Or now dispatch--'twas I that stabbed young Edward.

But 'twas thy heavenly face that set me on.

And I might still persist (so stubborn is

My temper) to rejoice at what I've done

But that thy powerful eyes have turned
My heart, and made it flow [with] penitence.

* * * Bid me kill myself and I'll do it.' [*sic*]

Lady A.--'I have already.'

[*She offers to strike.*

[*Immense laughter.*

[*She offers to strike.*

[*Uproarious laughter.*

[*She offers to strike.*

[*Enthusiastic laughter.*

Gloster--'That was in thy rage.'

[*Uncontrollable laughter.*]

For a modern actor, laughs would be mandatory here, and it is quite likely that Booth also was inviting laughter by pointing up Gloster's manipulation of Anne. The critic also objected that Booth 'screamed at the top of his voice' the last lines of this scene ('Shine out, fair sun . . . '); his concern for naturalism blinded him to the idea that here, as with the 'tower' line above, the end of a scene might need to be emphasized to provide the actor with an effective exit.

Only in the last act, when the time for hypocrisy is past, and 'muscular development is so strongly mingled in the author's plot', did the critic feel that Booth was 'faithful to the true meaning of the play'. He echoed the *Boston Post* of May 15, 1862 in saying that Booth appealed to the eye more than the ear:

A man may delineate wild passion by his actions when he cannot give it true utterance. Hence the fencing scene and the death were effective. . . . In the sudden awakening from the tent scene he was also effective. Nervous, exaggerated action was needed, and his humor furnished it in abundance; but in all this he had little or nothing to say, and what there was only detracted from the merit of the performance.

This young critic, with his sacralization of Shakespeare and his distaste for strong emotions openly expressed, pointed the way to the future (and incidentally challenged the stereotype of 'Western' tastes). The final victory of this viewpoint, however, would not come until after John Wilkes Booth's death.

Back in Boston in January, Booth was greeted on his first night with a house 'absolutely lined, crammed and jammed', while 'hundreds were turned away', including the *Advertiser's* critic (*Daily Evening Traveller and Advertiser* (Jan. 20)). Booth had written to Keach:

If you will go to some trouble for Richard, I think we can make it a strong card for three or four nights in the first and last week of the engagement. Viz--First of all, plenty of supernumeraries (with one rehearsal), and then the Coronation scene [IV,ii] and the scene "Who saw the sun to day," [V, vii] could be made fine pictures, the latter by having the left flat painted camp running off in distance, Richards tent (furnished as in his previous scene) set L.U.E. And on right flat archers extending in line of battle carying [*sic*] out that line I draw down right of stage.⁴⁴

44 Dec. 8, 1862, Gratz Collection. The last sentence must refer to some

Booth's Richard was enough of a guaranteed draw to make it feasible to have scenery especially painted, and supers (unusually) rehearsed. The *Post* found the performance 'yet more perfect, showing the progress which a year of study may accomplish' (Jan. 20). Many Boston papers thought Richard his best part, but the *Post* (Jan. 24) and the *Saturday Evening Gazette* (Jan. 24) preferred his Pescara. The *Post* expanded on this, making again, rather more kindly, the *Chicago Times's* point about Booth's inexperience:

We do not deny the majestic proportions of his 'Richard'--certainly *majestic* when we consider the age and limited experience of the actor--but where the requirements are not so great the success is more complete. Something besides genius is necessary to render a personation of 'Gloster' illustrious. Study and experience are aids which must here be called into *long* service, and yet with all its imperfections we consider this Shakspearian effort of his as surpassingly good. The lines of demarcation between light and shade are more clearly defined than ever, and an enhanced effectiveness is observable in every scene. There is in reality a 'fiery expedition' in all his movements, and there is an increased impressiveness alike in action and in speech.

It seems that Booth had begun to add subtleties to the performance, though the critic still thought his elocution faulty, 'particularly as regards emphasis and pronunciation': for instance, he said, 'I'll be in men's despite a *monarch*' (V,ii). However, summing up on February 6, the *Post* said that Richard was 'after all the most extraordinary' of Booth's performances, and was not to be missed.

The *New York Clipper* (Mar. 14), in noting that some of the Philadelphia papers 'criticise[d Booth's] Richard as though he had been on the stage for many years,' clearly felt that more allowance should have been made for inexperience. The press's partisanship (discussed in Chapter 7) led the pro-Forrest *North American Gazette* to declare on March 16 that it 'did not deem it worth while to criticise Mr. Booth's rendition of such characters as . . . Richard . . . though even in them he is atrocious', although it had in fact (Mar. 3) favourably reviewed his opening, which it said 'made a profound sensation':

irrecoverable business, perhaps in the Tent scene (V, v) where Richards often drew battle plans on the ground with their swords (Hankey, p. 231). Once, a Norfolk ruined this carefully composed picture by 'coming in at the left first entrance instead of right . . . Richard fiercely met him with' *Well, Norfolk, what think'st thou now*--and added, "'and why the d--l didn't you come in on the other side?" The house "shook" for about five consecutive minutes' (*Rochester Evening Express*, Feb. 1, 1861).

We cannot better characterize his style of acting than by calling it the intensification of earnestness--every nerve quivers with the passion which his words give vent to, crime heaped on crime only seems to afford fresh scope for his determined will--whilst the climax of the play, the fight between 'Richard' and 'Richmond,' was never given with such desperate energy.

The *Inquirer* (Mar. 4) reported the first audience 'very enthusiastic, the ladies joining in the applause'. By contrast, the first disapproval of the famous fight came from the *Sunday Mercury* (Mar. 8), which called it 'melodramatic'.⁴⁵

The *Sunday Dispatch*, which called Forrest's Richard 'a slow, heavy, and apparently rheumatic politician' (Mar. 22), reviewed Booth's on Mar. 8, saying that the young actor 'seems thoroughly to understand the meaning and the philosophy of his author.' Unlike the *Chicago Times* writer, this critic understood that the acting edition was 'a literary patchwork', and that Booth could not be blamed for using it: 'he but imitates the unwise example of a long line of performers who have preceded him.' Richard was pictured by Shakespeare as 'misshapen in body and deformed in mind--a monster mentally and physically. As such Mr. Booth was compelled to accept him; but . . . he was not compelled to make him a brute rather than a man.' His interpretation was 'too highly colored':

He was always cruel and bloodthirsty. He moved about the stage as if he hated all mankind. He was hasty with *Buckingham* while the latter was still his most trusty servant. He was rude in manner to the Lord Mayor and citizens

He should have been 'deep, dissembling, a man of fair words', but he lacked the necessary hypocrisy. Wooing Lady Anne, 'very little attempt was made at dissimulation. Her heart was carried . . . by a *coup de main*.' The citizens would not have asked such a man to be their king. Booth also overplayed on a technical level:

The fault of Mr. Booth is a common one with young performers--it is over-action. He gesticulates too much. He has a motion, a smile or a frown for every sentence. He does not seem satisfied to allow the language of his author to do its work. He wishes to help it along by bodily illustrations. This becomes fatiguing to the spectators. . . . The earlier scenes of Mr. Booth were unpleasing for this reason, but the fault gave him for the closing acts a super-abundant energy. For this cause in the bustling situations Mr. Booth

45 Transcription in Barbee Papers.

was fiery, impatient, ardent. He carried the feelings with him, for here he was justified in the delineation.

The *New York Clipper* (Aug. 31, 1861) had said of Edwin, too, that he 'declaims too much, has too many gestures' in his soliloquies. Earlier in his career, he too had had 'tremendous energy' in the battle scenes.⁴⁶ As with the *Chicago Times*, John's interpretation fitted the *Dispatch* critic's ideas at the end of the play, if not before. The fight was 'passionate and effective, and tolerably devoid of the clap-trap points frequent in stage fencing', and his falls and death were natural. By contrast, the fighting in Forrest's *Richard* 'was, as usual, ridiculous, and not in the least like fighting, nor was his dying at all like death', and Forrest's tent scene 'did not even obtain the applause of the gallery' (Mar. 22). Summing up, the critic felt that Booth

deserves a hearty encouragement. . . . He has many advantages, and may by study and practice make himself a superior performer. His *Richard* was not the best we have ever seen, but it was by no means the worst. The best was undoubtedly that of Mr. Booth's father, which has a fame which grows brighter in memory--the worst was the *Gloster* of Edwin Forrest. Between these, but distant from the last extremity, we may place the *Richard* of J. Wilkes Booth.

The Philadelphia *Press* (Mar. 5) agreed with the *Dispatch* that Booth was too obviously villainous:

We know it is the custom of actors to make *Richard* do nothing but murder while he smiles, but Mr. Booth even disdains to smile. His look, from the beginning to the end, is almost demoniac, and it was our constant wonder that he succeeded in making love to *Lady Anne*, in deceiving the mayor and *Buckingham*, and making all men his victims or his tools. The *Richard* of Mr. Booth is, in these respects, an impossible personage.

This Richard 'dabbles in blood . . . and revels in it from the beginning to the end.' This psychological quirk made 'a very original and effective conception, but so much truth and poetry is sacrificed that we advise Mr. Booth to abandon it.' He 'sprinkles [blood] on the stage after the murder of *Henry*', rather as Forrest is said to have done on 'See how my sword weeps for the poor king's death';⁴⁷ and then 'wipes his sword on his mantle (a very

46 Badeau, *Vagabond*, p. 288. Mary Devlin had worried that he would wear himself out playing Richard every night (letter to EB, Aug. 16, 1859, *Letters and Notebooks*, p. 7).

47 Shattuck, *Shakespeare on the American Stage*, p. 74.

vulgar and disgusting thing for a nobleman to do)'. With this last comment, the critic showed that he was more concerned with decorum than with characterization; similarly, he did not like Booth's making Richard 'a slinking, malignant cripple, so deformed as to be almost unpleasant to the eye'. Richard's own words harp on his deformity; but this critic expected refinement, whether it was present in the script or not:

Let him give us *Richard* as he was--*Richard* as Mr. Bulwer drew him in 'The Last of the Barons'--a proud, gifted, haughty prince: a soldier, a courtier, a scholar and a wit; abandoning, if possible, the crude absurdities foisted upon the acting edition, and doing him all the justice that the poetry of Shakspeare's partisan pen will permit.

Richard as Bulwer-Lytton's character in Shakespeare's play sounds suspiciously like Forrest's interpretation as seen by the *Washington Chronicle* (see below), but may be more to do with elevating the stage by giving history lessons and demonstrating gentlemanly behaviour rather than merely entertaining. However, this critic felt that Booth was

a good actor, and may become a great one. . . . He does not play *Richard III* as well as Edwin, but he plays some parts of it in a manner that we do not think Edwin can ever equal. His last act, and particularly his dying scene, is a piece of acting that few actors can rival, and is far above the capacity of Edwin Booth.

An almost contemporary piece on Edwin agreed:

As Richard III, we should look to find him most effective in schemeful soliloquy and the phases of assumed virtue and affection, while perhaps less eminent than his father or Edmund Kean in that headlong, strident unrest, which hurried on their representations to the fury of the retributive end.⁴⁸

The *Baltimore Clipper's* (Mar. 16, 1863) statement that 'critics everywhere agree' that Booth surpassed all other actors in 'the fierce passion of the usurper upon learning of Richmond's expedition against him' may be based on John. T. Ford's press releases, for this writer has found no prior mention of this 'point'.⁴⁹ Comparing Booth with his father, the *Gazette* (Mar. 17) felt that his conception of the character was 'essentially similar':

48 [E.C. Stedman], 'Edwin Booth', *Atlantic Monthly* 17 (May 1866): 591.

49 See Chapter 7. Adam Badeau describes Edwin at the line, 'What do they in the North . . .': 'His whole face and form were ablaze with expression--literally transfigured; and his voice embodied a majestic terrible rage that electrified the listeners' ('EB on and off the Stage', pp. 258-59). JBB had also made a famous 'point' here.

Its prominent trait is a ruthless ambition, which regarded no obligation, human or divine, when inimical to its triumph; and its control[ing] impulse a cruelty as intrepid as it is ferocious. This view . . . was sustained throughout with great clearness and with vital force.

The Baltimore *American* (Mar. 17) found similarity, but no 'servility of imitation':

It was, on the contrary, a singularly original performance, . . . The conception of the character was evidently formed from the elder Booth's point of view. It pictured the usurper in the vivid colors of a brave, cruel, and energetic, but still able tyrant, who seized upon the sceptre with a grasp as merciless as Hate, and held it with the firmness of Fate.

William Ballauf, the Holliday Street's property man, remembered: 'In the last act, where he hears Richmond's music and dashes from the stage, leading the charge, [Booth] reached, in my opinion, the greatest heights of acting.'⁵⁰

The Washington *Daily Morning Chronicle* (April 11) announced John's debut in the capital by promising that in his combat scene, 'none but experts must support him without danger from the terrible weapon which he wields with all the fury of Coeur de Lion.' Charles Wyndham, then a beginner in the company, has provided an interesting description of some business in the battle scene, which he felt to be 'highly dramatic, but intensely ridiculous':

The scene opened with the two contesting parties fighting, forming a long lane diagonally across the stage. On he would rush, bursting through this lane, slashing right and left at both friend and foe till aglow with hate and passion he reached the footlights, where Richmond would appear. If we forget the absurdity of his slashing away at his own friends, this, by reason of the wild passion and ungovernable fury, was one of the most effective entrances I have ever seen.⁵¹

Richard's mistrust of his friends at this stage of Shakespeare's play is omitted from Cibber's version; perhaps this detail is evidence that Booth had carefully studied the original.

50 'Behind Scenes 50 Years', Baltimore *Sun*, Oct. 7, 1906. Elsewhere, Ballauf said that he was once narrowly missed by Booth's outstretched sword as he hurtled into the wings (Boston *Sunday Herald*, Feb. 26, 1911).

51 'Comedian Wyndham's Career' (See also this writer's 'Colonel's Journal Slams Thesp! or, Two Reviews of John Wilkes Booth', *Surratt Courier* 12, no. 2 (Feb. 1987): 1,5-8.) This staging is confirmed by the Austin promptbook: 'All the characters discovered & fight above 2 & 3 Gr[ooves]. Long Flourish kept up till Richard fights through Soldiers and meets Richmond who enters R.1.E'.

The *Chicago Times*, during Booth's May engagement, added acerbity to its earlier strictures: though it considered that 'one or two palpable improvements have been made since we last heard him' (May 20), from the third act onward he was 'a ranting and roaring stage hero of the first water'; the performance was 'a parody upon nature' (May 20, June 3). Interestingly, the critic claimed that the audience was as indifferent as himself, an 'unimpassioned gathering' (May 20), which echoes the *Evening Journal's* report on Booth's first engagement there (Jan. 21, 1862). 'Those who liked Neafie tragedy', sneered the *Times*, 'will take comfort in this performance'. The *Spirit of the Times's* Chicago correspondent (Oct. 11, 1862, quoted above) had pointed out that in contrast to 'Booth's Richard', 'when Neafie or Proctor are on the bills there are benches to let.' It is possible, though, that John's Richard did not go down so well in Chicago as in other places, and it may be significant that for his last two appearances there he opened with *The Lady of Lyons*, reserving Richard unusually for his second night.

1863-64

The *Saturday Evening Gazette* (Oct. 3), reviewing Booth's Richard at the Boston Athenaeum, says that 'his last act was given with an intensity it were hard to exceed. His combat, though melodramatic to a degree, is in accordance with the spirit of the part'. The Athenaeum was a melodrama house, but the *Philadelphia Sunday Mercury* (Mar. 8, 1863) had also called the fight 'melodramatic'; perhaps Booth had developed this most successful part of his performance more than some critics considered appropriate. The *Transcript* (Sept. 30), however, felt that Booth had become generally more subtle:

The performance was, on the whole, an improvement on his former representations. In many of the principal points he manifested greater intensity than was his wont, while his voice was not allowed that full rant which once characterized his reading. His gestures were more finished, and did not give the impression, as formerly, that he had studied for effect.

During the combination tour of New England and Brooklyn which followed, houses were generally good and reviews generally favourable. The *Worcester* (Massachusetts) *Daily Transcript* (Oct. 13) disagreed with many critics in claiming that Booth satisfactorily played 'a schemer and a shrewd fore-calculator'; he had 'dash', but

'deep cunning also, and cool calculation'. The *Springfield Daily Republican* (Oct. 15), on the other hand, found his interpretation only patchily successful: 'His readings were at times almost faultless, exhibiting a subtle appreciation of the author's meaning . . . at other times his conception was intangible and apparently inconsistent.' Booth was most at home with strong emotions:

In the expression of intense passion he is very good if not great, when a desire for startling effects does not tempt him over the bound of dramatic propriety. He does not 'tear a passion to tatters,' but it must be a stout passion to pass whole through the handling he gives some of them.

However, the critic felt that Booth attained 'unusual success' in this difficult role, though 'his Hamlet is better' (Oct. 24). The *Brooklyn Standard* (Oct. 31), after describing 'the deities of the gallery' buying their tickets (see Chapter 7), observed that John strongly resembled Edwin Booth

in features, physique and quality of voice, but . . . [h]is performance lacks the grace, finish and repose of Edwin's; his enunciation is indistinct, and he betrays at times a tendency to rant. There are, however, flashes of real power. I was particularly and favorably impressed with the scene of the killing of Henry and with the whole of the fourth act. The difficult wooing scene did not please me so well.

The murder of Henry does not require hypocrisy, which many critics thought Booth lacked. In the "'terrific broadsword combat," . . . intensely gratifying to the gallery', Booth 'fenc[ed] well and introduc[ed] some new and effective business.' The *New Haven Morning Journal and Courier* (Oct. 29) thought that 'the demise of [Richard] was equal to any "die" we have ever seen.' The advertisement in the *Providence Journal* (Oct. 16) mentioning the 'Terrible Broad Sword Combat between Richard and Richmond' shows the prominence given to the fight on this tour at least.

At Ford's, Washington, Booth's Richard was panned by the *Chronicle* in a long article.⁵² This review (Nov. 4), like that of the *Philadelphia Press*, confused the play with the historical character. Stating (rightly but irrelevantly) that Shakespeare's portrait

⁵² See Chapter 7 for the speculation that theatrical or national politics were involved.

of Richard was a calumny and Cibber's worse, the critic thought that actors should set this right. One actor, he thought, had done this:

We have in our mind the Richard of Edwin Forrest. That great tragedian, by the force of his genius, has almost made Richard an agreeable villain. He shows in him the grace, and wit, and breeding that eminently distinguished the most illustrious prince of the house of York.

It may or may not be a coincidence that this paper was edited by J.W. Forney, who was a close friend of Forrest's, and that Forney also published the *Philadelphia Press*. The critic, not explaining why it should be desirable to make Richard agreeable, given his function in the play, admitted that

tragedians find that Richard the brute is more popular in the galleries than Richard, the genial and courtly prince. Mr. J. Wilkes Booth is a representative of this class. He certainly deserves the merit of giving us the very worst Richard now upon the stage. In plainer words, his Richard is as bad as it is possible for an actor to make him. . . . He might see, by studying the character closely, that there still remained some faint traces of a manly and royal disposition.

The character as written, he asserted, had 'gentle courtesy, an eloquence and wit, and dignity that never failed him; and which, in the hands of a true actor, would go far towards elevating the character of Richard'; but Booth 'evidently thinks that his audiences desire gross food'. Since the *Chronicle* itself had reported the previous day that Booth's Richard had 'filled the house completely, and left nothing but standing room', the actor had clearly gauged his audiences' appetite correctly.

The same critic interpreted Richard's first soliloquy as 'a joyous, exulting speech . . . with a buoyant and sunny feeling'; quoting the first eight lines, he complained that 'Mr. Booth might have made these words the keynote of Richard's character, but he seems to prefer the brutal traditions that came from Cibber and Garrick.' The *Boston Post* (May 17, 1862) also of this opinion, added that Edwin Forrest played the speech as joyful.⁵³ The *Chronicle* claimed that as the House of York's 'most popular prince, [Richard] may look forward to the crown', ignoring the fact that England has never been an elective

⁵³ Forrest 'burst upon the stage, cloaked and capped, waving his glove in triumph over the downfall of the house of Lancaster' (Arthur Colby Sprague, *Shakespeare and the Actors: The Stage Business in his Plays (1660-1905)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1945), p. 95).

monarchy, and that King Edward had two sons. 'The concluding lines of the speech', he went on, 'are nothing more than the cynical complaints of a man who has been oppressed with deformity, sensitive and proud, but with the good sense not to allow these feelings to interfere with his general aims.' Both Shakespeare and Cibber make clear, however, that his deformity has created those aims: 'this earth affords no joy to me, / But to command . . .'. Forrest's 'joyful' playing here can only be attributable to his 'way of trimming from ironic lines everything except their plain dictionary meaning'.⁵⁴ Booth, unlike Forrest, did not try to 'rescue the character' from its authors:

[W]hen Mr. Booth comes upon the stage, he looks like a rascal--a low, cunning, implacable rascal. . . . He is satisfied to adopt all the green-room customs--to scowl in certain parts, because his father scowled--to rub his hands in a coarse, fiendish manner, as though there was as much brutality in his nature as in one of his own murderers.⁵⁵

It was Booth's pretensions which annoyed the critic:

There is a certain class of people who call this tragedy, just as there is a certain class who think . . . Mr. Eddy, with his mouthings and declamations, more natural than Mr. Forrest. Mr. Eddy, however, has this advantage over Mr. Booth. He does not claim to be a tragedian. . . . Richard, to him, is a melodramatic character . . . and he aims at no effects but those that may be produced by a vigorous use of the broadsword, a scowling brow, and harsh, angry tones. If Mr. Booth did this, we would say that he was an honestly good actor in melodrama, and would trouble him with no unpleasant criticisms. This he does not do. He must be a tragedian, an inheritor of his father's genius. He insists upon being measured by the highest standards of taste--of [*sic*] being mentioned in the same sentence as Forrest, Macready, Davenport, Wallack and Edwin Booth. This is an attempt to obtain fame under false pretences.

It might be a valid point that Booth was confusing his genres to give an inappropriate performance, but the criticism is vitiated by partisanship and personal attack. The *Chronicle's* attitude is similar to the Philadelphia *North American Gazette's*, that Forrest should have no rivals for the title of 'tragedian' (see Chapter 7), though it does name others. The *Chronicle* critic called on Booth 'to do a part towards refining the drama', and spoke of 'elevating the character of Richard': like the Philadelphia *Press* writer he wanted

54 Shattuck, *Shakespeare on the American Stage*, p. 74. Forrest also 'entirely disregarded the traditional deformity' (Alice Perry Wood, *The Stage History of Shakespeare's King Richard the Third* (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1909), pp. 153-54).

55 Kean also rubbed his hands together 'in moments of glee' (Hankey, p. 49).

the stage to edify with manners and history, whether appropriate to the play or not. Booth's Richard, he finished, was 'neither a tragedy nor a drama, but something noisy, unpleasant, and improbable, which might do very well in the Bowery . . . , but which should not again be played before an audience of judgment and taste.'

The attack did not go unremarked. Announcing Booth's third Washington *Richard*, the *Daily Constitutional Union* (Nov. 13) said that the portrayal was 'acknowledged to be without an equal' despite '[b]iassed opinions of "whimsical" writers',⁵⁶ while the *National Intelligencer*, whose fulsome front-page puff on the eve of the engagement may have irritated the *Chronicle*, defended both Cibber and Booth on November 13, stating that

every actor of any note, from the triumphant Burbage to Mr. John Wilkes Booth--including Betterton, Cibber, Cooke, Garrick, Cooper, Kean, and Junius Brutus Booth--have moulded their conceptions of Richard's spirit and character from the historical [*sic*] portrait

It pointed out that Forrest's Richard, the *Chronicle*'s ideal, had not been successful--audiences 'failed to recognise in it any likeness to the Richard of history and of Shakspeare, and our great tragedian has practically banished the effort from his repertoire'.⁵⁷ It might have added that the other tragedians cited by the *Chronicle* followed the old traditions far more closely than Forrest did. It considered Booth's conception of the part correct in essentials, although

its realization exhibits at times a lack of creative power, and of that confident elaboration which experience alone can suggest; but notwithstanding these obscure blemishes, the vigor, the confident *poise*, and the skilful shadings of the picture remain

At Louisville in the new year it was 'The same old story--house crowded, as usual' for Richard, and Booth had 'improved wonderfully since his last appearance' (*Louisville Daily Democrat*, January 27 and 21, 1864). Though the *Nashville Union* (Feb. 2) wholly approved of his performance, the *Nashville Dispatch* (Feb. 2), despite the audience's 'general satisfaction', argued that

56 This may also refer to the *Sunday Chronicle*'s November 8 piece by 'Bizarre', which dealt with Booth's Shylock in equally uncomplimentary terms. See Chapter 10.

57 Alice Perry Wood supports this assessment: Forrest's 'princely conception . . . required a more complex psychology than Forrest's to make convincing' (pp. 153-54).

although he possesses many good qualities, his portraiture of Richard was not grand with those fine touches of nature and art for which those of Edwin and the elder Booth, the Keenes [*sic*] and the Kembles, were distinguished above all others; in short, he displays too much of art and depends too little on nature.

Booth's cold in New Orleans may have been the reason for the *Daily Picayune* and the *Bee* (both Mar. 16) to criticize his delivery.⁵⁸ The *Picayune's* objection that he 'displayed great redundancy of action' had been heard before, but on this occasion Booth may have been overcompensating for his lack of voice. The *Bee* disliked an 'incessant jerking down of the head and spasmodic working of the mouth and smacking of the lips' which spoiled the 'dignity of tragedy by an exaggeration.' Even Richard should have 'some moments of repose' rather than always 'frothing like a wild boar at bay'. All four papers had something complimentary to say, however. Only the *Bee* felt that Booth 'did not give room enough for the play of Richard's hypocrisy. He made the character so obviously villainous that it appeared impossible that any one could be deceived by it.' Contrary to this common objection, the *Daily True Delta* (Mar. 15) thought that

His scenes with Lady Anne, with the queen mother and princes[,] in the council chamber, and with the lord mayor and aldermen, were all masterpieces of Satanic dissimulation, and scarcely inferior to those of his lamented father.

and the *New Orleans Times* (Mar. 15) that the scenes with Anne and with the Mayor and citizens 'betrayed an unusual counterfeit of subtlety'. Even the *Picayune* (Mar. 16), the least impressed, said that throughout 'Mr. Booth was successful in the exhibition of that subtlety which was so prominent in *Gloster*'.

But all critics gave most space to the last act. The *Delta* (Mar. 15) found him 'absolutely horrifying' in the tent and Bosworth scenes. The *Times* (Mar. 15) discerned both horror and pathos:

His violent waking from the couch in his martial tent and the phrenzy with which he seeks to recover himself from the ghastly phantasma of slumber, was terrible for its power. Mr. Booth has succeeded with peculiar felicity in investing the King on Bosworth Field with a measurable pathos, such as we might be slow to accord the mere Gloster. King by custody of crown and sceptre, he moves with a soul that bears him down to earth, and yet with a defiant eye, though with a heart sorely perturbed as to the next day's conflict,

58 See Chapter 8.

he forgets himself as the usurper, and stands forth the desperate man. Mr. Booth pre-assures us of his wrecked destiny and thus wins a strange, unwitting sympathy from the observer. Suffice it to say, he achieved a triumph.⁵⁹

On April 3, the *Times* added, 'the last two acts are perhaps unequaled upon our American stage A king by usurped power, he dies a king in action and dignity.' The *Bee* (Mar. 16) noted that Booth

threw over the deepest villa[i]ny of Richard a sombre pathos that is rarely seen in such a personation. In the dream scene and the death-encounter he was terribly intense, and, more than his brother Edwin has yet done, recalled the tragic glories of his father.

The *Chicago Times* had already mentioned pathos in the performance in general (Dec. 3, 1862), but perhaps these New Orleans critics are registering a development of this aspect. The *Picayune* (Mar. 16) was only partly impressed, however:

In the Tent scene, on waking from his horrible dream, his acting was remarkably fine. We cannot imagine a more terrible picture of phrenzied guilt. The combat scene at the close was so protracted, so improbable, that a fine tragic scene was transformed into a ludicrous spectacle. It strongly reminded us of 'Wake me up when Kirby dies,' Kirby's performance in the same scene.⁶⁰

As in Philadelphia and Boston, where the fight was labelled 'melodramatic', this critic thought it overdeveloped in an inappropriate way for a tragedy. In the memory of William Seymour, the boy who played the Duke of York, the fight was coloured by the later belief that Booth was insane: 'there would come on his face a demoniacal expression, as of a madman'.⁶¹ Seymour also remembered the 'wonderful snake-like crawl down the stage which John Wilkes Booth did with such thrilling effect and was copied from him . . . by all descendants in the role'--presumably at the end of the fight.⁶²

59 O'Flynn seems to confirm this when he notes that Booth's 'voice, as again he calls for a horse, has a note of half-mad, despairing pathos in it' (n. pag.).

60 J. Hudson Kirby was the leading man at the Chatham Theatre, New York, from 1840 to 1845, where his greatest successes were in melodramas. 'Kirby's scene-chewing technique gave rise to the expression "Wake me up when Kirby dies"' (Bordman, p. 405).

61 'Notes and Queries: Note 339', *Boston Evening Transcript*, Sept. 5, 1931.

62 Barbee, 'Lincoln & Booth', Barbee Papers. Whoever in fact began this tradition, Irving broke it: 'he does not crawl along the stage in a ghastly death-scene' (J.T. Grein, quoted in Hankey, p. 248).

Booth's last, anticlimactic reviews for Richard, in Boston, reflected his illness, which persisted through his opening performances. The *Advertiser* (April 25) felt the actor needed 'qualities of a different sort . . . to ensure a performance of more than average merit', without specifying them. Booth had both improved and weakened:

There was little or nothing of ranting declamation and his reading of the text was careful and judicious, but he did not throw into it the fervor and force which are essential to powerful acting, nor was there anything of the artistic delicacy and beauty which is so striking in Mr. Edwin Booth's rendering of this character, reminding the hearer at every word that the play is a poem as well as a tragedy. The performance was an excellent one but not, as we have said, above the average of excellent performances. It seemed to us that if the critics found less cause for cavil than has sometimes been the case, Mr. Booth's especial admirers must find less food for their enthusiasm than has been their wont.

Booth's lack of 'force' must surely have been due to ill-health (see Chapter 8). However, the *Saturday Evening Express* (April 30) thought Richard 'one of [his] most powerful personations, and upon it he may safely base a good reputation.'

As for his costumes in this role Booth's approach seems to have been conventional: the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* (Nov. 26, 1861) declared that the 'make-up' (a term that included costume) was 'the same in all actors'. Not much credence can be attached to Otis Skinner's reference to a 'long, belted, purple velvet "shirt"' with 'like-colored robe';⁶³ probably his costume resembled that of the elder Booth: a 'shape dress' (stylized Elizabethan doublet-and-hose) with an ermine-trimmed armhole cloak over it.⁶⁴ John certainly wore a 'scarlet cloak' (*Boston Post*, May 26, 1862) at some point, as had Junius Brutus.⁶⁵ Apart from the G.F. Cooke-like soiled buff gauntlets, then, it was not John's costumes that were unique, it was the way that he wore them: one Boston audience member says, 'His costume was appropriate, yet somehow it seemed a part of the man, and not an arbitrary dress.'⁶⁶

63 See Chapter 8 for the unreliability of this story.

64 For instance, as shown in Charles H. Shattuck, 'The Romantic Acting of Junius Brutus Booth', *Nineteenth Century Theatre Research* 5 (1977), opp. p. 1.

65 Elizabeth Stoddard, 'My Record of the Stage', *Saturday Evening Post* 172 (1899): 355.

66 Clipping, 'Wilkes Booth. His First Appearance . . . '.

To sum up, then, our impressions of the performance: it is clear that from the outset, even allowing for exaggeration in puffs, it was an impressive rendering. The word 'earnestness' is often mentioned, as is Booth's identification with the character. All through his career there is reference both to rant and conventional staginess and to his eschewing of these; also to his originality and, conversely, his observance of traditional 'points'. Within the traditional, declamatory method he crammed more naturalism than some critics could stomach: the deformity, ugliness, untidiness and habitual mannerisms of Richard, and the husky, sometimes inaudible voice. Playing as he did with stock companies, with only one rehearsal, he could not depart too far from the traditional stage business without risking chaos; any innovations he made would have to be confined within the familiar framework. For the same reason, he could not make large reforms in the acting edition, as urged by some critics, even if he had wished to.

He had a clear concept of the character, which critics duly recognized, even if some of them disliked it, and he sought to show Richard's overall purpose as the climb to the throne, and accordingly to build the performance to a climax. If this did not always come over, it may have been because he had the tyro's fault of overemphasizing his text and overdetailing every line with gestures and facial expressions, so that the structure was obscured. The attempt to build his performance also meant that the first three acts could seem too restrained. His energy was always impressive, manifesting itself at first mainly in the fight, and later, as he learnt subtlety, in the form of intensity and reserved power. As time went on, he developed, learning the art that conceals art, so that more of his scenes impressed; but it was always the last two acts which staked his claim to greatness. As well as the bustling energy, there was a paradoxical royal dignity, a Shakespearean sense of oncoming doom and a consequent pathos, culminating in the intense horror of the dream scene and the courageous desperation of the final combat--always a crowd-pleaser if sometimes disapproved of by critics. It was never a finished performance, though it improved in speech, gesture, and contrasts, and criticism repeatedly mentions faulty elocution and borrowed, or traditional, clichés.

It is hardly fair to Booth's Richard at the ages of 22-26 to compare it with his father's mature and perfected characterization. Yet comparisons were, and are, inevitable, and striking similarities can be instanced. Junius Brutus, too, played the first three acts 'in a comparatively restrained (some would say lackadaisical) manner'.⁶⁷ He too kept Richard's ultimate goal in view: 'the main impulse was most apparent; the ambition, and not the crimes it caused', and his 'change of manner when seated on the throne was marked and majestic'.⁶⁸ His tent scene communicated 'inexpressible horror' and his fight scene was celebrated: he too, 'when wounded and overthrown, fought on the ground'--but this seemed, to one critic at least, a mere 'pugilistic feast'.⁶⁹ His critics used words that were echoed in criticism of John: Junius Brutus too was 'terribly in earnest'; and in him '[t]he words fire, energy, *abandon*, found . . . unprecedented meanings'.⁷⁰ He was 'constantly violating all the proprieties of the modern stage, as far as action and picturesque and statuesque poses are concerned' but his performance had 'an intensity and fidelity' that disarmed criticism.⁷¹ He had, however, a different approach to the first three acts: instead of John's fidgety impatience, he had 'a sombre, settled purpose', making his first entrance slowly and meditatively; his manner was 'wily'; only when he was king did this give place to 'a preternatural energy, and fiery expedition'.⁷² Whitman classed him in the old 'inflated, stagy' school, for which 'the expression of electric passion [was] the prime eligibility of the tragic artist',⁷³ yet he had the art to seem natural; as noted already, the soliloquies seemed to be said to himself. Unlike his son, he was 'confident' as he went into battle.⁷⁴

67 Shattuck, 'Romantic Acting of JBB', p. 15.

68 Gould, pp. 39, 44.

69 Ibid., p. 47, and Shattuck, 'Romantic Acting of JBB', p. 15, quoting opinions of two New York critics in 1821. Kean too had fought with 'doubled fists' at the end (Hankey, p. 247).

70 Shattuck, 'Romantic Acting', p. 2, quoting an 1847 writer for the *Albion*; Walt Whitman, *Prose Works, 1892: Collect and Other Prose*, ed. Floyd Stovall (New York: New York U. Press, 1964) 2:597.

71 Shattuck, 'Romantic Acting of JBB', p. 2, quoting *Albion* critic in 1847.

72 Gould, pp. 39, 44.

73 *Prose Works*, 2:597.

74 Gould, p. 47.

Many comparisons with Edwin Booth have already been indicated. Not only Edwin's ideas, but probably also his less robust physique led him to play the earlier acts more quietly, and to emphasize Richard's calculation and hypocrisy. E.C. Stedman, in 1866, perceptively suggested that '[Edwin] will perhaps never reach the special eminence at which we place a few historic names' in one category--that of 'those simply powerful characters, the ideal of which his voice and magnetism cannot in themselves sustain.'⁷⁵ This was why, in later years, he was a better Iago than Richard. In 1861, when he was 27, his Richard was summed up: calm and judicious, free of rant; not one of his best parts, but satisfactory (*New York Clipper*, Aug. 31). In later years he played it seldom.⁷⁶

E.L. Davenport's Richard, which John would have known from his Philadelphia days, shared this deficiency with Edwin: 'When he begins to speak, his lack of physical power becomes apparent.' He had not the 'unbroken energy', with the 'vehemences of utterance suited to the vehemence of sentiment'. As with Edwin, his scenes of 'dissimulation and hypocrisy' were admired; and his best scene was one which is mentioned in connection with none of the Booths: Richard's pangs of conscience as the princes are killed. He was not, for one critic at least, ungainly enough.⁷⁷

Like Booth, Barry Sullivan was noted for 'energy and realism'. He also gave the impression of departing from 'most of the old traditions of the stage' and thus 'marked the performance with the stamp of originality.' His last scene was 'the most brilliant', when he used his skill as a swordsman. He continued to fight after he had lost his sword, 'and on receiving his death-blow, he thrust at his adversary with his empty hands'--as Kean had done.⁷⁸ Since Booth had played with Sullivan in Richmond, he could have been influenced by Sullivan's approach. Certainly this description and those of his father sound most reminiscent of John Booth's Richard.

⁷⁵ 'Edwin Booth', p. 592.

⁷⁶ Royle, p. 34.

⁷⁷ Edgett, p. 64, quoting an unidentified critic.

⁷⁸ Sillard, 2:18.

The actor E.A. Emerson remembered: 'in the fourth and fifth acts [Booth] was the best Richard III that I ever saw', and to John A. Ellsler, he was 'the only Richard after his father', the fifth act 'terribly real'.⁷⁹ E.M. Alfrend says that '[m]any old actors . . . have told me that they never saw so great a performance' as John's Richard III.⁸⁰ Inevitably, though, the fight came to dominate later memories of actors and others: Harry Weaver remembered the audience rising to their feet with the excitement of the combat,⁸¹ and so did the author of a piece on the fight at St. Louis, with Thomas L. Conner as Richmond. This account would have us believe that each of these actors, 'for the love of fight . . . so far forgot himself' that 'first Richmond and then Richard would be driven at swords' point over the footlights into the ranks of the audience'.⁸² This was at least likelier than Mr. Reilly of Baltimore's recollection of Booth at Bosworth Field on horseback.⁸³ And the fight remained a theatrical legend: about thirty years after John's death, the critic 'Nym Crinkle', in discussing Richard Mansfield's Richard, compared their respective performances: 'I must say that nothing since Wilkes Booth's terrible onslaught in the part has so moved an audience as his combat.'⁸⁴

Coda

It is impossible fully to reconcile descriptions of the fight, which in any case must have varied with the skill of the opposing Richmond. The *New York Clipper* (April 12, 1862) gives the fullest contemporary account:

Cautiously they manoeuvre around each other, for an opening,⁸⁵ like two boxers Suddenly they come together 'like a hog at a gate,' clash goes Dick's steel toward his foe, but Richmond is there; he parries the blow, and counters with his good right hand; then they have it up and down, right and left, neither being able to get in; Richard slashes as if in earnest But

79 Mosby, p. 179; Ellsler, p. 124.

80 'Assassin Booth idealized . . . '.

81 'No. 2 Bullfinch Place'.

82 Unidentified newspaper clipping, possibly *Boston Herald*, June 5, 1890, Harvard Theatre Collection.

83 Louise Malloy, 'Famous Collection of Theatrical Souvenirs', *Baltimore American*, Jan. 8, 1905. Leavitt (p. 168) similarly asserts that JBB once played the part on horseback in Philadelphia.

84 Undated newspaper clipping in Harvard Theatre Collection. Mansfield began playing Richard in 1889, in London. 'Nym Crinkle' was the pseudonym of Andrew C. Wheeler.

85 O'Flynn also has the combatants 'circle about for a moment' (n. pag.).

Richard forced the fighting, and becoming weak from the force of his own blows, is floored, and swordless; grasping the weapon again, he renews the fight without rising. He is wounded by his adversary, but manages to get upon his pins again, and taking his sword in both hands he brings it down upon his opponent's guard; this part of the fight is thrilling . . . [He] fights on, double-handed, to the last, until nature can hold out no longer

The *Spirit of the Times* (Mar. 29, 1862) confirms that the sword was used both single- and double-handed: 'when Richard makes his final effort, grasping his claymore with both hands and chopping at Richmond with the ferocity of hate and desperation, foot to foot, breast to breast, hewing over his shoulders, the effect is perfectly thrilling.' Harry Weaver recalled the fight in 1893: Booth 'exhibited a rage and fury almost terrible to witness. I have seen the audience rise to their feet in the excitement of the moment.'

Weaver claims that Booth

had the stump of a tree set in the center of the stage as far back as possible. After parrying the first blow of Richmond he deliberately turned and ran up the stage, his foot tripped against the stump, and he fell headlong backward. Richmond ran up after him and as he fell aimed a blow at his head. This was immediately caught by Richard, who was on his feet in an instant raining blow after blow at his adversary and driving him down the stage to the footlights. This had an electrical effect upon the audience, especially as this stubborn fight was kept up for several minutes, Richard dying very hard indeed.⁸⁶

Neither promptbook mentions a tree-stump; perhaps this is an incorrect memory of the 'Branch R.H. 1st Wing' noted in the Dow scenery lists. It is not clear what this was for; Jeannine Clarke Dodels suggests that he would use it for support, as he 'tries twice to rise and cannot' (Austin).⁸⁷

A remark by John Ellsler implies that with an experienced swordsman as Richmond, there may have been a degree of improvisation: 'In many instances he wore poor Richmond out, and on one occasion Richmond was compelled to whisper, "For God's sake, John, die! Die! If you don't I shall."'⁸⁸ Oddly, no reliable source mentions how the death-blow was given.

86 'No. 2 Bullfinch Place'. Weaver supported Booth in Cincinnati in 1861 and 62. Kean had made a backward fall, which had become traditional, but at the end of his fight.

87 'John Wilkes Booth as Richard III', *Surratt Society News* 10, no. 12 (Dec. 1985): 7.

88 Ellsler, p. 124. William Hobbs explains that the 'well-known routines' used in stage fighting could be 'repeated as often as required' (p. 8).



John Wilkes Booth as Hamlet, from a painting. Published in Francis Wilson, *John Wilkes Booth*, opp. p. 16. The original painting, noted by Wilson as being in the Harvard Theatre Collection, seems to have disappeared; it is unlikely to have been done from life.



‘Let each man render me his bloody hand . . . ‘

John Wilkes (Antony), Edwin (Brutus) and Junius Brutus Booth, Jr. (Cassius) in *Julius Caesar*, around the time of their benefit performance of the play on November 25, 1864 (‘Gutman 37’). This and a slightly different pose are the only photographs extant of John Booth in costume; he shaved off his moustache for a more authentic Roman look in this role.

TWO POSSIBLE COSTUMES

298



Robe owned by Gettysburg National Museum, said to have belonged to John Wilkes Booth, which may have been worn as Othello

photo: Deirdre Kincaid



Leather jerkin, probably worn by John Wilkes Booth in *The Robbers*. The buttons are decorated with a 'Star of David'. Dr. Gary Lattimer Collection.

CHAPTER 10

Other Significant Roles

Hamlet

Booth gave 46 performances of Hamlet from 1860 to 1864. That the critics agreed not at all on how successful he was is partly due to the character itself. Opinions on Hamlet, said the *Spirit of the Times* (April 5, 1862), 'are as numerous as critics'; the *Chicago Times* (Dec. 6, 1862) pointed out that 'everybody who reads it forms his own particular ideal; and, of the many [actors], but few fill the popular estimation.' Though Hamlet was almost *de rigueur* for tragedians, this paper thought that only about half a dozen had embodied the part in true form (May 30, 1863). The *New Orleans Times* (Mar. 16, 1864) warned against narrow-mindedness:

That 'Hamlet' is susceptible of diverse readings in various scenes is a fact too long exhibited by critics to warrant dispute,--and that any special construction should invariably govern is too illiberal a notion for the broad charity of intellect.

Nonetheless, the nineteenth century had more fixed ideas about Hamlet than our own age, and an actor confronted both the reader's ideal and the audience's memory, 'for scarcely is there a theatre-goer who has not made up his mind as to the best "Hamlet"', as the *Chicago Tribune* said (June 10, 1862).

The Montgomery Theatre was 'crammed full' for Booth's debut as Hamlet, despite competition.¹ Previous to his New York engagement, notices confine themselves mainly to puffy generalities and to remarking on the 'full and fashionable' audiences and their appreciation. The *Providence Daily Evening Press* (Oct. 25, 1861) praised him for fully entering into his characters, saying his Hamlet 'stirred the audience, not only to interest, but to emotion.' However, for the *Spirit of the Times* (April 4, 1862), his only New York performance of the role did not make the audience identify with him:

Mr. Booth failed to convey and enforce that sympathy to and from the audience, which I associate with every (in my judgment) good representation of the character. Instead of this warm interest . . . instead of all [the]

¹ *Montgomery Daily Mail*, Nov. 1, 1860.

emotions, which a great Hamlet, fitly supported, will invariably excite, I found among the audience, and coming upon myself, a sensation of dullness .

...

This rather serious flaw was here partly due to an inadequate supporting cast; but the *Chicago Times* (May 30, 1863) may have been making the same point when it said, 'The personation is not particularly calculated to excite enthusiasm in an audience'.

Critics usually conceded that Booth had prepared well for the part. The *New York Herald* (Mar. 25, 1862) found it 'very well read throughout'; it had 'evidently been carefully studied.' The *Boston Saturday Evening Express* (May 17, 1862) was more enthusiastic: Booth's Hamlet was, like his Richard, 'finished, thoughtful, scholarly,' and both 'compare[d] favorably' with those of any living actor, American or British:

As with Edwin his Hamlet is superb. Figure, voice, action--the interpretation of the philosophic Dane--his mental, physical, spiritual characteristics--are given with a meaning and emphasis which shows that the young actor is no mere stage strutter appealing to empty heads and noisy canes; but to the intellect and best judgment of intelligent and critical people. To fathom Hamlet is the work of years; to interpret it aright is the work of genius. If Mr Booth is not equal to the portraiture, he is assuredly not far from it.

The *Indianapolis Daily Gazette* (Jan. 6, 1863), which did not like Booth's acting, conceded that he could 'play Hamlet with unusually good taste.' The *Chicago Times* (Dec. 8, 1862), however, without specifying, thought that 'his conception of the character is not a perfect one.' But the only totally negative view came from the *Buffalo Daily Courier* (July 10, 1863):

J. Wilkes Booth is a splendid actor, and we do not like to find fault with him, but we cannot recognize his right to assume the part of Hamlet, with that spirit of recklessness which he displayed last night. In fact, we think he had better not attempt to play Hamlet at all. He has not made the character a study, and to say that, is to make the cleanest criticism that we desire to indulge in. In general terms we may say that we do not like Mr. Booth's Hamlet. He has the genius to play it but it is evident that he has not had the patience to study it.

So different is this from other views that one is tempted to think the paper was hinting that Booth had gone on drunk, or otherwise distracted. The word 'recklessness' and two references to 'study'--did he appear not to know the lines?--suggest that the paper knows something it is not stating outright in its 'cleanest criticism'. The *Buffalo Commercial*

Advertiser, however, reviewing the same performance, thought it 'the best thing he has done during his engagement' (July 10, 1863).

Charles Wyndham played Osric in Washington in April 1863 to Booth's Hamlet, which he called an 'effective, thrilling presentation'. Wyndham was quite specific about Booth's conception of the part:

As John Wilkes played it the Danish prince was unmistakably mad throughout. Edwin's conception of the part was that of uneven and unbalanced genius But John Wilkes leaned toward the other view of the character, as was in keeping with his own bent of mind. His Hamlet was insane, and his interpretation was fiery, convincing and artistic[.]²

This opinion is not backed up by any other reviews or reminiscences, unless the *Buffalo Daily Courier* was reading Hamlet's madness as Booth's recklessness. Wyndham, recalling the performance more than 40 years later, was probably influenced by the received opinion about the actor whom he calls 'sad, mad, bad John Wilkes'.

Considering that his brother was on the way to becoming America's definitive Hamlet, John was subjected to few comparisons in this role and those mostly complimentary. The *New York Evening Express* (Mar. 25, 1862) said that Edwin 'is about the best Hamlet on the modern stage; and to say that [John] did not suffer by the comparison is to award him the highest praise.' He reminded the *New York Herald* (Mar. 25, 1862) of his father in the action scenes. In Chicago, said the *Tribune* (June 10, 1862), James Murdoch was considered 'the "greatest of the great"' as Hamlet:

But admiring Murdock [*sic*] as we do, we are free to confess we observed beauties in Booth's rendition that never struck us in Murdock. Murdock's is the most even and polished performance, while Booth's is interspersed with bright flashes of genius, which amply make amends for the few defects perceptible to the critic's eye. With one-fourth of Murdock's experience and devotion to his profession, we believe John Wilkes Booth will be as good a "Hamlet" as ever walked the stage.

The *Daily Advertiser* (May 7, 1864) considered that '[t]hough falling short of Edwin Booth's delineation of the character, it is one of great power.'

There are few references to originality: though the *Daily Missouri Democrat* (April 23, 1862) claimed in a puffy review that 'his style is entirely his own, never showing the

² Wyndham, 'Recollections'.

least symptom of imitation', the *Chicago Times* (May 30, 1863) thought Booth played 'without much originality, or a superabundance of striking points.' The *Daily Picayune* (Mar. 17, 1864), though approving his conception and development of the character, took him to task for the wrong sort of originality: 'He gave some new readings that were not improvements; and, in endeavoring to develop new beauties in the text, slurred over and sacrificed others dear to all play goers and Shakespearean students.' No sound evidence is available for how he dressed the part. Otis Skinner mentions 'a black-beaded Hamlet hauberk'.³ There is a photograph of a painting extant, showing Booth dressed in the conventional 'mediaeval' Hamlet tunic, but this was apparently not painted from life.⁴

Any apparent originality may have been partly the result of Booth's own temperament, and an acting style which produced those 'bright flashes of genius' in an uneven performance. To the *Spirit of the Times* (April 5, 1862), Booth seemed 'too energetic, too positive, earthly, real and tangible for Hamlet', and the *New York Leader* (Mar. 29, 1862) thought his 'Hamlet and Macbeth were full of power--too full, perhaps'. The *Boston Saturday Evening Express* (May 17, 1862) approved the performance as 'graphic and powerful', and the *Springfield Daily Republican* (Oct. 24, 1863) mentioned his 'intensity and power'. The *Chicago Times* critic (Dec. 6, 1862) wanted refinement: Hamlet's character, for him, was 'a well-bred one, requiring something of the true-born gentleman to personify it irresolute at times, tender hearted always', but

Mr. Booth threw into the character at times more of energy than comported with this view. In the colloquy with Ophelia he was furious. That all he said might not have been said with more effect in a concentrated rather than vehement way, cannot be doubted. In like manner, after the murder of Polonius in his mother's closet, he rages and mouths at her thus

'A bloody deed; almost as bad, good mother

As kill a king, and marry with his brother.'

In view of the fact that she had done this very thing, what so effective

3 See Chapter 8 for the unreliability of his account.

4 Published in Francis Wilson, *John Wilkes Booth*, opp. p. 16, and reproduced on p. 296 of this thesis. A copy of this picture is in the Museum of the City of New York, with the annotation: 'Copied from a photograph in [Harvard Theatre Collection], formerly in the possession of Evert [Jansen?] Wendell, given to him by Edwin Booth. Identification from Harvard.' Harvard's photograph and the original painting are apparently not to be found.

as to remind her of it in those cold, sarcastic tones, which cut to the heart when consuming fury fails to reach the point.

Predictably, though, he liked the pathos of 'Alas, poor Yorick'. The *Springfield Republican* (Oct. 24, 1863) found 'isolated passages . . . too hurried and obscure' and the *Cleveland Daily Plain Dealer* (Nov. 28, 1863) that the play 'dragged a little'; but even the *Indianapolis Journal* (Nov 29, 1862), not an admirer, conceded that 'he certainly played portions of Hamlet admirably'. The *New York Herald* (Mar. 25, 1862) summed up the virtues and shortcomings of the performance in early 1862:

Mr. Booth's Hamlet is not so excellent and consistent a performance as his Richard Third or Charles de Moor The melancholic, philosophical scenes were only good; but when the action was hurried and the passion intense, Mr. Booth was more like himself, and marvellously like his father. Decidedly his forte is in melodramatic, rather than in quiet, classical, intellectual characters.

Over time, the performance apparently mellowed. In late 1863, the *Boston Saturday Evening Gazette* (Oct. 3) noted 'an improvement we would fain believe results from study--noticeable, especially, in the 4th act [*sic*]. He is quick, yet impressive, in the play scene, and does not consider it necessary to be tediously slow properly to produce his points.' The *Boston Daily Advertiser* (May 28, 1864) said of his last performance of the character: 'He has indeed so much improved in care and refinement that it is hard to identify in him the coarse and almost prize-fighting *Hamlet* which he presented when we first had the pleasure of seeing him'.

Critics no more agreed about individual scenes and speeches than about Booth's performance as a whole. The highly critical *Chicago Times* (Dec. 6, 1862) was quite impressed:

In the soliloquies, Mr. Booth was very fine. His reading was correct, well-accented, and distinct, and, while more exciting portions of the play failed to command attention at times, he was here listened to in deep silence. If all had been as good, nothing more could have been asked.

The *Providence Daily Post* (Oct. 20, 1863) concurred about at least one soliloquy (presumably 'To be or not to be'), which was

a masterpiece of declamation. It was put with a point and emphasis so just, a feeling so deep, a passion so repressed, and yet so full, that he seemed to lay bare a heart torn with distrusts, and confused with doubt. It was the

quiet, unobtruding Hamlet, probing the problem of life with the sharp knife of philosophy and meditation.

However, as discussed in Chapter 8, Col. M.F. Tiernan thought 'Booth's rendition of Hamlet's soliloquy and of his address to the players' at his reading in St. Joseph 'palpable failures', because of vocal deficiencies and staginess.⁵ The *Daily Picayune* of March 17 that year found the performance a curate's egg: 'Some of the soliloquies were finely delivered; others were but so-so. In some scenes he was very impressive; in others, in which we expected he would be as others had been, he was not.' The *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* (July 10, 1863) agreed with Tiernan that the 'instructions to the players might, perhaps, have been improved upon,' but thought that 'the scenes with Ophelia and the Queen were really very fine'. The *Chicago Times* critic (Dec. 6, 1862) said, 'The ghost scene in his mother's closet gave fine scope, and he improved it well. The intensified horror which sat upon his countenance, and spoke in his tones, thrilled the audience with an involuntary tremor.' This sequence, in a performance 'replete with charms', also impressed the *Cleveland Daily Plain Dealer* (Nov. 28, 1863):

The frenzy of fine acting was reached in this scene, and the audience fairly shivered with affright as he started back from the apparition with the words--
 'Save me and hover over me, ye Heavenly guards.' [*sic*]
 The scene was given superbly

The *Chicago Times* (Dec. 6, 1862) found him 'quite effective' in the graveyard scene: "'Alas, poor Yorick" came out with a pathos which struck home.' A small detail was pointed out by the *Boston Advertiser* of May 19, 1862: Booth mis-emphasized some lines, saying, for instance, 'The pangs of *despis'd* love'. Interestingly, considering Booth's reputation for stage fighting, only one review picked out 'the combat with Laertes', along with his 'confronting the paternal ghost, his interviews with *Ophelia*, and his mother *Gertrude*, [and] his demeanor in the play-scene' as some of 'the several successes of the evening' (*New Orleans Times*, Mar. 16, 1864).

Whatever Booth's understanding and technique could bring to the role, was he fundamentally suited to it? The *Chicago Journal* (Dec. 5, 1862) thought that his 'slight

figure and musical voice' better fitted Hamlet than the 'stern, rougher and heavier' parts such as Richard III and Othello. For the *Providence Daily Post* (Oct. 20, 1863), Booth's 'quiet unassuming scholar' provided a telling instance of his versatility. Naturally, critics compared his Hamlet with the rest of his repertoire. The *Spirit of the Times* (April 5, 1862) thought Booth's Richard and Macbeth were more successful than his Hamlet, as both are less spiritual, and more material. The *Hartford Evening Press* concluded on October 23, 1863 that 'his Hamlet was not equal to his Richard'; the next day's *Springfield Daily Republican* stated that Booth's 'Richard is good but his Hamlet is better.' Hamlet presented a different acting challenge, as the *Boston Saturday Evening Express* (May 17, 1862) recognized; Booth's Richard was best, it thought, but

In Richard there is not scope for the genuine actor which Hamlet affords, although it has made the reputation of many an actor, our young subject included. But we must award to his Hamlet a higher merit, all things considered.

Two years later, the same paper considered Hamlet 'among his best performances, though of course not without blemishes' (May 7, 1864).

Later reminiscence is no more unanimous than contemporary criticism. John Patton, ex-mayor of Detroit, remembered him as a versatile actor, 'extremely good as "Hamlet" and "Richard III"'; while the actor J.L. Saphore thought Hamlet his weakest part.⁶ And manager John A. Ellsler, for whom Booth played Hamlet in two engagements, had no recollection of his performing it at all when asked about it thirty years later.⁷

The impression given by all these contradictory opinions is that Booth's Hamlet was an intelligent attempt at a part in which he was, by the understanding of his day, miscast. But perhaps Booth himself should have the last word, obliquely, on his own temperamental suitability for the part. Clara Morris, his Player Queen at Cleveland, recalled:

⁶ Clipping, 'Portrait of J. Wilkes Booth', Fawcett Scrapbook, Yale Pamphlet Collection.

⁷ Letter from Ellsler, New York, June 19, 1897, in W.E. Hill Collection, Fine Arts Division, Dallas Public Library.

One morning, going on the stage where a group were talking with John Wilkes, I heard him say: 'No! no, no! there's but one *Hamlet*, to my mind, that's my brother Edwin. You see, between ourselves, he *is Hamlet*--melancholy and all!'⁸

Macbeth

Macbeth, said the *Chicago Tribune*, 'we understand[,] is Mr. Booth's favorite character' (Jan. 29, 1862). We may doubt this, when he gave only 32 full performances, and two of the fifth act, in his career; he played Hamlet more often, and Richard III over 100 times. Most of his Macbeth performances were in his second and third seasons (1861-62 and 1862-63), with a notable falling-off in the last, which may indicate that he was not satisfied yet with his interpretation. It appears to have been reasonably popular: the unimpressed *Daily Picayune* comments of Booth's penultimate performance that it had a 'pretty large audience' (Mar. 25, 1864).

The contemporary stage version cuts the Porter, the Third Murderer and the onstage slaughter of the Macduff family, and adds a scene after Duncan's death in which the weird sisters meet a chorus of witches for a gloating song and dance, with music attributed to Matthew Locke. The dubiously Shakespearean Hecate scene is augmented by descending spirits and the chorus; and these reappear in the cauldron scene, adding further ingredients including 'three ounces of a red-haired wench'.⁹ This greater emphasis on the supernatural would tend to diminish Macbeth's own moral struggle, as well as offering a rival attraction: we are told by the *Spirit of the Times* (April 5, 1862) that in Booth's one New York performance, the choruses got an encore. All this machinery and extra personnel may explain why *Macbeth* was considered not a very profitable play to stage, though it drew well: 'such considerable expense is involved in the getting it up.'¹⁰ This may also go toward explaining why Booth did not perform it more often. The Boston Museum scenery list covering his engagements follows the acting

⁸ *Life on the Stage*, p. 104.

⁹ *Macbeth*, French's Standard Drama no. 50 (New York: Samuel French, n.d.).

¹⁰ Philadelphia *Press*, Oct. 26, 1857. This comment was *apropos* a stock production; but would also hold good for a star engagement.

edition closely, noting 'See car down 2nd Ent' in the Hecate scene.¹¹ This list makes the England scene the first of Act V instead of the last of IV, presumably to facilitate the change after the spectacular cauldron scene, but spoiling Shakespeare's structure.

Macbeth is a complex part, and the fact that the fight with Macduff was often singled out for praise in Booth's performance might indicate that he was not yet ready for those complexities. The combat is mentioned in his first reviews in the part: 'splendidly rendered' to 'hearty cheers' in the *Detroit Daily Advertiser* (Nov. 14, 1861), and for the *Free Press* of the same date, it was 'probably never excelled, if even equaled, in this city. There was no "air-cutting," but every blow was given rapidly and forcibly, and the whole scene drew forth the most hearty applause.' This is technical skill, but the *Louisville Daily Democrat* (Dec. 12, 1861) also found a 'terrible intensity and appearance of reality' in the fight, which 'carried the audience by storm'. This critic felt it equalled the *Richard III* fight, with which it would inevitably be compared again. By June of 1862, it was notable enough to be mentioned in advertising: the *Chicago Tribune* on the 16th tempted the audience with not only 'All the Original [*sic*] Music', but also 'Mr. Booth's TERRIFIC COMBAT.' The fight was still being mentioned at the end of Booth's career, in the *New Orleans Times* (Mar. 24, 1864).

Not only the fight drew comparison with *Richard III*. The *Spirit of the Times* (April 5, 1862) perceptively lined up three of Booth's parts:

His Macbeth seemed to me about midway between his Richard and Hamlet--not so good as the former, but better than the latter. And this in just such degree as the Scot is less spiritual than the Danish prince, and less material than the English tyrant.

Booth's materiality may be glanced at by the *New York Leader* (Mar. 29, 1862) in its criticism that his Macbeth was 'full of power--too full, perhaps'. For the *Sunday Dispatch* (Mar. 30, 1862), it 'showed the same brilliancies and excellencies and the same faults as in Richard: though it is but just to say that the former were prominent and the latter exceptional.' (The paper had mentioned Booth's expressive face, faulty elocution,

11 Donald P. Dow Lincoln Collection.

naturalness and grace in its review of his Richard on Mar. 23.) The same mixed impression is conveyed by the *Louisville Daily Democrat* (Dec. 12, 1861): Booth's performance, 'though somewhat unequal,' was 'at times illuminated by those electric bursts characteristic of the elder Booth, which his admirers have never forgotten.' The *Chicago Tribune* (June 16, 1862) announced Macbeth as 'one of his most powerful efforts, in which his impulsive style of acting shows to great advantage'.

John was not compared to his father again, but the *Spirit of the Times's* opinion that 'Mr. Booth finely portrays the irresolution of Macbeth' (April 5, 1862) uncannily echoes a judgement on Junius Brutus: 'The doubt, the perplexity, the irresolution of Macbeth, were admirably depicted by Mr. Booth'¹²

Any originality in Booth's Macbeth seems to have been confined to details: although John T. Ford later remembered it as 'different from any other I ever witnessed', he gave only one instance:

In the scene in Macbeth where he enters the den of the witches Booth would not content himself with the usual steps to reach the stage, but had a ledge of rocks some ten or twelve feet high erected in their stead, down which he sprang upon the stage.¹³

This effect has been used to support the view of Booth as merely a gymnast, and Ford himself had earlier claimed that the *Baltimore Sun* had 'condemned' the feat, and 'styled [Booth] the "gymnastic actor"';¹⁴ yet it is but a development of the printed directions--the scene (IV, i) is in 'A Cave', and Macbeth enters 'descending steps, L.U.E.'.¹⁵ Far more eccentric seems Edwin Booth's making his *first* entrance 'leaping from the rocks, as he exclaimed, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen"', as remembered by Adam Badeau.¹⁶ It seems that John did not always leap into the scene, either: the Boston

¹² *The Actor*, (New York: Graham, 1846), p. 61. This anonymously-published book was probably written by James T. Vail.

¹³ [Frank A. Burr], 'Booth's Bullet', *Philadelphia Weekly Press*, Dec. 8, 1881.

¹⁴ Ben Perley Poore, ed., *The Conspiracy Trial for the Murder of the President* (Boston: J.E. Tilton, 1865), 2:532 (Ford's examination). As far as this writer knows, no-one has ever located this 'editorial article' in the *Sun*.

¹⁵ French's edition, pp. 42, 44.

¹⁶ 'EB on and off the Stage', p. 261. It is interesting to speculate whether either of them borrowed the effect from the other.

scenery list mentions 'Steps & Platform L.H.F.' (Left-hand Flat) for the cauldron scene. Like Ford, the *Indianapolis Journal* (Jan. 4, 1862) mentioned only one of the 'many original points' it saw in John's performance: 'the reading, "Hang out our banners on the outward wall! The cry is 'Still they come!'" met our unqualified approval. He is the only actor who ever met our expectations in that very passage.' The reviewer does not say what pleased him so much; perhaps that the line, a textual crux at the time, was read as he quotes it, rather than the acting edition's 'The cry is still "They come:"' (V, iv). The long and detailed review in the *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch* (Mar. 15, 1863) saw few originalities after Duncan's murder:

The conventional and usual stage business was honestly adhered to. There were few novelties, and such as were introduced were in trifling matters. . . . Mr. Booth has the traditions of the profession to follow, and as long as he does so he will be considered clever.

This critic, who felt that Macbeth needed 'exceptional and superior qualities of genius' in the actor, had begun his column with a detailed annihilation of Forrest's Thane. Forrest's innovations were such pieces of 'claptrap' as placing the witches on the battlements during the dagger speech; the 'usual stage business' was at least preferable to that.

Booth's concept of his character must have pleased most reviewers, for it draws little comment. The Philadelphia reviewer above is the exception, thinking it 'not happy':

The Thane of Glamis is, in his introduction by Shakspeare, a bold and successful soldier. . . . The personation of this character by Mr. Booth up to the point of the murder of *Duncan* was too feeble. *Macbeth* yields to the promptings of ambition by overcoming the terrors of conscience. But he does not do so like a woman. It is his better nature which holds him back.

Presumably what the *Spirit of the Times* reviewer quoted above had seen as Booth 'finely portray[ing]' Macbeth's 'irresolution', the Philadelphia critic saw as 'Mr. Booth . . . rendering *Macbeth* weak and lachrymose in the first and second acts.' Edwin Booth had received a very similar criticism in the *New York Clipper* (Jan. 12, 1861) when he played the part in Philadelphia opposite Charlotte Cushman:

Edwin Booth's Macbeth was the weakest rendition of that character I ever saw. There are many parts in which he is really excellent, but he should never attempt that of Macbeth. His conception of the character is very weak, and he has not the physical power for it.

Later, the *Clipper's* profile (Aug. 31, 1861) called Edwin's Macbeth 'a *decided failure*.' At least no-one could fault John on physical power.

In the early soliloquies, the Philadelphia critic found John 'pusillanimous':

The fine soliloquy commencing, 'If it were done,' &c., was delivered in a whining tone, as if the Thane of Cawdor were a child who feared a whipping. *Macbeth* is, in the personation of Mr. Booth, a sniveller, who argues to himself with cowardly eloquence, in fear of the punishment which he may receive.

He had found Forrest's version 'very badly read'; Forrest apparently did not know the meaning of the words, 'We'd jump the life to come'. The *Chicago Times* (Dec. 11, 1862) could not have disagreed more about Booth's soliloquies; though its commendation mentions Booth's technical skill rather than his characterization, they cannot really be separated:

The soliloquies, which are so important a feature in the play . . . were given with good effect. . . . Mr. Booth displayed his recitative requirements in the ['If it were done'] soliloquy . . . and gave with the greatest emphasis and purity the concluding [*sic*] lines:¹⁷

That his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking off.

The dagger soliloquy aroused equally mixed opinions. The Philadelphia reviewer found it 'ineffective'. 'Mr. Booth expresses horror and fear, not with the energy of manhood, but in womanly terror.' He conceded it 'some good points', however, one of them that

it was not too vigorously performed. The attitudes and expressions were simple and not too highly wrought by seeming attempts to be too impressive. This is a fault with many actors, who, struggling to produce an effect in this famous scene, go beyond the natural expression, and reveal their art in glaring colors.

He could not understand Booth's omission of the lines, 'I see thee yet, in form as palpable / As this which now I draw.' He thought it necessary as 'a form of argument which *Macbeth* employs to satisfy his mind that the airy weapon *is* imaginary.' When Forrest said these lines, '[t]he shaking of his own weapon in his scabbard . . . is a trick to gain applause, which might be good in a burlesque, but is contemptible in earnest acting.'

17 The French's edition cuts from here to 'I have no spur . . . '.

Again, Booth had spared the reviewer claptrap. For the *Spirit of the Times* (April 5, 1862) also, the dagger speech was 'not great', for a different reason: 'Mr. B. lacks the delicacy of execution necessary to embody the emotions of supernatural fear.' The *Chicago Times* (Dec. 11, 1862), however, thought the dagger speech the best of Booth's soliloquies: 'The thrilling earnestness of his voice, the fixed gaze with which his eyes followed the phantom blade, the frantic grasp at air; all went home to his listeners, and enchained their attention.' The *Spirit of the Times* (April 5, 1862) thought the 'whole [first] scene with Lady Macbeth was well done', Booth's 'irresolution' expressed in 'his restless eye and troubled visage'. Later, Booth 'went through the murder scene excellently well.' The *New Orleans Times* (Mar. 24, 1864) found Booth 'impressive . . . especially in the scenes shared by Lady Macbeth', and the *Chicago Times* (Dec. 11, 1862) endorsed the New York critic's opinion of II, i: 'In the murder scene, both himself and Miss Hosmer were absorbed in their assumed characteristic, and the nervous, weird action of the play was brought out in characters which caused a tremor in the coolest.' The *Chicago Times* also liked the banquet scene: 'A natural wildness animated Mr. Booth, over which the cold, unmoved temper of Lady Macbeth held sway with admirable power'; the *Spirit of the Times* agreed: Booth here was

forcible without ranting, a fact greatly in his favor, since so many Macbeth's [*sic*] tear themselves in these celebrated speeches. The sudden transition from quivering fear to courteous and even careless ease, on the final exit of the ghost, was a good point.

'Transitions', in the technical sense of going from one emotion to another (see Chapter 2) were important in this part. The *Detroit Free Press* (Nov. 14, 1861), early in Booth's career, had thought that they made Macbeth one of the most difficult parts to play: 'The transitions from the extremes of courage and cowardice, virtue and villainy, are of frequent occurrence, and require to be managed with the most consummate skill to give satisfaction Mr. Booth can do this'. He managed to make 'points' of them, 'as the frequent and hearty applause . . . gave ample evidence'.

The performance seems to have become less controversial as the action proceeded: the *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch* said that after Booth 'got rid of *Duncan* his rendition went on smoothly, and it requires no special remark.' The *Spirit of the Times* was warmer: after the banquet scene

he was good throughout, working up to the requirements of the text with fine effect, and keeping well in view the remorse and fear which struggle in Macbeth's troubled heart. The semi-soliloquies about his age, the flight of time, &c., were very well done. Of course the combat was good, though less terrific than that in Richard.

The critic picked out one passage for praise: 'His reading of "Duncan is in his grave," &c., was a fine touch of pathos, made solemn by remorse.' By contrast, the Philadelphia critic complained that the 'sepulchral tones in which Mr. Forrest groaned [this passage] were an unnatural attempt to express in sound the abstraction of deep repose in the tomb, but did not convey any semblance of the personal feeling of *Macbeth*.'

Not everyone agreed with the *Spirit of the Times* and the *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch* that Booth had resisted the temptation to overdo parts of *Macbeth*. Edwin Booth's friend Richard Cary saw John in one performance in Baltimore just before his New York debut, and wrote to his wife, 'I saw [Edwin's] brother Wilkes for an hour or so in Balto. one evening & did not like him at all--he rants & his face has no more expression than a board fence--his voice is like Ned's.'¹⁸ He wrote similarly to Edwin, adding that the performance reminded him of 'a blood-and-thunder melo-drama full of sheet iron and burnt rosin and ghosts and other horrors' which he had once seen.¹⁹ It is strange to hear reversed the usual verdict that John's expressive face made up for what his voice lacked. Aside from the *New Orleans Times* (Mar. 24, 1864), which comments on Booth's temporary hoarseness, there is little mention of his voice; the *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch* makes the usual point: 'His defective voice is much against him. Passages of beauty suffer where the reader cannot intonate with clearness and melody', but the

¹⁸ Mar. 14, 1862, Letters of Captain Richard Cary, Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹⁹ Quoted in Ruggles, p. 123.

Chicago Times (quoted above) praised his 'emphasis and purity' and the 'thrilling earnestness' of Booth's voice.

Only the *Louisville Daily Journal* (Nov. 4, 1862) reported his Macbeth 'the best, in general opinion, in his varied repertory'. Later on, John Patton would remember that 'his "Macbeth" did not impress me'.²⁰ For the *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch*, 'as a whole, it may be pronounced passable. It was not great, and it was not atrociously bad.' There was hope for Booth, unlike Forrest: with him 'faults may be reformed, and natural genius be improved by study and practice.'

Romeo

Before he went on the stage, John Wilkes Booth doubted that he could play Shakespeare's most famous lover: 'I can never be a nimble skip-about like Romeo; I am too square and solid', he told his sister.²¹ In the event, he played the part only 24 times in his career. The availability of a suitable stock leading lady to play Juliet was probably a large factor in this infrequency, for, as we shall see, his performance was far from unpopular and reviews suggest his self-doubt was mistaken.

His first reviews were charitably lukewarm. The Columbus *Daily Sun* (Oct. 4, 1860) thought the title role in *The Stranger* more suited to his style than Romeo, pointing out that he was playing both for the first time.²² A month later the *Montgomery Daily Mail* (Nov. 16) said, 'Mr. WILKES showed that he can learn to play Romeo, with great power, though as yet his conception is crude'; and this opinion was echoed by the *Buffalo Morning Express* for November 5, 1861, which felt that 'his defects are those of imperfect skill and mastery. He will by and bye [*sic*] nobly interpret the great drama of love.'

Critics were inclined to take Romeo less seriously than the heavier tragic parts such as Richard III. The *Boston Saturday Evening Express* (May 17, 1862) felt that it did not

20 Clipping, 'Portrait of J. Wilkes Booth'.

21 Clarke, *Unlocked Book*, p. 107.

22 Keller, pp. 142-43.

'tax to any considerable extent the powers of even a moderate actor.' It had pitfalls, as the *Buffalo Morning Express* (Nov. 5, 1861) observed:

There are few actors who can appreciate the exquisite sentimentality of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. In their conception it is almost invariably overwrought and rendered so gross an element that the excess is sickening. Mr. Booth has too much of the artist in his nature to be thus guilty

The role's lyricism also offered actors 'alluring opportunities' to indulge in 'mere elocution', said the *National Intelligencer* (Jan. 22, 1865); but Booth was not so 'tempted'.

Advance notices and reviews constantly point out that Booth was 'fitted by nature' to play Romeo: he was young and good-looking. These were telling features, since most male tragedians starring at the time were considerably older, and even stock leading men were likely to be more than Booth's 22 to 26 years. This may help to account for the high incidence of female Romeos during this period. John's main rival in youth and looks, his brother Edwin, never enjoyed playing lovers and after 1869 dropped Romeo from his repertoire. Adam Badeau said that Edwin was 'the poorest of Romeos, and he knew it . . . there was a lack of tenderness in his eye, and of ardor in his tone; even the gestures were tame.'²³ Publicizing John's Romeo, the *Baltimore Sun* mentioned his 'clear, musical voice' (Feb. 19, 1862) and the *Baltimore American* his 'animation of style, and his fervor of imagination' (Mar. 17, 1863) as being well suited to the character; for the *Boston Transcript* (May 13, 1862) it was his 'impassioned earnestness'.

Critics felt that the part of Romeo brought out Booth's essential qualities, perhaps better than *Richard III*. The *Boston Post* (May 15, 1862) wrote of his intensity, 'his most conspicuous quality and the one which raises the most expectation for his future career', and thought it was well exemplified in Romeo:

. . . when he is told of Mercutio's death and that Tybalt who slew him, is returning, although he has just before been in the attitude of the most affectionate forbearance to this very Tybalt--yet, instantly, the rush of passion in his face and form transforms him, and the deadly spring at Tybalt, followed by blows like thunder-bolts, and a swift death, before one can draw breath, illustrate the splendid suddenness of his intensity of rage.

²³ Shattuck, *Hamlet of EB*, p. 64; Badeau, 'EB on and off the Stage', p. 260.

For the *Baltimore Gazette* (Mar. 18, 1863), his Romeo displayed other, but related aspects of his talent:

His exuberant impulse and natural animation found freer vent in the passionate ardor of the young lover Mr. Booth evidenced, in this personation, his abundant possession of that highest quality of dramatic power--*abandon*--ability to merge his individuality in the character he simulates, and to surrender up to the sentiment of the *role* he would personate his entire consciousness of self.

With such a part, it is not surprising that most of the critical emphasis is on the unstudied, spontaneous, and instinctive side of Booth's acting skills, often referred to as 'genius'; but some critics note control and artistry as well. The *National Intelligencer's* 'Erasmus' (Jan. 22, 1865) thought him 'full of genius, and almost as perfect an artist as his brother Edwin', adding that his 'elocution was faultless. . . . His readings were perfect'; and earlier the *Buffalo Morning Express* (Nov. 5, 1861) had called his Romeo 'carefully studied acting, modelled upon the principles of good taste by a correct judgment.'

Particular scenes are singled out for praise. Romeo's seeing Tybalt after Mercutio's death provided Booth with an effective 'transition', as one of his earliest reviews noticed:

The meeting with Tybalt fairly started [*sic*] every one. The actor had been so quiet and gentle in the previous scenes that when the fire blazed forth so suddenly and furiously, it sent a thrill of astonishment through the entire house (*Rochester Evening Express*, Jan. 22, 1861).

The *Boston Post*, quoted above, made the same point a year later. The *Chicago Times* critic (May 26 and June 5, 1863), thinking Romeo 'perhaps the best [role] in his repertoire' partly because there was 'but little provocation for rant' in the character, felt that Booth had 'marred an effective scene' because he 'could not resist the temptation to rant a little before going to fight with Tybalt'. This critic felt that Booth had 'a capacity for sentimental parts':

It is in emotional passages that his real strength shows itself, and this play abounds in such. The balcony scene, and the parting of the lovers in the lady's chamber . . . are among the most beautiful of the play, and were well given. Mr. Booth can throw a depth and pathos into his voice in passages like these which tells with effect upon an audience.

For the *Rochester Evening Express* (Jan. 22, 1861), 'The death scene with Juliet, at the tomb, was especially to be commended; indeed, we have seldom seen a more perfect

piece of acting.' At the other end of Booth's career, one Mrs. Grundy saw his Romeo at Ford's for Avonia Jones's benefit, and remembered, 'I was particularly struck by the simulated agony in the death scene, where *Romeo* appears to be undergoing the cruelest of tortures' (*New York Daily Graphic*, April 13, 1876).

The very qualities mentioned, of 'abandon', sincerity and intensity, may help to explain the accidents he had while playing this role. William Ferguson remembered from his Ford's engagement in November 1863:

Particularly was I impressed by the sincerity of his acting. Playing Romeo, he so gave himself up to emotion in the cell of Friar Laurence, that when he threw himself down at the line, 'taking the measure of an unmade grave,' he wounded himself on the point of the dagger he wore suspended from his girdle.²⁴

In the same scene (III, iii) at Baltimore in February of 1862, he threw himself down hard enough to provoke a heavy nosebleed (see Chapter 5). On occasion, Booth could give fellow actors a rough time of it, too:

In the last scene of *Romeo and Juliet*, one night, I vividly recall how the buttons at his cuff caught my hair, and in trying to tear them out he trod on my dress and rent it so as to make it utterly useless afterward; and in his last struggle literally shook me out of my shoes! The curtain fell on Romeo with a sprained thumb, a good deal of hair on his sleeve, Juliet in rags and two white satin shoes lying in the corner of the stage!²⁵

Despite his emotional commitment to the part, not everybody liked Booth's Romeo. Lincoln's secretary, John Hay, saw it at Ford's in 1863, and wrote in his diary, 'Wheatley [*sic* for Charles Wheatleigh] took all the honors away as Mercutio.'²⁶ Roe Reisinger, as a Union veteran of 18, saw Booth's final Romeo in 1865 and remarked that 'it was soppy enough to make all the ladies swoon', which might be taken as a compliment, though doubtless not intended as one.²⁷ However, his audiences, usually large, were twice

24 William J. Ferguson, 'Lincoln's Death', *Saturday Evening Post*, Feb. 12, 1927, p. 37.

25 Reignolds-Winslow, p. 141-42. Miss Winslow may exaggerate, influenced by newspaper allegations that Booth 'almost always' hurt his opponents in stage fights (for instance, the *Boston Saturday Evening Express*, April 15, 1865).

26 John Hay, *Lincoln and the Civil War in the Letters and Diaries of John Hay*, ed. Tyler Dennett (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1939), p. 118, entry for Nov. 11, 1863.

27 Hildegard Dolson, *The Great Oildorado* (New York: Random House, 1959), p. 163.

specified as 'select and intelligent' and 'distinguished, fashionable, and discriminating'.²⁸ He never performed Romeo more than twice in an engagement; yet the Boston *Daily Advertiser* (Jan. 30, 1863) thought it 'perhaps the best of his lighter tragic characters'.

In 1860, reviewing his second performance, the *Montgomery Daily Mail* had predicted that Booth could learn to play Romeo. The review for his last, at Ford's, suggests that in little over four years, he had indeed done so. 'Erasmus' in the *National Intelligencer* (Jan. 22, 1865) enthused, 'no such Romeo as he of Friday night ever trod our boards. To be sure he suffered from huskiness of voice--but then, what perfect acting!'²⁹ 'Erasmus', who had never seen him before, continued:

He is full of genius, and almost as perfect an artist as his brother Edwin. The passion of his acting Friday night, whether as the lover listening to silvery sounds from his idol in the still Italian moonlight, or as the man aroused, like an awakened lion, to resent the death of Mercutio; or as the hopeless desperate exile in the Friar's cell; or as the lingering, condemned young husband in his bridal chamber watching the 'envious streaks' of morning . . . or as the reckless suicide in the 'hungry churchyard' rushing madly on Paris; or when chaunting such a song and poem of the passions over his sepulchered bride as only Shakespeare could conceive and utter--in each and all of these points we have never seen a Romeo bearing any near comparison with the acting of Booth on Friday night. His death-scene was the most remarkable and fearfully natural that we have seen for years upon the stage. It reminded us of the death-struggle of Rachel as Adrienne, and was quite equal to it.

The character actress Mrs. G.H. Gilbert, who acted with John at Cincinnati, gave the most succinct verdict. After recalling Edwin Booth as Romeo, she added, 'But the most perfect *Romeo*, the finest I ever saw, was the brother, Wilkes Booth.'³⁰

Othello and Iago

After his debut in the role in Richmond, with his brother as Iago, Booth played Othello 23 times; Iago he played five times, over the last six months of his regular career. Critics' discussions of his performance were always in terms of how well he fitted into the

²⁸ *Baltimore Clipper*, Mar. 18, 1863, and *National Intelligencer*, Jan. 22, 1865 respectively.

²⁹ Booth had not been on stage since the previous November, and no doubt his voice was out of condition; see Chapter 8.

³⁰ Mrs. Gilbert, p. 177.

usual conception of Othello, thought of then as a completely noble character. Booth's idea of the role is hardly discussed, his usual 'originality' is not mentioned; yet he experimented with an interesting piece of original business, as we shall see.

He was predictably commended for power, intensity and passion, and less often accused of unevenness than as Richard III. An Albany paper in early 1861 called his Othello a 'spirited' piece of acting, saying that he

exhibits the workings of the green-eyed monster--jealousy[--]in a most terrible manner. . . . The scene where he doubts the honesty of Iago, and threatens to annihilate him unless he brings forth ocular proof, was most effectively and artistically executed. The last scene was also well acted . . .³¹

The last scene also impressed the *Cincinnati Commercial* (Nov. 27, 1861). The reviewer, who had heard that Booth's Othello was 'an unequal performance as a whole', but with 'passages in which he attained the highest dramatic art,' was

present only during the final act, in which he certainly displayed the terrible and convulsive passions of the scene. Nothing could have been finer, and no pathos more touching, than his remorse and the tone in which he exclaims, 'O fool, fool, fool,' . . . His transitions from anguish to fiery indignation were absolutely electrifying.

The *Chicago Times* (Dec. 5, 1862) gave Booth a near-rave review, picking out the great jealousy scene (III, i), the last scene, and, in tune with the critic's tastes, the much quieter I, iii:

Mr. Booth told this tale [the 'witchcraft' speech] in eloquent tones. The entire scene was given on his part with marked fidelity. The winning pathos of his voice, when he spoke of the fair Desdemona, went home to the hearts of his hearers. But it was when the subtle venom of Iago's ingenuity began to work upon him, that he showed his power. Doubt, hesitancy, and reckless passion alternately animated his acting, and made him the absorbing point of interest. . . . The death scene was enacted with the same intensity of expression. There was concentrated fire and energy in every word, and, when at last conscience came to accuse him of his great crime, he was all that an honest man, self condemned, can be--a tower of strength and goodness consumed by inward fire.

It is surprising not to find him oftener compared to Junius Brutus Booth. The Albany newspaper clipping calls him, in the jealousy scenes, 'the exact counterfeit of his father',

31 Clipping, labelled 'Albany, NY; JWB 1861' in Scrapbook of Junius Brutus Booth, Jr., William Seymour Theatre Collection.

but the only other mention comes from the *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel* (Dec. 28, 1861), claiming John's was 'a matchless performance, and we have seen Junius Brutus Booth and Macready enact it'.

The headlong nature of Booth's performance can be imagined in the light of a reminiscence from his Boston *Desdemona*, Kate Reignolds:

[W]hen, with fiery remorse, he rushed to the bed of *Desdemona* after the murder, I used to gather myself together and hold my breath, lest the bang his cimeter [*sic*] gave when he threw himself at me should force me back to life with a shriek.³²

Booth did not play *Othello* in New York, or in his first Boston engagement which followed in spring 1862. He may have felt he was not ready to confront such demanding audiences; certainly it was in that year that he received his most negative criticism, shortly before the *Chicago Times's* praise quoted above. The *Cincinnati Enquirer's* correspondent 'Ubiquitous Allabout' felt Booth's *Othello* was 'a mistake' (Nov. 25, 1862); the *Indianapolis Journal* (Nov. 29) went further, calling it a 'failure'. Booth, the latter critic said, lacked a 'strong voice' and 'imposing appearance':

Mr. Booth, with his thin figure, husky voice, indistinct articulation, exaggerated action, and constant straining to get up to that strength of passion which makes a strong man seem stronger, but under which he broke down into paralytic head-shakings, and wild staggerings about the stage, was just enough unlike the bold, open and dignified warrior to make one laugh, if the poet had not put it beyond the power of anybody to make *him* ridiculous.

The critic's main quarrel was with Booth's height and build: 'Mr. Booth may be a good actor in some characters . . . but there is not enough of him for *Othello*. The intense passion of a nature as large as the Moor's would burn out Booth's little boiler in one act.' His *Iago* (Riley) 'overshadowed Booth', who did not make of *Othello* 'a marked and well defined character': 'Rant and wrath were [the performance's] prominent features, and might have belonged as well to a drover, mad at a locomotive for killing his cow, as a jealous husband crazy with shame and despair.' A few weeks later, the other Indianapolis papers responded to the *Journal's* attack during Booth's next engagement there.³³ More

32 Reignolds-Winslow, p. 141.

33 See also Chapter 6.

important than any vocal or physical shortcomings, said the *Gazette* (Jan. 7, 1863), was that Booth's

truthful conception of the character, his strict adherence to the form and spirit of the text, and the interpretation of the native character of the Turk [*sic*], make his audience forget the presence of Booth, and think only of the misguided, passionate Moor.

The *Daily Sentinel* of the same day thought the performance 'a splendid success. Without rant he threw force and vigor into the character'. It dismissed the *Journal's* view with contempt: the rival paper had said that if Booth's

was a faithful representation of the Moor, then Shakspeare was an ass. The public were convinced there was an ass around somewhere, but were not sure whether it was Shakspeare, the critic of the Journal, or Mr. Booth. Last night they decided that the ears did not belong to Mr. Booth, and now the question of ownership lies between the Bard of Avon and the critic of the Journal.

Perhaps encouraged by the excellent Chicago reviews, Booth did risk Othello when he next played Boston shortly after this engagement, and gained notices which reflect his usual strengths and shortcomings. The *Daily Advertiser* (Jan. 28, 1863) said that 'into the impetuous nature of [Othello] he enters with a will, infusing into the stronger scenes that intensity of passion which is his greatest attribute.' The *Daily Evening Traveller* (Jan. 29) was very impressed, although 'in the milder diction of the character' Booth should have 'lingered in his delivery longer, and imparted more expression to its rendering'. The actor came into his own in the intenser scenes: 'He seemed in his passion almost to breathe the inspiration of his hero, and through every exciting stage of the piece, he maintained the same energy and power which fired the scene, where jealousy first seeks the freshness of his love.' In short, it was among the best of Booth's roles:

In none that we have seen him [in] has he evinced so keen an appreciation of the legitimate effect which every prominent passage should receive; and in not one of them does he overdo the scene by unreal gesticulations or those wild howls in which actors are wont to exceed the power of their lungs and mar the whole conception.

Edwin Booth's Othello had recently been commended by the *New York Tribune* (Oct. 4, 1862) for the same restraint: 'The absence of those counterfeit effects by which violence is usually made to supply the place of force, and riotous fury to stand for subtle intensity,

added infinitely to the value of the personation'. For the *Saturday Evening Gazette* (Jan. 31), 'Certain scenes in *Othello* were superbly given,' but unusually for Booth, 'the performance as a whole exhibited more finish and evenness than are apparent in many of the young actor's assumptions.' However, when Booth returned to Boston in 1864, the *Daily Advertiser* (May 3, 1864) treated him more critically. It felt that, though 'well enough played', his performance 'lacked delicacy and variety, and failed to express that gradual development of suspicion which forms the chief interest of the chief scenes.' The *New Orleans Times* would not have agreed: on March 22 that year it had said that Booth's 'dialogues with Iago were peculiarly thrilling in their gradually enhanced passion', though the *Daily Picayune* (Mar. 23) dismissed the performance as being only 'in tolerable style'.

Booth's costumes for the role were said by the unidentified Albany paper to have been 'of the richest and most appropriate kind'. We know from Kate Reingold's anecdote that in the last scene he wore a scimitar; we cannot be so sure of Otis Skinner's 'gorgeous robe for *Othello* made of two East India shawls, so fine you could have pulled them through a lady's bracelet'. At Gettysburg National Museum there is a sleeved and hooded robe with the 'Arabesque' braiding fashionable in the 1860s, which is said to have belonged to John Wilkes Booth: if so, it might have been worn as *Othello*.³⁴

An interesting account survives of Booth's altering the traditional business in II, ii, when *Othello* enters to stop the brawl between Cassio and Montano. At this period, according to Martin Meisel, the moment was usually staged so as to create a 'picture', in melodrama fashion. To this end, lines were cut so that *Othello*'s entrance stopped the fight immediately:

The scene represents a courtyard with an archway at the center back through which *Othello* has previously retired. The noise of the brawl increases, 'till *Othello* appears, and, standing with his sword drawn immediately under the archway, brings all to a climax by shouting at the top of his voice, "Hold for your lives!" at which instant Montano receives his hurt and staggers into one corner. Cassio, conscience stricken . . . occupies the other. The rest of the performers put themselves into attitudes--the stage is grouped--and a picture formed, of which the Moor is the centre figure. After this there is a pause;

34 See photograph on page 298. The attribution to Booth seems to be hearsay; the robe belonged to J.T. Richards's National Civil War Collection in Old Town, Florida, until 1962 when the Gettysburg Museum acquired it (*Lincoln Log* 3, no. 3 (1978): 4).

when Othello, having looked around him, walks forward, and the half exclamation of *Why, how now, ho? Whence ariseth this?* becomes an enquiry.' (Mayhew, pp. 50-52).³⁵

Thomas Duncan was working as a stage carpenter at Buffalo during Booth's autumn 1861 engagement:

[Booth] came to the theater one morning when there was no rehearsal and asked Duncan if he would do him a favor 'I wish you would make me a set for the second act of "Othello," give me a terrace and steps to run down center[.] I want to have some distance to come when Montano and Roderigo [*sic*] are fighting. I wish to speak some of the lines as I come on.' Duncan gave him the set he required, and he spent over an hour in rehearsing the effect he wished to produce. Entering at the cue, he did not get down between them and throw up the swords on the usual line, 'Hold for your lives!' But he spoke that as he came running on, also the following:

Why, how now ho! from whence ariseth this?
Are we turn'd Turks, and to ourselves do that
Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites?
For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl!
He that stirs next to carve [for] his own rage
Holds his soul light (*on this word he is down center and strikes up their swords*); he dies upon [his] motion.³⁶

A 'picture' could have followed the last line quoted, or Booth may have departed from tradition and omitted it entirely. The sequence as staged by Booth becomes more natural: Othello takes some time to establish his authority, finally intervening physically only on the last line. The 'terrace' he requested would have enabled the audience to see him while the fight continued. Booth was clearly not afraid to be upstaged by a fight during his speech, and was prepared to spend some time working out the business. We do not know if he was happy enough with his innovation to continue playing it after the Buffalo performance on October 30, 1861: it is not remarked on elsewhere. Of course, it may not always have been practicable.

Two of the negative critics of Booth's Othello suggested that he might have been better as Iago: his 'wiry frame' was ideal for 'that keen, crafty, plausible, inexorable devil'.³⁷ He did begin to play the part, which was already one of his brother Edwin's

35 Martin Meisel, 'Speaking Pictures', *Melodrama*, ed. Daniel Gerould (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1980), p. 52. Meisel quotes from Henry Mayhew, *Stage Effect*, 1840.

36 Weaver, 'No. 2 Bullfinch Place'. Italics added.

37 *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 29, 1862. The other was 'Ubiquitous Allabout' in *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Nov. 25, 1862.

strong cards, in December 1863, but the only useful criticism of John's Iago is from the *Boston Transcript* of May 16, 1864, which called the performance 'a most decided success', and noted John's ability to keep focused on a character's goals:

In Iago he had a part suited to his years He made him a merry villain, but not a careless or unintentional one; his mirth was only fed by mischief, and he never lost sight of the passion which possessed him, hatred of the Moor. His scene, in the third act, where he excites Othello's jealousy, was most skillfully done, as was also that in the fourth act where Roderigo is slain.

Shylock

Booth performed Shylock 24 times, also giving one performance of the trial scene only and one of 'scenes' from *The Merchant of Venice* in his first two seasons. Early in his third season, he introduced Petruchio into his repertoire, and thereafter almost invariably played these two parts in a double bill (as his brothers Edwin and Junius also did), and nearly always for his benefit. At this period, *Merchant* was normally presented minus its fifth act, which would tend to reinforce the view of Shylock as its tragic hero: when he leaves the action, the play ends, Portia thus being deprived of her central position, and the play of its harmonious ending.

According to the *Chicago Tribune* (June 4, 1862), Shylock was 'a character which, since the death of the elder Kean and Booth, has found few representatives on the American stage.' Booth had seen his brother, E.L. Davenport, and Barry Sullivan in the role, but Forrest played it 'rarely'.³⁸ It is a 'character' role, requiring an actor to conceal his own personality: an early puff in the *Albany Times & Courier* (Mar. 15, 1861) claimed that Booth 'identifies himself' with the part 'in a forcible and artistic manner', and an audience member recalled that 'His Shylock was very fine and he seemed to lose himself entirely in the character of the Jew.'³⁹ The *Chicago Times* (Dec. 4, 1862), felt the character called for 'an actor of strong delineative power to render it in its true sense. To

³⁸ Moody, *Edwin Forrest: First Star of the American Stage* (New York: Knopf, 1960), p. 74.

³⁹ Hill, p. 231.

that class Mr. Booth belongs. His personation was strongly marked, and truthful to the meaning of the author in every part.' The same paper expanded the point six months later (May 28, 1863): in Booth's 'correct and impressive delineation', his Shylock profited from 'the limited exertion of his muscular gifts': he restrained his energy in playing the elderly miser. He showed another quality this paper valued: 'There is at times a strong emotional capacity in the acting of Mr. Booth; in fact, his strength lies therein, and when that peculiarity is developed, as is largely the case in this character, he acquits himself most creditably.'

Not everyone thought he succeeded in sinking himself in the part. His first serious review rapped him sharply on the knuckles: the *New York Herald* (April 3, 1862, quoted in full in Chapter 6), complained that he 'neither looks, conceives nor acts the character in a style to increase his reputation or satisfy his audience', though he made some points well. The *Herald's* stricture became magnified in post-assassination accounts as 'His attempt at Shylock was a failure' (*New York World*, April 17, 1865); yet contemporary papers do not agree with this verdict. The *Evening Post* (April 4, 1862) called it a 'masterly delineation', which was 'very much in general style like the *Shylock* of Edwin Booth'. The *Commercial Advertiser* (also April 4) approved more coolly: the character 'was rendered faithfully If Mr. Booth excels in Richard III, his personation of the character of Shylock is full of interest.'

The only detailed reviews of Booth's Shylock are to be found in the *Chicago Times* of December 4, 1862, and, signed 'Bizarre', in the *Washington Sunday Chronicle* of November 8, 1863. 'Bizarre' complained that Booth played Shylock

in the good old way--a way that has never left the stage since Edmund Kean. . . . and he gives us every tradition that lingers in the green-room. He scowls in the proper places, raises his voice as his preceptors did, and does everything with precision and certainty. If scowling and raising the voice and doing everything with precision and certainty makes a great actor, Mr. Booth's Shylock would be grand. We require something more.⁴⁰

40 With its verbal echo of the hostile *Richard III* review in the *Daily Chronicle* (Nov. 4), this may be from the same pen or result from the same editorial policy: see Chapter 7 for discussion of possible bias.

The *Chicago Times*, on the other hand, did not say whether Booth played the part in the traditional way or not, simply pronouncing it 'truthful'. For this critic, Booth 'showed his power in the first act, when denouncing Antonio's scornful treatment.' 'Bizarre', however, complained that Booth missed opportunities in passages 'hidden here and there', among them one from the same scene (I, iii). Booth seemed to think that

Why, look you, how you storm!

...
This is kind I offer

was 'a hurried by-speech, of no material value to the play, and slurred it.' If this is true, then Booth was indeed missing subtleties: in this speech Shylock wrong-foots Antonio and prepares to make him accept the 'merry bond'. Similarly, in the speech:

By Jacob's staff I swear
I have no mind of feasting forth to-night;
But I will go (II, v).

'Shylock the merchant struggles with Shylock the Jew,' said Bizarre,' and in the line "I will go," shows one of the keenest traits of his character. Mr. Booth overlooks it altogether.'

'Bizarre' and the *Chicago Times* critic disagreed most of all about the Tubal scene (III, i). For the latter, Booth showed plenty of variety, and the appropriate 'transitions':

He rose to a point of superabundant excellence in the scene which follows the loss of his daughter. A raging lion, a bloodthirsty beast, a groaning miser, a fiendish man, exultant in the hope of revenge--all by turns, so rapidly that the transition confused the sense, and caused the audience to wonder at the conception which created such a being, as well as the imitative power which delineated.

'Bizarre' thought that Booth, earlier, seemed 'desirous to save himself for the third act, and in the third act we have a burst of fury and wrath which Kean might have envied.' Despite the variety of emotion called for, 'Mr. Booth went through the whole [scene] violently--ranting, shouting, and making all manner of noises. It produced no more effect than if it had been a pantomime.' He went on, however:

This ends our censure and our criticism, for in the trial scene Mr. Booth acted with great power and truth, and was applauded. It is a scene like this that gives us our hopes of Mr. Booth, and makes us feel that in time he may be what he certainly is not now--an eminent tragedian.

The *Chicago Times* went into more detail:

The greed which whetted the covetous man's appetite shone in his eye, lurked on his tongue, and spoke in the nervous play of his fingers. The vacillations of eager hope and utter despair ran through his acting with rapidity which rendered the scene absorbing, and when he bent under the retribution, and faltered, 'I am content,' there was scarcely a sentiment but pity left for one who deserved no pity.

It seems strange, however, that greed should be ascribed to Shylock in this scene, when he has largely given this up in favour of revenge. Another review from Washington, in the *National Intelligencer* (April 30, 1863), may also be referring to the trial scene in its commendation of Booth's facial mobility: 'The play of his features is intensely expressive of the emotion of the words. We have never seen more intense and complicated expressions of agony than his features express in Shylock.'

None but the *New York Herald* review was totally negative. Even 'Bizarre' had 'hope'; the unimpressed *Daily Picayune* (Mar. 27, 1864), which saw a little of the performance, found that it 'pleased us better than any other personation we have seen him attempt', and the *Chicago Times* ended its review by calling it 'a masterly piece of acting throughout.' It would be surprising at Booth's age if his Shylock had indeed been a finished piece of work; but his talent for character acting, his expressive face and capacity for strong emotion seem to have carried him a long way toward his goal.

Petruchio

Booth introduced Petruchio, in Garrick's version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, into his repertoire in December 1862, his third season as a star, and between then and May of 1864 played it 21 times. Usually he teamed it with *The Merchant of Venice*, occasionally with *Money* or *The Stranger*, once with *The Lady of Lyons*, and once, his last performance of it, with his father's three-act tragedy *Ugolino*. This adaptation continued to hold the stage till late in the century, as John Drew explains:

A short version of the play known as *Katherine and Petruchio* had been played by a number of tragedians when they wanted a rest. This . . .

consisted mainly of the horse-play scenes in which *Petruchio* brandishes his whip and the leg of mutton about the stage⁴¹

The Bianca plot was entirely cut, and without that as a contrast, the Kate/Petruchio scenes tended to become mere farce. Kemble had introduced the horse-whip, which had since become traditional.⁴²

Very little critical attention was given to Booth's Petruchio; as a comic, or farcical part played by a tragedian, it seems not to have been considered worthy of analysis. The *New Orleans Times* (Mar. 26, 1864) was 'struck with that graceful nonchalance which, while correctly restricted within due bounds, lent a spirit and humor to the role which delighted all.' The same paper called a later performance a 'lively, graceful piece of acting, full of admirable points' (April 2, 1864). The emphasis on grace and control suggests that Booth resisted the temptation to be merely rowdy in Petruchio's taming scenes, an impression strengthened by the *Boston Daily Advertiser* (May 26, 1864) in announcing his last performance:

He also appears as *Petruchio*, a part which a year ago we should have been sorry to see him assume, but his improvement in care and refinement of acting is so great since he first appeared here that he will doubtless enact the true gentleman, and exhibit very much such a *Petruchio* as Shakespeare meant should be.

While the foregoing make the performance sound extremely decorous, anecdotes by a fellow actor and an audience member give a rather livelier impression. At Ford's Theatre, Washington, W.J. Ferguson played one of the servants whom Booth made the subjects of a practical joke. Maddox, the property man,

had made an imitation ham, properly only painted on the canvas of its upper side. . . . At the height of his presumed fury against the servants, Booth [seized] the ham and swung it right and left against the cheeks of the actors, constantly twisting it in his hand so that the underside came in contact with our faces. Magically, on one cheek and then on the other, dusky smears appeared until we all looked like darkies. . . . The audience shrieked with laughter at our appearance, shouts rising louder and louder as each black smudge was added. Booth had instructed Maddox to cover the underside of the ham with moist lampblack.⁴³

41 John Drew, *My Years on the Stage* (New York: Dutton, 1922), p. 91.

42 Brian Morris, intro. to Arden edition (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 98-99.

43 'Lincoln's Death', pp. 37, 39.

Since Petruchio is complaining that the meat is burnt, this seems a quite legitimate piece of farcical business. A similar, but less apt stage joke was once played on Jean Hosmer by Edwin Booth:

During a wait when he was not on the stage Booth blackened his moustache. When he kissed Katherine in the last act he left a well-marked black streak around the shrew's nose and mouth. The audience roared with laughter, of course, and their hilarity was only increased by the absolute wonderment of the unconscious Katherine.⁴⁴

Since Kate and Petruchio are reconciled by the last act, it seems inappropriate that Petruchio should make jokes at her expense.

Sarah Jane Hill saw John as Petruchio in Nashville in early 1864.⁴⁵ In her account, she seems undecided as to whether he was acting, or merely exhibiting his own wayward temperament. On the one hand, she says that he 'made it very realistic and frolicked and fumed around the stage. Both he and the actors seemed to enjoy it as much as the spectators.' However, when props began to invade the auditorium, she saw it as evidence of Booth's irresponsibility:

During the banquet scene, he sent the dishes of viands flying over the stage. One of the property hams bounced and hit one of the orchestra in the face and started his nose to bleed, and a loaf of bread landed in a woman's lap, who sat near the front. I thought then, and still think, he was under the influence of liquor, for he had such a reckless devil-may care manner with him. Finally, the curtain was rung down before the end of the scene.⁴⁶

What she interprets as intoxication may have been Booth giving Petruchio a 'devil-may-care manner' as part of his making the character, as she notes, 'very realistic'.

If Booth's horseplay was getting a bit too boisterous, so was his brother's at around the same time--and at least John did not alienate his fellow actors. The *New York Clipper* (Jan. 30, 1864) reported of Edwin's Petruchio at Brooklyn: 'The way he laid about him with the horsewhip . . . elicited the heartiest laughter of those off the stage, but those on it didn't see it in that light.'

44 Unidentified newspaper clipping, n.d., Clippings File, Harvard Theatre Collection.

45 See also Chapter 8; the account was probably written after the assassination.

46 Hill, p. 231. The newspapers make no mention of a premature end to any scene.

Antony

Asia recalls her brother, as a teenager, learning *Julius Caesar*; he would recite 'much of the play . . . while I held the book'. He may have learned all the principal parts, and certainly included Antony's oration.⁴⁷ But he played Antony in its entirety only once: at the Shakespeare Statue Fund benefit in New York on November 25, 1864, with his brothers as Brutus and Cassius. At the beginning of his star career at Columbus, after being accidentally wounded by his manager, he had given a portion of it as a farewell performance:

Curiosity to see the rising young Tragedian, and sympathy for his late misfortune, drew more to the theatre than the bill Between the plays Mr. Booth recited Mark Antony's address over the dead body of Caesar, in a manner entirely above criticism.⁴⁸

In the circumstances, real criticism was not to be expected.

The part of Antony would be difficult to include in a touring star's repertoire since the play requires two other highly competent leading men, and not all stock companies would be able to supply them. This problem was solved when the three Booth brothers gave the play under Edwin's management. As the *New York Herald* (Nov. 26, 1864) noted, 'Three parts in the tragedy of Julius Caesar were personated by actors of the first merit--a thing that can hardly be seen in any city but ours.' Charles Walcot, Jr., who played Octavius in this production, called Antony a 'showy part', and explained: 'The sympathy of the house is usually with Anthony [*sic*], if he does not rant, for the conspirators, though patriots, were still false friends.'⁴⁹ The critic William Winter pointed out, 'Success in Antony . . . does not mean so much as success in [Brutus or Cassius]. The character is simpler, and the situations in which it is presented are readily apprehended and utilised.'⁵⁰ In the nineteenth century, the scene (IV, i) in which Antony shows himself a clever and ruthless politician was usually cut, leaving him a less complex and more heroic figure.

47 Clarke, *Unlocked Book*, pp. 75, 81 and 106-07.

48 Columbus *Daily Sun*, Oct. 22, 1860, quoted in Keller, p. 150.

49 'Memorable Night on the American Stage'.

50 *Life and Art of Edwin Booth*, p. 329.

Contemporary comment suggests that John's performance was successful, but it was left for later reminiscence to assert that he eclipsed the other leads. The *New York Herald* (Nov. 26) noted the limited nature of the part: 'If there was less of real personality given to Marc Antony, the fault was rather in the part than in the actor.' For the *New York Clipper* (Dec. 3), John's was 'a creditable performance. . . . His speech in the forum was a great piece of elocution'. The *New York Evening Post*⁵¹ described John's particular quality as 'an élan and fire which at times fairly electrifies the audience and whirls them along with him.' The oration was naturally singled out, and, after Lincoln's assassination, the New York correspondent of the San Francisco *Evening Bulletin* (May 20, 1865) recalled that 'a little while ago he was moving the public to tears and agitation, when he stood as Marc Antony over the body of Caesar'. The critic of the *Spirit of the Times*, however, who saw only part of the play due to the fire scare (see Chapter 8), came to the conclusion 'that Edwin Booth, as an actor, completely overshadows [*sic*] John Wilkes B. and the elder brother' (Dec. 3). If the play was interrupted before the oration, the competition would not have been fair.

The parallels between this play and real life were irresistible to post-assassination commentators. According to the *New York World* (April 17, 1865), 'many who witnessed this representation' managed to remember that John 'interpolated, at some inappropriate point in the oration over Caesar's body, the words *sic semper tyrannis*--the same that he used after jumping from the President's box'. Almost any point would have been inappropriate in that part.

Some post-assassination comment on his Antony followed the usual pattern of denigration: the *New York Leader* of April 22, 1865 dismissed the performance as 'good, but melo-dramatic', and much later Edwin's one-time manager, William Stuart, endorsed the *Spirit's* review: 'John was physically the handsomest and received the largest measure of applause, as he had a strong following in the house, but Edwin was head and

51 N.d., quoted in *Castle Square Theatre Magazine*, June 2, 1913.

shoulders, as an actor, above the other two.⁵² Since he went on to claim that John 'knew nothing' of this role which we know he had learnt as a boy, Stuart's statement that he had 'no conception of the character, but sailed in for strong points' does not carry much weight. The *St. Louis Daily Press* of April 23, 1865, on the other hand, reported that Booth 'won considerable applause for the excellent rendition of the role', and Edwin later spoke to his friend E.V. Valentine 'of how finely Wilkes Booth played Mark Antony.'⁵³ By about 1899 Charles Walcott, Jr., was claiming that Booth had played with 'great vim and fire' and that he 'carried off the honors of the evening. . . . his brothers joined in the admiration and did not grudge him the great triumph of this night.'⁵⁴ This was closely echoed still later: 'There can be no doubt that [John] easily carried off the honors of the occasion. He played with a phosphorescent passion and fire, which recalled to old theatregoers the characteristics of the elder Booth.'⁵⁵ In an interview with Samuel K. Chester, the *Trebonius*, in 1902, it is stated that 'the younger brother completely electrified the audience, by his wonderful histrionic genius, especially in his supreme oratorical effects, in the forum scene, over the body of the dead "Caesar."'⁵⁶

The New York correspondent of the *Constitutional Union* (Washington) wrote soon after the benefit:

The three brothers, standing side by side, when Anthony [*sic*] offers his hand to the scowling and reluctant Cassius, and Brutus passes round and lays his hand, expostulating, upon Cassius's shoulder, was a remarkable tableau, and ought to be photographed.

It was indeed photographed, and one of two slightly different extant poses can be seen on page 297.

Phidias/Raphael in *The Marble Heart* by Charles Selby

After Richard III, the sculptor Raphael was Booth's most popular role. He played it

52 *New York Recorder*, 1893, clipping, Harvard Theatre Collection.

53 Edward V. Valentine, ms. 'My Recollections', Oct. 6, 1891, Valentine Museum.

54 'Memorable Night on the American Stage'.

55 'G.T.F.', 'Players of Yesterday', *Theatre Magazine* 10 (Sept. 1909), p. 85.

56 Alonzo May, p. 907.

from the very beginning of his star career in Columbus until the end: 55 performances in all, with four in his first season, and 14, 21 and 16 in the succeeding ones. It was not a very obvious choice of part: newspapers pointed out that the play was 'generally acted to display the role of [Mlle.] Marco' and thus given up to female stars (*Boston Daily Advertiser*, Feb. 4, 1863 and *Chicago Evening Journal*, June 10, 1862), while Raphael, as the *Chicago Tribune* (June 13, 1862) informs us, was 'often played by the second man of the "stock"' (i.e., the juvenile or light comedian). The *Journal* added that the author had clearly intended Raphael to be the chief feature; and indeed, he is central to the plot, though his friend Volage, played in London by Ben Webster, has most of the best lines.

Booth had seen Edwin Adams and Harkins (the juvenile) play the role at Richmond, and he must also have taken a hint from his brother: in the play's American premiere, Edwin had supported Catherine Sinclair as Raphael during his Californian apprenticeship, and had walked away with the honours of the evening.⁵⁷ The *Boston Saturday Evening Gazette* (Feb. 7, 1863) stated that Edwin 'has played it a great deal and is said to excel any of his compeers'; J.J. McCloskey, who was in the cast, says they performed for 100 nights 'through the mines and cities of California',⁵⁸ and Charles Krone remembered Edwin's Raphael, during his first star tour in the East, as 'one of the most beautiful performances I have ever witnessed.'⁵⁹

Act I of the play is a prologue set in fifth-century BC Greece: the sculptor Phidias has completed a group of three female statues, and become so fond of them that he does not want to deliver them to the rich Gorgias, who commissioned them. Phidias' friend Diogenes suggests asking the statues themselves whom they want to belong to. Phidias offers love, Gorgias riches. The statues choose Gorgias.

The play proper is set in contemporary Paris, the actors doubling their equivalent roles. Raphael, a successful young sculptor, becomes hopelessly infatuated with the

⁵⁷ McCloskey, p. 1326. Junius, Jr. also played the role on his starring tour of the East in 1864-65.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Krone, 3:62. Shattuck notes that Edwin played Raphael in New York in the season of 1863-64, but that it 'came to nothing' (*Hamlet of EB*, p. 53).

coquette Mademoiselle Marco, who is out to make a rich marriage. Despite his friend Volage's warnings, Raphael neglects his work and his mother, and spends all his money following Marco around. Act IV is the best-written section: Marco has used Raphael's attentions to pique the jealousy of a rich, silly young man who has now proposed. Though she has pangs of conscience, she coldly rejects Raphael. He pleads with her, but she is adamant: she has experienced poverty, and never will again. Finally, he tears from her head a wreath of white roses--'they are only for the brows of innocence and truth'--and rushes off. In Act V he returns home to find his mother has died in his absence. His griefs turn his brain, and he hallucinates Marco before him, with a heart of marble. He dies just before she arrives in person, perhaps penitent, and the statues reappear for the final tableau.

Not all the critics liked the play, the *Brooklyn Standard* (Oct. 31, 1863) finding it 'hard to sympathize with a man like Raphael . . . foolishly fascinated by a heartless woman'; Booth had 'made what he could of an unworthy subject'. The *Leavenworth Conservative* (Dec. 30, 1863) simply called it 'a bad play'. Yet it was popular with audiences. In his second season, John made a 'sensation' with it in St. Louis, according to the *Spirit of the Times* (May 10, 1862), and, at Boston, it was 'a great matinée card'.⁶⁰ The Museum's regular matinées usually featured only the stock company, but Booth gave five afternoon performances of this play at Boston, and also one at Baltimore, which had no matinée tradition. Since ladies could attend matinées unaccompanied, it is reasonable to suppose that this play was particularly popular with women. John, of course, had the youth and looks to be a 'matinée idol', though few of the critics mentioned these qualifications with regard to this play. The *Boston Post* (Feb. 7, 1863) noted 'a charming freshness in the youthful buoyancy of his spirits during the earlier scenes', and the *New York Clipper* (Nov. 7, 1863) that his 'handsome and intelligent countenance is seen to great advantage' in the emotions of the last acts. A retired theatrical manager put it

60 Letter from John W. Ryan, *Boston Herald*, May 21, 1916.

succinctly in later years: 'I never saw a man who looked the part and acted it as that boy did'.⁶¹

Nonetheless, critics disagreed on whether the part suited John's acting skills. The *Chicago Times* (Dec. 9, 1862) thought him 'graceful and self-possessed, and, in the pathetic portions, most effective'; it was a 'role nature intended' for him. The *Boston Courier* (Feb. 3, 1863) felt that the part 'could not have better suited the peculiar powers of Mr. Booth had it been written expressly for him'; however, the *Morning Chronicle* (Washington, April 14, 1863) did not think 'his abilities appear to as great advantage as they might' in the role. Some thought the part too trivial, the *Boston Evening Traveller* (Feb. 5, 1863) saying it was 'hardly heavy enough for him,' though 'he renders it with more skill than the generality of the light parts which he attempts', and the *Boston Post* (Feb. 7, 1863) that it was not 'worthy the notice given it by Mr. Booth'. Another Boston paper, the *Saturday Evening Express* (Feb. 7, 1863) expanded: 'That Mr. Booth was equal to the part would be paying no great compliment, since it requires less power, intellect and effort for its rendition than any of his previous roles, with perhaps Melnotte excepted.' However, it thought that Booth had 'not only brought out all the conventional excellencies of the character, but . . . created even new ones.' The Leavenworth *Daily Conservative* (Dec. 30, 1863) felt that 'No one with less genius than Mr. Booth could make [the play] endurable'. Booth, said the *Boston Saturday Evening Gazette* (Feb. 7, 1863), 'takes more pains to make Raphael a splendid part than any actor we have seen in it in this city, and consequently plays it better'. He had discovered possibilities in the part which others missed:

The last two acts only offer him opportunity to show great power or intense feeling, but then they rise into a sudden dignity by being filled with the magnetism of an actor who has found something in them more than the sentimental mournings of light comedians (*Boston Daily Advertiser*, Feb. 4, 1863).

Indeed, he was making it his own in more than one way: for the 1862-63 season, he had an addition to the play written by George F. Fuller, manager of the Louisville

61 Clipping, 'Portrait of J. Wilkes Booth'.

Theatre. First announced by the *Louisville Daily Journal* as 'an introductory scene, which will change the former prologue act to a dream of the sculptor Raphael', it promised 'a great improvement, for the object of the dramatist has heretofore been ambiguous' (Oct. 31, 1862). The play's subtitle is *The Sculptor's Dream*, but only a brief exclamation by Raphael links the two stories. In December at Chicago, 'two new scenes' were announced as having been written by Fuller. The *New York Clipper* (Nov. 15) reported that Booth had copyrighted the extra scene and would 'play it at the east this season'.⁶² The additions were not mentioned again after they had been 'enthusiastically received' at their Louisville premiere (*Clipper*, Oct. 25): their content and position can now only be guessed at.⁶³

The fourth and fifth acts give the best opportunities for acting--and for over-acting. The *Louisville Daily Democrat* (Dec. 22, 1861) said that 'in the fourth act, Mr. Booth displays a depth of tenderness, a power of passion, and a loftiness of feeling' not excelled even by his Shakespearean performances. The *New York Clipper* (Nov. 7, 1863) reviewing his Brooklyn performance chose 'the explanatory interview with Marco' and the 'last scene' as especially excellent. The *Chicago Times* (Dec. 10, 1862), saying the personation was 'full of interest', went into more detail:

From the moment disappointment strikes his hopes to the ground, his voice and manner are full of living pathos, which rings in every tone and is shown in every movement. In the parting scene with Marco, his attitude and gesture, as the coquette received her repulse, were sublime; while the outburst of passion, in which the wreath is torn from her head, was full of . . . manly power The death scene was also very fine, although perhaps a little prolonged. The frantic grasp at the "Marble Heart" is as thrilling a piece of acting as any one need wish to see.

As this review makes clear, part of the impact lay in Booth's movements and gestures, as two Boston papers also noticed. The *Saturday Evening Gazette* (Feb. 7, 1863) found that his 'general manner and action in the fourth and fifth acts were most admirable, and he played with fine feeling and fervor', and the *Post* of the same date that 'his bearing in the

62 Despite the help of Gayle T. Harris, this writer failed to find any trace of it in the copyright division of the Library of Congress.

63 A new scene at the beginning would necessitate two complete changes of costume and scenery, and was perhaps later dropped as impractical.

fourth act--where the exceedingly delicate sentiment of the scene depends entirely upon the *action*--is admirable.' The *National Intelligencer* (May 9, 1863) expanded on this:

He *acts* every passion to the *eye*. Thus, . . . in the first act, he says little, but his whole deportment expresses the absorbing enthusiasm of the fierce artist nature, and by that action the audience is almost always magnetized, fascinated, and held; for although his voice is often inarticulate, yet the tones somehow thrill you, although you do not hear the words. We never witnessed a finer piece of acting than Booth's scene with . . . Marco, in which she casts him off forever

The *Boston Daily Evening Traveller* (Feb. 5, 1863) took him to task more severely on his elocution: Booth, it said,

falls into the same error that has characterized every personation we have seen by him. We refer to that hurried enunciation with which he passes over all those quiet scenes where passion is not master. His only object is apparently to obliterate articulation in gestures; and what is often a connecting link between scene and scene is sometimes altogether lost to the hearer by this [illegible] haste.

This blemish threatened to 'mar his finest performances'. This oft-heard objection was voiced also by the *Boston Daily Advertiser* (Feb. 4, 1863):

In [Acts I-III] Mr. Booth is at times too abrupt in manner, and altogether too inelegant in his enunciation, but he carries these final [acts] through so earnestly that such flaws can be pardoned there, though there is no excuse for them in the simple conversational scenes.

The most hostile review was the second one from the *Chicago Times* (May 21, 1863; for possible bias see Chapter 7). Booth's performance, from being 'full of interest' and 'thrilling' in December 1862, was now 'the conventional one, doing ordinary justice perhaps to the character, but furnishing no brilliant points'. Though the audience 'found no fault', they also

received no vivid impressions, for there was no powerful acting to create such impressions. Mr. Booth does not abound in power under any circumstances, but he sometimes displays an emotional capacity which wins him a fair share of commendation, and to this peculiarity he was indebted for all the success he acquired last night.

It is not clear what sort of power the critic thought Booth lacked; certainly not the sort that fuelled rant, for this was the only review which accused him of overacting in this part:

The inveterate desire for stage display, which is part and parcel of all his acting, was visible as one of the marring features. It was hardly necessary,

for instance, to go on the rampage and endanger the scenery at the close of the third act, when a simple act of reckless resolve was to be perpetrated.

He blames this on Booth's following the stage direction, 'which instructs him . . . to fall into a "fit of desperation"' (actually, '*in a fury of desperation, shaking [Volage] off*'):

It is in this adherence to stage forms that Mr. Booth does himself and his name rank injustice. It is that which makes a farce of his *Richard the Third*, and which ruins the effect of most of his efforts at high-strung acting. He has a native talent, which often shows itself, and, when left to the impulses of nature, does credit to its possessor, but when blended with stage rant, it is no better than the common trash which we see every day in actors who should have been plowmen.

The laconic and much-quoted verdict of Lincoln's secretary, John Hay, 'J. Wilkes Booth was doing the "Marble Heart." Rather tame than otherwise',⁶⁴ seems to endorse the *Chicago Times's* suggestion that Booth lacked power; or it may mean that for Hay, Booth's performance was too refined or reserved. The Baltimore reviews for March 1863 all suggest power as well as pathos in the role, the *Gazette* (Mar. 19) calling the performance 'a fresh and refreshing exhibition of genuine power; so clearly defined in purpose, and so direct in the vigor with which it seized upon the salient points of the character', while the *American* (Mar. 19) said he acted 'with surpassing force of passion and skill' as well as 'the deepest and purest pathos'. The *Gazette* on March 21 suggested that this force was controlled: 'His Raphael . . . is, in its quiet intensity and its well-sustained power, a superb effort of art.' The *Boston Saturday Evening Gazette* (Feb. 7, 1863) noticed that though he 'throws a great deal of spirit and expression into it, [and] is very impassioned at times', he also 'grasps the poetry of the character intelligently and appreciatingly', and the *Boston Post* (also Feb. 7), while feeling that Booth's 'undoubted genius' was 'fitfully illustrated' in the role, noted 'an impressiveness of delivery and action during the more serious portions, and a consistent regard for propriety everywhere'. On Booth's return to Boston in autumn 1863, the *Saturday Evening Gazette* (Oct. 10) thought his Raphael 'an improved performance - impressive and vigorous, yet at times very

⁶⁴ Hay, p. 118. Presumably he was referring to John's performance rather than the play or the production as a whole.

delicate and pathetic.' Booth's last review in the part was also from this paper (May 22), during his 1864 Boston engagement, and gives a glimpse of his sincerity:

Mr. Booth's Raphael in the *Marble Heart* is one of his best,--if not, by many reasons, *the* best of his portrayals. He throws deep feeling in[to] it, and his paroxysms of grief are natural and produce a sympathetic feeling in the audience. When an actor sheds tears--as Mr. Booth did in playing this part--in self-despite, an identification of self with the part to be played is shown which excuses many a minor fault.

An important element in this play was the visual effect created by the statues at the beginning and end. An announcement during his second season says that the play will be 'produced Monday, after having been long in preparation, with appropriate scenery and unusually beautiful effects' (*Daily Missouri Democrat*, April 27, 1862). It was Booth's usual practice not to bring out this play until well into an engagement (typically, the Monday of the second week) so it might always have been 'long in preparation'. He was rewarded by praise for the tableau: 'magnificent', from the *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel* (Jan. 8, 1863), and from the *Boston Daily Advertiser* (Feb. 4, 1863):

The draping and grouping of the three figures representing Phidias['] statues proved that some unknown hand had been busy to good purpose, and the general effect of the tableau was very striking by reason of the skilful management of the lights.

The 'unknown hand' was Booth's own, and a vivid reminiscence from Clara Morris shows him using his visual sense to good effect in his capacity as director of the play. Miss Morris relates that, at Cleveland in November 1863:

I was one of the group of three statues in the first act. . . . We had been told to descend to the stage at night with our white robes hanging free and straight, that Mr. Booth himself might drape them as we stood upon the pedestal. It really is a charming picture, that of the statues in the first act. Against a backing of black velvet the three white figures, carefully posed, strongly lighted, stand out so marble-like, that when they slowly turn their faces and point to their chosen master, the effect is uncanny enough to chill the looker-on.

Well, with white wigs, white tights, and white robes, and half strangled with the powder we had inhaled in our efforts to make our lips stay white, we cautiously descended the stairs. We dared not talk, we dared not blink our eyes, for fear of disturbing the coat of powder; we were lifted to the pedestal and took our places as we expected to stand. Then Mr. Booth came, such a picture in his Greek garments as made even the men exclaim at him, and began to pose us.⁶⁵

65 *Life on the Stage*, p.100.

Miss Morris adds that Booth carried in his Greek 'shirt' a photograph of a group of statuary, and posed the actresses according to that (p. 102).

Booth's Raphael was fondly remembered in later years. Rear-Admiral G.W. Baird, who met Booth in New Orleans, thought him 'splendid' in the part,⁶⁶ while John T. Ford said that 'his Raphael in the "Marble Heart" was simply matchless. He was an ideal Raphael.'⁶⁷ According to a girl from a theatrical family, *The Marble Heart*, along with *Money*, was his best remembered play in Boston.⁶⁸

Count Pescara in *The Apostate* by Richard Lalor Shiel

The Apostate, of which John gave 45 performances, was very much a Booth play. First performed at Covent Garden in 1816, this verse tragedy was written for Eliza O'Neill as Florinda, while the part of Pescara was to be played by the young Junius Brutus Booth who, however, 'resigned the part after a few rehearsals'.⁶⁹ Later, though, he starred in it in America: 'thousands of the theatre goers of the present day have witnessed his personation', the *Chicago Times* recalled on December 8, 1862. John had seen E.L. Davenport play it in Philadelphia, and J.B. Roberts in Richmond; Edwin Booth played it, as did John from the beginning of his star career to the very end: it was also the last part he ever played.

Pescara, Governor of Granada under Philip II, is actually a smaller part than Hemeya, the apostate of the title, but an extremely showy one. He first enters late in Act I to learn that his promised bride Florinda, who hates him, is now to marry the Moor Hemeya. He gloatingly gives the news that henceforward no Moor will be allowed to wed a Christian unless he renounces his faith. In the second act he enters with Inquisitors and taunts Florinda with hints of his plans; he relates a dream of a personified Vengeance giving her to him as his bride. In the third act his plots become clear: he has Hemeya's

66 Baird to Burke McCarty, n.d., Barbee Papers.

67 [F.A. Burr], 'Booth's Bullet'.

68 Norcross, p. 72.

69 *The Apostate*, French's Standard Drama no. 57 (New York: Samuel French, [c. 1850]), p. iii.

foster-father Malec, leader of disaffected Moors, arrested by the Inquisition for trying to reclaim the newly-Christian Hemeya for Islam. Pescara enters for another short scene taunting Hemeya with his apostasy and with Malec's impending execution. The enraged Hemeya begins a sword-fight which Florinda interrupts.

In Act IV, as Pescara has foreseen, Hemeya and other Moors rescue Malec on the way to the stake; Pescara's ambush captures Hemeya, but lets Florinda escape with Malec, giving Pescara occasion for a 13-line speech of furious frustration. Later captured, she is promised Hemeya's freedom--if she will marry Pescara. She tells him she has vowed to die rather than be his wife. Foiled and furious, Pescara tells her she must witness Hemeya's death and makes her think she sees it; she faints as the curtain falls. In the final act, Florinda comes to release Hemeya straight from the altar where she has married Pescara; Pescara enters and calls his executioners to kill Hemeya. At that moment Malec's band of Moors is heard without, Pescara raises his dagger to kill Florinda, but Hemeya stabs him with it. In the play as written, Florinda then reveals that she has taken poison to fulfill her oath, and Hemeya kills himself, but as William Winter tells us, this was not the version usually acted:

There is no dramatic necessity . . . for sacrificing the lovers, at the end, and the practice of the stage has usually been to conclude this story of horrors with a happy close,--by which means the darkness of a terrific picture is much and gratefully relieved.⁷⁰

He might have added that this robs the play of its title to tragedy, and effectively turns it into melodrama.

Up to and including his engagement at Washington in April 1863, comment on Booth's Pescara is usually favourable or better. His first reviewer in the role (*Montgomery Daily Mail*, Oct. 30, 1860) did not think the character showed his talent to great advantage, but the *Spirit of the Times* (April 5, 1862) and the *Boston Post* (Jan. 24, 1863) both thought him quite 'at home' in the part, and the *Chicago Evening Journal* of January 23, 1862, went into detail:

⁷⁰ *Life and Art of Edwin Booth*, p. 236. The play was still being acted occasionally when Winter wrote, in 1893.

It was reserved for Pescara to bring out Mr. Booth's strong points. His thin, sinewy figure, his cat-like movements, his full, dark eye, his strongly marked features, and above all, his wonderful 'facial art,' were each and all embodied and impersonified [*sic*] in Pescara, the subtle and vengeful Spaniard. We never saw a character so fitted to the artist as was Pescara to Mr. Booth. Nobly did he realize it, as did his delighted audience, who called him twice before the curtain, amid thunders of applause.

Comparisons with John's father were inevitable. William Winter gives a vivid impression of Junius Brutus in the role:

[H]e was a terrible presence. He seemed the incarnation of smooth, specious, hellish rapacity. His exultant malice seemed to buoy him above the ground. He floated rather than walked. His glance was deadly. His clear, high, cutting, measured tone was the exasperating note of hideous cruelty. He was acting a fiend then, and making the monster not only possible but actual.⁷¹

John's Montgomery reviewer, despite his reservations, thought that 'still his performance last night stamp[s] him as a "chip of the old block"'. Few would have gone so far as the spiritualists of Albany, who 'could only account for the similarity by the theory that the spirit of his father must have been hovering around to inspire him with his energy, conception and soul';⁷² but the *Boston Saturday Evening Gazette* (Jan. 24, 1863) found him 'at times remarkably like his father.' The *Daily Missouri Democrat* of January 11, 1862 also noted the similarity, and for the *National Intelligencer* (April 30, 1863), the performance

reminded us most vividly of his father's famous impersonation. . . . Booth, the father, used always to thrill the house as Pescara; many single passages in the play were uttered by him with volcanic power. The son seems to us full of his father's genuine inspiration, and he shows it not merely by voice and tone, but in his personal action, his face especially.

The *Providence Daily Post* (Oct. 23, 1861), giving Booth his first detailed review, considered him entirely in relation to his father--and pronounced that he had passed the test:

We were satisfied that the genius of Booth the senior has descended in no small measure to the son. There was that same subdued tone where hatred was concealed, that same terrible fire when hatred burst out. It was not Booth on the stage, but Pescara in Granada. It did not seem like acting, but it was, for the time being, the reality. . . . The recital of the fearful dream--that vision of vengeance--and the utterance of those words--"There's oft a prophecy in dreams["]; the fierce declaration of love by a heart full of most

71 *Vagrant Memories* (New York: Doran, 1915), p. 160.

72 Phelps, p. 325.

vindictive hatred; the terrible triumph of vengeance within the walls of the inquisition, and its headlong downfall as soon as it had triumphed; were but almost repetitions of the father in the son.

On Booth's first visit to Boston, the *Post* (May 26, 1862) said that his Pescara was, 'if possible, more intense in its fury of revengeful love, than even his father's famous impersonation.' It might seem to be courting danger to be more intense than the intense Junius Brutus, as we shall perhaps see later. The *Post's* review of his next engagement (Jan. 24, 1863), like the Providence newspaper, equated brilliance in the role with likeness to the elder Booth:

It is in this character more than in anything else that John Booth reminds us of his father. The nervous irritability of the Spanish Governor, his fierce hatred of 'Hemeyer,' [*sic*] and his wildly passionate desire for 'Florinda,' are each illustrated with fiery earnestness which never amounts to either exaggeration or rant. The extraordinary resemblance presented in the tones of the voice, the keen glances of that brilliant eye, the frequent pulling on the gauntletts [*sic*], the nervous inspection of the contra[c]ted or grouped finger ends⁷³ and his bustling movements around the stage, refresh our remembrance of one who when living knew no equal in this part.

But John's performance was also 'characterized by marked originality at times, and bears the stamp of merit which genius alone, and imitation never, could give it.' The *Post* noted, as had the *Providence Post*, that Booth sank himself in the part: 'we often found ourselves forgetting the actor in the fascinating though repulsive counterfeit before us.'

Booth was compared to both father and brother by the *Buffalo Daily Courier* (Oct. 29, 1861), in terms which make clear both his originality and the dangers the performance was skirting; John's acting had

much of the strange power and effect of *the* Booth, and *the* living Booth, and all of the great passional [*sic*] command of feature and gesture, the quiet intense by-play of eye and nerve, yet with more of grotesqueness of person and style than any of the family that we have ever seen. We do the present star no discredit in ranking him much below his brother, and we do not flatter him when we say he has extraordinary physiognomical power, almost electric feeling and weird and startling elocutionary effects.

Only a few months later the *New York Clipper* (May 31, 1862) flatly stated that as Pescara, 'he is greatly superior to his brother'.

⁷³ This mannerism was noted also in *Richard III* by the *New York Tribune*, Mar. 21, 1862, where it was said to be shared by Edwin: see Chapter 9.

Several papers thought it his greatest character,⁷⁴ and the *Chicago Tribune* (Jan. 24, 1862) thought it at least as good as his Richard. The *Boston Post* (Jan. 24, 1863) preferred it to Richard on the ground that 'where the requirements are not so great the success is more complete.' The *Buffalo Morning Express* (Oct. 29, 1861), less enthusiastic, found potential in the performance; it 'showed in something more than gleams the fierce fire of tragedy that impregnates his blood. It was not such a performance as he will be capable of in a few years; but it was splendid for so immature an actor.' Much the same verdict was reached by Edwin Booth and his wife Mary, when they saw John during his Boston engagement in early 1863. Edwin wrote to his friend Richard Henry Stoddard:

I saw last night--for the first time--my brother act; he played *Pescara*--a bloody villain of the deepest red, you know, an *admiral* of the red, as 'twas, and he presented him--not underdone, but rare enough for the most fastidious 'beef-eater'; Jno. Bull himself Esquire never looked more savagely at us poor 'mudsills' than did J. Wilkes, himself, Esquire, settle the accounts of last evening. Yet I am happy to state that he is full of the true grit--he has stuff enough in him to make good suits for a dozen such player-folk as we are cursed with; and when time and study round his rough edges he'll bid them all 'stand apart' like 'a bully boy, with a glass eye'; I am delighted with him & feel the name of Booth to be more of a hydra than snakes and things ever was.⁷⁵

And Mary wrote more briefly to Emma Cushman (Jan. 22, 1863), 'We were very much pleased with him--but he has a great deal to learn & unlearn'.⁷⁶ In later years, the actor J.L. Saphore told the story that when 'Edwin first saw him in the part of Pescara . . . after the performance Ned sent John a note saying: "Dear John--Go up to the house and get my Pescara clothes. I shall never again attempt to play the part," and he kept his word.'⁷⁷ Though this cannot be the literal truth, Edwin about this period was indeed shedding such roles from his repertoire and may have seen that John was more suited to them than he was.

⁷⁴ *Chicago Evening Journal*, June 11, 1862; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, Nov. 19, 1862; *Boston Post*, Jan. 24, 1863; and *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Jan. 26, 1863.

⁷⁵ Quoted in Skinner, *Last Tragedian*, p. 71.

⁷⁶ *Letters and Notebooks*, p. 101.

⁷⁷ Clipping, 'Portrait of J. Wilkes Booth'.

It was to be expected that Booth's usual faults would be apparent in this full-blooded role: for the New York *Sunday Dispatch* (Mar. 30, 1862), 'he showed the same brilliancies and excellencies and the same faults as in Richard', though 'the former were prominent and the latter exceptional'. As to individual scenes, we have noted the *Providence Post's* praise of the dream speeches from Act II; the Baltimore *Sun* (Feb. 22, 1862) reported that '[t]he passionate interview between Pescara and Florinda, with which the fourth act closes, was sustained with such power and such influence upon the audience' that Booth and Mrs. Farren had to take an act call. Perhaps the most vivid description of the performance from an admiring critic was in the *Spirit of the Times* (April 5, 1862), whose writer had no reservations about this 'melo-dramatic effort':

There is a terrible earnestness in his eye, a waking up of every nerve and fibre in his frame, a Richardizing of himself, that gives immense effect in this part. He seems to revel in rascality, to enjoy the dev[i]lish tricks he puts upon his victims, to glory like another Lucifer in the misery he has caused. His Mephistophilan [*sic*] sneer, his demoniac glare, and pity-murdering laugh, fairly curdle the blood, and haunt one like the spectres of a dream.

That Philadelphia's *North American Gazette* panned the performance says more about theatrical politics than about Booth's abilities (see Chapter 7). Having, on March 14, 1863, reported that Booth had 'made a great impression in this part', the paper turned about on the 16th: 'We could hardly conceive of a worse piece of acting. It was ranting, uproarious, ridiculous, full of monkey shines of the most outlandish description'.⁷⁸ This mauling occurred between favourable reviews in Boston and Washington, the *Boston Post* (quoted above) having specifically said that Booth did not rant.

However, the *Chicago Times* was less impressed, and its opinion predictably worsened between December 1862 and the following May. 'The plot is full of murderous horrors,' said the critic, introducing his December 8 review. 'So startling are its events that it has almost lost its place upon the stage'. This was more wishful thinking than

⁷⁸ Although this piece was more polemic than review, it may be worth noting that Philadelphia may have preferred a very quiet style: see Chapter 3 for the description of the usually-admired Mrs. Farren as 'Western' and exaggerated.

strictly true. It is clear in this first review that the critic's opprobrium is directed more at McVicker's company and the play itself than at Booth:

In the hands of its delineators, last evening, [the play] was for the most part, a severe dose of Rant. A succession of uproarious dialogues, shouted in thunderous tones at the audience, at the ceiling, at the scenery, and at everything else in view . . . put the audience into nervous tantrums.

Though he went on to criticize other individuals before mentioning Booth, the *Chicago Evening Journal* of the same date quoted him as having 'denounce[d] Mr. Booth's inimitable Pescara . . . as "a severe dose of rant"'. The *Times* critic had at least faint praise for Booth, who was 'sufficiently athletic and active to suit the most ardent admirer of the slam bang style.' Occasionally, he said, Booth 'tempered down to a concentrated and really thrilling exhibition of passion'; and in the last scene of Act IV, 'he was quite effective; throwing aside, as he did, the uproarious method, and rather acting than speaking his passion.' The play's style was the problem:

The blood and thunder drama is too far gone to gain a place in the affections of people of intelligence and taste, and even Mr. Booth's Pescara cannot redeem it. He makes it a character of horrors, and if we had but that character, it would be endurable, but there are so many varieties of horrors connected with the play which the author never intended to perpetrate, that it seals its own condemnation.

When Booth returned the next year, the critic's memory had soured. On the day of performance (May 26, 1863), he promised that 'Mr. Booth's presentation' would be 'a fierce and uncompromising specimen of stage rant'. The next day, he confirmed his own prophecy, descending, unusually for him, into personal attack: while Booth's 'ambition and self-confidence may equal any emergency, he unfortunately fails in some of the great requisites of success.' One of these was restraint:

He fails to appreciate the essential fact that intensity of emotion is not in any sense expressed by fuming rant, and that passion is displayed with the least effect when the actor loses control of himself. It is simply absurd to call that acting which produces an effect contrary to what is intended, and yet the raging scenes of the fourth act bathed the audience in smiles.

These 'raging scenes' may have included the very passage the critic had praised six months earlier: the scene with Florinda. This reaction was partly the fault of the play, whose 'concentrated horrors . . . were simply a burlesque upon tragedy'; but the smiles

were provoked not only by its 'absurdities', but by their being 'over-acted'. Where he had found 'horrors', the critic now found only staginess:

To delineate consuming passion by a natural, intense, and concentrated effort which carries with it a thrill of sympathy, is one thing, and to interpret the same sentiment by raging like a wild beast, splitting the air with hoarse outcry, and fairly fuming into a state of exhaustion, is another. Yet the latter was the very letter of Mr. Booth's personation. It was positively agonizing at intervals, always intensely over-tragic, and in no sense natural or unaffected. It was, in a word, the delineation of a most approved stage villain, conceived in stereotyped mould, and clothed in every exaggerated form which the licenses of the stage admit of.

Few actors, he thought, could 'sufficiently concentrate their action' to avoid 'exaggeration' in this part, and Booth was not one of them, 'for instead of concentrating his energies, he loosens every frantic impulse', and consequently his production was 'only a farce in serious disguise.'

Given this critic's preference for genteel, repressed emotions, his opinion could perhaps be dismissed, were it not echoed in many of Booth's reviews from then on. The *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* of July 9, 1863, liked what it saw of the play, and thought the Act IV scene 'very effective'; but the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, which on January 26, 1863 had thought his *Pescara* at the Museum 'rich in indications of original talent', in October found the performance at the Howard Athenaeum 'less to our liking than we had expected' (Oct. 9). The critic had thought Booth was improving:

But last night we found in his *Pescara* the same great blemishes which so annoyed those who wished wholly to admire him when he made his debut in Boston. . . . Inarticulate noises, violent but meaning [*sic*] gestures, elocution destroyed by unnecessary turbulence, and all the hundred and one things which go to make up the sum of what is termed 'rant,'--these are all 'from the purpose of playing' and unworthy of any man who is so gifted with genius as is Mr. Wilkes Booth.

These are recognizably the same faults which upset the *Chicago Times* critic; perhaps they were another way of regarding the 'weird and startling elocutionary effects' which the *Buffalo Courier* had liked in 1861. Playing the popular, melodrama house in Boston, Booth may have played more broadly than for the Museum. However, the *Advertiser* thought the performance had some value, when Booth did not overstep the knife-edge into bathos:

Some passages of his *Pescara* were very fine, and the whole impersonation was instinct with that fire which burns so splendidly in him, and the greater scenes sometimes were kept within that limit of intensity which ensures the continuance of the magnetic bond wherewith the actor should hold his audience to him, and which if overstrained but a little breaks and sets the spell-bound free to gape or laugh

It is interesting that this critic, too, should mention laughter, though he does not tell us if the Boston audience succumbed to it. After crowded and enthusiastic houses for two performances at Louisville, according to the *Journal* (Jan. 22, 1864) and *Democrat* (Jan. 24), Booth's performance at Nashville was the occasion for the *Dispatch* (Feb. 3) to sum up his acting thus:

It may be that we are so firmly wedded to that quiet school, which recognizes the right of an actor to speak and walk and act naturally, and which forbids the tearing of a passion to tatters, as to suppose nothing good can come from any other school; but if so, we cannot help it, and therefore cannot comm[e]nd Mr. Booth as a finished *artiste*; he is too violent by half.

Unlike the Chicago and Boston critics, this one recognized that there *was* another school and thus other possible opinions on the performance.

After this date, contemporary opinions were divided. The *Cincinnati Commercial* (Feb. 16, 1864) found the performance 'striking and powerful', and two of the New Orleans papers praised Booth's truthfulness and absorption in his character. The *Daily True Delta's* critic (Mar. 17, 1864) saw only the first two acts, thus missing the biggest temptations to over-acting, and thought that '[t]he subtle hate and malignity of Pescara were depicted with a fidelity and intensity that stamp Mr. Booth as a son worthy of [his] sire'. Booth gave the dream speeches in Act II, 'one of those test scenes which distinguish the artist from the mimic', with 'great power and excellent judgment'. The *New Orleans Times* (Mar. 17) defined Booth's acting as intuitive:

Not simply to wear a mask, but to throb with those pulses of thought, of which mere words are a dead expression, is obviously the reverent aim of Mr. Booth, and the power and veracity of his *Pescara* last night clearly indicated it.

The *Daily Picayune* (Mar. 18), on the contrary, could see only externals in Booth's portrayal:

In depicting Pescara's malignity and his subtle and fierce hate of Hemeya, Mr. Booth would have been successful, if his manner had been less

extravagant. Throughout his performance, he exhibited an unpleasing mannerism, and his action was an exaggerated imitation of that of his father in the same character.

It is doubtful whether Booth could have remembered his father's performance well enough to copy it even if he had wanted to; the *Picayune* seems to be contradicting the *Delta's* judgement that Booth was not merely a mimic. In 'occasional scenes', the critic conceded, 'he was impressive, as in that in which he relates his dream to Florinda', but the whole 'did not come up to public expectation'. The *Boston Courier* in his next, and last, engagement was more complimentary: in this part 'more than in anything else', Booth reminded its critic (May 5, 1864) 'of his lamented father.'

Two of the three accounts of his final performance, at Ford's on March 18, 1865, date from after the assassination, and may be coloured by the received opinions that Booth had been either an inferior actor or a madman. Colonel A.K. McClure was 'greatly disappointed' to see a Booth 'exhibit so little of histrionic ability'. To him, Booth 'seemed to be wildly tragic whenever opportunity offered,' (agreeing with the *Chicago Times's* description of him as 'always intensely over-tragic'), while he 'possessed none of the inspiring and impressive attributes of his father or of his brother, Edwin.'⁷⁹ A schoolgirl, Miss Porterfield, noted only that Booth 'was applauded more than any one else in the play', with the audience 'unusually demonstrative, stamping the floor [and] cheering'. Booth, however, would not come out for a curtain call, perhaps feeling that it was McCullough's evening.⁸⁰ Louis J. Weichmann was much more impressed. There is no such scene in the play as the one he mentions, in which 'a female was dragged on the stage by Pescara and subjected to torture on the wheel', though it is clear from his quotation that he means the end of Act IV, when Pescara makes Florinda 'see' Hemeya's torture. The very fact that such a mistake could be made, however, may testify to the savagery of the portrayal:

⁷⁹ Col. A.K. McClure, 'Sad and Pathetic Echoes of the Lincoln Assassination', *Philadelphia Record*, Dec. 29, 1901.

⁸⁰ Jesse W. Weik, 'A New Story of Lincoln's Assassination', *Century Magazine* 85 (1913), p. 561.

Never in my life did I witness a man play with so much intensity and passion as did Booth on that occasion. The hideous, malevolent expression of his distorted countenance, the fierce glare and ugly roll of his eyes, which seemed ready to burst from their sockets as he seized his victim by the hair and, placing her on the wheel, exclaimed, 'Now behold Pescara's masterpiece!' are yet present with me. I cannot use language forcible enough to describe Booth's actions on that night.⁸¹

This is clearly a description of a 'dangerous' performance which might slip into meaningless bombast when Booth was not on top form, or might seem to be empty ranting to an audience member unsympathetic to its style. Perhaps Booth grew tired of the role and began to play it carelessly, or perhaps, as with the *Richard III* fight, he was playing to the gallery more than the critics liked. It provides an interesting contrast to other roles, criticism of which usually suggests a gradual improvement and refinement: the performance seems to have stayed much the same throughout Booth's career, as if he had decided on a style that he felt was appropriate to it and had not modified his opinion.

Large and enthusiastic audiences for *The Apostate* are frequently mentioned; three Chicago papers asked for a repetition of the play after John's first performance there;⁸² and he was often called before the curtain at the end of Act IV--even in Boston on the occasion when the *Advertiser* complained of rant (Oct. 9, 1863). Only the *Chicago Times* (Dec. 17, 1862) alleged declining popularity: 'The house was the smallest of the past two weeks' for the second performance of the play during that engagement, and in May the following year it claimed that the audience had 'grow[n] sarcastic in their eulogies' (May 26, 1863).

Despite a possible falling-off during his career, John's Pescara was remembered by John T. Ford as 'very fine', and by J.L. Saphore as his best part (see below). The fact that so much comment exists, even though it was only his fourth most popular role (after Richard, Raphael, and Charles de Moor), testifies to the strong, though not always favourable, impression it made.

81 *A True History of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln and of the Conspiracy of 1865*, ed. Floyd E. Risvold (New York: Knopf, 1975), p. 119. Weichmann's memory may also be coloured by his later knowledge that on the previous day, Booth and the other conspirators had failed in an attempt to kidnap Lincoln.

82 *Chicago Evening Journal*, Jan. 24, 1862.

'What did I think of J. Wilkes Booth as an actor?', J.L. Saphore was asked.

His best part was, in my opinion, Pescara. In that he was simply incomparable. His Raphael in 'The Marble Heart' was the best, by far, that I ever saw, and I have seen all the great ones. I think his Hamlet was perhaps, the weakest part in his repertoire, but his Richard III, Macbeth, Othello, Iago, Shylock--and mind you, he was only a boy--were distinct masterpieces.

'I think he was the greatest of them all,' said the old actor, looking back forty-odd years, 'because he could play anything well.'

CONCLUSION

The question is often asked: Which of the younger Booths was the better actor, Edwin or John? 'The palm has been awarded,' says a satirical writer, 'with great unanimity to John Wilkes--by those who never saw either.'¹

The butt of this joke is a kind of paradoxical nostalgia that was abroad in the last years of the nineteenth century. Why had it developed? The answer leads us deep into the divisions in American culture which characterized the second half of the century.

Seen in retrospect, the triumph of Edwin Booth and the style he represented was a foregone conclusion:

He arrived [in the East] at an opportune moment. Forrest was beginning to lose his grasp of the scepter which he had held so long. . . . his style was derided by a new generation of th[eater]goers. . . . and a place was already made for a man who had original and creative power.²

If this were true, it would mean that John spent his career flogging a dead (or dying) horse: as Kimmel puts it, 'he was following in the trend [*sic*] of Forrest, and, like him, . . . had no conception of Edwin's determination to moderate the old bombastic style of acting' (p. 170). As we have seen, though, such hindsight is a vast oversimplification. Forrest still seemed (in Philadelphia at least) to be an unassailable institution: otherwise, the *Sunday Dispatch* critic would hardly have gone to such trouble to dissect him. In this period of transition, dramatic criticism reflected both sides of a growing polarization of opinion, as did audiences.

This incipient polarization gave newspapers a ready-made weapon with which to vilify John Wilkes Booth after the assassination: often contradicting their own earlier drama criticism, they 'edited out' any evidence of refinement, studiousness or subtlety from his acting and portrayed him as a crude ranter. Thus the *New York Tribune* (April 17, 1865) could label his style as 'characterized by extreme impetuosity, violence and extravagance', and the *New York Dispatch* (April 16) say that he "'Split the ears of

¹ 'Shakespeare in Albany: A paper read at the Shakespeare night of the Albany Press Club, Jan. 10, 1891', *New York Dramatic Mirror*, n.d., transcription in Kimmel Collection.

² *Baltimore American*, June 7, 1893.

groundlings [*sic*]". Boston was particularly keen to recant: the *Saturday Evening Express* (April 15) claimed he was 'not highly rated as an actor', and the once-enthusiastic *Advertiser* (April 17) that 'he was given to rant and mouthing, and showed in his acting the coarseness of his nature.' That the last-named paper contrasted him with Edwin Booth, and the first relegated him to popularity in 'Southern and Western cities' shows the drift of their imputations; and the later victory of the genteel style endorsed their attempt to consign the younger brother to the dustbin of outworn histrionic modes.³

Enough should have been said in the preceding chapters, however, to show that the critical response, favourable and unfavourable, to the two brothers in the late 1850s and early 60s was remarkably similar: the unevenness, the hurrying through scenes to arrive at 'points', the occasional ranting, the display of too much energy and too many gestures, even some of the same mannerisms, were all noted by critics in both actors. Edwin in this period was still much influenced by his father: the *Clipper* portrait (Aug. 31, 1861) urged him to 'ignore traditions, and take nature for his model'. In New York in 1857, he seemed 'crude, unpolished, but still startling and original', much as John did later; Mrs. Cowell's comment in 1860, 'Sometimes a little tendency to rant distressed one, but the earnestness of his acting made amends for that fault', could have been written about the younger brother.⁴ Neither, at this period, was a finished actor. The impatience at John's slow improvement which the *Boston Advertiser* felt is paralleled even more strongly by the *Spirit of the Times*'s chastisement of Edwin on April 27, 1861: too much praise had spoiled

an actor who had that within him to have made *the* tragedian of the age. Mr. Booth has not improved a whit since we saw him in the beginning of the year, and we are sorry to hear that he entirely ignores study of any kind, while he is decidedly averse to new parts.

As with many of John's reviews, the critic then had to admit that houses were good.

Both brothers, as noted in Chapter 8, had a female following, but the character of

³ Similarly, the *Buffalo Courier* said that his school was 'bad', and the *New York Leader* that he should have acted at the Bowery: see Chapters 6 and 7.

⁴ Oggel, 'EB and America's Concept of Shakespearean Tragedy', pp. 115-16; Cowell, p. 226.

Edwin's fans shows the direction in which his appeal was developing. Like Bunthorne's lovesick maidens, they tended to come from the upper echelons:

The 'young American tragedian' has departed, and youthful Japonicadom mourns. We met *Daisy* this morning as she was on her way to the fashionable seminary where she is supposed to drink of the fount of knowledge at \$200 per annum, and her evident depression of mind was perfectly heart-rending. Daisy thinks Booth is *perfectly splendid* and looks upon your unfortunate [columnist] as but one remove from a barbarian because he 'can't see it.'⁵

With female attendance at the theatre increasing through the second half of the century and being particularly important in the bourgeois playhouses,⁶ Edwin's lady following was an important part of his success. As early as 1865, he was 'Edwin Booth . . . whom the ladies call the beau ideal of the melancholy Dane'; and it was a 'lady correspondent' who wedded his personal appeal to the sacralization of culture to describe him as 'the high priest of Art, through whose slender hands passed all the pure incense to Shakespeare, that God of Art.'⁷ As Bruce McConachie says, 'No other actor was as sanctified by the American bourgeoisie in the 1860s as Edwin Booth.'⁸

During John's career, McConachie notes, 'American business-class critics were constructing [Edwin] Booth as the bourgeois answer to the plebeian but still mighty Forrest'.⁹ Edwin was lucky all his life in his media coverage. On his arrival in the East, articles such as 'A Night with the Booths' by his friend Adam Badeau (*New York Sunday Times*, Aug. 7, 1858) created his mystique as the heir of the Great Booth: 'So I thought of the long career of triumphs the father had gone through, and wondered whether fate had in store for the youth at my side a corresponding history, as she had already showered on him corresponding gifts.' Later, a similar function was performed by William Winter, up to the 1880s 'America's most influential critic', who held that the vocation of the acting profession 'was "to instill, to protect, and to maintain purity, sweetness, and refinement in

⁵ *Boston Saturday Evening Express*, Sept. 29, 1860.

⁶ Benjamin McArthur, *Actors and American Culture, 1880-1920* (Philadelphia: Temple U. Press, 1984), pp. 90-91; McConachie, pp. 200, 204.

⁷ Townsend, *Life, Crime, and Capture*, p. 20; *Evening Bulletin* (San Francisco), May 20, 1865, 'from our New York lady correspondent'.

⁸ McConachie, p. 239.

⁹ *Ibid.*

our feelings, our manners, our language, and our national character.'" Winter's 'loyalty' to actors who were also his friends, including Edwin Booth, 'led him to boost their careers at the expense of his critical objectivity.'¹⁰

Perhaps this press favouritism, or "'harping symphony" of indulgent adulation' as 'Nym Crinkle' had it,¹¹ created a backlash; certainly, in the later years of the century, a persistent minority put on record its disenchantment with Edwin Booth, and with the genteel style and the elaborate, 'authentic' productions that were associated with him. The Indianapolis *Sentinel* in 1875 found Barry Sullivan's Hamlet 'a piece of intense nervous humanity' compared with Booth's 'stage model in alabaster'; likewise McCullough's Hamlet to the St. Louis *Republican* was 'a flesh and blood man, and not a philosophical abstraction'. Reviewing Asia Booth Clarke's *Elder and the Younger Booth*, one paper stated that no-one could think Edwin an imitator of his father: 'The elder Booth was . . . a natural actor of passion. Booth the younger . . . is essentially a conventional, and not a natural actor. There is a vast difference between real and natural acting and the conventional tricks of art that are accepted in its stead.' Henry Pitt Phelps gave him credit for 'inherited talent, if not genius', for having mastered 'all the minutiae of the stage';

His readings are all that can be desired; his gestures and poses are grace itself; in all his *roles* he is admirable, and yet, who that sees him ever forgets that he is acting . . . ? The headlong impetuosity with which the elder Booth swept to his triumphs, carrying audience and all before him, is lacking.¹²

Charles Krone, protesting that in the old stock days, 'Men and women were of more importance . . . than dress or decoration', was making the same point as 'Nym Crinkle' when he complained that Augustin Daly's productions were valued 'because the cut of his Greek Chiton is correct'.¹³ In *Romeo and Juliet* at Booth's Theatre in 1869, 'the backs of the chairs were embossed and the table linen embroidered with the monograms of the

10 McArthur, pp. 146-47.

11 'Nym Crinkle' [Andrew C. Wheeler], 'Edwin Booth', *The World* (New York), June 9, 1893.

12 Sillard, 2:169; Shattuck, *Shakespeare on the American Stage*, p. 128; clipping, n.d., in Townsend Papers; Phelps, p. 400.

13 Krone, 2:35; Moses and Brown, pp. 136-37.

Montague and Capulet families'.¹⁴ To 'Nym Crinkle', Edwin Booth's most unenchanted critic, this sort of concentration on inessentials was a sign of the decadence of the age. The 'new scale of values which came into vogue' with the first popularity of Booth's Hamlet in the 1860s, had a 'bias . . . to propriety, not to profundity.' Forrest's 'massive and crude splendor' was rejected because '[v]iolence of demonstration was beginning to be as objectionable in the actor as it was in the gentleman. The demands of society were for suppression rather than expression.' In turning Hamlet into 'a nineteenth-century gentleman', Booth 'met and expressed a new condition of public taste.'¹⁵ 'Crinkle' was exceptional among critics, but he was not the only one to articulate a sense of loss in an age when 'the man who acts best . . . is the one who appears to act least'.¹⁶ Edwin Booth's mature style was described as one 'in which exquisite touches of art could supply the lack of vehement gesture or rhetorical fireworks.' Even among Edwin's friends, some missed the fireworks: Joseph Jefferson 'often warned him against refining away his power', and Adam Badeau regretted the loss of 'the awful bursts of passion of his younger days'.¹⁷ Perhaps Walt Whitman should have the last word on this subject:

I always found that I respected [Edwin] Booth: he had the quality of good wine--it is clean, it is uplifting--but Edwin was never supreme--had for me no super-mundane moments--never unreservedly carried me away. . . . he always left me about as you see me now--never made me forget everything else and follow him, as the greatest fellows, when they let themselves go, always do. Perhaps that was the one defect of Booth--that he did not let himself go.

The elder Booth was Whitman's hero, and neither son could touch him, but he 'saw [John] several times: he was a queer fellow: had strange ways: it would take some effort to get used, adjusted, to him: but now and then he would have flashes, passages, I thought, of real genius.'¹⁸

14 Shattuck, *Hamlet of EB*, P. 58.

15 'Edwin Booth'.

16 Bank, 'A Reconsideration', p. 64, quoting *New York Dramatic Mirror* editorial, Jan. 17, 1880.

17 Philadelphia *Press*, June 7, 1893; 'EB on and off the Stage', p. 258.

18 *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, 1:456, 4:485.

It was perhaps this lingering regret for the grand style that led Winter, the apostle of purity, sweetness and refinement, to praise John McCullough in 1874 by attacking Forrest yet again: "'He does not spend half-an-hour in saying the word 'boy,' so that his auditors may spend another half-an-hour in applauding him for saying it. He does not use his fist as a trip-hammer and his chest as an anvil. And he neither snorts nor howls.'"¹⁹ Forrest had been dead for two years, but his style wouldn't lie down: audiences still had to be told what they ought to prefer. In 1904, Robert B. Mantell, '[a] robust, muscular figure with a powerful voice,' opened in New York with the Cibber *Richard III* in 'a modified version of the heroic Edwin Forrest-John McCullough acting style'; he was met with 'surprising enthusiasm.' He toured America for thirty years with an old-fashioned tragic repertoire.²⁰ The point-making style was still pleasing audiences in the English regions at the turn of the twentieth century, as an anecdote told by the actor Baliol Holloway makes clear. As a new leading man in Northampton, he was given a part which the manager told him was worth forty-two rounds of applause. After the performance,

the manager appeared in his dressing room. 'Not bad 'olloway, not bad. Thirty-six out of the forty-two. But 'olloway, "'eart as black as Villiers"-- what 'appened to it?'

'I don't know, sir,' said Ba. 'I shouted it as loudly as I could.'

'SHOUTED IT? It's yer right arm. YOU DROPPED IT! . . . Look, I'll give it to you again: "I may be only a trooper, Kendrick, but I would rather be a trooper--*ten times rather*--(the manager here raised his arm ominously and pointed) than an ensign with an 'eart as black as Villiers." Hold it; keep yer arm up there till they do applaud.'²¹

This is recognizably the same technique which was condescendingly noted by the editor of *Harper's Magazine* at Niblo's Garden in 1863: 'And when, upon the temptation to escape, Pythias slapped his breast, and, pushing open the prison-door with what may be termed "a theatrical air," roared out, "Never, never!--death before dishonor!" the audience broke out into a storm of applause.'²²

19 Shattuck, *Shakespeare on the American Stage*, p. 126, from *New York Tribune*.

20 Morrison, pp. 21-22.

21 Donald Sinden, *A Touch of the Memoirs* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1982), p. 70.

22 Shattuck, *Shakespeare on the American Stage*, p. 87.

By the time of Edwin's death in 1893, the old style had for so long been ignored by fashionable criticism that its adherents seemed much of a muchness: explaining the old ways, the *Baltimore American* (June 8) could say that 'ranting and violence of speech and intensity of passions evinced in physical contortion and vocal volume' constituted the elder Booth's style, thus making him sound identical to Forrest, 'with whom muscle and roar and strident fierceness indicated intensest power and most forcible expression of hate and villainy.' If these two very different actors were seen as having had the same style, John Wilkes Booth was seen as exaggerating that style: 'the violent contortions and ranting of J. Wilkes Booth . . . led admirers of the old school to predict that the mantle of the elder Junius Booth had fallen upon his younger son.' In attempting to analyze John's acting style, comparisons with all three of these actors, Junius Brutus Booth, Edwin Booth, and Edwin Forrest, will be informative.

Few direct comparisons with Forrest are available. The *Boston Saturday Evening Express* (May 24, 1862) said tentatively, 'We may be very singular, and exhibit questionable judgment, but we had rather see Mr Booth than Mr Forrest [as Claude Melnotte]. Taste and judgment, we are aware, differ; but even great actors sometimes over-shoot the mark', which seems to imply that for this critic Forrest over-acted, while Booth did not. Claude was a role 'admirably suited to [Booth's] talent and personal qualities', among which were youth and good looks, which Forrest no longer possessed. Physical qualifications were glanced at again in the *Boston Advertiser's* denial that 'only a big man can be tragic', and the *Indianapolis Journal's* contention that Booth was too slight for some of his roles.²³ Both the *Advertiser*, above, and a piece on *Richard III* in New York mention Forrest's voice: for the Boston paper, 'Mr. Forrest atones for many faults by his studied grace of speech', and for an audience member, Booth's voice in the wooing scene 'equaled in its grand melody that of Forrest, and made, as in Forrest's case, the scene seem natural.'²⁴ Booth's 'inarticulate noises', mentioned by several critics as well

23 May 19 and Nov. 29, 1862 respectively; see Chapters 6 and 10.

24 Clipping, 'Memories of the Metropolis'.

as the *Boston Advertiser* (Oct. 9, 1863), may even suggest a less feral version of 'the snorts and grunts, the brays and belches, the gaspings and gurglings' which Winter disliked in Forrest.²⁵ Winter stressed Forrest's coarseness, but as we have seen, Booth was censured in Philadelphia and Washington for being *less* courtly, genial, elegant and witty than Forrest as Richard III. The imperviousness to irony which enabled Forrest to read Richard's first soliloquy as joyful was part of a major flaw in his interpretation of his texts, noticed by John Forster in London in 1837 and by the *Sunday Dispatch* critic in Philadelphia in 1863. Forster called Forrest Shakespeare's 'merciless translator into prose', the *Dispatch* critic '[a]n intellect that grasps realities only'. He would instruct Lady Macbeth to bring forth men-children only 'just as if he were telling her ladyship to go to bed, or to prepare his posset', said Forster, and the Philadelphia critic complained that he read the speech about the killing of Duncan's grooms 'exactly as if it were literally true.'²⁶ With so many documented references to Booth's careful reading and understanding of his text, it seems most unlikely that he could have been guilty of such misjudgements; nor was his point-making ever noted for being as inappropriate as Forrest's 'roar[ing] out exultingly', 'I am Thane of Cawdor' in mid-soliloquy, while 'thumping himself on the chest with his truncheon.' Forrest's points did not arise from a consistent characterization but seemed to come from nowhere,²⁷ whereas Booth's carefully built characters were often commended by his critics. Booth's admiration for Forrest may have influenced his style somewhat, but he was probably aware that with his shorter, slighter form he could not reproduce the older actor's effects; the fact that he considered McCullough 'the only one worthy of wearing the old Roman's sandals'²⁸ would seem to indicate that he knew he could not fill them himself.

Many comparisons of John with Junius Brutus Booth have been detailed in previous chapters. A school friend remembered that John had 'an admiration for his

²⁵ Moses and Brown, p. 85.

²⁶ Shattuck, *Shakespeare on the American Stage*, 74; Philadelphia *Sunday Dispatch*, March 15, 1863.

²⁷ Shattuck, *Shakespeare on the American Stage*, pp. 76-77.

²⁸ Clarke, *Unlocked Book*, p. 109n.

father and his abilities that amounted almost to idolatry',²⁹ though we do not know how much of his stage work John had seen. After his debut, John told his sister that he 'could never hope to be as great as father' and that he did not want to rival Edwin either,³⁰ but in criticisms and memoirs all three Booths are frequently compared, and the almost invariable conclusion was that John was more like his father than Edwin was. The *Boston Post* (May 15, 1862) based this similarity on the physical build of the actors and their intensity, the prime component of great acting:

[John] is taller and more closely knit in muscle and frame than his brother; with shoulders square, and the broad chest more like his father's; his whole movement speaks of energy and animation, rather than grace and melody. . . . [I]ntensity the Old Booth had to the extent of frenzy [*sic*], and he has given it to his son, John Wilkes, in far greater measure than to Edwin.

Most also said, with the actor George L. Stout, that John 'could never have played "Hamlet" as Edwin did--he was not so refined in style as his brother, but he had all the old man's magnetism and fire, and in such roles as "King Lear," "Richard" and "Shylock" Edwin could not touch him.'³¹ Stout and Jean Hosmer, quoted in Chapter 5, both considered John a greater actor than Edwin. Occasionally, John's likeness to the elder Booth is connected to the latter's madness, in tune with the accepted theory about the motivation of the assassination: Charles Walcott felt that John's 'talent was just over the line that divides genius from insanity'. Edwin himself once told Edward Alfriend, 'John Wilkes had the genius of my father, and was far more gifted than I.'³²

We have seen, above, that Edwin and John received very similar reviews; apart from Edwin's greater refinement and better elocution, the differences between them are often in John's favour. Though both were versatile, John's range included lovers and comic roles, in which Edwin only sporadically succeeded. Harry Weaver remembered that John 'was exceedingly good in light and eccentric comedy, as his performance of

29 'A Marylander', 'John Wilkes Booth', *Philadelphia Press*, Dec. 27, 1881.

30 Clarke, *Unlocked Book*, p. 106.

31 *Baltimore American*, July 27, 1903; JWB never played King Lear.

32 Clipping, 'Memorable Night on the American Stage'; E.M. Alfriend. Edwin also wrote to Nahum Capen, 'He possessed rare dramatic talent, and would have made a brilliant mark in the theatrical world' (Skinner, *Last Tragedian*, p. 127).

Romeo Jaffier Jenkins . . . abundantly proved. . . . I remember that Booth kept the audience in a roar of laughter all the time he was on the stage.'³³ The different varieties of comedy in *Money*, *Katharine and Petruchio*--and perhaps *Richard III*--were all within his range. The *New York Clipper* mused on December 3, 1864, '[JWB] is a very extraordinary young man; it is really surprising to see with what ability he assumes and supports characters of such various ages, and kinds.' Over four years, he made several roles his own, including the very different Richard III and Raphael. He seems to have varied his style according to that of the play he was in, so that though he was accused of ranting in some of his melodramatic parts, his Claude, Raphael, Petruchio and Evelyn were suitably restrained--even to the point of seeming 'tame' to some auditors. Comparing his repertoire with other actors', he can be seen to range from Forrest's or Sullivan's robust melodrama to Murdoch's romance and high comedy. His sinking of his own personality in a role was often mentioned. He seems to have been free of personal vanity, as demonstrated by his willingness to portray Richard's 'rudely stamped' ugliness, and as his 'grotesqueness of person' in the part of Pescara suggests (see Chapter 10).

Greater differences between the brothers lie not in their acting but in external factors and in their personalities and beliefs. As noted in Chapter 1, Edwin was fortunate in the timing of his star debut in the East: like a folklore hero, the son of the great man came from afar to claim his birthright. John's later appearance as *another* son of the Great Booth served to dilute the mystique of both, and during his star career he had not only Forrest to contend with, but a great war which took people's minds away from peacetime pursuits like the arts. From Edwin's first appearance in New York, he attracted the personal attention of theatrical cognoscenti like Adam Badeau, who introduced him to books and art galleries and argued with him about his interpretations. Mary Devlin also filled the role of mentor to her husband, and she and Adam watched Edwin and discussed his performances.³⁴ That no-one has claimed the role of mentor to John (with the

33 'No. 2 Bullfinch Place'.

34 'EB on and off the Stage', pp. 259, 263.

exception of the unlikely Harry Langdon: see Chapter 4) has created the impression that he was not thought worthy of such attentions. There may be two reasons for this. One, of course, is the assassination. One very likely mentor for John was Richard Montgomery Field, the critic and later theatre manager, with whom he was clearly on friendly terms.³⁵ Shortly after the assassination, however, Field apparently dismissed John as 'rather a rowdy'.³⁶ Also in Boston was the occasional columnist 'X.Y.Z.' of the *Transcript*, who seems to have known John, and was always enthusiastic about his work. But John's very success in Boston must have made it particularly vital for Bostonians to repudiate him after his disgrace. The other reason may lie in John's outlook. He had leaned on family connections far less than did Edwin in the early days of his career, and may similarly have eschewed the influence of friends--or, at least, the type of friends who influenced Edwin.

Adam Badeau, whom Shattuck describes as 'a young man-about-town . . . very much an exponent of what Nym Crinkle would one day label "sensitive dillettantism [*sic*]'", was

anxious that [Edwin] Booth should receive a social recognition. . . . The wits, the scholars, artists, authors, all were glad to know the man who had given them so refined a pleasure. . . . [M]en and women of the first social position . . . were his personal friends³⁷

These were the people who were impressed by Edwin's engagement in London, even though it was not very successful. Badeau put Edwin up for membership of the Century Club, whose members were 'artists and patrons of the arts'; as late as the 1880s, the only actor members were Booth, Wallack and Lawrence Barrett.³⁸ Another friend, Elizabeth Stoddard, remembered, 'Mr. Booth and his wife were pleased to know our "set" of writers and artists'. This 'set' included the poet Thomas Bailey Aldrich, whom Shattuck calls 'that faint-hearted apostle of Beauty', one of whose poems began, 'The mother's being

35 See his letter to 'Dear Monty', from Cincinnati, Feb. 22, 1864 (De Coppet Collection, Princeton University).

36 William S. Robinson, *"Warrington" Pen-Portraits* (Boston: Mrs. W.S. Robinson, 1877), p. 307.

37 *Hamlet of EB*, pp. 18, 47; 'EB on and off the Stage', p. 260.

38 'EB on and off the Stage', p. 260; McArthur, p. 78.

ceased on earth / When Baby came from Paradise.' Mrs. Stoddard recalled that 'John Wilkes Booth came up to New York, and . . . reproached Edwin for being false to his father's memory by keeping such associates.'³⁹ John may have meant that, unlike their father, Edwin seemed to be losing the common touch. Edwin himself tells us that Junius Brutus had a very humble idea of the actor's position in society, once referring to himself as 'Tom-fool'; another time, he horrified his wife by inviting a grubby band of Arab jugglers into their parlour.⁴⁰ John, who once called himself 'a mere peregrinating play-actor', could talk to anyone, joking with Boston cabmen and girls in the laundry.⁴¹ Edwin, after his early raffishness, seems to have set out to become respectable and middle-class. It is probably significant that, whereas Junius, Jr.'s three wives all continued to act after their marriage to him, neither of Edwin's did: Mary Devlin gave up her career on her engagement, and was tutored to become a cultured, decorative but useless bourgeois wife. Later, in founding The Players, Edwin hoped his actors' club would encourage the player 'to lift up himself to a higher social grade than the Bohemian level' that so many occupied; Benjamin McArthur comments, 'The insistent respectability of The Players was not unanimously applauded by actors.'⁴²

If John's democratic feelings had an influence on his acting, it is possible that he made a deliberate choice to provide entertainment for the whole house, and to slight neither the intellectuals nor the gallery boys. This choice could also explain his continuing to tour so widely, while Edwin soon restricted himself to the eastern seaboard. McConachie suggests that '[Edwin] Booth may have narrowed his appeal by working so exclusively within the business-class values of sensibility, spirituality, and idealization';⁴³ to do so, he would have had to avoid the mixed-class theatres to be found in smaller cities. While Edwin developed a style which later official history would

39 Stoddard, p. 355; *Hamlet of EB*, p. 93; Aldrich, p. 19.

40 'Some Words about my Father', pp. 103, 101.

41 *Unlocked Book*, p. 114; Norcross, p. 37.

42 McArthur, pp. 79, 82.

43 McConachie, p. 241.

proclaim the only acceptable one, John was following the tradition his father had worked in and breathing new life into it.

If John had lived, what would have become of him and that style? He would presumably have carried on refining his repertoire, adding and subtracting roles, perhaps commissioning new plays as his hero Forrest had done, until he and comparable tragedians like his brother, Edwin Adams and John McCullough possessed few roles in common. Edwin Adams later became identified with *Enoch Arden*, as did James O'Neill with *Monte Cristo*, Jefferson with *Rip Van Winkle*, and to some extent Edwin Booth with *Hamlet*; John might have found a popular standby like these, and he could well have settled somewhere as an actor-manager, since he seems to have had a better business sense than Edwin. He would have been affected, with the whole profession, by the profound changes in organization which made Edwin Booth, Jefferson and their contemporaries the last of their line as touring stars trained in the old stock system. A more difficult problem, for one whose appeal was across class lines, would have been the elevation of Shakespeare to highbrow status. John McCullough had been 'introduced to Shakespeare's plays by an Irish workman who could recite long passages from them', but by 1882 Shakespeare was being claimed by universities and by "private and select culture" During the 1880s and 1890s, Americans were reminded time and again that a level of education and cultivation were required to appreciate the plays, an emphasis that soon came to affect their widespread popularity.⁴⁴ By 1884, says Lawrence Levine, 'Richard Grant White was asserting that "Shakespereanism" had become "a cult, a religion, with priests and professional incense-burners, who lived . . . by his worship."⁴⁵ One cannot imagine anyone ever describing John Booth as a slender-handed high priest of Art. Yet even in those increasingly hierarchical days there was room for John McCullough, who had considerable success in Eastern cities from 1874 until his breakdown ten years later with a heroic acting style, modified to suit the times, but

44 Shattuck, *Shakespeare on the American Stage*, p. 125; Morrison, p. 13, quoting A.A. Lipscomb in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, August 1882.

45 *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, p. 70.

retaining his 'native vigour, resonance, and fire'.⁴⁶ It is tempting to think that John Wilkes Booth might have delayed the moment when 'ordinary' people became alienated from Shakespeare. Wedding his popular appeal to his obvious intelligence and his increasing 'care and refinement', he too might have tempered down his exuberance to produce that great acting which, as Adam Badeau said, must please more than one class. If he had been unwilling to modify his style at all, he could have lived out a useful career playing in working-class theatres where the declamatory style persisted.

During his lifetime, critics clearly felt that there was room for both John and his brother: the *New York Times & Messenger* (March 23, 1862) declined to compare them, since 'both are capable of standing upon their own merits', and Monty Field in the *Boston Post* (Jan. 17, 1863) declared, 'Whether greater than the elder son, or not so great--whether of more or less brilliant promise--does not matter. They are both ornaments to the American stage'. Earlier, he had in fact compared them memorably:

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 Shakspearean, John Wilkes more melo-dramatic; and in a word, Edwin is a better Hamlet, John Wilkes a better Richard III. Edwin Booth will be the delight of the women, John Wilkes Booth the favorite of the men (May 15, 1862).

If this description makes John sound more exciting, that was probably Field's intention. For this quality and for much else, now, 135 years after the death of Lincoln, it is time that he should once again receive his due.

⁴⁶ Shattuck, *Shakespeare on the American Stage*, pp. 126-27, quoting 'Nym Crinkle'.

APPENDIX
CHRONOLOGY OF PERFORMANCES

Notes

This list includes all verifiable performances given by John Wilkes Booth in the professional theatre; where there is some doubt, his roles are enclosed in brackets. John's roles at Richmond are least certain, because of the scarcity of playbills and of mentions of supporting cast members in the local papers.

Sources are given briefly at the foot of each page; for further detail see the relevant chapter.

Date	Play (Author if known)	Part	Date	Play (Author if known)	Part
Charles Street Theatre, Baltimore, MD					
14 Aug 1855	<i>Richard III</i> (Shakespeare, Cibber)	Henry, Earl of Richmond	14 Sept 1857	<i>A New Way to Pay Old Debts</i> (Massinger)	Watchall
			14 Sept 1857	<i>Cape May</i>	Nabhem
			15 Sept 1857	<i>St. Marc</i>	Stefano Lodori
			15 Sept 1857	<i>Cape May</i>	Nabhem
Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, PA 1857-58*					
15 Aug 1857	<i>The Belle's Stratagem</i> (Hannah Cowley)	2nd Mask	16 Sept 1857	<i>Hamlet</i> (Shakespeare)	Guildenstern
17 Aug 1857	<i>The Wife</i> (Sheridan Knowles)	Courier	16 Sept 1857	<i>Cape May</i>	Nabhem
27 Aug 1857	<i>St. Marc, or A Husband's Sacrifice</i> (John H. Wilkins)	(Stefano Lodori, Controller of the Army)	17 Sept 1857	<i>Richard III</i> (Shakespeare, Cibber)	Earl of Oxford
28 Aug 1857	<i>St. Marc</i>	Stefano Lodori	17 Sept 1857	<i>Cape May</i>	Nabhem
29 Aug 1857	<i>St. Marc</i>	Stefano Lodori	18 Sept 1857	<i>Hamlet</i>	Guildenstern
1 Sept 1857	<i>The Hunchback</i> (Sheridan Knowles)	Simpson	19 Sept 1857	<i>A New Way to Pay Old Debts</i>	Watchall
2 Sept 1857	<i>Fazio, or The Italian Wife</i> (H.H. Milman)	Antonio	21 Sept 1857	<i>Hamlet</i>	Guildenstern
3 Sept 1857	<i>The Hunchback</i>	Simpson	22 Sept 1857	<i>Camille</i> (John H. Wilkins)	Servant to Camille
5 Sept 1857	<i>The Golden Farmer</i> [a]	1st Officer	23 Sept 1857	<i>The Brigand</i> (J.R. Planché)	A brigand
7 Sept 1857	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> (Shakespeare)	Conrade	23 Sept 1857	<i>The Willow Copse</i> (Dion Boucicault)	Bubblemere
12 Sept 1857	<i>The Apostate</i> (R.L. Sheil)	1st Spaniard	24 Sept 1857	<i>The Belle's Stratagem</i>	2nd Mask
12 Sept 1857	<i>Cape May</i> [a]	Nabhem, a Sheriff's Officer	24 Sept 1857	<i>The Brigand</i>	A brigand
			25 Sept 1857	<i>Camille</i>	Servant to Camille
			25 Sept 1857	<i>The Brigand</i>	A brigand
			26 Sept 1857	<i>Hamlet</i>	Guildenstern
			28 Sept 1857	<i>Othello</i> (Shakespeare)	Antonio [sic]

*Source for Philadelphia 1857-58 performances is playbills in Channing Pollock Theatre Collection, Howard University, unless otherwise stated.
Bold type = JWB debut in role () = part conjectural, playbill missing [a] = afterpiece

Date	Play (Author if known)	Part	Date	Play (Author if known)	Part
29 Sept 1857	<i>The Brigand</i>	A brigand	31 Oct 1857	<i>Julius Caesar</i>	Metellus Cimber
2 Oct 1857	<i>The Brigand</i>	A brigand	31 Oct 1857	<i>Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Hortensio
3 Oct 1857	<i>The Robbers</i> (Schiller)	1st Robber	2 Nov 1857	<i>The Queen of Spades</i> (Scribe, Boucicault)	1st Lord
5 Oct 1857	<i>The Brigand</i>	A brigand	2 Nov 1857	<i>Black-Eyed Susan</i> (Douglas Jerrold) [a]	Lieut. Pike
6 Oct 1857	<i>Othello</i>	Antonio	3 Nov1857	<i>The Queen of Spades</i>	1st Lord
7 Oct 1857	<i>The Robbers</i>	1st Robber	3 Nov 1857	<i>Black-Eyed Susan</i>	Lieut. Pike
8 Oct 1857	<i>Camille</i>	Servant to Camille	4 Nov 1857	<i>The Queen of Spades</i>	1st Lord
8 Oct 1857	<i>The Brigand</i>	A brigand	4 Nov 1857	<i>Black-Eyed Susan</i>	Lieut. Pike
9 Oct 1857	<i>The Robbers</i>	1st Robber	5 Nov 1857	<i>The Queen of Spades</i>	1st Lord
12 Oct 1857	<i>The Brigand</i>	A brigand	5 Nov 1857	<i>Black-Eyed Susan</i>	Lieut. Pike
13 Oct 1857	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	Conrade	6 Nov 1857	<i>The Queen of Spades</i>	1st Lord
23 Oct 1857	<i>Katharine and Petruchio</i> (Shakespeare, Garrick) [a]	Hortensio	6 Nov 1857	<i>Black-Eyed Susan</i>	Lieut. Pike
24 Oct 1857	<i>Civilization</i> (John H. Wilkins)	Marquis de Villarceaux	7 Nov 1857	<i>Ingomar, the Barbarian</i> (Mrs. Lovell)	Elphinoor
26 Oct 1857	<i>Macbeth</i> (Shakespeare)	2nd Officer	7 Nov 1857	<i>Black-Eyed Susan</i>	Lieut. Pike
27 Oct 1857	<i>Civilization</i>	Marquis de Villarceaux	9 Nov 1857	<i>The Jealous Wife</i>	John
28 Oct 1857	<i>Julius Caesar</i> (Shakespeare)	(Metellus Cimber)	9 Nov 1857	<i>Black-Eyed Susan</i>	Lieut. Pike
29 Oct 1857	<i>Civilization</i>	Marquis de Villarceaux	12 Nov 1857	<i>Camille</i>	Servant to Camille
29 Oct 1857	<i>Guy Mannering</i>	Sergeant	12 Nov 1857	<i>The Robber's Wife</i> (Isaac Pocock) [a]	Mouser
30 Oct 1857	<i>The Jealous Wife</i> (George Colman the Elder)	John	13 Nov 1857	<i>The Golden Farmer</i>	1st Officer
			14 Nov 1857	<i>Richard III</i>	Earl of Oxford
30 Oct 1857	<i>Guy Mannering</i>	Sergeant	16 Nov 1857	<i>Hamlet</i>	Guildenstern

[a] = afterpiece () = part conjectural, playbill missing

Date	Play (Author if known)	Part	Date	Play (Author if known)	Part
17 Nov 1857	<i>Rob Roy, or Auld Lang Syne</i>	Andrew Fairservice	12 Dec 1857	<i>Richard III</i>	(Earl of Oxford)
17 Nov 1857	<i>Laugh When You Can</i> (Fred Reynolds) [a]	Waiter	14 Dec 1857	<i>Annette, the Forsaken</i>	Frederick Morden
18 Nov 1857	<i>Guy Mannering</i>	Sergeant	15 Dec 1857	<i>The Carpenter of Rouen</i> (J.S. Jones) [a]	2nd Officer
19 Nov 1857	<i>Rob Roy</i>	Andrew Fairservice	19 Dec 1857	<i>The Carpenter of Rouen</i>	2nd Officer
20 Nov 1857	<i>Richelieu</i> (Edward Bulwer-Lytton)	1st Courtier	25 Dec 1857	<i>Black-Eyed Susan</i>	Lieut. Pike
21 Nov 1857	<i>The Sea of Ice</i>	(Jano, a sailor)	m		
23 Nov 1857	<i>Richelieu</i>	1st Courtier	28 Dec 1857	<i>The Rival Pages</i> (Charles Selby) [a]	Sentinel
24 Nov 1857	<i>The Sea of Ice</i>	(Jano)	29 Dec 1857	<i>The Rival Pages</i>	Sentinel
25 Nov 1857	<i>Fazio</i>	Antonio	2 Jan 1858	<i>The Scalp Hunters</i> (John A. Wilkins) [a]	St. Vrain
26 Nov 1857 m	<i>Out for Thanksgiving</i>	Waiter	4 Jan 1858	<i>The Scalp Hunters</i>	St. Vrain
26 Nov 1857	<i>The Sea of Ice</i>	Jano	5 Jan 1858	<i>The Scalp Hunters</i>	St. Vrain
27 Nov 1857	<i>Retribution, or The Doom of the Libertine</i>	Garnier	6 Jan 1858	<i>The Scalp Hunters</i>	St. Vrain
28 Nov 1857	<i>Retribution</i>	Garnier	7 Jan 1858	<i>The Scalp Hunters</i>	St. Vrain
30 Nov 1857	<i>A Day Well Spent</i> (John Oxenford)*	Waiter	8 Jan 1858	<i>The Scalp Hunters</i>	St. Vrain
1 Dec 1857	<i>Madelaine, or The Foundling of Paris</i> [a]	Grosmere	9 Jan 1858	<i>The Scalp Hunters</i>	St. Vrain
2 Dec 1857	<i>Madelaine</i>	Grosmere	11 Jan 1858	<i>Don Caesar de Bazan</i> (Boucicault/Ben Webster)	Pacolo
5 Dec 1857	<i>Othello</i>	Antonio	13 Jan 1858	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> (Shakespeare)	Salanio
8 Dec 1857	<i>Annette, the Forsaken</i> [a]	Frederick Morden	14 Jan 1858	<i>The Scalp Hunters</i>	St. Vrain
9 Dec 1857	<i>Laugh When You Can</i>	Waiter	15 Jan 1858	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Major Desmoulin
10 Dec 1857	<i>The Jealous Wife</i>	John	16 Jan 1858	<i>Fraud and its Victims, or The Poor of Philadelphia</i> (Stirling Coyne, H.J. Conway)	Clarence Lindon
11 Dec 1857	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i> (Edward Bulwer-Lytton)	Major Desmoulin	18 Jan 1858	<i>Fraud and its Victims</i>	Clarence Lindon

[a] = afterpiece () = part conjectural, playbill missing m = matinee * This play is probably identical to *Out for Thanksgiving*, above.

Date	Play (Author if known)	Part	Date	Play (Author if known)	Part
18 Jan 1858	<i>The Rival Pages</i>	Sentinel	10 Feb 1858	<i>Ambition, or The Tomb, the Throne, and the Scaffold</i>	Sir Thomas Nalvern [sic]
19 Jan 1858	<i>Fraud and its Victims</i>	Clarence Lindon	11 Feb 1858	<i>Ambition</i>	Sir Thomas Nalvern
20 Jan 1858	<i>Fraud and its Victims</i>	Clarence Lindon	12 Feb 1858	<i>Ambition</i>	Sir Thomas Nalvern
20 Jan 1858	<i>The Married Bachelor</i> [a]	John	13 Feb 1858	<i>Ambition</i>	Sir Thomas Nalvern
21 Jan 1858	<i>Fraud and its Victims</i>	Clarence Lindon	15 Feb 1858	<i>Ambition</i>	Sir Thomas Nalvern
22 Jan 1858	<i>Fraud and its Victims</i>	Clarence Lindon	16 Feb 1858	<i>Ambition</i>	Sir Thomas Nalvern
22 Jan 1858	<i>The Rival Pages</i>	Sentinel	17 Feb 1858	<i>Ambition</i>	Sir Thomas Nalvern
23 Jan 1858	<i>Fraud and its Victims</i>	Clarence Lindon	18 Feb 1858	<i>Ambition</i>	Sir Thomas Nalvern
25 Jan 1858	<i>Fraud and its Victims</i>	Clarence Lindon	19 Feb 1858	<i>Richard III</i> [scenes]	Henry, Earl of Richmond*
26 Jan 1858	<i>Fraud and its Victims</i>	Clarence Lindon	23 Feb 1858	<i>Lucretia Borgia</i> (Victor Hugo)	Ascanio Petrucci ^o
27 Jan 1858	<i>Fraud and its Victims</i>	Clarence Lindon	24 Feb 1858	<i>The Gamester</i> (Edward Moore)	Dawson
28 Jan 1858	<i>Fraud and its Victims</i>	Clarence Lindon	25 Feb 1858	<i>Ingomar, the Barbarian</i>	Elphignor
29 Jan 1858	<i>Fraud and its Victims</i>	Clarence Lindon	25 Feb 1858	<i>Lucretia Borgia</i>	Ascanio Petrucci
29 Jan 1858	<i>Laugh When You Can</i>	Waiter	26 Feb 1858	<i>Mary Tudor</i> (Hugo)	Lord Gardiner
30 Jan 1858	<i>Wallace, The Hero of Scotland (W. Barrymore)</i>	(Earl of Fife)	1 Mar 1858	<i>Jane Shore</i> (Nicholas Rowe)	Servant to Jane Shore
1 Feb 1858	<i>Damon and Pythias</i> (John Banim, Sheil)	2nd Senator	3 Mar 1858	<i>Douglas</i> (John Home) announced; <i>Fazio</i> substituted. †	[2nd Officer] (Antonio)
2 Feb 1858	<i>Wallace, The Hero of Scotland</i>	Earl of Fife	5 Mar 1858	<i>Rule a Wife and Have a Wife</i> (Beaumont & Fletcher)	Vasio
3 Feb 1858	<i>Wallace, The Hero of Scotland</i>	Earl of Fife	5 Mar 1858	<i>A Roland for an Oliver</i> [a]	A gamekeeper
8 Feb 1858	<i>Virgilius</i> (Sheridan Knowles)	Soldier	6 Mar 1858	<i>Douglas</i>	(2nd Officer)
9 Feb 1858	<i>The Carpenter of Rouen</i>	2nd Officer			

[a] = afterpiece () = part conjectural, playbill missing *Benefit of John Sleeper Clarke ° Source: Townsend, *Life, Crime and Capture*. † Philadelphia Press, March 4.

Date	Play (Author if known)	Part	Date	Play (Author if known)	Part
6 Mar 1858	<i>The Willow Copse</i>	(Bubblemere)	2 Apr 1858	<i>A Cure for the Heartache</i> (Thomas Morton) [a]	James
8 Mar 1858	<i>The Declaration of Independence</i>	Captain Danforth	3 Apr 1858	<i>The School for Scandal</i>	Careless
9 Mar 1858	<i>The Declaration of Independence</i>	Captain Danforth	3 Apr 1858	<i>Gambler's Fate</i>	Captain d'Esterre
10 Mar 1858	<i>The Declaration of Independence</i>	Captain Danforth	5 Apr 1858	<i>Brutus, or The Fall of Tarquin</i> (J.H. Payne)	Messenger
11 Mar 1858	<i>The Declaration of Independence</i>	Captain Danforth	7 Apr 1858	<i>Fashion</i> (Anna Cora Mowatt)	Augustus Fogg
12 Mar 1858	<i>The Declaration of Independence</i>	Captain Danforth	7 Apr 1858	<i>William Tell</i> (Sheridan Knowles)	Rodolph
13 Mar 1858	<i>The Declaration of Independence</i>	Captain Danforth	8 Apr 1858	<i>Fashion</i>	Augustus Fogg
15 Mar 1858	<i>The Declaration of Independence</i>	Captain Danforth	8 Apr 1858	<i>Pizarro, or The Conquest of Peru</i> (Kotzebue, Dunlap)	Almagro
16 Mar 1858	<i>The Declaration of Independence</i>	Captain Danforth	9 Apr 1858	<i>The Egyptian</i>	Tenellus
17 Mar 1858	<i>The Declaration of Independence</i>	Captain Danforth	9 Apr 1858	<i>Black-Eyed Susan</i>	Lieut. Pike
17 Mar 1858	<i>The Golden Farmer</i>	1st Officer	10 Apr 1858	<i>Damon and Pythias</i>	2nd Senator
18 Mar 1858	<i>The Declaration of Independence</i>	Captain Danforth	10 Apr 1858	<i>The Carpenter of Rouen</i>	2nd Officer
19 Mar 1858	<i>The Declaration of Independence</i>	Captain Danforth	12 Apr 1858	<i>Jonathan Bradford</i>	Sergeant Sam
20 Mar 1858	<i>Douglas</i>	2nd Officer	12 Apr 1858	<i>Paul Pry in America</i> (J.H. Conway) [a]	Frank Linwood
20 Mar 1858	<i>The Willow Copse</i>	Bubblemere	13 Apr 1858	<i>Wild Oats</i> (John O'Keefe)	Lamp
23 Mar 1858	<i>A Husband of an Hour</i> (Edmund Falconer)	Duc de Rohan	14 Apr 1858	<i>Jonathan Bradford</i>	Sergeant Sam
26 Mar 1858	<i>A Husband of an Hour</i>	Duc de Rohan	14 Apr 1858	<i>Paul Pry in America</i>	Frank Linwood
27 Mar 1858	<i>Venice Preserved</i> (Otway)	Elliot/Officer	15 Apr 1858	<i>The Way to Get Married</i> (Thomas Morton)	Undertaker
31Mar 1858	<i>The School for Scandal</i> (Sheridan)	Careless	16 Apr 1858	<i>Town and Country</i> (Thomas Morton)	Robin
1 Apr 1858	<i>A Husband of an Hour</i>	Duc de Rohan	17 April 1858	<i>The Way to Get Married</i>	Undertaker
2 Apr 1858	<i>Gambler's Fate</i>	Captain d'Esterre	17 April 1858	<i>Jonathan Bradford</i>	Sergeant Sam

[a] = afterpiece () = part conjectural, playbill missing

Date	Play (Author if known)	Part	Date	Play (Author if known)	Part
19 Apr 1858	<i>Jonathan Bradford</i>	Sergeant Sam	10 June 1858	<i>Po-ca-hon-tas</i>	William Jones
20 Apr 1858	King Henry IV (Shakespeare)	Prince John of Lancaster	11 June 1858	<i>Po-ca-hon-tas</i>	William Jones
22 Apr 1858	<i>King Henry IV</i>	Prince John of Lancaster	12 June 1858	<i>Po-ca-hon-tas</i>	William Jones
23 Apr 1858	<i>King Henry IV</i>	Prince John of Lancaster	16 June 1858	Lend Me Five Shillings (J.M. Morton) [a]	Captain Spruce
23 Apr 1858	<i>Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Hortensio	18 June 1858	<i>Po-ca-hon-tas</i>	William Jones
4 May 1858	The Irish Broom-Maker [a]	‘Squire Robert	Holliday Theatre, Baltimore, MD		
5 May 1858	<i>The Irish Broom-Maker</i>	‘Squire Robert			
8 May 1858	<i>The Irish Broom-Maker</i>	‘Squire Robert			
10 May 1858	<i>The Irish Broom-Maker</i>	‘Squire Robert	27 August 1858	<i>Richard III</i>	Henry, Earl of Richmond
12 May 1858	Teddy the Tiler	Henry Dunderford	Richmond Theatre, Richmond, VA 1858-59*		
13 May 1858	<i>Teddy the Tiler</i>	Henry Dunderford	6 Sept 1858	<i>The School for Scandal</i> (Sheridan)	(Sir Benjamin Backbite)**
25 May 1858	<i>Macbeth</i>	1st Apparition	7 Sept 1858	<i>Jenny Lind</i> (A. Reach) [a]	(Herr Scheroot)
26 May 1858	Henry VIII (Shakespeare)	Capucius	8 Sept 1858	<i>The Wife</i> (Knowles)	(Count Florio)
28 May 1858	As You Like It (Shakespeare)	Silvius	9 Sept 1858	<i>London Assurance</i> (Boucicault)	Cool†
29 May 1858	<i>Retribution</i>	Garnier	1 Oct 1858	<i>Richard III</i>	Henry, Earl of Richmond
29 May 1858	<i>William Tell</i>	Rodolph	5 Oct 1858	<i>Hamlet</i>	(Horatio)**
31 May 1858	<i>The Willow Copse</i>	Bubblemere	9 Oct 1858	<i>Richard III</i>	Henry, Earl of Richmond
5 June 1858	King Lear (Shakespeare)	Duke of Burgundy	19 Oct 1858	<i>Jenny Lind</i>	(Herr Scheroot)
7 June 1858	<i>Sketches in India</i> [a]	Captain Tancred	25 Oct 1858	<i>David Copperfield</i> (John Brougham)	Traddles
9 June 1858	<i>Nervous Man</i>	Lord Lounge			
9 June 1858	Po-ca-hon-tas, or Ye Gentle Savage (John Brougham)	William Jones			

[a] = afterpiece *Source is local papers unless otherwise stated. () = part conjectural ** Source: E.M. Alfriend, no supporting evidence † Source: JWB letter

Date	Play (Author if known)	Part	Date	Play (Author if known)	Part
Dudley Hall, Lynchburg, VA (Richmond company on tour)					
1 Nov 1858	<i>The Wife</i>	Count Florio	19 Feb 1859	<i>Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish</i>	Uncas**
3 Nov 1858	<i>David Copperfield</i>	(Traddles)	24 Feb 1859	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> (Shakespeare)	Count Paris
8 Nov 1858	<i>The School for Scandal</i>	(Sir Benjamin Backbite)			

Richmond Theatre, Richmond					
19 Nov 1858	<i>Adrienne, the Actress</i>	Paisson*	25 Feb 1859	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Count Paris
19 Nov 1858	<i>Jenny Lind</i>	Herr Scheroot*	21 Mar 1859	<i>De Soto</i> (George H. Miles)	Gallegos†
25 Nov 1858	<i>Adrienne, the Actress</i>	(Paisson)	22 Mar 1859	<i>De Soto</i>	(Gallegos)
24 Jan 1859	<i>Monte Cristo</i>	Danglars, a supercargo	23 Mar 1859	<i>De Soto</i>	(Gallegos)
25 Jan 1859	<i>Monte Cristo</i>	(Danglars)	7 Apr 1859	<i>The Naiad Queen</i> (Edmund Cole)	(Amphibio)
26 Jan 1859	<i>Monte Cristo</i>	(Danglars)	8 Apr 1859	<i>The Naiad Queen</i>	(Amphibio)
27 Jan 1859	<i>Monte Cristo</i>	(Danglars)	9 Apr 1859	<i>The Naiad Queen</i>	(Amphibio)
28 Jan 1859	<i>Monte Cristo</i>	(Danglars)	16 Apr 1859 m	<i>The Naiad Queen</i>	(Amphibio)
29 Jan 1859 m	<i>Monte Cristo</i>	(Danglars)	2 May 1859 B	<i>Othello</i>	Othello
29 Jan 1859	<i>Monte Cristo</i>	(Danglars)	4 May 1859	<i>London Assurance</i>	(Cool)
31 Jan 1859	<i>Monte Cristo</i>	(Danglars)	6 May 1859	<i>The Hunchback</i> (Knowles)	Lord Tinsel
1 Feb 1859	<i>Monte Cristo</i>	(Danglars)			
9 Feb 1859	<i>Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish</i>	(Uncas, an Indian)	Dudley Hall, Lynchburg (Richmond company on tour)		
			17 May 1859	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Gaspar

() = part conjectural

m = matinee

* Source: playbill, Valentine Museum

** Source: Grover, p. 943

†Source: playbill (J.O. Hall)

B = JWB benefit

Date	Play (Author if known)	Part	Date	Play (Author if known)	Part
26 May 1859	<i>David Copperfield</i>	(Traddles)	6 Sept 1859	<i>Everybody's Friend</i> (Stirling Coyne)	Mr. Icebrook*
27 May 1859	<i>The Naiad Queen</i>	(Amphibio)	6 Sept 1859	<i>Everybody's Friend</i>	(Mr. Icebrook)
28 May 1859	<i>The Naiad Queen</i>	Amphibio	10 Sept 1859	<i>Richard III</i>	(Duke of Buckingham)**
30 May 1859	<i>The Naiad Queen</i>	(Amphibio)	23 Sept 1859	<i>The Hunchback</i> (Knowles)	Lord Tinsel
31 May 1859	<i>The Naiad Queen</i>	(Amphibio)	27 Sept 1859	<i>The School for Scandal</i>	(Sir Benjamin Backbite)
1 June 1859 m	<i>The Naiad Queen</i>	(Amphibio)	28 Sept 1859	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Count Paris†
1 June 1859	<i>The Naiad Queen</i>	(Amphibio)	29 Sept 1859	<i>Ingomar, the Barbarian</i>	Alastor
2 June 1859	<i>The Naiad Queen</i>	(Amphibio)	30 Sept 1859	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Glavis
3 June 1859	<i>The Naiad Queen</i>	(Amphibio)	30 Sept 1859	<i>The Love Chase</i> (Knowles)	Trueworth
4 June 1859 m	<i>The Naiad Queen</i>	(Amphibio)	1 Oct 1859	<i>Ingomar, the Barbarian</i>	(Alastor)
4 June 1859	<i>The Naiad Queen</i>	(Amphibio)	4 Oct 1859	<i>London Assurance</i>	Cool

Phoenix Hall, Petersburg (Richmond company on tour)

22 June 1859	<i>Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish</i>	(Uncas)	17 Oct1859	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	(Glavis)
--------------	------------------------------	---------	------------	--------------------------	----------

Richmond Theatre, Richmond

27 June 1858	<i>Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish</i>	(Uncas)	24 Oct 1859	<i>Everybody's Friend</i>	(Mr. Icebrook)
--------------	------------------------------	---------	-------------	---------------------------	----------------

Richmond Theatre, Richmond 1859-60

3 Sept 1859	<i>The Heir-at-Law</i> (G.Colman the Younger)	Henry Moreland	1 Nov 1859	<i>Richelieu</i>	(Baradas)‡
			2 Nov 1859	<i>The Gamester</i>	Dawson

() = part conjectural m = matinee *Source: *N.Y. Clipper*, Dec. 17 **Source: Loux, 'Day by Day', p. 145 † Source: Playbill, Folger Shakespeare Library
‡Source: Sillard, 2:23

Date	Play (Author if known)	Part	Date	Play (Author if known)	Part
5 Nov 1859	<i>Richard III</i>	(Duke of Buckingham)	17 Feb 1860	<i>The Broken Sword</i> (W. Dimond)	Claudio**
8 Nov 1859	<i>King Lear</i> (Shakespeare)	(Edmund)*	20 Feb 1860	<i>Richard III</i>	(Duke of Buckingham)
10 Nov 1859	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	(Don Pedro)*	25 Feb 1860	<i>Too Much for Good Nature</i>	(Romeo Jaffier Jenkins)
19 November - 5 December:	JWB absent from company, at Charlestown		27 Feb 1860	<i>Too Much for Good Nature</i>	(Romeo Jaffier Jenkins)
			28 Feb 1860	<i>Ingomar, the Barbarian</i>	(Alastor)

Phoenix Hall, Petersburg

19 Dec 1859	<i>The Hunchback</i>	(Lord Tinsel)	28 Feb 1860	<i>Too Much for Good Nature</i>	(Romeo Jaffier Jenkins)
20 Dec 1859	<i>The Love Chase</i>	(Truworth)	29 Feb 1860	<i>The Hunchback</i>	Lord Tinsel
21 Dec 1859	<i>London Assurance</i>	(Cool)	29 Feb 1860	<i>Too Much for Good Nature</i>	Romeo Jaffier Jenkins
			1 Mar 1860	<i>London Assurance</i>	(Cool)
			2 Mar 1860	<i>Evadne, or The Statue</i> (Sheil)	Ludovico†

Richmond Theatre, Richmond

27 Dec 1859	<i>Dreams of Delusion</i> (Palgrave Simpson)	Lord Arthur Brandon**	10 Mar 1860	<i>Too Much for Good Nature</i>	(Romeo Jaffier Jenkins)
27 Dec 1859	<i>Wild Oats</i> (John O'Keeffe)	Lamp**	13 Mar 1860	<i>Too Much for Good Nature</i>	(Romeo Jaffier Jenkins)
30 Dec 1859	<i>Everybody's Friend</i>	(Mr. Icebrook)	23 Mar 1860	<i>Our American Cousin</i> (Tom Taylor)	(Lord Dundreary)*
30 Dec 1859	<i>Everybody's Friend</i>	(Mr. Icebrook)	24 Mar 1860	<i>Our American Cousin</i>	(Lord Dundreary)
30 Jan 1860	<i>Wild Oats</i>	(Lamp)	26 Mar 1860	<i>Everybody's Friend</i>	(Mr. Icebrook)
1 Feb 1860	<i>Hamlet</i>	(Horatio)	27 March 1860	<i>Dreams of Delusion</i>	(Lord Arthur Brandon)
2 Feb 1860	<i>The Gamester</i>	Dawson	29 Mar 1860	<i>Whitebait at Greenwich</i> °	(Mr. Glimmer)
2 Feb 1860	<i>The Buzzards</i>	Mr. Glimmer	31 Mar 1860	<i>The Rake's Progress</i>	Fred Florid**
4 Feb 1860	<i>The Buzzards</i>	(Mr. Glimmer)	3 Apr 1860	<i>The Wandering Boys of Switzerland</i>	(Count de Courcy)
6 Feb 1860	<i>Dreams of Delusion</i>	(Lord Arthur Brandon)	7 Apr 1860	<i>The Hot Corn Girl, or Life Scenes in New York</i> (Charles W. Taylor)	(Eugene Sedley)
10 Feb 1860	<i>The Buzzards</i>	(Mr. Glimmer)	14 Apr 1860	<i>The Hot Corn Girl</i>	(Eugene Sedley)

() = part conjectural * Source: Sillard, 2:23 **Source: Playbills, Harvard †Source: letter, Rosalie Booth ‡Source: 'Great Casts' clipping, Yale
°A.k.a. *The Buzzards*

Date	Play (Author if known)	Part	Date	Play (Author if known)	Part
16 Apr 1860	<i>The Three Fast Men, or The Female Robinson Crusoes</i>	(George Middleton)	31 May 1860 JB	<i>Son of Malta</i>	'Victim'
17 Apr 1860	<i>The Three Fast Men</i>	(George Middleton)	31 May 1860 JB	<i>My Fellow Clerk</i>	Sayers
18 Apr 1860	<i>The Three Fast Men</i>	(George Middleton)	31 May 1860 JB	<i>Richard III (Act V)</i>	Richard
19 Apr 1860	<i>The Three Fast Men</i>	(George Middleton)			
20 Apr 1860	<i>The Three Fast Men</i>	(George Middleton)			
21 Apr 1860	<i>The Three Fast Men</i>	(George Middleton)			

Phoenix Hall, Petersburg

25 Apr 1860	<i>The Hot Corn Girl</i>	Eugene Sedley*	1 Oct 1860	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo
25 Apr 1860	<i>The Wandering Boys of Switzerland</i>	Count de Courcy*	2 Oct 1860	<i>The Stranger (Kotzebue)</i>	The Stranger
26 Apr 1860	<i>The Three Fast Men</i>	(George Middleton)	3 Oct 1860	<i>Evadne</i>	Ludovico
27 Apr 1860	<i>The Three Fast Men</i>	(George Middleton)	4 Oct 1860	<i>The Wife</i>	Julian St. Pierre
28 Apr 1860	<i>The Three Fast Men</i>	(George Middleton)	5 Oct 1860 B	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
			6 Oct 1860	<i>The Apostate</i>	Count Pescara
			8 Oct 1860	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
			9 Oct 1860	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte
			10 Oct 1860	<i>The Wife</i>	Julian St. Pierre
			11 Oct 1860	<i>Everybody's Friend</i>	Mr. Icebrook
			12 October - 19 October 1860:	did not appear because of accidental gunshot wound	
			20 October 1860 B	Forum speech from <i>Julius Caesar</i>	Mark Antony

Richmond Theatre, Richmond

14 May 1860	<i>The Three Guardsmen</i>	Aramis			
15 May 1860	<i>The Three Guardsmen</i>	(Aramis)			
18 May 1860	<i>Romance of a Poor Young Man</i>	M. de Bevanne s , a man of the world			
25 May 1860	<i>Romance of a Poor Young Man</i>	(M. de Bevanne s)			

*Source: Playbill, Harvard

Season 1860-61

Temperance Hall, Columbus, GA

1 Oct 1860	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo
2 Oct 1860	<i>The Stranger (Kotzebue)</i>	The Stranger
3 Oct 1860	<i>Evadne</i>	Ludovico
4 Oct 1860	<i>The Wife</i>	Julian St. Pierre
5 Oct 1860 B	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
6 Oct 1860	<i>The Apostate</i>	Count Pescara
8 Oct 1860	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
9 Oct 1860	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte
10 Oct 1860	<i>The Wife</i>	Julian St. Pierre
11 Oct 1860	<i>Everybody's Friend</i>	Mr. Icebrook
12 October - 19 October 1860:	did not appear because of accidental gunshot wound	
20 October 1860 B	Forum speech from <i>Julius Caesar</i>	Mark Antony

JB = Joint benefit of JWB & J. W. Collier

For star career, source is local newspapers unless otherwise stated

B = JWB benefit

Date	Play (Author if known)	Part	Date	Play (Author if known)	Part
Montgomery Theatre, Montgomery, AL					
22 October - 27 October 1860	did not appear: still suffering from wound		29 Jan 1861	<i>Evadne</i>	Ludovico
29 Oct 1860	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara	30 Jan 1861	<i>Don Caesar de Bazan</i>	Don Caesar
30 Oct 1860	<i>The Wife</i>	Julian St. Pierre	31 Jan 1861	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
31 Oct 1860	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet	1 Feb 1861	<i>B The Corsican Brothers (Boucicault)</i>	Fabien/Louis
1 Nov 1860	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	2 Feb 1861	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis
2 Nov 1860	<i>B Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo	2 Feb 1861	<i>The Momentous Question</i>	Robert Shell[ley]
3 Nov 1860	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	Gayety Theatre, Albany, NY		
16 Nov 1860*	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo	11 Feb 1861	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo
1 Dec 1860	<i>CB Raffaele, the Reprobate [a]</i>	Raffaele	12 Feb 1861†	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara

13 February - 16 February 1861: did not appear because of dagger injury.

Metropolitan Theatre, Rochester, NY					
21 Jan 1861	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo	18 Feb 1861	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara
22 Jan 61	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte	19 Feb 1861	<i>The Wife</i>	St. Pierre
23 Jan 1861	<i>Othello</i>	Othello	20 Feb 1861	<i>Othello</i>	Othello
24 January 1861	<i>The Wife</i>	St. Pierre	21 Feb 1861	<i>The Stranger</i>	The Stranger
25 Jan 1861	<i>B Richard III</i>	Richard	22 Feb 1861	<i>B Richard III</i>	Richard
25 Jan 1861	<i>B Faint Heart Never Won FairLady [a]</i>	***	23 Feb 1861	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor
26 Jan 1861	<i>Raffaele, the Reprobate</i>	Raffaele	4 Mar 1861	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
28 Jan 1861	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael	5 Mar 1861	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
			6 Mar 1861	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet

CB = Complimentary benefit to JWB *Benefit of Kate Bateman **Part not given (*Rochester Evening Express*) †Injured Mr. Leonard, fell on own dagger.
[a] = afterpiece

Date	Play (Author if known)	Part	Date	Play (Author if known)	Part
7 Mar 1861	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte	23 Mar 1861 m	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte
8 Mar 1861 B	<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>	25 Mar 1861	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo
9 Mar 1861	<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>	26 Mar 1861	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock
11 Mar 1861	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock	27 Mar 1861	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara
12 Mar 1861	<i>Hamlet</i> (Act III)	Hamlet	28 Mar 1861	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
12 Mar 1861	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> (Trial Scene)	Shylock	29 Mar 1861 B	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis
12 Mar 1861	<i>Richard III</i> (Act V)	Richard	29 Mar 1861 B	<i>Raffaelle the Reprobate</i>	Raffaelle
13 Mar 1861	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael	30 Mar 1861 m	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis
14 Mar 1861 B	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis	5 Apr 1861 ‡	<i>The Stranger</i>	The Stranger
15 Mar 1861	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis	5 Apr 1861 ‡	<i>The Hunchback</i>	(Clifford)
15 Mar 1861 *	<i>Raffaelle the Reprobate</i>	Raffaelle	8 Apr 1861 ‡	<i>Camille</i>	?
16 Mar 1861 **	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis	9 Apr 1861 ‡	<i>Evadne</i>	Ludovico
16 Mar 1861 **	<i>Raffaelle the Reprobate</i>	Raffaelle	10 Apr 1861 B ‡	<i>The Wife</i>	St. Pierre
Portland Theatre, Portland, ME			10 Apr 1861 B ‡	<i>Richard III</i> (Act V)	Richard
18 Mar 1861	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	11 Apr 1861 m°	<i>William Tell</i> (Knowles?)	William Tell
19 Mar 1861	<i>Othello</i>	Othello	11 Apr 1861 ‡	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth
20 Mar 1861	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet	12 April 1861 ‡	<i>Hamlet</i> (Act III)	Hamlet
21 Mar 1861	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	13 Apr 1861 ‡§	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis
22 Mar 1861 B †	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth	13 Apr 1861 ‡§	<i>Raffaelle the Reprobate</i>	Raffaelle

* *Atlas & Argus*; Loux, Samples do not include this afterpiece. **Loux, p. 224 (*Albany Times and Courier*). *Atlas & Argus* names 15 March as his last night.
† John McCullough supported JWB (Loux, p. 225: *Advertiser*). ‡ JWB supporting Mrs. Farren (Loux, p. 227-8: *Advertiser*). § Loux, p. 228 **B** = JWB benefit
m = matinee () = part conjectural ° Special matinee on day of fasting and prayer

Date	Play (Author if known)	Part	Date	Play (Author if known)	Part
Gayety Theatre, Albany, NY					
22 Apr 1861	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	2 Nov 1861	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor
23 Apr 1861	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	4 Nov 1861	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo
24 Apr 1861	<i>Evadne</i>	Ludovico	5 Nov 1861	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte
25-27 Apr 1861:	<i>Evadne</i> advertised, but no play may have been performed		6 Nov 1861	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth
			7 Nov 1861	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
			8 Nov 1861	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
			9 Nov 1861	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis

1861-62

Providence Theatre, Providence, RI

21 Oct 1861	<i>The Wife</i>	St. Pierre
22 Oct 1861	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara
23 Oct 1861	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth
24 Oct 1861	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
25 Oct 1861	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard

Metropolitan Theatre, Buffalo, NY

28 Oct 1861	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara
29 Oct 1861	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
30 Oct 1861	<i>Othello</i>	Othello
31 Oct 1861	<i>The Wife</i>	St. Pierre
1 Nov 1861 B?	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard

B = JWB benefit

Metropolitan Theatre, Detroit, MI

11 Nov 1861	<i>The Wife</i>	St. Pierre
12 Nov 1861	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth
13 Nov 1861	<i>Othello</i>	Othello
14 Nov 1861	<i>Othello</i>	Othello
15 Nov 61	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
15 Nov 61	<i>Too Much for Good Nature</i>	Romeo J. Jenkins
16 Nov 1861	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
18 Nov 1861*	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard

Wood's Theatre, Cincinnati, OH

25 Nov 1861	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
26 Nov 1861	<i>Othello</i>	Othello

*Held over as Kate Bateman delayed.

Date	Play	Part	Date	Play	Part
27 Nov 1861	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte	17 Dec 1861	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor
28 Nov 1861	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	18 Dec 1861	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock
29 Nov 1861 B	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth	18 Dec 1861	<i>Macbeth (Act V)</i>	Macbeth
30 Nov 1861	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	19 Dec 1861	<i>The Stranger</i>	The Stranger
2 Dec 1861	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael	20 Dec 1861 B	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
3 Dec 1861	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael	20 Dec 1861 B	<i>Too Much for Good Nature</i>	Romeo J. Jenkins
4 Dec 1861	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet	21 Dec 1861	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
5 Dec 1861	<i>The Wife</i>	St. Pierre	23 Dec 1861	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
5 Dec 1861	<i>Macbeth (Act V)</i>	Macbeth			

Metropolitan Hall, Indianapolis, IN

6 Dec 1861 B	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock	25 Dec 1861	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
6 Dec 1861 B	<i>Too Much for Good Nature</i>	Romeo J. Jenkins	26 Dec 1861	<i>Othello</i>	Othello
7 Dec 1861	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	27 Dec 1861	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet

Louisville Theatre, Louisville, KY

9 Dec 1861	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	28 Dec 1861	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor
10 Dec 1861	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte	30 Dec 1861 B	<i>Too Much for Good Nature</i>	Romeo J. Jenkins
11 Dec 1861	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth	31 Dec 1861	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard

St. Louis Theatre, St. Louis, MO

12 Dec 1861	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	6 Jan 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
13 Dec 1861 B	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet	7 Jan 1862	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
14 Dec 1861	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor			
16 Dec 1861	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara	8 Jan 1862	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth

B = JWB benefit

Date	Play	Part	Date	Play	Part
9 Jan 1862	<i>Othello</i>	Othello	30 Jan 1862	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara
10 Jan 1862 B	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara	31 Jan 1862 B	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth
11 Jan 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	1 Feb 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
13 Jan 1862	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	Holliday Street Theatre, Baltimore, MD		
14 Jan 1862	<i>The Wife</i>	St. Pierre			
15 Jan 1862	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael			
16 Jan 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard			
17 Jan 1862 B	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte			
17 Jan 1862 B	<i>Too Much for Good Nature</i>	Romeo J. Jenkins			
18 Jan 1862	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael	21 Feb 1862 B	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara
18 Jan 1862	<i>Too Much for Good Nature</i>	Romeo J. Jenkins	21 Feb 1862 B	<i>Too Much for Good Nature</i>	Romeo J. Jenkins
			22 Feb 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
			24 Feb 1862	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
			25 Feb 1862	<i>The Stranger</i>	The Stranger
			26 Feb 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
			27 Feb 1862	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth
			28 Feb 1862 B	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
			1 Mar 1862	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara
			3 Mar 1862	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
			4 Mar 1862	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor
			5 Mar 1862	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
			6 Mar 1862	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo

McVicker's Theatre, Chicago, IL

20 Jan 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
21 Jan 1862	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte
22 Jan 1862	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara
23 Jan 1862	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo
24 Jan 1862 B	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
25 Jan 1862	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor
27 Jan 1862	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
28 Jan 1862	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
29 Jan 1862	<i>Othello</i>	Othello

B = JWB benefit

*injured nose falling on stage (*Spirit of the Times*, March 8).

Date	Play	Part	Date	Play	Part
7 Mar 1862 TB	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	2 Apr 1862	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock
8 Mar 1862*	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	3 Apr 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
Front Street Theatre, Baltimore, MD			4 Apr 1862 CB	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor
11 Mar 1862†	<i>Othello</i> (Acts III-V)	Othello	5 Apr 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard

Mary Provost's Theatre, New York, NY

17 Mar 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	21 Apr 1862	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor
18 Mar 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	22 Apr 1862	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
19 Mar 1862	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	23 Apr 1862	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth
20 Mar 1862	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	24 Apr 1862	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara
21 Mar 1862 B‡	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	25 Apr 1862 B	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
22 Mar 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	26 Apr 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
24 Mar 1862	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet	28 Apr 1862	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
25 Mar 1862	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara	29 Apr 1862	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
26 Mar 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	30 Apr 1862	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock
27 Mar 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	1 May 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
28 Mar 1862 B	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth	2 May 1862 B	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo
29 Mar 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	3 May 1862	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
31 Mar 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	Boston Museum, Boston, MA		
1 Apr 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	12 May 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard

TB = Testimonial Benefit from the young men of the city *JWB's sword blade flew off handle into orchestra pit *NY Clipper*, March 22) †Complimentary benefit to George Kunkel **B** = JWB benefit ‡E.L. Tilton injured by falling off stage. **CB** = Complimentary benefit to JWB

Date	Play	Part	Date	Play	Part
13 May 1862	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo	11 June 1862	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo
14 May 1862	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	12 June 1862	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara
15 May 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	13 June 1862 B?	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
16 May 1862 B	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet	14 June 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
17 May 1862 m	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo	16 June 1862	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth
19 May 1862	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara	17 June 1862	<i>Othello</i>	Othello
20 May 1862	<i>The Stranger</i>	The Stranger	18 June 1862	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
21 May 1862	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	19 June 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
21 May 1862	<i>Too Much for Good Nature</i>	(Romeo J. Jenkins)	20 June 1862 B	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor
22 May 1862	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte	21 June 1862	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte
23 May 1862 B	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard			
24 May 1862 m	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte			

Louisville Theatre, Louisville, KY

23-24 June 1862: detained in Chicago by illness

McVicker's Theatre, Chicago, IL					
2 June 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	25 June 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
3 June 1862	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara	26 June 1862	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
4 June 1862	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock	27 June 1862 B?	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor
5 June 1862	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte	28 June 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
6 June 1862 B	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	30 June 1862	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock

1862-63

Opera House, Lexington, KY

9 June 1862	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet	23 Oct 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard*
10 June 1862	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet			

B = JWB benefit m = matinee () Performance conjectural (Loux, p. 286, Samples, p. 216) *Loux, p. 308

Date	Play	Part	Date	Play	Part
------	------	------	------	------	------

24 Oct 1862 *The Robbers*

Charles de Moor*

14 Nov 1862 **B** *Richard III*

Richard

15 Nov 1862 *The Robbers*

Charles de Moor

Louisville Theatre, Louisville, KY

17 Nov 1862 *Hamlet*

Hamlet

27 Oct 1862 *The Lady of Lyons*

Claude Melnotte

18 Nov 1862 *Othello*

Othello

28 Oct 1862 *Richard III*

Richard

19 Nov 1862 *The Apostate*

Pescara

29 Oct 1862 *The Apostate*

Pescara

20 Nov 1862 *The Robbers*

Charles de Moor

30 Oct 1862 *Macbeth*

Macbeth

21 Nov 1862 **B** *Money*

Alfred Evelyn

31 Oct 1862 **B** *The Marble Heart***

Phidias/Raphael

22 Nov 1862 *The Apostate*

Pescara

1 Nov 1862 *Richard III*

Richard

3 Nov 1862 *The Robbers*

Charles de Moor

Metropolitan Theatre, Indianapolis, IN

4 Nov 1862 *Macbeth*

Macbeth

24 Nov 1862 *Macbeth*

Macbeth

5 Nov 1862 *Richard III*

Richard

25 Nov 1862 *The Lady of Lyons*

Claude Melnotte

6 Nov 1862 *The Merchant of Venice*

Shylock

26 Nov 1862 *Hamlet*

Hamlet

7 Nov 1862 **B** *Money (Edward Bulwer-Lytton)*

Alfred Evelyn

27 Nov 1862 *Othello*

Othello

8 Nov 1862 *The Corsican Brothers*

Fabien/Louis

28 Nov 1862 **B** *Richard III*

Richard

29 Nov 1862 *The Robbers*

Charles de Moor

National Theatre, Cincinnati, OH

10 Nov 1862 *Richard III*

Richard

McVicker's Theatre, Chicago, IL

11 Nov 1862 *The Lady of Lyons*

Claude Melnotte

1 Dec 1862 *The Lady of Lyons*

Claude Melnotte

12 Nov 1862 *Macbeth*

Macbeth

2 Dec 1862 *Richard III*

Richard

13 Nov 1862 *The Corsican Brothers*

Fabien/Louis

3 Dec 1862 *The Merchant of Venice*

Shylock

4 Dec 1862 *Othello*

Othello

* Loux, p. 308 ** With new introductory scene by G.F. Fuller **B** = JWB benefit

Date	Play	Part	Date	Play	Part
5 Dec 1862	B* <i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet	26 Dec 1862:	probably no performance was given; newspapers unavailable	
6 Dec 1862	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara	27 Dec 1862	B <i>Richard III</i>	Richard
8 Dec 1862	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael	29 Dec 1862	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
9 Dec 1862	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael	30 Dec 1862	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
10 Dec 1862	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth	31 Dec 1862	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
11 Dec 1862	<i>The Stranger</i>	The Stranger	1 Jan 1863	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis
12 Dec 1862	B <i>Richard III</i>	Richard	2 Jan 1863	<i>Money</i>	Alfred Evelyn
13 Dec 1862	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	3 Jan 1863	B <i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock
15 Dec 1862	<i>Money</i>	Alfred Evelyn	3 Jan 1863	B <i>Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Petruchio
16 Dec 1862	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara			

Metropolitan Theatre, Indianapolis, IN

17 Dec 1862	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo	5 Jan 1863	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
18 Dec 1862	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth	6 Jan 1863	<i>Othello</i>	Othello
19 Dec 1862	B <i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock	7 Jan 1863	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
19 Dec 1862	B <i>Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Petruchio	8 Jan 1863	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis
20 Dec 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	9 Jan 1863	B <i>Money</i>	Alfred Evelyn

St. Louis Theatre, St. Louis, MO

22 Dec 1862	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	9 Jan 1863	B <i>Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Petruchio
23 Dec 1862	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet			
24 Dec 1862	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara			
25 Dec 1862	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth			

Boston Museum, Boston, MA

19 Jan 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	20 Jan 1863	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte
20 Jan 1863	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>		21 Jan 1863	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara

B* Probably JWB benefit: not mentioned in newspapers B = JWB benefit

Date	Play	Part	Date	Play	Part
18 Mar 1863	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael	1 May 1863 B	<i>The Stranger</i>	The Stranger
19 Mar 1863	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara	2 May 1863	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor
20 Mar 1863 B	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	4 May 1863	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis
21 Mar 1863 m	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael	5 May 1863	<i>Othello</i>	Othello
21 Mar 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	6-7 May 1863: Relinquished two nights to Grau's Italian Opera Troupe		
			8 May 1863 B	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth
			9 May 1863	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor

Grover's Theatre, Washington, DC

11 Apr 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	McVicker's Theatre, Chicago, IL		
13 Apr 1863	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael	18 May 1863	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte
14 Apr 1863	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet	19 May 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
15 Apr 1863	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte	20 May 1863	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
16 Apr 1863	<i>Money</i>	Alfred Evelyn	21 May 1863	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
17 Apr 1863 B	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock	22 May 1863 B	<i>Money</i>	Alfred Evelyn
17 Apr 1863 B	<i>Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Petruchio	23 May 1863	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor
18 Apr 1863	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael	25 May 1863	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo

Washington Theatre, Washington, DC*

27 Apr 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	26 May 1863	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara
28 Apr 1863	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara	27 May 1863	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock
29 Apr 1863	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael	28 May 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard [chek source]
30 Apr 1863	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo	29 May 1863 B	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
			30 May 1863	<i>Othello</i>	Othello [chek sauce]

B = JWB benefit m = matinee *Under own management, possibly in partnership with M. W. Canning

Date	Play	Part	Date	Play	Part
1 June 1863	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	26 June 1863	B <i>Money</i>	Alfred Evelyn
2 June 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	27 June 1863 relinquished to local amateur for his debut*		
3 June 1863	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael			
4 June 1863	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo	Academy of Music, Cleveland, OH		
5 June 1863	B <i>The Stranger</i>	The Stranger	30 June 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
5 June 1863	B <i>Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Petruchio	1 July 1863	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
6 June 1863	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock	2 July 1863	<i>Money</i>	Alfred Evelyn
6 June 1863	<i>Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Petruchio	3 July 1863	B <i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor

St. Louis Theatre, St. Louis, MO

15 June 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
16 June 1863	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
17 June 1863	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara
18 June 1863	<i>The Stranger</i>	The Stranger
19 June 1863	B? <i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis
20 June 1863	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis
22 June 1863	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
23 June 1863	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor
24 June 1863	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock
24 June 1863	<i>Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Petruchio
25 June 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard

Metropolitan Theatre, Buffalo, NY

6 July 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
7 July 1863	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte
8 July 1863	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara
9 July 1863	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
10 July 1863	B <i>Money</i>	Alfred Evelyn
10 July 1863	B <i>Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Petruchio
11 July 1863	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth

1863-64

Howard Athenaeum, Boston, MA

28 Sept 1863	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte
29 Sept 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard

B = JWB benefit * Source: *Spirit of the Times*, July 11

Date	Play	Part	Date	Play	Part
30 Sept 1863	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet			
1 Oct 1863	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara	Academy of Music, Providence, RI*		
2 Oct 1863 B	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	16 Oct 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
3 Oct 1863	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	17 Oct 1863	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte
5 Oct 1863	<i>Othello</i>	Othello	19 Oct 1863	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
6 Oct 1863	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael			
7 Oct 1863	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth	Allyn Hall, Hartford, CT*		
8 Oct 1863	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara	20 Oct 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
9 Oct 1863 B	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock	21 Oct 1863	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte
9 Oct 1863 B	<i>Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Petruchio	22 Oct 1863	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
10 Oct 1863 m	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael			
10 Oct 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	Music Hall, Springfield, MA*		
			23 Oct 1863	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet

Worcester Theatre, Worcester, MA *

12 Oct 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
13 Oct 1863	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte

Music Hall, Springfield, MA *

14 Oct 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
15 Oct 1863	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte

Academy of Music, Brooklyn, NY*

24 Oct 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
26 Oct 1863	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael

Music Hall, New Haven, CT*

27 Oct 1863	<i>The Marble Heart**</i>	Phidias/Raphael
28 Oct 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard

B = JWB benefit m = matinee * Combination tour under own management ***Richard III* originally advertised. *Marble Heart* substituted (*NH Palladium*, 24 Oct)

Date	Play	Part	Date	Play	Part
------	------	------	------	------	------

29 Oct 1863	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet	30 Nov 1863	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
-------------	---------------	--------	-------------	-------------------------	-----------------

Ford's Theatre, Washington, DC

2 Nov 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	1 Dec 1863	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
3 Nov 1863	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara	2 Dec 1863	<i>Othello</i>	Iago
4 Nov 1863	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	3 Dec 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
5 Nov 1863	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte	4 Dec 1863	<i>The Stranger</i>	The Stranger
6 Nov 1863	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock	4 Dec 1863	<i>Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Petruchio
6 Nov 1863	<i>Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Petruchio	5 Dec 1863	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor

Union Theatre, Leavenworth, KS

7 Nov 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	19-21 Dec 1863	Delayed, probably by heavy snow**	
9 Nov 1863	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael	22 Dec 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard**
10 Nov 1863	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet	23 Dec 1863	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet**
11 Nov 1863	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo	24 Dec 1863	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte
12 Nov 1863	<i>Money</i>	Alfred Evelyn	25 Dec 1863	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor
13 Nov 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	26 Dec 1863	<i>Money</i>	Alfred Evelyn
14 Nov 1863	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	26 Dec 1863	<i>Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Petruchio

Academy of Music, Cleveland, OH

26 Nov 1863	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte	29 Dec 1863	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
27 Nov 1863	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet	30 Dec 1863	<i>Richelieu</i>	Cardinal Richelieu
28 Nov 1863	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	31 Dec 1863	<i>Othello</i>	Iago

B = JWB benefit *Cut by McCollom above eye during fight ** Source: Barbee transcripts of local papers

Date	Play	Part	Date	Play	Part
Corby's Hall, St. Joseph, MO					
5 Jan 1864	Various readings while snowbound en route for St. Louis		26 Jan 1864	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
			27 Jan 1864	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis
			28 Jan 1864	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis
			29 Jan 1864*	<i>Damon and Pythias</i>	Damon
			30 Jan 1864	<i>B Macbeth</i>	Macbeth
St. Louis Theatre, St. Louis, MO					
4-11 Jan 1864:	Unable to arrive, snowbound at St. Joseph		Nashville Theatre, Nashville, TN		
12 Jan 1864	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	1 Feb 1864	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
13 Jan 1864	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet	2 Feb 1864	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara
14 Jan 1864	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	3 Feb 1864	<i>Richelieu</i>	Richelieu
15 Jan 1864	<i>B Money</i>	Alfred Evelyn	4 Feb 1864	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet
15 Jan 1864	<i>B Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Petruchio	5 Feb 1864	<i>B Money</i>	Alfred Evelyn
16 Jan 1864	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	6 Feb 1864	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor
Wood's Theatre, Louisville, KY					
18 Jan 1864	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	8 Feb 1864	<i>Othello</i>	Iago
19 Jan 1864	<i>Othello</i>	Othello	9 Feb 1864	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard
20 Jan 1864	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor	10 Feb 1864	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis
21 Jan 1864	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara	11 Feb 1864	<i>Damon and Pythias</i>	Damon
22 Jan 1864	<i>B Money</i>	Alfred Evelyn	12 Feb 1864	<i>B The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock
23 Jan 1864	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara	12 Feb 1864	<i>B Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Petruchio
25 Jan 1864	<i>Richelieu</i>	Richelieu	13 Feb 1864	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis

B = JWB benefit * Benefit of J. W. Albaugh (Pythias)

Date	Play	Part	Date	Play	Part
26 Apr 1864	<i>Money</i>	Alfred Evelyn	19 May 1864	<i>The Wife</i>	St. Pierre
27 Apr 1864	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara	20 May 1864 B	<i>Macbeth</i>	Macbeth
28 Apr 1864	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte	21 May 1864 m	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
29 Apr 1864 B	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard	23 May 1864	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis
30 Apr 1864 m	<i>Money</i>	Alfred Evelyn	24 May 1864	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis
2 May 1864	<i>Othello</i>	Othello	25 May 1864 m	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
3 May 1864	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo	25 May 1864	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis
4 May 1864	<i>Damon and Pythias</i>	Damon	26 May 1864	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael
5 May 1864	<i>The Apostate</i>	Pescara	27 May 1864 B	<i>Ugolino (Junius Brutus Booth)</i>	Ugolino
6 May 1864 B	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hamlet	27 May 1864 B	<i>Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Petruchio
7 May 1864 m	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Romeo	28 May 1864	<i>The Corsican Brothers</i>	Fabien/Louis
9 May 1864	<i>Richelieu</i>	Richelieu			
10 May 1864	<i>Othello</i>	Iago			
11 May 1864	<i>The Robbers</i>	Charles de Moor			
12 May 1864	<i>Richard III</i>	Richard			
13 May 1864 B	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Shylock			
13 May 1864 B	<i>Katharine and Petruchio</i>	Petruchio			
14 May 1864 m	<i>The Lady of Lyons</i>	Claude Melnotte			
16 May 1864	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael			
17 May 1864	<i>The Marble Heart</i>	Phidias/Raphael			
18 May 1864	<i>Damon and Pythias</i>	Damon			

1864-65

Winter Garden, New York, NY

25 Nov 1864* *Julius Caesar*

Mark Antony

Grover's Theatre, Washington, DC

20 Jan 1865** *Romeo and Juliet*

Romeo

Ford's Theatre, Washington, DC

18 Mar 1865† *The Apostate*

Pescara

B = JWB benefit m = matinee * Shakespeare statue fund benefit ** Benefit of Avonia Jones † Benefit of John McCullough

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Aldrich, Mrs. Thomas Bailey. *Crowding Memories*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920.
- Alfriend, John Shadrach. *History of Zion Episcopal Church, Saint Andrew's Parish, Charles Town, West Virginia*. Charles Town, WV, 1973.
- The Actor*. New York: Graham, 1846.
- The Amateur; or, Guide to the Stage. Containing Lessons for Theatrical Novices . . . by a Retired Performer. Philadelphia: Fisher, [c. 1852].
- The American Theatre: A Sum of Its Parts*. New York: Samuel French, 1971.
- Andreas, A. T. *History of Chicago from the Earliest Period to the Present Time*. Vol. 2. Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1884.
- Archer, Stephen M. *Junius Brutus Booth: Theatrical Prometheus*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992.
- Badeau, Adam. *The Vagabond*. New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1859.
- Bagley, Mary. *The Front Row: Missouri's Grand Theatres*. St. Louis, 1984.
- Baker, Lafayette C. *History of the United States Secret Service*. Philadelphia: L.C. Baker, 1867.
- Baker, Michael. *The Rise of the Victorian Actor*. Croom Helm Social History Series. London: Croom Helm, 1978.
- [Banim, John & Richard Lalor Sheil]. *Damon and Pythias*. London: John Warren, 1821.
- Bank, Rosemarie K. *Theatre Culture in America, 1825-1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Barnes, Eric Wollencott. *The Lady of Fashion: The Life and the Theatre of Anna Cora Mowatt*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954.
- Barrett, Lawrence. *Edwin Forrest*. American Actor series. Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1881.
- Bernheim, Alfred L. *The Business of the Theatre. An Economic History of the American Theatre 1750-1932*. 1932. Reprint. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964.
- Bill, Alfred Hoyt. *The Beleaguered City: Richmond, 1861-65*. NY: Knopf, 1946.
- Blake, Charles. *An Historical Account of the Providence Stage*. Providence, RI: George H. Whitney, 1866.
- Blitz, Antonio. *Fifty Years in the Magic Circle*. Hartford, CT: Belknap & Bliss, 1871.
- Booth, Edwin & William Winter. *Between Actor and Critic: Selected Letters of Edwin Booth and William Winter*. Edited by Daniel J. Watermeier. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.
- Booth, John Wilkes. *Right or Wrong, God Judge Me: The Writings of John Wilkes Booth*. Edited by John Rhodehamel & Louise Taper. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997.
- Booth, Junius Brutus. *Ugolino: A Tragedy in Three Acts*. French's American Drama no. 120. New York: Samuel French, n.d.
- Booth, Mary Devlin. *The Letters and Notebooks of Mary Devlin Booth*. Edited by L. Terry Oggel. Contributions in Drama and Theatre Studies no. 23. New York: Greenwood Press, 1987.
- Bordman, Gerald, ed. *The Oxford Companion to American Theatre*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Boucicault, Dion. *The Corsican Brothers*. In *The Magistrate and Other Nineteenth Century Plays*. Edited by Michael R. Booth. London: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- Brown, Thomas Allston. *History of the American Stage*. New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1870.
- . *A History of the New York Stage, 1732-1901*. 3 vols. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1903.
- Bryan, George Sands. *The Great American Myth*. New York: Carrick & Evans, 1940. Reprint. Chicago: American House, 1990.
- Buckingham, J.E. *Reminiscences and Souvenirs of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*. Washington: Darby, 1894.

- Bulwer-Lytton, Edward. *The Lady of Lyons*. In *Dramatic Works*, vol. 1. London: George Routledge & Sons, 1876.
- . *Money*. In *Nineteenth-century Plays*. The World's Classics no. 533. London: Oxford University Press, 1953.
- . *Richelieu; or, The Conspiracy*. In *Dramatic Works*, vol. 1 as above.
- Bunn, Alfred. *Old England and New England, in a Series of Views Taken on the Spot*. Philadelphia: A. Hart, 1853.
- Burge, James C. *Lines of Business: Casting Practice and Policy in the American Theatre 1752-1899*. New York: Peter Lang, 1986.
- Bushong, Millard Kessler. *Historic Jefferson County*. Boyce, VA: Carr Publ. Co., 1972.
- Cappon, Lester J. *Virginia Newspapers 1821-1935*. New York: Appleton-Century, 1936.
- Carroll, David. *The Matinee Idols*. London: Peter Owen, 1972.
- Chicago: A Strangers' and Tourists' Guide to the City of Chicago*. Chicago: Religious & Philosophical Publishing Association, 1866.
- Christian, William Asbury. *Richmond: Her Past and Present*. Richmond: L.H. Jenkins, 1912.
- Clark, Susie Champney. *John McCullough as Man, Actor and Spirit*. Boston: Murray & Emory Co., 1905.
- Clarke, Asia Booth. *Booth Memorials: Passages, Incidents, and Anecdotes in the Life of Junius Brutus Booth (The Elder)*. New York: Carleton, 1866.
- . *The Elder and the Younger Booth*. Boston: James R. Osgood, 1882.
- . *Personal Recollections of the Elder Booth*. London: privately printed, n.d.
- . *The Unlocked Book: a Memoir of John Wilkes Booth*. Edited by Eleanor Farjeon. London: Faber & Faber, 1938.
- Click, Patricia Catherine. *The Spirit of the Times: Amusements in Nineteenth-Century Baltimore, Norfolk, and Richmond*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989.
- Colman, George, the Younger. *The Heir at Law: a Comedy, in Five Acts*. London: Longman, n.d..
- [Cowell, Emilie]. *The Cowells in America: Being the Diary of Mrs. Sam Cowell during her Husband's Concert Tour in the Years 1860-1861*. Edited by M. Willson Disher. London: Oxford University Press, 1934.
- Cowley, Hannah. *The Belle's Stratagem*. Dolby's British Theatre. London: T. Dolby, 1823.
- Coyne, J. Stirling. *Everybody's Friend: An Original Comedy in Three Acts*. Lacy's Acting Edition of Plays, vol. 40. London: Thomas Hailes Lacy, n.d..
- Crabb, Alfred Leland. *Nashville: Personality of a City*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1960.
- Crane, William H. *Footprints and Echoes*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1927.
- Crawford, Mary Caroline. *Romantic Days in Old Boston: The Story of the City and of its People during the Nineteenth Century*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1910.
- Davidge, William Pleater. *Footlight Flashes*. New York: American News Co., 1866.
- Dimond, William. *The Broken Sword, a Grand Melo-Drama*. London: J. Barker, 1816.
- Disher, Maurice Willson. *Blood and Thunder: Mid-Victorian Melodrama and its Origins*. London: Frederick Muller, 1949.
- Dolson, Hildegard. *The Great Oildorado*. New York: Random House, 1959.
- Dormon, James H. *Theatre in the Ante-Bellum South: 1815-1861*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967.
- Drew, John. *My Years on the Stage*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1922.
- Drew, Louisa Lane (Mrs. John Drew). *Autobiographical Sketch of Mrs. Drew*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1900.
- Durham, Weldon B., ed. *American Theatre Companies, 1749-1887*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1986.
- Edgett, Edwin F. *Edward Loomis Davenport: A Biography*. Publications of the Dunlap Society, n.s. 14. New York: Dunlap Society, 1901.

- Ellsler, John Adam. *The Stage Memories of John A. Ellsler*. Cleveland, OH: Rowfant Club, 1950.
- Esslinger, Dean R. *Friends for 200 Years: A History of Baltimore's Oldest School*. Baltimore: Friends School, 1983.
- Falconer, Edmund. *Too Much for Good Nature*. Lacy's Acting Edition of Plays, vol. 42. London: Thomas Hailes Lacy, n.d.
- Fawkes, Richard. *Dion Boucicault: A Biography*. London: Quartet, 1979.
- Ferguson, William J. *I Saw Booth Shoot Lincoln*. 1930. Reprint. Austin, TX: Pemberton Press, 1969.
- Fontane, Theodor. *Shakespeare in the London Theatre 1855-58*. Translated by Russell Jackson. London: Society for Theatre Research, 1999.
- Ford, George D. *These Were Actors: A Story of the Chapmans and the Drakes*. New York: Library Publishers, 1955.
- [Ford, Tom]. *A Peep Behind the Curtain*. By a Boston Supernumerary. Boston: Redding & Co., 1850.
- Forrester, Izola. *This One Mad Act: The Unknown Story of John Wilkes Booth and His Family*. By His Granddaughter. Boston: Hale, Cushman & Flint, 1937.
- Furtwangler, Albert. *Assassin on Stage: Brutus, Hamlet, and the Death of Lincoln*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991.
- Garraty, John A. & Mark C. Carnes, eds. *American National Biography*. Vol. 19. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Gerould, Daniel, ed. *Melodrama*. New York: NY Literary Forum, 1980.
- Glazer, Irvin R. *Philadelphia Theatres, A-Z*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1986.
- Goodale, Katherine. *Behind the Scenes with Edwin Booth*. Boston, 1931. Reprint. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969.
- Goodspeed, Weston Arthur. *History of Cook County, Illinois*. Vol. 1. Chicago: Goodspeed Historical Assoc., [c. 1911].
- Gottschalk, Louis Moreau. *Notes of a Pianist*. Edited by Jeanne Behrend. London, 1881. Reprint. New York: Knopf, 1964.
- Gould, Thomas R. *The Tragedian: An Essay on the Histrionic Genius of Junius Brutus Booth*. New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1868.
- The Great Conspiracy: A Book of Absorbing Interest!* Philadelphia: Barclay & Co., 1866.
- Grimsted, David. *Melodrama Unveiled: American Theatre and Culture 1800-1850*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.
- Grossmann, Edwina Booth. *Edwin Booth: Recollections by his Daughter*. London: Osgood, McIlvaine & Co., 1894.
- Gutman, Richard J.S. & Kellie O. Gutman. *John Wilkes Booth Himself*. Dover, MA: Hired Hand Press, 1979.
- Haco, Dion J. *John Wilkes Booth, The Assassinator of President Lincoln*. Dawley's New War Novels no. 9. New York: T.R. Dawley, 1865.
- Halttunen, Karen. *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.
- Hamilton, Allan McLane. *Recollections of an Alienist*. New York: Geo. H. Doran, 1916.
- Hanchett, William. *The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983.
- Hankey, Julie, ed. *Richard III*, by William Shakespeare. Plays in Performance series. London: Junction Books, 1981.
- Hay, John. *Lincoln and the Civil War in the Letters and Diaries of John Hay*. Edited by Tyler Dennett. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1939.
- Hewitt, John Hill. *Shadows on the Wall; or, Glimpses of the Past*. 1877. Reprint. New York: AMS Press, [1971].
- Hill, Sarah Jane Full. *Mrs. Hill's Journal: Civil War Reminiscences*. Edited by Mark M. Krug. Chicago: R.R. Donnelley & Sons, 1980.
- Hobbs, William. *Techniques of the Stage Fight*. Introduction by Laurence Olivier. London: Studio Vista, 1967.

- Hugo, Victor. *The Dramas of Victor Hugo*. [In English]. 2 vols. London: H.S. Nichols, 1896.
- Hunter, Alexander & Polkinhorn, J.H. *New National Theater, Washington, DC: A Record of Fifty Years*. Washington: R.O. Polkinhorn, 1885.
- Hutton, Laurence. *Edwin Booth*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1893.
- Jennings, John Joseph. *Theatrical and Circus Life; or, Secrets of the Stage, Greenroom and Sawdust Arena*. St. Louis: M.S. Barnett, 1882.
- Jerome, Jerome K. *On the Stage--and Off*. 1885. Reprint. Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1991.
- Johnson, Claudia D. & Vernon E. Johnson, eds. *Nineteenth Century Theatrical Memoirs*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982.
- Kendall, John Smith. *The Golden Age of the New Orleans Theater*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952.
- Kimmel, Stanley. *The Mad Booths of Maryland*. 2nd rev. ed. New York: Dover Publications, 1969.
- Kincaid, Arthur, ed. *John Wilkes Booth, Actor: The Proceedings of a Conference Weekend in Bel Air, Maryland, May 1988*. North Leigh, Oxon.: privately printed, 1989.
- Knibb, Joyce G. & Patricia A. Mehrtens. *The Elusive Booths of Burrillville: An Investigation of John Wilkes Booth's Alleged Wife and Daughter*. Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1991.
- Kolin, Philip C., ed. *Shakespeare in the South: Essays on Performance*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983.
- Lamb, John Emerson & Eli M. Lamb. *Circular of Milton Boarding School, Situated in Baltimore County, Md., with Terms of Admittance and Rules and Regulations*. Baltimore: James Lucas & Son, 1859.
- Laughlin, Clara E. *Traveling through Life: Being the Autobiography of Clara E. Laughlin*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934.
- Leavitt, Michael B. *Fifty Years in Theatrical Management*. New York: Broadway Publishing Co., 1912.
- Leman, Walter Moore. *Memories of an Old Actor*. Reprint. New York: Benjamin Blom, [1969].
- Levine, Lawrence W. *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Lewis, Lloyd. *Myths after Lincoln*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929.
- Life and Memoirs of William Warren, Boston's Favorite Comedian*. Boston: James Daly, 1888.
- Lockridge, Richard. *Darling of Misfortune: Edwin Booth: 1833-1893*. New York: Century Co., 1932.
- Logan, Olive. *Before the Footlights and Behind the Scenes*. Philadelphia: Parmelee & Co., 1870.
- Long, Augustus White. *Son of Carolina*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1939.
- Long, Everette B. & Barbara Long. *The Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac 1861-65*. 1971. Repr. New York: Da Capo, 1985.
- McArthur, Benjamin. *Actors and American Culture, 1880-1920*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984.
- McConachie, Bruce A. *Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre and Society, 1820-1870*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992.
- Mahoney, Ella V. *Sketches of Tudor Hall and the Booth Family*. Bel Air, MD: Ella V. Mahoney, 1925.
- Malone, Dumas, ed. *Dictionary of American Biography*. New York: Scribner, 1929 & 1936.
- Mammen, Edward William. *The Old Stock Company School of Acting: A Study of the Boston Museum*. Boston: Trustees of the Public Library, 1945.
- Martin, John H. *Columbus, Georgia from its Selection as a Trading Post Town in 1827 to its Partial Destruction by Wilson's Raid in 1865*. Easley, SC: Georgia Genealogical Reprints, 1972.

- Mason, Jeffrey D. *Melodrama and the Myth of America*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993.
- Matthews, Brander, & Laurence Hutton, eds. *Actors and Actresses of Great Britain and the United States*. Vol. 3. New York: Cassell & Co., 1886.
- Mearns, David Chambers. *Largely Lincoln*. N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1961.
- Miller, Ernest Conrad. *John Wilkes Booth in the Pennsylvania Oil Region*. Meadville, PA: Crawford County Historical Society, 1987.
- Miller, Tice L. *Bohemians and Critics: American Theatre Criticism in the Nineteenth Century*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1991.
- Moody, Richard. *America Takes the Stage: Romanticism in American Drama and Theatre, 1750-1900*. Indiana University Publications, Humanities Series no. 34. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955.
- . *Edwin Forrest: First Star of the American Stage*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960.
- Morris, Clara. *A Life on the Stage*. New York: McClure, Phillips & Co., 1901.
- Morrison, Michael A. *John Barrymore, Shakespearean Actor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Morton, John Maddison. *Whitebait at Greenwich*. Lacy's Acting Edition of Plays, vol. 12. London: Thomas Hailes Lacy, n.d..
- Murdoch, James E. *The Stage; or, Recollections of Actors and Acting from an Experience of Fifty Years*. Introduction by J. Bunting. 1880. Reprint. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969.
- Moses, Montrose J. & John Mason Brown, eds. *The American Theatre as Seen by its Critics 1752-1934*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1934.
- Nagler, A. M., ed. *A Source Book in Theatrical History*. New York: Dover, 1959.
- Odell, George Clinton Densmore. *Annals of the New York Stage*. 15 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1927-49.
- O'Keeffe, John. *Wild Oats; or, The Strolling Gentleman*. Oxberry's edition. London: W. Simkin & R. Marshall, 1820.
- Olszewski, George. *The Restoration of Ford's Theatre*. Washington, DC: Interior Dept., 1963.
- Owens, Mary C. [Stevens]. *Memories of the Professional and Social Life of John E. Owens, by his Wife*. Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1892.
- Phelps, Henry Pitt. *Players of a Century: A Record of the Albany Stage*. Albany, NY: Joseph McDonough, 1880.
- Poore, Ben Perley, ed. *The Conspiracy Trial for the Murder of the President*. Boston: J.E. Tilton, 1865.
- Power, Tyrone. *Impressions of America During the Years 1833, 1834, and 1835*. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1836.
- Reach, Angus Bethune. *Jenny Lind at Last; or, The Swedish Nightingale*. French's Minor Drama, Acting Edition, no. 189. New York: Samuel French, n.d.
- Rede, Leman Thomas. *The Guide to the Stage . . . With Additional Information, Making It Applicable to the American Stage*. Edited by Francis C. Wemyss. New York: Samuel French, 1863.
- Reignolds-Winslow, Catherine Mary. *Yesterdays with Actors*. Boston: Cupples & Hurd, 1887.
- Rhodehamel, John. See Booth, John Wilkes.
- Robinson, William S. *"Warrington" Pen-Portraits*. Boston: Mrs. W.S. Robinson, 1877.
- Royle, Edwin Milton. *Edwin Booth as I Knew Him*. New York: The Players, 1933.
- Ruggles, Eleanor. *Prince of Players: Edwin Booth*. New York: Norton, 1953.
- Rules and Regulations for the Government of the Students at St. Timothy's Hall, Catonsville, Baltimore Co., Maryland*. Baltimore: Joseph Robinson, 1852.
- Rush, James. *The Philosophy of the Human Voice*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Grigg & Elliott, 1833.
- Samples, Gordon. *Lust for Fame: The Stage Career of John Wilkes Booth*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1982.

- Sandburg, Carl. *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*. Vol. 4. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1939.
- Scharf, J. Thomas. *History of Baltimore City and County*. Part 2. Baltimore: Regional Publishing Co., 1971.
- Scharf, J. Thomas & Thompson Westcott. *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884*. 3 vols. Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1884.
- Schiller, Friedrich. *The Robbers. A Tragedy. . . . The Second American Edition, as Adapted for Representation by Mr. Marriott*. New York: Samuel Campbell, 1795.
- Selby, Charles. *The Marble Heart*. Lacy's Acting Edition of Plays. [London]: Thomas Hailes Lacy, [1850].
- Senelick, Laurence. *The Age and Stage of George L. Fox, 1825-1877*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1988.
- Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. New York: M. Douglas., n.d.
- Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. New York: Samuel French, n.d..
- Shakespeare, William. *Othello*. New York: William Taylor & Co., 1846.
- Shakespeare, William. *Richard III*. Adapted by Colley Cibber. New York: Samuel French, n.d.
- Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. New York: Samuel French, n.d.
- Shakespeare, William. *Taming of the Shrew; or, Katharine and Petruchio: A Comedy in Three Acts*. Altered by David Garrick, revised by J.P. Kemble. London: John Cumberland, n.d..
- Shakespeare, William. *The Merchant of Venice*. New York: Samuel French, n.d.
- Shattuck, Charles H. *The Hamlet of Edwin Booth*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969.
- . *Shakespeare on the American Stage: From the Hallams to Edwin Booth*. Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1976.
- . *The Shakespeare Promptbooks*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965.
- Sheil, Richard Lalor. *The Apostate. A Tragedy in Five Acts*. New York: Samuel French, [c. 1850].
- . *Evadne; or, The Statue. A Tragedy in Five Acts: as performed at the Theatre Royal, Covent-garden*. London: J. Murray, 1819.
- Sillard, Robert M. *Barry Sullivan and his Contemporaries*. 2 vols. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901.
- Sinden, Donald. *A Touch of the Memoirs*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1982.
- Skinner, Otis A. *The Last Tragedian*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1939.
- Skinner, Maud & Otis A. Skinner, eds. *One Man in his Time: The Adventures of H. Watkins, Strolling Player 1845-1863 from his Journal*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1938.
- Sprague, Arthur Colby. *Shakespeare and the Actors: The Stage Business in his Plays (1660-1905)*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945.
- Stevens, L. L. *Lives, Crimes, and Confessions of the Assassins*. Troy, NY: n.pub., 1865.
- Strang, Lewis Clinton. *Famous Actors of the Day*. Boston: Page, 1899.
- Tidwell, William A., James O. Hall and David Winfred Gaddy. *Come Retribution: The Confederate Secret Service and the Assassination of Lincoln*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988.
- Toomey, Daniel Carroll. *The Civil War in Maryland*. Baltimore: Toomey Press, 1983.
- Townsend, George Alfred. *The Life, Crime, and Capture of John Wilkes Booth*. New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1865.
- . *Katy of Catoctin*. New edition with introduction by Harold R. Manakee. Cambridge, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1959.
- Warner, Sam Bass, Jr. *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968.
- Taylor, George. *Players and Performances in the Victorian Theatre*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989.
- Wallack, Lester. *Memories of Fifty Years*. 1889. Reprint. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969.

- Watermeier, Daniel J. See Booth, Edwin.
- Watkins, Harry. See Skinner, Maud.
- Weichmann, Louis J. *A True History of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln and of the Conspiracy of 1865*. Edited by Floyd E. Risvold. New York: Knopf, 1975.
- Weisert, John Jacob. *Mozart Hall: 1851 to 1866. A Checklist of Attractions at a Minor Theatre of Louisville, Kentucky*. Louisville, KY: privately printed, 1962.
- Whitman, Walt. *Prose Works, 1892: Collect and Other Prose*. Vol. 2. Edited by Floyd Stovall. New York: New York University Press, 1964.
- . *With Walt Whitman in Camden: A Selection of Prose from Specimen Days*. Camden, NJ: The Haddon Craftsmen, 1938.
- Willard, George O. *History of the Providence Stage 1762-1891*. Providence, RI: News Co., 1891.
- Wilson, Arthur Herman. *A History of the Philadelphia Theatre, 1835-1855*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1935.
- Wilson, Francis. *Francis Wilson's Life of Himself*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924.
- . *John Wilkes Booth: Fact and Fiction of Lincoln's Assassination*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1929.
- Wilson, Garff Bell. *Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973.
- Wingate, Charles F. L. *Shakespeare's Heroes on the Stage*. New York: Crowell, 1896.
- Winter, William. *The Life and Art of Edwin Booth*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893; New York: Macmillan, 1906.
- . *Vagrant Memories: Being Further Recollections of Other Days*. New York: Doran, 1916.
- Wise, John Sergeant. *The End of an Era*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1902.
- Wood, Alice I. Perry. *The Stage History of Shakespeare's King Richard the Third*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1909.
- Woods, Rufus. *The Weirdest Story in American History: The Escape of John Wilkes Booth*. Wenatchee, WA: n. pub., 1944.
- W[ooster], L[ouise] C. *The Autobiography of a Magdalene*. Birmingham, AL: Birmingham Publishing Co., 1911.

Articles

- Alfriend, Edward M. 'Assassin Booth Idealized in the Recollections of Edward M. Alfriend'. *Washington Sunday Globe*, Feb. 9, 1902.
- Allen, Mary Cherry. 'Assassin's Local Play Dates Pinpointed'. *Petersburg Progress-Index*, July 11, 1965.
- Badeau, Adam. 'Dramatic Reminiscences'. *St. Paul & Minneapolis Pioneer Press*, Feb. 20, 1887.
- . 'Edwin Booth on and off the Stage'. *McClure's Magazine* 1 (Aug. 1893): 255-67.
- . 'The Representative Art'. *Atlantic Monthly* 5 (June 1860): 687-93.
- Bank, Rosemarie K. 'A Reconsideration of the Death of Nineteenth-Century American Repertory Companies and the Rise of the Combination'. *Essays in Theatre* 5(1) (Nov. 1986): 61-75.
- Barber, Deirdre. 'The Celebrated Mr. Who? A Small Mystery Solved'. *Surratt Courier* 18, no. 8 (1993): 4.
- . 'Colonel's Journal Slams Thesp! or, Two Reviews of John Wilkes Booth', *Surratt Courier*, 12, no. 2 (Feb. 1987): 1,5-8.
- . 'A Man of Promise: John Wilkes Booth at Richmond, 1858-1860'. *Theatre Symposium 2: Theatre in the Antebellum South* (1994): 113-29.
- Barron, John M. [A series of articles on the theatre]. *Baltimore Sun*, November 4, 1906 - April 7, 1907.
- Beale, Mary Bella. 'Wilkes Booth's Ring. The Touching Story of John Wilkes' Love for a Little Girl in Richmond'. *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 31, 1887.
- 'Behind Scenes 50 Years. Mr. W.L. Ballauf, Sr., Celebrates Jubilee at Holliday Street.'. *Baltimore Sun*, Oct. 7, 1906.

- 'Behind the Curtains'. *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 4, 1881.
- [Booth, Edwin obituary articles]. *Baltimore American*, June 7 and 8, 1893.
- 'Booth's Appearance in Washington, November 1863'. *Lincoln Lore* no. 1301 (March 15, 1954), n. pag.
- Boucicault, Dion. 'The Life of an Actor'. *New York Clipper*, Dec. 1, 1860.
- Brennan, John C. 'John Wilkes Booth's Enigmatic Brother Joseph'. *Maryland Historical Magazine* 78, no. 1 (Spring 1983): 22-34.
- Brumby, William V. 'Veterans Tell of Great Players in the Old Days of Drama in St. Louis'. *The Republic* (St. Louis), April 19, 1903.
- Bullard, F. Lauriston. 'Boston's Part in Lincoln's Death'. *Boston Sunday Herald*, April 11, 1915.
- [Burr, Frank A.]. 'Booth's Bullet. Chapters from the Unpublished History of Lincoln's Murder'. *Philadelphia Weekly Press*, Dec. 8, 1881.
- Busbey, Hamilton. 'Recollections of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War'. *The Forum* 45 (1911): 257.
- Campbell, Lily B. 'The Rise of a Theory of Stage Presentation in England during the Eighteenth Century'. *PMLA* 32 (1917) 163-200.
- Cate, Wirt Armistead. 'Ford, the Booths, and Lincoln's Assassination'. *Emory University Quarterly* 5 (1949): 11-19.
- Clark, Allen C. 'Richard Wallach and the Times of his Mayoralty'. *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, 21 (1918): 217.
- 'Comedian Wyndham's Career'. *New York World*, Dec. 1, 1889.
- 'Crinkle, Nym' [Andrew C. Wheeler]. 'Edwin Booth'. *New York World*, June 9, 1893.
- Davis, Erick, 'Saint Timothy's Hall'. *History Trails* 11 (1977): 12.
- Dodels, Jeannine Clarke. 'John Wilkes Booth as Richard III'. *Surratt Society News* 10, no. 12 (1985): 5-7.
- Downer, Alan S. 'Players and Painted Stage: Nineteenth Century Acting'. *PMLA* 61 (1946): 522-76.
- 'Edwin Booth Died Early This Morning'. *Philadelphia Press*, June 7, 1893.
- 'Eye Witness Tells of Lincoln's Assassination'. *Baltimore Sun*, Feb. 9, 1913.
- Ezekiel, Herbert T. 'Booth, Lincoln's Assassin, Joined Grays for One Trip'. *Richmond News Leader*, Feb. 12, 1937.
- Ferguson, William J. 'Lincoln's Death'. *Saturday Evening Post*, Feb. 12, 1927.
- . 'I Saw Lincoln Shot!'. *American Magazine* 90 (Aug. 1920): 15ff.
- Ford, John Thompson. 'Behind the Curtains of a Conspiracy'. *North American Review* 148 (1889): 485-93.
- . 'John T. Ford's Recollections'. *Philadelphia Weekly Press*, Dec. 8, 1881.
- . 'John T. Ford's Recollections. Booth's Earlier Career--The Cause of a Coolness'. *Baltimore American*, June 8, 1893.
- 'Found Few Comforts in School Winter Season Fifty Years Ago'. *Baltimore Sun*, Mar. 29, 1923.
- Fuller, Charles Franklin, Jr. 'Edwin and John Wilkes Booth: Actors at the Old Marshall Theatre in Richmond'. *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 79 (1971): 477-83.
- Gilbert, Anne Hartley. 'The Stage Reminiscences of Mrs. Gilbert'. Edited by Charlotte M. Martin. *Scribner's Magazine* 29 (1901): 167-84.
- [Gould, Nathan]. 'John Wilkes Booth's Visit to Portland'. *Portland Sunday Telegram*, April 13, 1902.
- Grover, Leonard. 'Lincoln's Interest in the Theater'. *Century Magazine* 77 (1909): 943-50.
- 'G.T.F.' 'Players of Yesterday'. *Theatre Magazine* 10 (Sept. 1909): 83-86, ix.
- Gutman, Richard and Kellie Gutman. 'Boston: A Home for John Wilkes Booth?' *Surratt Society News* 10, no. 9 (1985): 1, 6-8.
- Hall, James O. 'The Dahlgren Papers: a Yankee Plot to Kill President Davis'. *Civil War Times Illustrated*, Nov. 1983, pp. 30-39.

- . 'John Wilkes Booth at School', *Surratt Courier* 16, no. 7 (1991): 3.
- Harvey, James R. 'Recollections of the Early Theatre'. *Colorado Magazine* 17 (1940).
- Head, Constance. 'John Wilkes Booth, 1864: Prologue to Assassination'. *Lincoln Herald* 85 (1983): 254-62.
- . 'JWB: I Am Myself Alone'. *Surratt Society News* 5, no. 11 (1980): 5-6.
- Hersell, Norman. 'A Former Actress in "Our American Cousin" Tells the Story of the Assassination of Lincoln'. *Minneapolis Journal*, April 27, 1914.
- Holding, Charles E. 'John Wilkes Booth Stars in Nashville'. *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 23 (1964): 73-79.
- Howell, William A. 'Memories of Wilkes Booth'. *Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 23, 1899.
- Hutcheson, Austin E. 'Philadelphia and the Panic of 1857'. *Pennsylvania History* 3 (July 1936): 182-94.
- Johnson, Albert E. and W. H. Crain, Jr. 'A Dictionary of American Drama Critics 1850-1910'. *Theatre Annual* 13 (1955): 63-89.
- 'Knew the Booths in Boyhood Days; Interesting Recollections of George L. Stout, Actor'. *Baltimore American*, July 27, 1903.
- Krone, Charles A. 'Recollections of an Old Actor'. *Missouri Historical Society Collections* 2, no. 7 (1906): 25-43; 3, no. 1 (1908): 53-70; 3, no. 2 (1908): 170-182; 3, no. 3 (1911): 275-306; 3, no. 4 (1911): 423-36; 4, no. 1 (1912): 104-20; 4, no. 2 (1913): 209-33; 4, no. 3 (1914): 323-51; 4, no. 4 (1923): 423-63.
- Levine, Lawrence W. 'William Shakespeare and the American People: A Study in Cultural Transformation'. *American Historical Review* 89 (Feb. 1984): 34-66.
- Libby, George W. 'John Brown and John Wilkes Booth'. *Confederate Veteran* 38 (April 1930): 138-39.
- Loux, Arthur F. 'The Accident-Prone John Wilkes Booth'. *Lincoln Herald* 85 (1983): 263-68.
- Ludwig, Jay F. 'James H. McVicker and His Theatre'. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 46 (Feb. 1960): 14-25.
- McDermott, Douglas. 'Structure and Management in the American Theatre from the Beginning to 1870'. *The Cambridge History of American Theatre*. Vol. 1. *Beginnings to 1870*. Edited by Don B. Wilmeth & Christopher Bigsby. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Malin, James C. 'Theatre in Kansas 1858-68'. *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 23 (Spring 1957): 10-53.
- Malloy, Louise. 'Famous Collection of Theatrical Souvenirs'. *Baltimore American*, Jan. 8, 1905.
- 'A Marylander'. 'John Wilkes Booth. His School-day Dreams and Constant Study--His Thoughts of Greatness'. *Philadelphia Press*, Dec. 27, 1881.
- Matlaw, Myron. 'English and American Dramatizations of *Le Comte de Monte Cristo*'. *Nineteenth Century Theatre Research* 7 (1979): 39-53.
- May, John Frederick. 'The Mark of the Scalpel'. *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* 13 (1910): 49-68.
- McCloskey, J. J. 'Edwin Booth in Old California'. *Green Book Album*, June 1911, pp. 1322-27.
- McClure, A.K. 'Sad and Pathetic Echoes of the Lincoln Assassination'. *Philadelphia Record*, Dec. 20, 1901.
- McCullough, John, Joseph Jefferson III, Lawrence Barrett, Maggie Mitchell and William Warren. 'Success on the Stage'. *North American Review* 135 (Dec. 1882): 580-602.
- Morris, Clara. 'John Wilkes Booth: Clara Morris Answers Messrs. Nicolay and Hay'. *Boston Herald*, Jan. 10, 1890.
- Mosby, John S., Jr. 'The Night that Lincoln was Shot'. *Theatre Magazine* 17 (June 1913): ix, 179-80.
- Norcross, A.F. 'A Child's Memory of the Boston Theatre'. *Theatre Magazine* 43 (May 1926): 37, 72.

- 'A Notable Performance'. *Castle Square Theatre Magazine*, June 2, 1913.
- O'Brien, Frank P. 'Passing of the Old Montgomery Theatre'. *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, Spring 1941, pp. 8ff.
- Poole, H. Annette. [Letter to editor.] *Springfield Republican*, Feb. 12, 1909.
- Pope, Charles. 'The Eccentric Booths'. *New York Sun*, March 28, 1897.
- Rankin, Mrs. McKee. 'The News of Lincoln's Death'. *American Magazine* 67 (Jan. 1909): 259-62.
- Roppolo, Joseph Patrick. 'Audiences in New Orleans Theatres, 1845-1861'. *Tulane Studies in English* 2 (1950): 121-35.
- Rowell, George. 'An Acting Assistant Surgeon'. *Nineteenth Century Theatre Research* 12 (1984): 25-38.
- Ryan, John W. [Letter to editor]. *Boston Herald*, May 21, 1916.
- Seymour, William. 'Notes and Queries. Note 339. John Wilkes Booth'. *Boston Evening Transcript*, Sept. 5, 1931.
- Shank, Theodore J. 'Theatre for the Majority: Its Influence on a Nineteenth Century American Theatre'. *Educational Theatre Journal* 11 (Oct. 1959): 188-99.
- Shattuck, Charles H. 'The Romantic Acting of Junius Brutus Booth'. *Nineteenth Century Theatre Research* 5 (1977): 1-26.
- Shepherd, William G. 'They Tried to Stop Booth'. *Collier's Weekly*, Dec. 27, 1924, pp. 12, 42.
- Shettel, James W. 'J. Wilkes Booth at School'. *New York Dramatic Mirror*, Feb. 26, 1916.
- Skinner, Otis A. 'The Last of John Wilkes Booth'. *American Magazine*, Nov. 1908, pp. 73-77.
- [Sloan, Richard E.] 'Speaking of Relics'. *Lincoln Log* 3, no. 3 (1978): 4.
- [Stedman, E. C.] 'Edwin Booth'. *Atlantic Monthly* 17 (May 1866): 585-93.
- Stoddard, Elizabeth. 'My Record of the Stage'. *Saturday Evening Post* 172 (1899): 354-55.
- Stoddart, J. H. 'The Recollections of a Player'. *Century Magazine* n.s. 42 (1902): 51-62, 290-303.
- 'Stuart Robson is Dead'. *Baltimore Sun*, April 30, 1903.
- Tiernan, M.F. 'Ten Years Ago. A Reminiscence of the Visit of John Wilkes Booth to St. Joseph'. *New York Clipper*, Feb. 21, 1874.
- Townsend, George Alfred. 'John McCullough, the Actor'. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 2, 1885.
- 'The True Reason Why John Wilkes Booth Shot President Lincoln'. *Atlanta Constitution*, March 11, 1888.
- Weaver, Harry A., Sr. 'No. 2 Bullfinch Place'. *Sunday Inter-Ocean* (Chicago), Aug. 27, 1893.
- Weik, Jesse W. 'A New Story of Lincoln's Assassination'. *Century Magazine* 85 (Feb. 1913): 559-62.
- West, E.J. 'Revolution in the American Theatre: Glimpses of Acting Conditions on the American Stage, 1855-70'. *Theatre Survey* 1 (1960): 43-64.
- 'W.F.B.'. 'Snowbound with John Wilkes Booth at Cameron, MO'. *St. Louis Republic*, Aug. 4, 1901.
- Whiting, Joseph E. [Letter to editor.] *Detroit Free Press*, Jan. 5, 1897.
- 'Wilkes Booth Story. Sudden Decision in Richmond to Go to Harper's Ferry. Richmond Man Tells the Tale'. *Richmond Dispatch*, Feb. 2, 1902.
- Wren, Fred R. 'Reminiscences of an Old Actor'. *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Aug. 4, 1907.
- Wyndham, Charles. 'Recollections of John Wilkes Booth'. *New York Herald*, June 27, 1909.

Newspapers Consulted

Albany, NY: *Atlas & Argus*, *Evening Journal*, *Morning Express*, *Times & Courier*.
 Baltimore, MD: *American and Commercial Advertiser*, *Clipper*, *Daily Exchange*, *Gazette*, *Sun*.

Bel Air, MD: *Southern Aegis*.
 Boston, MA: *Daily Advertiser*, *Daily Courier*, *Daily Evening Traveller*, *Daily Evening Transcript*, *Daily Evening Voice*, *Evening Journal*, *Herald*, *Post*, *Saturday Evening Express*, *Saturday Evening Gazette*.
 Brooklyn, NY: *Daily Eagle*, *Daily Times*, *Daily Union*, *Programme*, *Standard*.
 Buffalo, NY: *Commercial Advertiser*, *Daily Courier*, *Morning Express*.
 Chicago, IL: *Evening Journal*, *Times*, *Tribune*.
 Cincinnati, OH: *Daily Commercial*, *Daily Enquirer*, *Daily Gazette*.
 Cleveland, OH: *Daily Plain Dealer*, *Morning Leader*.
 Columbus, GA: *Daily Sun*, *Daily Times*, *Enquirer (Weekly)*, *Weekly Sun*, *Weekly Times*.
 Detroit, MI: *Daily Advertiser and Tribune*, *Free Press*.
 Hartford, CT: *Courant*, *Daily Times*, *Evening Press*.
 Indianapolis, IN: *Daily Gazette*, *Daily Journal*, *Daily Sentinel*.
 Leavenworth, KS: *Daily Conservative*, *Daily Times*.
 Louisville, KY: *Daily Journal*, *Daily Union Press*, *Democrat*.
 Lynchburg, VA: *Daily Virginian*.
 Montgomery, AL: *Daily Mail*, *Daily Post*, *Weekly Advertiser*, *Weekly Confederation*, *Weekly Mail*.
 Nashville, TN: *Daily Press*, *Daily Union*, *Dispatch*.
 New Haven, CT: *Morning Journal & Courier*, *Palladium*, *Register*.
 New Orleans, LA: *Bee*, *Daily Picayune*, *Daily True Delta*, *Times*.
 New York, NY: *Clipper*, *Commercial Advertiser*, *Daily Tribune*, *Dispatch*, *Evening Express*, *Evening Post*, *Herald*, *Leader*, *Spirit of the Times*,¹ *Times*, *Times and Messenger*, *Tribune*, *World*.
 Norfolk, VA: *Southern Argus*.
 Petersburg, VA: *Daily Express*, *Daily Intelligencer*, *Press*.
 Philadelphia, PA: *Daily Evening Bulletin*, *Inquirer*, *North American Gazette*, *Press*, *Public Ledger*, *Sunday Dispatch*, *Sunday Mercury*.
 Portland, ME: *Daily Advertiser*, *Eastern Argus*.
 Providence, RI: *Daily Evening Press*, *Daily Journal*, *Daily Post*.
 Richmond, VA: *Daily Dispatch*, *Enquirer*, *Examiner*, *Whig and Public Advertiser*.
 Rochester, NY: *Daily Union and Advertiser*, *Evening Express*.
 Sacramento, CA: *Daily Union*.
 Springfield, MA: *Daily Republican*.
 St. Joseph, MO: *Morning Herald*.
 St. Louis, MO: *Daily Press*, *Daily Missouri Democrat*, *Daily Missouri Republican*.
 Washington, DC: *Constitutional Union*, *Daily Morning Chronicle*, *Evening Star*, *National Intelligencer*, *National Republican*, *Sunday Chronicle*.
 Worcester, MA: *Daily Spy*, *Daily Transcript*.

Unpublished Material

Arnold, Claude Ahmed. 'The Development of the Stage in Nashville, Tennessee 1807-1870. 1933. Tennessee State Library, Nashville.
 Barbee, David Rankin. 'Lincoln and Booth'. Barbee Papers, Special Collections Division, Georgetown University Library.
 Booth, John Wilkes. Promptbook for *Richard III*. Harvard Theatre Collection.
 ---. Promptbook for *Richard III*. Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.
 Booth, Junius Brutus Jr. Diary for 1864. Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC.
 Boston Museum. Promptbook for *Richard III*, signed by J.H. Ring, apparently used for J. Wallack Jr. & JWB. Folger Shakespeare Library.
 Breckenridge, Helen Elizabeth. 'The *Chicago Times* during the Civil War'. M.A. thesis. University of Chicago, 1931.

¹ Also known in this period as *Porter's ...* and *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*.

- Clarke, Asia Booth. 'J.W.B.', 1874 [published as *The Unlocked Book*]. Private collection.
- Coder, William Dickey. 'A History of the Philadelphia Theatre'. Ph.D. diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1936.
- Cushman, Charlotte. Promptbook for *As You Like It*. Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC.
- Doak, Henry Melvil. 'Nashville Amusements--Drama, Music--Theatres'. Tennessee State Library, Nashville.
- Doyle, Elizabeth J. 'Civilian Life in Occupied New Orleans'. Ph.D. diss. Louisiana State University, 1955.
- Fuller, Charles Franklin, Jr. 'Kunkel and Company at the Marshall Theatre, Richmond, Virginia, 1856-61. M.A. thesis. Ohio University, 1968.
- Herbstruth, Grant M. 'Benedict de Bar and the Grand Opera House in St. Louis, 1855-79'. Diss. State University of Iowa, 1954.
- Jerome, Frank E. 'Recollections of J. Wilkes Booth, in Leavenworth, Kansas, in December, 1863. [1886]. Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.
- Kauffman, Michael W. Database listing of Pollock Collection playbills.
- Keller, Helen B. 'The History of the Theater in Columbus, Georgia, from 1828-65'. M.A. thesis. University of Georgia, 1957.
- Kilby, Quincy. 'Some Newly-Collected Facts about John Wilkes Booth'. William Seymour Theatre Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Libraries.
- Langley, William Osler. 'The Theatre in Columbus, Georgia, from 1828-78'. M.Sc. Alabama Polytechnic Institute, [1937].
- Loux, Arthur F. 'John Wilkes Booth Day by Day', 1991.
- Ludwig, Jay Ferris. 'McVicker's Theatre, 1857-1896'. Ph.D. diss. University of Illinois, 1958.
- May, Alonzo J. 'May's Dramatic Encyclopedia of Baltimore'. Manuscript and revised typescript. MS 995. Manuscripts Division, Maryland Historical Society Library.
- O'Flynn, T. W. M. 'Promptbook of the Tragedy of King Richard III'. Billy Rose Theatre Collection, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.
- Oggel, L. Terry. 'Edwin Booth and America's Concept of Shakespearean Tragedy'. Ph.D. diss. University of Wisconsin, 1969.
- Porter, Albert G. 'Recollections of John Wilkes Booth'. Albert Gallatin Porter Manuscript Collection, Indiana State Library.
- Turnipseed, La Margaret. 'The Ante-Bellum Theatre in Montgomery, Alabama, 1840-1860'. M.A. thesis. Auburn (Alabama) Polytechnic Institute, 1948.
- Valentine, Edward V. 'Biographical Index. B. Edwin Booth--John Wilkes Booth' and 'Extracts from my Diary'. The Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia.
- Wilson, Courtney. Talk on St. Timothy's Hall, given at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, Catonsville, Maryland, May 14, 1988.
- Withers, Nan Wyatt. 'The Acting Style and Career of John Wilkes Booth'. Ph.D. diss. University of Wisconsin at Madison, 1979.