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THE KENTUCKY TRAGEDY IN AMERICAN LITERATURE: FROM THOMAS HOLLEY CHIVERS TO ROBERT PENN WARREN

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Jack Edward Surrency

March 1977

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ABSTRACT

On November 7, 1825, in Frankfort, Kentucky, Colonel Solomon P. Sharp, a distinguished Kentucky statesman, was murdered by Jereboam O. Beauchamp, who was hanged for Sharp's murder on July 7, 1826, a few hours after he had stabbed himself in the abdomen and had witnessed the suicide of his wife Ann. This event—the celebrated case in which a young Kentucky gentleman, to fulfill a vow of revenge imposed upon him by his wife as a condition of their marriage, assassinated the man who had been his wife's lover years before—became known internationally as the Kentucky Tragedy and for over a century and a half has appeared as a major theme in American literature.

Occurring at a time when American authors were searching for events from their national history for treatment and at a time when Americans were eager for stories of chivalry and romance, the Kentucky Tragedy developed into one of the most popular literary themes in the nineteenth century. Among the important reasons for the popularity of the Tragedy in literature is that it was a factual account that satisfied and fulfilled the curiosity and expectations of Americans about the violent character of frontier life in the Southwest of the early 1800's. Although violence has always been common in America, the South has always seemed to many the very embodiment of that violence. As Charles R. Anderson, in "Violence and Order in the Novels of Robert Penn Warren," Hopkins Review, 6 (Winter 1953), 88-105, points out, "the witch-burning of New England, the bandit of the Wild West, the underworld of Chicago,

all . . . fade before the succession of Southern images of violence that fascinate the popular mind: the lash of the slave-driver, the Bowie knife of the old Southwest, the duelling pistol of the hot-headed gentleman, the rebel yell of the fire-eater, the gasoline torch of the lyncher, the fiery cross of the Klansman." The "popular mind," fascinated with stories of the violence of the South, could not have been more satisfied than with the story of the Kentucky Tragedy, an incident fraught with murder, suicide, and hanging.

A wealth of incidents in frontier life, especially incidents of lawlessness and crime, appealed to the American public and provided American authors with native themes. J. B. Hubbell, in South and Southwest: Literary Essays and Reminiscences (Durham: Duke University Press, 1965), p. 277, quotes one southern historian who suggests that "what is distinctive in American, in contrast to general English literature, comes out of our experience with the frontier." Of all the stories of the frontier the Kentucky Tragedy became the most popular. In fact, Professor Richard Beale Davis has pointed out, in "Thomas Holley Chivers and the Kentucky Tragedy," University of Texas Studies in Literature and Language, I, No. 2 (Summer 1959), 281-288, that the "Kentucky Tragedy stands as one of the three great historical events, matters, or themes which American writers have drawn upon in creating fiction, poetry, and drama. Only Pocahontas and Merry Mount rival it."

Since its occurrence in 1825 and 1826, the Kentucky Tragedy has been discussed by many Kentucky historians, and many theses have been written which deal with the Tragedy as a major theme in American

literature. The facts as reported by some historians, however, have too often been biased, misleading, and erroneous, creating a distorted, confused picture of what actually happened and why. The earlier studies which have examined the use authors have made of the event are usually sketchy in the background information related to the case itself and have been necessarily limited in their appraisal of the literature based on the Tragedy.

This study, therefore, attempts to present an accurate, chronological history of the Kentucky Tragedy—taking into consideration the economic and political climate of the times—relying often on court and county records to verify or disprove information that has long been regarded as factual. Moreover, four works are examined which have often been used by writers as source material for their works based on the Tragedy to determine how reliable these works are as factual sources.

Finally, an examination of all extant works based on the Beauchamp-Sharp case by American authors is undertaken to determine how the Tragedy has been presented in fiction and nonfiction and to demonstrate the ubiquity of the story as a major theme in American literature from its first appearance as a play by an anonymous author in 1833 to Robert Penn Warren's novel World Enough and Time in 1950.

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INTRODUCTION

The 1820's were colorful but tumultuous times in Kentucky. The wild, untamed frontier existed side by side with the beginnings of a more refined society. The state was growing and opportunity was available to those who would seize it. Excitement, growth, and opportunity, however, were mixed with despair. The effects of the nation's depression in 1819 continued to be felt in Kentucky, and many historians believe that during this time, because of the existing political and financial conditions, Kentucky was on the verge of civil war. There was little faith in the banking system in Kentucky; trade was slowing down rapidly; and debtors were finding it increasingly difficult to meet their obligations.[1]

To forestall complete financial disaster and possible anarchy, the Kentucky legislature passed laws which allowed deferment of debts. The lower courts and the Court of Appeals immediately declared that many of the more important relief measures were unconstitutional. The legislature responded by passing an act that called for the three regularly appointed judges of the Court of Appeals to vacate and decreed that a new set of judges be appointed by the governor. The so-called Old Court justices, or Anti-Relief justices, refused to resign after Governor Joseph Desha appointed the New Court, or Relief justices, as they were

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[1]Arndt M. Stickles, "Joseph R. Underwood's Fragmentary Journal of the New and Old Court Contest in Kentucky," The Filson Club History Quarterly, 13 (1939), 202-210.

often called. As a result, from 1823 until 1826 there was an annual contest in the legislature over the court issue. Finally, in 1826, the Old Court partisans triumphed and the law that had established the New Court judges was abolished. This political-financial imbroglio divided the people of Kentucky into two bitter factions, bringing about numerous quarrels and altercations that quite often led to homicide.[2]

One Kentucky newspaper editor wrote: "If the people of other countries were to judge the condition of morals in Kentucky from the frequency of murder . . . they could compare us to a set of savages. The reign of Governor Desha will be recorded by the future historian as the bloody reign."[3] Even the governor's son, Isaac B. Desha, had been convicted of murder in 1825.[4]

Although many startling events took place during this time, one incident occurred at the height of Kentucky's political turmoil that not only arrested the attention of the citizens of that state but captured the hearts and minds of the entire nation—an incident entangled with political intrigue, party rancour, and personal slander. In 1825, during the months prior to the hotly contested elections for governor and state legislators, it had been whispered in the streets and taverns of Frankfort and surrounding counties that if Coloner Solomon P. Sharp won his race

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[2]Stickles, p. 204.

[3]Alvin F. Harlow, Weep No More My Lady (New York: Whittlessey House, 1942), p. 108.

[4]Robert S. Thomas and George W. Williams, A Statement of the Trial of Isaac B. Desha, 1825, p. 1.

for representative of Franklin County, he would never live to take his seat.[5] Sharp, one of the most prominent politicians in Kentucky and a leader of the Relief or New Court Party, won his race by a narrow margin. When the legislature opened on November 7, 1825, he was expected by many to become the next Speaker of the House. In the pre-dawn hours of November 7, 1825, only hours before the state legislature was to convene, Jereboam O. Beauchamp, a young backwoods lawyer from southern Kentucky, knocked at the door of Colonel Sharp's home and, pretending to be a friend of Colonel Sharp, asked for lodging for the night. When Beauchamp was admitted into the house, he pulled out a knife and stabbed Sharp to death.[6]

Beauchamp later claimed that he had killed Sharp to fulfill a promise that his wife, the former Ann Cook, had exacted from him before she would consent to marry him. According to Beauchamp, several years earlier Sharp had seduced Ann and had refused to acknowledge that he was the father of Ann's stillborn child. Her virtue completely sullied, Ann withdrew from society. She moved from Bowling Green to Simpson County, a few miles from the farm owned by Beauchamp's father. Beauchamp met and fell in love with Ann. After a brief courtship, she consented to marry him if he would promise to kill Colonel Sharp to avenge the wrong

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[5] L. F. Johnson, History of Franklin County (Frankfort, Kentucky: Roberts Printing Co., 1912), p. 80.

[6] J. G. Dana and R. S. Thomas, Beauchamp's Trial (Frankfort, Kentucky: Albert G. Hodges, 1826), rpt. in The Kentucky Tragedy, ed. Loren J. Kallsen (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1963), pp. 173-174.

he had done to her honor. Beauchamp readily consented and claimed that in 1821, before he married Ann, he challenged Sharp to a duel and that Sharp refused to accept his challenge. For several years Beauchamp made no attempt to seek redress for the alleged seduction of Ann by Colonel Sharp, and he and Ann were married in June, 1824.

In 1825, however, just before Sharp's election to the House of Representatives, in an attempt to silence rumors that were being circulated by Sharp's political enemies that he had been the father of Ann's child, Beauchamp insisted that Sharp had handbills circulated in which the claim was made that Ann's child had been a mulatto. This act so enraged Beauchamp that he then determined to honor the promise that he had made to his wife years earlier to silence the man who had already brought shame and dishonor to his wife and would now reopen wounds that had never quite healed.[7]

Within hours after the homicide, Beauchamp was suspected by one who claimed to have heard Beauchamp threaten the life of Colonel Sharp at one time.[8] Beauchamp was apprehended at his home in Simpson County and was brought back to Frankfort to face charges of murder. Beauchamp was subsequently tried and, on evidence that was highly circumstantial, was convicted and sentenced to be hanged for Sharp's murder. Until the day that he was sentenced, Beauchamp maintained that he was innocent. After

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[7]Jereboam O. Beauchamp, The Confession (Bloomfield, Kentucky: Will H. Holmes, 1826), rpt. in The Kentucky Tragedy, ed. Kallsen, pp. 11-20.

[8]Lucius P. Little, Ben Hardin: His Times and Contemporaries (Louisville, Kentucky: Courier-Journal Job Printing Co., 1887), p. 140.

he was sentenced, however, he admitted his guilt in two confessions, one of which was published not long after his execution. His wife, Ann, although exonerated from any involvement, joined him in his dungeon cell in Frankfort.

On July 6, 1826, the night before Beauchamp was to be executed, he and his wife attempted suicide by taking large doses of laudanum. Their attempt failed, but the next day, only hours before Beauchamp was to be taken to the gallows, once again the two tried to take their lives by stabbing themselves with a small case knife. As a result, Mrs. Beauchamp died. Jereboam only succeeded in wounding himself. Although weakened by his wound and the effects of the laudanum he had taken, Beauchamp was rushed to the public gallows and hanged. His and Ann's bodies were given to Beauchamp's father, who, according to young Beauchamp's wish, took the bodies to Bloomfield, Kentucky, where the two were buried in the same coffin.[9]

This event, which was then called the Beauchamp-Sharp Tragedy, eventually became known as the Kentucky Tragedy. For over a century and a half, it has appeared as a major theme in American literature. Based primarily on Beauchamp's Confession, the Letters of Ann Cook, the Vindication of Col. Sharp, and Beauchamp's Trial, the story has been told again and again in newspapers, in magazines, in ballads, in novels, and on stage. Although many American writers have been attracted to the story of Beauchamp and Sharp, southern writers particularly have been

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[9]J. Winston Coleman, The Beauchamp-Sharp Tragedy (Frankfort, Kentucky: Roberts Printing Co., 1950), p. 60.

inspired by the event. Thomas Holley Chivers, Edgar Allan Poe, William Gilmore Simms, and Robert Penn Warren have all fallen under the spell of the Kentucky Tragedy.

Almost every writer of fiction who has chosen to use the tragedy as the inspiration for his work, however, has altered for his own purposes the actual facts of the case. For even though Beauchamp was convicted of premeditated murder, he is treated in fiction as a hero, an avenging angel. Moreover, Ann Cook Beauchamp has been recreated in fiction not as an admitted accomplice to murder but as an innocent victim, a heroine. Colonel Sharp, notwithstanding his distinguished place in the history of Kentucky, has been depicted as an arch-villain, motivated by insatiable lust and a burning desire for power.

In addition to ignoring the facts of the case, most writers of fiction, as well as some historians, have ignored two figures, Patrick Henry Darby and John U. Waring, whose very presence and involvement in this affair point to a complicated, politically motivated scheme to assassinate Sharp. Patrick Henry Darby, a lawyer and Old Court or Anti-Relief partisan, was the editor of a Frankfort paper, The Constitutional Advocate. Darby was a bitter foe of Sharp and had been heard to say on several occasions that if Colonel Sharp was elected to the legislature he would not live to take his seat.[10] Darby was never brought to trial, but Sharp's widow publicly accused Darby of complicity in her husband's death.[11] John U. Waring, described as one of the most

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[10]Johnson, p. 80.

[11]The Patriot, Frankfort, Kentucky, April 3, 1826.

dangerous men who ever lived in Frankfort, was also a lawyer and a man of great wealth. He wrote two letters threatening the life of Sharp in which he boasted of having stabbed to death six or seven men.[12]

It is not unusual that many of the writers who were first inspired by the Tragedy should avoid the political aspects of the affair. The themes of seduction, revenge, and suicide were simply more compelling. Moreover, romantic domestic tragedies were in vogue.

Inevitably, the realities of the case became so intertwined with the embellishments of novelists and dramatists that they were replaced with rather curious and imaginative distortions. Today, it is difficult to find an account of the Tragedy that is completely trustworthy. Therefore, an unbiased, accurate recapitulation of the historical facts of the case is needed. At present there is not a single work that has accomplished this. Chapter I of this study will be an attempt to present a clear, objective history of the Tragedy.

Before an examination of the literary works based on the Tragedy can be effected, it will be necessary to look at the sources that were used by the various authors. The reliability of three of the sources—Beauchamp's Confession, Beauchamp's Trial, and Dr. Leander J. Sharp's Vindication—is in some parts highly questionable. A fourth source, moreover, the Letters of Ann Cook, is spurious. In Chapter II an explication of these sources will be attempted to determine their reliability and authenticity.

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[12]Johnson, p. 80.

The most substantial works based on the Kentucky Tragedy are found in drama and the novel. There were, however, many poems, ballads, short stories, and pamphlets which were derived from this event. In fact, in 1956 a university professor tape-recorded a ballad sung by a Kentuckian in Bell County, Kentucky, entitled "Jeremiah Beechum." Since only one short story and a small number of poems, ballads, and pamphlets have been located, these miscellaneous pieces will be examined together in Chapter III. Chapter IV will be devoted to a treatment of the Tragedy's influence on those who chose to present the story in dramatic form. Finally, Chapter V will deal with the theme as it has appeared in the novel.

Although English and Canadian authors have borrowed this theme, only American authors and their treatment of the story will be examined in this study.[13] For this tragedy, spawned on the frontiers of Kentucky, is peculiarly American. The sacredness of marriage, the sensibilities of the southern gentleman and his code of honor, the backwoods lawyer with plow in one hand and Coke or Chitty in the other, the American's hunger for land, politics laced with violence and bloodshed, all combine in the Kentucky Tragedy to give us a view of early nineteenth-century America, elements of which continue to be a part of the American way of life one hundred and fifty years later.

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[13]For Canadian and British novels dealing with the Kentucky Tragedy see: John Richardson, Matilda Montgomerie: or, The Prophecy Fulfilled (New York: Dewitt and Davenport, 1851), and Joseph Shearing, To Bed at Noon (London, Heinemann, 1951).

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORY OF THE KENTUCKY TRAGEDY

In the Frankfort, Kentucky, cemetery, about one hundred feet from the monument of Daniel Boone, is the grave of Solomon Porcius Sharp. On a large marble stone marking the site is this inscription:

> To Father
> Solomon P. Sharp:
> was assassinated while extending
> the hand of hospitality on the
> morning of Nov. 7, 1825, in the
> 38 year of his age.
>
> What thou knowest not now,
> thou shall know hereafter.

A few miles southwest of Frankfort in Bloomfield, Kentucky, is a small unkempt cemetery, overgrown with weeds and wild flowers. In this cemetery lie the remains of Jereboam O. Beauchamp and his wife Ann.[1] A large flat stone marks the grave. The stone, broken into two parts, bears the following information:

> In Memory of
> JEREBOAM O. BEAUCHAMP Born Sept. 24th, 1802,
> and ANNA, his wife
> Born Feb. 7th, 1786. Who both
> left this world July 7th, 1826.

An epitaph follows, still legible after one hundred and fifty years:

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[1]The names of the principal figures in the Kentucky Tragedy are often spelled Jeroboam O. Beauchampe, Anna Cooke, Solomon P. Sharpe. Unless reference is made to a work in which their names are spelled as such, their names will be spelled thus: Jereboam O. Beauchamp, Ann Cook, Solomon P. Sharp.

Entomb'd below in others' arms,
  The Husband and the Wife repose,
Safe from life's never ending storms,
  And safe from all their cruel foes.

A child of evil fate she lived,
  A villain's wiles her peace had cross'd,
The husband of her heart revived,
  The happiness she long had lost.

He heard her tale of matchless woe,
  And burning for revenge he rose,
And laid her base seducer low,
  And struck dismay to virtue's foes.

Reader! if honor's generous blood
  E'er warmed thy breast, here drop a tear,
And let the sympathetic flood,
  Deep in thy mind its traces bear.

A father or a mother thou,
  Thy daughter view in grief's despair;
Then turn and see the villain low,
  And here let fall the grateful tear.

Daughter of virtue! moist thy tear,
  This tomb of love and honor claim;
For thy defense the husband here,
  Laid down in youth his life and fame.

His wife disdained a life forlorn,
  Without her heart's lov'd, honor'd Lord,
Then reader, here their fortunes mourn,
  Who for their love, their life blood pour'd.

This epitaph, written by Ann Cook Beauchamp in her husband's cell in Frankfort where he was incarcerated while awaiting execution for the murder of Solomon P. Sharp, summarizes an event that occurred in 1825 and 1826 and has become known as the Kentucky Tragedy, a story of love, seduction, political assassination, suicide, and public execution.

Although writers of fiction have chosen to make Jereboam and Ann Beauchamp their major characters, historically the most important figure

in the Beauchamp-Sharp affair is Solomon P. Sharp. Sharp, a man of humble origins, was held in high esteem by many of his fellow Kentuckians at the time of his death. Many of his contemporaries felt that eventually his talents as a lawyer, orator, and statesman would have gained for him national, perhaps even international, fame.[2]

Born in Washington County, Virginia, on August 22, 1787, Solomon was the eldest son of Thomas and Jean Sharp, who moved to the frontier of Tennessee when Solomon was only an infant. The family first settled in Nashville, but moved to the southwestern part of Kentucky, known as the Green River Country, when Solomon was in his late teens.[3]

Solomon's education was only such as the rudeness of the times afforded. Without benefit of much formal education, Sharp became a self-trained lawyer and was admitted to the bar at Bowling Green by a special act of the legislature when he was nineteen years old. In a short time he was recognized as a youth of uncommon abilities and promise. He charmed many with his powers of reasoning and eloquence, and in debate many felt that he had few equals.[4]

Sharp became involved in politics at an early age. In 1810 and 1811, at the earliest period permitted by the constitution, he was

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[2]H. Levin, The Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1897), pp. 109-114.

[3]J. Winston Coleman, The Beauchamp-Sharp Tragedy (Frankfort, Kentucky: Roberts Printing Co., 1950), p. 63.

[4]Richard H. Collins, History of Kentucky, 2 vols. (Covington, Kentucky: Collins and Co., 1870), II, 255. (Vol. I, pp. 317-322 contains an account of the New and Old Court struggle; Vol. II, pp. 255-256 has a biographical sketch of Sharp and his legal activities.)

elected a member of the Kentucky legislature from Warren County. He exchanged his role as politician for that of soldier when he volunteered as a private during the War of 1812. Sharp rose from the ranks and was eventually given the command of a battalion in the regiment of General Young Ewing. Only one letter has been found which tells us anything of Sharp's involvement in the war. Addressed to John Armstrong, the Secretary of War, and signed by Henry Clay, Sharp, and others, the letter contains an appeal for the exchange of American officers being held prisoner in Canada.[5]

After serving in the war, Sharp was elected to the Congress of the United States, and for two successive terms, during the administration of Madison, he was in the front rank among the most eminent politicians of that day. During this period, he was the roommate and intimate friend of John C. Calhoun. Calhoun declared that Sharp "was the ablest man of his age that had ever crossed the mountains."[6] And President Madison said that Sharp was the ablest man of his age who had represented the West.[7]

In 1818 Sharp was again elected a member of the Kentucky legislature from Warren County. While serving in the House of Representatives, in

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[5]James F. Hopkins, ed., The Papers of Henry Clay, 5 vols. (Lexington: Univ. of Ky. Press, 1959), I, 813.

[6]Collins, p. 256. Collins states that Sharp and Calhoun were at one time roommates, but at present this has not been verified. City directories and directories of congressional officials were not begun until 1822, five years after Sharp left the congress.

[7]L. F. Johnson, History of Franklin County Bar: 1786-1932 (Frankfort: Frank K. Kavanaugh, 1932), p. 33.

Frankfort, he made the acquaintance of Eliza T. Scott, the daughter of Dr. John M. Scott of Frankfort.[8] Solomon and Eliza were married on December 17, 1818, and soon after moved to Bowling Green, Kentucky, in Warren County.[9]

In 1819 Sharp was returned to the state legislature. By now his reputation was secure as a brilliant and successful lawyer; and he began to acquire large holdings of land in Warren, Simpson, and surrounding counties. After serving in the House, in 1821, Sharp became a candidate for the state senate. But two months before the elections were to take place, Governor Adair on June 1, 1821, wrote to him offering him the office of attorney general. Adair concluded his offer with praise for Sharp: "I need not say to you, that the office has fallen into disrepute in public estimation, and the salary been improperly reduced, more from an eye to the former occupant, than to the office. It is my wish so to fill it at present, that it may be again renovated and take its due stand in the government."[10]

On the same day that Governor Adair proffered the attorney generalship to Sharp, Sharp received a letter from John U. Waring, a

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[8]Levin, p. 114. Levin informs us that Mrs. Sharp's father, Dr. John M. Scott, had been a close friend of General William Henry Harrison. When Dr. Scott died, his son William Harrison Scott was adopted and educated by General Harrison. When Harrison was elected president, his wife being in too delicate health to preside in the White House, Colonel Sharp's widow was invited to preside there, but she declined, preferring the quiet of her home.

[9]Dr. Leander J. Sharp, Vindication of . . . Colonel Sharp (Frankfort, Kentucky: Amos Kendall, 1827), p. 21.

[10]Sharp, p. 5.

lawyer and land speculator of considerable wealth who had only months before moved to Warren County from Versailles, Kentucky. Waring warned Sharp that he planned to expose him for "among other things," as Waring wrote, Sharp's "Chickasaw town project to defraud the soldiers of the revolution of the price of their blood and the toils of a seven years' war." Waring challenged Sharp "to prepare to meet the charge; justify yourself if you can, or sink into political infamy."[11]

A week later, on June 8, 1821, Waring began to circulate handbills in which he charged Sharp with an attempt to defraud the public of some of its lands. In this same publication Waring also made reference to the story of Sharp's alleged seduction of Ann Cook. Although a senate investigating committee would eventually dismiss the charge of seduction that Waring made against Sharp, nevertheless, Waring's public charges set off a chain reaction that resulted in a tragedy that shocked the nation.

When Sharp's nomination for attorney general was submitted to the senate on October 24, 1821, the senate formed a select committee for the purpose of examining and determining the truth of the charges that had been made by Waring. The committee began its investigation on October 26, and four days later, on October 30, it pronounced the charges to be unfounded and unanimously approved Sharp's appointment.[12]

At the time Waring circulated his handbills charging Sharp with fathering Ann Cook's illegitimate child, it is not inconceivable that

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[11]Sharp, pp. 20-21.

[12]Sharp, p. 7.

Ann Cook was either informed of or actually received one of the handbills. At this time she was living in seclusion with her mother, Alicia, in Simpson County on a small farm Ann called the Retirement.[13] Seeking anonymity in seclusion after giving birth to a stillborn child in June, 1820, she now lived a life radically different from when she had been known as a wealthy and influential Kentucky belle who traveled with her sister "in elegant style with their servants and a team of four horses, and outriders."[14] At one time she had been looked upon as "educated, vivacious, and fascinating" as well as a great gambler. Moreover, Ann and her sister were supposed to have been frequent visitors to Frankfort who never failed, for example, to visit the city during each legislative session.[15]

Although it is difficult today to determine if Ann and her sister were fascinating and were actually great gamblers, it is easy to substantiate the statement that she was of a wealthy and influential family. Her father, Giles Cook (1744-1805), a descendant of the Paynes of Virginia, lived in Fairfax County, Virginia, adjacent to "Ravensworth," a Fitzhugh manorial estate. Ann's family was not only prominent in

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[13]Jereboam O. Beauchamp, The Confession of Jereboam O. Beauchamp (Bloomfield, Kentucky, 1826), rpt. in The Kentucky Tragedy, ed. Loren J. Kallsen (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1963), p. 17.

[14]Ann's sister was named Elizabeth, born October 7, 1780's and died September 24, 1817. She was married by the Rev. Jeremiah Moore in 1801 to William R. Payne: Dr. and Mrs. William Carter Stubbs, Descendants of Mordecai Cooke (New Orleans, n.p., 1923), p. 102.

[15]L. F. Johnson, History of Franklin County (Frankfort: Roberts Printing Co., 1912), p. 86.

Virginia, but members of her father's family became early settlers in Kentucky and acquired large tracts of land in that state.[16]

Apparently Ann lived with her father and mother in Fairfax County, Virginia, until her father's death in 1805. Shortly thereafter, she moved with her mother to Kentucky and divided her time between an older brother John, who owned a farm in Simpson County, Kentucky, and a younger brother Peyton, who owned a small boardinghouse in Bowling Green, Kentucky.[17]

In 1818, in Bowling Green, Ann made the acquaintance of Colonel Solomon P. Sharp. Ann, who was officially visiting her brother, was in the habit of visiting many of the respectable families and often called on Colonel Sharp's wife, Eliza, since the Sharps' home was nearby. Solomon's brother, Dr. Leander J. Sharp, later wrote in his Vindication that because of Ann's extreme frivolity her visits were not only unacceptable to Mrs. Sharp but often disgusting. He insists that there was never any intimacy or any degree of confidence between Eliza Sharp and Ann Cook but that Ann was tolerated because of her relatives and connections, "who were among the most respectable in that section of the country."[18]

At the time Ann made the acquaintance of Colonel and Mrs. Sharp, Dr. Leander Sharp had already known Ann for about ten years. Apparently never fond of the woman, he sketched a consistently uncomplimentary

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[16]Brooke Payne, The Paynes of Virginia (Richmond, Virginia: William Byrd Press, 1937), p. 244.

[17]Coleman, p. 2.

[18]Sharp, p. 13.

picture of her. He claimed that her "vivacity, often amounting to frivolity, was her only recommendation." He spoke pejoratively about her reading of novels and her delight in conversing upon scenes of romance and fiction. He said that she was wholly destitute of moral and religious principles and was an avowed disciple of Mary Wollstonecraft, scoffing at the institutions of society, especially matrimony. "She believed in no future state of existence," he stated, but declared that in her opinion, "mankind are brought into being with an entire right to dispose of their persons and lives as they please. The whole Christian system she denounced as a fraud on mankind, propagated and sustained by cunning and priestcraft."[19]

In spite of what Dr. Leander Sharp wrote about Ann, apparently Solomon Sharp did find her attractive. And if Colonel Sharp did indeed seduce Ann Cook, the seduction must have taken place about September, 1819, a few months after their initial meeting in 1818. Some time in 1819, Ann is said to have walked out from Bowling Green to visit a friend, Peggy Grider. When Ann started home, Peggy Grider walked part of the way into town with her. Ann was wearing a fine shawl around her, but she had to climb a fence at one point in her journey home and in so doing exposed her figure. When Peggy Grider returned home, she told her mother that she thought Ann was pregnant. Peggy's assumption was correct, for Ann gave birth to a stillborn child in June, 1820. The child is supposed to have been buried in the family graveyard of her

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[19]Sharp, p. 12.

brother Peyton Cook.[20] Soon after the burial of her child, to avoid contact with society, she left Bowling Green and moved with her mother to Simpson County, Kentucky.

In Simpson County, Ann and her mother lived within a mile of the farm of Thomas Beauchamp, a respectable farmer of some property. Here, at the age of thirty-six on a romantic little farm she called Retirement, she was determined to spend the remainder of her days in seclusion, and "sternly refused to make any acquaintances, or even to receive the society, or visits of her former acquaintances."[21] Soon, however, under the pretence of borrowing books, Jereboam O. Beauchamp gained an audience with Ann Cook.[22]

Prior to meeting Ann, Jereboam, in addition to completing his own education preparatory to the study of the law, had been assisting Dr. Benjamin Thurston at his school in Glasgow, Kentucky. It was while Jerry, as his family called him, was at Glasgow that he first heard of Ann Cook. In 1820 he had been attracted by a general outburst of indignation towards Colonel Sharp for the seduction of Ann. Prior to this public outcry, Beauchamp had looked up to Sharp and had once thought of studying law under him. These thoughts now evaporated, and

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[20]Letter on file at Western Kentucky University written by Jennie Cole of Oakland, Kentucky, to Mrs. Moore, September 29, 1950. According to Mr. Riley Handy, Kentucky Librarian at Western Kentucky University, Jennie Cole's letter is considered by some, particularly the Cook family descendants still living in Bowling Green, as folklore.

[21]Confession, in Kallsen, p. 8.

[22]Confession, in Kallsen, p. 8.

he now felt nothing but antipathy toward Sharp "for his dishonor towards a worthy orphan female."[23]

Coincidental with learning of the allegations made against Sharp, Beauchamp, for reasons of health, retired to his father's farm in Simpson County to spend a few months "in a country life," before entering the study of the law. Beauchamp's father, Thomas Beauchamp, must have been pleased to have Jereboam home since he was reported to be his father's favorite.[24] Learning that Ann Cook, of whom he had heard so much, was living nearby, he eagerly sought her acquaintance. At first completely rebuffed in his attempt to meet her, he finally persuaded Ann to open her library to him; and Beauchamp continued to visit her home regularly for several weeks. Finally, Ann consented to meet him and soon agreed to spend a short period of time with him when he came. This arrangement lasted for about three months, during which time Beauchamp became more and more convinced that he was in love with her.

The courtship was one-sided, and when Beauchamp formally proposed marriage to Ann, she summarily refused his proposal, but Beauchamp resolved to continue his suit. In response to his persistent entreaties, Beauchamp writes in his Confession, "she then told me . . . that the hand which should receive hers, would have to revenge the injury a villain had done her. She said her heart could never cease to ache,

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[23] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 6.

[24] Beauchamp's father was not wealthy, but in 1820 the Simpson County tax lists show that Thomas Beauchamp owned 200 acres of second class land on Sulphur Fork of Drake's Creek. He owned several slaves, ten horses, and one town lot: a total appraised value of $3,500.00.

till Col. Sharp should die through her instrumentality; that he had blighted all her happiness; and while he lived, she would feel unworthy of my love. But she said, she would kiss the hand, and adore the person who would revenge her; but that no one else, save myself should do it."[25]

With an almost perverse sense of delight in the idea of revenge, Beauchamp responded to Ann's injunctions: "No conditions, nor any earthly proposition she could have made me could have filled me with so much delight. When ever I had contemplated a marriage with her, I had always esteemed the death of Col. Sharp a necessary consequence. . . . And to hear her thus require what I had so much calculated on and desired was peculiarly pleasing to me indeed. These feelings I expressed to her and told her it had been my firm purpose to take Col. Sharp's life, if I married her. She then consented to become my wife, and in my ardour I determined to fight Col. Sharp before our marriage. He was at that time at Frankfort."[26]

After swearing to avenge the dishonor brought upon Ann by Sharp, Beauchamp began a four-day journey from Simpson County to Frankfort. This occurred in the year 1821 when Sharp only recently had been offered the office of attorney general; and even more recently, John U. Waring had circulated his handbills accusing Sharp, among other things, of seducing Ann Cook. Curiously, Beauchamp, when writing of this episode in his Confession, does not mention Waring's indictment against Sharp.

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[25] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 11.

[26] Confession, in Kallsen, pp. 11-12.

It seems to have been only his promise to Ann to seek revenge for her dishonor that inspired him. Beauchamp's sister looked upon his mission as a holy crusade and burst into tears at his parting and invoked the protecting arm of Heaven to be his defense and his shield.[27]

After arriving in Frankfort, Beauchamp claims that he met Sharp and challenged him to a duel. When Sharp repeatedly refused to fight him, and even begged Beauchamp to spare his life, Beauchamp claims that he slapped Sharp in the face so hard as to tilt him back on his hands . . . and," he continues, "as he arose, I gave him a kick; now said I go arm yourself, for tomorrow I shall horsewhip you in the streets, and repeat it daily till you fight me a duel."[28]

The next morning, Beauchamp paraded in the streets of Frankfort armed with a horsewhip and pistols. His Confession, at this point full of bombast, informs us that apparently he did not plan to give Sharp a fighting chance, for he writes: "I was well practiced with the pistol; which I knew he was not."[29] For the next two days Beauchamp claims he searched for Sharp until he was informed that Sharp had left for Bowling Green in order to bring his family to Frankfort. At a time when gentlemen rarely refused a challenge of honor, it was unusual that Sharp should have rejected Beauchamp's challenge. But in 1811, an act of the Assembly to ban duelling was drawn up by Ben Hardin and was actively

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[27] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 12.

[28] Confession, in Kallsen, pp. 13-14.

[29] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 15.

supported and carried through the House of Representatives by Colonel Sharp.[30] Beauchamp writes that after he failed to accomplish his task, he returned home, where he and Ann plotted to lure Sharp to Ann's home. There Ann, who had been taught by Beauchamp to fire his pistols, would shoot him.[31] Beauchamp did not really approve of this plan, however, and eventually the role of avenger was once again assumed by him.

Soon the thought of killing Sharp became less important than completing his education. In fact, Beauchamp even postponed marrying Ann. He left Simpson County and moved to Bowling Green to finish his study of the law, while Ann continued to live at the Retirement with her mother and servants.[32] After Beauchamp finished his studies, a very strange event occurred. Not only had Beauchamp refrained from accosting Sharp for over two years but he approached the Colonel's brother and solicited him to put into his hands some of Colonel Sharp's business. Dr. Sharp obliged Beauchamp by giving him several notes to collect. In 1822, 1823, and 1824 Beauchamp represented Sharp in several lawsuits in Simpson and Warren counties. On March 12, 1823, Beauchamp brought a suit against one M. Clark for Colonel Sharp. The sheriff who collected

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[30]Lucius P. Little, Ben Hardin: His Times and Contemporaries (Louisville, Kentucky: Courier-Journal Job Printing Co., 1887), p. 41. This act of Sharp was rather courageous in itself since at that period it placed him in an antagonistic position with a socially respectable class of people who believed fiercely in the "gentlemanly" right to participate in so-called affairs of honor.

[31]Confession, in Kallsen, p. 17.

[32]The Simpson County, Kentucky, tax lists show that at this time Ann Cook had two blacks over sixteen and a total of three blacks. Her total appraised value was $1,150.00.

the money from M. Clark later testified that Beauchamp frequently applied to him to urge the collection and stated that he wished the collection done expeditiously in order to obtain the further patronage of Colonel Sharp.[33]

While Beauchamp was busy collecting debts for Sharp, the latter was busy in Frankfort acquiring "a practice as extensive and lucrative as any practitioner at the bar, and the docket of the Court of Appeals of that day, shows his name to almost every litigated case, from the first day of his location in Frankfort."[34] Concomitant with Sharp's business success was his success socially. In May, 1824, he, along with several other Frankfort dignitaries, arranged a dinner in honor of Lafayette, who was then visiting Frankfort.[35] Moreover, when Lafayette visited Louisville, Kentucky, Sharp, in the absence of the gentleman delegated to deliver the address in honor of the visiting Lafayette, "was called upon to fill his place and made extemporaneously a most eloquent and touching address, extending to the French hero the hospitality of the state and welcoming him in the name of all its citizens."[36]

During the same year when Sharp was Lafayette's host, Jereboam and Ann were married in Simpson County by W. Lynch. The marriage took place in June, 1824; Jereboam was twenty-one and Ann was thirty-eight.[37]

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[33]Collins, p. 256.

[34]Sharp, p. 24.

[35]Albert D. Kirwan, John J. Crittenden: The Struggle for Union (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962), p. 42. Others were J. J. Crittenden, George M. Bibb, Thomas Bodley.

[36]Levin, p. 112.

[37]Coleman, pp. 46-47.

Another important event occurred in 1824, an event which was to divide the people in Kentucky. In December, 1824, the Kentucky legislature passed an act repealing all previous acts establishing and regulating the existing Court of Appeals and organized another court. The court which was abolished became known as the Old or Anti-Relief Court, and the newly organized court as the New or Relief Court.[38] Those who supported the New Court appealed to Jefferson to speak out in their support. He refused, but it was thought that he was sympathetic to the New Court principles.[39] This act of the legislature was popular among the masses in Kentucky, for it allowed a depression-ridden people the opportunity to replevin their debts.

Colonel Sharp favored the act which reorganized the court and believed that it was constitutional. As attorney general he helped carry it into execution without any compromise whatsoever. His inflexibility in this affair brought down upon him the most bitter denunciations from members of the Old Court Party. Sharp was spoken of in the most savage and bitter terms and was threatened with vengeance. The newspapers favoring the Old Court Party denounced Sharp as an arch-inquisitor. The Harbinger viewed his actions to support the legislature as no less atrocious than the "usurpation of Caesar." And in the Commentator reference was made to the old charge of bastardy against Colonel Sharp.[40]

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[38]Sharp, pp. 40-43.

[39]Letters of Amos Kendall in the Argus of Western America, Frankfort, Kentucky, May 10, 17, 24, 31, 1826.

[40]From the Harbinger, Frankfort, Kentucky, April 20, 1824.

Sharp weathered these attacks and was asked to run for the legislature as a representative of the New Court Party in opposition to John J. Crittenden, who had resigned his position as president of the Bank of the Commonwealth to run as an Old Court candidate. Crittenden was well known for his even temper and equanimity, and at the beginning of his campaign he presented himself more as a mediator between contending parties than as an inflexible partisan. This particular election in Kentucky was very bitter because hard times had increased the litigation over land titles, and many Kentuckians had lost their farms to speculators. Those who had lost their land had long resented the courts, and now a great many saw the courts as protectors of speculators and of banks intent on oppressing the poor.[41]

Both Crittenden and Sharp had to endure a great deal of abuse during the campaign. Crittenden had to contend with the disgruntled poor, who saw him as the spokesman for those who would continue to oppress them. Sharp, on the other hand, was a favorite of the masses, but had to stand up to his share of criticism. According to Dr. Sharp, Colonel Sharp had been informed that if he ran he would be publicly assailed with the story of his seduction of Ann Cook. This story did not appear in the newspapers; but Sharp was attacked by one Patrick Henry Darby, who made speeches against him throughout Franklin County.

Patrick Henry Darby, a disbarred lawyer from Tennessee, is a very significant person in the Kentucky Tragedy. He moved to Frankfort in

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[41]Quoted in Kirwan, p. 58.

1821 and was admitted to the bar in 1822. In 1823 he was back in Tennessee, where he became the editor of the Nashville Clarion. Thomas Hart Benton wrote to Henry Clay on July 23, 1823, that the most active and influential paper in the state of Tennessee was the paper edited by Darby. By the fall of 1824 Darby had returned to the practice of law in Frankfort, and in September, 1825, he acquired the Harbinger, which he renamed the Constitutional Advocate. Under Darby, the paper became a powerful, conservative political organ.[42] One Kentucky historian refers to Darby as "a noisy and mischief-making demagogue, entering with more zeal than brains into the lively canvasses of the Court times as both stumper and penny-a-liner. In the hot contest of 1825, in Franklin County . . . Darby disgusted almost every one by his coarse assaults upon the private life of Sharp."[43] After Sharp's death, Mrs. Sharp announced in the Frankfort newspaper, the Argus of Western America, that she thought Darby had somehow been directly responsible for her husband's death. On March 25, 1826, the Louisville Public Advertiser summarized Mrs. Sharp's address, in which she claimed that Darby's motives for participating in the assassination of her husband "were mingled with politics, professional rivalry, and private interest."

The 1825 elections proved to be among the most unruly and corrupt the state would ever experience. Each side accused the other of buying votes. The New Court Party was charged with dressing convicts as

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[42]Hopkins, III, 460.

[43]Orval Baylor, John Pope: Kentuckian (Cynthiana, Kentucky: Hobson Press, 1943), p. 231.

citizens and taking them to the polls to vote. Charges of fraud against both sides were made with good reason. In Franklin County alone there were two hundred more votes cast than there were qualified voters. The election throughout the state resulted in an astonishing victory for the Old Court Party. Sharp and Crittenden were elected over Lewis Sanders to represent Franklin County, which was entitled to two representatives.[44]

One voter who was more than a little interested in one of the candidates from Franklin County was Jereboam Beauchamp. Just before the election he claims to have received a letter from a gentleman whose address, Beauchamp said, was "the whole world." Beauchamp writes that the letter informed him of reports and insinuations being circulated by Colonel Sharp and his family that Ann's stillborn child had been a mulatto, thus disproving accounts that Sharp had fathered Ann's child. Moreover, the writer informed Beauchamp that Sharp claimed that he had a certificate from the midwife who delivered Ann's child to prove that the child was a mulatto. Beauchamp would later insist, when questioned about the author of this letter, that the writer of the letter was not influenced by political jealousy or personal envy. According to Beauchamp, "his letter was written in a spirit of pure, honorable and disinterested justice; because he thought it right I should know of this vile conduct of Col. Sharp and his family, and set them right."[45]

The insinuation that Ann's child had been a mulatto so infuriated Beauchamp that he immediately began, with his wife, to devise a plan

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[44] Kirwan, pp. 58-59.

[45] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 20.

which would allow him to murder Sharp without being detected. He states emphatically that he planned to kill Sharp secretly not because he feared capture and death if he did so publicly; rather, he writes: "I never regarded death much, yet I did not feel that I was bound to risque my own life, by shooting him, any more than I would have felt bound to go publicly into an Indian town and shoot down the savage who had secretly crept to my house and murdered my defenceless children."[46] Moreover, Beauchamp felt that the laws of society did not provide adequate redress for all injuries of one citizen towards another and therefore felt compelled to take the law into his own hands. He was convinced that what he was about to do was "sanctioned by every law of justice and of right."[47]

Beauchamp writes that "never was a murder planned with such studied precaution since the world began." Initially, Beauchamp began to make plans to sell his property and to leave for Missouri as soon as the deed had been accomplished. Next, he procured a large butcher knife, the point of which his wife tipped with poison. Furthermore, Beauchamp planned to disguise himself as a Negro when in Frankfort by wearing a mask of black silk. He also planned to wear two pairs of socks instead of shoes to avoid leaving identifiable footprints.[48]

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[46] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 22.

[47] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 23.

[48] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 24.

Ironically, about four days before Beauchamp left Simpson County to travel to Frankfort, the following warrant for bastardy was issued against him:

> The Commonwealth of Kentucky to the Sheriff or any constable of Simpson County, greeting:
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> Whereas, Ruth Reed of said County, single woman, hath made oath, before me, H. B. Montague, one of the Commonwealth's Justices of the Peace for said county, that on the 10th day of June, 1824, in the county of Simpson, she, the said Ruth Reed, was delivered of a male bastard child, and hath charged J. O. Beauchamp, laborer, of having gotten her with child of the said bastard child: You are, therefore, commanded immediately to apprehend the said Beauchamp, and to bring him before me, or some other Justice of the Peace for said County, then and there to be dealt with according to the act of Assembly, in that case made and provided. Given under my hand, this 29th day of October, 1825.
>
> H. B. Montague, J.P.[49]

It took Beauchamp approximately four days, by horseback, to reach Frankfort. When he arrived, the citizens of the city were still in a state of excitement over the recent elections; and the streets and hotels were filled with strangers and out-of-town members of the General Assembly. Beauchamp arrived on the night of November 6, 1825, the night before the legislature was to convene. He stopped at the Mansion House and sought lodging, only to be told that there were no accommodations. He also found Captain Weisiger's tavern full, but finally secured lodging

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[49] Coleman, pp. 47-48. Beauchamp claims in his Confession to have had a hand in having this warrant issued against himself to conceal, under pretence of escaping from it, his journey to Frankfort.

at the home of Joel Scott, a relative of Sharp's wife and keeper of the penitentiary in Frankfort.[50]

After being shown a room in Scott's house, Beauchamp left and began to walk to Sharp's house, which he had been told beforehand was across the street from the state house. Not finding Sharp at home, he began to search for him. He discovered Sharp at the Mansion House with friends from the Green River Country with whom he was probably celebrating his election to the House of Representatives. Beauchamp left the Mansion House without allowing Sharp to see him and returned to the Colonel's home, determined to take Sharp's life before Sharp should enter his home. While Beauchamp was watching the rear of the house, however, Sharp entered the front and was in his chambers before Beauchamp saw him.

Beauchamp waited until all the lights were extinguished and then decided to lure Sharp to the door by feigning to be a friend of Sharp named John W. Covington. Beauchamp decided to refer to himself as John A. Covington to avoid having suspicion cast upon himself if he were suspected of Sharp's murder. He reasoned that since many knew that he was well acquainted with Sharp's friend John W. Covington he would not have referred to himself as John A. Covington.

Beauchamp's own words graphically describe the scene that he had planned so well:

> I drew my dagger and proceeded to the door. I knocked three times, loud and quick! Col. Sharp said "whose there?" "Covington," I replied. . . . I drew my mask from my face,

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[50]Coleman, p. 6. Daniel Weisiger's tavern was the best-known and best-liked tavern in town. Only six months before, General Lafayette had been very elegantly entertained there.

> and immediately Col. Sharp opened the door, I advanced into the room and with my left hand I grasped his right wrist, as with an iron hand. . . . he said, "what Covington is this?" I replied, "John A. Covington, sir." "I don't know you," said Col. Sharp. . . . I then replied. . . . "Come to the light Col. and you will know me."[51]

Beauchamp then stripped himself of his hat and handkerchief, exposing his "long bushy curly suit of hair." Sharp sprang back and exclaimed: "Great God! It's him! ! !"

Beauchamp writes that Sharp then fell on his knees and that he dashed Sharp against the facing of the door and choked him to keep him from crying out. Beauchamp then muttered in his face, "die you villain," and then plunged the dagger into Sharp's heart. Beauchamp concludes his description of the murder scene by writing that as he stabbed Sharp, the victim sprang up from his knees and attempted to throw his arms around Beauchamp's neck, and asked for mercy. Beauchamp struck him again in the face and knocked him to the floor.[52]

Beauchamp then dashed out of the house and ran into the alley next to Sharp's house. He waited to hear if Sharp would speak. Beauchamp heard Mrs. Sharp trying to speak to her husband and of course receiving no answer. Soon Dr. Sharp rushed in from a neighbor's and exclaimed, "Great God, Beauchamp has done this." Beauchamp slipped his black mask on and continued to remain near the house hoping that someone would see him and take him for a Negro. Mrs. Sharp ran out of the house and came

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[51] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 29.

[52] Confession, in Kallsen, pp. 29-39.

upon Beauchamp. She began to cry out that she saw the murderer, and Beauchamp ran away.

He ran to the river, and there removed his hat and coat and threw them into the river. He also buried the knife near the riverbank. After dressing in his usual clothes, which he had hidden beforehand near the river, he put on his shoes and returned to town. He passed near Sharp's house to listen for any reports related to the murder, but all was whispering and silence. Much to his relief, he did hear that Sharp had died without speaking.

A few minutes later, Beauchamp returned to his room in Scott's house. Inside his room he lit a candle, burned his mask, washed his hands, and lay down to contemplate his recent actions. He recalled later that at that time "such were the happly feelings which prevated [sic] me, and the perfect resignation which I felt to the will of Heaven, having accomplished my long settled purpose, that in five minutes after I laid down, I fell fast asleep and slept soundly, till the stirring of the family waked me the next morning."[53]

The next morning, Beauchamp spoke with Mr. Scott, who informed him that only a few hours ago Colonel Sharp had been murdered. Beauchamp feigned astonishment and inquired a few minutes later of Mrs. Scott if anyone were suspected. She replied that no one to her knowledge was suspected. Beauchamp then left and went to the Register's Office to complete some business which he thought had been initiated by his

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[53] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 31.

brother, Thomas D. Beauchamp. Apparently, however, Beauchamp's brother had failed to file certificates of four surveys which were needed for Beauchamp to complete his business. He now found himself in Frankfort without a reason for being there. Since there was no evidence against him, he felt that if he could leave Frankfort immediately without being arrested he would not be sent for in Simpson County. Moreover, he hoped that Colonel Sharp's murder would be attributed to political enemies.[54]

Beauchamp left Frankfort and began his long journey home, lodging with friends and relatives along the way. The third night he spent at the home of Peyton Cook, Ann's brother. On the fourth day, in the evening near sunset, he reached home. As Beauchamp rode up to his house, Ann ran to meet him. Before he dismounted, he waved a piece of red cloth that he had attached to a stick as a sign of victory. When Ann saw the red flag she fell prostrate before him and burst into tears. She "lifted her voice in gratitude to Heaven, that she was revenged for all the misery a villain had brought upon her family." She called upon a just Providence to protect Beauchamp from all harm for the "righteous deed" that he had done. Of this very emotional moment in their lives, Beauchamp later wrote in his Confession: "I do not believe there ever lived upon the earth, two more happy beings than we then were."[55]

While Beauchamp and Ann celebrated their "victory" over Sharp, the citizens of Frankfort were expressing astonishment and outrage at the

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[54] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 32.

[55] Confession, in Kallsen, pp. 39-40.

news of Sharp's death. The town trustees met on the morning of the murder, and through their chairman, Captain Daniel Weisiger, offered a cash reward of one thousand dollars for the apprehension of Sharp's murderer. Another one thousand dollars was offered by the friends of Sharp and his family.[56] Joseph R. Underwood, a member of the Kentucky legislature who had spoken at length with Sharp the night before his death, wrote in his journal: "I would not at first believe it, but the horrible fact was soon verified. . . . the daring deed, the fiend-like assassin, the mysterious motive, all flashed thru my mind in quick succession producing sensations which are without a name."[57]

When the House of Representatives convened the morning of November 7, 1825, old animosities between rival factions were silenced in the presence of this tragedy. The first order of business by the members of the House was a resolution requesting Governor Desha to offer a three-thousand-dollar reward for the detection, apprehension, and conviction of Sharp's assassin. Then John J. Crittenden, champion of the Old Court Party and Sharp's recent opponent, delivered an eloquent speech in which he paid tribute to Colonel Sharp as one of Kentucky's ablest and most distinguished citizens. Crittenden made a resolution, adopted by both Houses, calling for the members of the legislature to wear crepe on their arms during the present session.

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[56]Coleman, p. 13.

[57]Arndt M. Stickles, "Joseph R. Underwood's Fragmentary Journal of the New and Old Court Contest in Kentucky." The Filson Club History Quarterly, 13 (1939), 202-210.

Another tribute came from the members of the Kentucky Court of Appeals, who resolved to go into mourning for thirty days. On November 8, 1825, Sharp's body lay in state in the House of Representatives. The eulogy was delivered by the Reverend Jacob Creath. After the service, a procession was formed and the body was carried to the cemetery, about a mile and a half from town, and interred.[58]

Because of the prominence and popularity of Colonel Sharp, the news of his death spread rapidly throughout the state. The Kentucky Reporter stated that "the gloom which this event has spread through society is of the deepest cast, and the fact that he was not known to have a personal enemy, cause suspicion to flash across the mind that the assassin was not actuated wholly by personal considerations."[59] Sharp, however, was known to have personal enemies, and those nearest to him began to suspect several persons, two of whom were John U. Waring and Patrick Henry Darby. Waring had written threatening letters to Sharp, had circulated a handbill alluding to Sharp's alleged seduction of Ann Cook, and had publicly assailed him. And Mrs. Sharp now said that the voice of the assassin had sounded to her like that of Waring. A warrant was issued for him, but an investigation revealed that Waring had been shot through both hips on the Saturday preceding the death of Sharp. This information naturally stopped any further proceedings against him.[60]

Although it was not until April 3, 1826, almost five months after Sharp's death, that Mrs. Sharp publicly accused Darby of complicity in

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[58]Stickles, p. 208.

[59]Coleman, pp. 11-12.

[60]Johnson, History of Franklin County, p. 81.

the murder of her husband, the newspapers in Frankfort began printing stories which indicate that rumors connecting Darby with Sharp's death were circulating from the moment news of the Colonel's death was made public. Darby's fierce opposition to Sharp prior to Sharp's election to the House made him suspect; Darby had also been heard to say on several occasions that if Colonel Sharp was elected that he would never take his seat.[61] Although under a heavy cloud of suspicion until he died, Darby was never arrested.

Waring and Darby were at first the main suspects, but soon attention was focused on Jereboam O. Beauchamp. It was recalled that Beauchamp had married Ann Cook, who was rumored to have been seduced by Sharp and to have borne his child. It was also recalled that only recently it had been whispered about Frankfort that Sharp claimed to have proof that Ann's child was a mulatto. It was reported by Joel Scott that young Beauchamp not only had lodged in his home overnight but had ridden hastily out of town before sunup. Other witnesses began to appear who stated that they had seen Beauchamp riding fast for home. A search party was organized, and between ten and eleven o'clock on the night of November 7, 1825, four men set out for the Green River Country, about one hundred and sixty miles away, with the authority to apprehend Beauchamp and bring him back to Frankfort.[62] Five days later, one day after Beauchamp had returned home and hoisted his red flag of victory,

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[61]Johnson, History of Franklin County, p. 80.

[62]Coleman, p. 19. The four men who were sent to apprehend Beauchamp were William Jackson, George P. Kelley, Samuel Carroll, and J. C. Burnett.

the four men rode up to Beauchamp's front gate. They stated their business to Beauchamp, and he immediately consented to return with them.

During the return to Frankfort, one of the men escorting Beauchamp showed him a bloody handkerchief that the guard claimed had been found at the scene of the crime. Beauchamp asked to be allowed to examine it; he found that it was indeed his and remembered having left it behind at Joel Scott's home. He found that a corner of the handkerchief had been cut off and that two holes had been cut in the body of it, as though the assassin had held it over his knife as he stabbed through it. Although Beauchamp was confident that he had left the handkerchief at Scott's and had not used it when committing the crime, he felt that if it were proved to be his it would be a most damaging piece of evidence. That night when he and his guards stopped for the night, he managed to steal the handkerchief and throw it into the fire. It was not until the next day at Munsfordsville that the handkerchief was missed. One of the most important pieces of evidence which could link Beauchamp to Sharp's murder now had been irrevocably lost. The party proceeded to Frankfort and arrived on Tuesday evening, November 15, 1825.[63]

The next morning, Benjamin Edrington, a guard at the state penitentiary, swore out a warrant for Beauchamp's arrest. That afternoon Beauchamp's examining trial was held before John Brown and Oliver P. Waggoner, Justices of the Peace for Franklin County. The members of

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[63] Confession, in Kallsen, pp. 43-46.

the arresting party explained how they had tracked Beauchamp to his home and had arrested him. Joel Scott told of Beauchamp's visit to Frankfort on the eve of the murder, and the members of the Frankfort City Patrol, Ace Carle, James Downing, and Elias M. Crane, testified that they had seen Beauchamp loitering near Sharp's home before Sharp was murdered. The Justices declared that Beauchamp should be tried in the circuit court and that no bail should be allowed.[64]

Jereboam O. Beauchamp was now confined in the Frankfort jail for a crime to which he would later confess. At this point, however, he was very loudly protesting his innocence. Although he was denied bail, there were many who were attempting to have Beauchamp released from prison. One letter survives, a letter written by Ann Beauchamp to John U. Waring, in which Ann pleads with Waring to attempt to help her husband.[65] Two days after Beauchamp had been formally indicted for Sharp's murder, Beauchamp wrote to John J. Crittenden seeking his help. A week later on November 25, 1825, Beauchamp wrote to Crittenden again begging him to believe that he was innocent of the murder of Sharp.[66] On March 2, 1826, eighteen days before the Franklin Circuit Court was to convene, Beauchamp wrote to his friend and neighbor, Captain John F. Lowe, to come to his rescue: "I know your friendship for me, John, is unshaken, but really you do not know what a high hand of bribery is

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[64]Coleman, p. 23.

[65]See Appendix.

[66]Robert D. Bamberg, ed., The Confession of Jereboam O. Beauchamp (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 1966), pp. 135-146.

carried on against me or you could not stand off and see me thus murdered publicly, and you not come to my aid."[67]

On March 20, 1826, the Franklin Circuit Court met. The grand jury returned a true bill against Beauchamp, signed by its foreman, J. Dudley. Beauchamp appeared in person and requested a postponement of his case upon grounds that some of his material witnesses lived at a great distance from Frankfort and were not readily available. His request was granted and the court appointed a special term to convene on the second Monday in May, 1826, for the purpose of trying the accused murderer of Colonel Sharp.

Beauchamp was returned to jail, where he remained until May 8, 1826, when the special term of the court opened and Beauchamp's trial began. It was now almost six months to the day after Sharp had been assassinated. The Honorable Henry Davidge, judge of the circuit court, presided. The Commonwealth was represented by James W. Denny, the Attorney General of Kentucky; Charles S. Bibb, the Commonwealth's Attorney for the district; and Daniel Mayes, a well-known lawyer of Frankfort who had been privately retained by Sharp's family and friends of the deceased. John Pope, of Washington County, Kentucky, then reputed to be one of the foremost criminal lawyers in the country and a former U.S. Senator, was chief counsel for the defense. Associated with Pope were Thomas J. Lacy, a

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[67]From a scrapbook of Mrs. D. D. Travelstead, Franklin, Kentucky, on file at the University of Western Kentucky library, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

young attorney from Springfield, and Samuel Q. Richardson of Louisville, a prominent criminal lawyer and gifted speaker.[68]

Beauchamp's trial was held at a time when political excitement far exceeded that of any other period in the history of Kentucky. Moreover, this trial was not conducted like the trials of the present day. The judge did not instruct the jury as to the law of the case. The law and the facts were stated and argued before the jury by the attorneys. When an attorney addressed the jury it was often for hours. Mr. Denny's concluding argument for the prosecution took the better part of two days. During the trial the courthouse was crowded and intense interest was maintained throughout the entire proceedings.[69] Almost as soon as the trial began, John Pope asked for a delay until after the forthcoming August elections. He argued that the excitement aroused by the upcoming elections was unfavorable to Beauchamp since many thought that his case was connected in some way with politics. Furthermore, Pope stated, certain witnesses for Beauchamp's defense had failed to appear. The court refused to delay the trial until the August elections, but it did agree to continue the case until July. This did not suit the defense and Beauchamp's attorneys decided to proceed with the case.

On the second day of the trial, Beauchamp was brought before the bar and the indictment charging him with the murder of Sharp was read. The clerk, Francis F. Blair, asked, "What say you—are you guilty, or

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[68]Coleman, pp. 18-26.

[69]L. F. Johnson, History of Franklin County Bar, pp. 33-34.

not guilty?" Beauchamp replied, "Not guilty." The trial continued with the selection of the jury. Forty-eight jurors were called. By Tuesday evening, six were selected, and the remaining six were chosen a little after twelve o'clock on Wednesday, May 10, 1826.

The first witness to testify for the Commonwealth was Dr. Leader J. Sharp, who recounted the details of the, by then, well-known story of Sharp's murder. Mrs. Sharp appeared next and spoke in hushed tones that were not always audible. In her testimony, it was brought out that she felt a second person other than Beauchamp had been at the scene of the crime. At one point Mrs. Sharp was asked by Mr. Pope if it were not true that she had been reluctant to believe Beauchamp had committed the crime. She responded: "I could not believe he was the man, until I heard some circumstances, because I did not see any motive." The most damaging testimony given by Mrs. Sharp was that she had seen Beauchamp and had heard his "sharp shrill voice" at the time of the murder. She had earlier said that she thought the voice of the murderer had been that of John U. Waring. Now she claimed that because of a voice experiment conducted at the residence of John McIntosh, the jailer, she was certain that it was Beauchamp's voice she had heard the night her husband died. Other witnesses appeared whose testimony was also damaging to Beauchamp's case. Captain John F. Lowe and James C. Hayes, testified that they had heard Beauchamp threaten the life of Colonel Sharp on several occasions.[70]

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[70] J. G. Dana and R. S. Thomas, Beauchamp's Trial (Frankfort, Kentucky: Albert G. Hodges, 1826), rpt. in The Kentucky Tragedy, ed. Kallsen, p. 186; p. 193.

During the course of the trial, two letters were presented by the prosecution and read in court, despite the strong objections of Beauchamp's attorney Mr. Pope. Beauchamp had convinced his uncle, Senator Jereboam Beauchamp, from Washington County, Kentucky, that Patrick H. Darby was involved in Sharp's murder. Senator Beauchamp believed his nephew and stated as much in a letter to the younger Beauchamp: "I am preparing," Senator Beauchamp wrote, "to give Mr. Darby what he deserves. . . . I do believe that he is the man that did do the murder, or was the cause of it; and it is believed by every honest man in this part."[71] This letter prompted Darby to sue Senator Beauchamp for libel. The second letter read in court by the prosecution was a six-page letter Beauchamp had written to John F. Lowe outlining "many facts for Lowe to swear to, against Darby, which did not take place . . . ; making out in the whole, a deep laid scheme to palm the murder on Darby."[72] This letter given to the prosecution by Lowe proved most damaging to Beauchamp's case.

The defense put a great deal of pressure on Darby during the course of the trial to discredit his testimony that in September, 1824, Beauchamp had attempted to persuade Darby to undertake some business for him involving Colonel Sharp. Darby claimed that Beauchamp told him that Sharp, because of his relationship with Ann Cook, had promised to give her a thousand dollars, a Negro girl and two hundred acres of land.

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[71] Beauchamp's Trial, in Kallsen, p. 204.

[72] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 76. For the letter to Lowe from Beauchamp, see Beauchamp's Trial, in Kallsen, pp. 251-266.

According to Darby, Beauchamp claimed that Sharp had not fulfilled this promise, and he asked Darby to assist him in collecting what he felt Sharp should pay. Darby stated in court that when he told Beauchamp that Sharp could not be compelled to pay, Beauchamp flew into a rage and said that Sharp's conduct had been very injurious to his wife and that if Sharp did not fulfill his promise, Beauchamp would go to Frankfort and shoot Sharp in the street. At one point, Darby became so enraged by questions from Pope designed to discredit his testimony that when the trial adjourned for the day, Darby "approached Pope and made as if he would strike him with the heavy cane he carried. This threw the courtroom into a bedlam of excitement, from which it quickly recovered after the sheriff and his deputies had laid hold upon Darby and taken him from the room."[73]

Other incriminating testimony against Beauchamp included the fact that, when in Frankfort at the time of the murder, he was absent from Joel Scott's home for about an hour and refused to give any reason for his being out. In addition, one of his neighbors swore that Beauchamp had said triumphantly on returning from Frankfort at the time of the murder that he had brought home a red flag which was the sign of war and victory and that he had gained the victory. The witness continued to explain that Beauchamp had said that he now had thoughts of turning Christian, for he began to believe in a God more than he used to do,

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[73]Baylor, p. 230.

for he now found that there was a God who would give vengeance to whom it was due.[74]

Beauchamp's attorneys endeavored to explain away the evidence against him. J. G. Dana and R. S. Thomas, who took shorthand notes on the trial, state in the preface to their book Beauchamp's Trial that the defense attorneys "were all very ingenious, generally eloquent and sometimes pathetic." Arguments by the defense began on Tuesday afternoon and continued throughout Wednesday, Thursday, and a part of Friday, May 19. On Friday, May 19, 1826, after the concluding speech for the Commonwealth had been delivered by James W. Denny, the case was given to the jury at five o'clock in the afternoon. The trial had lasted for thirteen days. After an hour's deliberation, the jury brought in the verdict of guilty and fixed Beauchamp's punishment at death. After the verdict was recorded, the court adjourned until the next morning.

The next morning, on Saturday, May 20, 1826, Judge Henry Davidge was about to pass sentence when John Pope rose and requested a postponement of sentencing. He stated that an examination of Beauchamp's wife was about to take place. A few days earlier, she had been arrested in Simpson County and had been brought to Frankfort and charged with being an accessory to Sharp's murder. Judge Davidge granted the postponement and stepped down from the bench. His place was then taken by John Brown and E. S. Coleman, Justices of the Peace for Franklin County. Beauchamp was allowed to remain in the courtroom as the examination of his wife

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[74]From the Commentator, Frankfort, Kentucky, June 1, 1826.

was begun. Charles S. Bibb conducted the examination for the Commonwealth, and John Pope acted as counsel for the accused.

A number of witnesses were called, among them one Mr. Stratton and Captain John F. Lowe. Stratton testified that on the evening after Beauchamp was taken from his home by the guard Mrs. Beauchamp said in Stratton's presence that "the grand rascal was dead, and she was glad of it; that he ought to have been dead many a year ago." Lowe stated that he understood the determination to kill Sharp was Beauchamp's own and that Mrs. Beauchamp had merely induced him to refrain from killing Sharp publicly. The justices, after conferring together, discharged Mrs. Beauchamp.[75]

The following Monday morning, May 22, Judge Davidge sentenced Beauchamp to be hanged by the neck until dead. He set the date of execution as June 16, 1826. Judge Davidge imposed this sentence on Beauchamp despite the fact that the defense had earlier argued that there was no law in force in the state of Kentucky which provided a punishment for deliberate murder. The defense contended that by the Act of 1824, on the subject of manslaughter, the legislature had inadvertently repealed the whole of the first section of an Act of 1801 which provided a punishment for murder. The court, however, was of the opinion, after examining the whole Act of 1824, that the legislature did not intend to repeal that part of the Act of 1801 which related to deliberate murder.[76]

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[75] Kentucky Whig, Lexington, Kentucky, June 22, 1826.

[76] Beauchamp's Trial, in Kallsen, p. 316.

After receiving his sentence, Beauchamp, with considerable composure and apparent calmness, asked for a respite of a few more days to write something "to justify those whom he left behind." Judge Davidge granted his request and postponed the day of execution until July 7, 1826, between the hours of twelve and three o'clock. Throughout the trial Beauchamp had appeared firm and composed, sometimes even cheerful. And when he heard his fate announced, some felt that he remained unmoved. The Kentucky Whig on June 1, 1826, reported, however, that "the more close observer could see that he had that within which passeth show." The Louisville Public Advertiser stated that "those who were near him, assert that, while speaking to his counsel shortly after, he betrayed sensible emotion."[77]

Circumstantial evidence had been largely responsible for Beauchamp's conviction. No footprint or track at the Sharp residence was ever identified as Beauchamp's. Moreover, the murder weapon was not produced at the trial. Furthermore, it was never determined whether there was an accomplice or not. Finally, nothing during the trial was developed which could determine the motive of the murderer.

After hearing his sentence pronounced, Beauchamp was returned to his dungeon cell, a cell that was used for the most dangerous criminals and murderers under sentence of death. The cell had no windows or doors. To enter it, a ladder had to be let down from a trap door. When the trap door was shut neither light nor air could enter from any

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[77] Louisville Public Advertiser, Louisville, Kentucky, May 27, 1826.

source.[78] Mrs. Beauchamp chose to join her husband in his cell, and the two remained there for nearly six weeks after Beauchamp was sentenced. The Beauchamps occupied themselves with writing. Ann composed several poems, including the epitaph to be inscribed on their tombstone. Beauchamp not only wrote his Confession, in which he admitted taking Colonel Sharp's life, but also drafted several letters in which he sought a pardon for his crime.

Beauchamp always believed that Governor Desha would ultimately pardon his son, Isaac B. Desha, who had been tried and convicted for highway robbery and murder. Beauchamp felt that if the governor did pardon his son for such crimes he would surely not refuse to pardon Beauchamp, who had killed someone who, Beauchamp thought, deserved to die for his base and dishonorable seduction of Ann Cook. Beauchamp decided, therefore, to petition the governor for a pardon. Before he addressed the governor, he wrote to Amos Kendall, the editor of the Argus of Western America, extolling Mr. Kendall as an honest and impartial editor, and stating that he had fallen and was in Kendall's power. He appealed to Kendall's magnanimity and implored Kendall to advocate that he might be permitted to live and to depart the government.[79]

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[78] L. F. Johnson, Famous Kentucky Trials and Tragedies (Louisville: Baldwin Law Book Co., 1916), p. 62.

[79] Louisville Public Advertiser, Louisville, Kentucky, July 15, 1826. Amos Kendall was accounted one of the ablest and most incisive political writers of his day. Kendall always maintained that Sharp's death was brought on by Old Court party members and singled out Patrick H. Darby on whom to fix the blame.

On June 5, 1826, Beauchamp addressed a letter to Governor Desha praying for mercy and swore that if pardoned he would go into perpetual exile, preferably to Greece or South America.[80] He intimated that he could, if spared, make important disclosures. Beauchamp sent another petition to the governor through his uncle on July 4 for a respite of thirty days. The governor made no reply, and finally Beauchamp's uncle, Senator Beauchamp, brought word that the governor would not grant his nephew a pardon or respite.[81]

Now that it appeared that Beauchamp could no longer hope for a pardon or commutation of his sentence, he and his wife began to prepare to take their own lives. Ann had often boasted to the jailer and others that she would not survive her husband. She had stated that she would never live to see him buried, for she would die with him and be buried in the same coffin. These comments by Ann had always been taken lightly, but during the night of July 5, 1826, Beauchamp and his wife began drinking a vial of laudanum which Ann had managed to smuggle into their cell. In a postscript to his Confession, Beauchamp describes his and his wife's actions in detail clearly and calmly: "We have a vial of laudanum, which my wife, with as much composure, as she ever shared with me a glass of wine, is carefully dividing into equal portions. . . . I mark her serene aspect!"[82] As the two swallowed the laudanum they

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[80] Argus of Western America, Frankfort, Kentucky, July 12, 1826.

[81] Kentucky Gazette, Lexington, Kentucky, July 14, 1826.

[82] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 86.

prayed for forgiveness. As soon as they had drunk the potion, they began to sing for joy at the anticipation of awaking in a new world.

Before Beauchamp closed his eyes for what he thought would be the last time, he exculpated Patrick Henry Darby from any complicity in Sharp's murder. He wrote: "I have now to close my accounts with an all seeing God; and truth bids me tell the world, Mr. Darby had nothing to do with Colonel Sharp's murder. But that he was certainly guilty of wilful perjury, for he never saw my face in his life, till I was a prisoner after the murder."[83]

Beauchamp and his wife awoke the morning of July 6 to find that their spirits had not been launched into a happier world but that the laudanum had acted only as an emetic. The governor was informed of their suicide attempt by Senator Beauchamp, who urged the jailer to separate the two. Ann refused to be parted from her husband, and they promised if they were allowed to remain together that they would not attempt to take their lives again. A guard, however, was placed in the cell to prevent any further suicide attempts. Friday morning, July 7, however, Beauchamp told the guard that during the night Ann had taken another dose of laudanum but had suffered no ill effects.

About an hour before Beauchamp was to be taken to the gallows, Mrs. Beauchamp requested that the guard, Benjamin Edrington, leave the room to allow her to get up and dress. Before Edrington had made his exit he heard a loud groan. He hurried down the ladder and found that

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[83] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 84.

Ann had stabbed herself in the abdomen. Beauchamp also had stabbed himself in the abdomen, but his wound was neither as wide nor as deep as his wife's. Beauchamp told the guard that he had taken the knife, which they had long kept concealed, and had struck himself first but his wife had deflected the blow and had then wrested the knife from him and plunged it into herself.[84] The guard called for assistance, and Beauchamp begged that an attempt be made to save his wife's life. She was then removed into the jailer's house. In answer to questions put to her she replied, "I struck the fatal blow myself, and am dying for my dear husband." The physicians who had been called in, Roberts, Majors, and Wilkinson, examined her wound and pronounced it to be mortal.[85]

Beauchamp himself was in a weakened condition, and an attempt was made to hurry his execution. He was being carried through the passage of the jailer's house when he begged to see his wife. Some objections were made to stopping, and the physicians told him that Ann was not badly hurt and would survive. Beauchamp said that it was cruel to deny him his request, and he was carried in and laid beside his wife. He placed his hand on Ann's face and said, "My dear, do you know that this is the hand of your husband?" When she returned no answer, he felt her pulse and said, "Physicians you have deceived me—she is dying." He glanced up at the ladies who surrounded the bed and said, "From you,

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[84]In 1957, this knife was in the museum of the Old State House in Frankfort, Kentucky.

[85]Confession, in Kallsen, p. 107.

ladies, I demand a tear of sympathy." When Ann died only minutes later, Beauchamp cried: "Farewell, child of sorrow—Farewell child of misfortune and persecution—You are now secure from the tongue of slander—For you I have lived; for you I die." He then kissed her twice and said, "I am now ready to go."[86]

It was now half past twelve o'clock. There were two militia companies of the Twenty-Second Regiment waiting to escort Beauchamp to the gallows. The crowd which surrounded the soldiers was in a state of feverish excitement as it waited for news of the dying pair. Beauchamp was brought out lying in a blanket. He was too weak from the effects of the laudanum and his stab wound to sit on his coffin in a cart as was the custom. A covered carriage, therefore, was provided for his conveyance to the gallows. He was put into the carriage next to the jailer, John McIntosh. The drums began to beat, and the soldiers and the crowd began to move up Clinton Street to the outskirts of Frankfort where the gallows had been erected.[87]

Just before the carriage got under way, Beauchamp is supposed to have asked to see Darby. Several newspapers reported later that Beauchamp, on the way to the gallows, spoke with Darby and acquitted him of any involvement in the crime for which Beauchamp was about to die. Orval W. Baylor, in his book John Pope: Kentuckian, contradicts the newspaper accounts when he writes that when Beauchamp was being

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[86] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 108.

[87] The Twenty-Second Regiment was under the command of Captains James Davidson and Preston S. Loughborough.

conducted to the gallows, "Darby ran alongside the wagon, frantically calling out to Beauchamp to repudiate his statements implicating Darby, but Beauchamp remained silent to the end."[88]

When the gallows was reached and Beauchamp saw his coffin, he appeared unmoved. The crowd was estimated to be five to six thousand.[89] Several ministers were present, inquiring as to his state of mind. To all their questions, he answered that he was certain of going to heaven. In any pause in the conversation, he would say, with some impatience, "I want to be executed—I want to go to my wife."[90]

Beauchamp was now lifted from the wagon and placed on his coffin in the cart. It had been rumored that he would address the crowd at the gallows, but he made no such attempt.[91] He requested a drink of water and asked the musicians of the Twenty-Second Regiment to play "Bonaparte's Retreat From Moscow." After he repeated his request, it was done. He then drank some water, and in a firm voice asked to be told when all was ready. He was told that all was ready; with assistance, he rose; the cart started, and he was launched into eternity. A few hours after Beauchamp died, Thomas Beauchamp, Jereboam's father, started with the bodies of Jereboam and Ann Beauchamp for Bloomfield, Kentucky, a small village in Nelson County. Here, Beauchamp and his wife were buried in one coffin with his right arm around her neck as he had

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[88]Baylor, p. 247.

[89]Coleman, p. 59.

[90]Confession, in Kallsen, pp. 108-109.

[91]Niles' Register, Baltimore, Maryland, Vol. 30, July 22, 1826, p. 366.

requested. After a simple, quiet ceremony, in contrast to the elaborate funeral of Colonel Sharp, Jereboam and Ann were laid to rest near some of Jereboam's relatives.[92]

With the burial of Jereboam and Ann, it may have been thought that soon the entire affiar would fade from memory. But as late as September 16, 1826, an inflammatory article appeared in the Louisville Public Advertiser:

> We regret to observe that a controversy is kept up in the Frankfort newspapers, in relation to the private conduct and character of the later Col. S. P. Sharp. It appears to us to be not only uncalled for, but disreputable. If the Col. has left, some indiscreet and over sensitive connexions, their efforts to defend the deceased, or to impugn the conduct of those who were his political opponents, can have no influence whatever upon the public mind. On this subject it is high time for a cessation of hostilities.

The most violent hostilities were perpetrated by John U. Waring. Although it was never proved that Waring was involved in Sharp's murder, Waring carried a grudge against Samuel Q. Richardson, one of Beauchamp's defense counselors and the attorney who prosecuted Waring when he was arrested for Sharp's murder. Waring was released on the strength of his alibi, but he never forgave Richardson's vigorous prosecution. Ten years after Sharp's death, Waring met Richardson on the stairway of the old Mansion House in Frankfort and shot him to death. Waring was eventually acquitted of this crime, but he was slain in 1845 and no effort was made to search for his slayer.[93] Patrick Henry Darby also

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[92] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 109.

[93] L. S. Thompson, Kentucky Tradition (Hamden, Ct.: The Shoe String Press, 1956), p. 97.

kept the Tragedy alive in Kentucky by bringing law suits against Senator Beauchamp, Dr. Leander J. Sharp, Mrs. Eliza T. Sharp, and Amos Kendall. And the Tragedy was kept alive throughout the United States by the countless newspaper articles that began to appear from the day of Sharp's assassination. People everywhere clamored for information about this strange Kentucky affair.

Henry Clay wrote to his friend John J. Crittenden, Sharp's old political foe, three days after Beauchamp had been executed that "the manner of the death of the unfortunate Beauchamp and his still more unfortunate wife must awaken a public sympathy which even his crime and her vices cannot smother."[94] The public's sympathy and interest have never waned. Today, the Tragedy is kept alive by the literary works that grew out of the Beauchamp-Sharp affair. Beauchamp, Ann Cook, and Colonel Sharp are alive in Simms's Beauchampe, Poe's Politian, Warren's World Enough and Time.

It is essential, however, to know that all the literary works based on the Kentucky Tragedy, in some degree, grew out of four documents that appeared after Beauchamp's death: Beauchamp's Trial, Beauchamp's Confession, the Vindication . . . of Colonel Sharp, and the Letters of Ann Cook. The reliability of the first three documents is questionable, and the authenticity of the Letters of Ann Cook is more than questionable. Therefore, before an analysis of the literary works based on the Tragedy can be undertaken, an explication of these sources must be essayed.

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[94]Hopkins, V, 536-537.

Learning how the authors of these documents reshaped and twisted facts to suit their own ends heightens our understanding of the romantic tales that grew out of the Kentucky Tragedy.

CHAPTER II

AN EXAMINATION OF SOURCES

The authors who wrote about the Kentucky Tragedy had many sources from which to draw. The story appeared in hundreds of newspapers all across the United States. And there were four documents published after Beauchamp's death that most authors, to one degree or another, used as primary source material for their works. Since the authors were attempting to capitalize on the popular appeal of the tragedy, they might not have cared that much information contained in many newspapers and "primary sources" is unreliable and in some instances not based on fact.

From the time of Colonel Solomon P. Sharp's assassination until long after Jereboam O. Beauchamp and his wife Ann had been buried in Bloomfield, Kentucky, newspapers all over the nation took an active interest in the Kentucky Tragedy. Understandably, the newspaper accounts of the tragedy were most numerous in Frankfort, Kentucky, where the major events had occurred. In fact, there was so much publicity in Frankfort before and during Beauchamp's trial that in May, 1826, the editors of the Argus, Commentator, Patriot, and Spirit of '76 were cited to appear before the judge of the Franklin Circuit Court at the next July term to show why an attachment should not be issued against them for contempt of court for publishing all the testimony they could

collect, pro and con, in the case of the Commonwealth vs. J. O. Beauchamp.[1]

There were five newspapers in Frankfort in 1825 and 1826, two of which were aligned with the New Court Party and three with the Old Court. Of course the stories appearing in these newspapers were slanted according to the political bias of each paper's editor, since many believed that Beauchamp was a tool of the Old Court Party. If the stories in the Frankfort papers were biased, some articles that were printed in newspapers outside Kentucky were completely untrue. For example, on July 29, 1826, several weeks after Beauchamp had been executed, a Baltimore paper, Niles' Register, reported that John F. Lowe, a neighbor of Beauchamp whose testimony at Beauchamp's trial had been most incriminating, had been killed. Dr. Leander J. Sharp, Colonel Sharp's brother, wrote to the editor of Niles' Register insisting that Lowe had not been slain. The editor responded to Dr. Sharp in his newspaper and wrote that everything that had been mentioned by him in Niles' Register had been inserted in hundreds of newspapers.[2] Dr. Sharp, however, was right. The report of Lowe's death was erroneous. The Simpson County, Kentucky, tax lists for 1827 and 1828 report property owned by Lowe. Moreover, there is a record of Lowe's suing Thomas Beauchamp, Jereboam's father, for the sum of twenty thousand dollars in April, 1828.[3]

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[1] Louisville Public Advertiser, May 17, 1826.

[2] Niles' Register, Baltimore, Maryland, August 26, 1826.

[3] Simpson County Kentucky Order Book C, p. 279.

Not only are the newspapers sometimes not reliable sources, but even the four documents which are called primary sources by Loren J. Kallsen in his case book The Kentucky Tragedy must be read with caution. The most popular and widely used of the four so-called primary sources is Beauchamp's Confession, which was begun in his dungeon cell the night of May 22, 1826, only hours after he had been sentenced to die for the murder of Sharp. Another source, which was written in response to the Confession, is Dr. Leander J. Sharp's Vindication of the Character of the Late Col. Solomon P. Sharp. A third is the Letters of Ann Cook, published by W___R___n. Beauchamp's Trial is the fourth, the published shorthand notes taken during the trial by J. G. Dana and R. S. Thomas.[4]

J. Winston Coleman writes in his study of the Kentucky Tragedy that "by far the most reliable source of contemporary materials for this study is the book: Beauchamp's Trial. . . . In it the evidence is recorded as the witnesses saw and heard it."[5] Dana and Thomas's account of the trial is, as Coleman states, a reliable source. But it is a reliable source only for an account of what occurred at Beauchamp's

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[4]J. G. Dana and R. S. Thomas were presumably court stenographers. They published their shorthand notes in Frankfort in 1826 in a small volume of 153 pages. R. S. Thomas, with George W. Williams, also published the Trial of Isaac B. Desha. Desha was the governor's son who had been indicted for the murder of Francis Baker in 1825. Frank L. Johnson writes that J. G. Dana was among those Frankfort lawyers "who left the indelible impression of their personality and genius upon the times in which they lived by their literary work." History of Franklin County Bar (Frankfort: Frank K. Kavanaugh, 1932), p. 17.

[5]The Beauchamp-Sharp Tragedy (Frankfort, Kentucky: Roberts Printing Co., 1950), p. viii.

trial. It is not a reliable source for an account of the tragedy itself because of the conflicting testimony and possible perjury of some of the witnesses. Moreover, at one point when Mrs. Sharp is testifying, Dana and Thomas are obliged to report that "the difficulty of hearing was somewhat increased by the bonnet and veil worn by the lady. It is, therefore, not unlikely that in some respects we may have misapprehended what was said by the witness. We trust, however, the following, will be found substantially, if not literally, correct."[6]

Testimony from Beauchamp's trial gives us a confusing picture of the Kentucky Tragedy. Some witnesses produced by the Commonwealth, such as Patrick Henry Darby, swore that they had heard Beauchamp threaten to murder Sharp. Other witnesses for the defnese, such as George Work, testified that Beauchamp never expressed hostility toward Sharp but always spoke of him in the highest terms possible. And ultimately, Beauchamp himself in his Confession would insist that bribes were offered to two of his neighbors to bear false testimony against him. In fact, the trial itself, Beauchamp writes in his Confession, afforded him "an amusing occasion to sit silently by and take a philosophical consideration of human nature, and observe the wild and variant speculations" which were offered as truth but "which existed . . . only in their . . . imaginations."[7]

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[6]J. G. Dana and R. S. Thomas, Beauchamp's Trial (Frankfort: Albert G. Hodges, 1826), rpt. in The Kentucky Tragedy, ed. Loren J. Kallsen (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1963), p. 179.

[7]Jereboam O. Beauchamp, The Confession (Bloomfield, Ky.: Will H. Holmes, 1826), rpt. in The Kentucky Tragedy, ed. Kallsen, p. 63.

It is ironic that Beauchamp would think of much of the testimony at his trial as being invented. It is ironic since his Confession, which in part attempts to refute a great deal of that which had been sworn against him, is itself in parts the manifestation of Beauchamp's imagination. There is no doubt that the greater portion of the Confession is authentic, authentic in the sense that Beauchamp wrote it; but the reliability of this document, as evidence of concrete facts, is in several instances doubtful.

Beauchamp began his Confession the night of May 22, 1826, only hours after Judge Davidge had sentenced him to be executed for the murder of Colonel Sharp. Some antiquarians report that Beauchamp's written confession, which was published after his death, is his second confession. His first confession is supposed to have been made verbally to his uncle, Senator Jereboam Beauchamp, in the presence of John McIntosh, the jailer. In his first confession, Beauchamp is supposed to have stated that he never had a hostile feeling against Colonel Sharp until 1825, presumably after he had received a letter telling him that Colonel Sharp had sworn that he had proof that Ann's child had been a mulatto. Moreover, it was then that Beauchamp implicated Patrick Henry Darby as his accomplice in the crime. This first "confession" has often been overlooked by students of the Beauchamp-Sharp tragedy or has been given little credence because of the lack of available documentation. On June 1, 1826, ten days after Beauchamp had been sentenced, the Kentucky Whig printed a story from the Commentator which reported that "Beauchamp now confesses the murder." Although Beauchamp did begin

writing his confession the night after he had been sentenced and word of this could have been given to the newspapers, this statement in the Kentucky Whig could be an announcement of the verbal or "first" confession.

There is no hard evidence that supports the theory that Beauchamp made a verbal confession. On the other hand, the written confession is available, although perhaps somewhat altered and somewhat fictitious. In the preface to the Confession Beauchamp states clearly the reason why he asked Judge Davidge to extend the date of his execution: "To justify myself before my country, and for the satisfaction of my family, who feel dishonored by my condemnation, I shall submit to the world, a plain unreserved narrative, of the motives and causes, which led me to become an assassin."[8]

Before relating the details of the assassination, Beauchamp begins with an account of his education in Simpson County leading up to the time when at the age of eighteen he first heard of the alleged seduction of Ann Cook by Solomon P. Sharp. At the time Beauchamp was at Glasgow finishing his general education preparatory to the study of the law. He then informs us that after learning of the seduction of Miss Cook, he had nothing but contempt for Sharp, writing that "this was a species of dishonor which from my earliest recollection had ever excited my most violent reprobation. I had ever said, I would as soon receive into my friendship, an horse thief, as a man however high his standing, who had

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[8]Confession, in Kallsen, p. 4.

dishonoured and prostrated the hopes of a respectable and worthy female."[9] This very statement, however, is the first indication that Beauchamp's Confession must be read with caution; for this statement, damning Sharp for his dishonoring a worthy orphan, loses its impact and even its credibility when juxtaposed with a warrant for Beauchamp's arrest for bastardy issued against him by Ruth Reed of Simpson County on October 29, 1825, the day Beauchamp left for Frankfort to murder Sharp (see Chapter II, p. 20).

Beauchamp continues his story with an account of his meeting Ann Cook, his assiduous courting of her, and her eventual acceptance of his proposal of marriage with the stipulation that he destroy Sharp. Beauchamp happily accepted the role of avenger, a role he looked upon as holy and sanctioned by God. At the commencement of the legislative session in Frankfort in 1821, he writes that he journeyed to the capital to challenge Sharp to a duel. When he arrived, he met Sharp upon the Mansion House pavement and declared to him: "I have come deputed and sent by her, to take your life." He then attempted to engage Sharp in a duel. When Sharp refused, Beauchamp claims that he slapped and kicked Sharp and said: "Go arm yourself, for tomorrow I shall horsewhip you in the streets, and repeat it daily till you fight me a duel." According to Beauchamp, Sharp then began to beg for forgiveness and to whine and weep. "Next morning," Beauchamp continues, "I bought me a very heavy horsewhip and after breakfast paraded in the streets armed

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[9] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 8.

at all points for battle."[10] But Sharp, he tells us, had fled during the night to Bowling Green.

The entire episode, permeated with histrionics and braggadocio, has a quixotic flavor which renders it humorous but unbelievable. The strongest evidence that this incident did not take place is the silence of Dr. Leander J. Sharp in his Vindication, where he does not attempt to discredit this episode. Moreover, the newspapers in Frankfort never failed to capitalize on such an incident as that reported by Beauchamp, but they too make no mention of such an occurrence.

What has been overlooked until now is that Sharp actually was called to task in the streets, about the time Beauchamp reports that he accosted Sharp, by John U. Waring, Sharp's archenemy and, at one time, suspected assassin. Only months before Beauchamp claims to have challenged Sharp to a duel, Sharp was in the Frankfort courthouse. Outside in the street was Waring completely armed and swearing that he would take vengeance on Sharp on an entirely different matter, when he came out of the courthouse. Waring felt that Sharp had cheated him out of some land and had written to Sharp telling him that he would kill him. Since Waring had already killed several men, Sharp's friends who were in the courthouse advised him not to go out. Mrs. Sharp, who had been informed of Waring's threats, became apprehensive and went into the street to watch for her husband's return. Sharp left the courthouse against the advice of his friends and passed within a few steps of

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[10] Confession, in Kallsen, pp. 13-15.

Waring, who did not molest him.[11] Since much of Beauchamp's Confession clearly was written to prove his manhood and to denigrate Sharp's, it is not unlikely that Beauchamp based his story of publicly threatening Sharp on the actual threat made by Waring.

A glaring contradiction follows fast on the heels of the challenge episode. Beauchamp writes that after he returned from Frankfort, unable to fulfill his mission, he and Ann "then determined to delay marrying till Col. Sharp should come to settle up his business in Bowling Green, and then lure him to the Retirement, where Miss Cooke lived, and there kill him." A few paragraphs later, however, he states that "we postponed marrying till I could finish the study of the law."[12]

When Beauchamp begins to outline step by step his arrival in Frankfort and his subsequent murder of Sharp, his detailed description of the interior of Sharp's house appears incongruous with the fact that only sentences earlier he states that someone had to tell him where the Sharp home was located. Throughout his Confession, Beauchamp maintains that he acted alone, but when he writes that "while I was lying meditating in the public square, concealed, whether to knock at the door of Col. Sharp's chamber or at a secret door, in a dark alley, which opened into a room immediately communicating with the chamber,"[13] one begins to question Beauchamp's veracity. It is difficult to believe

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[11]Dr. Leander J. Sharp, Vindication of . . . Colonel Sharp (Frankfort: Amos Kendall, 1827), p. 21.

[12]Confession, in Kallsen, p. 15; p. 17.

[13]Confession, in Kallsen, p. 26.

that he did act alone as he states since this detailed description of Sharp's home appears to suggest that he must have had an accessory or at least an informant, someone who had knowledge of the interior of Sharp's home with its "secret door."[14]

After Beauchamp describes how he murdered Sharp, he writes of running to the river, sinking the clothes he had worn when he committed the crime, and burying his knife. The knife, however, was later found not near the river but near the governor's house on directions given by Beauchamp himself.[15] Beauchamp then gives an account of his journey home, and also writes that he had no objection to being thought the murderer, provided the Sharps could not prove it. Then he states: "I never spoke of Col. Sharp in Bowling Green. I had for years, before my marriage and even after, studiously and carefully avoided speaking about Col. Sharp . . . . I could not bear the idea of people's talking to me about Col. Sharp."[16] These comments are easily disproved by court records in Simpson County which show that Beauchamp acted as attorney for Sharp on several occasions. In 1823, for example, he worked diligently and won a case for Sharp against Micajah Clark.[17]

When Beauchamp recounted his "glorious deed" to his wife she "burst into tears and lifted her voice in gratitude to Heaven." But Beauchamp warned her that "the avenger of blood "was after him. And four men deputed to arrest him did arrive and inform Beauchamp that he was under

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[14] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 28.

[15] Vindication, p. 112.

[16] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 39.

[17] Coleman, p. 63.

suspicion of having murdered Sharp and must return with them to Frankfort to acquit himself. After arriving in Frankfort, Beauchamp was brought before John Brown and Oliver P. Waggoner, Justices of the Peace for Franklin County. At this point it becomes clear that Beauchamp was so fascinated with "this Drama" that he is writing that he cannot forgo the opportunity to exhibit his predilection for histrionics. He writes that "before a crowded state house" the prosecuting attorney admitted he had no evidence against him, but it was suggested that evidence might be found in the Green River Country. Center stage and fully aware of his audience, Beauchamp writes: "I then arose and stated before the assembly, that I would be far from seeking to be acquitted, or to leave the place while it was suggested that proof could be any where had against me; and that I was quite willing to remain in custody, and allow full time for the friends of the deceased to collect any evidence they might deem important, if any existed."[18]

Beauchamp's "magnanimous" act is negated by documentary evidence. On November 16, 1825, after presiding over Beauchamp's examining trial, Justices Brown and Waggoner wrote that "having heard the evidence touching the murder for which he is accused . . . that he ought to be tried in the Circuit Court and that the offense is not bailable. Whereas, he is committed to the custody of the jailer and there to be kept until discharged by due course of law."[19]

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[18] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 54.

[19] Franklin Circuit Court, file No. 399, March term, 1826. Quoted in Coleman, p. 23.

The remainder of the Confession is sprinkled with gibes directed at those whose testimony helped to convict him. He accuses many witnesses of perjury but commends the forthrightness and truthfulness of others. By this time, however, it is difficult to know when to believe anything he says.

Even the original title page of the Confession adds to the confusion. When Beauchamp completed his Confession, he had his manuscript taken to the state printer, Jacob H. Holeman. Holeman refused to publish it and returned it to Beauchamp. The manuscript was then given to Senator Beauchamp, who, on June 17, 1826, lodged the Confession for copyright in the office of the clerk of the Seventh Circuit Court of the United States for the District of Kentucky. The title page read: Beauchamp's Confession . . . of the murder of Col. Solomon P. Sharp . . . by one Patrick H. Darby and Jereboam O. Beauchamp.[20] When Darby learned that his name appeared on the title page of Beauchamp's Confession, he immediately brought suit against Senator Beauchamp in the Franklin Circuit Court for twenty thousand dollars. This suit, later transferred to the Woodford Circuit Court, stopped the publication of the Confession and prevented Beauchamp from ever seeing his manuscript in printed form.[21] After Beauchamp's death, on August 11, 1826, the Confession was printed by Will H. Holmes in Bloomfield, Kentucky, with a new title page which omitted Darby's name.

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[20]Darby, however, is exonerated by Beauchamp in the Confession as it was finally printed. Confession, in Kallsen, p. 84.

[21]Coleman, pp. 40-41.

It was Beauchamp's desire to leave a written statement which he believed in time would cause posterity to look upon him not as an assassin but as the "noble champion and martyred protector of female virtue of antebellum Kentucky."[22] What remains, unfortunately, is simply another tissue of declarations which merely tends to cloud the issue and which must be read with caution, especially since Will H. Holmes, the printer of the Confession, states in a footnote to the printed document that the original manuscript was presented to him by G. S. Hammond and that "the forgoing Narrative is a true copy . . . with some trifling and unimportant alterations excepted—some hard expressions against individuals . . . softened or expunged."[23]

Dr. Leander J. Sharp took it upon himself to refute, point by point, the entire Confession in the Vindication of . . . Col. Sharp, printed in 1827 by Amos Kendall, the editor of the Argus of Western America, in Frankfort. Dr. Sharp worshipped his brother Solomon. In fact, Beauchamp tells us that although he wanted to murder Dr. Sharp when he took the life of Colonel Sharp, his wife begged him not to. "For she always said," Beauchamp explains, "to see him deprived of his brother, whom he literally worshipped, was the greatest revenge she could possible imagine or wish to be exercised upon him."[24] Not only to have lost his brother but to see his name disgraced and his

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[22]Coleman, pp. vii-viii.

[23]Confession, in Kallsen, p. 105.

[24]Confession, in Kallsen, p. 28.

character stained by Beauchamp's Confession was more than Dr. Sharp could bear.

Moreover, not only did he see that many in Frankfort and elsewhere in Kentucky believed the Confession but he also saw that newspapers all over the country were reporting as fact what Beauchamp had written about his brother. In an attempt therefore to vindicate the reputation of the murdered man, Dr. Sharp combed parts of Kentucky searching for evidence that would disprove the slanderous stories that were being given national coverage. He interviewed dozens of persons who gave sworn testimony which he used to contest charges that had been made by Beauchamp. Moreover, throughout the Vindication, he attempts to discredit Beauchamp by portraying him as a "wild, eccentric, unprincipled profligate."

Thus, since much of the Vindication is tendentious, since much of the testimony is given at second and third hand, and since the testimony of different witnesses is almost verbatim, this work, like the Confession, must be read with caution or indeed wary scepticism. Chapter I of the Vindication is not only factual, however, but restrained in its encomiums on Solomon Sharp. The first chapter presents a straightforward account of Solomon's "parentage, education, progress and character." But in Chapter II, which deals with Ann Cook and the origin of the seduction story, Dr. Sharp's unbridled, vituperative comments about Miss Cook put us at once on guard.

In the opening paragraph of Chapter II, Dr. Sharp describes Ann at the time she met Colonel Sharp in Bowling Green:

> She was small in stature, probably not exceeding 90 pounds in weight, had dark hair and eyes, dark skin inclined to sallow, a large forehead, slender nose, large mouth, low chin, face tapering downwards, had lost her fore teeth, was stoop shouldered, and in no way a handsome or desirable woman. Her tone of voice appeared to be affected even to childishness, and she was remarkably frivolous in her conversation. . . . She had read considerable, especially of Novels. . . . She was an avowed disciple of Mary Woolstoncraft [sic], and . . . believed in no future state of existence.[25]

John McIntosh's description of Ann should be compared with Sharp's. According to McIntosh, Ann was

> of sleder form, and I think dark eyes and dark hair, fair skin, a middling long slender nose, rather a large forehead, mouth rather large, with upper foreteeth all artificial, low chin, face tapering downwards, inclined to be stoop-shouldered, not much, if any appearance of breasts, about ninety pounds weight, and was to me, by no means a desirable looking woman. She was affected in her utterance, even to childishness. She some times conversed upon novels, in which she seemed to be well read. . . . she did not believe in a future state of existence.[26]

McIntosh's statement reads as though he had Dr. Sharp's description of Ann before him. The same phrases are used, the same order of presenting them is adhered to by both.

Evidence abounds which illustrates that Dr. Sharp presents hearsay evidence as fact. For example, when expounding on the licentious nature of Ann Cook, each person who is quoted in his account testifies that "someone else had told him that he had caught Ann Cook in the illicit act of intercourse." Sometimes this information is even third hand. For instance, Dr. Sharp reports that John W. and Isaac C. Covington both told him "that a gentleman of undoubted veracity had informed them that

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[25] Vindication, p. 12.

[26] Vindication, p. 132.

he had caught her in the criminal act with a man . . . several years before." Equally as vague is Dr. Sharp's comment that he "would name individuals, were it proper, who kept her as a mistress, before the birth of her illegitimate child."[27]

Page after page of unfounded denunciations are directed against Ann and Beauchamp. "Rumor says," writes Dr. Sharp, "that she practiced shameless adultery and prostitution while her husband was confined in the jail in Frankfort." Beauchamp often comes under fire for being a "wild, unprincipled, profligate" and "a desperate young man . . . as depraved as herself, but more dangerous."[28] During Beauchamp's trial, however, Dr. Sharp was asked if he knew of Beauchamp's ever doing any business for Colonel Sharp. The Doctor, under oath, replied, "yes, it was through my agency. I was told he was a man of steady habits."[29]

In the Vindication, Patrick H. Darby, as well as the Beauchamps, comes under attack. As a political opponent of Sharp, Darby had printed stories vilifying Colonel Sharp in his newspaper when Sharp was campaigning for election to the legislature in 1825. And after Sharp's death, Darby continued to print derogatory comments about him. In one article, he writes that if Beauchamp "dies for the deed . . . he will die, not so much for the death of Col. Sharp, as for the manner of doing it! . . . The wrong to Beauchamp and wife merited death to all who were engaged in it."[30]

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[27] Vindication, p. 17. [28] Vindication, p. 32.

[29] Beauchamp's Trial, in Kallsen, p. 176.

[30] Constitutional Advocate, April 29, 1826.

Dr. Sharp, to discredit Darby's credibility, devotes an entire chapter to the "disbarred lawyer from Tennessee." Again, however, Sharp undermines his efforts by relying heavily on "rumor." In the opening paragraph of his chapter on Darby, Dr. Sharp writes that "rumor has fixed Ireland as the place of his birth."[31] If anything, Sharp portrays Darby as a man who has led an adventurous life. For example, at one point, Sharp writes: "It is said, that many years ago he was the associate of a gang of villains in the Arkansas Territory, and left that country with a race horse, recommended to a similar association in Louisiana. The story goes, that on the credit of his recommendations, a race was made up and he encouraged his new friends to make the most extravagant bets on his horse, and after he had got them committed as deeply as possible, made an arrangement with the opposite party, purposely caused his horse to be beaten, pocketed his portion of the ill gotten gains, and immediately fled to Illinois."[32] This Snopesian episode entertains rather than traduces. And since it too is based on hearsay it is by no means concrete proof of Darby's wrongdoings.

When reading the Vindication one is struck repeatedly by the fact that Dr. Sharp did indeed love his brother and wanted desperately to clear his name. This was so important to him that several times he attempts to prove that it was he rather than his brother who was abhorred by the Beauchamps. To prove this, Dr. Sharp includes a statement by one Martha Dowell, who swore that Ann had told her that she had never been

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[31] Vindication, p. 33.

[32] Vindication, p. 34.

injured by Colonel Sharp, "but that Doctor Sharp had spoken ill of her, and against him, she showed great irritation."[33] Then there is William McIntosh's statement that "Beauchamp often declared Doctor Sharp had done him more injury than Col. Sharp, and he was disposed to kill him, but was persuaded out of it by his wife."[34]

Because of the several suits for libel which Patrick H. Darby brought against Dr. Sharp, Eliza Sharp and others, and because John U. Warring had threatened Dr. Sharp with death if he were mentioned in the Vindication, Sharp's Vindication was suppressed by the family shortly after its publication in 1827. It was thought that all copies of the work had been destroyed. Fifty years later, however, in 1877, the Sharp home was being remodeled and twenty-five copies fell out of a partition.[35] Today, the Vindication is a rare and much sought after piece of Kentuckiana.

One work which was not suppressed, and which is perhaps the most colorful of all the so-called primary sources, is the Letters of Ann Cook. The letters, fourteen in number, are all addressed to Ann's friend, Ellen, in Maryland and purport to contain a short history of that "remarkable woman" Ann Cook. The Letters was published in Washington, D.C., in 1826, by W___R___n of Charles County, Maryland.

Many students of the Kentucky Tragedy, including Robert Penn Warren, have suggested that perhaps the Letters is a spurious document. On the

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[33] Vindication, p. 51.

[34] Vindication, p. 133.

[35] Coleman, p. 69.

basis of internal evidence, the fourteen letters are not authentic and should not be considered a primary source. The first seven are written ostensibly from Virginia and the remaining seven from Kentucky. The fact that the first seven letters are headed Loudon County, Virginia, is our first clue that the letters were not written by Ann Cook. The letters suggest that Loudon County is Ann's home. Although Ann's brother William married Maria E. Lacy of Loudon County, Virginia, in 1808 and Ann may have visited there, Ann was born and lived in Fairfax County, Virginia, until she moved to Kentucky after her father's death.[36]

In almost every letter, we find some statement which serves in some way to foreshadow the ultimate fate of Ann Cook and to furnish a prelude to the Kentucky Tragedy. In Letter I, dated May 10, 18__, Ann informs Ellen: "I was . . . perhaps rather too much indulged by my fond parents, who thought they saw, in me, something which would render my name conspicuous in the world; and I did myself sometimes foolishly dream that I was destined to play a distinguished part on the theatre of life."[37] She then relates an incident from her childhood which was supposed to have occurred years before she moved to Kentucky and met Colonel Sharp, but which reads as if she is preparing Ellen to understand why she became the motivating force behind Beauchamp's decision to murder Sharp. She writes:

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[36]Brooke Payne, The Paynes of Virginia (Richmond, Va.: William Byrd Press, 1937), p. 244. See also affidavits on page 23 of Sharp's Vindication stating that Ann Cook lived in Fairfax County, Virginia.

[37]Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 115.

> My feelings are acute and tremblingly alive to everything like insult and neglect. My passions have always been strong and wayward, and susceptible of being easily roused by injuries or indignities. . . . You remember little Frank D_____, our school mate. . . . He told a deliberate falsehood on my sister, and the teacher . . . punished her severely. . . . I was fired with indignation, and, waiting my opportunity, enticed the boy to the banks of the stream . . . and pushed him headlong into the current. He . . . almost drowned. . . . I mention this, dear Ellen, merely to show the nature of my feelings at that early age.[38]

In the same letter, she recounts how, at the age of fourteen, she championed a young Negro slave who was being beaten by her master. Ann writes: "I seized a large stone that laid near me, and cast it with all my force at the wretch's head. He fell groaning to the earth . . . . Even now I exult at the spirit I displayed, and look back upon the act as one more entitled to praise than censure."[39] She claims that it was not in her nature to be trampled upon and suggests that the consequences of such a nature only "time will unfold."

In Letter II we are given a glimpse of the life that Ann perhaps did experience in Virginia when she was "a romantic girl of sixteen." When Ann was sixteen we know that her father was not without the means to provide her with a happy, carefree life. She probably did attend the Virginia "dances and barbecues" spoken of in this letter. And she was "an object of attraction . . . flattered, caressed, and sometimes adored." There is no reason to doubt that the real Ann Cook was "fond of music and poetry, and could write verses with considerable ease."

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[38] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 116.

[39] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 117.

And like Amanda Wingfield in Tennessée Williams' The Glass Menagerie, she at one time might have exclaimed: "What a delightful period of life. Oh! how I love to retrace it. I often, in moments of gloom, dwell upon those scenes of early happiness, and almost weep at the recollection."[40]

We would like to believe that Ann Cook wrote to Ellen in Letter II: "I literally devoured the productions of the English bards. . . . The Epistle of Heloisa to Abeillard was my favourite poem. Her character was, I thought, analogous to my own—her ardent and heroic devotion to her lover excited my enthusiasm, and I felt as if I could have made the same sacrifice that she made."[41] But we know that Ann did not write this letter because in it she mentions the death of her sister Mary. According to Dr. and Mrs. William Carter Stubbs in their book Descendants of Mordecai Cooke, Ann never had a sister named Mary. Ann's only sister was Elizabeth, who died in Kentucky in 1817 several years after Ann had left Virginia.[42]

The third letter is a gloomy epistle informing Ellen of Ann's father's sudden and severe loss of property. Ann writes that her father has told her that it is on her account that he regrets the loss of his

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[40]Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 119.

[41]Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 119.

[42]Dr. and Mrs. William Carter Stubbs, Descendants of Mordecai Cooke (New Orleans, n.p., 1923), p. 81.

fortune, for when he dies she will be left penniless. Ann tells him that "it is a trifle . . . and that it is unmanly to despair."[43]

An incident is related in Letter IV which foreshadows the avenging role for which the real Ann actually practiced at one time.[44] In this letter Ann explains that her sister Mary at one time was the victim of treachery and seduction. Ann tells Ellen that she took it upon herself to avenge her sister. Arming herself with a brace of pistols, she pursued her sister's seducer and shot him. Although he recovered, Ann explains that she was satisfied with the injury that she had inflicted upon him. Ann then inserts several entries from her sister's diary, entries which portend occurrences in Ann's own life. One entry reveals that Ann's sister plans to take her own life and apparently that of her child: "My unborn infant—child of sin—yet dearer part of myself—shall I never—never see you. . . . No evil will be your lot—we will sleep in one grave together."[45] Suicide and the burial of two persons in one grave are referred to again in Letter V when Ann relates a story of a man who accidently killed his son and then took his own life. Father and son "were both buried in the same grave, amidst the tears and sympathy of all who heard the shocking tragedy."[46]

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[43] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 123.

[44] Beauchamp writes: "Our design, when we attempted to lure Col. Sharp to retirement, was for Miss Cooke, with her own hand, to shoot him . . . . I learned her to fire my pistols." Confession, in Kallsen, p. 17.

[45] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 127.

[46] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, pp. 131-132.

False statements in Letters VI and VII help us to determine that the Letters of Ann Cook is a spurious document. In Letter VI, dated April 10, 18__, Ann writes that "death has made strange ravages in our family."[47] And in Letter VII, dated July 10, 18__, she writes that her father has just died.[48] We know that the comment in Letter VI is false, for although several of Ann's brothers did die in succession, the first death did not occur until 1818, thirteen years after the time of her father's death and at a time when Ann and her brothers were living in Kentucky.[49] Moreover, the statement about her father's death in Letter VII is not accurate. The letter is dated July 10, 18__, and she writes that her father "died last Wednesday morning."[50] According to the method of dating used in the Letters, this would mean that he died on July 3, 18__. The fact is, however, that Ann's father died on a Tuesday, September 26, 1805.[51]

The last seven letters supposedly written by Ann Cook bear Kentucky addresses. The heading of Letters VIII, IX, X, and XI is Laurenceburg, Kentucky, which is in the middle of the state. In these letters, Ann tells of her introduction to Colonel Sharp, her seduction, her pregnancy, and her introduction to Beauchamp. All these events according to the

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[47] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 133.

[48] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 135.

[49] Stubbs, p. 81.

[50] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 135.

[51] Payne, p. 244.

Letters took place in Laurenceburg. But Beauchamp and Dr. Sharp, who seldom agree on other points, both inform us that Ann first met Sharp in Bowling Green, that Ann's seduction took place in Bowling Green, and that Ann was living in Simpson County when she met Beauchamp. Never is Laurenceburg mentioned by anyone involved in the Kentucky Tragedy.[52]

We learn from Letter VII that it has been several years since Ann has written to Ellen and that Ann is now living in Kentucky. In this letter, Ann describes her first meeting with Colonel Sharp, with whom she fell immediately in love. She continues to speak of her feelings for Sharp in Letter IX, and speaks of his giving her Byron's Corsair and Child Harold. We also learn that Sharp has confessed his love for Ann.[53]

An abbreviated version of the Tragedy is found in Letter X. Ann has dreamed of sailing with Sharp on a moonlit night. A furious storm arises, and Ann hears a voice crying, "you shall perish." She clings to Sharp and tells him that they "will live and die together" only to have him coldly rebuke her and tenderly embrace another. Ann is infuriated, and her heart is "a mass of burning lava." A dagger suddenly glitters in her hand and she rushes at Sharp and buries the knife in his bosom.[54] The disclosure of this ominous dream is followed by Ann's announcement that Sharp has proposed to her and that the wedding will take place three months hence. Then in halting sentences, Ann describes

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[52]See especially p. 8 in the Confession in Kallsen and Vindication, p. 13.

[53]Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, pp. 137-141.

[54]Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, pp. 142-143.

how, after imbibing more wine than she had ever taken before and in a moment of madness, she yielded to his advances. She concludes by stating that Colonel Sharp is more ardent, more tender than ever before. "Give me but his love," she says, "and I would yield up everything, even life itself, to promote his happiness."[55] This letter is interesting and entertaining, but it is simply another example of the apocryphal nature of the letters. Sharp could not have openly met with Ann at balls and parties as she states, nor could he have proposed marriage. For when Ann Cook met Sharp in Bowling Green Sharp was already married and had been so for almost a year.[56]

There are more inaccuracies in Letter XI than in any of the other thirteen. To begin with we are told that Ann is now a mother, and Ann calls her infant a "poor child of sorrow." And she speaks of her child as being alive: "I gaze on my helpless babe. . . . I look upon the dear and innocent child as a part of myself. . . . its smile is the smile of a seraph."[57] Ann's child, of course, was stillborn. It is also in Letter XI that we are informed that Colonel Sharp himself introduces Beauchamp to Ann. And it is at this time that Sharp informs Ann that he is engaged to be married to another. Again, we know that Sharp did not introduce Beauchamp to Ann and that Beauchamp met Ann in Simpson County and not in Laurenceburg as suggested in the letter. Moreover,

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[55] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, pp. 142-143.

[56] Vindication, pp. 12-13.

[57] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 145.

since Sharp was already married when Beauchamp and Ann met, even if he had introduced the two, he would not be telling Ann that he is now engaged to another.[58] Finally, after Sharp tells Ann he is to be married soon, Ann begs him not to desert her and cries: "I am fatherless, brotherless, defenseless."[59] The fact is that Ann was never brotherless. In 1820, when she gave birth to her stillborn child, she had at least three brothers living in Kentucky. And when she died in 1826 at least one brother survived her.[60]

Letter XII is headed Franklin County and contains information related to Ann's child, her growing fondness for Beauchamp, and Beauchamp's proposal for marriage. Again, the heading alerts us to be circumspect when reading this letter. Franklin County is the county in which the capital, Frankfort, is located. The only time Ann would write from Frankfort or Franklin County was when she was in her husband's dungeon cell in 1826 about six years after this letter is supposed to have been written. Not only does this letter state that Ann's child died in its sixth month, which is not so, but it gives the impression that a few months after the child's death, Ann and Beauchamp were married. Ann's child died in 1820, and Ann and Beauchamp were not wed until 1824.[61]

As in previous letters, foreshadowing of the tragedy to come is manifested in Letter XII. We read that Ann's desire for revenge against

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[58] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 148.

[59] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 149.

[60] Stubbs, p. 81.

[61] Confession, in Kallsen, p. 18.

Sharp has become monomaniacal: "I dwelt upon the cold blooded treachery and cruelty . . . unceasingly; it had become a part of my nature." And then in reference to Beauchamp we read: "My influence over him seems to be almost unbounded."[62] Elements of foreboding persist in Letter XIII. Ann writes: "My dear husband seems to become more and more attached to me, and to feel . . . more and more indignant against the slayer of my peace."[63]

The heading of the final letter is Frankfort Prison, July 4, 18__. Of the preceding thirteen headings, this is the only one that coincides with fact. This letter also contains believable statements such as "I have been revenged, terribly revenged. The cause of my ruin, my shame, and my miseries is no more. He has fallen by the hand of my husband, the noble avenger of my wrong, and the defender of my character. . . . But he is to die—and I shall die with him."[64] Then there is the revelation of what was possibly the true motive for Beauchamp's assassination of Sharp: "Ellen, this monster—this fiend, in human shape, had circulated reports everywhere that the infant I brought into life, was the—the—Oh! I shudder at the very mention of it—the child of a negro father." In strident tones, the letter continues: "I was roused, like the lioness from her lair. . . . I would have put an end to the monster with my own hands, but my dear husband imbibed my

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[62] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 153.

[63] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 155.

[64] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 158.

feelings, and was roused to a pitch of madness. We took a solemn oath together that nothing but the heart's blood of the slanderer and the betrayer should atone for the deep and horrible injury he had inflicted."[65]

Although there are many statements in this final letter which could have been written by Ann Beauchamp, there are several which she could not have written. For example, Mrs. Beauchamp was not tried as an accessory until the very last day of Beauchamp's trial, almost two weeks after the trial had begun. In this letter, however, we find the claim being made: "When my dear and much injured husband was brought to trial, I insisted upon being also tried with him, and charged myself as a party concerned in the act which had brought his life into danger."[66] If this were true, this would have been tantamount to a confession of guilt on Ann's part, thereby incriminating her husband. But in reality, from the beginning until the end of his trial, Beauchamp maintained his innocence. The remainder of the letter deals with Ann's resolution to take her own life. Whatever the true reason for Ann's suicide, the author of this final letter offers us a convincing surmise: "I will convince the world that however low my character might have sunk, and however debased and infamous those who knew me not might have thought me, I could yet conceive and execute an act of heroism, and of vengeance that will never be forgotten."[67]

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[65] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 159.

[66] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 160.

[67] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 162.

The small volume of fourteen letters offered in 1826 as correspondence between Ann Cook and her friend Ellen are then entertaining and colorful, but they were not written by Ann Cook. Because of the overwhelming number of inaccuracies one is tempted to believe that the letters were published not so much to represent truthful statements actually penned by Ann Cook but were offered rather, as W___R___n states in the preface to the letters, to "serve as an example to those . . . who, whatever be their cultivation or their talents, suffer themselves to be too much under the influence of feeling and passion; or, who repose too confidently on their own strength, and the honour of man."[68]

For years, four documents have been used by writers as "primary sources" of the Kentucky Tragedy, sources which have been labeled precise and accurate. The present discussion should demonstrate that parts of three of these sources, Beauchamp's Trial, the Confession, and the Vindication, contain questionable statements and that one source, the Letters of Ann Cook, is apocryphal. In a curious way, however, the very fact that these documents are to be read with caution adds to the overall effect that is created, for it heightens the romance and the mystery of the case. And because there was a great hunger in America at the time the tragedy occurred for stories of romance, dozens of authors retold the story over and over again using "accurate primary sources."

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[68] Letters of Ann Cook, in Kallsen, p. 113.

CHAPTER III

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES

In April, 1938, an article by William Rouse Jillson, noted Kentucky geologist and antiquarian, appeared in the Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society. In this essay, "The Beauchamp-Sharp Tragedy in American Literature," Jillson states that at one time he prepared an annotated bibliography of literature based on the Kentucky Tragedy, the titles of which totaled more than one hundred and seventy. Many of these titles, however, were drawn from standard Kentucky histories. Over forty titles were taken from pamphlets, short stories, magazine articles, and ballads, in many instances no longer available.[1] Enough of these miscellaneous pieces are extant, however, to give us a good idea of how pervasive the theme of the Kentucky Tragedy has been in American literature. Today there are only three pamphlets, one short story, one magazine article, and two ballads available for study.

Of the many pamphlets published in the nineteenth century, one of the earliest, printed in Philadelphia before 1829, gives a good account of Beauchamp's trial, the suicide attempts of Beauchamp and Ann, and

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[1] Jillson's bibliography does contain errors. For example, he lists under the heading of Biography "Godfrey's Lady's Book (E. A. Pope), 1842 and 1846." Under the heading of Magazines he lists "Godey's Lady's Book (E. A. Poe), 1842 and 1846." Both entries are incorrect; in the former the title of the source and the name of the author have been misspelled. The latter entry is incorrect since Sarah J. Hale and not E. A. Poe wrote an article about the Kentucky Tragedy that appeared in Godey's in 1842. No article written by Poe has been found in Godey's in 1846.

the conversation between Beauchamp and the jailer John McIntosh as Beauchamp was escorted to the gallows. The pamphlet, which bears no date, was probably written before 1829 since it is written as though Patrick Henry Darby, who died in 1829, were still alive. At one point in the pamphlet, for example, the author states that "it is but justice to Mr. Darby to say that . . . he has publicly vindicated himself in an Address in the Kentucky papers."[2] Moreover, on July 21, 1826, an article appeared in the National Gazette which opened with these words: "No poet, no novelist has conceived a story more harrowing, nor framed a lesson more powerful against the indulgence of licentious passion."[3] The author of the Philadelphia pamphlet uses these same words in the introduction of his narrative. Although certainly written before 1829, it is quite possible that the pamphlet was written within days of the article that appeared in the National Gazette. Accurate for the most part, the Philadelphia pamphlet does contain errors. And although the author introduces Beauchamp and his wife Ann as the hero and heroine of the story, later, when discussing Beauchamp's trial, he condemns Beauchamp and clearly attempts to exonerate Patrick Henry Darby of any complicity in the death of Solomon P. Sharp. Most importantly, the author of this work presents information that is not found in any other early account now available relating to the Tragedy.

The Philadelphia pamphlet opens with a sketchy history of the relationships of the major figures, which, though accurate for the

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[2]The Kentucky Tragedy (Philadelphia, n.d.), p. 20.

[3]National Gazette, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 21, 1826.

most part, does contain a number of errors. To begin with Jereboam's name is spelled "Jeroboam." Then, the author errs when he writes that Ann moved to Kentucky from Virginia after the death of both of her parents. Ann did leave Virginia after her father's death in 1805, but her mother lived until 1837.[4] Another factual error is the statement that after Colonel Sharp had seduced Ann he deserted her to marry another. At the time of Ann's seduction, which occurred in 1819, Colonel Sharp and his wife Eliza had been married for about ten months.[5]

The major portion of this pamphlet is devoted to presenting testimony from Beauchamp's trial taken primarily from J. G. Dana and R. S. Thomas's book Beauchamp's Trial. The summarized testimony of several witnesses is reported quite objectively until the author begins to deal with the instructions that Beauchamp had sent to John F. Lowe attempting to persuade Lowe to perjure himself to help clear Beauchamp. At this point, the author begins to condemn Beauchamp for attempting to use "this wicked device," and adds that "happily this diabolical plot failed."[6] The author then insists that Darby, who would have been implicated in the crime if Lowe had perjured himself, was "an innocent man" and had vindicated himself in the Kentucky newspapers. Moreover, the author writes that while the prosecuting attorney read aloud in

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[4]Dr. and Mrs. William Carter Stubbs, Descendants of Mordecai Cooke (New Orleans, n.p., 1923), p. 81.

[5]J. Winston Coleman, The Beauchamp-Sharp Tragedy (Frankfort: Roberts Printing Co., 1950), p. 2.

[6]The Kentucky Tragedy, Philadelphia, p. 20.

open court the document that had been prepared by Beauchamp with instructions for Lowe to implicate Darby, "Darby stood erect with his fierce eye beaming with indignation firmly riveted upon the being who had sought to destroy both his reputation and life. Beauchamp could not bear his intense gaze which searched his inmost soul; he writhed like a serpent transfixed to the earth. Every one present, even the most rancorous political foes of Darby, had indignation depicted upon his countenance. All were struck with the turpitude of Beauchamp, and none felt any commiseration for his approaching fate."[7] Although this author attempted to underscore the innocence of Darby, his name was never cleared of involvement in the crime for which Beauchamp was executed.

The next six pages of the thirty-six page pamphlet give details, following closely Beauchamp's Confession, of the suicide attempts of the Beauchamps and their ultimate deaths. Near the conclusion of the pamphlet, however, information is given that has not been found elsewhere. Just before the hangman's rope was put around Beauchamp's neck, he was asked if he forgave everyone. The author reports that Beauchamp replied: "Dr. Sharp has done me great injury; and his life is in danger, but I hope they will not kill him."[8] It is not clear exactly what injury Dr. Sharp had done Beauchamp, but in his Confession Beauchamp had written that he had wanted to kill Dr. Sharp when he

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[7] The Kentucky Tragedy, Philadelphia, p. 31.

[8] The Kentucky Tragedy, Philadelphia, p. 31.

killed his brother but had been persuaded not to by Ann. The matter is complicated even further by the fact that in his Vindication Dr. Sharp insists that it was he rather than his brother who should have been hated by the Beauchamps.[9]

The next two pamphlets—A Full and Complete Account of the Heberton Tragedy: To Which is Added Beauchamp, or the Kentucky Tragedy printed in New York in 1843 and The Life of Jeroboam O. Beauchamp printed in Frankfort in 1850—have a great deal in common. Both appear to be drawn principally from Beauchamp's Confession, and in both accounts an attempt is made to excuse Beauchamp's crime and to portray Beauchamp and Ann as hero and heroine. Both focus on the relationships of Beauchamp, Ann, and Sharp; both stress the meeting of Jereboam and Ann, Sharp's refusal to engage in a duel with Beauchamp, and Beauchamp's assassination of Sharp. Both pamphlets are twenty-three pages long, although the 1850 version adds several illustrations including one of Beauchamp's execution.

Although they are alike in many ways, the 1850 pamphlet is more interesting than the 1843 pamphlet because of the attempts by the author of the 1850 pamphlet to excuse not only Beauchamp's plan to take unfair advantage of Sharp in a duel but also Beauchamp's attempted subornation of perjury and his murder of Sharp. In his Confession, Beauchamp tells how he hoped to engage Sharp in a duel with pistols, for Beauchamp knew that Sharp was unskilled in the use of firearms, whereas the plotter

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[9]Dr. Leander J. Sharp, Vindication of . . . Sharp (Frankfort: Amos Kendall, 1827), pp. 51; 133.

was an excellent shot.[10] The author suggests that "this circumstance would convict Beauchamp of cowardice, had he not before offered to fight Sharp fairly."[11] Admitting that Beauchamp's "attempt at subornation of perjury adds a darker shade to Beauchamp's character," the author excuses the episode by insisting that "life is sweet, and he was contending for it."[12] The greatest amount of space is given in an attempt to excuse the murder. The author first stresses the environment in which Beauchamp lived. He writes: "It may seem strange that Beauchamp could have believed such an act justifiable in any case; but, be it remembered that at that period, a human life was regarded as a small matter in the Western and Southern States."[13] And, he continues, "almost every gentleman in Kentucky carries his bowie-knife or dagger."[14] Moreover, he adds, "scenes of ruffianly violence were not at that day anything uncommon."[15] Warming to his argument, the author writes that "it may be said in his excuse that he was actuated by a sense of honour highly commendable and . . . he was instigated by a woman he fondly loved."[16] The author is convinced that "there was never villainly more cruel, more cowardly, more atrocious than that of Sharp. There was no

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[10]Jereboam O. Beauchamp, The Confession (Bloomfield, Kentucky: Will H. Holmes, 1826), rpt. in The Kentucky Tragedy, ed. Loren J. Kallsen (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1963), p. 15.

[11]The Life of Jeroboam O. Beauchamp (Frankfort: D'Unger and Co., 1850), p. 12.

[12]Beauchamp, 1850, p. 23.

[13]Beauchamp, 1850, p. 9.

[14]Beauchamp, 1850, p. 20.

[15]Beauchamp, 1850, p. 11.

[16]Beauchamp, 1850, p. 28.

palliating circumstance—not even the heat of young blood. He deserved all he got, and much more."[17] The author concludes by stating that "it is idle to say that the laws afford redress for all injuries. . . . for stealing the fair fame, the whole hope of earthly happiness of woman—for crushing her heart in the spring of her life— . . . Such should be made criminal in all the world."[18]

The pamphlets served not only to inform the American public of the Beauchamp-Sharp Tragedy and to offer judgments about those involved, they also became sources for literary works such as Mary E. MacMichael's short story, "The Kentucky Tragedy A Tale: Founded on Facts of Actual Occurrence," which appeared in 1838 in The Gentleman's Magazine. Unfortunately, MacMichael's entire story—the setting, the characters, and the language—is spoiled by excessive artificiality. The opening paragraph is a good example of the high-flown and irrelevant rhetoric which permeates the story:

> 'Tis a calm summer's evening, and very lovely is the view; the sun is setting behind the distant hills, and gilding with its red and glowing light the little river which glides like a silver serpent through the plain, forming various fairy islets in its meandering course; and pleasant it is to watch the humble boat with its red sails glowing in the sun set, as it proceeds slowly by the luxuriant woods towards the city of _____, which is seen in the distance, far as the eye can reach.

Moreover, the story is rife with such expressions as "reeking with her best blood," and "the eloquent blood leaped into her cheeks," and

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[17] Beauchamp, 1850, p. 28.

[18] Beauchamp, 1850, p. 28.

"he lodged the contents of a pistol in Wilton's breast."[19]

The characters are no less artificial. Claude de Wilton, as Colonel Sharp, is a "young man . . . tall and athletic in figure, with eyes flashing with animation, and in his open countenance the reckless gayety of youth was blended with an expression of hardihood and manly daring beyond his years."[20] Ann Cook is recreated as Ianthe Willoughby, a young maid whose "features were exquisitely moulded, and dark diamond-like eyes lightened their bloom with the beams of light and chastened intellect."[21] The hero of the story is given no fictitious name but is simply called Beauchamp and is described as one whose "personal appearance . . . must have claimed approbation even from an enemy."[22]

The story itself is an inartistic, garbled version of the historical tragedy. For example, over half the story centers around the relationship of Claude de Wilton and a blonde, blue-eyed beauty Geraldine Heathwood. Since it is obvious from the beginning that de Wilton intends to jilt Miss Heathwood, one is inclined to associate her with Ann Cook. We soon learn, however, that Geraldine is not meant to represent Ann Cook, for Geraldine is overcome by consumption and dies.

Although the last few pages of the story present a fairly accurate summary of the Tragedy, for the most part Mary E. MacMichael's story is extravagant nonsense without direction or purpose. The artificial

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[19]Mary E. MacMichael, "The Kentucky Tragedy: A Tale—Founded on Facts of Actual Occurrence," The Gentleman's Magazine, 2 (1838), 265-271.

[20]MacMichael, p. 265.

[21]MacMichael, p. 268.

[22]MacMichael, p. 270.

setting, the high-flown rhetoric, the too-perfect hero and heroine all tend to debase the story of Beauchamp, Ann Cook, and Colonel Sharp, a story which derives a great deal of its meaning from the crude natures of the major characters living on the untamed, raw frontier of early nineteenth-century Kentucky.

It was inevitable that the most notorious domestic tragedy ever to occur in Kentucky would appear in ballad form. In 1911, Professors Hubert G. Shearin and Josiah H. Combs refer to two ballads based on the Tragedy in A Syllabus of Kentucky Folk-Songs. The first is "Beauchamp's Confession," in which Beauchamp, under sentence of death by Judge Davidge for the murder of Sharp, pictures the meeting of himself and his victim in hell.[23] The second ballad, entitled "Jereboam Beauchamp," is a recital of the murder of Sharp by Beauchamp. These two ballads have never been printed although both were supposedly included in an unpublished article by Professor Shearin, "The Beauchamp Tragedy in American Literature," which was read before the Twenty-first Annual Meeting of the Central Division of the Modern Language Association in Chicago, December 27-29, 1916.[24] In 1932, Kate Tipton Irvine, who wrote a Master's thesis on the Tragedy, attempted to locate the two ballads by soliciting the help of Professor Shearin's widow Mrs. Ruth B. Shearin. Mrs. Shearin informed Miss Irvine that the article in which the two

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[23]Hubert G. Shearin and Josiah H. Combs, A Syllabus of Kentucky Folk-Songs (Lexington: Transylvania Printing Co., 1911), p. 16.

[24]Thomas O. Mabbott, ed., Politian: An Unfinished Tragedy by Edgar A. Poe (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Co., 1923), p. 57.

ballads appeared was in the care of Occidental College, Los Angeles.[25] A thorough search recently at Occidental failed to turn it up.[26]

Although the two ballads listed by title by Professors Shearin and Combs in their Syllabus may be lost, two other ballads are extant. One, entitled "Colonel Sharp," was printed in 1915 in E. C. Perrow's "Songs and Rhymes From the South" in the Journal of American Folk-Lore. The ballad was given to Perrow by E. N. Caldwell, who had acquired the manuscript in North Carolina in 1913. In a footnote, Perrow explains that the crime on which this ballad is founded "became the basis of widely spread ballads."[27] The ballad "Colonel Sharp" is arranged in fifteen quatrains. Many lines are in dialogue and the speakers, Jereboam and Ann, call each other "my dearest Jewel." A sign of oral rendering is the fact that throughout the ballad the word lover is spelled lovyer. Although the actual affair covered several months, the poet effectively telescopes the time so that he is able to include every important event. The ballad opens with the traditional "come all ye" beginning, and then Ann tells Beauchamp of the injury done to her by Colonel Sharp and promises to marry Beauchamp if "he would avenge her heart." Beauchamp answers:

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[25]Kate Tipton Irvine, "The Beauchamp Tragedy in American Literature," M.A. Thesis University of Kentucky, 1932, p. 3.

[26]In an attempt to locate the article, George R. Surrency spoke with Professor Shearin's son in Los Angeles in December 1975, and was told that all of his father's work had been donated to Occidental College. A search of the material in the library at Occidental failed to turn up the article.

[27]E. C. Perrow, "Songs and Rhymes From the South," Journal of American Folk-Lore, 28 (April-June, 1915), 166-168.

Oh, my dearest Jewel, that's pleasant talk to me.
To kill the man who injured you I really do feel free.
For I never could expect you for to become my wife
Until I did attack him and surely take his life.[28]

Details often not used by authors who wrote about the affair in fiction are included by the poet. He writes of Ann's making Beauchamp a mask of black silk with which to disguise himself while in Frankfort and Beauchamp's plan to leave with Ann for Missouri once the crime had been committed. Mention is also made of the burial of Beauchamp and Ann in the same grave, a fact that is surprisingly omitted in most stories about the Tragedy. The last seven quatrains tell of Beauchamp's trial, Ann's joining her husband in his cell, and the suicide attempts of the two lovers. In the concluding quatrain the lovers are identified thus: "Perhaps there's some one here who'd wish to know their names. / It was Andy Bowens Beecher and Andy Cooker's dame."[29]

In 1956, another ballad, "Jeremiah Beechum," was acquired by Professor Leonard Roberts and was printed in the Kentucky Folklore Record in March, 1968.[30] Roberts received the ballad, which is a variant of "Colonel Sharp," from Mrs. Eller (sic) Hensley of Bell County, Kentucky. Mrs. Hensley had invited him to her home on the Cumberland River to listen to ballads and folk songs. Roberts writes that when

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[28]Perrow, p. 167.

[29]Perrow, p. 168.

[30]Professor Roberts, commenting on the ballad "Colonel Sharp" printed by Perrow, writes that the ballad "tells the story in order and quite accurately (except its sharp penknife suicide)." Professor Roberts himself is in error since Ann and Jereboam did use a sharp penknife in their suicide attempts. Leonard Roberts, "Beauchamp and Sharp: A Kentucky Tragedy," Kentucky Folklore Records, 14 (January-March, 1968), 14-19.

he arrived he found eight or nine singers, one of whom, Mrs. Lidia Green Knuckles, sang the first stanza of "Jeremiah Beechum" which Roberts tape-recorded. Mrs. Knuckles told the professor that many years ago she had heard her father sing the entire ballad many times.

Although "Jeremiah Beechum" is based on the Perrow text, several stanzas are misplaced which distort the actual sequence of events. For example, stanzas twelve and thirteen tell of the double suicide attempt and Ann's death. But four stanzas later we read that Beauchamp

> . . . then returned to Frankfort
> And went to Colonel Sharp
> He called him from his lodging room
> And stabbed him to the heart.

Since ballads tend to deteriorate by transmission, it is remarkable that the ballad discovered by Professor Roberts remains almost unchanged from the earlier version printed by Perrow. For example, the tenth quatrain of "Colonel Sharp" relates Beauchamp's writing his Confession in this manner:

> Then he called for pen and ink to write all around,
> "I want this whole world to know what I have done:
> I've killed this noble Colonel that injured my poor wife
> And always will protect her as long as I have life."

Stanzas fourteen and fifteen of "Jeremiah Beechum" express the same incident thus:

> He called for pen and paper
> To write to every one.
> Saying, "I wish that this whole world
> Could know what I have done.
>
> "I've killed the Colonel Sharp
> Who injured my poor wife
> I always will protect her,
> As long as I have life."

In a footnote to "Colonel Sharp" E. C. Perrow writes that in 1915 Beauchamp's Confession "is occasionally seen even now for sale."[31] But shortly thereafter Beauchamp's Confession was not readily available as a source for would-be authors, and stories about the tragedy decreased. Occasionally, however, in the twentieth century the story has been printed in "Detective Weeklies." On February 19, 1927, excerpts from Beauchamp's Confession, covering Sharp's assassination, Beauchamp's arrest, trial, and execution, appeared in Flynn's Detective Fiction Weekly under the title "Jereboam Beauchamp: His Confession," edited by Zeta Rothschild. And on December 2, 1951, "Dirk of Vengeance," by Lewis Thompson, was printed in The American Weekly. Thompson's article, a synopsis of Beauchamp's Confession, contains some very obvious errors. For example, he writes that Ann's father was a wealthy planter in Bowling Green and died in 1819. Moreover, he states that Beauchamp was an active supporter of the New Court Party and that Sharp was the leader of the Old Court faction. Actually the reverse was true.

The Beauchamp-Sharp Tragedy was not dealt with effectively in the pamphlet, the short story, or the ballad, for each of these forms is too limited. It was left to the dramatist and the novelist to present more than the basic facts and to examine more thoroughly the complex political aspects of the story, the personalities and character traits of the major figures, and the causes of this violent episode in American history.

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[31] Perrow, p. 166.

CHAPTER IV

PLAYS

One of the first to grasp the significance of the Kentucky Tragedy as raw material for a romantic domestic tragedy was neither a poet nor a dramatist but the distinguished statesman Henry Clay, who was intimate with several of the major figures in the case. John U. Waring, Solomon P. Sharp's archenemy and suspected assassin, was employed by Clay on several occasions as an agent in Clay's land speculations in Kentucky.[1] Patrick Henry Darby, the editor of the Constitutional Advocate in Frankfort and also suspected of being involved in Sharp's death, was one of Clay's friends and political supporters in Frankfort.[2] Moreover, Solomon P. Sharp and Henry Clay had been friends for many years. During President Madison's term, Clay and Sharp had served as United States representatives from Kentucky. When Sharp returned to Kentucky, he maintained his friendship with Clay and often was employed by Clay in legal matters.[3]

Henry Clay was informed of Sharp's assassination by his son Theodore W. Clay, on November 11, 1825: You will perceive by the prints that one of the most atrocious and unheard of acts of murder was committed a few nights ago on Sol. P. Sharpe. Language could not find terms strong

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[1]James F. Hopkins, ed., The Papers of Henry Clay, 5 vols. Lexington: Univ. of Ky. Press, 1959-), IV, 724; V, 204, 704.

[2]Hopkins, IV, 398, 403-404.

[3]Hopkins, I, 777; II, 228, 239, 370, 567; III, 456.

enough to condemn it in, nor could the law be too severe in avenging the rights of humanity. He was called to his door by a man passing himself for an old acquaintance and seeking hospitality for the night at 1 o'clock, and in the act of conferring the favor, and in the dark the savage stabbed him to the heart."[4] On the day this was written, Jereboam O. Beauchamp was arrested for the murder. Clay maintained his interest in the case, and on July 10, 1826, he wrote to his friend John J. Crittenden: "I have got home time enough to be near the last act of the Tragedy in your town—for such undoubtedly ought to be considered the events of last Friday. The manner of the death of the unfortunate Beauchamp and his still more unfortunate wife must awaken a public sympathy which even his crime and her vices cannot smother.[5] And on August 2, 1826, Clay wrote to Josiah S. Johnston: "You will have seen the tragical end of Beauchamp and his unfortunate wife. We live in an age of romance. Ask Mrs. Johnston if the story might be wrought up into a fine popular tragedy—one similar to George Barnwell?"[6] About the time that Clay made his appeal to his friend Johnston a notice appeared in The New York Mirror announcing a "new tragedy" by a "native dramatist" based on the Beauchamp-Sharp Tragedy. Agreeing with Henry Clay's observation, the author of the article wrote that "perhaps there never occurred in real life a combination of incidents so admirably

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[4]Hopkins, IV, 816-817.

[5]Hopkins, V, 536-537.

[6]George Lillo, English dramatist, had produced in 1731 a play, The London Merchant or the History of George Barnwell, based upon an old ballad. The play recounted the story of a young apprentice, who became infatuated with a courtesan and, to retain her favor, embezzled his employer's money and murdered his uncle. The courtesan and her lover were finally hanged.

calculated to produce stage effects."[7] Although the play mentioned in The New York Mirror has not been found, we do have plays by a "resident near the scene," Thomas Holley Chivers, Edgar Allan Poe, Charlotte M. S. Barnes, and John Savage.

Many students of the Kentucky Tragedy have stated that Thomas Holley Chivers' play Conrad and Eudora (1834) was the first published literary treatment of the celebrated affair. This writer, however, recently obtained from Harvard University a copy of a play based on the Tragedy printed in 1833. Harvard received its copy in 1918 as part of the bequest of Evert Jansen Wendell. The play, entitled Beauchamp, or the Murder of Col. Sharp, was written by "A Resident near the scene of action, and acquainted with all the parties." Although, for the most part, a dramatization of Beauchamp's Confession, the thirty-six page play is envigorated by the writer's occasional attempts to make Beauchamp's speeches poetic, by the introduction of Negro servants, and by the inclusion and development of two figures who are only mentioned in passing by Beauchamp in his Confession.

In all five acts the dramatist follows, lifting entire passages from the work, the main outline of the Confession. Thus many lines in the play are merely direct quotations or paraphrases from the Confession. At times, however, the dramatist departs from his source and allows Beauchamp to speak poetically, as in the following speech. As his soliloquy reveals, it is the night before Beauchamp's wedding:

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[7]The New York Mirror, July 29, 1826.

> To-morrow's night will make her indissolubly mine. See how the thunders toll, and the lightenings rend the elements, as if to tear nature's majesty in twain. So will I brace myself against the prejudices of this scowling world, and be a man in the midst of ruin. Roll on, thou messenger of Deity, that I may borrow virtue from thy might. Would that this steel was pointed with thy keenest flash, and with the power of Jove's thunder, driven home to the villain's heart.—Yet, would I bid adieu to such nights, and take a final farewell of celibacy with such gloom, to hail the nuptial morn enriched by the golden sun.[8]

In addition to the occasional poetic speeches by Beauchamp, the embellishments of the 1833 drama also include the author's addition of Negro characters. And though Ann Cook owned blacks, and though the 1850 Frankfort pamphlet The Life of Jeroboam O. Beauchamp contains a picture of Ann Cook's black servants rejoicing on hearing of the death of Colonel Sharp, only the author of the 1833 play Beauchamp, or the Murder of Col. Sharp and Hannah Daviess Pittman in The Heart of Kentucky (1908) include Negroes in their works. The Negroes that appear in the play as servants of Ann Cook have relatively few lines, but the dramatist attempts to capture the flavor of Negro dialect by including in the speech of the servants such words and expressions as "ingons," "mistess," and "I-be-bound."

The most interesting embellishment made by the author is the inclusion and development of two persons who figure prominently in the historical Kentucky Tragedy, Amos Kendall and John Upshaw Waring. In his Confession, Beauchamp refers briefly to Amos Kendall, the editor of the Frankfort newspaper The Argus of Western America, as the "oracle of

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[8] Beauchamp, or the Murder of Col. Sharp, (1833, n.p.), p. 19.

the new court faction," who after Sharp's murder "sounded the alarm throughout the state, that it was 'politics' which had caused the murder."[9] Beauchamp mentions John Upshaw Waring, a notoriously violent man, as an enemy of Governor Desha, and a man whom the governor wanted Beauchamp to implicate in Sharp's murder. Though the dramatist elects to retain the names of the principal characters of the Tragedy—Beauchamp, Sharp, and Ann—he thinly disguises the names of Kendall and Waring, who become Amus and Upshaw respectively.

In the play, Amus has a small role compared with the role of the more fully developed Upshaw. Like his prototype, Amus is a friend of Colonel Sharp, and after Sharp is murdered it is Amus, like the historical Amos Kendall, who accuses Darby of complicity in the Colonel's death. Although today information about John Upshaw Waring is sketchy, at best, the dramatist confirms what historians have written about the legendary duellist and man of savage temper. In the play, one character remarks: "Oh John of Upshaw, you have always carried more hell and thunder about you, than has seemed to me prudent for ordinary men."[10] The bitterness between Sharp and Waring, as documented by Dr. Leander J. Sharp in his Vindication, is revealed in the play in this remark by Upshaw to Darby: "Sharp says he can prove the child of Miss Cook was not the offspring of a white man; well he might do this, and the child still be his, for if

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[9]Jereboam O. Beauchamp, The Confession (Bloomfield, Ky.: Will H. Holmes, 1826), rpt. in The Kentucky Tragedy, ed. Loren J. Kallsen (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1963), p. 17.

[10]Beauchamp, 1833, p. 21.

he was as black outside as he is in, no polished ebony would outshine him."[11] The dramatist also confirms what historians have written about Waring's whereabouts at the time of Sharp's assassination. The dramatist explains that he lay "wounded and disabled in Lexington" after having been shot in the thigh. Finally, it is Upshaw's responses near the conclusion of the play that reveal the dramatist's sympathy for Beauchamp and his wife. Just prior to Beauchamp's execution, Amus remarks to another character: "The widow of a man that's hanged, you know, makes the best wife in the world."[12] Upshaw, who has returned to Frankfort from Lexington, immediately replies: "Unfeeling dogs, had I my usual flesh and blood about me, I'd strike you dumb for such a speech." Amus exits and Upshaw says: "Yes, scamper away to your dens like rats, to continue more mischief. Ah, poor youth, I see he must die; even if he were innocent he would hang. Their vengeance it must be glutted, and their reward secured."[13] And after it is announced that Ann declares she will not survive her husband, Upshaw states: "She's a heroine worthy of better days; preferring, as she conceives, a glorious death to living infamy." The dramatist then departs radically from the facts as we know them by having Upshaw remark: "Lead on, I'll go myself and prepare a decent burial, for fear this last act of kindness will be denied them."[14]

The second dramatist to write of the Kentucky Tragedy was Thomas Holley Chivers. Chivers became interested in the affair while he was a

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[11] Beauchamp, 1833, p. 22.

[12] Beauchamp, 1833, p. 34.

[13] Beauchamp, 1833, p. 34.

[14] Beauchamp, 1833, p. 35.

student at Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1828. While working toward his Doctor of Medicine degree, he was given a pamphlet containing the Confession of Beauchamp. The result was his first book, Conrad and Eudora; or, the Death of Alonzo, published in Philadelphia in 1834. Now for the first time we have an author attempting to probe beneath the factual surface of the tragedy in an effort to come to grips with the complex personalities of the principal figures in one of the most dramatic and bloody incidents in American history. And though his sympathies are clearly with Ann, the wronged woman, and Beauchamp, her heroic defender, Chivers allows the character based upon Sharp to explain why he betrayed the trust of those who loved him.

Chivers' play, a closet drama in blank verse, follows the facts of the actual case quite faithfully. A few details were changed, however, for the sake of expediency. For example, in the play the location of the heroine's cottage is on the outskirts of Frankfort rather than a four days' journey away. Time elements are telescoped to add continuity to the action. Often Chivers appears to be having fun with his distortion of the facts. In the play Joel Scott, who provided Beauchamp with a room the night of the murder and whose testimony helped to convict him, is represented as an innkeeper who does not testify against Beauchamp; on the contrary, he sympathizes with him and wishes him a fair and just trial. Those familiar with the case would have known that Joel Scott was prejudiced against Beauchamp not only because of Scott's relationship with Mrs. Sharp but perhaps also because, as many felt,

Scott wished to see Beauchamp convicted in order to share in the reward money.

Since this play was Chivers' first poetic endeavor, it is not surprising that it has its faults. The language is stilted and highly rhetorical. One finds constant repetition of words and lines that Chivers felt were good. But Chivers presents a perceptive and rather artistic exploration of the somewhat twisted personalities of the major characters which led to murder and suicide. The characters of Conrad, Eudora, and Alonzo, representing Beauchamp, Ann, and Sharp respectively, are based primarily on information, according to Chivers himself, acquired from Beauchamp's Confession.[15] And although Charles H. Watts in Thomas Holley Chivers: His Literary Career and His Poetry writes that "Chivers' probable acquaintance with the Thomas Lacey who acted as one of Beauchamp's counsel may have led him to provide the reader with the occasional glimpses into Ann Cook's true character which we find in Conrad and Eudora," Chivers did not know the Thomas J. Lacy who served as one of Beauchamp's attorneys. Chivers wrote "An Elegy on the Death of my Friend, Mr. Thomas Lacey," which appeared in Path of Sorrow in in 1832.[16] The Thomas Lacy who acted as Beauchamp's attorney did not die in 1832. Richard Collins' History of Kentucky has a list of Kentuckians who moved to other states where they attained prominence,

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[15]The Georgia Citizen, Macon, Georgia, May 17, 1851.

[16]Richard Beale Davis, "Thomas Holley Chivers and The Kentucky Tragedy," Univ. of Texas Studies in Literature and Language, I, No. 2 (Summer 1959), 281-288.

and he lists Thomas J. Lacy has having gone from Nelson County, Kentucky, to Arkansas, where he became a federal judge. In the Arkansas Historical Quarterly, Winter 1951, Lacy is listed as a judge of the Superior Court in 1833-34 and as a member of the constitutional convention of 1836.[17]

Even though Thomas J. Lacy did not speak with Chivers about Ann Cook, there is no doubt that Chivers used the Letters of Ann Cook to create the character of Eudora. Specific words and ideas that are found in the Letters are echoed in the play. In the Letters, for example, Ann compares herself to a lioness just as Eudora does in the last act of the play. At one point in the Letters Ann writes: "Any thing but premeditated wrong, insult, and injury, I am sure I could bear with calmness." In the play, Eduora declares:

> I would not harm the simplest thing on earth!
> As loathe to scorn, as fierce to insult given!
> But, when despite is on my nature thrown,
> I swear, 'tis harder far than adamant![18]

The above quotation captures the essence of Chiver's heroine, who is a sweetly naive, nymph-like creature madly in love with Alonzo, Chivers' Colonel Sharp, until her seduction and desertion by him. When this occurs she is overwhelmed with bitterness and shame which eventually leads to madness and an hysterical desire for revenge. S. Foster Damon in Thomas Holley Chivers: Friend of Poe writes that Eudora is "chicken-hearted." This is hardly the case, for one finds Eudora urging Conrad

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[17]Walter Lee Brown, "Albert Pike, Arkansas Editor," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, 10 (Winter 1951), 399-405.

[18]Thomas Holley Chivers, Conrad and Eudora (Philadelphia, n.p., 1834), p. 26.

on with words such as these when Conrad tells her that Alonzo refuses to fight him:

> Why not cut the treacherous villain's throat?
> Had I been with thee, he had died so sweet.
> Were he within this proud arm's reach—this stroke
> Should be effectual, and bring lowness low!
> I'd tramp me in his blood, and smile with joy.[19]

This passage, moreover, is typical of Eudora's expression of demented determination to see Alonzo dead. It illustrates the extreme personality change experienced by Eudora, who spoke at the outset of the play of nothing but morality, goodness, and love. Chivers makes it abundantly clear, until her suicide, that Eudora's obsession with exacting retribution is simply because, in the words of her mother, Eudora has "run mad." Insanity, brought about by Alonzo's crushing Eudora's heart, which had been filled with trust and love for him, is the key to Eudora's insatiable lust for Alonzo's death.

Conrad, portraying Beauchamp, is perhaps the most stereotyped of the major characters. Throughout the play, he is cast, rather embarrassingly, as the heroic defender of wronged female virtue. At one point he reveals that he once slew a man who had insulted a lady in Conrad's presence. Everyone, including Conrad himself, recognizes his superior strength, his manliness, and his right to punish Alonzo, for Conrad has "authority from higher climes." At times, however, Conrad becomes more than a mechanical hero when Chivers attempts to portray his protagonist's feelings of doubt and remorse. At the beginning of a soliloquy in which Conrad rationalizes his forthcoming

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[19] Conrad and Eudora, p. 49.

murder of Alonzo, he whispers: "I have an eddying sorrow in my heart." In the lines that follow he enumerates what he feels are valid reasons for taking Alonzo's life, but concludes with the question: "But stay—am I not wrong?"[20] Later after Alonzo has refused to fight with him, Conrad explains that he could not then kill him "when he begged so hard: / I could not help from feeling for his fate."[21] When explaining to Eudora why he spared Alonzo he tells her that his pity overcame his hate. When she accuses him of neglecting his oath, he exclaims: "I am no huge gladiator, without soul: / A man may have his purpose, and still feel./ There are strange mixtures in this chalice, life."[22] Chivers clearly sympathizes with Conrad's "right" to avenge the honor of Eudora, and casts him as the noble avenger, but he tries to add dimension to Conrad's character by showing his doubts and even his reluctance at times to assume blindly the role of avenger.

If Chivers only gives us glimpses of the internal struggle experienced by Conrad, he takes great pains to demonstrate Alonzo's battle with himself before and after his seduction of Eudora. In the first act, Alonzo is not only wooing Eudora but also Angeline, who later becomes his wife. Knowing that he will marry Angeline but having convinced Eudora of his love for her and having agreed on a place and time to meet with her where he plans to take advantage of her trust, Alonzo begins to have misgivings about his plan. He hears a "secret

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[20] Conrad and Eudora, p. 39. [21] Conrad and Eudora, p. 47.

[22] Conrad and Eudora, p. 53.

whisper" in his heart, and he asks himself why the voice must torture him at this moment. Just when he seems to have overcome the whisperings of his conscience and is resolved to carry out his evil design upon Eudora, he wavers and asks himself:

> What's this?—my conscience has come back again!
> Man! wilt thou tread upon that sacred thing?
> Mould, with thy lust, such ugliness and grief?
> And lop the tender roses in their bloom?[23]

Though Alonzo vacillates and agonizes over the debauchery he has planned, finally his conscience is no match for his lust. But after his seduction of Eudora, he is seized with guilt and remorse. Alonzo does not win our sympathy, but for the first time someone had allowed the seducer to speak in his own behalf. Chivers does not attempt to make Alonzo any less a villain, but because Chivers allows us to witness Alonzo's struggle with his conscience, he becomes less an abstraction, less the personification of evil as he had heretofore been presented.

Chivers' interest in the Kentucky Tragedy did not end with the publication of Conrad and Eudora. On March 7, 1838, he wrote to Edmon Sheppard Conner, the Philadelphia actor-manager and later husband of Charlotte Barnes, who wrote Octavia Bragaldi, based on the Tragedy. Chivers asked Conner to pass judgment on a new play of his, Leoni, or the the Orphan of Venice, and informed Conner that he had written the part of Alvino for him.[24] Conner apparently never read the play, or perhaps

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[23] Conrad and Eudora, p. 18.

[24] Emma L. Chase and Lois F. Parks, eds., The Correspondence of Thomas Holley Chivers (Providence: Brown Univ. Press, 1957), I, 1. The Harvard manuscript of this version of Leoni bears the date 1838 which was changed to 1839. Professor Richard Beale Davis notes in his

never answered Chivers' letter, for thirteen years later on May 28, 1851, Chivers wrote to him again recommending the play to him and enclosed the first act. At that time the play was appearing weekly in Macon, Georgia, in The Georgia Citizen.[25] Although many lines from Conrad and Eudora appear in Leoni, Chivers is attempting something different with the latter play. In the earlier play he stressed human weaknesses and psychological debilities as being responsible for the disaster. In Leoni there is less emphasis on the psychology of his characters and more concern with the theme of revenge. The very fact that every major character vehemently expresses a motive and desire for revenge and the fact that Chivers uses every opportunity to stress the theme of revenge tend to suggest that the poet is parodying, unwittingly perhaps, the revenge play itself rather than exploring the theme of revenge as an element crucial to an understanding of the Kentucky Tragedy.

Every major character expresses the desire to seek revenge because of wrongs inflicted by another. Of course Leoni wants revenge for Count Alvar's rejecting her for another. And ironically this is the strongest motive that she has; the Count did not seduce her but merely admitted that he loved another better. Nevertheless, Leoni engages her

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article, "Thomas Holley Chivers and the Kentucky Tragedy" that the changes in whole or parts of speeches would indicate that this version was a working copy of the play that was printed in The Georgia Citizen in 1851.

[25]The play appeared in The Georgia Citizen May 17, 24, 31, and June 7, 14, 1851.

cousin Alvino to administer the death blow to Alvar. Also, in the first act, Don Carlos, a friend of Leoni, reveals that twenty years ago Count Alvar stole his bride away, and that he has been waiting as long to avenge himself of this crime. In the same act, we learn that Count Alvar is attempting to bribe his friend Don Pedro to murder Don Carlos. Alvar tells Don Pedro that Pedro has reason to seek revenge since it is Don Carlos who has prevented Pedro from marrying the sister of Don Carlos. In Act II Count Alvar himself expresses the desire to seek revenge. He refers to Don Carlos as "the savage that has prowled along my path," who Alvar boasts, "will find the depths of my revenge so deep, / He will not seek to lavish out his own!"[26] And when Alvino murders Count Alvar, with his dying breath Alvar calls upon the gods to take revenge upon Alvino. Then, after reflecting upon his crime, Alvino tells Leoni that "the sentence of the law will fall, / Upon us with avenging wrath."[27]

Since there is less emphasis in Leoni on the underlying psychological aberrations of the principal characters and more emphasis on creating a plot with diverse reasons for revenge unrelated to the factual occurrence, Conrad and Eudora must be credited as being the play which comes closer to a satisfactory exploration of the Kentucky Tragedy. On the other hand, Leoni would have been the better acting version of the Tragedy. The language is less stilted and rhetorical. The pace of

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[26]Thomas Holley Chivers, "Leoni, or the Orphan of Venice," The Georgia Citizen, Macon, Georgia, 17 May 1851, p. 1.

[27]"Leoni," The Georgia Citizen, 7 June 1851, p. 1.

the action is much faster, with a great deal more on-stage confrontation between antagonists. There is no record of either play having been performed, but Willard Rouse Jillson writes that Chivers sold Leoni to the manager of Covent Garden.[28]

After Chivers' Conrad and Eudora was published in 1834, in the December, 1835, and January, 1836, issues of the Southern Literary Messenger there appeared scenes from another play based on the Kentucky Tragedy, Politian, which has excited a great deal of curiosity since it is the one known serious attempt at drama by Edgar Allan Poe. Late in his life, Poe gave the original manuscript to Mrs. Sarah Anna Lewis. From her it passed to John H. Ingram and from him indirectly into the Pierpont Morgan Library.[29] Although Poe never finished the play, it was included in The Raven and Other Poems in 1845. In 1923 Politian was edited by Thomas O. Mabbott.

Politian appears in Floyd Stovall's 1965 edition of The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe, a volume in which Stovall states that Poe's tragedy has very little in common with the Kentucky Tragedy.[30] Nevertheless, there

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[28]Willard Rouse Jillson, "The Beauchamp-Sharp Tragedy," Louisville Courier-Journal, Nov. 25 and 26, 1937.

[29]Edgar Allan Poe, Politian, ed. Thomas O. Mabbot (Menasha, Wis.: George Banta Publishing Co., 1923), p. 1.

[30]In Mabbott's edition of Politian the scenes are numbered consecutively one through eleven, ignoring, according to Stovall, Poe's designation of act and scene number. Stovall claims that in his edition the acts and scenes are arranged in the order in which Poe intended them as determined by internal evidence and by the revisions he made on the manuscript. Stovall asserts that there are four acts in the manuscript, with the second scene of Act II a fragment and possibly an entire scene missing in Act III.

is a great deal of evidence which indicates that Poe drew heavily on Beauchamp's Confession and the Letters of Ann Cook. At the beginning of the play, which is set in sixteenth-century Rome, Castiglione (Colonel Sharp) has renounced Lalage (Ann Cook) in favor of Alessandra. We learn from a servant, however, that Lalage cannot deny that she still loves Castiglione, an admission made by Ann in the Letters regarding her feeling for Sharp after he deserted her. Moreover, when Politian (Beauchamp), Earl of Leicester, meets and becomes enamoured of Lalage, she informs him of her mistreatment by Castiglione and Politian vowes to punish him. Politian and Lalage plan to escape to the New World after Politian has achieved retribution just as Beauchamp and Ann prepared to leave for Missouri after Sharp has been killed. When Politian is unsuccessful in his attempt to engage Castiglione in a duel, Politian promises to insult Castiglione publicly. This follows Beauchamp's account in his Confession of his confrontation with Sharp. After Politian's "Coliseum Soliloquy," Lalage rushes in to inform him that "the hour is come / for vengeance or will never," for Alessandra and Castiglione are at the altar rail. Politian responds by swearing that he will slay Castiglione even if it must be done at the foot of the altar. In the Letters of Ann Cook Ann suggests to Beauchamp that it would be better to plunge the dagger into Sharp's heart "while folded in the arms of her for whom he deserted me."[31]

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[31] W___ R___n, ed., Letters of Ann Cook (Washington, 1826), rpt. in The Kentucky Tragedy, ed. Loren J. Kallsen (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1963), p. 159.

Though Poe did rely on the Confession and the Letters as the basis for several scenes, there are many scenes that have absolutely nothing to do with the Kentucky Tragedy. And ultimately, our interest is focused on these scenes, scenes which are all humorous. Heretofore, no one had even hinted at levity when writing of the Tragedy. If for no other reason this would cause the humor in Poe's play to stand out. But the very fact that there is so much humor, ranging from slapstick to black comedy, is interesting in itself. Mabbott here writes that the humorous scenes are Poe's only real attempt at comic verse, some of which show his peculiar bitter humor at a level with that in his best tales of the grotesque.[32]

The opening scene sets the tone for the comic scenes that follow. The stage directions call for "Masks, a lute, a lady's slipper, cards and broken bottles . . . strewn about the floor and on the table."[33] Ugo, a servant, is having difficulty conversing with Benito, a fellow servant, because of the hiccups that are interrupting Ugo's speech. Rupert, another servant, enters and reports that he has put Castiglione to bed after pulling him from under the table where he lay. Ugo attempts to defend Castiglione's "low debaucheries" by explaining that Castiglione is reforming and now "drinks none but the very (hiccup!) best of wine."[34]

Occasionally Colonel Sharp is portrayed in fiction as a villain capable of feeling pangs of conscience but seldom as a cheerful man.

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[32] Politian, p. iv.

[33] Politian, p. 1.

[34] Politian, p. 3.

Poe's Sharp, in the character of Castiglione, is often conscience-stricken but more often is seen laughing and joking. Moreover, nowhere in fiction is Beauchamp allowed his moments of jocularity to the extent Poe allows them to his hero Politian. The first instance of Castiglione's cheerfulness is seen in the second scene when he and his friend San Ozzo are speaking with each other in the Count's dressing room. In response to something that the Count has just told him, San Ozzo replies that he will die of laughing. The Count urges San Ozzo to desist from joking since he is concerned about breaking his plighted vows with Lalage. San Ozzo continues to laugh and joke and tells Castiglione that if he feels penitent about breaking his engagement with Lalage he will send him a robe of sackcloth and a tub of ashes. San Ozzo exits, and Castiglione admits that San Ozzo's jokes do make him laugh. The scene ends with a servant informing the Count that San Ozzo has sent him two presents with instructions that he is to choose only one—either a dozen bottles of wine or a tub of ashes. This gesture strikes the Count as being so funny that he is overcome with laughter. In the fifth scene there is more laughter. The Count is laughing as he relates to his father the account that Politian has just given him of his journey from England to Rome with the Duke of Surrey (sic):

> Such an account he gave me of his journey!
> 'Twould have made you die with laughter—such
> tales he told
> Of his caprices and his merry freaks
> Along the road—such oddity—such humor
> Such wit—such whim—such flashes of wild merriment
> Set off too in such full relief by the grave

> Demeanor of his friend—who to speak the truth
> Was gravity itself.[35]

At this point one is reminded less of the Kentucky Tragedy and more of Jack Wilton, the bright picaresque hero of Thomas Nashe's The Unfortunate Traveller, as he ambles through Italy with the Earl of Surrey in pursuit of the Fair Geraldine.

The fact that characters modelled at least in part on Sharp and Beauchamp appear for the first time actually laughing and engaging in jests is captivating. But perhaps the most interesting characters in the play are Ugo, a servant of Castiglione, and Ugo's sometime sweetheart Jacinta. Jacinta is Lalage's lady-in-waiting until Jacinta leaves Lalage for a more lucrative position with Alessandra. Poe gives Jacinta an entire scene. In scene viii, Jacinta, the ambitious social climber, appears on stage fantastically dressed holding a flat bandbox. Looking at her watch and counting the hours until the wedding of her mistress, Alessandra, with Castiglione, while speaking to herself, she invokes the Alice in Wonderland atmosphere that dominates the scene:

> It is not late—O no! it is not late—
> What need is there of hurry? I'll answer for it
> There's time enough to spare—now let me see
> The wedding is to be at dark, and here
> The day's not half done,—stay I can tell
> To a minute how many hours there are between
> This time and dark—one, two, three, four, five, six!
> Six hours! why I can easily do
> The whole of my errands in two hours at farthest!
> Who'd be without a watch?—these are pretty gloves!
> I will not walk myself to death at all—
> I won't—I'll take my time.

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[35] Politian, p. 18.

At this point Jacinta begins to kick the bandbox to and fro with an air of nonchalance. Benito, a servant, enters with a bundle and begins crossing and recrossing the stage rapidly without noticing Jacinta, who becomes furious that Benito does not acknowledge her presence. Ugo enters and "treads upon the bandbox and remains with his foot in it, as if stupified." Jacinta insults Ugo and strikes him. Ugo runs off followed by Jacinta, who throws the bandbox after him.[36]

As scene viii belongs entirely to Jacinta, scene x is Ugo's. The scene takes place in the hall of the Count's palace. San Ozzo enters, discovers Ugo in a very puzzling position, and asks him what is the matter with him. Ugo replies: "It's very strange / You can't perceive I'm dead!" When San Ozzo asks Ugo if he is really dead, Ugo answers: "Not, Sir, exactly / Dead, so to say, but having just committed / Felo de se, I'm what they call deceased." San Ozzo suggests that defunct is a better word to describe Ugo's condition, and Ugo readily agrees. San Ozzo then replies:

> Ah—very well!—then I shall tell your master
> That you're defunct—or stop, suppose I say—
> I think there would be more of dignity
> In saying "Sir Count, your worthy servant Ugo
> Not being dead, nor yet to say deceased,
> Nor yet defunct, but having unluckily
> Made way with himself—that's felo de se you know—
> Hath now departed this life."

Very excited, Ugo responds: "Say that, Sir, say that! / For now, upon consideration, I think / I have—departed this life." Wishing to make the most of the situation, San Ozzo demands that Ugo himself tell the

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[36] Politian, p. 30.

Count that Ugo is dead. Ugo readily consents to do so after San Ozzo convinces him that even though Ugo has been dead an hour his legs are not too stiff to carry him to the Count.[37]

Although Poe maintained an interest in the Kentucky Tragedy long after he had put Politian aside, the eleven scenes that make up the play suggest that Poe was less interested in dramatizing the Tragedy than he was in developing visually effective dramatic and comic scenes such as the confrontation scene between Politian and Castiglione, in which Politian threatens to horsewhip the Count in the streets of Rome, and the scenes in which the minor characters, Jacinta and Ugo, dominate the action. Poe commented on the play very little, but in a letter to Judge Nathaniel Beverley Tucker, dated December 1, 1835, he wrote: "I do not entirely acquiesce in your strictures on the versification of my Drama."[38] And in a letter to Duyckinck on September 19, 1845, when Poe was preparing to publish what he felt were his best poems, he suggested that if more material were needed to fill the book he could furnish, among other things, some dramatic scenes.[39] Perhaps a letter from John P. Kennedy to T. W. White gives us the reason why Poe never finished the play. Kennedy writes that Poe is "at work upon a tragedy, but I have turned him to drudging upon whatever may make money."[40]

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[37] Politian, pp. 34-35.

[38] John W. Ostrum, ed., The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1948), I, 78.

[39] Ostrum I, 297.

[40] Quoted by Mabbott in Appendix to Politian, p. 59.

Only a year after the first scenes from Politian appeared in the Southern Literary Messenger, an eighteen-year-old American actress tried her hand with the Kentucky Tragedy. Charlotte Mary Sandford Barnes' play Octavia Bragaldi was performed in New York in 1837 and was the first stage performance of the affair. Chivers was in New York in November, 1837, with his new bride and may have seen Miss Barnes in the title role of her play at the National Theatre on November 9, 1837.[41] Miss Barnes evidently had read Poe's Politian, for the similarity of Castiglione to Castelli, her Colonel Sharp, is evident. Moreover, there are phrases and even lines in Barnes' play that appear in Poe's. For example, at one point in Politian, Castiglione, debating with himself whether to marry Lalage, exclaims: "Marry her—no! / Castiglione wed him with a wanton!"[42] Castelli, in Octavia Bragaldi, responding to the question of having ever been married to Octavia, replies: "I say 'tis false; / I ne'er did wed her—never loved her—no! / I could not love a wanton."[43]

Even though Barnes was almost surely influenced by Poe—and for that matter there is evidence to support the claim that she was familiar with Chivers' Conrad and Eudora—her play is different from the plays of her predecessors. Miss Barnes' play is set in Milan of the fifteenth century. The heroine, Octavia, is married to Francesco Bragaldi, an untitled courtier who is loved and revered by nobleman and commoner

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[41]Chase, p. 1.

[42]Politian, p. 8.

[43]Charlotte M. S. Barnes, Octavia Bragaldi (New York, n.p., 1837), p. 7.

alike. Six years earlier, against her father's wishes, Octavia had married Count di Castelli, an ambitious man obsessed with gaining power. As a result of her marriage, Octavia's father died of a broken heart. Growing weary of Octavia's lamenting the loss of her father, Castelli deserts her and a year later is reported to have been slain in battle although he was not slain but taken prisoner. Five years after his alleged death, Octavia wed Francesco Bragaldi. When the play opens Octavia and Francesco have been married four years and Castelli has just returned to Milan after being released from prison. Bragaldi learns that Castelli and Octavia were never legally married since the monk who performed the ceremony was merely a henchman of Castelli and not a monk. Bragaldi seeks revenge and challenges Castelli to a duel. Castelli refuses to fight, and Bragaldi murders him. When accused of the murder, Bragaldi confesses. Before he can be executed, however, he and Octavia commit suicide.

Obviously Miss Barnes has followed some of the facts of the case and has altered and omitted others. One alteration sets her version of the Tragedy apart from all the others. Traditionally in literature the character representing Ann Cook had demanded quite vociferously that the wrong done to her be avenged. Barnes, however, did not visualize her heroine as obsessed with the thought of revenge; in fact, Octavia initially wished to forgive the man who had tricked and betrayed her. When she learns that Castelli is alive and that her marriage to him was merely a sham, she calmly suggests to Bragaldi, who is raging with anger: "Let not the spectre of departed woe / Rise up again to haunt

our happy home." She urges her husband to pity Castelli, who has recently been released as a prisoner of war, and to remember that "in his hopeless, long captivity / He hath received most ample retribution." Bragaldi does not listen to her, and when he informs Octavia that Castelli will not accept his challenge, Octavia entreats him to accept the fact that

> The wrong that's past, is past. The fire is quenched—
> Oh! for my sake then seek not to relume it!
> If he rest silent, and no longer breathe
> A thought of injury against our peace—
> If he molest us not, let us be dumb.[44]

Even when overhearing Castelli refer to her as a "wanton" whose name is "a scorn and by word 'mongst the peasantry," Octavia remains calm. She tells Castelli: "To those who heard the falsehood, say 't is false, / And I will pardon thee."[45] When he refuses, Octavia falls at his feet and begs him for her husband's sake to repudiate those who would traduce her character. Castelli remains adamant, and only then is Octavia aroused to anger. She curses Castelli, but she does not desire his death.

Finally, in the fourth act, after brooding over Castelli's refusal to clear her good name, Octavia is moved to a sudden desire for revenge. She implores Bragaldi to do away with Castelli and to do it quickly. Exciting Bragaldi to the same pitch of furious rage that she now feels, she exacts an oath from him to slay Castelli by stealth. Thus, briefly, Octavia reminds us of Ann Cook. But unlike Ann who told Beauchamp that

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[44] Octavia Bragaldi, p. 49.

[45] Octavia Bragaldi, p. 74.

she was ecstatic when she learned of Sharp's death, Octavia feels nothing but guilt when she learns that her husband has fulfilled his oath. And when Octavia commits suicide after Bragaldi has taken his life, her act does not appear to be inspired by her desire to join her husband in death but rather an attempt to free herself from a conscience burning with self-reproach.

Octavia Bragaldi was a great success in the United States, having been performed in almost every city in the Union.[46] The play also was seen in London and Liverpool. It was produced in the United States as late as 1854, when Miss Barnes and her husband, Edmon Sheppard Conner, played it at the Bowery Theatre.[47] The success of Miss Barnes' play, however, was overshadowed by that of another play on the same theme by John Savage, a native of Dublin who became an American poet and journalist of some note. Sybil, a dramatization of William Gilmore Simms's Beauchampe, was first performed at the St. Louis Theatre September 6, 1858.[48] Although Savage acknowledges Simms's work only in passing as the inspiration for his play, he follows the plot of the novel very rigidly and lifts entire passages from Beauchampe. Though Savage does borrow from Simms, he, like the other dramatists, brings something novel to his dramatic interpretation of the Kentucky Tragedy.[49]

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[46]J. N. Ireland, Records of the New York Stage From 1750 to 1860 (New York, 1867), 2, 239-240.

[47]Arthur H. Quinn, A History of the American Drama (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1923), p. 261.

[48]John Savage, Sybil (New York: James B. Kirker, 1865), p. 99.

[49]Simms's Beauchampe will be examined in detail in Chapter V.

Sybil begins five years after the seduction of Margaret Cooper, in the village of Eaglemont, by Colonel Rufus Wolfe, a Frankfort lawyer and politician who had lived in Eaglemont under the name Alfred Stevens. Margaret, who has changed her name to Sybil Hardy, is now living with her mother on the outskirts of Frankfort. She meets Eustace Clifden, the Beauchamp-figure, whom she looks upon as an avenging angel sent to her by heaven. After a brief courtship, Clifden, a young lawyer with a promising future, proposes to Sybil and is finally accepted when he swears to take the life of the man, Alfred Stevens, who seduced and deserted Sybil. In the mean time, another young lawyer, William Acton, who five years ago had professed love for but was rejected by Sybil when she was still known as Margaret Cooper, is now campaigning for office in opposition to Colonel Wolfe. After a political speech by Acton, he and Wolfe are introduced. Acton immediately recognizes Wolfe as the man who had, as Alfred Stevens, betrayed Margaret. Acton forces Wolfe to accept a duel, but in the duel Acton is wounded. After the duel, Wolfe journeys to Clifden's home only to find that Clifden has just married Sybil Hardy. Wolfe recognizes that Sybil is Margaret Cooper and attempts to renew his relationship with her. Sybil recognizes Wolfe as her seducer Alfred Stevens, and warns Wolfe to leave or else she will inform Clifden that the man he has sworn to murder is now in his home. Wolfe persists in his advances, however, forcing Subil to reveal to Clifden that Wolfe was her seducer. Consequently, Clifden murders Wolfe and is tried for the crime, with Acton conducting his defense. Although anticipating the death sentence, Clifden is found

"not guilty." The strain, however, has been too much for Sybil, and she dies as the tragedy comes to a close.

Until the last scene, Savage's play is a dramatization of Simms's Beauchampe. But the fact of freeing Clifden differs from the conclusion of Simms's novel. Perhaps Savage allows Clifden to live because he was convinced by Simms's argument in his novel that Beauchamp's taking the life of Sharp was justifiable. There is, however, one other possible explanation for the manner in which Savage concludes his play. Savage was a staunch Unionist. His poetry written before and during the Civil War is highly patriotic. He served with General Concoran during the war, continuing to write verses designed to inspire the northern forces. The most successful of these, "The Starry Flag," was written on board the United States transport Marion in May, 1861, as the boat sailed up the Potomac through the batteries of the enemy.[50] Soon after this, Savage wrote the ballad of "The Muster of the North," the usefulness of which was acknowledged by a government appointment.[51] Since Sybil was first performed in September, 1858, at a time when the disruption of the Union was imminent, Savage may have seen in this play an opportunity to speak out against any such disruption. Internal evidence suggests this, and, in fact, any time that Savage deviates from Simms's novel, it is to proclaim the undesirability of a nation divided. The very fact that Clifden is found not guilty allows Savage to end the play on a conciliatory note.

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[50] F[rank] M[onaghan], "John Savage," DAB, (1936).

[51] Evert A. and George L. Duyckinck, Cyclopaedia of American Literature (1866; rpt. Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1965), pp. 823-24.

Evidence abounds that appears to indicate that Savage did use the play as a vehicle for Unionist propaganda. In Act I, William Acton and his adopted father look down upon the ruined village of Eaglemont, their former home. Acton, musing at the sight, recalls how at one time Eaglemont had been a thriving, robust village. Old Acton, his stepfather, replies that "Discontent between a couple of families . . . / Has sundered towns more populous than this."[52] This ominous note is followed in Act II by a statement from Colonel Wolfe's friend Barnabas, a statement that must have been heard in all areas of the Union in 1858: "If you are not wholly with us, you are against us. Besides, every one should know the right side."[53] In Act II, a speech by Clifden seems to allude to the discord gripping the nation:

> Between us as between two banks
> Of some wide stream, the throbbing tide of life
> Rolls on, and fretfully on either shore
> Splashed fond discord, that in echoes mock
> The restless pleadings at the distant side.
> Must it be thus? It cannot.[54]

In several places one finds caveats against the making of unpatriotic speeches and exhortations to serve one's country. Finally, Savage does not refer to what could have been a very sensitive topic at this time. He elects not to portray Colonel Wolfe whispering that the child of Margaret Cooper had been black. This was crucial to the factual case, however, and Simms makes use of it in his novel.

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[52] Sybil, p. 19.

[53] Sybil, p. 32.

[54] Sybil, p. 47.

Sybil was well received in the United States, acquiring a degree of success that "attracted the eulogiums not only of American but of English journals."[55] The 1865 edition of Sybil lists the cast of characters for performances in nine major cities in the United States. There is a note explaining that the casts appearing at many prominent theatres in the United States and Melbourne, Australia, were unattainable.[56] In the introduction to the play, Savage quotes from a newspaper article that tells of the play's being withdrawn in Louisville, Kentucky, in consequence of the remonstrances of the family where the tragedy occurred. Savage explains that the play was not withdrawn but that it was postponed for one night in Louisville out of respect for the request of the Governor of Kentucky since it was thought that some incidents of the play suggested "a notable passage in the criminal and domestic history of Kentucky. . . . Upon its representation, however, Sybil was declared to be a fiction" and was allowed to be performed.[57]

The Kentucky Tragedy found a natural medium of expression in the drama of nineteenth-century America when the impulse of American dramatists was to combine a distinctly American theme with a foreign setting. During this period, American theatre-goers demanded romantic tragedies and domestic melodramas and responded enthusiastically to Barnes' and Savage's dramatizations of the Beauchamp-Sharp Tragedy. It is rather unfortunate that Chivers' play Leoni was not performed, for

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[55] From Watson's Weekly Art Journal, July 23, 1864, quoted in "Notices of the Press" in the appendix to Sybil, p. 105.

[56] Sybil, pp. 99-100.

[57] Introduction to Sybil, p. 6.

it is in many ways a better and perhaps more actable play than Octavia Bragaldi. Certainly it is unfortunate that Poe did not complete Politian, for its combination of melodrama, pathos, and comedy would no doubt have been well received by American audiences. A successful production of Politian might have earned for Poe monetary tribute as well as a secure niche in the history of American drama. Today, however, it is a small matter for the student of the Kentucky Tragedy that not all the plays based on this event were performed. What is more important is that they survive and testify to the popularity of the Tragedy as a theme for American writers and also suggest the Tragedy's potentialities as a vehicle for propaganda or varied artistic treatment, comic, historical, and tragic. There are six extant plays and surely as many more that are now lost. Savage himself speaks of a melodrama by Clifton W. Tayleure inspired by the Tragedy which has been lost.[58] The various plays also give the student different interpretations of the affair which help to illuminate the personalities, the causes, and the results of an occurrence that continues to cast a spell over those who seek to study and to understand it.

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[58]On the title page of Horseshoe Robinson, Tayleure's dramatization of John P. Kennedy's novel of the same name, several other plays by Tayleur are listed including Beauchamp, or the Kentucky Tragedy.

CHAPTER V

NOVELS

Edgar Allan Poe once wrote that William Gilmore Simms had treated the Kentucky Tragedy more effectively in his novel Beauchampe than had Charles Fenno Hoffman in Greyslaer. Both writers, Poe wrote, had failed, however, because "the facts of this remarkable tragedy, as arranged by actual circumstances, would put to shame the skill of the most consummate artist." Poe claimed that "nothing was left to the novelist but the amplification of character," and suggested that "the incident might be better woven into a tragedy."[1] The incident was not better woven into a tragedy, however, and the very item of development that Poe concedes to the novelist—amplification of character—is what the novelists working with the tragedy have accomplished quite well, giving us in the process the best presentations of the affair. There have been four American novelists who have used the Kentucky Tragedy as the basis for their works: Charles Fenno Hoffman, William Gilmore Simms, Hanna Daviess Pittman, and Robert Penn Warren. Poe's strictures notwithstanding, it has been these novelists who, by imposing their own vision of order upon the facts of the tragedy, have come closer to expressing the essence of the affair than all others who have written about it.

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[1]James A. Harrison, ed., Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe (New York: Fred De Fau and Co., 1902), XIV, 110.

The first American novelist to write of the Kentucky Tragedy was Charles Fenno Hoffman, New York author and editor, whose career included editorial positions on the American Monthly Magazine, Knickerbocker Magazine, and the New-York Mirror. Hoffman was famous in his time, and Griswold included in his anthology more of the poems of Hoffman than of anyone else. Hoffman expressed an interest in the Beauchamp-Sharp case in A Winter in the West, a book that grew out of his travels in the western states and territories in 1833 and 1834. In the book, Hoffman details the particulars of the case and remarks that Kentuckians, ten years after the event, have not forgotten "the tragic fate of Beauchamp and his wife . . . and the story of their strange loves, of her cruel wrong and his dark revenge, of the savage retribution they exacted from the author of their misery and their crime, and the touching heroism of the death they shared at last together."[2] The affair made such an impression on Hoffman that beginning in 1838 he devoted two years to the development of the theme in Greyslaer.

Greyslaer, published by Harpers in 1840, proved to be very successful. It received the widest recognition accorded any of Hoffman's prose productions, and many critics called it the most finished of his works.[3] Godey's Lady's Book reported that Greyslaer "is an exciting, interesting, and vigorous production, full of graphic description and

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[2]Charles Fenno Hoffman, A Winter in the West (New York, n.p., 1835), p. 161.

[3]Homer F. Barnes, Charles Fenno Hoffman (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1930), p. 124.

stirring incidents."[4] The New York Mirror claimed that Hoffman's sketches of scenery were "touched with the hand of a master."[5] Praise also came from Henry T. Tuckerman, who, in an undated fragment of a letter to Rufus W. Griswold, wrote that "in Greyslaer Balt the hunter is a well-conveived & admirably-sustained character, American in the most genuine sense of the word. Greyslaer has so many traits about him which find a response in our consciousness that we cannot but venture the assertion that the original existed elsewhere than in a poet's imagination."[6]

The most in-depth criticism of Greyslaer appears in Homer F. Barnes' book Charles Fenno Hoffman. Barnes, however, underestimates the importance of the Kentucky Tragedy as a major theme in Greyslaer when he writes that "although Hoffman is generally said to have founded this novel on the famous Beauchamp-Sharp murder case of Kentucky, he did not actually make significant use of that tragedy."[7] Barnes maintains that the story is mainly concerned with the history of the country along the Mohawk Valley at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. It is true that Greyslaer is set during the Revolutionary War period, but from beginning to end Hoffman makes use of the Tragedy as a unifying theme of

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[4] Godey's Lady's Book, August, 1840, p. 95.

[5] Quoted in Barnes, p. 130.

[6] Quoted in Barnes, p. 131. It is interesting to note that Griswold quotes in his critique of Greyslaer in his Prose Writers of America from Tuckerman's letter verbatim as though he himself had authored the comments.

[7] Barnes, p. 124.

major importance. The conflict between Whigs and Tories in the Mohawk Valley serves in Hoffman's novel to represent an era when neighbor was pitted against neighbor and brother fought against brother, just as the citizens of Kentucky found themselves polarized behind Anti-relief and Relief Court factions in the 1820's. Rather than present the story in the era in which it occurred, as did later American novelists, Hoffman merely placed the principals in an earlier time period when there was as much division among the inhabitants of New York state as there was in Kentucky at the time Beauchamp murdered Sharp.

Only one completely unschooled in the facts of the tragedy—as surely Barnes was when he wrote his study of Hoffman—could write that "the only important point of similarity between the Beauchamp-Sharp case and Greyslaer is in the kidnapping of the heroine."[8] Ann Cook was never kidnapped as is her fictional counterpart in Greyslaer. Since Barnes is considered a major critic of Hoffman, his assertion must be weighed carefully. An attempt will be made to show that not only are the major characters of Greyslaer patterned after the principals in the Beauchamp-Sharp case but also that Hoffman focuses on one aspect of the case—the charge of miscegenation allegedly made by Colonel Sharp against Ann Cook—as the basis for dealing with an important sociological problem, the white man's prejudice against the red man in America.

Hoffman used three sources for his major characters: Beauchamp's Confession, the Letters of Ann Cook, and Charlotte Barnes' Octavia

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[8]Barnes, p. 125.

Bragaldi. And though Hoffman's characters are not slavish imitations of their historical models, one easily recognizes Alida De Roos as Ann Cook, Max Greyslaer as Jereboam O. Beauchamp, and Walter Bradshawe as Colonel Solomon P. Sharp. Like the title character in Charlotte Barnes' play Octavia Bragaldi, Alida De Roos is tricked into believing that she is married to the villain. Like Ann Cook of Beauchamp's Confession Alida practices with pistols to avenge her mistreatment, lives apart from society, refuses to accept a proposal of marriage from a suitor who is younger than she, and is accused of having once given birth to an illegitimate half-breed. Moreover, Alida is called "a child of sorrow" by Max Greyslaer, a phrase lifted from Beauchamp's Confession. And like the Ann Cook in the Letters of Ann Cook, who claims that she would "like to be in the midst of a battle scene,"[9] Alida is described as one for whom the "sounds of approaching combat were music to her soul."[10]

Max Greyslaer, a young Revolutionary officer, is obviously patterned after Beauchamp. Max, like Beauchamp, falls in love with and is rebuffed by one whose cause he would champion. He vows to avenge her, and his desire for revenge becomes almost monomanical when he learns that rumors are being spread designed to ruin her reputation. To allow for a happy ending, Hoffman departs from the facts of the case and has Max acquitted of the murder of Alida's betrayer Walter Bradshawe.

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[9]The Letters of Ann Cook (Washington, 1826), rpt. in The Kentucky Tragedy, ed. Loren J. Kallsen (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1963), p. 129.

[10]Charles Fenno Hoffman, Greyslaer (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1840), p. 92.

The third major character, Walter Bradshawe, a loyalist officer during the war, is clearly based on Colonel Sharp. Exactly like Sharp, Bradshawe is a politician who ran for office at a time when "party feeling was running high," and during the campaign, Bradshawe's "character was roughly handled."[11] Bradshawe betrays Alida, spreads rumors about her, and is challenged by Greyslaer. It should be noted that Hoffman is the only author to reveal in fiction Colonel Sharp's acquaintance with Lafayette. Hoffman's use of this fact, which is not mentioned in the easily obtained popular sources of the tragedy, underscores Hoffman's extensive knowledge of the case.[12] At one point in the novel, Bradshawe is imprisoned after being convicted of spying, but his sentence of death is commuted by Lafayette, who ameliorates the rigors of Bradshawe's confinement and even permits Bradshawe to attend his levees.[13]

Not only does Hoffman base the major characters of his novel on the principals in the Beauchamp-Sharp case, he uses an incident from

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[11]Greyslaer, I, 69.

[12]For information concerning Sharp's relationship with Lafayette see H. Levin, The Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1897), p. 112.

[13]In addition to having patterned Bradshawe after Colonel Sharp, Hoffman is also much indebted for many characteristics of his villain to Cooper's Magua in The Last of the Mohicans. Both characters, in many respects, correspond to the European Gothic villain. Like Cooper, Hoffman makes use of the American forest as the villain's domain. Bradshawe, like Magua, is master of a cave, his "subterranean castle," roughly equivalent to the Gothic castle in European literature, in which there are intricate passages and hidden tunnels. Like Magua, Bradshawe is caught up in the pattern of capture and rescue while pursuing the heroine, who ultimately is freed.

that case—the charge of miscegenation against Ann Cook—to demonstrate a specific example of the white man's prejudice against the red man in America, the white man's unwillingness to accept intermarriage with the Indian. Hoffman leads up to this by speaking in general terms throughout the novel of the mistreatment of the American Indian by the white man. In an exchange with Max Greyslaer, an Indian Chief, as Hoffman's spokesman, enumerates his objection to elements of the white man's civilization that were often forced upon the Indian: "It is your vaunted social system from which I recoil with loathing. Your so-called civilization is, in its very essence, a tyrant and enthraller of the soul; it merges the individual in the mass, and moulds him to the purposes, not of God, but of a community of men."[14] Hoffman appears to be acutely aware of the inevitable conflict between the encroaching civilization of the white man and the folk ways of the Indian. Hoffman is sympathetic toward the Indian and questions the efficacy of progress and expansion at the expense of destroying an entire race of people.

Again following the lead of Cooper, who in the Last of the Mohicans allows Cora to be married to Uncas only in a ceremonial death marriage because of existing racial prejudice, Hoffman uses the relationship of Derrick De Roos, the younger brother of Alida, with an Indian girl to point out the intimacy that could be established between the two races and the prejudices that would prevent any legal consummation of such a relationship. For years, Derrick's name had been linked with that of a

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[14]Greyslaer, I, 140.

beautiful Indian girl. It was rumored that he had been intimate with her, but even Max Greyslaer, one of Derrick's close friends, did not know whether the scandalous rumor was true. Hoffman hints that an Indian boy whom Derrick claims to have rescued after the child was abandoned and has entrusted to the care of his sister Alida is proof that the rumor is true. Max, after having seen the child, is struck by the resemblance of the child to Alida. And though Alida insists that there is an even greater resemblance between Guise, as the child is called, and her brother Derrick, Walter Bradshawe stresses the resemblance between Alida and the Indian boy to give credence to rumors he had set afloat that the child is Alida's. Although Derrick dies before he can reveal his relationship with Guise, during Greyslaer's trial for the murder of Bradshawe, a deposition is produced which reveals that Guise had been born out of wedlock to Derrick and an Indian maiden Annatie.

Hoffman's Greyslaer is one of the most interesting works based upon the Kentucky Tragedy. The author's use of well-known as well as esoteric facts related to the principals suggests that he was very familiar with the case. And though his major characters are clearly drawn from their Kentucky counterparts, Hoffman freely embellishes them with novel characteristics, especially Walter Bradshawe, who is perhaps more Gothic villain than Kentucky colonel. Hoffman's placing the affair during the time of the Revolutionary War when political division was at fever pitch magnifies the element of political conflict inherent in the Kentucky Tragedy. Of added interest to the student of the Beauchamp-Sharp case

is the manner in which Hoffman uses one aspect of the affair to probe the white man's relationship with the Indian.

Although Hoffman's Greyslaer sold well in the United States, apparently there were sections of the country where the book was not known, for in May, 1842, Sarah J. Hale addressed her readers in Godey's Lady's Book thus: "We actually received a communication, signed by a number of our respected friends and subscribers in Missouri, requesting us to obtain the necessary materials relating to the famous Kentucky Tragedy, and work them up into a tale for the Lady's Book."[15] And though she did not mention Greyslaer she did recommend Beauchampe, a recently published book by William Gilmore Simms. It was perhaps inevitable that Simms, the most important literary figure of the South prior to the Civil War, would incorporate the story of the Kentucky Tragedy into one of his border romances. He felt that the American writer should use subjects available in his national history, and Simms himself had a predilection for national subjects imbued with heroic personalities, picturesque events, chivalry, and intense human passions.[16] The story of Beauchamp and Sharp, therefore, appeared made to order for Simms, and in 1842 Beauchampe, or, The Kentucky Tragedy appeared in two volumes.[17]

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[15] Godey's Lady's Book, May, 1842, p. 288.

[16] Raymond C. Palmer, The Prose Fiction Theories of William Gilmore Simms (Indiana University Press, 1946), p. 6.

[17] The so-called revised edition of Beauchampe, or, The Kentucky Tragedy came out in 1856. There was little revision; Simms merely renamed volume one of the 1842 Beauchampe, entitling it Charlemont, or The Pride of the Village. Volume two of the 1856 edition he named Beauchampe, or the Kentucky Tragedy, a Sequel to Charlemont. The 1856 text differs from that of 1842 only in comparatively minor details.

There had been so many conflicting versions written of the Beauchamp-Sharp case that in his preface to Beauchampe Simms insists that he alone had gone to the "fountain head" for his materials: "We have good authority for all that is here given. We can place our hand on the record at any moment, and we defy all skepticism. Newspapers are lying things at best—they have told sundry fibs on this very subject. Pamphlets—and our melancholy history has induced several—are scarcely better as authorities; even the dusty files of the court should make nothing against the truth of our statements where they happen to differ."[18] These statements are most interesting. There is no question but that Simms used Beauchamp's Confession and the Letters of Ann Cook as sources for his novel, but he intimates that he has an even greater authority. Simms made a trip to the Southwest before and after the tragedy occurred, and it may have been possible that he spoke with persons connected with or highly knowledgeable of the participants in the case, as he had spoken with Virgil Stewart, the man who had tracked down a band of outlaws, before Simms wrote Richard Hurdis.[19]

At best the lengthy Beauchampe is unified and even symmetrical; digressions, however, tend to disrupt the narrative all too frequently. Comments found in Simms's letters may account for the digressions, many

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[18]William Gilmore Simms, Beauchampe, or, the Kentucky Tragedy (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1842), I, 8.

[19]For the trips that Simms made to the Southwest see: Hampton M. Jarrell, "Simms's Visits to the Southwest," American Literature, 5 (March 1933), 29-35 and William S. Hoole, "A Note on Simms's Visits to the Southwest," American Literature, 6 (November 1934), 334-336.

of which, such as his discussion of the art of angling and his definitions of the terms "jog trot" and "dog trot," are more than distracting. Just before Beauchampe was finished, Simms wrote to James Lawson: "I average from 15 to 20 pages per diem, write like steam, recklessly, perhaps thoughtlessly—can give you no idea of the work. Scarcely have any myself."[20] After the book was published he revealed to Benjamin Franklin Perry that Beauchampe had been written "stans pede in uno, goon like, literally, as fast as pen could fly over paper."[21] Although Simms's digressions tend to disrupt the orderly flow of his story, his novel is one of the most satisfying accounts of the Tragedy since he devotes an entire volume to giving us for the first time a full-length portrait of the character based on Colonel Sharp. In addition, Simms found, as Leslie A. Fiedler points out, the "roots of the double crime of passion and revenge in the social conditions of the border,"[22] and offers a vigorous defense for Beauchampe's murder of Sharpe as an act required and justified by the dictates of the southern code of honor.

Historians generally agree that the southern way of life encompassed a wide range of social practices several of which—the practice of hospitality, the protection of one's own name, the protection of one's

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[20]Mary C. Oliphant et al., eds., The Letters of William Gilmore Simms (Columbia, South Carolina, 1952), I, 278.

[21]Oliphant, I, 316.

[22]Leslie A. Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, rev. ed. (New York: Stein and Day, 1975), p. 221.

family, the protection of feminine virtue, and the practice of the formal duel—are loosely referred to as the southern code of honor.[23] In Beauchampe, Simms illustrates Sharpe's violation of the code, particularly his violation of the practice of hospitality and feminine virtue, and as a natural consequence the protagonist's challenging Sharpe to a duel.

Volume I opens with the chance meeting of Warham P. Sharpe, a young Frankfort attorney, and Margaret Cooper, a young girl of the village of Charlemont. The two initially meet as Sharpe passes through Charlemont on his way from Frankfort to the Mississippi Valley. The beauty of Margaret makes such an impression upon Sharpe that the thought of sexual conquest begins to dominate his thoughts. Riding into Charlemont on his return to Frankfort, Sharpe hits upon a scheme to advance his evil designs. He decides to ingratiate himself with the villagers by pretending to be a minister. The Hinkleys, a very old and respected family of Charlemont, extend their hospitality to Sharpe by inviting him to be their house guest. Sharpe violates the sacred trust of hospitality by using the Hinkleys and their home as a means to gain the acceptance of the villagers in order to move among them freely and without suspicion to achieve his conquest of Margaret Cooper. Not only is Sharpe guilty of a breach of hospitality against the Hinkleys but also against the entire village where he had obtained the "desired entree into the bosom of the flock. He was everywhere admitted with

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[23]Stephen P. Beck, "The Southern Code of Honor in the Kentucky Tragedy," M.A. Thesis East Carolina University, 1968, pp. 7-8.

gladness—everywhere welcomed as to a home" without anyone realizing that Sharpe is the "arch-hypocrite," "a spider," and "a serpent."[24]

Sharpe soon establishes a relationship with Margaret Cooper, and after he has turned her head with praise and touched her heart with professions of love, Margaret succumbs to his advances. After Margaret begins to realize her mistake and to feel ashamed, she asks Sharpe to marry her. He agrees to do so, but he abandons her even as she learns that she is carrying his child. As Sharpe leaves Charlemont for Frankfort at the conclusion of Volume I, he boasts that when he first met Margaret he had found her "a sort of eagle . . . . She is now," he observes, "like a timid fawn that trembles at the very falling of a leaf in the forests."[25]

In Volume II we learn that Margaret has left Charlemont after giving birth to a child which lived only one month. She has now assumed the name Anna Cook and is living near Orville Beauchampe's farm outside Frankfort. Beauchampe, returning home from Frankfort, chances to meet Margaret as she is target-practicing with her pistols. Beauchampe is fascinated by her beauty and begins to court her. As Beauchampe grows increasingly bold in his expressions of love to her, Margaret begins to see him as her avenger. She informs him of her past and her plans to murder her seducer. Beauchampe pledges that if she will marry him he will be her champion and avenge whatever wrong has been done her.

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[24] Beauchampe, I, 93.

[25] Beauchampe, I, 295.

After Margaret and Beauchampe are married, Sharpe, an acquaintance of Beauchampe, visits their home. Margaret and Sharpe recognize each other but neither betrays his recognition of the other. Once again Sharpe is guilty of a gross breach of hospitality and an affront against feminine virtue when he attempts to coerce Margaret into having an affair with him. When Margaret finally reveals Sharpe's past and present misconduct to her husband, Beauchampe has ample reason to challenge Sharpe to a duel to fulfill his obligation to uphold the code of honor. Holding steadfastly to the code of hospitality, however, Beauchampe refuses to take action against a guest in his own home. He "will not violate the holy pledge of hospitality," but warns Sharpe to expect a challenge from him when Sharpe has returned to Frankfort.

The duel which should have taken place between Beauchampe and Sharpe as a natural result of Sharpe's violating the southern code never occurs, however, for Sharpe refuses Beauchampe's challenge. When Beauchampe confronts Sharpe at the latter's home and insists that Sharpe accepts his callenge, Sharpe makes an effort to exonerate himself by insinuating that not he but a Negro had been the father of Margaret's child. Maddened by Sharpe's attempt to injure his wife further by accusing her of miscegenation, Beauchampe stabs Sharpe to death.

After Beauchampe returns to Margaret to inform her that she has at last been avenged, Simms closes the chapter with his strongest defense of Beauchampe's act:

> Law is a very good thing in its way, but it is not everything; and there are some honest impulses, in every manly bosom, which are the best of all moral laws, as they are the

> most certainly human of all laws. Give us, say I, Kentucky practice, like that of Beauchampe, as a social law, rather than that which prevails in some of our pattern cities, where women are, in three-fourths the number of instances, the victims,—violated, mangled, murdered,—where men are the criminals, and where—(Heaven kindly having withdrawn the sense of shame)—there is no one guilty—at least none brave enough or manly enough to bring the guilty to punishment.[26]

Twentieth-century critics have not been kind in their evaluations of Beauchampe. Arthur H. Quinn labeled it as among the "poorest" of Simms's novels.[27] Carl Van Doren considered the novel "amazingly sensational—bloody and tearful and barbarously ornate."[28] Vernon Louis Parrington called the story a "preposterous account of a notorious murder case in Kentucky [that] deserved no better fate than the rubbish heap."[29] Simms's contemporaries, however, heaped praise upon the novel and its author. Paul Hamilton Hayne reviewed the 1856 edition in Russell's, June, 1857, calling it "one of the very best of Simms's series of 'Border novels.'" The Charleston Mercury of March 25, 1856, said of Beauchampe: "This is one of Mr. Simms's novels in which he has adhered most closely to historical fact. It is written with great power, but the tale is almost too tragic for fiction. In this respect, however, the author has in no degree overcolored the details of a true

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[26] Beauchampe, II, 264.

[27] Arthur Hobson Quinn, American Fiction (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1936), pp. 122-123.

[28] Carl Van Doren, The American Novel (New York: MacMillan, 1967), p. 55.

[29] Vernon L. Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927), II, 130.

story, that . . . agitated the whole West with its terrible interest." Benjamin Franklin Perry's review in the Greenville Mountaineer of May 27, 1842, stated that "this story will rank with any of Bulwers, and is destined to be regarded as the very first of American Novels." Even Poe, who had given faint praise to Simms in 1842, wrote in the Broadway Journal October 4, 1845, that Simms "is the Lope de Vega of American writers of fiction" and cited Beauchampe as one of his "best fictions."

Only when one is aware of the widespread impression the Kentucky Tragedy made upon the nation during the nineteenth century is one able to understand the praise awarded Beauchampe during Simms's lifetime. This was a story that the nation demanded to hear, and Simms gave readers a good fictional account of the Beauchamp-Sharp case. He gave them, moreover, for the first time, a detailed extrapolation of the relationship between characters representing Colonel Solomon P. Sharp and Ann Cook, an extrapolation that is all the more interesting since it may have been founded on first-hand accounts of those who knew Sharp and Ann and acquired by Simms during one of his visits to the Southwest when the Beauchamp-Sharp affair was already well known.[30]

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[30]Hampton M. Jarrell, in "Simms's Visits to the Southwest," American Literature, 5 (March 1933), 29-35, writes that Simms made several trips to the Southwest. At the close of 1824 or the beginning of 1825, Simms's father invited him to visit him at his plantation near Georgeville, Mississippi. After a long journey, Simms arrived and remained there for several months. And though we do not know if Simms visited Kentucky, in a letter quoted by William S. Hoole in "A Note on Simm's Visits to the Southwest," American Literature, 6 (November 1934), 334-336 we learn that during 1831 Simms "left Charleston with a view of travelling through . . . what was then called the frontier. The wild stories then in circulation of daring adventure and wild lawless life of the frontier had attracted his attention, and he determined to see for himself."

Although after Simms's Beauchampe there is no evidence that the Kentucky Tragedy was used in an American novel during the remainder of the nineteenth century, it was the inspiration in the twentieth century for two novelists, Hannah Daviess Pittman, whose The Heart of Kentucky appeared at the turn of the century, and Robert Penn Warren, whose World Enough and Time was published in 1950. And whereas Mrs. Pittman's book is merely an imitation, for the most part, of Simms's Beauchampe, Warren's World Enough and Time is the most original and most exciting account of the story that has yet been written.

Although The Heart of Kentucky is in some respects an original treatment of the Kentucky Tragedy, the novel is a reworking of William Gilmore Simms's Beauchampe despite James H. Justus' contention that "there is no concrete evidence to show Simms's work influenced Mrs. Pittman."[31] To begin with, there is the similarity between Pittman's and Simms's heroine. Pittman's heroine is named Marguerite after Simms's Margaret. In her own home, after she has recently been married, each heroine encounters but refuses to acknowledge recognition of her seducer and is forced to repulse his advances by securing a pistol from a desk drawer. Each heroine is willing to suppress her desire for revenge to save her husband. In addition to the similarity between heroines, both Pittman and Simms maintain most emphatically that the hero was justified in taking the life of his wife's betrayer. Moreover,

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[31]James H. Justus, "The Kentucky Tragedy in Simms and Warren: A Study in Changing Milieux," M.A. Thesis University of Tennessee 1952, n. 16, p. 8.

many of the chapter headings of Pittman's book bear a striking resemblance to many of Simms's. For example, "The Challenge," "The Trail of the Serpent," "Innocent or Guilty," and "The Last Evening" in Pittman's book appear in Beauchampe as "Challenge," "The Serpent at his old Subtleties," "Guilty," and "Last Words." Finally, one of the characters in Pittman's novel when speaking of Colonel Steale summarizes the plot found in Volume I of Simms's Beauchampe: "Some years ago, I helped unmask his villainy in a little settlement near where I grew up. He, at that time passing for a student of divinity and under an assumed name, was paying court to all the country girls round about. I happened to hear him at a distant post office ask for letters under another name,—his own, I know now,—and saw him open and read them."[32]

There are some differences in detail and mode of presentation to be found between Simms's Beauchampe and Mrs. Pittman's version of that book. When reading Beauchampe, for instance, one is left with the impression that the entire story takes place outdoors. Moreover, Simms's descriptions of mountain streams, woods, and crags could be indigenous to many sections of the country. On the other hand, one feels that Pittman's story is indeed taking place in the South. Beauchampe and Marguerite's home, for example, "The Manor House," a large white structure of "Colonial style with broad porch and fluted columns, its high gable roof disappearing in the lofty firs behind it,"[33]

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[32]Hannah Daviess Pittman, The Heart of Kentucky (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1908), p. 159.

[33]The Heart of Kentucky, p. 13.

is the type of home that represents what has come to be known as traditional southern architecture. Surrounding the house are large, spacious gardens where Wallace Darrell, Pittman's Beauchamp, and his fellow politicians gather on Sunday afternoons to discuss politics and to drink mint juleps, plan barbecues, and exchange stories about the belles who graced the Springs the previous summer. Bustling about the Manor House is Jefferson, Darrell's irascible black servant, who speaks what is generally known as southern Negro dialect. This is in contrast with the somewhat surprising fact that Simms, the first important American writer to use the Negro as a character in a short story and praised for his accurate reproduction of Negro dialect, does not make use of Negro characters in Beauchampe. There their presence, as in The Heart of Kentucky, might have heightened the verisimilitude of his story.[34]

The Heart of Kentucky is not only the first work based on the tragedy that is invigorated with a sense of the Old South, but it is also the first work in which it appears, at least for a time, that the character portraying Beauchamp is not guilty of murder. After it is announced that Colonel Steale has been murdered, Pittman succeeds in convincing the reader that Wallace Darrell was not the assassin. At the end of Chapter XIII, Darrell, who has been unsuccessful in his attempt to provoke Steale into accepting his challenge to a duel,

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[34]J. Allen Morris, "The Stories of William Gilmore Simms," American Literature, 14 (March 1942), 20-35.

assures Marguerite that his resolve to murder Steale is as strong as ever. "Nothing is altered," he tells her. "It is simply postponed."[35] At the beginning of Chapter XIV, the reader learns that Colonel Steale has been assassinated. And since the murder scene has been omitted by Pittman, when Darrell is accused of Steale's death but insists upon his innocence, pointing out that there is no evidence to connect him with the murder, we have no reason to doubt him since he has been, up to this point, the personification of truth. Over and over he persuasively argues that he could not have been involved in Steale's death. Just when it appears that Pittman has added a new twist to the story Darrell admits killing Steale and the reader begins to turn the pages in an attempt to discover how Pittman was able to deceive him by convincing him that Darrell had not been guilty of murder.

As did John Savage fifty years before her, Hannah Daviess Pittman used William Gilmore Simms's novel Beauchampe as the foundation for her story based on the Kentucky Tragedy. The works of both authors, however, were enriched when they departed from their model to tincture their stories with their own originality. One finds, therefore, that Pittman's attempts to construct a truly southern atmosphere for her novel and to convince her readers, for a while at least, that Wallace Darrell was not responsible for the death of Colonel Steale are unique contributions to the fictional accounts of the Beauchamp-Sharp affair.

Almost half a century after Hannah Pittman wrote The Heart of Kentucky, Robert Penn Warren was introduced to and wrote of the Kentucky

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[35] The Heart of Kentucky, p. 152.

Tragedy. In an interview with Ralph Ellison, author of Invisible Man, Warren explained how his introduction to the Tragedy came about: "Katherine Anne Porter and I were both at the Library of Congress as Fellows. We were in the same pew, had offices next to each other. She came in one day with an old pamphlet, the trial of Beauchamp for killing Colonel Sharp. She said, 'Well, Red, you better read this.' There it was. I read it in five minutes. But I was six years making the book."[36] The book was World Enough and Time (1950), a novel that is the most historically thorough and the most provocative work yet based on the Kentucky Tragedy.

Critics of World Enough and Time stress the fact that the novel fits in well with the dominant themes of Warren's other novels. John W. Rathbun states that in World Enough and Time Warren deals with, as he has in his other novels, "the question of man's guilt and sin, his attempts at moral definition of himself."[37] Irene Hendry writes that Jeremiah Beaumont, the story's protagonist, is one among many heroes in Warren's novels who "fails in self-knowledge" and "thus fails to act rightly . . . he lives in doubt, confusion, error and sin; he fails to realize his fullest potentialities as a man."[38] Charles R. Anderson

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[36]Malcolm Crowley, ed., Writers at Work (New York: Viking Press, 1959), p. 196.

[37]John W. Rathbun, "Philosophy, World Enough and Time, and the Art of the Novel," Modern Fiction Studies, 6 (Spring 1960), 47-54.

[38]Irene Hendry, "The Regional Novel," Sewanee Review, 53 (Winter 1945), 84-102.

observes that World Enough and Time deals with a theme that is found in all of Warren's novels, "the tragic search for order in a world of violence."[39]

Critics also focus on Warren's drastic departure from the facts of the case in the concluding chapters of World Enough and Time. His novel, however, follows the facts of the case with more fidelity than any other work based on the Tragedy. And though most critics assume that Warren's only source was Beauchamp's Confession, internal evidence reveals that Warren used many sources. Not only does Warren preface the pages containing the trial scene with the remark that "we have a full record of the trial, the transcript itself, which was later published,"[40] a remark which indicates his familiarity with J. G. Dana and R. S. Thomas's Beauchamp's Trial. He also quotes almost verbatim from Beauchamp's Trial the interrogation of Mrs. Eliza T. Sharp concerning the question of Beauchamp's voice matching the voice of her husband's assassin. And though Rachel Jordan is quite unlike the Ann Cook of the Letters of Ann Cook, one paragraph in World Enough and Time suggests that Warren was familiar with the Letters: "Rachel could have made a good match in those days, but she did not use her chances. . . . At one moment she was the young lady of fashion surrounded by her dandies. At another, she was mooning over a book of philosophy or

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[39]Charles R. Anderson, "Violence and Order in the Novels of Robert Penn Warren," Hopkins Review, 6 (Winter 1953), 88-105.

[40]Robert Penn Warren, World Enough and Time (New York: Random House, 1950), pp. 346-347.

a book of poems or was scribbling away in her diary and at letters she sent to her cousin Amanda Hopeby, who had visited her for a year but was now back in Virginia."[41] Each characteristic attributed to Rachel is ascribed to Ann Cook in the Letters. In addition to the Confession, the Trial, and the Letters, Warren also made use of Dr. Leander J. Sharp's Vindication of . . . Col. Solomon P. Sharp. When introducing Sugg Lancaster, Patrick Henry Darby's counterpart, Warren repeats an account, found only in the Vindication, of Darby's befriending two slaves whom he later sells to a slaverunner.[42]

Warren consulted historical accounts of the tragedy as well as sources written by participants and observers. Any number of works could have provided him with the general information needed for his clear, concise references to the New Court-Old Court struggle and to other political aspects of the case. But one specific source that Warren probably used is L. F. Johnson's Famous Kentucky Tragedies and Trials, in which there is information about John U. Waring that is almost impossible to find elsewhere. In World Enough and Time, John U. Waring—who was considered to be involved somehow in Sharp's death—becomes Percival Skrogg, newspaper editor and man of violence. Skrogg's participation in many duels, the manner in which he dies—a bullet struck him in the face—, and his chicanery, which involved wearing a "beautifully wrought vest of chain mail beneath his . . . shirt" when

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[41] World Enough and Time, p. 51.

[42] Leander J. Sharp, Vindication of . . . Sharp (Frankfort: Amos Kendall, 1827), pp. 39-40.

he duelled all correspond with L. F. Johnson's description of Waring as a man who "had . . . engaged in many a bloody encounter," who was killed by a bullet that "passed through his head," and who wore a long overcoat with sleeves like bags in which "rumor had it he carried pistols."[43] Additional evidence supporting the theory that Warren used Johnson as a source is the fact that at one point in World Enough and Time Jeremiah Beaumont, Warren's Beauchamp, attends a session of the legislature in Frankfort. During the session Beaumont is particularly interested in the arguments concerning the Old and New Courts conducted by two legislators Rowan and Wickliffe. L. F. Johnson writes of a debate over a bill designed to repeal the act which had authorized the organization of the New Court with "John Rowan for and Robert Wickliffe against the measure."[44]

Not only did Warren use more sources than anyone before him, he also follows the historical account more faithfully. But this history he animates and enriches into a commentary upon the tragedy of misguided aspiration and at the same time presents the complexity of life and character in the frontier of the old Southwest. In World Enough and Time, Warren breaks with tradition to give us new, and in some instances more accurate, interpretations of the major figures of the Beauchamp-Sharp case. Rachel Jordan, less like the original Ann Cook than the heroine in any previous treatment of the Kentucky Tragedy,

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[43]L. F. Johnson, Famous Kentucky Tragedies and Trials (Louisville: Baldwin Law Book Co., 1916), pp. 66-67.

[44]Johnson, p. 32.

is frigid and lacks the passion of her model. Colonel Cassius Fort, perhaps a more accurate representation of Colonel Sharp than his fictional predecessors, is portrayed as a distinguished, dedicated public servant and is the most balanced and sympathetic character in the novel. Jeremiah Beaumont, as Beauchamp, actually is the villain of the story at the same time that he is modern man in search of his identity, in a search for self-understanding. He is an impulsive, melancholy young man who, despite his claim that he murdered Fort out of devotion to the idea of exacting justice on the behalf of Rachel, finally acknowledges that his crime was motivated by the "vain glory of self."

For the first time in fiction or non-fiction Colonel Sharp's counterpart becomes a sympathetic character, ironically, by Warren's simply basing the delineation of Colonel Cassius Fort on historical evidence. Thus in World Enough and Time Colonel Fort is portrayed as a man with a reputation for sober thought and forensic eloquence. And just as President Madison praised Sharp, Fort is proclaimed by Jefferson "'as intelligent and devoted a man as has come out of the west.'"[45] Unlike the traditional portrait of Sharp as the unscrupulous, power hungry politician, the characterization here is of a man unflagging in his efforts to bring about a peaceful solution to the turbulence in Kentucky during the financial crisis in the 1820's. His ability to accept compromise enables him to conceive of a plan to end the New

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[45] World Enough and Time, p. 37.

Court-Old Court squabble to everyone's satisfaction, a plan which Beaumont foils by murdering Fort the night before he was to present it to the legislature. Contributing most to our favorable impression of Fort is the fact that he is not the vile seducer his fictional counterparts have always been; for although he did have an affair with Rachel Jordan he did not abandon her and, most importantly, never in the novel does Rachel accuse Fort of seduction or betrayal until she is tortured into doing so by Jeremiah. In fact, near the end of the novel Rachel admits to Beaumont that she had always loved Fort.

Regardless of Fort's respectability and distinction, the novel is predominantly the story of Jeremiah Beaumont, a would-be knight-errant obsessed with the desire to win praise from the world and insight into and an understanding of inner forces that drive him to pursue an ideal that is at times in conflict with his own desires and reality. At an early age Jeremiah's life was affected deeply by his infatuation with a book filled with pictures and stories of Christian martyrs, especially the picture of a young woman tied to a post with flames rising about her. He would look at the picture for hours and sometimes felt as though he "might seize her from the flame and escape with her from all the people who crowded about for her death."[46] As he grew older the vision of the young woman and the desire to help her gained in intensity. Shortly after Jeremiah began to study law under Colonel Fort, he found himself faced with the possibility of actually achieving his dream of rescuing a damsel in distress.

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[46]World Enough and Time, p. 11.

Jeremiah's closest friend, Wilkie Barron, confirms a rumor concerning Colonel Fort's "selfless passion and dark betrayal" of Rachel Jordan. Jeremiah becomes enraged to hear that Fort, who had been like a father to him, was a villainous seducer. He decides to sever his relationship with Fort and to seek out Rachel and offer himself to her as her defender and protector. He is ecstatic when he meets Rachel and finds that she resembles the "young female bound to the stake for the flames in the picture in the old book of Martyrs." His first thought, however, is not that he will save Rachel from Fort or from the slanderous tongues of the world; his first thought is that by becoming Rachel's champion he will win the applause of "all men of honor."[47]

From the outset of the relationship between Beaumont and Rachel until well after Fort's death, Warren offers overwhelming evidence that Beaumont's eventual murder of Fort is motivated by deep-seated, personal desires and not by any demand for vengeance by Rachel. After Rachel agrees to marry Beaumont, she does not require an oath of vengeance from him; rather it is Beaumont who insists that Rachel has suffered because of Fort and that she will have justice and peace only when he is dead. Rachel attempts to explain to Beaumont that her affair with Fort was "Just something that happened. To him. To me. Something that happened. . . . It was nobody's fault."[48] It soon becomes apparent,

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[47] World Enough and Time, p. 78.

[48] World Enough and Time, p. 122.

however, that Beaumont persists in his demand that Fort must die since he feels that it would serve to "show his manhood in the world in the way the world would understand."[49] And if anyone should ever accuse him of marrying "a cast-off trollop because she was rich" then "the blood of Fort would clear him . . . before the world."[50] When Beaumont finally prepares to journey to Frankfort to assassinate Fort, Rachel again pleads that she does not hate Fort nor does she desire his death. Beaumont refuses to listen, for he has begun to look upon the assassination of Fort as his "great Purpose."

After Beaumont has murdered Fort and is awaiting execution after he has been tried and found guilty of homicide, Warren allows him, along with Rachel, who had voluntarily joined Beaumont in his cell, to escape from jail. The two find sanctuary in the swampy backwaters of the Ohio on an island ruled by an aged outlaw, La Grand' Bosse. Unlike others who had allowed their fictional Beauchamps to escape death to live happily ever after, Warren allows Beaumont to escape death to give his protagonist an opportunity to come to terms with the fact that his crime was committed for personal reasons that had nothing to do with Rachel.

In the swamp, literally cut off from civilization, Beaumont is safe from capture, but he is constantly tortured by doubts concerning his motives for murdering Fort. During his trial he had begun to ask

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[49] World Enough and Time, p. 182.

[50] World Enough and Time, p. 180.

himself if he had indeed acted because he felt that Rachel had been wronged by Fort. In his journal he wrote: "I tried to think back on all my life that had led to the deed, and what came after. I could remember the events, but the reason that held them together seemed to have fled away."[51] He had even begun to doubt that he had ever loved Rachel and "he prayed God for help to love her."[52] While on the island of La Grand' Bosse Beaumont begins to see nothing but ugliness in Rachel's appearance and inwardly cries, "was it all for this, was it all for this!"[53] Groping within himself for answers, he finds none but begins to find peace by a gradual descent into the drunkenness, debauchery, and animal-like existence of the other inhabitants on the island. For a while he finds a kind of serenity, which he calls the "black inwardness and womb of the quagmire."[54]

Beaumont's pleace is shattered, however, when after he once again tells Rachel that he killed Fort for her, Rachel exclaims vehemently: "No. No. Not for me. . . . Oh, for yourself! . . . Oh, I didn't hate him, I loved him, and you used me, you used me to kill him."[55] Unable to cope with the guilt that she feels for allowing Beaumont to kill Fort, Rachel commits suicide. Deeply affected by Rachel's death and

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[51] World Enough and Time, p. 393.

[52] World Enough and Time, p. 404.

[53] World Enough and Time, p. 479.

[54] World Enough and Time, p. 479.

[55] World Enough and Time, pp. 497-498.

her indictment against him for the murder of Fort, Beaumont decides to return to the world and attempts to explain why: "I do not flee toward pardon but toward expiation. . . . I killed Cassius Fort, in darkness and deceit, and that was a crime. But I do not seek expiation merely for that. Nor for what I did to Rachel, greater crime as it is, to go to her not for her sake but my own and to defile her mind, and to torture her . . . and to lead her into ruin for my vain glory. . . . No, that crime for which I seek expiation is never lost. It is always there. It is unpardonable. It is the crime of self."[56]

Now that he had begun to accept the truth, Beaumont could enumerate the errors he had made that had resulted in the tragic deaths of Fort and Rachel and the terrible wasting of his own human resources and potential. To begin with he had named his "great Purpose" as all, and in so doing he had exiled himself from mankind. He had murdered and had denied his guilt. Finally, pursuing peace, he had sought "communion only in the blank cup of nature" on the island of La Grand' Bosse. Even though Beaumont accepts his guilt, he is not allowed to achieve expiation. After deciding to return to Frankfort to "shake the hangman's hand," Beaumont is murdered by a bounty hunter, who decapitates him and carries his head to Frankfort for the reward.[57] After the body of Rachel has

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[56]World Enough and Time, pp. 504-505.

[57]While engaged in research in Kentucky, this writer was led to believe that Warren had been threatened with a lawsuit for tampering with the facts of the historical tragedy and allowing his fictional Beauchamp to die not by the hangman's rope but by the knife of One-eye. Warren, however, states in a letter to the writer, December 1976: "I

been returned to Frankfort, she is buried with the head of Jeremiah propped against her left shoulder.

Although the manner in which Beaumont dies is a clear departure from the facts as we know them, World Enough and Time remains the one work that comes closest to re-creating the essence and spirit of the Kentucky Tragedy as it was recorded by participant and historian. The melancholy, the mystery, the anguish are all preserved. Moreover, in Warren's novel every historical character of any importance is drawn with remarkable clarity. There is, for example, the roguish Patrick Henry Darby, who as Sugg Lancaster enters the world of Jeremiah Beaumont with "black cape, ruby pin, and twisted smile like ripped silk."[58] Finally, Warren's message in World Enough and Time, unlike that found in the fiction and non-fiction of his predecessors, is not a lecture against seduction but is rather a more astute appraisal of the Tragedy which chronicles the tragic wasting of human resources through the misguided aspirations of the protagonist.

From 1842 to 1950 the story of Beauchamp and Sharp appeared in novels by four American authors. These authors, although combining fiction with the facts of the story, have given us more complete chronicles of the Kentucky Tragedy than those who have told the story

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affirm, insofar as human memory permits, that no one on God's green globe ever threatened to bring suit because in World Enough and Time I have One-eye hack off the head of Jeremiah, thus departing from the conclusion of The Kentucky Tragedy."

[58] World Enough and Time, p. 308.

in plays, poems, short stories, and pamphlets. Each novelist, in addition to presenting a complete picture of the affair, chose to focus on one major aspect of the story. Thus, Charles Fenno Hoffman in Greyslaer magnifies the fractious political situation prevalent in the 1820's in Kentucky, which many historians feel had a great bearing on the Beauchamp-Sharp murder case, by placing his story during the Revolutionary War. William Gilmore Simms's book-length conjectural account of the relationship between his fictional Colonel Sharp and Ann Cook renders Beauchampe as the only work singularly devoted to an analysis of the principal cause of the Kentucky Tragedy. Although Hannah Daviess Pittman's work is primarily a rewriting of Simms's novel, The Heart of Kentucky deserves praise as the first work about the Tragedy in which the setting and atmosphere are truly southern. Finally, Robert Penn Warren's study realistically portrays Beauchamp as an assassin and probes the motives and impulses that inspired his protagonist to murder in cold blood.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Kentucky in the 1820's was in a state of turmoil. Acts of violence occurred almost daily. The deplorable economic situation, which eventually led to the polarization of the citizens of Kentucky behind the New and Old Court parties, produced a general state of confusion and conflict. Order was difficult to maintain, and one journalist wrote that "if the people of other countries were to judge the condition of morals in Kentucky from the frequency of murder . . . they would compare us to a set of savages."[1] Instances of bloodshed were ubiquitous during this period, but some individual instances of violence have been singled out by historians as illustrations of the fierceness of the times. For example, Governor Desha's son, Issac B. Desha, was convicted of highway robbery and murder in 1825 and later attempted to take his own life by cutting his throat.[2] Francis G. Waring of Frankfort, Kentucky, was killed in a duel with Jacob H. Holeman, editor of the Frankfort Commentator, following a quarrel over Waring's having killed Holeman's dog.[3] And Francis Waring's brother John U. Waring, a wealthy land speculator and lawyer of more than ordinary ability, bragged that he had

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[1]Alvin F. Harlow, Weep No More My Lady (New York: Whittlessey House, 1942), p. 108.

[2]Louisville Public Advertiser, Louisville, Kentucky, July 12, 1826.

[3]J. Winston Coleman, Jr., Famous Kentucky Duels (Frankfort, Kentucky, 1953), pp. 51-58.

stabbed to death six men and that he "brought saddle pickets along with him to fill with men's ears and he mentioned particularly Gov. Charles A. Morehead."[4] But perhaps the most violent event that took place during this time was the murder on November 7, 1825, of Colonel Solomon P. Sharp, distinguished Kentucky statesman, by Jereboam O. Beauchamp, who was hanged for Sharp's murder on July 7, 1826, a few hours after he had stabbed himself in the abdomen and had witnessed the suicide of his wife Ann. This event--the celebrated case in which a young Kentucky gentleman, to fulfill a vow of revenge imposed upon him by his wife as a condition of their marriage, assassinated the man who had been her lover years before—became known as the Kentucky Tragedy and for over a century and a half has appeared as a major theme in American literature.

Occurring at a time when American authors were searching for themes from their national history and at a time when Americans were eager for stories of chivalry and romance, the Kentucky Tragedy became one of the most popular literary themes in the nineteenth century. As one author stated, the story "has been told in many a place, from the far south, even to the frozen north; there is scarcely a hearth that has not re-echoed 'The Kentucky Tragedy.'"[5] Van Wyck Brooks in The World of Washington Irving calls it the most popular literary theme in America in the 1830's. The story has appeared in every genre, ranging from the

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[4]L. F. Johnson, Famous Kentucky Tragedies and Trials (Lexington, Kentucky: Henry Clay Press, 1972), p. 67.

[5]Mary E. MacMichael, "The Kentucky Tragedy: A Tale—Founded on Facts of Actual Occurrence," The Gentleman's Magazine, 2 (1838), 265-271.

inane short story "The Kentucky Tragedy: A Tale—Founded on Facts of Actual Occurrence" (1838) by Mary E. MacMichael to the superb novel World Enough and Time (1950) by Robert Penn Warren.

An important reason for the popularity of the Kentucky Tragedy in literature lies in its being a factual account that demonstrably satisfied and fulfilled the curiosity and expectations of Americans about the violent character of frontier life in the Southwest of the early 1800's. Although violence has always been common in America, the South has always seemed to many the very embodiment of that violence. As one critic of Robert Penn Warren points out, "the witch-burning of New England, the bandit of the Wild West, the underworld of Chicago, all . . . fade before the succession of Southern images of violence that fascinate the popular mind: the lash of the slave-driver, the Bowie knife of the old Southwest, the duelling pistol of the hot-headed gentleman, the rebel yell of the fire-eater, the gasoline torch of the lyncher, the fiery cross of the Klansman."[6] The "popular mind," fascinated with stories of the violence of the South, could not have been more satisfied than with the story of the Kentucky Tragedy, an incident fraught with murder, suicide, and hanging.

During the 1830's the popularity of the Tragedy was assured because it dramatized an actual application of the celebrated southern code of honor which justified the concept of private justice, especially since, as in the Beauchamp case, it involved the defense of feminine honor

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[6]Charles R. Anderson, "Violence and Order in the Novels of Robert Penn Warren," Hopkins Review, 6 (Winter 1953), 88-105.

which had been violated by seduction and accusations of miscegenation. In his Confession, Beauchamp insists that his act was that of a southern gentleman reacting normally to the accepted code of conduct of his time—a code that called for the protection of one's family, feminine virtue, and the practice of the formal duel.[7] Of added interest to the public was the fact that the Kentucky Tragedy involved the story of a woman who actually planned to avenge her own dishonor, ironically overstepping the bounds of the southern code which forbade a woman from avenging any wrong committed against her.[8]

A wealth of incidents in frontier life, especially incidents of lawlessness and crime, appealed to the American public and provided American authors with native themes. One southern historian suggests that "what is distinctive in American, in contrast to general English literature, comes out of our experience with the frontier."[9] Of all the stories of the frontier the Kentucky Tragedy became the most popular. In fact, Professor Richard Beale Davis has pointed out that the "Kentucky Tragedy stands as one of the three great historical events, matters, or

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[7]Although the southern code of honor was never formally codified, John Lyde Wilson, Charleston minister and former governor of South Carolina, published The Code of Honor in 1838 which subsequently became the accepted guide for duelling in the South.

[8]Stephen P. Beck, "The Southern Code of Honor in the Kentucky Tragedy," M. A. Thesis East Carolina University, 1968, p. 9.

[9]J. B. Hubbell, South and Southwest: Literary Essays and Reminiscences (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1965), p. 277.

themes which American writers have drawn upon in creating fiction, poetry, and drama. Only Pocahontas and Merry Mount rival it."[10]

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[10]Richard Beale Davis, "Thomas Holley Chivers and the Kentucky Tragedy," University of Texas Studies in Literature and Language, I, No. 2 (Summer 1959), 281-288.

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APPENDIX

In January 1826, about two months after Beauchamp had been placed in jail, Ann Cook Beauchamp wrote the following letter to John U. Waring pleading for Waring to help her husband. At the time, Waring himself was under suspicion of being somehow involved in Colonel Sharp's death. The entire letter is here reproduced since it gives us some insight into the character of the woman who was directly responsible for the Kentucky Tragedy.

Retirement JanY 1826

Dear Sir

I have taken the liberty of addressing you by letter, as the only means in my power; and do appeal to the magnanimity of soul that I am conscious you possess! To be the protector of my Husband! Defend him from vile perjury strategems and snares that are laid for him! Recording Angels will approve your course, and justify you at the bar of Heaven for defending innocence, and virtue! For myself (previously) I would never have solicited mortal in my favour—But readily and with a freedom I ask alone be meritorious to extend this aid to the alike deserving whose acts have been founded on rectitude—And but for the force of prejudice, and the great weight of wealth in competition Mr. Beauchamp never would have been committed or detained a moment for the crime alleged against him, when there was no foundation or just evidence. You will excuse the panegyric due to intrinsic worth. I am very conscious that true merit has also delicate and refined sensations, consequently I am induced to justify myself for the liberty I have taken in so holy a cause by giving the true reasons why you are the object applied to for beneficence. Then your generosity will only consider it a freedom originating from real candour, and which the present crisis amply justifies.

I understood you had detected Darby in the vile stratagem he had laid to convict Mr. Beauchamp. I do not believe Mr. Beauchamp had ever laid eyes on Darby previous to his trial.— My grateful heart glows with unbound gratitude to you the choicest of Heaven to distribute justice to my beloved Husband! Previous to my seeing you after you came to Bowling Green to live, your character was delineated by an enemy of yours in the most glowing and vivid colours in the world to my

eyes whereas it was intended to be exhibited as the most hideous Monster.—The picture was finished by a supplementary remark that he [not legible] and was quite a stranger to fear—such a man should be avoided. My heart was inwardly delighted! And I sighed for such as I saw you: but had no opportunity of becoming much acquainted before I left Bowling Green—Disgusted with the greater part of the world I entered into retirement. You there (I was informed) frustrated the vile motives and strategems used by my enemies to blast my character forever. And fearlessly you opposed the current that was turned upon an innocent female whose greatest fault was blindness to the arts of an insidious villain. In this retired situation in which I lived, chance threw my husband in my way—we became acquainted.—No sordid motive on either part united us—I discovered a similar cast of character between yourself and him, and have secretly wished that destiny had placed you near each other, that reciprocally when needed you might be the useful friend to each other, for convinced I was you were both capable of friendship in the supreme degree.

A generous friendship no cold medium knows
Burns with one love with one [not legible] of [not legible]
One should our interest and our passions be
My friend must hate the man that injures me

Such a friend as the poet describes you would ever find my husband, and convinced I am you will be the friend in need to him who is truly deserving, and [not legible] villainy that will be [not legible] in a great degree against him. Mr. Sandford Duncan in whose house Darby stated he saw Mr. Beauchamp, will swear the period mentioned by Darby of Mr. Beauchamp's being there was not the fact as he certainly would have known it, being confined to his bed by sickness many weeks. This Mr. Duncan will be a material witness in Mr. Beauchamp's favour. Will you not be in Frankfort at Mr. Beauchamp's trial? I hope there is not any thing that could prevent your being there. And will you not write to me on the receipt of this, that I may be happy in the confirmation you are in favour of my husband! Oh you that have experienced each tender feeling of the heart, will conceive the concern I have for the beloved of my soul! And your philanthropy will excuse and not consider this lengthy epistle an imposition. I never would have had the least fear for the safety of my husband but for the great bribe offered by our Legislature to villains. Still I have a confidence that the outstretched arm of Deity will shield from the enemy the innocent culprit whose acts have been founded on rectitude. Tender my respects to Mrs. Waring and accept the esteem of one who has greatly wished your prosperity.

Anna Beauchamp

Mr. John U. Waring

P.S. As Mr. Waring is a gentleman of business [not legible] not be at home on the receit of this—the friend whom he may have directed to open and attend to his letters will please forward this to Mr. Waring and I shall be greatly obliged.

A.B.[1]

[1]This letter is on file at the Library of Congress. A copy was obtained from Professor Robert D. Bamberg of Kent State University.

VITA

Jack Edward Surrency was born in Waycross, Georgia, on July 16, 1941. He attended elementary schools in that city and was graduated from Waycross High School in June 1959. The following September he entered South Georgia College in Douglas, Georgia. In 1961 Mr. Surrency enlisted in the United States Army for three years. He returned to school in August 1966 and in 1970 received his Bachelor of Arts degree in English at the University of Florida. In the fall of 1970 he accepted a teaching assistantship at the University of Tennessee and began study toward a Master's degree. This degree was awarded in December 1971.

After teaching at Cocoa Beach High School in Cocoa Beach, Florida, he returned to graduate school at the University of Tennessee in June 1972. From August 1974 until December 1975 Mr. Surrency taught English composition and literature at Morristown College, Morristown, Tennessee. He received the Doctor of Philosophy degree with a major in English in March 1977.

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