

**HUGH HENRY BRACKENRIDGE, WRITER\***

By Claude M. Newlin

In 1806, when Hugh Henry Brackenridge was fifty-eight years old and a judge of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, he reviewed his literary career. His opinion of his accomplishments as an author and his statement regarding the place of literature in his life's work make perhaps the best preface to a study of his writings. At the end of a postscript to *Gazette Publications* he said: "One thing I will add in excuse of employing so much of my time, and whatever talents I may possess, in what may seem to be of too light a nature for a serious mind, that the taste for playful humour, and the habit of versifying was contracted in early life, from the want of a monitor to direct resistance to the propensity; and at the same time that I present the result to the public, I must caution others to beware of the indulgence. It is not an age or country, that will make it the means of emolument, or the way to honour. And though I would rather be the poet than the Maecenas as to after-fame, yet it is better to be the Maecenas as to present enjoyment. I would warn, therefore, a son of mine against too much attention to some parts of

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*Biographical note.* Hugh Henry Brackenridge, the son of a poor farmer, was born near Campbeltown, Scotland, in 1748. In 1753 the family emigrated to America and settled in York County, Pennsylvania. At the age of fifteen Brackenridge taught a school in Maryland. About 1766 he entered Princeton. After graduating from Princeton in 1771 he was master of an academy in Maryland until he became a chaplain in the Revolutionary army. During the year 1779 he edited the *United States Magazine* in Philadelphia. After studying law with Samuel Chase at Annapolis, he removed to Pittsburgh in 1781. During his twenty years' residence in Pittsburgh he was successful as a lawyer and active in politics. In this frontier town he also aided in the establishment of the first two newspapers (1786 and 1800), the first bookstore (1798), and the Pittsburgh Academy (1787). In 1791 he married Sabina Wolf, daughter of a farmer. He had been previously married but nothing is known about his first wife. In 1801 he removed to Carlisle, having been appointed judge of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. He died at Carlisle on June 25, 1816.

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what may be called polite literature, as not fashionable in our present state of society, and as a seducing syren from the more profitable pursuits of life." (1)

Elsewhere in the same confession he said: "It has been my amusement to write; (2) and I have set a greater value on the praise of genius than on all else that is obtainable amongst men. A man of moderate parts can fill an office; perhaps all the better for being moderate; but it is but one in many that can show a single spark of the celestial fire that distinguishes the orator, the philosopher, or the rapt poet." (3)

Brackenridge's early devotion to learning indicated that he would find his career in some kind of intellectual pursuit. Although, living in a rude rural community, he had little access to either books or instruction he was able to make progress in Latin and a beginning in Greek by his thirteenth year. While he was still a boy he mastered Horace and was deeply grieved when a treasured copy of the poet was destroyed by a cow. The Scottish mother of such a boy naturally destined him for the ministry, and presumably a course at Princeton under Dr. Witherspoon did nothing to deflect him from a career in the Church. Brackenridge had difficulties with the creed, however, and turned to the law as his profession. (4) Although his first love was literature, he came at least a generation before it was possible for a young American to devote himself wholly to letters. But the law itself appealed to Brackenridge partly because it offered an opportunity for the display of eloquence. (5)

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- 1 *Gazette Publications*, Carlisle, Pa., 1806, p. 347-348.
  - 2 This attitude is also expressed in Brackenridge's most important work, *Modern Chivalry* (chap. 20): "It is a happiness to a man to be able to amuse himself with writing. . . . It is a good deal owing to my solitary residence in the western country, at a distance from books and literary conversation, that I have been led to write at all. It was necessary to fill up the interstices of business."
  - 3 *Gazette Publications*, p. 345.
  - 4 "Biographical Notice of H. H. Brackenridge," (by H. M. Brackenridge), *Southern Literary Messenger*, Jan. 1842, p. 1 ff., and *Modern Chivalry* (ed. of 1856), p. 152 ff.
  - 5 *Legal Miscellanies*, pp. VIII-IX.

Since politics and law, then, were to claim Brackenridge's most serious efforts, literature was followed as an ancillary pursuit. And although writing was to him an amusement and a refuge, it was also a means of expressing opinions on political issues. In this respect he did the same thing as his contemporaries in American literature. Franklin, Trumbull, Francis Hopkinson, and Freneau, for instance, were rarely able to use their admirable talents in the production of literature for art's sake. Brackenridge's writings, therefore, like most American writings of the period from 1770 to 1815, can properly be classified on the basis of their relation to public affairs. From this point of view his work can be divided into three periods. During the first, the brief pre-Revolutionary period, he was a student at Princeton and master of an academy in Maryland. The most interesting feature of this early work is its relation to the growing American nationalism. The second is the Revolutionary period. Brackenridge's literary work of the years 1775-1799 is intensely patriotic and comprises dramas, sermons, an oration, and editorial work in the *United States Magazine*. The third period, lasting from 1782 to 1816, is by far the longest and most important. During this period of thirty-four years, most of which was spent in the West, Brackenridge attacked in satires the various abuses and follies which he observed in the new democratic society which was developing. *Modern Chivalry* is the summary of his most important thought during this time.

While this way of grouping Brackenridge's works throws their most important aspect into the foreground and brings them into relation with almost the whole body of American literature from 1770 to 1815, there are other important and interesting ways of studying them. It is essential also to consider Brackenridge as belonging almost wholly to the neo-classical literary movement of the eighteenth century. Although by the time of his death in 1816 the Romantic movement in Europe had produced a complete change in the intellectual atmosphere of the Old World, Brackenridge remained loyal to the literary ideals of an earlier day, using the literary forms of Cervantes,

Samuel Butler, and Swift, and trying to cultivate a style like that of Addison, Swift, and Bolingbroke. In surveying his writings, then, it is best to be guided mainly by their political aspects but to give due attention also to such belletristic matters as style, form, and sources.

If it were not for their relation to the growth of intense national feeling in the colonies, the writings of Brackenridge's first period could simply be disposed of as juvenilia. The very first of his extant productions exist only in a manuscript book owned by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The book opens with a series of poems called *Satires against the Tories. Written in the last War between the Whigs and Cliosophians in which the former obtained a compleat Victory*. The first ten poems in the book are by Brackenridge, the rest being by his friends Freneau and Madison. The book was the outcome of a political war between two rival literary clubs and is of significance as showing the lively reaction of students toward the controversy between the colonies and the English government. (6) The same manuscript contains also a prose narrative written by Brackenridge and Freneau in 1770. It is a hastily written tale of marvelous adventure with the following fully explanatory title: *Father Bombo's Pilgrimage to Mecca in Arabia. Vol II. Where in is given a true account of the innumerable and surprizing adventures which befell him in the course of that long and tedious Journey. Till he once more returned safe to his native land, as related by his own mouth. Written by H. B. and P. F. 1770*. (7) Twenty-two years later Brackenridge was to return to prose narrative as a medium for the expression of his ripest thought. *Father Bombo's Pilgrimage* is of interest chiefly as a faint early foreshadowing of *Modern Chivalry*. The really significant product of this pre-Revolutionary period is *The Rising Glory of America*, a Commencement poem in dialogue form composed by Freneau and Brackenridge and delivered by Brackenridge on September 25, 1771. (8) The poem was pub-

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6 *The Poems of Philip Freneau*, ed. by F. I. Pattee (Princeton, 1902), Vol. I, *Life of Philip Freneau*, p. xvi-xviii

7 *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

8 *Ibid.*, p. xx.

lished in Philadelphia in 1772, and Freneau republished his own part of it in 1786 and again in 1806, making various changes and additions. (9) By comparing Freneau's edition with the original edition we can with some degree of accuracy identify the passages composed by Brackenridge.

The poem is a dialogue in blank verse and is epic in inspiration and content. (10) After naming Memphis, Alexandria, Greece, Athens, Macedonia, Rome, and Britain as epic themes and spurning them as being antiquated, the young poets cover briefly the discovery of America, the settlement, and the French and Indian War. Then they celebrate the greatness of American agriculture commerce, and science. The last third of the poem is a prophecy, most of it written by Brackenridge. It is worth some attention, as it indicates that at least some of the colonists in 1771 were imbued with a nationalism that went far beyond constitutional rights, commercial autonomy, and taxation with representation. The twenty-two year old prophet said in part:

"Tis true no human eye can penetrate  
The veil obscure, and in fair light disclos'd  
Behold the scenes of dark futurity;  
Yet if we reason from the course of things,  
And downward trace the vestiges of time,  
The mind prophetic grows and pierces far  
Thro' ages yet unborn . . . . . (11)

"And here fair freedom shall forever reign.  
I see a train, a glorious train appear,  
Of Patriots plac'd in equal fame with those  
Who nobly fell for Athens or for Rome. (12)

"Tis but the morning of the world with us  
And Science yet but sheds her orient rays.  
I see the age, the happy age, roll on  
Bright with the splendours of her mid-day beams,  
I see a Homer and a Milton rise  
In all the pomp and majesty of song,  
Which gives immortal vigour to the deeds  
Atchiev'd by Heroes in the fields of fame. (13)

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- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 49.  
10 *Ibid.*, pp. c-ciii.  
11 *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.  
12 *Ibid.*, p. 78.  
13 *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

"This is thy praise, America, thy pow'r,  
 Thou best of climes, by science visited,  
 By freedom blest and richly stor'd with all  
 The luxuries of life. Hail, happy land,  
 The seat of empire, the abode of kings,  
 The final stage where time shall introduce  
 Renowned characters, and glorious works  
 Of high invention and of wondrous art  
 Which not the ravages of time shall waste  
 Till he himself has run his long career." (14)

Nothing else by Brackenridge was published before the Revolution except another commencement piece entitled *A Poem on Divine Revelation*, which was delivered at Nassau-Hall on September 28, 1774. (15)

Brackenridge's literary work of the Revolutionary period was all ardently patriotic. The first two productions were plays celebrating American valor. One of the plays, *The Battle of Bunker's Hill*, was written while the author was master of an academy in Somerset County, Maryland, and was, as he said, designed "for an exercise to be performed by the youth of the seminary." (16) The prefatory note which he wrote for *The Death of General Montgomery* describes the circumstances and the ideas which conditioned the composition of both plays. The author's note "to the public" is designed to disarm criticism by avowing the haste with which the play was written. The haste was, he says, necessary. "One great foundation of the merit of any performance is its being seasonable. An oration, eulogism, or production of any kind, in honour of our brave countrymen who have fallen, or of those who do yet contend in the glorious cause of freedom, is likely to do greater good and will be more acceptable at present, than hereafter, when the foe is entirely repulsed and the danger over." (17) Another passage in the preface indi-

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- 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83. Such roseate forecasts of the future in America were not uncommon in the Revolutionary period. In 1776 Thomas Paine said, "America is the theatre where human nature will soon receive its greatest military, civil, and literary honours." Thomas Paine, *Works*, ed. by M. D. Conway (New York, 1894), Vol. I, p. 167.
- 15 C. F. Heartman, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Hugh Henry Brackenridge* (New York 1917.)
- 16 *Gazette Publications*, p. 279.
- 17 *The Death of General Montgomery*, pp. 5-6.

cates that Brackenridge was loyal to the neo-classical dramatic rules as well as to his country: "For though it is written according to the prescribed rules of the Drama, with the strictest attention to the unities of time, place, and action, yet it differs materially from the greater part of those modern performances which have obtained the name of Tragedy. It is intended for the private entertainment of men of taste, and martial enterprise, but by no means for the exhibition of the stage. The subject is not love but valour. I meddle not with any of the effeminate passions, but consecrate my muse to the great themes of patriotic virtue, bravery and heroism." In fact, Brackenridge could not have written these plays for the regular stage, as the theater was almost completely suppressed during the war. (18)

*The Battle of Bunker's Hill* is not only fashioned in accordance with the classical rules but also shows signs of being influenced by the example of Shakespeare's great patriotic play, *King Henry V*. The eloquence of some of the passages is probably due in part to this influence. One of the most quotable passages is the following from a speech by Gardiner:

"Fear not, brave soldiers, tho' their infantry,  
In deep array, so far out-numbers us.  
The justness of our cause will brace each arm,  
And steel the soul, with fortitude; while they,  
Whose guilt hangs trembling, on their consciences,  
Must fail in battle, and receive that death,  
Which, in high vengeance, we prepare for them.  
Let then each spirit, to the height, wound up,  
Shew noble vigour, and full force this day.  
For on the merit of our swords is plac'd  
The virgin honour, and true character,  
Of this whole Continent; and one short hour,  
May give complexion, to the whole event,  
Fixing the judgment whether as base slaves,  
We serve these masters, or more nobly live,  
Free as the breeze, that on the hill-top, plays,  
With these sweet fields, and tenements, our own." (19)

- 18 A. H. Quinn, *History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War* (New York, 1923), p. 32.
- 19 Quoted from the text in M. J. Moses, *Representative Plays by American Dramatists*, Act. V, Sc. 2, p. 258. An error in the text as given by Moses should be noted. The line given as "Let then each spirit, to the height, would up," should read "Let then each spirit to the height wound up."

A tangible case of Shakespearean influence is found in the following lines from the foregoing passage:

“Let then each spirit, to the height, wound up,  
Shew noble vigour and full force this day.”

There can be little doubt that these lines are an echo of the following from *King Henry V*:

“Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide,  
Hold hard the breath and bend up every spirit  
To his full height.” (Act III, Sc. 1, ll. 15-17.)

*The Death of General Montgomery* is in quality and structure very similar to *The Battle of Bunker's Hill*, except that it shows a much more passionate resentment against the British on account of their incitement of the Indians to acts of cruelty against the colonists.

There is reason to believe that these plays were presented by the students of Harvard College. In 1781 Claude C. Robin, a French observer, visited Harvard. In a short note on the college he said: “Their pupils often act tragedies, the subject of which is generally taken from their national events, such as the battle of Bunker's Hill, the burning of Charlestown, the Death of General Montgomery, the capture of Burgoyne, the treason of Arnold, and the Fall of British tyranny.” (20) Since two of these titles are precisely like those of Brackenridge's plays and since there is no record of other Revolutionary dramas so named, it is fairly safe to draw the inference that Brackenridge's plays were acted by the Harvard students.

Soon after the beginning of the war Brackenridge left the academy and became a chaplain in the army. Some of his patriotic sermons were published during the war in the volume entitled *Six Political Discourses founded on the Scriptures*, (Lancaster, 1778). (21) The patriotic fervor of these utterances may be taken for granted. A more noteworthy phase of Brackenridge's thought in the circumstances which usually disturb the critical judgment

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20 Claude C. Robin, *New Travels through North America* (1784), p. 17.

21 Two other sermons are included in *Gazette Publications* (1806), p. 125 and p. 265.



appears in a sermon which he delivered to the army before the battle of Brandywine. The conclusion of the sermon shows that the twenty-nine year old chaplain was not blind to the fact that political independence need not interfere with intellectual and literary relationships:

“Even though hostile, yet I feel myself interested in her (Britain’s) fate. I travel in imagination on the banks of the Cam, the Isis, and the Avon, where the fair form of a Shakespeare rises to my view. I am touched with the magic sound of a Milton’s harp, and the lyre of a Gray modulating soft music to my ravished ear. I lift my thought to the noble strain of Pope, and feel the enthusiasm of the bard rushing on my soul. I walk with her philosophers,—the Lockes, the Bacons, and the Newtons that she boasts . . . I feel a momentary impulse of concern for a country that gave these noble spirits birth. I could wish that, bounded in her empire, she were immortal in her date. But the will of heaven has determined otherwise, that she is infatuated in her counsels. Her renown is declining from its summit . . .” (22)

By 1779 Brackenridge was out of the army and was occupied with literary work in Philadelphia as editor of the *United States Magazine*, a “repository of history, politics and literature.” The magazine was both very patriotic and very literary. The editor, then thirty-one years of age, was sanguine at the beginning of the literary venture, although no American magazine had yet survived to maturity. In a poem entitled *Genethlicon*, which he helpfully glosses in a footnote as meaning “birthday-ode”, he greets the literary fledgling enthusiastically:

“Child of truth and fancy born,  
Rising like the beam of morn,  
From that shadowy silent place,  
Where the ideal shades embrace,  
Forms that yet in embryo lie,  
Forms of inactivity—  
Let me hail thee to the day,  
With thy natal honours gay.  
Thou art come to visit scenes  
Of Italian bowers and greens.  
Hear in wild wood notes with me,

What the world prepares for thee,  
 Statesmen of assembly great;  
 Soldiers that on danger wait;  
 Farmers that subdue the plain;  
 Merchants that attempt the main;  
 Tradesmen who their labours ply:  
 These shall court thy company,  
 These shall say with placid mien,  
*Have you read the Magazine?*  
 Maids of virgin-beauty fair;  
 Widows gay and debonair;  
 Matrons of a graver age;  
 Wives whom household cares engage;  
 These shall hear of thee and learn,  
 To esteem thee more than sterne;  
 These shall say when thou art seen,  
*Oh! enchanting Magazine.* (23)

Brackenridge evidently made an effort to please the various types of readers named in these verses. For statesmen and merchants there was, for example, a paper on the money question, *The Representation and Remonstrance of Hard Money*, in which the editor criticised the Continental currency. (24) For patriots of all types there were poems by Philip Freneau, the most important contributor. For the ladies there was, in the first issue, *A Genuine Letter of an Officer of High Rank in the American Service, to Miss F(ranks), a Young Lady of this City*. In this letter the officer, General Lee, harshly reprimanded the Philadelphia belle for some remarks she had made about his dress. (25) Brackenridge's publication of the epistle led to an angry retort from the enraged General which was published in another paper, and it also brought forth a challenge to duel which Brackenridge refused in a characteristically eccentric manner. (26)

At the end of the year the periodical was discontinued, the editor taking leave of his public in the following caustic words: "A large class inhabit the region of stupidity, and cannot bear to have the tranquility of their repose disturbed by the villanous shock of a book. Reading is to

23 *Gazette Publications*, p. 177.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 133-138.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 169-172.

26 See H. M. Brackenridge's *Biographical Notice of H. H. Brackenridge*. In later years Brackenridge wrote numerous satires on dueling.

them the worst of all torments, and I remember very well that at the commencement of the work it was their language, 'Art thou come to torment us before the time?' We will now say to them, 'Sleep on and take your rest.'" (27)

On July 5, 1779, Brackenridge delivered *An Eulogium of the Brave Men Who Have Fallen in the Contest with Great Britain*. The address was published in 1779 in both English and German and has frequently been reprinted. (28) Since the President of the State, the Council, and the Minister of France were invited to hear the oration, it is evident that Brackenridge had already a considerable reputation for eloquence. (29)

In this same year (1779) he undertook the preparation of a historical sketch entitled *The Establishment of the United States*, but the work was discontinued. The few pages that are extant were later included in *Gazette Publications*. In an apologetic prefatory note to this essay the author excuses the slightness of his research on the subject by saying that he is engaged in other arduous studies. (30) This other pursuit to which he refers was probably the law. At any rate, some time between 1779 and 1781 he studied law at Annapolis under Samuel Chase and presumably gave up writing for a time.

Brackenridge's final and most important literary period began after the close of the war. The period as a whole may be divided into two parts, 1781-1801 and 1801-1816. From 1781 to 1801 Brackenridge was a lawyer in the frontier town of Pittsburgh. It was during this time that he did his most distinctive work as a free-lance critic of American society. From 1801 to 1816, the date of his death, he was a member of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania and lived at Carlisle. During these last years he con-

27 Quoted from *The Poems of Philip Freneau*, ed. by Pattee (Princeton, 1902), Vol. I, pp. 29-30.

28 Later editions are found in the following: 1. *Gazette Publications* (1806), pp. 162-168; 2. H. H. Brackenridge's *Speeches on the Jew Bill* (1829), 183-191; 3. *American Eloquence*, ed. by Frank Moore (D. Appleton and Co., 1857), Vol. I, pp. 356-360.

29 The letter of invitation to the President is given in the *Pennsylvania Archives*, First series, Vol. X, p. 162.

30 *Gazette Publications*, p. 227.

tinued his free-lance satirical writing and published his legal papers.

The Pittsburgh to which Brackenridge removed in 1781 was far from being the great industrial city of today, and was also far different from the Philadelphia which he left. His own account of this frontier village shows that, while he was hardly pleased with what he first found, he was optimistic about the future of the town and gave his aid in improving its status. "It was in the spring of the year 1781," he said in 1806, "that, leaving the city of Philadelphia I crossed the Allegheny mountains, and took my residence in the town of Pittsburgh:

'If town it might be call'd that town was none  
Distinguishable by house or street—'

But in fact a few old buildings, under the walls of a Garrison, which stood at the junction of two rivers. Nevertheless it appeared to me as what would one day be a town of note, and in the meantime might be pushed forward by the usual means which raise such places. Two or three years had elapsed and some progress had been made in improvement when a Gazette was established at this place for the western country, and one of my earliest contributions was the following, intended to give some reputation to the town with a view to induce emigration to this particular spot . . . ." (31) This village could hardly be to the liking of an ardent lover of culture such as Brackenridge was. It not only had no newspaper, but also no bookstore, no library, no school, no church, and no literary society. Brackenridge frequently expressed his feeling of dissatisfaction with this environment. Men in the learned professions, he says, "require propinquity to the libraries of Apollo as well as the seats of the muses." (32) The prospect of going to Philadelphia to serve in the legislature pleased

- 31 *Gazette Publications*, p. 7. This note was written by Brackenridge to introduce a reprint of *An Account of Pittsburgh in 1786* which he wrote for one of the early numbers of the *Gazette*. This account is reprinted in the *Monthly Bulletin of the Carnegie Library*, 1902, V. 257-262, 288-290, 332-335. Brackenridge has given the wrong date for the establishment of the *Gazette*. It was founded in 1786, five years, rather than "two or three years", after his arrival in Pittsburgh.
- 32 *Modern Chivalry*, Vol. II, p. 160 (edition of 1819).

him primarily because "it was pleasant to be amongst political and literary men for a while." (33) But this un-literary environment did not cause him to withdraw from literary pursuits. "It is a good deal owing to my solitary residence in the western country, at a distance from books and literary conversation, that I have been led to write at all. It was necessary to fill up the interstices of business." (34)

In these circumstances Brackenridge not only continued his own intellectual pursuits, but he also contributed substantially to the dawning cultural life of the community. He encouraged the newspaper in various ways, especially by writing for it. He aided a relative, John Gilkinson, in establishing a book store and circulating library in 1798. (35) As a member of the state assembly, he sponsored the bill which led to the establishment of the Pittsburgh Academy (1787). All these cultural agencies were among the first of their kind in the West.

Although Brackenridge was not satisfied with western village life, the material which he used in the best of his writings was furnished by the society and politics of this environment to which he came at the age of thirty-three and in which he lived till the age of fifty-three. It was in these surroundings that he resumed his writing and entered upon a long period of satirical comment upon the abuses of democracy and other problems of the new American society and government.

Brackenridge's first work of the new period was a characteristically violent diatribe against the Indians. It is worth some attention because of the fact that the Indians come in for some very harsh treatment in *Modern Chivalry*. During his first months in the west Brackenridge edited for publication two narratives reciting the tortures inflicted on members of an expedition against the Indians in Ohio. He added comments and forwarded the documents to Philadelphia where they were published in

33 *Incidents of the Western Insurrection*, Vol. II, p. 37.

34 *Modern Chivalry*, pp. 94-95 (edition of 1926).

35 *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Dec. 22 and 29, 1798; H. M. Brackenridge, *Recollections of Persons and Places in the West*, p. 68; and Sara H. Killikelly, *The History of Pittsburgh*, p. 542.

*The Freeman's Journal, or North American Intelligencer* in 1783. The work was frequently reprinted, being issued at Cincinnati as late as 1867. The following passages from Brackenridge's signed comments prove that his later satirical chapters about Indian treaties were the result of a life long antipathy: "These narratives may be serviceable to induce our government to take some effectual steps to chastise and suppress them; as from hence they will see that the nature of an Indian is fierce and cruel, and that an extirpation of them would be useful to the world, and honorable to those who can effect it." (36)

"With the narrative enclosed, I subjoin some observations with regard to the animals vulgarly called Indians. It is not my intention to write a laboured essay; for at so great a distance from the city, and so long unaccustomed to write, I have scarcely resolution to put pen to paper. Having an opportunity to know something of the character of the race of men, I think proper to say something on the subject. Indeed, several years ago, and before I left your city, I had thought different from some others with respect to the right of soil, and the propriety of forming treaties and making peace with them.

"In the *United States Magazine* in the year 1779 I published a dissertation denying them to have a right to the soil." (37)

Before engaging in politics and political satire, Brackenridge made one more purely poetic effort which was evidently the result of a vacation. The piece is entitled *A Masque, Written at the Warm-Springs, in Virginia, in the*

36 *Indian Atrocities . . . with a Letter from H. Brackenridge on the Rights of the Indians*, (Cincinnati, 1867), pp. 5-6.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63. For the argument regarding the rights to the soil see *Gazette Publications*, pp. 227-235.

Brackenridge refutes the Romantic view of the Indians with the following example: "Some years ago, two French gentlemen, a botanist and a mineralist, the botanist a very learned man and truly a philosopher—but his head turned with Jean Jacques Rousseau's and other rhapsodies—the man of nature was his darling favourite. He had the Indians with him every day. Fitting out a small boat on the Ohio. . . ." He was scalped by his Indian proteges on the voyage down the river. *Gazette Publications*, p. 100.

Year 1784. (38) With its spirits of the springs, rivers, and woods as *dramatis personae* the masque is a very artificial production. It is of interest only as a belated use on the American frontier of a literary form which properly belonged to the courtly circles for which Ben Jonson and Milton wrote.

After the *Pittsburgh Gazette* was established in 1786, Brackenridge had at hand a medium for publication. His contributions to the *Gazette* were very numerous. They are devoted to a rather large variety of subjects, chiefly political, and are in both prose and verse. Many of these productions were years later, in 1806, incorporated with some of his other short writings in a volume of miscellanies called *Gazette Publications*, but many that are of much value for Brackenridge's personal, political, and literary history have never been lifted from the files of the *Gazette*. Many of these *Gazette* articles are essential documents for a critical study of *Modern Chivalry*, as they contain material that reveals something of the evolution of the book.

Most of these journalistic writings during 1786 and 1787 are concerned with the author's activities as a member of the Pennsylvania legislature. In these articles Brackenridge explains his votes and speeches in the assembly. These reports and apologies led to a controversy with another western assemblyman, William Findley, which is of more than passing interest, as it became the exciting cause of the writing of *Modern Chivalry*. From October 1787 to June 1788 most of Brackenridge's political writings had reference to the new Federal Constitution. As in all the newspapers of the period, there was much discussion of the new plan of government in the *Pittsburgh Gazette*. Brackenridge was the most eloquent supporter of the new instrument in the Western country and used all his literary resources of exposition and irony in an effort to secure popular favor for it. His first contribution to the cause was *A Narrative of the Transactions of the Late Session of Assembly, so far as they respect the System of Confederate*

38 The *Masque* was published a few years later in one of the first numbers of the *Gazette* (June 16, 1787), and again in *Gazette Publications* (1806).

*Government, proposed by the General Convention of the States at Philadelphia.* (39) Then he wrote several long ironical Hudibrastic poems directed against certain members of the State Assembly who absconded so that there would not be a quorum to vote on the constitution. Brackenridge's most notable contribution to the controversy was an ironical essay called *Cursory Remarks on the Constitution*. Of this essay Brackenridge said in 1806: "The following is a sample, perhaps a caricature, of the objections to the adopting of the Federal Constitution, as they appeared in the publications of the time. Ridicule is not the test of truth, but it may be employed to expose error, and on this occasion it seemed not amiss to use it a little, as a great object was at stake, and much prejudice or wilful misrepresentation to be encountered. It will shew also that, on our part, though in a remote quarter, we were willing to be assisting, and contributed a little to consolidate the government of the union, which, after all the pains taken, was with great difficulty brought about." (40)

Brackenridge correctly describes *Cursory Remarks* as a caricature, as a few extracts will show: "The first thing that strikes a diligent observer, is the want of precaution with respect to the *sex* of the president. Is it provided that he shall be of the male gender? The *Salii* . . . excluded females from the sovereignty. Without a similar exclusion what shall we think, if in the progress of time we should come to have an *old woman* at the head of our affairs? But what security have we that he shall be a *white man*? . . . A senate is the next great constituent part of the government; and yet there is not a word said with regard to the ancestry of any of them; whether they should be altogether Irish or only Scotch Irish. If any of them have been in the war of the White Boys, Hearts of Oak or the like, they may overturn all authority, and make the shillela the supreme law of the land." (41)

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39 *Gazette*, Oct. 27, 1787

40 *Gazette Publications*, p. 76.

41 *Gazette Publications*, pp. 77-79. *Cursory Remarks* originally appeared in the *Pittsburgh Gazette* in the issues of March 1 and March 15, 1788. Chas. F. Heartman, in his admirable



When the news reached Pittsburgh that Virginia had adopted the constitution and that the establishment of the new government was assured, the Pittsburghers held a public celebration at which Brackenridge was the orator. The speaker rose to heights of neo-classic eloquence in his eulogy of the constitution: "Compatriots: a union of nine states has taken place and you are now citizens of a new empire: an empire not the effect of chance, nor hewn out by the sword; but formed by the skill of sages, and the design of wise men. Who is there who does not spring in height, and find himself taller by the circumstances? For you have acquired superior stature, you are become a great people." Not less glowing is the rhetoric of his invective against the opponents of the constitution: "But who are those fell monsters that growl at the shadow of thy structure. They are the opponents of the new system. Ignorance, where is thy cave? Whence do thy fogs and thy vapours arise? What inferior race is that which croak along the bog? Animals which live by the credulity, the want of discernment, and the changing temper of the populace. Ranae palustres, frogs of the marsh, local demagogues, insidious declaimers, your pond is about to be dried up; no more amongst the weeds, and in the muddy fluid, shall you lift your hoarse voice. The marsh is drained, the dome aspires and the bright tinges of the rising day gild its summits." (42)

From this time until 1792, when the first two volumes of *Modern Chivalry* were published, there were no public issues which called forth comment by Brackenridge. His journalistic writings of the period, so far as they are preserved, are unimportant. It may be assumed that from

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*Bibliography of the Writings of Hugh Henry Brackenridge* (New York, 1917), says that no number is recorded of the issues of the *Gazette* in which the essay appeared (p. 21). It may be recorded here that the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh has copies of both issues. *Cursory Remarks* was reprinted in the *American Museum*, in April, 1788. It is included in P. L. Ford's *Essays on the Constitution* (Brooklyn, 1892).

- 42 *Pittsburgh Gazette*, June 28, 1788; and *Gazette Publications*, pp. 271-273. Only the first half of the speech is reprinted in *Gazette Publications*.

1789 to 1792 his literary work was largely confined to the composition of his novel.

*Modern Chivalry* is by all odds Brackenridge's most important contribution to American literature. Its composition extended over many years, and it expresses the author's most vital thought. The book calls for a study of its evolution, its literary relations, and its contents.

The main idea of the book, to satirize the people's unwise use of their democratic opportunities, was conceived at the time when Brackenridge was championing the constitution. He has made this clear in a statement in the later editions (1815 and 1819): "Some time after this (1787), when candidates were about to be chosen from the county where I resided, to frame a constitution for the United States . . . I offered myself for this, as considering it a special occasion; but to my astonishment and before I was aware, one of Shakespeare's characters, Snout, the bellows mender, was elected. This led me to introduce Teague as a politician." (43) The election of which Brackenridge speaks here was held to choose delegates to the state constitutional convention. The successful candidate in the Pittsburgh district was William Findley.

Brackenridge's immediate literary response to this occurrence was a Hudibrastic poem in the *Gazette* entitled *On the Popularity of* . . . . (44) The following extracts will show the intimate relation of this poem to the chapters on Traddle in *Modern Chivalry*:

"Whence comes it that a thing like this,  
Of mind no bigger than a fly's,  
Should yet attract the popular favor,  
Be of his country's thought the saviour,  
Sent to *assembly* and *convention*  
With votes almost without dissention,  
As if dame nature took the trouble  
To give him gifts and talents double,"

After a passage on the tendency of the pagans to make gods of beasts, Brackenridge says:

43 *Modern Chivalry*, vol. II, p. 363 (ed. of 1819).

44 *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Dec. 1 1797. This poem was not reprinted in *Gazette Publications*.

“What wonder then that Teague Reagan  
 Like Asteroth, or idol Dagon,  
 Should here receive our reverence,  
 In spite of truth and common sense;  
 Men in all ages are the same,  
 And nature is herself to blame,  
 Who has not given to all an eye,  
 Of sapience and philosophy.”

After castigating the victim for his votes on various bills, the angry rhymster proceeds to the running away from the assembly:

“The circumstance of running off  
 Has had a good effect enough,  
 It gave the populace a hint,  
 That devil *was in new government*;  
 For sure the system must be bad,  
 Could make a senator run mad;  
 \* \* \* \* \*

What eloquence could not produce  
 Is done by turning tail to the house;  
 'Tis thus that rowers make boat swim,  
 By turning backside to the stream.  
 But why aloft did Traddle rise,  
 As if he wanted wasps or flies?  
 A' cellar was the proper place,  
 To hide himself in his disgrace;  
 There he could weave; and while at work  
 Be thought a Paddy just from Cork;  
 For who would ask, let who would come,  
*What senator is that at the loom?*

Had Traddle staid at home and woven,  
 Who would have known he had foot cloven:  
 Who would have laughed at [the] incident  
 That such should judge of government,  
 As if it were a web which woman,  
 Complaining (not a thing uncommon)  
 That it was badly put together,  
 Not close enough to keep out weather,  
 Should have agreed; the customer,  
 With tradesmen, not to make a stir,  
 But settle difference and account,  
 By putting neighboring weavers on't.”

In this poem, in *The Modern Chevalier*, and in *Modern Chivalry* Brackenridge makes much of the fact that Traddle was a weaver before his undeserved advancement from the loom to the forum. Another Western Pennsylvania satiri-

cal poet, David Bruce, definitely states that William Findley had been a weaver in Ireland. (45)

The next stage in the evolution of *Modern Chivalry* was another Hudibrastic poem, *The Modern Chevalier*. It is a narrative and imaginative treatment of the material used in the poem on Findley. Its relation to the novel is stated by Brackenridge himself: "This was written about the year 1788-9 and gave rise in the author's mind to a publication under the signature of Modern Chivalry." (46) Also he says: "I had first begun this work in verse and have a volume by me, about two parts in three as large as Butler's *Hudibras*; from which I have extracted this (Modern Chivalry); thinking it might be more acceptable in prose. When I visit this city next, I may produce that in verse and let the people take their choice." (47)

A few extracts from *The Modern Chevalier* will indicate the direction in which the evolution of Brackenridge's satire was proceeding:

"Not far hence there was a cabbinn  
Inhabited by a great Rabbin,  
A weaver who had served the state,  
Which chevalier did not know yet,  
And therefore having heard the loom,  
Just as he had that way come  
More out of humour than of ire

- 45 *Poems of the Scots Irishman* (Washington, Pa., 1801), p. 121 and 125. Bruce says

"Now F-----comes, a man o'thrums,  
He's thrown his pirns awa', man,  
His loom and gears and creeshie wares,  
An's ta'en to making law, man.  
But were this lan' rul'd on his plan,  
We'd now been at the wa', man.

In a footnote Bruce glosses F----- as follows: "W-ll-m F-ndly, Esq . . . . His original profession was that of a weaver. Coming to America (being a native of Ireland) before the Revolution; at that time it is presumed, he threw by the shuttle and began his political career . . . . When the state government was organized, he became a member of the Legislature.

- 46 *Gazette Publications*, p. 311.  
47 *Modern Chivalry*, p. 89 (edition of 1809). Evidently the *Modern Chevalier* was never published in full. The version in *Gazette Publications*, p. 311 ff., is not two thirds as long as *Hudibras*. Also it begins with a transition phrase, "not far hence."

Began to feel a great desire  
 T'accost the manufacturer,  
 And ask him what was doing there;  
 A breed that earth themselves in cellars,  
 Like conjurors or fortune tellers;  
 Devoid of virtue and of mettle;  
 A sort of subterranean cattle,  
 Of no account in church or state,  
 Or ever think of being great,  
 As warriors or as politicians,  
 But lurk in dungeons as magicians." (48)

The chevalier finds, however, that Traddle really has been in politics, much to the annoyance of his wife. A writer, one of the interlocutors in the poem, gives the knight some advice as to how he can help a good cause:

"It would do service to the state,  
 If such a noble knight as you  
 Would teach them what they ought to do,  
 And give them seasonable lessons  
 Respecting such their crude creations,  
 That on the one hand while they pass  
 The ignorant though monied ass,  
 So on the other should avoid  
 The chusing such amongst the crowd  
 As are unqualified, though less,  
 They may in property possess." (49)

This passage is really a statement of the theme of *Modern Chivalry*.

*Modern Chivalry* includes also satirical chapters on many other subjects. Brackenridge had, before the publication of the novel, written numerous short journalistic poems and essays, mostly satirical, on some of these topics: Indian treaties, the duel, and the American Philosophical Society. (50) Part of this journalistic material is reworked in *Modern Chivalry*.

48 *Gazette Publications*, pp. 311-312.

49 *Gazette Publications*, p. 328. In *Modern Chivalry*, chapters 3, 4, and 5, Part I, and chapter 15, part II, incorporate much of the material of *The Modern Chevalier*.

50 On the duel see *Answer to a Challenge*, *Pittsburgh Gazette* Vol. I, No. I (1786); and *A Sermon on the Duel*, *Pittsburgh Gazette*, June 13, 1789, and *Gazette Publications*, p. 117 ff. On the "philosophers" see *A Memoir to the American Philosophical Society* (written for a Philadelphia paper in 1787) *Gazette Publications*, p. 256-264.

In 1792, five years after the disappointing election and the Hudibrastic poem on Findley, Brackenridge published in Philadelphia the first two small volumes of *Modern Chivalry*. (51) Although he wrote several other books after this date, he continued to the end of his life to make additions to his novel. In 1793 he published volume three in Pittsburgh. This volume was the first literary work published in the Western country. (52)

The two years following the date of this volume were stormy ones in the history of Pittsburgh and in the life of Brackenridge on account of the Whiskey Rebellion. The fourth volume of *Modern Chivalry*, published in Philadelphia in 1797, was a part of Brackenridge's literary interpretation of this insurrection. (53) The material in these four volumes was later published in numerous one-volume editions during Brackenridge's lifetime. (54) The editions of 1846, 1856, and 1926 contain only this portion of the whole work. The book was, however, enlarged by many accretions which are included in the editions of 1804-05 and 1815. The part comprising these later additions has very little continuity, a fact which is explained by the publisher's note: "The greater part of this volume is printed from scraps furnished by the author,

- 51 He was in Philadelphia in 1792. "Being at the seat of the General Government, in the winter of 1792, . . . ." *Gazette Publications*, p. 73.
- 52 The volume was advertised in the *Pittsburgh Gazette* February 23, 1793. This advertisement is no doubt the first Western newspaper notice of a locally published book.
- "Modern Chivalry,  
Volume III  
By H. H. Brackenridge  
Just Published and to be sold by the Printer  
Price—Three Shillings & Nine Pence  
Pittsburgh, February 23, 1793.  
N. B. A few copies of the first and second  
Volume may be had in this town."
- 53 Ernest Brennscke, Jr., is in error in suggesting that *Modern Chivalry* as a whole had its inception in the author's reaction to the Western Insurrection. The date which he gives for the book (1796) is also wrong. *Modern Chivalry* (New York: Greenberg, 1926), Introduction, pp. vii, xii, xiii.
- 54 C. F. Heartman, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Hugh Henry Brackenridge* (New York, 1917) and *Cambridge History of American Literature*, Vol. I, p. 526.

from his portfolio, in consequence of our signifying an inclination to publish a new edition of his work." (55)

Thus, by development and by accretion, an idea which Brackenridge had expressed in a short and rather trivial poem in 1787 had produced a very long picaresque novel that is one of the most valuable criticisms of early American democracy.

The literary relations of *Modern Chivalry* are not less interesting than its evolution. The first essays, the expression of the leading idea of the book, were, as has been seen, written under the influence of Butler's *Hudibras*. Other ironical and picaresque books also had their influence on its composition. Brackenridge himself indicated what his models were. Of the literary origin of his satirical bent he says: "In my earlier years . . . I had contracted some taste and even habit this way; owing to my reading the dialogues of Lucian in the original Greek . . . By means of a difficult language studying them slowly, the turn of thought became more deeply impressed upon my mind. (56) Moreover, afterwards, when I came to have some acquaintance with the modern wits, such as Cervantes, and especially Swift, I found myself inclined still more to an ironical and ludicrous way of thinking and writing." (57) He also confesses to an early admiration for Rabelais and Sterne. (58) Of his own style he says, "This I have formed on the model of Xenophon and Swift's *Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels*. It is simple, natural, various, and forcible." (59) He also expresses the opinion that his style is "in the pure, simple, Attic taste of Swift, Arbuthnot, and Bolingbroke." (60) It is evident that *Modern Chivalry* is a neo-classical book.

55 *Modern Chivalry*, Vol. IV, Book I, Chapter XI (p. 44 in edition of 1815). "Vol. IV" in this edition is really the second half of Vol. II.

56 When Brackenridge was at Princeton the Freshman course consisted of Horace, Cicero, Lucian, Xenophon, and Declamation. See "Hugh Henry Brackenridge at Princeton," by Martha Conner, *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, July 1927, p. 155; and Collins, *Princeton*, Chapter VIII.

57 *Modern Chivalry*, Part I, chapter 20, p. 94 (ed. of 1926).

58 *Ibid.*, p. 94.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

In his thinking as well as in his style Brackenridge was profoundly influenced by the classical tradition. "His ideas were chiefly drawn from the old school; the Greek and Roman way of looking at things," he says of Captain Farrago, his *alter ego*, in *Modern Chivalry*. (61) His political reading also was partly classical: "I am conscious to myself that I have read the writers on the government of Italy and Greece, in ancient as well as in modern times." (62)

Brackenridge owed something also to the social philosophies of the romantic French school. "The captain," he says, "had read the pamphlet of Thomas Paine, entitled *Rights of Man*, and was a good deal disposed to subscribe to the elementary principles of that work . . . ." (63) But these romantic radicals were not wholly acceptable to the American classicist. Thomas Paine he calls "an uncommon, but uninformed man." (63) "Visionary men, like Rousseau and Godwin, have seldom more in view than to support paradoxes. The ability is shown by the novelty or extravagance of the proposition." (64)

*Modern Chivalry* was then, it is clear, written under the influence of both personal political experience and reading. It is a neo-classical and picaresque book written on the American frontier as a sympathetic satire on various aspects of American, especially Western, democracy. Although the genesis of the book was largely due to personal disappointment, perhaps even jealousy, it really expressed the author's genuine and seasoned conviction on the fundamental problems of democracy. The main theme of the book is that people should not attempt to rise above the stations to which they are destined by ability, education, and character; and that electors should not by democratic fiat attempt to make statesmen of persons who are not fitted for statecraft by talents, experience, education, and integrity. "The great secret of preserving respect is the

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61 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

63 *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 148 (edition of 1819).

64 *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 145 (edition of 1819).



cultivation and showing to the best advantage the powers that we possess, and the not going beyond them . . . . Let the cobbler stick to his last; a sentiment we are about more to illustrate in the sequel to this work." (65)

Brackenridge's plan in the development of this theme was to write a series of amusing picaresque episodes to illustrate his points, interlarding these narrative chapters with essays on the same topics. The narrative framework tells of a journey made by Captain Farrago, a militia officer and farmer, a man of considerable education and culture, and his servant, Teague O'Regan, from Western Pennsylvania to Philadelphia and back. In the course of the journey Teague, who was quite illiterate, was very popular as a candidate for public office and for matrimony.

In various expository passages Brackenridge piquantly expresses his criticism of extreme, romantic democracy. "A democracy," he says, "is beyond all question the freest government; because, under this, every man is equally protected by the laws, and has equally a voice in making them. But I do not say an equal voice; because some men have stronger lungs than others, and can express more forcibly their opinions of public affairs. Others, though they may not speak very loud, yet have a faculty of saying more in a short time . . . . Is it necessary that every man should become a statesman? No more than that every man should become a poet or a painter. The sciences are open to all but let him only who has taste and genius pursue them . . . . A ditcher is a respectable character with his over-alls on and a spade in his hand, but put the same man to those offices which require the head, whereas he has become accustomed to impress with his foot, and there appears a contrast between the character and the occupation." (66)

The incompetent and uneducated among the rich are as unfit for affairs of state as are the untutored among the poor. "I would not mean to insinuate that legislators are to be selected from the more wealthy of the citizens, or from any particular calling; yet a man ought to have the habits of study and reflection, whatever be his situation;

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65 *Ibid.*, p. 9 (edition of 1926).

66 *Ibid.*, p. 22-23.

and it is no objection if his circumstances have afforded him leisure for such pursuits. But there is often wealth without taste or talent . . . Men associate with their own persons, the adventitious circumstances of birth and fortune: so that a fellow, blowing with fat and repletion conceives himself superior to the poor lean man, that lodges in the humble dwelling. Genius and virtue are independent of rank and fortune; and it is neither the opulent nor the indigent, but the man of ability and integrity that ought to be called forth to serve his country; and while, on the one hand, the aristocratic part of the government arrogates a right to represent; on the other hand, the democratic contests the point; and from this conjunction and opposition of forces, there is produced a compound resolution, which carries the object to an intermediate direction." (67)

The *nouveaux riches*, especially, command from him as little respect as the illiterate bog trotter. Of the political candidates whom little respect as Captain Farrago saw in Philadelphia he says: "The candidates were all remarkably pot-bellied; and waddled in their gait. The captain inquiring what were the pretensions of these men to be elected; he was told, that they all had stock in the funds, and lived in brick buildings; and some of them entertained fifty people at a time, and ate and drank abundantly; and living an easy life, and pampering their appetites, they had swollen to this size.

"'It is a strange thing,' said the captain, 'that in the country, they would elect no one but a weaver or a whiskey-distiller; and here none but fat swabs, that guzzle wine, and smoke segars. It was not so in Greece where Phocian came with his plain coat, from his humble dwelling, and directed the councils of the people; or in Rome, where Cincinnatus was made a dictator from the plough.'" (68)

While Brackenridge's paramount concern is with the dangers to the body politic arising from ignorant electors and the ignorant officials of their choice, he gives attention also to the bad effect of popular influence in education, law, and the church. In the later editions of *Modern*

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67 *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

*Chivalry* the men of the frontier village show bitter resentment of learning. "The doctrine of abating nuisances had been much in conversation since the town meeting in the matter of the pole cat [a libelous newspaper]. It came so far that an incendiary proposed to abate or burn down the college. Because, said he, all learning is a nuisance." (6) This opposition to learning Brackenridge thought to be a menacing reality. In describing the actual conditions which led to the writing of the book he said, "Learning was decayed; and it was no uncommon thing to hear members of the legislature thanking God that they had never been within a college." (70)

In addition to the main theme, *Modern Chivalry* touches upon a vast number of other topics: the Order of Cincinnati, the American Philosophical Society, horse races, Indian treaties, dueling, law, the status of the judiciary, language, literary style, manners,—and many others. It presents more of American life than any other book of its period. And while it is not as a whole a good narrative, many of the episodes are diverting. Its undeniable permanent value, however, is due to its intelligent and spirited criticism of the weak points in American democracy in its formative period.

While Brackenridge was writing *Modern Chivalry*, he was also publishing other writings, both books and journalistic productions. After the 1797 volume of his novel, however, his purely literary work deteriorated in quality and much of his later writing was on legal subjects.

The first production after the 1792 volume of *Modern Chivalry* was an oration delivered on July 4, 1793. Although Brackenridge did not show much enthusiasm for the Rousseauistic social philosophy and did not approve of an unreasonable application of equalitarianism at home, he expressed in this oration a profound sympathy with the French Revolution. The speech evidently attracted attention at the time, as it was reprinted in New York in 1793 in a volume called *A Political Miscellany* in which the

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69 *Ibid.*, p. 313 (edition of 1819).

70 *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 364.

author is styled "Citizen" Brackenridge. (71) Since the speech came at the time when Citizen Genet was arousing so much enthusiasm and so much resentment, it is interesting to note the attitude of the most important Western writer during this episode in American history. Citizen Brackenridge, as a few extracts from his address will show, was an ardent spokesman for the French cause:

"The celebration of the day introduces the idea of the effect of it beyond the sphere of these states . . . . The light kindled here has been reflected to France, and a new order of things has arisen. Shall we blame the intemperance of the exertions? And was there ever a great effect without enthusiasm? Thy principles, O! Liberty, are not violent or cruel; but in the desperation of thy efforts against tyranny, it is not possible to keep within the limit of the vengeance necessary to defence . . . .

"Is it the duty of these states to assist France? That we are bound by treaty, and how far, I will not say; because it is not necessary. We are bound by a higher principle, if our assistance could avail; the great law of humanity . . . . Shall kings combine, and shall republics not unite? We have united. The heart of America feels the cause of France; she takes a part in all her councils; approves her wisdom; blames her excesses; she is moved, impelled, elevated, and depressed, with all the changes of her good and bad fortune; she feels the same fury in her veins . . . . Why not? Can we be indifferent? Is not our fate interlaced with hers? For, O! France, if thy republic perish, where is the honour due to ours? . . .

"Can we assist France by arming in her favour? I will not say that we can. But could we, and should France say, United States, your neutrality is not sufficient; I expect the junction of your arms with mine . . . , who is there would not say, it shall be so; you shall have them;

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71 In addition to Brackenridge's oration the *Political Miscellany* contains a speech by Robespierre, and essay on the commercial and political relations between France and America, and another American oration. Brackenridge's speech originally appeared in the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, July 6, 1793. A reprint is published in *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, VI (1923), 194-196.

our citizens shall arm; they shall attack; our oaks shall descend from the mountains; our vessels be launched upon the stream, and the voice of our war, however weak, shall be heard with yours." (72)

The next occasion for an important work by Brackenridge was the Whiskey Rebellion of 1793-1794. Brackenridge's conduct during the insurrection, while justifiable, naturally called for elaborate explanation. While the insurrection was still in progress he gave public notice of his intention to write a history of the episode that would include an explanation of his own conduct, which, while designed to bring a peaceable understanding between the insurrectionists and the government, had temporarily drawn upon him the suspicion of treason toward the Federal Government. In the *Pittsburgh Gazette* of October 18, 1794, he inserted the following item: "I have taken notice of the correspondence between David Bradford and Isaac Craig, in which my name is introduced; and meaning in due time to give a history of the incidents of the late convulsion, I have laid this paper by, to be inserted with a proper comment, and such explanation and vouchers as may satisfy all reasonable men of the purity of my conduct with regard to individuals or the public, in the whole of this business." This history which Brackenridge promised was published the next year, 1795, in Philadelphia. It is written, of course, from the point of view of his political philosophy and contains many passages which show his distrust of the masses. It is so closely related to his other political writings that it is probably not safe to use it as historical evidence without studying it in relation to the rest of his works. Of the personal narrative in the book, one item is of special interest as showing the extraordinary influence of the classics on his political thinking and conduct. "I lay two nights in this manner, not sleeping much, but consoling myself with reading some of the lives of Plutarch. Reading that of Solon, I meditated upon his laws making it death for a citizen, in a civil tumult, not

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to take a part." (73) During the nights referred to Brackenridge was hourly expecting to be mobbed by Federal troops for the part he had played in the Insurrection.

The next political event that called for much writing was the political campaign of 1799. In spite of his scepticism as to the political wisdom of the people, Brackenridge was a vigorous Republican partisan. He was chairman of the Pittsburgh organization which managed the local campaign for Thomas McKean, the Republican candidate for governor. (74) He was also a supporter of Jefferson. "At a meeting . . . held on Thursday, March 12th, 1801, to celebrate the election of Thomas Jefferson to the presidency . . . among others the following toasts were drank . . . Franklin—May Columbia ever hold in grateful remembrance, his splendid scientific talents . . . The Hon. H. H. Brackenridge—may his exertions in support of republicanism gain the approbation even of his political enemies." (75) There seems to have been some communication between Brackenridge and Jefferson, but not much is known about their relations. (76)

Brackenridge's literary work connected with this campaign was merely journalistic and is not of much importance. The *Pittsburgh Gazette* supported the Federalists during the campaign, and Brackenridge had a part in the establishment of a Republican paper, "*The Tree of Liberty*." (77) The establishment of this new journal and the political campaign were the causes of a violent newspaper controversy. The *Gazette* writers attacked Brackenridge in bitter denunciations which he answered in kind. In this controversy as in previous ones he made considerable

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73 *Incidents of the Western Insurrection*, Vol. II, p. 73. Brackenridge's part in the Insurrection was investigated by Alexander Hamilton, and he was completely absolved from any suspicion of treasonable conduct.

74 *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Nov. 2, 1799.

75 *Tree of Liberty*, March 28, 1801.

76 Jefferson sent Brackenridge a copy of his *Notes on Virginia* and wrote him a letter. *Tree of Liberty*, Jan. 31, 1801.

77 *The Tree of Liberty* survived four years.

use of Hudibrastic verse. (78) He evidently did not take much pride in these productions, as he did not include them in *Gazette Publications*, his collection of journalistic writings.

As a reward for his services in the campaign, Brackenridge was appointed Judge of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. In the summer of 1801 he removed from Pittsburgh to Carlisle, where he spent the remaining fifteen years of his life. There, about 1802, he wrote a campaign pamphlet for McKean, who was a candidate for reelection. This pamphlet, *The Standard of Liberty*, contains, in addition to the title essay, a paper entitled *Ironical Reasons for a New Governor and Constitution*, which, in both literary method and political philosophy, follows the pattern of his other satirical writings.

The few remaining works of Brackenridge indicate that his creative energy was spent. With one slight exception, his only really literary productions were the scraps which went into the portfolio which was emptied into the last volume of *Modern Chivalry*. In 1806 he compiled an anthology of journalistic literature, *The Spirit of the Public Journals; or Beauties of American Newspapers, for 1805*. The charm of these "Beauties" is not perceptible to the modern reader. Although the compiler says that he "carefully perused" ninety-six newspapers and was well pleased with his gleanings, the book exhibits three hundred pages of stilted banality. In this same year Brackenridge also compiled a volume of his own minor writings, *Gazette Publications*, in which he included many of his contributions to the *United States Magazine*, the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, and the *Tree of Liberty*, and also some of his writings of the Revolutionary period. The prefatory notes which Brackenridge wrote for some of the items give some valuable biographical data, and the introduction and conclusion are illuminating statements of the author's attitude toward his literary work. Of the three remaining publica-

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78 The most elaborate of these Hudibrastic invectives is entitled *On the Blackguard Writers in Scull's Gazette In the Course of the Summer*. *Tree of Liberty*, Nov. 22, 1800; reprinted in the *Gazette* with scurrilous comments, Nov. 28, 1800.

tions only one, an essay on Walter Scott, is literary. The title page of the book explains the interesting circumstances in which it was written: *An Epistle to Walter Scott, Written at Pittsburgh, during the sitting of the term, by H. H. Brackenridge, Sept. 9th., 1811, on reading the Lady of the Lake— Taken up by chance.* The essay is only an eight page pamphlet and was published at Pittsburgh. Scott's *Vision of Don Roderick* was first issued in this same year, and an American edition was published including Brackenridge's epistle. In February and March of 1812 the Pittsburgh booksellers who had published the pamphlet had the following advertisement in the *Gazette*: "Have just received a few copies of the *Vision of Don Roderick*, a poem, to which is added an epistle to the author by H. H. Brackenridge, Esq." (79)

In this last period of his life Brackenridge published some of the results of his long career of study and experience in the law. Some of these papers had probably been written long before they were issued. In the first part of *Modern Chivalry*, in a somewhat whimsical apology for the levity of his novel, he says: "I have not been wholly inattentive to severer studies. I have several law tracts by me; for which I mean, in due time, to solicit a subscription." (80) The first of his two legal publications is a small pamphlet called *Considerations of Jurisprudence of the State of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1808). The other, *Legal Miscellanies*, is a bulky volume containing an introduction to the study of the law designed for the use of students, and several other long papers. The paper on the relations between the English common law and the common law of Pennsylvania reveals much legal learning and was probably the result of Brackenridge's labors as a member of the committee which, in 1808, made an official study of the English laws still in force in Pennsylvania.

Brackenridge realized that his powers were failing during this last period of his life and he was also disappointed in the results of his whole literary career. In 1806, ten years before his death, he said: "I do not flatter my-

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79 *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Feb. 7, 14, 21, 28, and March 13, 1812.

80 *Modern Chivalry*, p. 94 (edition of 1926).



self that my memory will survive me long. It is sufficient; at least it is the utmost that I can expect, that it can survive a few years. And even this not without some pains to make it live. For I do not conceive myself to be, what I acknowledge I was once disposed to think myself, a thing endued with faculties above the capacity of ordinary mortals. But had it not been that I had some idea of this kind, I would not have made the exertions that I have made. For since the discovery of my mistake, I feel myself sinking into indolence; and considering only how I shall get through the world, the small remainder of it that lies on my hands . . . . So far am I from anticipating immortality, in the language of Poets, that I think 20 years will about do; and I am resigned to this, finding that with all the pains I have taken, I can make no better of it." (81)

The modern reader will find an excellent commentary on Brackenridge's writings as a whole in a statement which he made about *Gazette Publications*: "Who knows after all but that even an hundred years hence a copy of this impression may be found in an old library among scarce books, and be valued because it is the only one remaining. It has been always a matter of amusement to me to be rummaging amongst old and scarce books, to see in what manner the human mind had employed itself in times past . . . . Hence it is that I have supposed these scraps may afford some amusement; especially if they are accompanied with observations as they occasionally will be, which will throw some light upon the affairs of men, and the history of the time." (82)

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81 *Gazette Publications* (Carlisle, 1806), p. 3.

82 *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.