

War, Ekphrasis, and Elliptical Form in Melville's *Battle-Pieces*

HSUAN HSU

Scholars of the "sister arts" – or the relation between literary and visual artworks – often question the classical definition of *ekphrasis* as a straightforward evocation or description of a work of art. Instead of giving voice to paintings, Bryan Wolf suggests, poems misrepresent or "mute-ilate" them: continually asserting the primacy of language over wordless images, "the ekphrastic is one who would charm art into silence."¹ According to W. J. T. Mitchell, poets attempting to give voice to paintings often encounter a paralytic and potentially castrating feeling of "ekphrastic fear," "the moment of resistance or counterdesire that occurs when we sense that the difference between the verbal and visual representation might collapse and the figurative, imaginary desire of ekphrasis might be realized literally and actually."² And Murray Krieger, revising an influential early essay on ekphrasis as a striving toward "still movement," claims that "from the first . . . to look into *ekphrasis* is to look into the illusionary representation of the unrepresentable."³

The skepticism of such critics suggests an alternative derivation of *ek-phrazein*: not from *saying out* in the sense of evoking or describing, but rather from *saying away*, ex-communicating or exorcising. Indeed, an analogously formed Greek word, *ek-graphein*, denotes not only "writing out" or "writing down" but also "striking out" or "expunging": *de*-scribing. The prefix *ek*- marks a po-

© 2002 Nineteenth Century Studies Association.

sition external to the object of ekphrasis, a position that precludes the possibility of an "inside narrative."

This essay will examine the use of poetic ekphrasis – understood as the de-scription of both artworks and "real" historical spectacles⁴ – in *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866), Herman Melville's (1819–91) first published book of poetry.⁵ In these poems, Melville dramatizes the failure of visual aestheticizations of the Civil War. For Melville's every attempt at ekphrasis opens up an ellipsis by portraying a panoramic, totalizing image that inevitably breaks down into a multiplicity of fragmentary perspectives.

SALVATOR ROSA'S DUAL VISION

In a journal entry describing his 27 March 1857 visit to the Pitti Gallery in Florence, Melville reports having seen "S[alvator] Rosa's portraits (one autograph) Battle Peice [*sic*]."⁶ In his "Overview" of Melville's deployment of the visual arts, Christopher Sten argues that Salvator Rosa's *Battaglia* (1642; Palazzo Pitti, Florence; fig. 1) – the "Battle Piece" noted by Melville – "proved important a few years later to the overall conception and title of . . . [Melville's] own large collection of poems on the Civil War."⁷ Yet Sten does not explain just how the painting may have proved important to *Battle-Pieces*. In fact, Sten's very project of a panoramic "overview" ironically incorporates the very form of vision that both Rosa and Melville call into question: both the painting and the poems named after it juxtapose the distanced overview of aestheticized *Aspects of the War* with a more skeptical, land-bound viewpoint that perceives only unassimilable fragments or *Pieces*.

In the same room of the Pitti as Rosa's *Battaglia*, a painting of the "3 Fates" attributed to Michelangelo arrested Melville's attention with "the way the one Fate looks at other."⁸ Immediately afterward, Melville may have noticed in Rosa's *Battaglia* the singular way in which a solitary soldier in the lower-left corner stares outward at the viewer (fig. 2). Perhaps he also observed Rosa's "autograph" encrypted in the word SARO, written on this enigmatic soldier's shield. This anagram of Rosa identifies the painter as the soldier standing aloof. As

FIGURE 1

Salvator Rosa, *Battaglia* (oil on canvas, 234 by 350 cm, 1642; Palazzo Pitti, Florence; permission granted by the Ministero dei Beni e le Attività Culturali; further reproduction or duplication is prohibited without express written consent).

Jonathan Scott comments, "Rosa has inserted his own self-portrait, dismounted behind a fallen horse. He is a detached spectator looking over a shield which bears the motto 'SARO,' an anagram of his own name. This has been interpreted to mean 'I will survive.'"⁹ The motto "I will survive" would appeal to an author who, not long before, had narrated *Moby-Dick* (1851) through the voice of a survivor: "The drama's done. Why then here does any one step forth? – Because one did survive the wreck."¹⁰ If Rosa's painting indeed "proved important a few years later to the overall conception" – and not merely to the title – of *Battle-Pieces*, then the artist's self-portrait as a "detached spectator" who observes and survives a tragic drama may suit Melville the poet as well as Ishmael.

Melville's position as a detached spectator may be seen in one of the few poems that he wrote about a battlefield that he actually visited. The primary speaker of "Malvern Hill (July, 1862)," a Union army veteran, attempts to evoke some sympathetic acknowledgment of a bloody battle from "Ye elms that wave on Malvern Hill": "Does the elm wood / Recall the haggard beards of blood?" But the personified trees, at once passionless spectators and survivors of the battle, respond with an enigmatic indifference:

*We elms of Malvern Hill
Remember every thing;
But sap the twig will fill;
Wag the world how it will,
Leaves must be green in Spring.*¹¹

In the same way that the soldier with the motto "SARO" positions Rosa in the margin of his painting, the lyric voice¹² that concludes "Malvern Hill" embodies the position of a detached and impassive observer who attenuates the violence of battle by means of a pastoral recuperation ironically phrased as an imperative – "Leaves must be green in Spring." But such a pastoral recovery from violence includes a constitutive blindness or erasure: Rosa's soldier, after





FIGURE 2

Salvator Rosa, Battaglia, detail (oil on canvas, 234 by 350 cm, 1642; Palazzo Pitti, Florence; permission granted by the Ministero dei Beni e le Attività Culturali; further reproduction or duplication is prohibited without express written consent).

all, paradoxically bears witness to the depicted battle only by looking out at the viewer and, hence, by not seeing the battle at all.

Melville's experience of the Civil War was primarily that of an interested but distant spectator: he did not participate in the fighting and relied heavily on journalistic accounts published in the *Rebellion Record* and *Harper's Weekly*; he visited the front only once, during a brief trip in 1864.¹³ His prefatory note to *Battle-Pieces* reports that, "with few exceptions, the Pieces in this volume originated in an impulse imparted by the fall of Richmond" (p. 52) – after the war had ended. Stanton Garner suggests that, before beginning "the main body of his book," Melville waited "until the immediacy of the events on which most of the poems are based had dissipated and his emotions about them could be recollected from the more tranquil and more settled viewpoint of the war as a historical whole."¹⁴ Michael Paul Rogin argues that Melville's restrained poetic form shields him from the war's concrete violence: "Little of the actual bloody carnage finds its way into these poems. Their

images are physical, nonetheless, generating a tension between the formal poetry and the concrete, historical world of war. That tension gives the poems their power. Melville's form armours the poet, protecting him as he enters the war, and it also embodies the experiences he has recovered from the battles."¹⁵ Both physically and temporally distanced from the war, Melville inhabits the position of a survivor – like Rosa's marginal soldier and the impassive elms of Malvern Hill – attempting to "re-cover" (re-cover: as if bringing forth only through further veiling) experiences of a carnage that he never fully encountered.

Nevertheless, Rosa's soldier-self is not an entirely detached spectator: his very presence in the picture, along with the fact that his horse has fallen, indicates participation as well as estrangement. In the same way, the poet of *Battle-Pieces* never successfully distances himself from the Civil War without leaving an ironic remainder, a trace of affective – if not physical – participation. Rosa's painting captures such an irony in a double gaze: the soldier-painter on the canvas stares back somewhat inquisitively, as if soliciting a response, at the hypothetical spectator who looks on this "wide panorama" from a distance.¹⁶ Melville's Civil War poetry involves a similar irony of "dual vision,"¹⁷ which undermines the possibility of representing the war in a textual version of Rosa's "panorama." The poems consistently attempt to achieve a distanced, panoramic gaze – what Garner calls a "settled viewpoint of the war as a historical whole" – but consistently reveal an ironic "survivor" or remainder that threatens to introduce another viewpoint, break through the fragile surface, or disrupt the laws of form.

CIRCULAR AND ELLIPTICAL FORM

According to Murray Krieger, ekphrasis is a figure of circularity that spatializes the temporal medium of language in an attempt to achieve the "plasticity" of a cup, urn, bowl, or shield: ekphrasis, he writes, constitutes an assertion of poetic self-sufficiency, which in turn "involves the poem's coming to terms with itself, its creating the sense of roundedness. That is, through all sorts of repetitions, echoes, complexes of internal relations, it converts its chronological progression into simultaneity, its temporally

unrepeatable flow into eternal recurrence; through a metaphorical bending under the pressure of aesthetic tension, it converts its linear movement into circle."¹⁸ Krieger develops his principle of ekphrastic circularity from T. S. Eliot's image of a Chinese jar in "Burnt Norton": "Only by the form, the pattern, / Can words or music reach / The stillness, as a Chinese jar still / Moves perpetually in its stillness."¹⁹ Melville's panoramic ideal seems akin to the "still movement" of ekphrasis: to a panoramic gaze, which occupies the center of a circle, distanced objects appear to move slowly, imperceptibly.²⁰

On the surface, "Dupont's Round Fight (November, 1861)" presents Melville's most explicit meditation on circular form. Echoing Krieger's argument that "time and measure perfect" enable a poem to achieve a "curved" shape symbolizing eternal recurrence, the poem eagerly celebrates the "victory of LAW":

In time and measure perfect moves
All Art whose aim is sure;
Evolving rhyme and stars divine
Have rules, and they endure.

Nor less the Fleet that warred for Right,
And, warring so, prevailed,
In geometric beauty curved,
And in an orbit sailed.

The rebel at Port Royal felt
The Unity overawe,
And rued the spell. A type was here,
And victory of LAW.

(p. 62)

On Krieger's model, this poem deploys ekphrastic repetitions and echoes to assert its own integrity of form, its "geometric beauty curved." The poem is an ekphrasis in the strict sense as well since it describes an illustration, which Melville would probably have seen in the *Rebellion Record* (fig. 3), of the battle plan executed by Commodore Samuel Francis DuPont in his significant victory of 7 November 1861 over the Confederate Forts Walker and Beauregard on South Carolina's Port Royal Sound.²¹ The caption accompanying the drawing explains, in euphemistically aestheticizing language, that "the plan of attack was simple and effective, being for the ships to steam in a circle, or ellipse, running close to one shore as they came down the river, drifting

or steaming as slowly as possible past the batteries there, and paying their fiery respects, and then making the turn to go back, and as they went up the river, favoring the other batteries with a similar compliment."²² In a sophisticated reading of the poem, Timothy Sweet rightly criticizes Melville's aestheticizing project as a reduction of the violent particularities of the actual event to the picture of DuPont's round path. Such a project, he argues, privileges the perspective of "the state": "Dupont's Round Fight' is not an 'inside narrative.' The only trace of the actual event is the description of the path of the fleet, 'In geometric beauty curved, / And in an orbit sailed.' This graceful form, which aestheticizes the battle and thus obscures the centrality of violence, was a fact emphasized in the journalistic account from which Melville worked. . . . The perspective of 'Dupont' is only the depersonalized perspective of the state." Sweet also draws attention to the tautological circularity of the poem's appeal to LAW: "The final word of the poem seems to gesture toward the transcendent. But the typography, insisting on itself as typography (note a supplementary sense of 'type'), reveals the self-referentiality of the assertion and so displaces the supposed transcendental referent. . . . 'LAW' is what the Union victory at Port Royal (by synecdoche, the outcome of the war) substantiates. One can say no more than this; one could say it equally truly had the Confederacy won the battle and the war."²³

Yet Sweet's emphasis on "the centrality of violence" as well as his totalizing claim that "the perspective of 'Dupont' is only the depersonalized perspective of the state" also miss the point – which is precisely the doubleness of points. For, according to the commentary in the *Rebellion Record* on the battle plan, the ships' path was "a circle, or ellipse." The very vacillation between the two shapes betrays that there was no ideal circle involved at all and, hence, no unitary center: according to the illustration of the battle plan, DuPont's path was an ellipse, and an ellipse has not one center but two foci. Sweet's claim that "'Dupont's Round Fight' is not an 'inside narrative'" does not reduce the effectiveness of Melville's poem at all; instead, Melville's self-conscious acknowl-

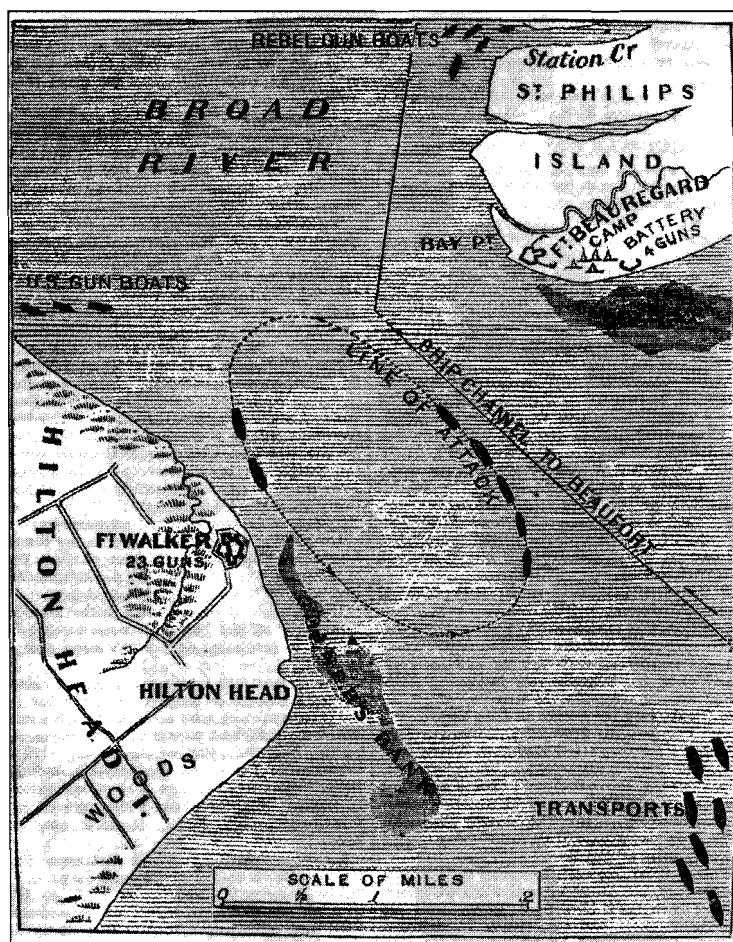


FIGURE 3

G. C. Plicque, "Plan of the Battle of Port Royal, S.C.," New York Tribune, n.d., as reprinted in Frank Moore, ed., *Rebellion Record*, 11 vols. (New York: Van Nostrand, 1871), 3:106. Courtesy University of California, General Library, Berkeley.

edgment of his "outside" perspective (ekphrasis as "speaking from outside") recognizes precisely the focus on violence that the LAW elides. Indeed, Melville's last stanza deliberately violates the poetic law of "time and measure perfect": "The Unity overawe" – the line that rhymes with "And victory of LAW" – does not fit the line's iambic trimeter as well as "The Unity o'erawe" would have. The excess syllable parodies the excess of a law that "overawes" – that "awes" too powerfully and too well. Similarly, the puns on *spell* and *type* point to the unnecessary capitalization of the word *LAW*. The poem thus supplements the perspective of the state with a self-conscious perspective

that presents an exaggerated caricature of the law.

Gail Coffler's insightful comments on what she calls "elliptical form" in "Dupont's Round Fight" indicate a productive alternative to both the circular form that Krieger ascribes to ekphrasis and the tautological commitment to an ahistorical, aestheticizing ideology that Sweet attributes to Melville's poems. Coffler begins by citing an essay on Platonic geometry in the April 1860 *Atlantic Monthly* entitled "The Laws of Beauty" that dismisses the "monotony" of the straight line and the circle in favor of the ellipse because "the ellipse expresses both unity and variety" and "the ellipse imitates the great 'natural design': 'the orbit of the planets.'" Although Coffler does not mention the ellipse's substitution of two foci or points of view for the circle's unitary center, she does mention the "more literary, linguistic meaning of something being left out" connoted by "elliptical form."²⁴ It is just this sense of "something being left out" that enables the notion of elliptical form to destabilize a distanced panoramic gaze, which would otherwise remain indifferent to history. The simultaneous celebration of LAW and disruption of metric laws in the line "The Unity overawe" constitute the two foci of an ellipse: on the one hand, the law of an abstract state and, on the other hand, the excessive violence experienced by individual soldiers fighting on either side – a violence that the poem's celebratory title attempted to elide by naming the entire battle after the geometrician who planned it. The poem's ekphrastic and seemingly circular effort to aestheticize the events of the war ironically reveals itself to be elliptical and incomplete.

Several pieces in the collection echo the movement in "Dupont's Round Fight" between desiring a panoramic, exalted viewpoint and acknowledging the fragmentary, incomprehensible experiences of individual soldiers. Melville's prefatory note explains: "The events and incidents of the conflict – making up a whole, in varied amplitude, corresponding with the geographical area covered by the war – from these but a few themes have been taken, such as for any cause chanced to imprint themselves upon the mind." Despite his admission that only a few themes have been taken from the whole of the war's events, Melville nevertheless presupposes the existence of a whole: the

passage implies that he enjoyed a panoramic view of all the events and incidents of the whole and over a whole "geographical area" and chose at leisure those specimens "such as for any cause chanced to imprint themselves upon the mind." The preface's concluding image of an Aeolian harp also involves this opposition between experienced contingency and a hypostatized unity: "I seem, in most of these verses, to have but placed a harp in a window, and noted the contrasted airs which wayward winds have played upon the strings" (p. 52). Instead of a clear, panoramic prospect, the poet seated at a window receives only contrasted and wayward inspirations.

The harp's position at a window recurs in "Ball's Bluff: A Reverie (October, 1861)": "One noonday, at my window in the town, / I saw a sight – saddest that eyes can see – / Young soldiers marching lustily" to battle. The last stanza depicts a mournful "musing" at the window:

Weeks passed; and at my window, leaving bed,
By night I mused, of easeful sleep bereft,
On those brave boys (Ah War! thy theft);
Some marching feet
Found pause at last by cliffs Potomac cleft;
Wakeful I mused, while in the street
Far footfalls died away till none were left.

The speaker's vision, both enabled and constrained by his sheltered position at the window, does not extend as far as the soldiers' experiences. His imagination exceeds the physical scope of his vision as the youthful victims of War's "theft" become lost, first to his sight, then even to his hearing as their footfalls die away. In a later poem, "The House-Top: A Night Piece (July, 1863)," the window motif represents a distanced and explicitly reactionary point of view: the speaker, from the elevated safety of his housetop, witnesses the outbreak and suppression – by means of "the midnight roll / Of black artillery" – of "the Atheist roar of riot." Yet, like Rosa's soldier, the authoritarian speaker witnesses the bloody draft riot only by turning his attention away from it: instead of dwelling on the violent conflict occurring more or less at his very feet, the speaker engages in abstract philosophical meditations on the necessary evil of the tyrannical laws of "Wise Draco" (pp. 61, 94).

Several poems dealing more directly with war also aspire to the panoramic viewpoint

of the housetop window while simultaneously revealing a consciousness of blindness. "Look-Out Mountain: The Night Fight (November, 1863)," which directly follows "The House-Top," ironically contrasts soldiers blindly watching a "night fight" and the panoramic position at stake in the battle: "Who inhabiteth the Mountain / . . . Who has gone up with a shouting / And a trumpet in the night?" (p. 95). On the surface, the speaker's point of view does not seem very different from that of the lookout: he, too, occupies a relatively safe position and watches the battle from afar. Yet the speaker's inability to determine who has won subtly ironizes his perspective: he survives as a witness precisely by not directly witnessing the fighting.

Two earlier poems, which seem to form a pair, also thematize the distanced gaze. The first, "Battle of Stone River, Tennessee: A View from Oxford Cloisters (January, 1863)," represents a presumably British observer's attempt to put the Civil War "in perspective":

With Tewksbury and Barnet heath
In days to come the field shall blend,
The story dim and date obscure;
In legend all shall end.
Even now, involved in forest shade
A Druid-dream the strife appears,
The fray of yesterday assumes
The haziness of years.²⁵

Like the indifferent elms of "Malvern Hill," this speaker wishes to "bury" the present war's particular events alongside other half-forgotten legends. Natural images of blended fields and forest shade enact a "pastoral erasure"²⁶ of violent specificities. Seen from the "cloistered" Englishman's distanced temporal and geographic perspective, the war imposes a peaceful and desirable "stillness" – both immobility and silence – on its dead. Immediately following "Battle of Stone River," "Running the Batteries: As Observed from the Anchorage above Vicksburgh (April, 1863)" retroactively criticizes the preceding poem's British speaker. Although "Running the Batteries" also adopts an elevated and sheltered perspective, the speaker's relative proximity to the war makes him a much

more troubled spectator. As in "Look-Out Mountain," the speaker here occupies a position that, despite its panoramic potential, keeps him myopic: as he and his companions watch the Union ships running the Confederate batteries, "The first boat melts; and a second keel / Is blent with the foliaged shade." "How we strain our gaze," the speaker exclaims, unable to do more than "guess" at the ships' positions. The very experience of war incorporates the former poem's blended field, "forest shade," and "haziness of years": but, to actual participants, the blur of war imparts not a comforting aura of abstraction but a terrifying sense of uncertainty. A panoramic desire to comprehend the whole battle discovers only indecipherable visions illuminated by "the fair, false, Circe light of cruel War" (pp. 87, 88, 89, 90).

This ambivalence toward the panoramic produces an ironic undertone in Melville's strictly ekphrastic poems. On the surface, "On the Photograph of a Corps Commander" and "Formerly a Slave: An Idealized Portrait, by E. Vedder, in the Spring Exhibition of the National Academy, 1865" flatten the war's confusing blend of blindness and violence by foregrounding two-dimensional representations. Both poems engage in a sort of stereotyping or leveling that reduces the two portraits' subjects to mere types: neither the commander nor the former slave is identified by name. In the former poem, the speaker's relation to the photograph eclipses the subject's experience of the war; as Sweet says, "although a heroic history frames the image, Melville remains relatively uninterested in its historicity."²⁷ In addition to eclipsing the photograph's historical context, the poem also effaces nearly all traces of visual mediation: besides the phrase "a cheering picture," only puns on "frame," "lighting," "scan," and possibly "draw" (pp. 104–5) recall that the poem is about a specific photograph of a particular man and not a generic type of Man. "Formerly a Slave" similarly frames Vedder's painting of Jane Jackson simply as "an Idealized Portrait." While acknowledging the injustice that has plagued her past ("Her children's children they shall know / The good withheld from her"), the poem nevertheless claims that "yet is she not at strife"

(p. 129). This idealized picture of a woman freed, not only from slavery, but also from any resentment resulting from the historical fact of slavery anticipates the politically moderate approach to Reconstruction espoused in Melville's prose "Supplement" (pp. 179–87).²⁸ In this poem as well, Melville presents few traces of visual mediation – except perhaps the "sober" light that illuminates the woman's face (p. 129).

Nevertheless, the two poems' attempts to represent victims of war and slavery in a tranquil and aestheticizing light are belied by ironic hints that those victims have been irrecoverably silenced. According to Sweet, "On the Photograph of a Corps Commander" springs from "a regularizing tautology" – that "man is manly" – the circularity of which effaces all reference to the war. Sweet explains that "Melville describes a bond between man and an *image* in a political vacuum. He hints that narcissism is the real ground of the wartime camaraderie Whitman valorized. The viewer of the photograph is supposed to identify himself, 'a fellow man,' with the idealized subject of the photograph; but he remains locked in his own narcissistic gaze." This poem – in which "man" and words derived from it appear ten times in . . . twenty-four line[s]" – does not so much indulge in narcissism as parody the narcissistic circularity of a gaze that would aestheticize the war by viewing it in a political vacuum.²⁹ With its repetitive and perhaps parodic tautologies ("Nothing can lift the heart of man / Like manhood in a fellow-man" [p. 105]), "Corps Commander" presents an exaggerated picture of ekphrastic circularity, stretching its own excessive circularity so far as to make it appear elliptical.

"Formerly a Slave" also calls ekphrastic circularity³⁰ into question by hinting at what such formal self-sufficiency would exclude. For example, Melville's omission of Jackson's children in emphasizing the future freedom of her *grandchildren* ("her children's children" [p. 129]) overlooks the generation of younger "former slaves" most directly affected by the war and by Reconstruction.³¹ Moreover, Jackson herself inhabits a position of marginality, unable to enjoy the freedom that she envisions: Robert Penn Warren points out that, "as the slave woman has been an outsider looking in at the 'revel' of the privileged whites, so now, as she looks into the future, she is still an

outsider – though a benign one – to the imagined revel of her own descendants.”³² This former slave, who “sees” her race’s happiness “far down the depth of thousand years” (p. 129), is a casualty of panoramic distance, excluded from a state of social equality to which she has no immediate access.

Finally, the poem’s metrical peculiarities present at best a troubled regularity: Vaughan Hudson complains that “the meter is made difficult by the necessity of syncopating three-syllable words in order to maintain iambic rhythm, as in the first line: ‘The sufferance of her race is shown.’ Here ‘sufferance’ must be syncopated to ‘suff’rance.’ Two lines later, the same must be done with ‘deliverance.’ Yet another obstacle is the seemingly needless inversion of subject and verb in the fourth line: ‘Yet is she not a[t] strife.’ Without the inversion the emphasis of the iambic foot would fall naturally upon ‘she.’” These apparent defects embody destabilizing traces of the poem’s act of aestheticization: Melville’s inversion of *she is not at strife* to *is she not at strife* problematizes the portrait’s (and the speaker’s) idealization of the former slave precisely because – what Hudson takes to be a failing – “the syntax and metrical emphasis lead the reader to anticipate a question.”³³ Moreover, the metrical tendency toward the syncopation of *sufferance* and *deliverance* destabilizes the poem’s two key terms: Jackson’s sufferance may continue after all (for a longer duration than *suff’rance*), and her deliverance may be cut short. These syncopations also urge the reader to pronounce the words in a sort of dialect, as a former slave might have spoken them: this would involve identifying with the woman to some extent, vocally closing the panoramic distance and crossing the two-dimensional surface of both picture and poem. “Corps Commander” and “Formerly a Slave” both include alternative perspectives that either stretch and distort or expose and pass through the flattened surface of circular form.

Not surprisingly, the collection’s best example of elliptical form is also its most ambitious attempt to comprehend and contain the war’s violence through circular form and pastoral imagery: the widely anthologized “Shiloh: A Requiem (April, 1862)”:

Skimming lightly, wheeling still,
The swallows fly low

Over the field in clouded days,

The forest-field of Shiloh –

Over the field where April rain

Solaced the parched ones stretched in pain

Through the pause of night

That followed the Sunday fight

Around the church of Shiloh –

The church so lone, the log-built one,

That echoed to many a parting groan

And natural prayer

Of dying foemen mingled there –

Foemen at morn, but friends at eve –

Fame or country least their care:

(What like a bullet can undecieve!)

But now they lie low,

While over them the swallows skim,

And all is hushed at Shiloh.

(pp. 81–82)

The first line immediately invokes the ekphrastic tradition – from Homer’s astrological description of the “Wagon, / who turns about in a fixed place”³⁴ to Eliot’s Chinese jar – so eloquently captured in Krieger’s notion of “still movement.” The swallows literally embody a panoramic bird’s-eye view, their motion suggesting a hermeneutics of mere “skimming.” The still movement of their “wheeling still” parallels the repetitive, circular structure of the “requiem”: in addition to its formal integrity, the poem circles back on itself by beginning and ending with a present-tense description of the battlefield long after the fighting, while lines 5–12 describe the past scene “where April rain / Solaced the parched ones stretched in pain.” (Is this the solace that relieves thirst or the more lasting solace of death by drowning?) Amid Melville’s beautiful, aestheticizing description of the dying, “the pause of night” simultaneously freezes the temporal experience of pain and cloaks it in darkness. Even the “Sunday fight / Around the church of Shiloh” recalls, despite its sacreligious setting, the roundness of DuPont’s battle plan. The concluding lines signal a return to the present, postbellum time with the modifier *now*, closing the poem with a chilling silence.³⁵

Yet the poem’s “central” image quietly registers the strangeness of this silence: swallows are known for their singing. Furthermore, Melville’s choice of bird yields an ironic double entendre that, from the outset, undermines the attempt at pastoral era-

sure: a *swallow* in 1866 was also "a deep hole or opening in the earth" or "a depth or abyss of water; a yawning gulf; a whirlpool."³⁶ To swallow meant to "consum[e]"; to "accept" or believe; "to engulf"; "to make away with, destroy, consume, cause to vanish"; "to accept without opposition or protest"; "to believe unquestioningly"; "to refrain from expressing or uttering; to keep down, repress"; or "to make away with or destroy completely; to cause to disappear utterly" (*OED*, 2d ed., 17:342–44). In addition to foregrounding the poem's suppression of violence, *swallows* also echoes one of Melville's less appetizing metaphors in the prose supplement, at the place where he expresses his faith that the freed slaves will eventually be fully incorporated (possibly through miscegenation) into the body politic: "Our institutions have a potent digestion, and may in time convert and assimilate to good all elements thrown in, however originally alien" (p. 185).³⁷ If, as Cohen argues, Melville's swallows symbolize the regeneration of spring,³⁸ then they do so – like the elms of Malvern Hill, which helplessly state that "*leaves must be green in Spring*" – at the cost of overlooking all that is "originally alien." Ideally, assimilation would preclude the violence that, in "Donelson" (February, 1862), Melville also (and more appropriately) likens to a digestive residue: "*Three columns of infantry rolled on, / Vomited out of Donelson*" (p. 71).

In addition to the destabilizing connotations of the "swallows," several of the formal and textual elements of "Shiloh" produce a sort of irreducible remainder. Metrical irregularities destabilize the poem's ekphrastic effort to assert its own integrity through the circular repetition of sounds and refrains: the accents in "fly *low*" and "lie *low*" do not quite match that of "*Shiloh*." The prosody demands that the reader either distort the stresses herself or accept the fact of asymmetrical (although still euphonious)³⁹ "assimilation." The poem also contains – or fails to quite contain – several graphic or visual ironies. For example, the word *Shiloh* itself contains an echo of the two perspectives – the swallows' overview and the wounded soldiers' "low," land-bound position – at stake in the poem.⁴⁰ Similarly, the word *swallows* contains, or "swallows," the word *wallows*, which seems to be precisely what

the "parched ones stretched in pain" are doing. Lines 2–4 qualify, quite early in the poem, the privileged aerial perspective of the swallows: they "fly *low* / Over the field in *clouded* days, / The *forest-field* of Shiloh" (emphasis added). After all, flying low does not offer such a panoramic view, particularly on a clouded day, and even the field of line 3 becomes mediated or obscured – a "*forest-field*" – in line 4.

What is more, the poem's most famous line – indeed, the most often-quoted line in all of Melville's poetry – presents a visual figuration of elliptical form. As Buell eloquently puts it, line 16 – "(What like a bullet can undeceive!)" – exposes "the irony of . . . [the soldiers'] innocence and the grimness of the grizzled wisdom to which the survivors were forcibly awakened."⁴¹ The exclamation interrupts the requiem with the suddenness of a bullet, violently exploding on the poem's effort of burying and silencing the dead. Regarded visually, the line even resembles an explosion, a shell burst open. While the two parentheses hint at the possibility of circular form, they embody the traces of an ellipse. Thus, both the content and the visual form of the line indicate an elliptical supplement neglected by the panoramic gaze.⁴² The line expresses an ironic skepticism concerning the very project of achieving poetic integrity when dealing with shattered, disintegrated bodies torn by war: situated between parentheses, words attempting to assert their own integrity are always already widening the gap separating the sides of an ellipse. Melville thus reveals the elliptical omissions at the very foundation of the restorative pastoral circles on the surface of his poem. "Shiloh" represents not one central viewpoint – that of the birds overhead – but the coexistence of two foci, which remain blind to one another: the birds do not notice the soldiers, nor do the dying heed the birds. The poem's unstable process of "wheeling still" dramatizes the ideological swallowing of violence that both supports and motivates aestheticizing representations like the depersonalized diagram of "Dupont's Round Fight."

Whereas the ideological viewpoint embodied in the "LAW" of "Dupont's Round Fight" and in the swallows of "Shiloh" strives for a panoramic prospect, the dual vision of elliptical form – both in its doubleness of foci and in its simultaneous emphasis on

the represented and the unrepresentable – approximates the optical genre of the stereograph. According to Jonathan Crary, stereographs were “the most significant form of visual imagery in the nineteenth century, with the exception of photographs.”⁴³ John Lone’s 1856 manual *Painting with Both Hands; or, The Adoption of the Principle of the Stereoscope in Art, as a Means to Binocular Pictures* outlines a stereoscopic style with which alone “the painter . . . can in any sense rival the perfection of the binocular stereoscope.” In addition to privileging the “indeterminateness” that frequently unsettles Melville’s panoramic views, Lone cites one of Melville’s favorite painters as an exemplar of stereoscopic style: “[S]traight, sharp, and manifestly single lines have no place in works of art; but breaks, compromises, and indeterminateness, run like a gauze before a picture, and set the imagination free to realize more than the eye has fairly before it. Thus, within certain limits, the least determinate artists, as for example Turner, are the nearest to suggesting the verity of natural things, simply because they are nearest to the double lines of nature.”⁴⁴

It is the indeterminateness of nature’s double lines, as embodied in the stereoscope’s dual vision, that Melville pursues in “The Temeraire (Supposed to Have Been Suggested to an Englishman of the Old Order by the Fight of the Monitor and Merrimac)” – an ekphrastic meditation on J. M. W. Turner’s *The Fighting “Temeraire,” Tugged to Her Last Berth to Be Broken Up*, 1838 (1839; National Gallery, London).⁴⁵ As the advent of ironclads relegated wooden ships to the navy yard, Melville envisioned picturesque fleets of formerly glorious ships “shrouded” in a “parting light”:

Towering afar in parting light,
The fleets like Albion’s forelands shine –
The full-sailed fleets, the shrouded show
Of Ships-of-the-Line.

(p. 79)

Yet the visual undecidability of these shrouded ships does not satisfy Melville’s ironic vision: clouds, after all, can conceal and aestheticize, as when they partially veil the unseemly dead of Shiloh. Instead, Melville again foregrounds the act of looking away (*ek-phrasis*, in the sense of “saying away”), which is an inevitable counterpart to the focused look of classical ekphrasis: a close look

at one object necessarily involves looking away from others. The poem’s (parenthetical) subtitle, after all, identifies “an Englishman of the old order” – perhaps the same gentleman who views the “Battle of Stone River” from the “Oxford Cloisters” – considering “the fight of the Monitor and Merrimac.” It is not that viewing the painting suggests thoughts about the battle; on the contrary, considering the battle – a prolonged, explosive battle between two thickly armored ships – occasions a pastoral, elegiac meditation on the painting!

The poem following “The Temeraire,” “A Utilitarian View of the Monitor’s Fight,” provides a stereographic counterpoint – the second focus of an ellipse – to the nostalgia expressed in “The Temeraire” for past forms of war. Although “A Utilitarian View” likewise avoids any details about the battle (indeed, the utilitarian speaker characterizes modern warfare as a “calm ’mid storm”), its conclusion emphasizes the fundamental ugliness of modern technologies of war, the resistance of modern warfare to aestheticization:

War shall yet be, and to the end;
But war-paint shows the streaks of weather;
War yet shall be, but warriors
Are now but operatives; War’s made
Less grand than Peace,
And a singe runs through lace and feather.

The poem’s first stanza declares, contra the nostalgic speaker of “The Temeraire,” a poetics of the ordinary, a recognition that war should no longer hide its grime behind the pompous “gaud of glory”:

Plain be the phrase, yet apt the verse,
More ponderous than nimble;
For since grimed War here laid aside
His painted pomp, ’twould ill befit
Overmuch to ply
The rhyme’s barbaric cymbal.

(pp. 81, 81, 80)

Read as a pair, “The Temeraire” and “A Utilitarian View” complement one another, each emphasizing the beauty and the efficiency, respectively, that the other overlooks. The result, in stereoscopic terms, is a sense of three-dimensionality, a demand that the reader keep sight of two juxtaposed

images that cannot quite be resolved.⁴⁶ *Battle-Pieces* offers many such stereoscopic pairings of poems that ironically undermine and broaden one another's claims.⁴⁷ Yet the very proliferation of such stereoscopic pairings suggests that the desired moment of synthesis continues to escape Melville's dual vision. At best, the poems continually and evocatively point out the unattainable position of the second, elliptical viewpoint. Elliptical form can never be complete: there always remains an indescribable perspective, one that neither poet nor reader can ever occupy.

A SILENT VISION UNAVOWED

Not surprisingly, this continually lacking perspective is that of the nameless, unrepresentable dead: the fading "footfalls" that die away as the speaker of "Ball's Bluff" stands at his window; the "haggard beards of blood" that the elms of Malvern Hill "remember" but refuse to "muse" on; or those "parched ones stretched in pain" refreshed or drowned by Shiloh's April rains. Although Melville opens his volume with a dedication claiming that "THE BATTLE-PIECES IN THIS VOLUME ARE DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND WHO . . . FELL DEVOTEDLY UNDER THE FLAG OF THEIR FATHERS," his poems seldom represent dead soldiers directly.⁴⁸ Instead, Melville alludes to the dead only to stress the troubling existence of an unattainable viewpoint that destabilizes all representations of the war, however "stereoscopic" they appear to be.

For no photographs – stereoscopic or otherwise – managed to capture the "real" events of the Civil War. Alan Trachtenberg explains that

few signs of actual battle appear in any Civil War pictures. They show preparations and aftermaths, the scene but not the event. Nevertheless, the ravage and destruction they depict are eloquent testimony of the violence which preceded the picture. As the *Times* noted, they "perpetuate" a physical sense of war, what it must have been like had we been there – tokens of spent violence.

But they are not just windows to the past. Made under trying conditions with slow, cumbersome equipment, they reveal the limits and

conventions of the medium as much as the look of the war.⁴⁹

Indeed, many photographs depicting the aftermath of battle were staged, the corpses dragged into aesthetically appealing positions and formations. If Melville's poems are like photographs or stereographs, they too are necessarily distanced from the fighting, portraying only early portents and remote aftermaths. When Melville does turn his poetic gaze toward battle, he too presents an ironic exposure of the representational limits and conventions of his own poetic medium rather than a transparent "window" onto "the look of the war." Thus, "The Armies of the Wilderness (1863–64)" begins with a typical vacillation between the partial perspective of privates standing "with rifles ready and eyes that strain" and the comprehensive, panoramic battle plan of General Grant ("The resolute scheme of a heart as calm / As the Cyclone's core," a heart encased in a sort of pastoral circularity); then the poem abruptly reveals that neither of these viewpoints involves the true experience of war:

None can narrate that strife in the pines,
A seal is on it – Sabaeen lore!
Obscure as the wood, the entangled rhyme
But hints at the maze of war –
Vivid glimpses or livid through peopled gloom,
And fires which creep and char –
A riddle of death, of which the slain
Sole solvers are.

(pp. 99, 102, 104)

A riddle of death that only the dead can solve: Melville's tautology confronts ekphrastic circles with a labyrinthine circle of opacity, showing them to be inherently elliptical insofar as they have always already elided this unnarratable strife. War in its entirety remains incomprehensible on account of these physical remains, these livid corpses that alone could properly narrate the strife that they did not quite survive. Despite his constant concern with historical events, Melville here seems to agree with Whitman that "the real war will never get in the books."⁵⁰

Melville again thematizes the unrepresentable dead in "Presentation to the Authorities, by Privates, of Colors Captured in Battles Ending in the Surrender of Lee," a poem that seems to be based on Alfred Waud's illustration for *Harper's Weekly* of

"General Custer Presenting Captured Battle-Flags at the War Department, Washington, October 23, 1864" (fig. 4).⁵¹ If, as Cohen reports, Melville had on hand a file of *Harper's Weekly* for the years 1861–65 while writing *Battle-Pieces*,⁵² he could not have missed this illustration, which appeared on the cover of the 12 November 1864 issue. In the woodcut, General Custer stands in the foreground, making a grand, chivalric gesture toward the flags held by his ragged, nondescript men. Melville's poem, in contrast, deliberately omits the ostentatious officer, instead giving voice to the battle-worn soldiers in the background of Waud's illustration. Yet these soldiers in turn acknowledge a further omission, one less easily remedied: for they attend the ceremony "while comrades, whom Duty as strongly nerved, / Whose wives were all as dear, lie low." Recalling the men who "lie low" at "Shiloh," their experiences swallowed by the recuperative requiem, these lines complicate the "end foredoomed which closes war" by emphasizing the cost of that closure. While these privates will, once they return to "private" life, "reap the recompense / Of life imperiled for just cause," their dead comrades remain uncompensated. The corpses' suffering – and that of their wives – interrupts and disrupts the connection, by means of rhyme, of "just cause" with the poem's concluding relief over the Union's "vindicated laws" (p. 140). Melville's ekphrastic response to Waud's illustration thus involves two swerves: first, between the woodcut and the poem, he turns away from the central figure of Custer in order to foreground the marginalized privates; next, the poem momentarily shifts its attention from these privates to their dead, uncompensated comrades. Melville destabilizes each viewpoint by adding another, until he comes to the perspective of the dead – a perspective that resists the very efforts at representation that it demands.

"America," the final poem in the collection's main section of battle poems,⁵³ seems to espouse a dialectical solution to this representational blockage. In the poem, the nation personified as a woman (Melville was probably influenced by Hiram Powers's [1805–73] sculpture of *America* [1848–54], which he saw on the same day in 1857 that he viewed Rosa's *Battaglia*)⁵⁴ experiences the Civil War as a bad dream:

She sleeps, but sleeps, she is not dead.
But in that sleep contortion showed
The terror of the vision there –
A silent vision unavowed,
Revealing earth's foundation bare,
And Gorgon in her hidden place.

Yet, after this vision, America awakens with

No trace of passion or of strife –
A clear calm look. It spake of pain,
But such as purifies from stain –
Sharp pangs that never come again. . . .

(p. 133)

However, if *Battle-Pieces* demonstrates anything about vision, it is that "a clear calm look" is a blind look: the poem's dialectical recuperation leaves "a silent vision unavowed" and suppresses pain without confronting it. How else could the speaker arrive at the naive conviction that "sharp pangs [will] . . . never come again"?

The movement of dialectical recovery is described in similar terms by the optimistic voice of "The Conflict of Convictions (1860–61)," which uses the image of bare foundations to emphasize the urgency of recuperation and reconstruction:

I know a wind in purpose strong –
It spins *against* the way it drives.
What if the gulfs their slimed foundations
bare?
So deep must the stones be hurled
Whereon the throes of ages rear
The final empire and the happier world.

The dialectical whirlwind that "spins *against* the way it drives" retains the circular movement of ekphrasis while insisting that earth's terrifying "slimed foundations" have been revealed only to be re-covered, buried by the new foundations of a happier world. Yet Melville never blindly turns away from the negative, antithetical moment of war's dialectic: the poem's pessimistic voice responds by pointing to the "Iron Dome" of the Capitol, a symbol of tyranny, and then by asserting that death will always "be busy with all who strive – / Death, with silent negative" (pp. 55, 56).

Melville delves more deeply into America's "silent vision unavowed" in another ekphrastic poem, "The Coming Storm: A



Picture by S. R. Gifford, and Owned by E. B. Included in the N.A. Exhibition, April 1865" (based on *The Coming Storm* by Sanford Robinson Gifford [1823–80] [oil on canvas, 1865; private collection]).⁵⁵ This poem inverts the trajectory of the gaze in "The Temeraire," moving not from a battle to a painting but from a painting to a historical situation. The poem opens, instead of with a distanced look, with a recommendation for a more affective appreciation of Gifford's painting: "All feeling hearts must feel for him / Who felt this picture." Comparing Edwin Booth (1833–93), the famous Shakespearean actor and brother of John Wilkes Booth, to the painting's portentous landscape, the second stanza continues, "A demon-cloud like the

FIGURE 4

Alfred Waud (1828–91), "General Custer Presenting Captured Battle-Flags at the War Department, Washington, October 23, 1864," *Harper's Weekly* 8, no. 411 (12 November 1864): 721. Courtesy Mark Twain Project, University of California, Berkeley.

mountain one / Burst on a spirit as mild / As this urned lake." Although Melville's assertion that Booth has "reache[d] Shakespeare's core" implies the existence of a spherical container, that "core" embodies precisely the awareness that an asymmetrical, irrational excess can burst at any moment on any round "urned lake" – the awareness of a death both eagerly sought and desperately avoided: "That which we seek and shun is there – / Man's final lore" (pp. 123, 124, 124).

The image of a core threatening to burst

reappears in "The Apparition (a Retrospect)," which William Shurr calls "the most concise statement of Melville's philosophy to be found anywhere in his writings."⁵⁶ The poem's (parenthetical) subtitle recalls both Melville's own claim that he composed most of the *Battle-Pieces* after the war was over and Jane Jackson's patient "retrospect of life" in the immediately preceding ekphrastic poem, "Formerly a Slave" (p. 129). But "The Apparition" argues that both the suffering of the war and the injustices endured by former slaves cannot simply be buried:

Convulsions came; and, where the field
Long slept in pastoral green,
A goblin-mountain was upheaved
(Sure the scared sense was all deceived),
Marl-glen and slag-ravine.

The poem describes a sudden explosion that induces an upheaval of the "pastoral green": as in "Shiloh," the parenthetical line (which also thematizes "deceptions" and becoming "undeceived") graphically represents the elliptical traces of an exploded shell. Yet the second stanza emphasizes that this explosion was too brief to be optically absorbed or "swallowed": "[E]re the eye could take it in, / Or mind could comprehension win, / It sunk!" The final stanza draws the following lesson from this incomprehensible spectacle:

So, then, Solidity's a crust –
The core of fire below;
All may go well for many a year,
But who can think without a fear
Of horrors that happen so?

(pp. 129, 130)

The pastoral erasure or recuperation of violence performed in earlier poems has only reestablished a "crust" over a volatile core. The ekphrastic yearning for circular plasticity or "solidity" also fades in the face of a subterranean core of fire. David Cody persuasively argues that the poem describes, not a real volcanic eruption, but rather the explosion of a Civil War mine in Petersburg long after the war's end – more specifically, an *illustration* of the explosion, printed in *Harper's Weekly*.⁵⁷ Instead of taking the visual representation at (sur)face value, Melville interprets it as an allegory of the way in which war may break through the "pastoral green" surface at any time, "ere the

eye could take it in, / Or mind could comprehension win."⁵⁸ If Melville's veiled and relatively obscure allusion to the Petersburg mine explosion dehistoricizes it to some extent (i.e., by representing it in vague terms that could just as easily be describing a volcanic eruption), it does so only to dramatize the way in which violence returns despite all attempts to exorcise or swallow it, to distance it or take it in.

Similarly, Melville's reliance on the opposition between core and surface reinscribes circular form only in order to dislocate it again. A passage from the prose supplement that recalls the quasi-volcanic burst of "The Apparition" provides a more sophisticated theorization of this opposition: "Why is not the cessation of war now at length attended with the settled calm of peace? Wherefore in a clear sky do we still turn our eyes toward the South, as the Neapolitan, months after the eruption, turns his toward Vesuvius? Do we dread lest the repose may be deceptive? In the recent convulsion has the crater but shifted? Let us revere that sacred uncertainty which forever impends over men and nations" (p. 184). A crater that shifts is not an absolute center but an unlocalizable site of uncertainty. The core – both the knowledge of death that is "Shakespeare's core" and the "core of fire" that can quite literally undermine an artificial solidity at any moment – manifests itself only in elusive, shifting craters.⁵⁹

Battle-Pieces presents poetic ekphrases only to turn away from them – only to turn toward the unfathomable core, the "silent vision unavowed" at the bare foundations of society. But Melville's focus on an unrepresentable violence is not merely a sad and unproductive obsession with the past: he accompanies his suggestion that the crater of discord may have only shifted with practical recommendations for a peaceful, nonvindictive approach to Reconstruction. "America," recovered from the Civil War, risks perpetuating its violence as her "clear calm" look produces a rash optimism – "Law on her brow and empire in her eyes" (p. 133). To such a statue-like gaze, Melville supplements an imperative of mourning for unseen losses, for the casualties of war that cannot be recovered. *Battle-Pieces*, which rarely describes the dead, does not live up

to its dedication: the volume's ekphrastic descriptions do not memorialize or mourn the dead by means of plastic monuments; instead, they expose the partial nature of such monuments, the impossibility of mourning for an incomprehensible absence. Refusing to fix and assimilate the war through recourse to visual mediations, Melville continually indicates the traces of an absence, of "a silent vision unavowed." Recovering her Law and Empire too quickly and too easily after the national conflict, America risks becoming the very Gorgon that haunted her nightmare – a monster whose gaze turns the living and the dead to stone by refusing to acknowledge the pressure of alternate, shifting perspectives.

NOTES

I would like to thank Christina Pugh, Lawrence Buell, and Samuel Otter for their thoughtful comments on this essay. Three anonymous readers for *Nineteenth Century Studies* also provided invaluable suggestions for research and revision.

1. Bryan J. Wolf, "Confessions of a Closet Ekphrastic: Literature, Painting, and Other Unnatural Relations," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 3, no. 2 (spring 1990): 181–203, 186. For the opposing, unskeptical view – which derives from Horace's idea that a poem can successfully describe and even aspire toward the condition of a painting (*ut pictura poesis*) – see Jean H. Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

2. W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 154. Compare Grant F. Scott's claim that "the critical literature of the sister arts has consistently overlooked the special *psychology* of ekphrastic encounter and the anxieties generated by the writer's confrontation with the provocative immediacy of the image" (*The Sculpted Word: Keats, Ekphrasis, and the Visual Arts* [Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1994], xii). Frederick Burwick also emphasizes Romanticism's tendency toward "the skeptical repudiation of the mimetic and ekphrastic endeavor" and the sense that "to enter into the 'endless monument' of art is to bear the risk of permanent entombment" ("Ekphrasis and the Mimetic Crisis of Romanticism," in *Icons – Texts – Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, ed. Peter Wagner [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996], 78–104, 78, 94). Ekphrasis, for these writers, involves intense and often conflicting

emotions as well as cold, unmoving works of plastic art.

3. Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xv. Because it represents Krieger's most detailed treatment of "circular form," I will focus primarily on the earlier (1967) essay, entitled "Ekphrasis and the Still Movement of Poetry; or *Laokoön* Revisited" and reprinted as an appendix to *Ekphrasis* (pp. 263–88). For a discussion of irony as an alternative to Krieger's understanding of the ekphrastic "moment," see J. Hillis Miller, "Friedrich Schlegel and the Anti-Ekphrastic Tradition," in *Revenge of the Aesthetic: The Place of Literature in Theory Today*, ed. Michael Clark (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 58–75.

4. My "loose" interpretation of ekphrasis as the verbal description of both art objects and real objects perceived as spectacle is indebted to Ruth Webb, who claims that, before twentieth-century literary critics appropriated it, the term *ekphrasis* strictly applied to the rhetorical description of any mental image – "of a person, a place, even a battle, as well as of a painting or sculpture" (*"Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern: The Invention of a Genre," Word and Image* 15, no. 1 [January–March 1999]: 7–18, 8). I also draw from Murray Krieger, who writes that "*ekphrasis*, no longer a narrow kind of poem defined by its object of imitation, broadens to become a general principle of poetics, asserted by every poem in the assertion of its integrity. Is it too much to say that essentially the same principle lies behind the employment of the poetic refrain, indeed behind the employment of meter itself?" (*Ekphrasis*, 284). Although he risks making *ekphrasis* synonymous with *poetry* as such, Krieger's understanding of the former in terms of its (circular) form rather than its (plastic-art) object points toward a way of linking what seems to be a rare and obscure poetic device with more pressing questions about poetic form. Krieger's framework also makes it possible to link the description of art objects to the aestheticizing description of "reality" as if it were a work of art. I discuss Krieger's argument in greater detail below.

5. For a comprehensive list of studies of Melville and the visual arts up to 1991, see Christopher Sten, "Appendix B: Studies of Herman Melville and the Visual Arts: A Comprehensive Check-List," in *Savage Eye: Melville and the Visual Arts*, ed. Christopher Sten (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991), 281–84. Works published in the last decade that discuss Melville's relation to the visual arts include, e.g., Robert K. Wallace, *Melville and Turner: Spheres of Love and Fear* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992); Douglas Robillard, *Melville and the Visual Arts: Ionian Form, Venetian Tint* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1997); Susan S. Williams, *Confounding Images: Photography and Portraiture in Ante-*

bellum American Fiction (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 120–46; portions of John Hollander, *The Gazer's Spirit: Poems Speaking to Silent Works of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); and Sten, ed., *Savage Eye*, a rich collection of essays. For a detailed account of Melville's responses to Civil War photography, see Timothy Sweet, *Traces of War: Poetry, Photography, and the Crisis of the Union* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990). Also of interest are visual materials reproduced in Stuart M. Frank's *Herman Melville's Picture Gallery: Sources and Types of the "Pictorial" Chapters of "Moby Dick"* (Fairhaven, Mass.: Edward J. Lefkowitz, 1986) and the twentieth-century illustrations of *Moby Dick* collected in Elizabeth A. Schultz's *Unpainted to the Last: "Moby Dick" and Twentieth-Century American Art* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995).

6. Herman Melville, *Journals*, ed. Howard C. Horsford and Lynn Horth, vol. 15 of *The Writings of Herman Melville*, ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, G. Thomas Tanselle, et al., 13 vols. to date (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press; Chicago: Newberry Library, 1968–), 116.

7. Christopher Sten, "Melville and the Visual Arts: An Overview," in Sten, ed., *Savage Eye*, 1–39, 24.

8. Melville, *Journals*, 116. The editors of the *Journals* comment that in Melville's time, "in the same hall" of the Pitti as Michelangelo's painting (now attributed to Francesco Salviati), "were Salvator Rosa's often-mentioned *Battle Piece* and *Conspiracy of Catiline*, and two rooms beyond, his self-portrait (attribution now disputed)" (pp. 495–96). This *Battaglia* would have been the larger 1642 painting of that title, commissioned by Ferdinand II, grand duke of Tuscany (see Jonathan Scott, *Salvator Rosa: His Life and Times* [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995], 39–41). A smaller painting, executed later for Prince Matthias de' Medici, also now hangs in the Pitti, but no guidebooks list it as being there at the time of Melville's visit.

9. Scott, *Salvator Rosa*, 40. Scott adds that the motto was "more likely intended" to mean "I will be there"; in other words, he would be available to commemorate the prince's triumphs at a later date." But Scott's reading still presupposes the painter's *survival* – which is the point that I wish to emphasize.

Melville could have learned about this motto indirectly through monographs on Rosa by Lady Morgan and Filippo Baldinucci, a seventeenth-century Italian critic (see Lady Morgan, *The Life and Times of Salvator Rosa* [London: Henry Colburn, 1824], 249; and Filippo Baldinucci, *Dal baroccio a Salvator Rosa*, ed. Franco Croce [Florence: Sansoni, 1961], 193). As early as the 1874 edition (earlier editions were unavailable for consultation), Baedeker's guidebook also notes parenthetically that "the figure on the l[eft], below the shield, with the word Saro, is the painter's

portrait" (*Italy: Handbook for Travellers: First Part, Northern Italy* [Leipzig: Baedeker, 1874], 354).

A closer reading of Melville's journal entry vis-à-vis guidebook accounts of the Pitti Gallery suggests that the autograph mentioned in the notes – "portraits (one autograph) Battle Piece" – can refer only to the 1642 *Battaglia*: there is one other self-portrait by Rosa in the Pitti, but it is conspicuously *unsigned* (thus, it had been previously attributed to Lorenzo Lippi).

10. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*, vol. 6 of Hayford et al., eds., *The Writings of Herman Melville*, 573.

11. Herman Melville, *The Poems of Herman Melville*, ed. Douglas Robillard (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2000), 84. Hereafter, page numbers from this edition are cited parenthetically in the text.

12. A subtle and perhaps coincidental echo of Rosa's anagrammatic signature literally renders Melville's (partial) identification with the elms' compromised point of view: the title "Malvern Hill" is a partial (or elliptical) anagram of the poet's name, "Herman [Me]lville[e]." Melville explicitly identified with Rosa when he attributed his tale "The Encantadas, or Enchanted Isles" to the pseudonymous "Salvator R. Tarnmoor" (see Herman Melville, *The Piazza Tales and Other Prose Pieces, 1839–1860*, vol. 9 of Hayford et al., eds., *The Writings of Herman Melville*, 125, 607).

13. Although he criticizes the "biographical legacy" that has overemphasized Melville's distance from the war, Stanton Garner gives a detailed account of Melville's intense but always *mediated* engagement with its events in his *The Civil War World of Herman Melville* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 388–90.

14. *Ibid.*, 388. See also Hennig Cohen, who describes the poems as the product "of the cool calculation which the passage of time makes possible" (introduction to *The Battle-Pieces of Herman Melville*, ed. Hennig Cohen [New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1963], 11–28, 15). Robert Penn Warren, in contrast, argues that "the Civil War made Melville a poet" by providing him with "the stimulation of the concrete, the specific" ("Melville's Poems," *Southern Review* 3 [1967]: 799–855, 806). The visual mediations of Melville's ekphrastic poems repeatedly problematize Warren's emphasis on the "concrete" by introducing problems of distance, perspective, and sometimes even blindness.

15. Michael Paul Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy: The Politics and Art of Herman Melville* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983; reprint, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 260.

16. Scott, *Salvator Rosa*, 40.

17. I adapt this term from Gail Coffler, "Form as Resolution: Classical Elements in Melville's

Battle-Pieces," in *American Poetry: Between Tradition and Modernism, 1865-1914: Papers from the Poetry Sessions of the European Association for American Studies Biennial Conference, Paris, 1982* (Eichstätter Beiträge, Abteilung Sprache und Literatur, vol. 9), ed. Roland Hagenbüchle (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1984), 105-21, 112: "Melville's special gift was the dual vision which allowed him to distinguish between the actual and the ideal and to see how they were one."

18. Krieger, *Ekphrasis*, 263.

19. T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," from *Four Quartets*, in *Collected Poems, 1909-1962* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), 175-81, 180.

20. Compare John Seelye, who suggests that "*Battle-Pieces* resembles 'The Encantadas' in being a static round" (*Melville: The Ironic Diagram* [Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1970], 136, emphasis added). William H. Shurr gathers the poems into two circular categories: the "Cycle of Law," which emphasizes the necessity of Unity and Law, and the "Cycle of Evil," which dwells on the war's senseless violence. Yet Shurr eventually notes, with regard to at least one poem ("The Fall of Richmond"), that "on first reading the poem appears to belong to the Cycle of Law; but law is here redefined as the reestablishment of right through military force, necessary because of the evil now manifested in man" (*The Mystery of Iniquity: Melville as Poet, 1857-1891* [Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972], 40). In other words, the Cycle of Law - which is also that of unity and integrity - lacks integrity to the extent that it already overlaps with the Cycle of Evil. This overlap, along with the very presence of two thematic "cycles," parallels the breakdown of the integrated ekphrastic circle with its unitary center.

On panoramas, see Collamer M. Abbott, "Melville and the Panoramas," *Melville Society Extracts*, no. 101 (June 1995): 1-14. Citing twenty-eight publicly exhibited panoramas that Melville may have seen or read about between 1844 and 1853, Abbott argues that Melville gradually developed a "panoramic style" of writing that "allowed most people to 'see' what they might never experience" (p. 1). Curiously, Abbott does not discuss Melville's encounters with panoramas after 1853, despite the fact that, according to Joseph Earl Arrington, the genre became still more popular during and after the Civil War: "It was the holocaust of the Civil War . . . with its involvement of almost all the nation's energies and the deeply enduring impressions it made on the American people which awakened the national interest sufficiently to bring the panorama movement to full flower. Even during the progress of the war there were beginnings" ("Thomas Clarkson Gordon's Moving Panorama

of the Civil War *Battle Scenes of the Rebellion*," in *Civil War Panorama: A Moving Panorama Painting Entitled "Battle Scenes of the Rebellion" by Thomas Clarkson Gordon, 1841-1922* [Dearborn, Mich.: Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, (1959?)], [1-6, 1]). Abbott's identification of a "panoramic style" in Melville's antebellum prose seems all the more applicable to his postbellum poetry, concerned as it is with achieving - or failing to achieve - a unitary, comprehensive perspective on the war.

21. See Cohen, ed., *Battle-Pieces*, 215-17, where a reproduction of the battle plan can likewise be found. Throughout this edition, Cohen reproduces several other visual artworks attesting to what he calls the "pictorial intention" of Melville's poems (see p. 15). Cohen (pp. 15-19) notes "at least twenty" significant parallels between Melville's poems and the *Rebellion Record*, taking his cue from Frank L. Day, "Herman Melville's Use of *The Rebellion Record* in His Poetry" (master's thesis, University of Tennessee, 1959).

22. Moore, ed., *Rebellion Record*, 106-7.

23. Sweet, *Traces of War*, 184, 183.

24. Coffler, "Form as Resolution," 108-9; see also "The Laws of Beauty," *Atlantic Monthly* 5, no. 30 (April 1860): 385-91. Coffler helpfully foregrounds the poem's potential irony about tyrannical political, aesthetic, and linguistic laws. On elliptical form, see also Mary Ann Caws, *The Art of Interference: Stressed Readings in Verbal and Visual Texts* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 46-50. Caws derives her "elliptical effect" from "ellipsis in its two major senses, both coming from the Greek for 'to come short': first, the omission of one or more words in a sentence which would have been needed to complete the grammatical construction; second, the oval generated by two foci, one side being shorter than the other. Then the compensating element of the ellipsis on the short-changed side might be the *pleat*, a denseness or accumulation, an awkwardness or stylistic clumsiness which has to be 'taken up' into the material and becomes noticeable, pointing the way to the ellipsis by its very opposition" (p. 48). Caws's awkward compensatory "pleats" seem analogous to Melville's ironic remainders - taken up into the formal or thematic "material" of his poems - which insistently point to the ellipses underlying circular form.

25. Robert Penn Warren's eloquent account of this poem describes a process by which time and history paradoxically "fix" and freeze human figures: "The act is always poised on the verge of history, the passion, even at the moment of greatest intensity, is always about to become legend, the moral issue is always about to disappear into time and leave only the human figures, shadowy now, fixed in attitudes of the struggle" ("Melville the Poet," in *Melville: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Richard Chase [Engle-

wood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962], 144–55, 153). Warren's observation that history paradoxically involves a tendency to dehistoricize helps account for Melville's interest in ekphrasis as a means of describing – and trying unsuccessfully to reanimate – the “fixed” attitudes and shadowy figures frozen by the passage of time.

26. My comments on “pastoral erasure” are indebted to Lawrence Buell: discussing Civil War writings, he claims that “pastoral and military modes of experience are here felt to be utterly at odds” and suggests that many “cases of pastoral closure as a way of coping with combat trauma can be found” (“Military Pastoral” [paper presented at the conference “Nineteenth-Century U.S. Environmental Representation,” Dunbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C., 17 February 1996]). I also draw from Samuel Otter's discussion of the hyperbolic parody in *Pierre* of picturesque paintings that encouraged the exclusion of social tensions – what Otter calls “details of controversy and displacement” (*Melville's Anatomies* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999], 179).

27. Sweet, *Traces of War*, 170.

28. Lawrence Buell explains that “Melville's desire to see white northerners and southerners reconciled . . . takes priority over his concern that African Americans be granted their rightful place as American citizens” (“Melville the Poet,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*, ed. Robert S. Levine [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998], 135–56, 153 n. 12).

29. Sweet, *Traces of War*, 170–71.

30. Incidentally, Elihu Vedder (1836–1929) designed Jane Jackson's portrait (1865; National Academy of Design, New York City) as a head study floated inside a circular border. For a reproduction, see Hollander, *The Gazer's Spirit*, 33. In addition to commenting on several strictly ekphrastic poems by Melville, Hollander also helpfully points out that some of his works apparently unrelated to visual art, such as the poem “The Portent,” often employ “the language of practical ecphrasis – ‘You can't see X in the picture, but Y is shown’” (p. 28). Hollander implies that “the language of practical ecphrasis” involves a process of supplementing the visible aspects “seen” in a spectacle with invisible hints of violence (the peacefully swaying body foreshadows the whole of the war) only implicitly or indirectly “shown.”

31. In fact, Vedder reports that Jane Jackson “had at that time a son . . . fighting in the Union Army” (Elihu Vedder, *The Digressions of V.* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910], 236). Although Melville probably never learned this, it nonetheless emphasizes that the children of Jackson's generation experienced many of the bloodiest costs of “freedom.”

32. Robert Penn Warren, in *Selected Poems of Herman Melville*, ed. Robert Penn Warren (New York: Random House, 1970), 374.

33. Vaughan Hudson, “Melville's *Battle-Pieces* and Whitman's *Drum-Taps*: A Comparison,” *Walt Whitman Review* 19, no. 3 (September 1973): 81–92, 90–91.

34. *The Iliad of Homer*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 388. This is the first of several unmoving circles in Homer's description of Achilles's shield.

35. Melville's use of ekphrastic circularity to “hush” the dead at Shiloh links the poem to a long tradition of poems that employ ekphrasis for the purpose of mourning: Homer's description of Achilles's shield offers both a break from the violent fighting and a complement to Patroklos's funeral rites; Keats's “Ode on a Grecian Urn” may advise a suitor “not [to] grieve,” but that suitor himself appears on a funereal urn; Shelley's “On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery” describes a painting of Medusa's severed head; Browning describes “my last Duchess painted on the wall, / Looking as if she were alive”; and Auden's “Musée des Beaux Arts” ironically aestheticizes Icarus's “white legs disappearing into the green / Water.” Robert Milder has in mind just such a notion of ekphrasis as a means of swallowing pain when he writes that “*Battle-Pieces* contains a tragedy and converts it to a source of human strength” (“The Reader of/in Melville's *Battle-Pieces*,” *Melville Society Extracts*, no. 72 [February 1988]: 12–15, 14).

36. The “Epilogue” to *Moby-Dick* uses a swallow or whirlpool to represent several aspects of circular form. Not only does the following passage present a structural parallel to the marginal surviving spectators of Rosa's *Battaglia* and Melville's war poems; it also describes a fascination with – and the ultimate bursting of – the still wheeling of ekphrasis: “So, floating on the margin of the ensuing scene, and in full sight of it, when the half-spent suction of the sunk ship reached me, I was then, but slowly, drawn towards the closing vortex. When I reached it, it had subsided to a creamy pool. Round and round, then, and ever contracting towards the button-like black bubble at the axis of that slowly wheeling circle, like another Ixion I did revolve. Till, gaining that vital centre, the black bubble upward burst” (p. 573, emphases added). Ishmael nearly loses his position on the margin of the scene, slowly swallowed inward by “that slowly wheeling circle”; he escapes that centripetal suction only because the black bubble bursts through the creamy surface – because the center cannot hold.

37. Compare Otter's discussion of oral metaphors and the erasure of “the social history of the land” (*Melville's Anatomies*, 184–90, 185).

38. Cohen, ed., *Battle-Pieces*, 229.

39. Whereas Hudson sees the metrical irregu-

larities of "Formerly a Slave" as a flaw, I am claiming that such formal asymmetries in "Shiloh" are a crucial source of both the poem's beauty and its critique of naive attempts to aestheticize the war.

40. I am grateful to Samuel Otter for this observation.

41. Buell, "Melville the Poet," 139.

42. One possible source for Melville's unsettling of circular form is Emerson's "Circles." Starting from the assertion that "the eye is the first circle," Emerson describes a continual outward expansion of "power" in concentric circles, each one "bursting" the last: "[I]t is the inert effort of each thought, having formed itself into a circular wave of circumstance, — as for instance an empire, rules of an art, a local usage, a religious rite, — to heap itself on that ridge and to solidify and hem in the life. But if the soul is quick and strong it bursts over that boundary on all sides and expands another orbit on the great deep, which also runs up into a high wave, with attempt again to stop and to bind" (Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Circles," in *Selected Writings of Emerson*, ed. Donald McQuade [New York: Random House, 1981], 263–75, 265). The motivating force behind this dialectic of solidification and expansive burst is the fact that "the field cannot be well seen from within the field": progress involves an accumulation and multiplication of perspectives, a process that continually stretches and overflows any given circle (p. 269). Yet Emerson often endorses such expansion even when it requires turning away from historical events, invoking precisely the notion of pastoral erasure that "Shiloh" resists: "In nature every moment is new: the past is always *swallowed* and forgotten" (p. 273, emphasis added). For a discussion of "the Emersonian strategy of erasure" in terms of ekphrasis, see Wolf, "Confessions," 188–93.

43. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 116. Crary argues that the stereoscope addresses "a fully embodied viewer," undermining the Enlightenment's "theatrical" distinction between observer and spectacle (pp. 127, 136). Kathleen Diffley has drawn suggestive parallels between stereographs and the literary use of multiple perspectives in the context of the Civil War ("After Antietam: Stereo Views, Civil War Stories, and Paramount National Citizenship" [guest lecture at the Center for Cultural and Literary Studies, Harvard University, 17 March 1997]).

44. John Lone, *Painting with Both Hands; or, The Adoption of the Principle of the Stereoscope in Art, as a Means to Binocular Pictures* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1856), 4.

45. For a discussion of this poem in relation to Turner's painting, see Wallace, *Melville and Turner*, 53–55. Wallace argues that Melville developed an "aesthetic of the indistinct" (p. 19) strongly influenced by Turner.

46. Compare Buell, "Melville the Poet": "The Civil War thus shaped Melville's mature poetic persona: a tough-minded albeit compassionate observer, self-consciously middle-aged rather than young, careful to *weigh opposite perspectives* against each other" (p. 140, emphasis added).

47. Some examples include the bold linking of "The Portent (1859)," which shows "Weird John Brown" hanged with his face veiled and beard "streaming" (p. 53), with "The Released Rebel Prisoner (June, 1865)," which contains a postwar meditation on a Confederate soldier, who dwells on his "wied [sic] memories among 'hang[ing]' 'cypress-moss,' with his 'face . . . hidden in his beard'" (pp. 127–28); the contrasting praise and blame expressed in "Stonewall Jackson, Mortally Wounded at Chancellorsville (May, 1863)" and "Stonewall Jackson (Ascribed to a Virginian)" (pp. 90–92); the pairing of the "glorious glad marching" in "The March to the Sea (December, 1864)" (p. 116) with the bitter claim that "even despair / Shall never our hate rescind" in "The Frenzy in the Wake: Sherman's Advance through the Carolinas (February, 1865)" (p. 119); and the juxtaposing of "The Martyr: Indicative of the Passion of the People on the 15th Day of April, 1865" with the sympathy for John Wilkes Booth's brother expressed in "'The Coming Storm': A Picture by S. R. Gifford, and Owned by E. B. Included in the N. A. Exhibition, April 1865" (pp. 122–24). Such an oscillation between perspectives — often marked by a distinction between italicized and normative "voices" — also structures several single poems, such as "The Conflict of Convictions (1860–61)," which pits cynicism against optimism (pp. 54–56); "Donelson (February, 1862)," which contrasts the viewpoint of noncombatants who read about battles at the post office with the gloomy perspective of soldiers at the front (pp. 63–76); and "Malvern Hill (July, 1862)," where the elms eventually tell the anxious speaker of their indifference to the war (pp. 83–84). Finally, Melville's addition of a prose supplement that, he says, disrupts the collection's "symmetry" (p. 179) confronts the collection's assemblage of different viewpoints with the "real" opinion of the author.

Respecting "The Released Rebel Prisoner (June, 1865)," Robillard, ed., *The Poems of Herman Melville*, 128, has "drear" in line 35, but both facsimile editions read "weird" (see *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War*, ed. Sidney Kaplan [Gainesville, Fla.: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1960], 152; and *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War*, ed. Lee Rust Brown [n.p.: Da Capo, 1995], 152).

48. For the inscription, see Cohen, ed., *Battle-Pieces*, 31. Two apparent exceptions to Melville's

avoidance of representing the dead in fact confirm his distance from the Union dead: the pastoral erasure of the soldiers' pain in "Shiloh" has been discussed above, and "Magnanimity Baffled" (p. 130) describes a *Confederate* corpse – not one of those who fell "under the flag of their fathers."

49. Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Matthew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1989), 72.

50. Walt Whitman, *Specimen Days*, in *Leaves of Grass and Selected Prose*, ed. John Kouwenhoven (New York: Modern Library, 1950), 559–760, 635.

51. *Harper's Weekly* 8, no. 411 (12 November 1864): 721.

52. Cohen, ed., *Battle-Pieces*, 24. Although nearly all the illustrations in his edition of *Battle-Pieces* are by Alfred and William Waud, Cohen seems to have overlooked this piece; instead, he supplements the poem with a drawing entitled "14th Brooklyn," which bears no apparent relation to the event described (Cohen, ed., *Battle-Pieces*, 161). In this case, Melville's critical modification of a visual representation may be just as significant as what he drew from it directly.

53. The battle poems are followed by a group entitled "Verses Inscriptive and Memorial" (pp. 134–41) and three longer poems (pp. 141–71). For a detailed account of the book's structure, see Richard H. Cox, "A Careful Disorderliness': The Organization of *Battle-Pieces*," in *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War*, ed. James M. McPherson (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus, 2001), 295–323.

54. Melville, *Journals*, 116, 496. A plaster model of the sculpture (1848–50) is held by the Smithsonian American Art Museum; a finished marble version (1854) is held by the Art Institute of Chicago.

55. Cohen, ed., *Battle-Pieces*, 267.

56. Schurr, *Mystery of Iniquity*, 42.

57. David Cody, "So, Then, Solidity's a Crust': Melville's 'The Apparition' and the Explosion of the Petersburg Mine," *Melville Society Extracts* 78, no. 1 (September 1989): 1–7, 1, 4–7. Cody (p. 6) argues that Melville drew the volcano metaphor as well as the term *apparation* directly from a "graphic description" of the explosion of the Petersburg mine accompanying Alfred R. Waud's illustration of the event in *Harper's Weekly*, 20 August 1864.

58. Otter describes a similar breakdown of the pastoral crust in *Pierre*: "He sees ruptures in the terrain: 'long and frequent rents among the mass of leaves revealed horrible glimpses of dark-dripping rocks, and mysterious mouths of wolfish caves.' . . . The closer one looks at Saddle Meadows, the more one sees 'a spectacle of wide and wanton spoil'" (*Melville's Anatomies*, 198–99).

59. Compare Emerson, "Circles," 270: "The natural world may be conceived of as a system of concentric circles, and we now and then detect

in nature slight dislocations which apprise us that this surface on which we now stand is not fixed, but sliding."