Eighteenth-Century Fiction

Volume 24
Issue 2 *Form and Formalism in the British Eighteenth-Century Novel*

Article 19

1-6-2012

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Recommended Citation
McIntire-Strasburg, Janice (2012) "Review of: Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *Modern Chivalry*, ed. Ed White," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*: Vol. 24: Iss. 2, Article 19.
Available at: http://digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/ecf/vol24/iss2/19

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Abstract
Review of Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *Modern Chivalry*, ed. Ed White (2009), reviewed by Janice McIntire-Strasburg

Keywords
Book review

This article is available in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: http://digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/ecf/vol24/iss2/19

Hugh Henry Brackenridge. *Modern Chivalry*, ed. Ed White. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2009. xxxviii+588pp. US$29.95. ISBN 978-0-87220-991-6.

Hugh Henry Brackenridge's sprawling post-Revolutionary War novel, *Modern Chivalry*, has been off the grid in terms of both scholarship and teaching in American literature for most of the past one hundred years. Scholarship on the text has suffered from the lack of availability of a definitive critical edition in print. Teaching of it has suffered from this lack as well. Lewis Leary's 1965 version, in addition to comprising only about one-third of Brackenridge's original edition (published in full by Claude Newlin in 1937), has also been available only sporadically. Given the size of this eighteenth-century novel and the costs of publication, it seemed that *Modern Chivalry* might languish in obscurity indefinitely. Yet Brackenridge himself was uniquely situated within the new Republic and the state of Pennsylvania's politics to offer insights into vital questions for the newly established country of America. Part of the impetus for the *Modern Chivalry* Crossroads Project stemmed from my frustration at having no readily available text from which to teach the book—with its insights into American law, politics, society, and satire—to Early American literature students.

This new print edition by Hackett Publishing marks the first time in many years that the complete text has been available for reading. It contains all of the volumes of parts 1 and 2 taken from the Newlin edition, along with extensive notes on the text, several appendices, and an extensive explanatory introduction by Ed White that both students and scholars will find helpful in their reading. Appendix A contains an alphabetical list of translations for all of the Latin phrases with which Brackenridge tended to pepper his text. The well-educated eighteenth-century reader would have been familiar with these axioms and other phrases from Vergil, Ovid, Horace, and other silver and golden age Latin and Greek writers, but the well-educated twentieth- and twenty-first-century reader is not; thus, these translations ease the transition for present-day readers. Appendix B offers similar contextualizing information on historical figures, with whom contemporary readers would also have been familiar. Appendix C incorporates into the text longer notes from Brackenridge's original serialized publication from volumes 1 and 2 of part 2 concerning his involvement in Pennsylvania's impeachment controversies from the 1805 publication, offering readers vital historical context for reading *Modern Chivalry*'s satire.

White also includes a textual note in the front matter explaining the complexity of *Modern Chivalry*'s publication history, and a section in the back matter indicating the few changes to the original text. True to scholarly editions, he has elected only to regularize—that

is, standardize—inconsistencies of spelling or printer's errors, and modernize the punctuation.

The lengthy and well-crafted introduction does an excellent job of encapsulating the text's complicated publication history, as well as demonstrating the complex and often double-edged satire Brackenridge engages through Captain Farrago, Teague O'Regan, and the various characters they encounter on their picaresque journey. As White points out: "*Modern Chivalry*, far from being just a satire directed at the frontier multitude, is an exploration of the complex class dynamics ranging from elite institutions to popular responses" (xii). The new Republic had the not inconsiderable challenge of framing a democratic institution that could incorporate emigrants from various European countries, indigenous tribes, and African slaves into a cohesive social unit of governance. *Modern Chivalry*'s sometimes unwieldy structure and language attempt, through satire, to illustrate those difficulties through concrete, practical demonstrations when a particular theoretical position is taken to the extreme. Each situation the travellers encounter is designed to locate the gaps in logic or the impracticalities between theory and practice that played out in this historical period. White's discussion of the Whiskey Rebellion is particularly well researched and offers necessary historical background for students.

Those of us who teach early texts are no strangers to the difficulties students encounter with historical events that seem both far away and quite abstract—these satirical discussions have, after all, been decided generations before they were born. One of the most compelling arguments for reading *Modern Chivalry* is that it brings a situational immediacy to historical figures, issues, and decisions for twenty-first-century students that they might not otherwise have available to them. This new print edition makes an important era of American history and literature available to the reading public. Reprinting the Newlin edition adds the availability of the full and complete text to scholars—a valuable tool for those wishing to study Brackenridge's writing and editing practices, and his poetic contributions. In some cases, the 1815 novel edition would have been a more practical choice for students; for example, Brackenridge himself edited out his long, Hudibrastic poem from part 1, volume 3, and much contained in the poem remains a part of the volume's prose. However, the mere fact that we now have an edition available for scholars to debate the merits of editions upon is a major addition to early American studies.

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