

# Re-Visiting the Sources of “Hans Pfaall”: A Tentative Approach to Include Hugh Henry Brackenridge’s *Modern Chivalry*<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:**

Dealing with the sources authors have historically had for the composition of their pieces is not always an easy task, especially if we considered writers like Edgar Allan Poe, who was an extensive reader. In the particular case of “The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall” even more issues should be brought to the debate, for this short story constitutes an early attempt of Poe towards the creation of (satiric) science-fiction. In consequence, the reference to scientific and pseudo-scientific texts needs to be constant. However, the aim of this article is not the discussion of these (for they have already been studied, as shown below) but the inclusion of a new source, Hugh Henry Brackenridge’s *Modern Chivalry*, which has been overshadowed to the present day and which offers a new, enhancing vision of Poe’s narration. By doing this, it is also the aim of this article to offer a reevaluation of “Hans Pfaall” through the lens of American-ness, a topic already widely discussed in reference to Poe and which has been proven as being among the most influential the Bostonian acquired during his career.

**Keywords:** “Hans Pfaall”, *Modern Chivalry*, sources, letters, science-fiction

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1 This chapter belongs to the activities developed by the Research Group “Estudios interdisciplinares de Literatura y Arte” [Multidisciplinary Studies in Literature and Art] (Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha) and by the Research Group “Poéticas y textualidades emergentes. Siglos XIX-XXI” [Poetics and Emerging Textualities: 19th to 21st Centuries] (Universidad Complutense de Madrid). In addition, it is also imbricated within the activities of the Research Groups’ Network “Aglaya Mitocrítica Cultural 2020-2” [Aglaya: Cultural Myth-Criticism 2020-2], sponsored by the regional government of Madrid.

In 1925, Killis Campbell already showed how Poe was an extensive but uneven reader who had a certain knowledge of different Western traditions that had been incorporated into his tales, poems, novels and essays (1925, 166). Campbell also noted that the widest part of Poe's literary connoisseurship came from works produced during his own lifetime. This is especially relevant because Poe lived in a period in which science was experiencing a *crescendo* like it had not been seen before in human history, favoring the coinage of pieces that paved the road to the later development of science-fiction. Although science-fiction is today considered as a subgenre aimed to push the boundaries of human knowledge, during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it had a different purpose, for it was used by the pioneering authors who attempted to create pieces of this kind (Poe among them) as a way of satirizing current society.<sup>2</sup> So, vices, social practices or prominent members of different communities were presented under the patina of a futuristic scenario. That is the case of "The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall" (1835), in which the science-fictional voyage to the Moon disguises the critique to Pfaall's creditors and Rotterdam citizens. That was also the case of some previous works (published both in Europe and in the United States) that had depicted similar situations.<sup>3</sup> The goal of this article is to offer a re-evaluation of how Poe knew and used some of those previous examples (Herschel, de Bergerac, etc.) in his first long narration, but with a new detail that has gone unstudied to the present day. More specifically, this essay is going to focus on the question of whether Hugh Henry Brackenridge's (1748-1816) *Modern Chivalry* (1792-1815) can be included among the sources employed in the creation of "Hans Pfaall." To do so, this essay is going to rely on two different types of sources: the short story itself and Poe's letters, for they offer pieces of information that deserve to be included in the discussion.<sup>4</sup>

Poe usually relied on American models in order to construct his own compositions, instead of looking for them abroad (in more fashionable or exotic countries like Great Britain, France or Germany).<sup>5</sup> As Shawn Rosenheim and Stephen Rachman point out in the introduction to their seminal book *The*

2 See Suvin (1972), Russ (1973), Roberts (2002) or Canavan and Suvin (2016), among many others. We only have to pay attention to Poe's own "Some Words with a Mummy" (1845) to notice this.

3 See Brantlinger's (1980), Stableford's (2003) or Correoso-Rodenas's (2019) texts included in "Works Cited."

4 Lesley Ginsberg (2019) explains how Poe's letters can also be used in order to reconstruct the life of the Bostonian, something particularly interesting when addressing the core of this article, as seen below.

5 Although, as mentioned, Poe knew about these traditions.

*American Face of Edgar Allan Poe* (1995), scholars who have approached different aspects of Poe’s production have recognized the American-ness of each of them, from the charlatanism proposed by Charles Baudelaire to the exploration of more novel concepts such as those of plagiarism or the development of detective fiction itself. So, although not reaching the extremes Walt Whitman would during the next literary generation, America was a key theme in Poe’s fiction (and non-fiction), being the author interested in knowing and praising his country and the artists that had already contributed to the greatness it started to experience during the American Renaissance.<sup>6</sup> Some of his tales, such as “The Elk” (1844) or his novels *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838) and the unfinished *Journal of Julius Rodman* (1840) constitute good examples of this circumstance.

During the last century, many different approaches have been undertaken considering which works were in the mind of Edgar Allan Poe when he composed his most famous pieces. From the complete and extensive notes included by editors (Mabbott, Pollin, Ostrom, Rigal-Aragón, among others) in the different academic editions<sup>7</sup> to particular articles and chapters on specific *œuvres*, Poe’s sources have received an interesting deal of attention. Among the authors who have tried to follow the path of Poe’s readings, names like the aforementioned Killis Campbell or John Robert Moore (1951) should be included. The latter, although focusing on a particular novel by Walter Scott, offers an interesting evaluation of how Poe’s “Gothic perspective” was conceived, being it one of the most important features included in his production. On the story that is going to be analyzed here, the best approach is offered by the editors, as mentioned above. However, some essays deserve to be included here, for they touch the topic that is going to be explored in the following pages. The first of them is Meredith Neill Posey’s “Notes on Poe’s Hans Pfaall” (1930), followed by J. O. Bailey’s “Sources for Poe’s Arthur Gordon Pym, ‘Hans Pfaal,’ and Other Pieces” (1942). Even today, decades after they were composed, these articles offer valuable explorations of Poe’s “mental map” when composing the voyage of “Hans Pfaall.”<sup>8</sup>

As the story dealt with what is considered among Poe’s science-fictional hoaxes, the bibliography of this (sub-)genre also needs to be mentioned. Of course, Harold Beaver’s edition of Poe’s science-fiction stories comes to mind,<sup>9</sup>

6 As see, for instance, in Barbara Cantalupo (2014) or Kerry Dean Carso (2015).

7 Here, biographies and books like *The Poe Log* should be mentioned as well.

8 Posey explores how “Hans Pfaall” can relate to Herschel’s treatise on Astronomy, establishing the parallels these two works show; on the other hand, Bailey’s major achievement is establishing a connection between Poe’s major voyages of scientific speculation, along with other pieces that discuss science.

9 Among other things, Beaver offers an interesting evaluation of the relations of Gothic and science fiction, two of the most influential literary trends incorporated into Poe’s fiction:

along with Giacomo Cosentino's study *The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe*. However, more names need to be included here, like those of E. Reiss (1957),<sup>10</sup> who deals with the scenario of "Hans Pfaall," C. Olney (1958),<sup>11</sup> E. F. Bleiler (1982), M. J. Bennett (1983),<sup>12</sup> who explores the role played by Poe in "Selenite" literature, D. E. E. Sloane and M. J. Pettengell (1996), P. Swirski (2000),<sup>13</sup> or J. Tresch (2002),<sup>14</sup> among many others. From different perspectives, these studies have contributed to the consolidation of the current scholarship about Poe's science-fiction. More recently, *The Oxford Handbook of Edgar Allan Poe* (2019) has also contributed to expanding the lore of knowledge this field contains.<sup>15</sup> More concretely, the chapters authored by Paul Grimstad and Maurice S. Lee explore the relations of Poe's production with science-fiction and the scientific implications "Hans Pfaall" presents, respectively.

Before groundbreaking the core of this article, some considerations about *Modern Chivalry* need to be offered. It was one of the earliest novels produced in the already independent United States, published by Hugh Henry Brackenridge<sup>16</sup>

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"Itself [science fiction] an offshoot of gothicism, the new genre was to evoke a horror both of the future and of the science which could bring that future about. By identifying with the collapse of technology, it was already critically undermining that technology" (1976, xv).

- 10 As seen in Reiss's article, "Hans Pfaall" is a clear representation of the dual nature of Poe's writings, halfway between the serious and the comic, something that can also be widely applied to Brackenridge's.
- 11 Which offers an early view on Poe's leading role in the conception of modern science fiction.
- 12 Here, Bennett accounts something that will be further expanded below in this article, for he analyzes how Poe understood the "Moon voyage genre," even offering an evaluation of the most relevant elements these pieces should have (according to Poe): "Poe thus announces the defining elements of the genre he has just endowed with its basic form: an emphasis on fact as defined and retrieved by empirical science, the analogical application of this fact to that portion of the universe which remains unknown, and a focus on the interstellar world opened to man by the achievements of modern astronomy" (1983, 137).
- 13 Swirski's main addition to the discussion is based on the gathering of Poe's science-fictional tales and essays with his philosophical and cosmological visions. Issues and terms such as artificial intelligence or the ethical implications of scientific practice are seen along with *Eureka* and other texts that can be incorporated to the scholarship of scientific Poe.
- 14 Tresch's revision of the genre and its implication continue the path already led by Bennett, continuing with the exploration of the different science-fictional elements and motifs included and developed by Poe.
- 15 To these, the studies developed by the widespread Poe scholarship in Spain can be added. See Francisco Javier Castillo Martín 1991 and 2011, María Isabel Jiménez González 2013, Margarita Rigal Aragón and Ricardo Marín Ruiz 2014 or Cristina Pérez Arranz 2017.
- 16 Although *Modern Chivalry* is the only piece of fiction that Brackenridge produced, he wrote, especially during his collegiate years, some patriotic and satiric poems. Some of them are *A Poem on the Rising Glory of America* (written along with Philip Freneau in

between 1792 and 1815.<sup>17</sup> It follows the adventures of Captain John Farrago and his companion, the Irish bog-trotter Teague O'Regan, along the Pennsylvania frontier. Much has been discussed about the nature and purpose of creating such a gargantuan novel, but most of the critics are today inclined to follow the thesis that it was shaped after Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605-1615).<sup>18</sup> In consequence, much of the content of *Modern Chivalry* will fall under the categorization of satire, as it will happen with some of Poe's most acknowledged pieces, including “Hans Pfaall.”<sup>19</sup> In the words of William L. Nance: “Satire was Brackenridge's medium, responsible for whatever the book contains of value as fiction. In view of the truism that the use of satire is one of the first signs of intellectual and artistic maturity, and examination of this element should make clearer just how conscious a literary artist Brackenridge was, and how successful” (1967, 381). As seen, many common features were shared by both

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1772), *A Poem on Divine Revelation* (1774) or “Satires against the Tories. Written in the last War between the Whigs and Cliosophians in which the former obtained a complete Victory” (undated and written along with Freneau and US fourth President James Madison -Historical Society of Pennsylvania, ms. 0336-). He also wrote some dramatic pieces. See Virginia A. Hajek 1971.

17 In the words of Ed White: “Brackenridge published the first two volumes in 1792, with a third volume appearing in 1793. Four years later, after Brackenridge's controversial involvement with the so-called Whiskey Rebellion, a fourth volume appeared. Another seven years would pass before new volumes of ‘Part II’ began to appear: a first volume dated 1804, a second dated 1805, and a third (confusingly labeled ‘Volume IV’) in 1815” (2009, x). This has provoked that many modern readers have problems when approaching the book and that it has become an editing nightmare. As Ed White states, “In the twentieth century, there was only one complete edition of the novel: Claude Newlin's 1937 edition for the American Book Company, reprinted as a paperback by Hafner Press in 1962. Another critic, Lewis Leary, prepared a heavily abridged edition -less than a sixth of the original- in 1965. More recently, Janice McIntire-Strasburg has attempted a hypertext edition for the University of Virginia Crossroads Project, though the demands of the text have been formidable. Absent an accessible edition, then, critics have treated the novel sporadically and unevenly” (2009, x).

18 Although some scholars like Aaron R. Hanlon may differ: “Thus, eighteenth-century quixotism would distort certain contextual elements of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* as it appeared in new and differing cultural spaces, but quixotes themselves would maintain the fundamentals of the character archetype: the imaginative idealism, literary sensibility, and exceptionalist deviation from the mainstream that render Cervantes' *Don Quixote* different from what Smollett understood as the ‘ordinary madman.’ The portability of this particular kind of eighteenth-century quixote, tested as the character was translated into English in the seventeenth century, then circulated throughout Britain and the wider Atlantic world in the eighteenth, has become a key feature of Quixote's legacy” (2017, 54). For a more detailed examination of Brackenridge's knowledge of the Spanish Golden Age literature and culture, see José Manuel Correoso Rodenas 2020.

19 See, for instance, Gary Richard Thompson 1973.

authors, although decades run between them and the styles they followed were extremely different. Besides, Brackenridge always had a purpose related to his own legal formation,<sup>20</sup> either satirizing the system of the new United States or offering new perspectives on how Law should be executed. In any case, *Modern Chivalry* had become one of the most famous American novels by the lifetime of Edgar Allan Poe. Following what Ed White states in his introduction to the most recent complete edition of *Modern Chivalry*,

Henry Adams [...] described the novel as ‘universally popular throughout the South and West,’ and as work that ‘filled the place of Don Quixote on the banks of the Ohio and along the Mississippi.’ It is difficult, from this distance, to assess the novel’s popularity; but for various reasons –Brackenridge’s educational background, his remoteness from urban publishing, his professional career– it is clear that *Modern Chivalry* was an anomaly in U.S. writing at the time (2009, xxviii).<sup>21</sup>

A contemporary to Henry Adams, Mark Twain, also acknowledged the influence of *Modern Chivalry*, as explained by Joseph H. Harkey, who follows the similarities between Pudd’nhead Wilson and Captain Farrago (1980-1981, 12).

Whether Poe read *Modern Chivalry* or not is technically unknown today, for as Killis Campbell states, “Poe kept no diary or journal so far as we now know; and he left no biographical account of himself beyond the brief and very inaccurate memorandum that he sent to Griswold in 1841. Nevertheless, it is possible to glean from his writings a good deal about what he had read” (1925, 166). Besides, no review or marginalia piece has been discovered discussing Brackenridge’s novel, although chivalry was a key topic along Poe’s epistolary and non-fictional production.<sup>22</sup> To get acquainted with what Poe could know about *Modern Chivalry*, it is necessary to turn to his letters. From late October to late November 1841, Poe maintained an epistolary conversation with Frederick William Thomas in which both authors discussed, among other issues, the publication of a manuscript that Brackenridge’s son, Henry Marie Brackenridge

20 For instance, see Dana D. Nelson 2002.

21 All the quotations from *Modern Chivalry* will be taken from Ed White’s edition published by Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. in 2009.

22 As an example, see his reviews and pieces of marginalia, where he addresses authors such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), Washington Irving (1783-1859), James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851), William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878), Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873), William Harrison Ainsworth (1805-1882), William Gilmore Simms (1806-1870) or Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882), among many others. As known, these authors discussed chivalry (in its many forms) in several of their literary examples.

(1786-1871) wanted to submit to a journal.<sup>23</sup> At that moment, Brackenridge Jr. was serving as a judge in Pennsylvania.<sup>24</sup> The manuscript contained a biography of Hugh Henry Brackenridge, as recognized in a letter he sent to Thomas on November 6, 1841: “About ten days ago I gave to our friend W. Colton, Esqr. a MSS biography of my late father, H. H. Brackenridge, with a view of having it published in the N. American, or some other journal of Philadelphia.”<sup>25</sup> That same day, Thomas addressed a letter to Poe discussing some details of this business and asking him to read Brackenridge’s manuscript as, according to Dwight R. Thomas and David K. Jackson, the judge had required: “Brackenridge asks Thomas to send his letter to Poe, who can then obtain the biography for his consideration [...]” (1987, 347). However, what is interesting here is what is introduced by Thomas as a *post scriptum*. There, the journalist asks Poe: “You have read ‘Modern Chivalry’ of course — What do you think of it — The biography is true and very good — Is it too long for your Magazine.” Unfortunately, Poe’s response to this relevant question is lost to this day. Thanks to Poe scholars’ interpretations, it is known that he should have written back to Thomas on November 8 or 9, for Thomas replies back on November 10 and references this lost letter: “This morning I received yours with regard to Judge Brackenridge’s MS: Thanks for your punctuality and promptness. I read the Judge what you said (of course leaving out what Graham said about its ‘heaviness’) at which he seemed much pleased.”<sup>26</sup> Finally, the last “episode” of this conversation would take place on November 23, when Thomas acknowledges the submission of Brackenridge’s manuscript to the journal: “Judge Brackenridge’s MS came safely to hand and has been transmitted to the Messenger, from whose editor I received all kinds of a courteous letter.”<sup>27</sup>

As surmised from the letters referenced above, Poe had a certain knowledge of the Brackenridge family. Although the response to Thomas’s *post scriptum* would have been the definitive confirmation, it is also easy to deduce (both because of Thomas’s tone and because Poe’s role in editing Brackenridge Sr.’s biography) that the author of “Hans Pfaall” had come across the novel, especially if we bear in mind what Brackenridge Jr. also wrote to Thomas on November 6: “This publication was intended as a precursor to the publication of a new and

23 According to Dwight R. Thomas, to *Graham’s Magazine*. However, *The Southern Literary Messenger* is pointed as a second option by Frederick W. Thomas: “Since he told me he thought I was right and he would like to have the biography published in your Magazine, or the Southern Literary Messenger” (1978, 283).

24 For more information about Henry Marie Brackenridge, see William F. Keller 1956.

25 <https://www.eapoe.org/misc/letters/t4111060.htm>.

26 <https://www.eapoe.org/misc/letters/t4111100.htm>.

27 <https://www.eapoe.org/misc/letters/t4111230.htm>.

improved edition of ‘Modern Chivalry’ now about to be put to press by: Messrs. Kay, brothers & Co.”<sup>28</sup>

The previous paragraphs have shown how Edgar Allan Poe was acquainted with the existence of *Modern Chivalry* and that there is a reasonable doubt that he had read Brackenridge’s novel. However, that does not explicitly prove that Poe had in mind *Modern Chivalry* when writing “Hans Pfaall,” especially when the sources for this story seem to be clear today. So, most of the scholars agree in mentioning scientific and pseudo-scientific works like Johannes Kepler’s *Somnium* (1634), Cyrano de Bergerac’s *Selenarchia* (1659), Daniel Defoe’s *The Consolidator* (1705), Rudolf Erich Raspe’s *The Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1816), Abraham Rees’s *Cyclopædia* (1802-1819), George Tucker’s *A Voyage to the Moon* (1827),<sup>29</sup> Sir John Herschel’s *A Treatise on Astronomy* (1834),<sup>30</sup> or the “Great Moon Hoax” articles (1835) among its most suitable sources. However, this list is not definitive and scholars have been varying its inclusions and exclusions since, at least, 1942. That same year, J. O. Bailey recognized that “Poe’s sources for ‘Hans Pfaal’ are complex. Poe turned to sources in both science and fiction for material” (1942, 522). That same complexity is what has left the possibilities open to the present day, with Maurice S. Lee’s list among the most definitive ones, giving a more or less well-established canon Poe followed when composing “Hans Pfaall” (2019, 339). The topic of the Lunar exploration has fed literary examples in many different traditions, especially since the Early Modern period, when telescopes first allowed to accurately observe the satellite (some of these examples are included in the aforementioned list).<sup>31</sup> As it happens with many other literary structures, the purposes of authors dealing with voyages to the Moon has been quite diverse, varying from scientific discussion to hypothetical “lost worlds.” Obviously, Poe was not alien to this. As Paul Grimstad acknowledges: “[...] Arthur Hobson Quinn writes that while ‘Hans Pfaall’ began as a parody of tales of trips to the moon, Poe ‘could not content himself with mere burlesque’ and became drawn to the challenge of creating a ‘plausible’ account” (2019, 737).<sup>32</sup>

28 <https://www.eapoe.org/misc/letters/t4111060.htm>.

29 Probably, the anonymous abridged version and review appeared on the *American Quarterly Review* in 1828 (under the pseudonym of Joseph Atterley), which Poe mentions at the end of “Hans Pfaal.”

30 Although the similarities between *A Treatise on Astronomy* and “Hans Pfaall” seem to be clear, it cannot be forgotten that Sir John Herschel belonged to a prominent family of astronomers, in which his father William discovered Uranus and other celestial bodies.

31 Including the adventure of one Torralba referenced by Don Quixote in Cervantes’s novel (1615, second part, chapter 41).

32 Something that had already been announced by Burton R. Pollin in 1994: “Poe was not

However, there is one source that is missing from the list and, surprisingly, has been so for many decades. As the reader may guess, it is Hugh Henry Brackenridge’s *Modern Chivalry*. The subsequent discussion will only focus on the eighth chapter of the second part. There, Farrago and O’Regan are in a community settled among the Delaware natives in western Pennsylvania. After discussing the role of religion within the structure of state, a fire breaks and the meeting has to be dissolved. However, that turmoil is seen by the bog-trotter as a chance to dictate a fictional account of his celestial travels, gathered by a pedagogue in the form of a manuscript. The eleven short paragraphs that compose that intercalated narration are the basis for the following lines of this article.<sup>33</sup> The manuscript contains the story of a balloon voyage towards the Moon, with later expansions to other planets of the Solar System. There is where the similarities with “Hans Pfaall” begin. As it happens with the account of Poe’s *Rotterdammer*, the story produced by Brackenridge’s character mainly focuses on the description of the journey. The descriptions offered during this journey, as it happens with Poe’s narration, fall, to a great extent, within the realm of satire or comicity, relating O’Regan every celestial body he came across to a reference to the popular culture it suggested. As an example, this quotation is quite illustrative: “There were marriages going on in Venus, and in Mars, we heard the drums beat” (Brackenridge 2009, 259). There, it is clearly appreciated how classical myths are brought to the novel by O’Regan’s testimony.

Setting this aside, other features appear as parallelisms, especially if we remember how short Brackenridge’s text is. Following the structure established by Poe in “Hans Pfaall,” the first of them is the presence of pigeons. These animals appear in both narratives, although playing different roles. While in Poe’s story they are carried as cargo, in *Modern Chivalry* they are the first extraordinary element found by Teague and exposed as exotic creatures (barb pigeons):<sup>34</sup> “[...] we saw a bird sitting on the corner of a cloud. We took it to be one of Mahomet’s Pigeons” (Brackenridge 2009, 259). Going on in Poe’s narration, it is possible to get new details that can lead to think that both groups of animals belong to

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writing a ‘parody of the romantic moon voyage’ as Bailey, A. H. Quinn, and Marjorie H. Nicholson thought, since the only prominent modern example of the genre was a novel by George Tucker of 1827, uncirculated and unread in 1835 [...]” (368).

33 We cannot forget that it is a very short narrative. In Ed White’s edition, it only encompasses the length of a page.

34 An artificial breed of pigeons already mentioned by William Shakespeare in *As You Like It* (1599 [2012]): “I will be more jealous of thee than a Barbary cock-pigeon over his hen [...]” (2012, 64-65). In a sense, including a kind of bird that has come as a result of human intelligence and science would match the general aim of “Hans Pfaall,” in which technical devices and scientific theories are exposed.

the same species. For instance, later on Poe pays attention to how one of Pfaall's birds looks around ("[...] looking anxiously around him [...] -*Writings* 1:408-), being the plumage around the eyes one of the most notable features of barb pigeons. Besides, as Regan's pigeon was sitting "on the corner of a cloud," one of Pfaall's will have a tendency towards sitting on the rim of the balloon (even after having been liberated): "He made, however, no attempt to descend, as I had expected, but struggled with great vehemence to get back, uttering at the same time very shrill and piercing cries. He at length succeeded in regaining his former station on the rim [...]" (*Writings* 1:408).<sup>35</sup>

The next important parallelism comes from the views Hans Pfaall enjoys from his balloon, focusing on "[...] the islands of Great Britain, the entire Atlantic coast of France and Spain [...]" (*Writings* 1:407). On his part, Regan, when returning from his aerial voyage, focused on locations such as "[...] the Pyrenean mountains [that] seemed a bed of parsley, and the Atlantic Ocean, [that] was about as large as Loch Swilly" (Brackenridge 2009, 259). Since Loch Swilly is a fjord in County Donegal (Ireland), it can be counted as belonging to "the islands of Great Britain."

However, the most suggesting parallelism to be found is deduced to what happens to Hans Pfaall on April 19. That day, the Rotterdammer finally reaches the surface of the Moon and is able to leave the balloon. As an easily understandable reaction, Pfaall decides to start exploring the satellite as soon as he sets foot on it. One of the first elements of the landscape that he finds there is the evidence of a civilization of Selenites: "I had barely time to observe that the whole country, as far as the eye could reach, was thickly interspersed with diminutive habitations [...]" (*Writings* 1:425). After that, the reader witnesses the encounter with the actual Selenites: "[...] a vast crowd of ugly little people, who none of them uttered a single syllable, or gave themselves the least trouble to render me assistance, but stood, like a parcel of idiots, grinning in a ludicrous manner, and eyeing me and my balloon askant, with their arms set a-kimbo" (*Writings* 1:425). Somehow, we know that those "ugly little people" are, to a certain extent, a welcoming civilization, for Hans Pfaall has managed to hide among them for five years, to instruct some of its members and to convince one of them to visit Rotterdam with the news of his journey. It can be concluded that Pfaall is settled in exile and aiming for his countrymates' pardon. Although Regan does not settle in the Moon, this is the only celestial body in which an intelligent being is set as inhabitant: "Passing by the moon we saw a man selling lands at auction. He wished us to give a bid [...]" (Brackenridge 2009, 259). The

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35 All quotations from "Hans Pfaall" are taken from Burton R. Pollin's edition of Poe's imaginary voyages included in "Works Cited."

possibility of starting a new life is offered, so the sales-Selenite can be classified under the label of “welcoming,” even if he pursues the interest of making a profit from the land auction.<sup>36</sup>

To find the last parallelism between both narrations (or between both authors’ minds in this case), it is necessary to turn to Poe’s notes at the end of “Hans Pfaall.” There, after exposing some of the details of the publication of the imaginary voyage, the author proceeds on to comment some of the scientific and technical issues that have appeared on the story. The one that is of interest here is related to Sir John Herschel’s works. It has been stated above that Poe may have had knowledge of the book *A Treatise on Astronomy*. As mentioned in footnote 30, John Herschel belonged to an important family of German-British astronomers. Beyond the similarities of *A Treatise on Astronomy* and “Hans Pfaall,” it is not hare-brained to think that the theories and works of William Herschel (father of John) were also known to Poe, especially if we bear in mind that William published another treatise entitled *Astronomical observations relating to the mountains of the moon* or *An account of three volcanoes in the moon*. Later on, many of these discoveries were incorporated by John into *A Treatise on Astronomy*. Considering the dates in which both astronomers lived, it is clear that the Herschel mentioned by Brackenridge is William and that this can also be (at least in part) the Dr. Herschel mentioned by Poe.

As seen in the previous pages, the context for a story, even for a well-known narration such as “The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall,” needs to be subject to constant revision. Edgar Allan Poe possessed a mind that was interested in many aspects of human culture, as his writings prove. Among these, he always showed a special inclination towards acknowledging improvements and discoveries performed in his own country and/or by fellow Americans (he would place an American among the first explorers of Antarctica). In relation to this, his kinship with his contemporary American authors is also a well-known feature, as seen at the beginning of this essay and proved by the amount of reviews he wrote, among which those concerning Nathaniel Hawthorne or Henry Wadsworth Longfellow stand out. That is why it seems strange that the work of such a recognized author as Hugh Henry Brackenridge could have fallen out of Poe’s scope. As seen, there are evidences that can lead to think the contrary (see

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36 An easy comparison that can come to the readers’ minds regarding Pfaall’s landing is that of the European encounter with the Natives in the Americas. If we recall those chronicles of the first explorers or settler, the discovery of a similar schedule is now unsurprising. Only to mention one example, William Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation* offers a similar account when describing the view the Pilgrims had of the Natives inhabiting the coast of Massachusetts, first approaching the dwellings and then sharing a recreation of the generosity of those “poor peoples.”

the aforementioned letter from Frederick W. Thomas). This said, we can start looking for comparisons, such as those that have been detailed in the previous paragraphs. Any reader will recognize that the task of finding the “firing gun” is not always possible when working in Literature and that the scholars can just rely on the traces that have been left by long-time departed authors. Bearing all this in mind and with all the cautions that have been already exposed, it is intriguing to see how *Modern Chivalry* already outlined some of the most iconic motifs that “Hans Pfaall” would develop decades later. The discussion probably needs to continue, especially if future researchers have access to new resources, but as for today, it can be strongly suggested that the Selenite who tried to sell land to Teague O'Regan was the forefather of those who welcomed Hans Pfaall and that *Modern Chivalry* plausibly contributed to Poe's first attempt to write a long narration. In any case, the resemblance between them, including its satirical mode, highlights.

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