

# *The Publication of Joel Barlow's Columbiad*

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THE PHILADELPHIA PRINTERS John Thompson and Abraham Small promoted their bargain-priced hot-pressed Bible of 1798 as a patriotic endeavor. On the title pages of its two folio volumes, the American eagle proudly spread its wings below lines of display types bought from London letter foundries; the fashionably austere typography, the generous leading, the novelty of hot-pressing—and possibly also the text itself—were all derived from Baskerville's magnificent folio edition, printed at Cambridge University some thirty-five years previously. The text pages, however, were set in a pica roman from the Baine typefoundry of Philadelphia, a rather homely typeface perhaps but American and competent nonetheless. Thompson and Small begged the indulgence of American bibliophiles:

Similar works in Europe have for some years been liberally patronized—they have had an honorable place in the libraries of men of taste: the present production is an attempt to shew, that in America, works CAN be executed, in every respect, equal to the efforts of transatlantic genius. . . . It claims patronage as being wholly American—the paper, by far the best ever used in this city—the types, which are truly beautiful, are also American

Many libraries answered my bibliographical queries promptly and efficiently; I am greatly indebted to them and to many librarians as well, particularly Donald L. Farren, Clinton Sisson, Daniel Traister, Jennifer B. Lee, and Peter M. VanWingen, all of whom volunteered useful information. For general advice and assistance, I am very grateful to Terry Belanger, Andrea Immel, Rollo G. Silver, and Willman Spawn. The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; the Houghton Library, Harvard University; and the Museum of the City of New York very kindly granted permission to quote from manuscripts in their possession.

—and the whole apparatus for hot-pressing has been procured from different parts of the union:—It is also the CHEAPEST HOT-PRESSED BIBLE ever produced in any country.<sup>1</sup>

Other American printers of the 1790s similarly extolled their native workmanship, some even while pirating an English text or slavishly copying English typography and illustrations. William Durell's page-for-page reprint of Josephus, 'The American *Edition*,' surpassed its London original in size of type and in sumptuousness of illustration; it too flaunted the American eagle. In 1794 Mountford, Bioren & Co. advertised what would be the first American edition of Shakespeare, 'comprized in Eight Duodecimo Volumes, printed on a fine American paper, in a stile of Typographical Elegance that shall reflect the highest credit on the American press.' In 1804 the American Company of Booksellers offered gold medals for the best examples of American printing, paper, binding, and ink.<sup>2</sup> Despite these first stirrings of pride and ambition, American printers had not yet gained entire confidence in their work or in their customers.

American printers were still too unsure of their resources, both artistic and financial, to undertake prestige bookmaking. Aristocratic printing in the spirit of Ibarra and Bodoni was out of the question, and to emulate Baskerville would have been impossible without subsidies. Many printers still favored imported types, with good reason, and the best efforts of their illustrators still called for apology. No amount of typographical skill would avail without the best possible materials, which were hard to come by and dauntingly expensive. As to suitable texts, there was Washington's Farewell Address and other patriotic documents, of course, but otherwise American litera-

<sup>1</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, April 25, 1798, quoted in Darrell Hyder, 'Philadelphia Fine Printing 1780-1820,' *Printing & Graphic Arts* 9(1961):79; see also Rollo G. Silver, *The American Printer, 1787-1825* (Charlottesville, 1967), p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> Silver, *The American Printer*, pp. 155-56; Hyder, 'Philadelphia Fine Printing,' p. 74; Charles L. Nichols, 'The Literary Fair in the United States,' in *Bibliographical Essays, A Tribute to Wilberforce Eames* (Cambridge, 1924), pp. 88-89.

ture worthy of printing in the grand manner was in short supply.

The text, wherewithal, and bookmaking talents finally converged when Joel Barlow came to Philadelphia with the manuscript of his long, national epic *The Columbiad*. In matters of papermaking, typefounding, presswork, and book illustration, Barlow knew what he wanted, and he could and did pay for it if need be. The publication of *The Columbiad* in 1807 was the graphic arts event of the decade: it was the first American-made deluxe book to be manufactured on a cost-is-no-object basis—or, if not that, it was a tremendous expense to all concerned. Nearly a thousand copies were printed at a cost of \$10,000, and they were not to be sold for less than \$20.<sup>3</sup>

Nearly all of the American book arts had something special to contribute to *The Columbiad*. Copies are not rare, nor are contemporary reviews or manuscript sources concerning its planning and production. Sometimes these sources conflict, but enough firsthand information survives to show how Barlow financed this unusually ambitious book, how he saw it through the press, and how he, his family and friends, and the Philadelphia book trade distributed it.

The printing, or rather the assembly, of *The Columbiad* was an enormously complex undertaking. I will consider each of its book arts ingredients in turn, for some of them cannot be understood without others already in place. The printing by Fry & Kammerer, the paper by Thomas Amies and by the Levis family, and the type by Binny & Ronaldson all deserve special mention. Barlow imported the illustrations from England at great expense, having commissioned preliminary sketches from his friend and protégé Robert Fulton and preliminary paintings from Henry Fuseli, John Vanderlyn, and Robert Smirke. Barlow's ill-fated negotiations with Fuseli, Fulton, and Vanderlyn reveal what he expected from Smirke, artist-

<sup>3</sup> Barlow to Abraham Bishop, May 16, 1808, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; Barlow to Richard Phillips, May 18, 1807, Beinecke Library.

cally and financially. Many copies are in bindings from the shop of Robert Desilver, who may or may not have assisted in the publication of *The Columbiad* but almost certainly presided at the remaindering of it. The publication was the work of C. & A. Conrad & Co., a fashionable firm soon ruined by its own bookmaking ambitions. When it foundered, Barlow and Fulton had a distressed correspondence, much of which survives. Along with contemporary newspaper reports, their letters are the best source for the study of *The Columbiad* in manuscript, in press, and in the marketplace.

PLANNING, WRITING, AND  
CASTING OFF 'THE COLUMBIAD'

Barlow did not write *The Columbiad* so much as rewrite his *Vision of Columbus* (Hartford, 1787). Barlow had emigrated to Paris in 1788, a sort of real estate agent for lands in south-east Ohio. His real estate syndicate collapsed quickly and ignominiously; nevertheless he later retired in dignity—a man of letters and sometime diplomat—on the profits from various speculative ventures in Paris, London, and Hamburg. An honorary citizen of republican France, he was no longer satisfied with what he had written as a chaplain in the Revolutionary army: his political and religious convictions had changed, and his poetic ambitions had grown. By completely revising the *Vision*, Barlow hoped to express his new republican and deistical opinions, and by judiciously expanding it, he hoped to transform a long philosophical poem into an epic. This he did by adding and altering text in interleaved copies of the 1793 edition, three of which are now in the Collection of American Literature at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See Dorothy W. Bridgwater, 'The Barlow Manuscripts in the Yale Library,' *The Yale University Library Gazette* 34(1959):57-59. There is also a rough draft at the Houghton Library, Harvard University (bMS Am 1448.52), in one place dated December 13, 1802. Unless otherwise specified, Charles Burr Todd, *Life and Letters of Joel Barlow, LL.D.* (New York and London, 1886); Leon Howard, *The Connecticut Wits*

Barlow changed the title and added an extra book in the first of the three (Yale manuscript, Za Barlow 1), probably compiled ca. 1800–1802. At that time he was planning on having *The Columbiad* published in Paris at the English Press of John Hurford Stone, who printed the 1793 *Vision*. According to his and Stone's estimates of May 22, 1802, they were thinking of a quarto edition of either 750 or 1,000 copies, with nine or perhaps eleven plates, and also of a duodecimo edition in 1,000 copies. The quarto edition would consist of 50, 55, or 60 sheets, the duodecimo of 17 or 20. Barlow and Stone investigated different grades of paper and considered hot-pressing 500 quarto copies.<sup>5</sup>

Barlow finished the second of Yale's manuscripts (Za Barlow 2) in Paris on March 14, 1804, and still had it on hand on July 14, 1807. In it, he totted up the size of his epic-to-be: 5,182 lines in 1787; 4,776 in 1793; 6,904 by March 14, 1804; and 502 lines added thereafter.<sup>6</sup> On a slip laid in, he recorded a grand total of 7,428 lines (having added 22 more somewhere along the way) and 102 formes, which he calculated by casting off book by book. From 738 lines in Book VIII, for example, he arrived at 33 pages and 20 lines, rounded off (probably to include the section title, argument and notes) to 36 pages printed in nine four-page formes. Altogether *The Columbiad* was to have 410 pages, including 40 pages of preliminary matter.

Although the text of this manuscript is quite close to the 1807 *Columbiad*—close enough to have been supposed the printer's copy<sup>7</sup>—it was not, in fact, the final version. Barlow

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(Chicago, 1943); and James Woodress, *A Yankee's Odyssey: The Life of Joel Barlow* (Philadelphia and New York, 1958), are the sources of my information about Barlow, his business dealings, and his literary career.

<sup>5</sup> 'a correction [?] of alterations in the Columbiad publishing by Stone,' Houghton Library bMS Am 1448.53.

<sup>6</sup> Ezra Kempton Maxfield, 'The Tom Barlow Manuscript of the *Columbiad*,' *The New England Quarterly* 11(1938):841.

<sup>7</sup> Maxfield, 'The Tom Barlow Manuscript,' pp. 835, 840.

continued to trim and fatten long after *Za Barlow 2*. As published, *The Columbiad* was cut down to 7,350 lines, but with dedication, preface, introduction, notes, postscript, and index, it still amounted to 470 pages. Nevertheless, when he was working on *Za Barlow 2*, Barlow did know precisely what to expect on the printed page: the quotient from dividing a book's number of pages, as estimated by Barlow, into its number of lines is the 1807 edition's quarto page of twenty-two lines with a sinkage of eight lines for the chapter title at the beginning of every book. So, Barlow expected to have 14 lines on the first page of Book VIII, 22 lines each on the next 32 pages, and 20 lines on the last one—which is what he would have gotten in the 1807 edition had he kept all of Book VIII's 738 lines.

Production details were also a concern of Barlow's friend and long-term house guest Robert Fulton, virtually a member of the family until his marriage in 1808—and even then Barlow's closest confidant. Since 1797 Fulton had been trying to interest the Directory and then Napoleon in his experiments with torpedoes and submarine warfare. Barlow invested in his inventions and, as one of the more influential Americans in Paris, interceded for him with French government officials. The two of them were to collaborate on *The Canal: A Poem on the Application of Physical Science to Political Economy*, Fulton providing the civil engineering, Barlow the versification. Fulton was eager to repay his host and patron. *The Canal* having faltered after the first half of the first book, the inventor collaborated on the illustration of *The Columbiad* instead.

No less artist than inventor, Fulton had studied painting under Benjamin West. He executed the frontispiece portrait of the author, and he was the liaison with the English artists, also, for the most part, paying them. Barlow dictated his own illustrations, Fulton sketched out his friend's ideas, and Robert Smirke furnished paintings for the guidance of the engravers. While Barlow was pricing *The Columbiad* with Stone in May

1802, he sent Fulton instructions for the sixth plate along with some encouragement: 'How happy I am that you succeed so well with the drawings, and that you have it so much at heart to make a splendid edition of the work.'<sup>8</sup>

In 1804 Fulton decided to promote his submarine elsewhere and left Paris for England, where, also, he could attend to his steamboat engine and arrange for its export to America. Likewise disenchanted with Napoleonic France, Barlow followed him that September. Barlow lingered in England until the spring of 1805. He consulted with Benjamin West on the choice of illustrators, and he visited Lord Stanhope, who showed him the mechanism of the Stanhope Press and gave him stereotype plates to take back to America.<sup>9</sup>

For *Columbiad* purposes, the publisher Richard Phillips was the most useful of Barlow's English acquaintances. Phillips's *Montbly Magazine* had reviewed the work of the Yankee man of letters as early as October 1798, and his annual *Public Characters* (1806) contained a long biography, possibly based on an interview. It mentioned Barlow's visit to England and concluded with an enthusiastic blurb for *The Columbiad*: 'It is still in manuscript; but as it is prepared for the press, the author of this memoir has obtained liberty to make some extracts.'<sup>10</sup> *The Columbiad*'s English preview consisted of the denunciation of slavery in Book VIII. Judging from the text used by Phillips, Barlow had not yet prepared the third of Yale's interleaved manuscripts (Za Barlow 3). He substituted words, added lines, and otherwise reworked Book VIII in Za Barlow 3, which, although by no means the last state of his text, was the printers' copy for preface, text, and notes.

After seventeen years of expatriation, Barlow embarked for America in mid-June 1805. The Barlows landed in New York

<sup>8</sup> Todd, *Life and Letters of Joel Barlow*, pp. 188-89.

<sup>9</sup> John Bidwell, 'Joshua Gilpin and Lord Stanhope's Improvements in Printing,' *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 76(1982):146.

<sup>10</sup> *Public Characters of 1806* (London, 1806), p. 167.

in early August, visited New England and Washington, summered in Rockaway Beach and Ballston Spa and then established themselves in Philadelphia in the fall of 1806. Except for visits to friends and ventures into Washington, Philadelphia was their residence for more than a year. The engravings were ready, and Robert Fulton wrote from London, 'I have sent you 300 Complete sets of prints for the Columbiad . . . how shall we manage this Winter as you must be in Phil<sup>a</sup> for the printing and I want to be at New York to build my boat?'<sup>11</sup>

FRY & KAMMERER, PRINTERS

William Fry and Joseph R. Kammerer became partners just about the time Barlow arrived in Philadelphia. Both had been in the book trade from the turn of the century, Kammerer associated with the *Philadelphische Correspondenz* from 1798 to 1800, Fry first appearing in Philadelphia directories in 1801. Their partnership, as well as Kammerer's Philadelphia printing career, seems to have ended in 1811 or 1812, and Kammerer died in 1814.<sup>12</sup>

William Fry undertook both book and job work, printing books for Mathew Carey and the letterpress portion of bank notes for the government. He maintained two offices after 1810, for which, it was said, he employed more journeymen and apprentices than any three of his competitors. With Robert Walsh as editor, he founded *The National Gazette and Literary Register* in 1820; the newspaper flourished enough for him to abandon all other printing activities around 1828. He retired in 1840, his sons taking over the newspaper, and he died in 1854.

Despite having lost the sight of one eye, Fry gained some

<sup>11</sup> Fulton to Barlow, September 12, 1806, Beinecke Library.

<sup>12</sup> Clarence S. Brigham, *History and Bibliography of American Newspapers, 1690-1820* (Worcester, 1947), 2:926; H. Glenn Brown and Maude O. Brown, 'A Directory of the Book-Arts and Book Trade in Philadelphia to 1820,' *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 53(1949):448-49 & 499; *American Dictionary of Printing and Book-making* (New York, 1894), pp. 217-18.



reputation as compositor, proofreader, and pressman. Typographical tradition has it that he was the first to use George Clymer's Columbian Press.<sup>13</sup> Even before Clymer's invention (about 1814), Fry & Kammerer's fame for fine presswork was such that they printed Binny & Ronaldson's first specimens, a display of ornaments in 1809 and of types in 1812. Fry's zeal in overseeing the printing of *The Columbiad* became legendary. If the *Printers' Circular* (1868) and the *American Dictionary of Printing and Bookmaking* (1894) are to be believed, Fry guaranteed his proofreading by offering a \$100 reward for every error found after he approved a forme for press; not only did he examine the type letter by letter, but he also made the ink and sometimes even hot-pressed the printed sheets himself.

As mentioned above, Fry & Kammerer's compositors set most of their text from *Za Barlow 3*. They marked it up accordingly, indicating the first line of the gathering with a long bracket, and, next to the bracket, noting pagination and sometimes signature numbers in the margin. Since there are no printed signatures in *The Columbiad*, these manuscript signatures must have been assigned purely for the convenience of the printers. The sequence begins with signature 10 on p. 57, Book I, and then lapses after signature 87 on p. 365, Book X, which would suggest the standard practice of setting the text of the poem, here beginning on p. 21, before the notes and the preliminary pages.

Barlow, all too reluctant to surrender the last word, continued to revise until the very last moment. Wherever he added, cancelled, or otherwise rearranged lines in proof, the brackets in *Za Barlow 3* no longer mark the beginning of the printed page. Some brackets will be off by a few lines or so, but in the preface whole paragraphs were changed. In-press corrections are equally frequent, and Barlow rewrote at least one line in the forme.

<sup>13</sup> *Printers' Circular* 3(1868):70.

Somebody saw to it that two leaves were cancelled. An obvious typo, 'wapt' for 'wrapt' (V, 78), was corrected in the cancel for pp. 169–70, and another typo, 'Briton' for 'Britain' in 'The boast of Britain and the scourge of France' (V, 258), caused the cancellation of pp. 179–80.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps some sharp-eyed bystander collected Fry's fabled \$100 reward twice over. Fry may have been doubly piqued, but to Barlow the decision to cancel was an opportunity to improve diction and to rewrite a few more lines. 'Rear their tall masts and stretch aloft their sails' (V, 42) became 'Shoot forth their quays and stretch aloft their sails' in the corrected state; 'Stretch wide their wings in circling onset far' (V, 269) became 'Push wide their wings, high bannering bright the air'; and so on.

Fry & Kammerer's compositors marked up Za Barlow 3 for quarto half-sheet imposition, probably printed by work and turn. They divided the text and the notes into 109 four-page gatherings, which, along with thirty-six pages of preliminary matter, makes for a total of 118 gatherings. Barlow himself was not too far off when he estimated in his memorandum book that altogether 120 formes were to be done. Including the two cancel leaves and perhaps a third one thus far undetected, or a final blank,<sup>15</sup> *The Columbiad* amounts to 476 pages or 119 quarto half sheets. Quarto half-sheet imposition by work and turn would have been especially convenient for Barlow's print-

<sup>14</sup> I have found three copies with the original readings: University of Pennsylvania (f811 B24c); University of Virginia (McG \*A 1807 .B37 c. 2); Harvard University (\*fAC7 .B2496 .807ca B). Most later editions are based on a copy in which only pp. 179–80 were cancelled. While the cancel readings for both leaves were adopted in Richard Phillips's 1809 octavo edition, C. & A. Conrad & Co.'s 1809 duodecimo edition followed the uncanceled substantives from 1807's pp. 169–170, correcting 'wapt' to 'wrapt,' and the cancel substantives from pp. 179–80. This curious mixture of cancelled and uncanceled material descended through the Paris, 1813 edition, 'with the last corrections of the author,' to the Washington, 1825 edition. For full bibliographical descriptions of Barlow's works—including *The Vision of Columbus*, *The Columbiad*, and these later editions—see Jacob Blanck, *Bibliography of American Literature* (New Haven and London, 1955), 1:169–84, hereafter cited as *BAL*.

<sup>15</sup> Za Barlow 3 is marked up so that the last printed leaf, pp. 453–54, is the first of a gathering. I have not found it conjugate with a final blank, nor have I found evidence in watermarked copies that it was printed along with preliminary matter.

ers; it would have simplified revision in type whenever lines were inserted or deleted, and it would have permitted Fry & Kammerer to print off both sides of the sheet from a single forme. Not having to set up and set aside a second forme—and not having to wait for it to be corrected—would have been a great advantage should Barlow have lingered over proofs or should the printers have run short of type.

Besides the cancels in Book V, other accidents befell Barlow's text as it went through the press. For a representative sampling of the poet's and the printers' second thoughts, I have compared two copies on a Hinman Collator—not so much for determining text, which is beyond the scope of this article, but for examining printing practice. Fry & Kammerer's pressmen worked off *The Columbiad* on three sorts of paper: 432 or perhaps 480 copies on 'best fine,' 384 on 'Second best' and 96 on 'Coarse.'<sup>16</sup> Having earlier, uncorrected readings throughout, the 'second best' sheets must have preceded the 'best fine' ones. At this writing, I have located one coarse paper copy (in the Harris Collection, John Hay Library, Brown University), which has 'best fine' and 'Second best' readings as well as some in a still earlier state. The *Bibliography of American Literature's* state A readings occur in 'Second best' copies, state B readings in 'best fine,' and its 'intermediate set of sheets' in Brown University's coarse paper copy (*BAL* 906). I have, therefore, compared copies on 'best fine' and on 'Second best,' New York Public Library's NBHD + c. 2 and NBHD + c. 1 respectively.

Judging from this collation, the refinements of typesetting were observed more scrupulously on some occasions than on others. While the 'Second best' sheets were in press, somebody noticed that the letters 'ow' following the initial N at the beginning of Book III ('Now twenty years these children of the skies . . .') had been inadvertantly set in lower case rather than in small capitals. Not a particularly glaring error, but

<sup>16</sup> Fulton to Barlow, April 19, 1812, Houghton Library; Fulton to C. & A. Conrad & Co., September 16, 1811, Houghton Library.

once detected, worth stopping the press and unlocking the forme. In some 'Second best' copies, parts of the title page are letterspaced. There was some debate in the Fry & Kammerer shop about hair-spacing before points. In *The Columbiad* the usual practice was to space slightly before the colon, semicolon, exclamation mark and question mark and not at all before the period and comma. The compositor for signature [6], pp. 41-44 must have spaced too widely, for his work was corrected as or after the 'Second best' sheets were printed off.

The most extensive difference between the 'best fine' copies and the 'Second best' ones is in the introduction, where Fry & Kammerer reset four gatherings, pp. 1-16. Why they did this is not immediately apparent, but it is clear that here as elsewhere the 'Second best' paper was the first to go through the press. 'Second best' readings generally stem from *The Vision of Columbus*, whereas the 'best fine' readings were adopted in later editions. In its first setting, Barlow's second sentence ('Yet it is presumed, from the present state of literature in the United States, that many persons . . . are but slightly acquainted with the life and character of the hero') may have been construed as inauspiciously condescending, and the phrase 'from the present state of literature in the United States' was withdrawn. Otherwise the textual changes are more agreeable than necessary. They bespeak careful copyfitting, modifying the amount of text set aside for each of the four gatherings by no more than a word or so. The earlier version was too heavily punctuated, some semicolons were replaced by commas, and many commas were eliminated altogether. In the first setting of p. 1, the text of the introduction begins almost in the middle of the page, two lines farther down than in the second setting. This was either an unsightly blunder in page makeup or an unfortunate (and ultimately intolerable) consequence of drastic revisions in proof; but it still does not explain the revision of four entire gatherings.

Whatever the cause for the resetting, it was not just another

case of Barlow's last minute inspirations; the changes here, like those in the two cancel leaves, were not so much his initiative as his opportunity. Although he rewrote much on pp. 1-16, the last page passed to the next gathering in mid-sentence, and the copy had to be made to fit. If he had his way, surely he would have meddled with the last two pages of the introduction, pp. 17-18. As if slightly harassed or celebrating an end to his labors, the compositor who reset this section neglected to letterspace his headlines.

By the middle of the year, publication was in sight, and Barlow began to plan for a London edition too. On May 18, 1807, he wrote to Richard Phillips, proposing an edition in quarto. He estimated that 'the work will make about 500 pages, rather less than more' and that it would not be ready until winter.<sup>17</sup> He also sent along a portfolio of engravings and some sample sheets of letterpress. By October 12, Fry & Kammerer's printing had advanced at least as far as the postscript on orthography, pp. 445-448, and Barlow had proofs of that section on hand.<sup>18</sup> At the end of the month, several newspapers announced *The Columbiad's* forthcoming publication, and it was registered for copyright on Christmas Eve.<sup>19</sup>

THOMAS AMIES & CO. AND THE  
LEVIS FAMILY, PAPERMAKERS

Barlow priced paper for *The Columbiad* long before he bought any. As early as 1802 he looked over different grades of French paper; he estimated that 75 reams of 'fine Angoulême' at 20 livres a ream would be necessary for 750 copies. For editions in both quarto and duodecimo, 1,000 copies of each, he considered four kinds of paper costing from 20 to 80 livres a ream. In late 1804 or 1805 he figured that, if he were to use three grades of

<sup>17</sup> Barlow to Phillips, May 18, 1807, Beinecke Library.

<sup>18</sup> Barlow was to send them to Noah Webster. Todd, *Life and Letters of Joel Barlow*, pp. 244-46.

<sup>19</sup> The copyright certificate is at Harvard, bMS Am 1448.55.

English paper, 134 reams for the quarto and 45 reams for the duodecimo would cost him £317.10.<sup>20</sup>

Luxury paper was not a staple commodity in Philadelphia. Barlow had to compromise with his publishers, after having haggled with them as best he could. Although his paper transactions are by no means straightforward, they deserve to be explained, for they are the best evidence for estimating the size of the *Columbiad* edition and for interpreting Barlow's fine printing motives.

At first C. & A. Conrad & Co. purchased 79 reams for him, which, 'not good enough' in his judgment, were to be resold for a better grade. Barlow himself sold 12 reams of this paper, and the publishers accounted for another 12 sold at \$11 each. When it became apparent that the *Columbiad* text would need 120 formes, he determined that, for each forme, Fry & Kammerer could print 216 sheets of 'Amies,' 192 sheets of 'Levies' and 15 sheets of super royal, or 846 copies in all. At 480 usable sheets to a ream, his calculations show that he was counting on having 54 reams of 'Amies,' 48 reams of 'Levies' and  $3\frac{3}{4}$  reams of super royal in stock.<sup>21</sup>

I have found no copies on super royal, nor have I found any mentioned in the later accounts. Since the page size of the author's presentation copies does not exceed 12" by  $9\frac{5}{8}$ ", standard royal measurements for this period, it is unlikely that his plans for a large paper issue were ever realized.

Correspondence between Barlow and Fulton in 1811 and 1812 has much to say on what papers were used. At this late date, they were trying to settle their accounts with the Conrads, a difficult and perplexing task because the Conrads would or could not keep credible records, and Barlow himself could not recollect how many copies were printed. All three of the variously aggrieved parties exchanged claims, counterclaims

<sup>20</sup> Za Barlow 1 & 2, Beinecke Library.

<sup>21</sup> Barlow to Fulton, July 28, 1811, Houghton Library; Barlow memorandum book, Houghton Library bMS Am 1448.8.

and inventories, for which the number of copies printed on each kind of paper was totaled up on two occasions. Robert Fulton wrote to the Conrads on September 16, 1811:

Mr Barlow is of opinion that you received of the 4<sup>to</sup> ed. fine and coarse 1000 Copies. By a letter from Mess<sup>rs</sup> Fry and Kammerer they say

of best fine	-----	480
Second best	-----	384
Coarse	-----	<u>96</u>
Total	--	960 copies <sup>22</sup>

By September 1811 Barlow was back in Paris as Minister to France, charged by President Madison with the delicate mission of negotiating a workable trade agreement with Napoleon. Fulton continued to take care of his literary negotiations at home, but by April 19, 1812, he could only recapitulate the situation:

I wrote you I believe March 6 how things stand with Conrad but as it may be interesting to you I will repeat it. To settle the accounts the first thing was to find out the number of copies fit for sale, for counting by reams it seems is not correct as many sheets are spoiled in getting every new form into good working order. W Fry has made out

Amies paper	432	} 816 fine paper
Lavers	384	
	<u>96</u>	Coarse
	912	Copies <sup>23</sup>

Evidently it was decided that 'Amies' was fine enough and that 96 coarse paper copies would be printed instead of 30 on super royal. Assuming that 192 sheets of 'Levies' are the same as 384 half-sheet quartos on 'Lavers,' all three accounts agree on the number of 'Second best' copies printed. As to the 'best fine,' the 1807 memorandum and the 1812 accounts agree on

<sup>22</sup> Fulton to C. & A. Conrad & Co., September 16, 1811, Houghton Library.

<sup>23</sup> Fulton to Barlow, April 19, 1812, Houghton Library.

432 'Amies' copies, but the figure of 480 copies in the 1811 letter is not confirmed elsewhere.

The 1811 letter does mention that ninety-two copies of the coarse paper issue were still on hand and that they were meant to sell at ten dollars, half the price of the fine paper copies. Since so many coarse paper copies were left nearly four years after publication, and since only one of them has been located now, it could be that they were never put up for sale. Perhaps Barlow or his heirs, having had enough trouble disposing of the regular copies, decided they were not worth the warehouse space.

To Leon Howard, these three issues were 'an effort to reach various levels of the public,' an opinion repeated in the *Bibliography of American Literature* and elaborated in William Charvat's *Profession of Authorship in America*.<sup>24</sup> Barlow did indeed have plans for luxury large paper and fine paper issues, but copies on cheap paper did not figure prominently in them. Conceivably they were not in his plans at all, either an afterthought or the responsibility of the publishers. His calculations of 1807 called for copies on Levis, Amies and super royal only. The ninety-six half-price coarse paper copies mentioned in Fulton's letters of 1811 and 1812 represent only ten per cent of the total edition, and after nearly four years, ninety-two of them were still in the warehouse. Rather than resorting to cheaper paper, Barlow brought out a duodecimo edition at two dollars in 1809, and the 1807 quarto was advertised along with it at one price only, twenty dollars.<sup>25</sup> Whether a ruse on the part of the publishers or merely indifference, the Levis 'Second best' copies were priced the same as those on Amies 'best fine'; both issues occur in particularly elaborate contem-

<sup>24</sup> Howard, *The Connecticut Wits*, p. 321; BAL 906; William Charvat, *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870* (Columbus, 1968), p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> *National Intelligencer & Washington Advertiser*, February 6, 1809, p. 3, the duodecimo was also advertised at \$2.25 in the Philadelphia *Aurora* of May 11 & 12, 1809. The Philadelphia, 1808 edition (Shaw & Shoemaker 14452; Woodress, p. 248) is a ghost.



porary bindings and with special India proof plates. As far as booksellers were concerned, there was but one grade of paper. Those who could not afford the 1807 quarto would have to wait two years for the duodecimo edition.

The coarse paper is a royal wove, unwatermarked, obviously substandard stock and manufactured as such. Poorly sized, perfunctorily couched and pressed, it looks and feels like wrapping paper. Knots and holes are evident throughout. Fry & Kammerer's pressmen treated it as defective material, and some pages show signs of haphazard inking and careless make-ready. I have found no mention of the papermaker in the Barlow-Fulton correspondence.

Brown University's coarse paper copy exhibits other unique features beside its paper. In other copies the imprint reads: 'Printed by Fry and Kammerer for C. and A. Conrad and Co. Philadelphia; Conrad, Lucas and Co. Baltimore. Philadelphia: 1807.' But in this case the Conrad firm added two of its Virginia associates: 'Printed by Fry and Kammerer for C. and A. Conrad and Co. Philadelphia; Conrad, Lucas and Co. Baltimore; Somervell and Conrad, Petersburg; Bonsal, Conrad and Co. Norfolk. Philadelphia: 1807.' Were southern book buyers thought to be too thrifty for the twenty-dollar version? Barlow annotated this copy throughout, systematically modernizing spelling and capitalization and also rewriting an occasional line. By marking up an inferior specimen, no doubt he too was endeavoring to be thrifty. Some of the author's marginalia were lost under the binder's knife, probably when John Allan had this copy extra-illustrated, a matter of eighty odd additional plates; Allan died in 1863, and one of his sale catalogues mentions that it 'was the *last* book illustrated by Mr. Allan.'<sup>26</sup>

The 'Second best' paper designated 'Levies' by Barlow in 1807 and 'Levers' by Fulton in 1812 was almost certainly made

<sup>26</sup> Joseph Sabin, *A Catalogue of the Books, Autographs, Engravings, and Miscellaneous Articles, Belonging to the Estate of the Late John Allan*, (New York: C. A. Alvord, 17 Vandewater Street, 1864), p. 13. I am indebted to Daniel Traister, who examined various John Allan sale catalogues at the New York Public Library for me.

by someone in the Levis family somewhere in the Philadelphia area. It is difficult to be more precise than that because paper-making ran in the family—which prospered and multiplied prodigiously. Some members owned or managed more than one mill, and fathers, sons and brothers swapped part interests in the mills as they were handed down from one generation to the next. At least five family mills were in operation when the *Columbiad* paper was made.

The Levis paper is also an unwatermarked royal wove, occasionally foxed and sometimes quite browned in the less happily preserved copies. Although Brown University's copy is too thoroughly extra-illustrated for an exact comparison, its coarse paper does seem thinner than the Levis paper. Directly or indirectly, I have measured thirty-eight Levis paper copies, of which nineteen bulk  $1\frac{5}{8}$ " , twelve  $1\frac{3}{4}$ " , and five  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " . Some Levis paper copies, bulking  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " to 2" , include gatherings printed on 'best fine' stock.

So far I have located forty-eight Amies 'best fine' copies. Not counting nine copies either extra-illustrated, incomplete or inaccessible—and therefore not measureable—all but three bulk over  $1\frac{3}{4}$ " , and thirty of them bulk 2" or over. Significantly thicker than the Levis paper, the Amies paper is also consistently whiter, browned only in cases of acid migration. Its texture, with that 'vellum' quality so coveted by nineteenth-century papermakers, is faultless. A royal wove of the standard American size ( $19\frac{1}{8}$ " by 24" ), it is watermarked with a dove, an olive sprig in its beak, on one half-sheet and with the countermark AMIES on the other. N. & D. Sellers entered a pair of 'Royal Vell:' moulds with these specifications in their *moulds finished* ledgers on August 20, 1806. The Sellers firm charged \$4.00 for watermarking the pair with '2 Doves & branches' and with '10 Letters,' that is, with the dove and AMIES on each mould.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See my 'Size of the Sheet in America: Paper-Moulds Manufactured by N. & D. Sellers of Philadelphia,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 87(1977): 299-342. My references to the Sellers ledgers (at the American Philosophical Society) are explained, and the ledgers themselves are described in this article.

Thomas Amies specialized in high quality ledger, writing and security papers. By some accounts, he was once a superintendent at the Ivy Mills on Chester Creek, Delaware County, one of the first American mills to make fine paper and one of the last to do so by hand. In 1798 he went into business for himself and purchased a mill in Lower Merion, Montgomery County, a venerable establishment that had been in operation in 1769 or possibly as early as 1748. It came to be known as the Dove Mill. First appearing in Philadelphia directories as papermaker in 1809 and at a city address, Amies moved to his mill in Lower Merion in 1814. Associated with a son, he managed the Glenwood Mills on Darby Creek from 1828 to 1838, either for or after the Levis family. When he died in 1839, Amies was listed in city directories as a merchant, again at a Philadelphia address.<sup>28</sup>

Amies undertook special orders for other special publications in the *Columbiad* spirit. Alexander Wilson's *American Ornithology* (Philadelphia, 1808–14) boasted custom-made paper from the Dove Mill, and Wilson himself praised 'the unrivalled excellence of the paper.' Amies subscribed for two copies. John Binns claimed that his sumptuously engraved Declaration of Independence (1819) was printed on Amies paper for which special moulds and felts and only the finest linen rags were used. That Binns paid \$125 a ream for it was, he made sure, a matter of public record, and in his memoirs of 1854 he raised the price to \$200.<sup>29</sup> Amies also supplied the Second Bank of the United States and perhaps even the United States Congress. Achievements in papermaking deserved national recognition, Amies believed. He lobbied for government

<sup>28</sup> Charles R. Barker, 'Old Mills of Mill Creek, Lower Merion,' *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 50(1926):9–11; Henry Graham Ashmead, *History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1884), p. 544; Brown, 'Directory of the Book-Arts and Book Trade in Philadelphia,' p. 221.

<sup>29</sup> Amies had his 'Ornithology' moulds refurbished by the Sellers firm—apparently at the cost of the publishers, *moulds finished* April 11, 1812. Philadelphia *Democratic Press*, April 30, 1817, quoted in Dard Hunter, *Papermaking: The History and Technique of an Ancient Craft*, 2d ed., rev. and enl. (New York, 1947), p. 17; *Recollections of the Life of John Binns* (Philadelphia, 1854), pp. 234–36.

premiums not only in the press<sup>30</sup> but also on his ream wrappers, which he adorned with portraits of presidents and statesmen and with the motto 'The American Arts Only Want Encouragement.'

#### BINNY & RONALDSON, TYPEFOUNDERS

An obvious flaw in Thompson and Small's hot-pressed Bible of 1798 was its American-made text type, more or less adequate but hardly the equal of types that could be imported from England and Scotland. Until American printers could take real pride in the work of their letter foundries, their claims to fine printing would have to be more patriotic than honest. The Philadelphia firm of Binny & Ronaldson, established in 1796 by Archibald Binny and James Ronaldson, did succeed eventually in gaining the wholehearted esteem of its American customers. By the time the *Columbiad* type was being cast, the Binny & Ronaldson foundry was an industrial concern employing more than thirty hands, importing vast amounts of antimony, and capitalized well enough to extend thousands of dollars of credit and to buy up matrices and equipment from its less fortunate, talented, or diligent competitors. When Binny retired in 1815, he sold his share in the business to his partner for sixty-two thousand dollars. James Ronaldson was followed by his younger brother Richard, who in turn was followed by a succession of partnerships culminating in the American Type Founders Company (ATF), amalgamated in 1892.<sup>31</sup>

The dedication, preface, introduction and text of *The Columbiad* are set in a Binny & Ronaldson great primer, generously leaded: the notes are set in their pica Roman no. 1, and the index in their long primer no. 1, all transitional faces and all displayed in the firm's *Specimen of Printing Types* (1812;

<sup>30</sup> Wilmington, *American Watchman*, September 22, 1810, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> P. J. Conkwright, 'Binny & Ronaldson's First Type,' *Printing & Graphic Arts* 1 (1953):27-35; Rollo G. Silver, *Typefounding in America, 1787-1825* (Charlottesville, 1965), pp. 17-30.

facsim., 1936). Darrell Hyder has not seen a significant earlier use of this great primer. Binny & Ronaldson did sell great primer to Mathew Carey in August 1802 and March 1804, but these types could have been old style fonts, later discontinued in favor of the transitional style, as were old style fonts in brevier, long primer and pica sizes.<sup>32</sup>

Whether the great primer was newly cut or not, Barlow was directly concerned with its acquisition. In his memorandum book he noted its price and also that for double pica (perhaps once intended for display or front matter), both at thirty-eight cents a pound. Carey bought great primer at the same price in March 1804, paying two cents less per pound in 1802. Fry & Kammerer printed the Philadelphia, 1809 duodecimo edition in Binny & Ronaldson's transitional faces as well, the introductory matter in small pica Roman no. 1 and the text in long primer no. 1. Barlow the epic poet was pleased with the *Columbiad* types, and Barlow the man of business continued to have dealings with the firm. In 1808 it attempted the manufacture of red and yellow tea sets, an enterprise apparently soon abandoned but which did bring out the Yankee ingenuity in Barlow:

I wish you as much success in your new manufacture of pottery as you have in your type foundery, both of which are extremely interesting to our country. Mr Fulton & myself have an idea of tile fire places resembling the Swedish stove . . . Could you make them at your works 6 by 6, or 8 by 8 inches, & half an inch thick . . . ?<sup>33</sup>

In May 1811 Barlow sent Binny & Ronaldson sixty dollars for the account of a friend. A month later he somewhat belatedly thanked them for their work on *The Columbiad* and rewarded them with an order, now lost, and with a presentation copy:

<sup>32</sup> Hyder, 'Philadelphia Fine Printing,' p. 85; Rollo G. Silver, 'The Costs of Mathew Carey's Printing Equipment,' *Studies in Bibliography* 19(1966):99; Conkwright, 'Binny & Ronaldson's First Type,' p. 27.

<sup>33</sup> Silver, *Typefounding in America*, p. 23; Barlow to Binny & Ronaldson, November 14, 1808, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

I ought long ago to have thanked you in my own way for your kindness & particular care in the elegant types you cut & cast for the Columbiad. I will now be obliged to you to present the above order & accept a copy of that work. . . .<sup>34</sup>

Barlow's gift, a memento of a prestigious and well publicized undertaking, must have boosted company pride. Even as late as 1816 James Ronaldson alluded to *The Columbiad* in his *Specimen of Printing Type*, which displays Columbian small capitals as 'GODFREY. . . . RITTENHOUSE. . . . BARLOW. . . . FULTON.'

Some American typefounders preferred the term Columbian to two-line brevier for the intermediate, approximately 16-point size between English and great primer. The origins of Columbian have become confused, and *The Columbiad* is partly responsible for confusing them. According to De Vinne, Columbian was 'first made in text-type by George Bruce of New York.'<sup>35</sup> Others claimed<sup>36</sup> or reported<sup>37</sup> that this size was first used in the 1807 edition of Barlow's epic and was named after it.

As it appears in the 1816 *Specimen*, Columbian is much closer to modern style than the *Columbiad* great primer and is hardly, if at all, larger than Binny & Ronaldson's English size. Ronaldson's second specimen of 1822 calls it 'Columbian, or English no. 2.' Having cut it too late to be included in their specimen book of 1812, Binny & Ronaldson issued a broadside specimen instead. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania has a copy of *Binny & Ronaldson's New Columbian* dated 1813 in pen, and Columbia University has one bound in Binny & Ronaldson's *Specimen of Metal Ornaments* (1809) along with other single leaf specimens, one dated March 10, 1814. Colum-

<sup>34</sup> The Rendells, Inc., *Autograph Letters, Manuscripts, Documents*, Catalogue 135 (Newton, Mass., 1978), item 6; Barlow to Binny & Ronaldson, June 7, 1811, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>35</sup> Theodore Low De Vinne, *The Practice of Typography . . . Plain Printing Types*, 2d ed. (New York, 1902), p. 64.

<sup>36</sup> 'Type was especially made for it, and type of the same size and pattern is known among printers at this day as *columbiad* [*sic*] type.' *The Historical Magazine* 1(1857): 98.

<sup>37</sup> *Am. Dict. Print.*, p. 105.

bian was originally intended to be used in a deluxe edition of the Bible, the broadside explains, and was named 'in honour of the Country where it was made.' Since it could be 'cast upon English or even Pica body,' being 'a little larger in the face than English, and smaller than Great Primer,' Binny & Ronaldson marketed it as an up-to-date and versatile design, not as a specific size.

For distinguished service over a century and a half—and for want of equally venerable contenders—Binny & Ronaldson's transitional roman could be dubbed the American national typeface. The *Columbiad* great primer was the text type throughout Wilson's *American Ornithology*, though Wilson's printers came to favor modern style fonts for display and notes in the later volumes. Isaiah Thomas, who once imported Fry, Caslon and Wilson types at great expense and with great pride, had his *History of Printing in America* (1810) set in Binny & Ronaldson's transitional pica Roman no. 1—with due credit to the foundry.

The American Type Founders Company revived the transitional series in 1892 and renamed it Oxford. Bruce Rogers used it at the Riverside Press, and Daniel Berkeley Updike deemed it 'a type of real distinction.' From 1910 to 1922 almost seventy Merrymount Press books were printed in Oxford, including Updike's *Printing Types: Their History, Forms, and Use*. During the Depression, C. H. Griffith considered having it recut for Linotype composition, and in 1943 he persuaded the Princeton University Press that it would be appropriate for its Jefferson Papers project. Preliminary proofs were ready by June 1944, and, named Monticello in Jefferson's honor, the Linotype version made its public debut when the first volume was published in 1950.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Daniel Berkeley Updike, *Printing Types: Their History, Forms and Use*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, 1937), 2:157 & 231; P. J. Conkwright, 'A Short Account of Monticello Type,' *Some Notes from the Journal of a Book Designer* (Rochester, 1974), pp. 9–19.

## ROBERT SMIRKE, ILLUSTRATOR

Planning the illustrations was for Barlow just as much an 'exhilarating labor' as writing the text. Fulton seems to have decided that there should be a plate for every book, and Barlow did his best to oblige, sending Fulton new subjects to be sketched and pondering over the slightest of details. (As published, the 1807 *Columbiad* has twelve plates: one for each of the ten books, a second plate in Book VI and the frontispiece portrait of the author.) Sometime in or near 1803, Barlow wrote out instructions for eight paintings. Barlow's instructions left little to the artists' imagination, and as they passed from author to artistic advisor to painter to engraver, they were not always followed. For 'Cruelty Presiding over the Prison Ship' in Book VI, Barlow allowed that 'This Fiend may be painted sitting on the hatches, listening to the cries below, & counting the dead as they are thrown into the sea. Prisoners hands may be seen through the small opening[s] of the hatches.'<sup>39</sup> In the finished plate, the prisoners do indeed extend supplicating hands from below decks towards Cruelty, but there are no bodies tossed overboard. Cruelty, perched on a cloud not on a hatch, holds some sort of ledger as stipulated in VI, 64: 'She keeps with joy the register of death.' But the morose and brawny winged figure depicted in the plate is hardly feminine—nor joyful for that matter.

Conceivably Fulton first expected to submit his sketches to the engravers directly or to execute the paintings himself. Although Barlow claimed to have shed tears over one of his sketches, Benjamin West and Vivant Denon, the French Director of Fine Arts, were decidedly unmoved. When shown the sketches, West somehow took umbrage, and Denon tactfully suggested that Fulton would be better off drawing from

<sup>39</sup> 'Subjects for painting taken from the *Columbiad*,' Houghton Library bMS Am 1448.54.



life. On their urging perhaps, Fulton turned to drawing steam-boats instead and retired to an advisory capacity.<sup>40</sup>

For whatever reason, it became apparent towards the summer or fall of 1803 that Fulton could not finish the *Columbiad* illustrations on his own; professional help or at least a professional intermediary was needed. According to Barlow's memorandum book (Houghton Library bMS Am 1448.8), Barlow and Fulton began by commissioning seven paintings from Henry Fuseli.

That Fuseli had a hand in the *Columbiad* illustrations is a relatively recent discovery.<sup>41</sup> Barlow probably first met him through Joseph Johnson, publisher of Barlow's *Advice to the Privileged Orders* and *The Conspiracy of Kings*, both printed in 1792. That same summer, Fuseli, Johnson and Mary Wollstonecraft planned a trip to Paris, for which Barlow was to provide lodgings. Barlow and Fuseli shared political sympathies, and both admired the works of Erasmus Darwin, author of *The Temple of Nature*, which Fuseli illustrated, and *The Botanic Garden*, which had no small influence on *The Canal* and *The Columbiad*.

Clearly Fuseli came highly recommended, but illustrations by an American artist—if they could be procured—would be more appropriate. Barlow and Fulton reconsidered; later notations in Barlow's memorandum book reassigned 'Zamor Killed by Capac' and 'The Murder of Lucinda' to the American painter John Vanderlyn. Born and schooled in Kingston, New York, Vanderlyn studied under Gilbert Stuart and also in Paris, 1796–01. He returned to Paris in 1803, and, as compatriot, there won the last minute patronage of Barlow and Fulton. Apparently they had not yet settled on a suitable illustrator for 'Cornwallis Resigning His Sword to Washington,' but

<sup>40</sup> Yvon Bizardel, *American Painters in Paris*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, 1960), pp. 9–70; Samuel Y. Edgerton, Jr., 'The Murder of Jane McCrea: The Tragedy of an American *Tableau d'histoire*,' *The Art Bulletin* 47(1965):485.

<sup>41</sup> Gert Schiff, *Johann Heinrich Füssli, 1741–1825, Oeuvrekataloge Schweizer Künstler*, Band I/1 (Zurich and Munich, 1973), p. 338.

'Inquisition,' 'Cesar Passing the Rubicon,' 'Cruelty Presiding over the Prison Ship,' and 'The Rape of the Golden Fleece' remained with Fuseli.

Fuseli duly proceeded with his own preliminary paintings (three of which survive) and with printing proofs of his work, engraved in *manière criblée* by Moses Haughton. The proofs must have arrived as something of a surprise: Fuseli's expressionless, symbolic figures were even farther removed from Barlow's painstaking instructions than Smirke's interpretations. Were it not for a patch of sea in the background, for example, it would be impossible to guess that Fuseli's 'Cruelty' took place on shipboard. Surely these visionary abstractions were not what Barlow and Fulton had in mind; besides, no other artist's work would harmonize with them, and their plans called for at least three and possibly six or seven more engravings.

Although no correspondence concerning the proofs has come to light, it would seem from their rarity that they marked an end to Fuseli's participation in *The Columbiad*. Apparently Fuseli lost interest in the project altogether. Gert Schiff's *Oeuvre-katalog* locates two stray prints at the Victoria and Albert Museum and only one complete set, at the British Museum. To this can be added another set at the Huntington Library, bound sometime after 1869 in Robert Hoe's extra-illustrated *Columbiad*. By 1905, no record of Fuseli's role in *The Columbiad* remained in Hoe's copy, nor were there any traces of provenance to guide the compilers of Hoe's library catalogue, who, without comment, attributed the proofs to William Blake.

Vanderlyn's work also went awry. He seems to have preferred the easy money of society portraiture to 'Zamor Killed by Capac,' but he did finish 'The Murder of Lucinda,' which he exhibited at the Salon of 1804 and then had shipped to the American Academy of Fine Arts in New York. Named after a Revolutionary War atrocity, Barlow's source for the story of Lucinda, the *Death of Jane McCrea* is now in the Wads-

worth Atheneum at Hartford, Connecticut. By the time the painting was ready, however, Barlow had lost patience entirely and engaged another artist. When Vanderlyn sent him a bill for balance due, Barlow disputed it and, in his reply of December 20, 1804, reviewed the circumstances of their contract. Evidently Fulton felt that Vanderlyn, being an American, would be right for the job and would be able to profit from it, if done quickly; the honor of such a commission would also be advantageous. It was Barlow's understanding that Fulton and Vanderlyn had settled on a price of twenty louis a picture, as many as possible to be completed before Vanderlyn's departure to Italy; if Vanderlyn wanted to sell 'The Murder of Lucinda' on his own, that would be fine, but if so he would kindly return the twenty-three louis down payment. Since Vanderlyn could not and would not finish the job on schedule, Barlow commissioned Robert Smirke instead, and Smirke agreed to furnish ten paintings at twenty guineas each. Four of them had been delivered already, much to Barlow's satisfaction, and even Benjamin West thought highly of them.<sup>42</sup>

Robert Smirke had other qualifications besides pleasing West. His revolutionary convictions and his French sympathies were so well known that, when he was elected keeper of the Royal Academy in 1804, George III withheld his approval. Although Smirke seems to have thought little of his own talent, he had a reasonably successful career, much of it devoted to book illustration. His canvases, generally small and in subdued colors, were probably intended more for the engraver than for exhibition. He illustrated several multivolume classics, among them Edward Forster's translation of *The Arabian Nights* (1802), printed by Bulmer and published by William Miller. In his introductory remarks, Forster noted that Smirke selected his engravers and personally supervised their work.

<sup>42</sup> Barlow to Vanderlyn, December 20, 1804, Houghton Library; Kathleen H. Pritchard, 'John Vanderlyn and the Massacre of Jane McCrea,' *The Art Quarterly* 12(1949):361-66.

Since many of the same engravers (Raimbach, Neagle, Heath, James Parker and Anker Smith) contributed to *The Columbiad*, Fulton may have delegated to Smirke similar responsibilities.

Fulton loaned Smirke's eleven paintings to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, where they arrived just in time to provide free publicity for *The Columbiad*; they were exhibited there at least through 1811. When Charles Willson Peale uncrated them in November 1807, he pronounced himself 'very much pleased with the masterly performance of Smirk.' Peale proposed to hang them in a long row beneath Benjamin West's *Ophelia Distracted, Before the King and Queen* and *King Lear in the Storm*, also loaned to the Academy by Fulton. Apprehensive that 'the effect of M<sup>r</sup> Smirke's delicate paintings may be diminished if suspended under the bold works of M<sup>r</sup> West,' Fulton replied that it might be better to display them separately, at eye level, in phalanx formation and labelled 'Eleven pictures by R. Smirke Esq<sup>r</sup> from M<sup>r</sup> Barlow's Columbiad.' I have not been able to trace what became of them since then, a fire having destroyed the Academy's building and most of its early records in 1845.<sup>43</sup>

The plates were printed in England, mostly on Whatman paper watermarked 1806, but some India proof sets were struck off as well. When Fulton reserved for himself 'fifty of the proof and embellished copies in quarto' in his will of December 13, 1814, he may have meant copies with India proof plates. Sets of the prints in various states, some on India paper and others on large paper and before letters, could be had without the letterpress. C. & A. Conrad & Co. proudly re-

<sup>43</sup> Anna Wells Rutledge, *Cumulative Record of Exhibition Catalogues: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1807-1870...*, Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 38 (Philadelphia, 1955), p. 205; Peale to Fulton, November 10 & 15, 1807, American Philosophical Society; Fulton to Peale, November 18, 1807, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; letter from Catherine Stover, Archivist, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, June 25, 1979. The Peale letters cited in this paper are available in a microfiche edition edited by Lillian B. Miller and published by Kraus-Thomson; I am much indebted to Cynthia Owen Philip for directing me to them and to the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, for providing me with photocopies.

ported that they sold in England for as much as twelve guineas each. William Beckford's set is at the Beinecke Library, and another one, one plate mounted on Whatman paper water-marked 1805, is at the Huntington Library. A third set may have contributed plates on India paper and in states before letters to Hoe's extra-illustrated *Columbiad*, also at the Huntington Library.<sup>44</sup>

In September 1806 Fulton sent word from London that three hundred (ordinary) sets, soldered up to protect them from the sea voyage, were on their way to New York. The copper-plates were to be left with Benjamin West, who could have more prints made if need be; eventually they were kept by the Conrads and then by Fulton, who had them shipped to Washington for storage. By May 1807 Barlow had a thousand sets on hand, 'elegant beyond example,' and he offered to sell up to six hundred of them to Phillips at a guinea each. In America they cost ten dollars, and there were two boxes of them left unsold in 1811.<sup>45</sup>

C. & A. CONRAD & CO., PUBLISHERS

Of all those associated with *The Columbiad*, the Conrads had the least to show for it. They had grand schemes, plenty of panache, and—unfortunately—empty pockets. Although they contrived to invest in their publications as little as possible, they fatally overextended themselves. Perhaps *The Columbiad* gave them a taste for book trade adventure; if so, their adventures were too many, too vast and soon ruined them.

John Conrad was the senior member of the firm. In 1800 John Conrad & Co. succeeded to the bookselling and stationery

<sup>44</sup> J. Franklin Reigart, *The Life of Robert Fulton* (Philadelphia, 1856), p. 210; 'Catalogue of Books Published by C. and A. Conrad & Co.,' *The American Register* 2(1808):2.

<sup>45</sup> Fulton to Barlow, September 12, 1806, Beinecke Library; Barlow to Phillips, May 18, 1807, Beinecke Library; *National Intelligencer & Washington Advertiser*, February 6, 1809, p. 3; Barlow to Fulton, July 17, 1811, Houghton Library; Peale to Ruth Barlow, January 26, 1816, American Philosophical Society.

business of Robert Campbell at 30 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia. Conrad opened a branch office in Baltimore, possibly managed by his father Michael Conrad. When Cornelius and Andrew Conrad joined the firm in 1807, it became C. & A. Conrad & Co., for which John Conrad continued to be in charge of negotiations with authors and their representatives. Having admitted Fielding Lucas, Jr. into partnership that June, the Conrads reorganized their Baltimore branch as Conrad, Lucas & Co. They also had book trade associates in Washington, Petersburg and Norfolk.<sup>46</sup>

The Conrads' list was ambitious and diversified: an encyclopedia in parts; a military treatise; many medical text books; a four-volume *Don Quixote*, also available on fine paper and with engravings at five dollars; the presidential *Account of Louisiana*; and numerous historical works, including Hume and Smollett's histories of England in twelve volumes, for sale at twenty-seven dollars. They had a share in the Select British Classics series (*Rambler, Idler, Spectator, Adventurer*, etc.)—altogether thirty-nine volumes, which could be had for forty-five dollars or, for those who fancied 'elegant binding,' sixty-five dollars. As wholesalers, they kept 116 titles available for exchange with other dealers in 1802 and nearly 190 in 1806.<sup>47</sup>

By 1810 the Conrads' fortunes were already in decline. While remaining on friendly terms with them, Fielding Lucas, Jr. bought out their Baltimore branch, book stock, stationery and all. The Conrads issued a prospectus for Lewis and Clark's *History of the Expedition . . . to the Sources of the Missouri* in 1807, and the manuscript was ready for press in July 1811. But

<sup>46</sup> Brown, 'Directory of the Book-Arts and Book Trade in Philadelphia,' pp. 339, 345-46; *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, with Related Documents, 1783-1854*, ed. Donald Jackson (Urbana, 1962), pp. 393-94; Rollo G. Silver, *The Baltimore Book Trade, 1800-1825* (New York, 1953), pp. 19, 23; James W. Foster, 'Fielding Lucas, Jr., Early 19th Century Publisher of Fine Books and Maps,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 65(1956):163; *BAL* 1503 & 1508.

<sup>47</sup> 'Catalogue of Books Published by C. and A. Conrad & Co.,' *The American Register* 2 & 3 (1808). The Huntington Library has two broadside exchange lists, *John Conrad, and Co's. Exchange Catalogue and Conrad & Co.'s Exchange Catalogue*, dated by contemporary inscriptions 1802 and 1806 respectively.

John Conrad had serious credit problems that April and was too preoccupied to get on with the job. Barlow learned that he had some 'necessity of contracting his affairs' in July 1811. In June 1812 his bankruptcy was announced, and a month later his book stock was put up for sale.<sup>48</sup>

While the Lewis and Clark narrative languished (Bradford & Inskeep finally published it in 1814), the Conrads saw a similar work through press—but just barely. The manuscript of Zebulon Montgomery Pike's *Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi* (1810) was so confused that parts of the text were printed out of order. An exasperated prefatory note, probably by John Conrad, hints at many other, presumably financial woes, 'not sufficiently interesting for publication, yet of sufficient magnitude to retard the work, embarrass the publisher, and impose more anxiety than has fallen to his lot in the various books which he has published.' Pike had contracted with Conrad, Lucas & Co. to pay the printing costs himself, allowing them a twenty per cent commission on sales; when the firm failed, the remaining book stock returned to him as his property. Pike's *Account* was therefore not so much a risk to the publishers as an inconvenience, aggravated by other more urgent business disappointments.<sup>49</sup>

Unfortunately, Barlow's original contract with the Conrads has not survived. When it came time to settle the *Columbiad* account, the Conrads' records were in an utter jumble, not even registering the number of copies printed; perhaps they had neglected their bookkeeping in the hysteria of approaching bankruptcy, or as Barlow suspected, perhaps they feigned their confusion, hoping to salvage what they could from a wealthy client. What is really astonishing is that Barlow, who had supervised the printing himself and who had no small book

<sup>48</sup> *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, pp. 392–94, 566, 577–78, 601, 604; Barlow to Fulton, July 17, 1811, Houghton Library.

<sup>49</sup> *The Journals of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, with Letters and Related Documents*, ed. Donald Jackson (Norman, 1966), 1:xi, xxv–xxvi; 2:321, 378.

trade experience of his own, was quite unable to make any sense out of the Conrads' statements. Nor could he reconstruct them from his own records. He too could not recollect how many copies were printed; to the best of his knowledge, there were 800 on fine paper, 200 on coarse. He left the whole matter in Fulton's hands with the admonition, 'do [with] them as you like, only do not be cheated by the bookseller. I believe in general they are very great sharpers.'<sup>50</sup>

He advised Fulton to hire a professional, someone who would not be duped by bookkeeping camouflage and who could extract as much as possible out of the Conrads under the terms of their contract. Barlow disregarded whatever documents he might have had on hand; he neither quoted them nor attached them to his instructions and accounts. Instead he paraphrased what he called his 'bargain':

The Conrads were to pay the whole expence of the two editions [the 1807 quarto and the 1809 two-volume duodecimo], & sell the books & charge 20 percent commission on all except what was delivered to me on my order. Perhaps it was a hard bargain. & they might have charged a commission tho' a less one, on what I took. This they may still do if they will settle the account. . . . But notwithstanding they were to pay all expences, that [i.e., they] had scarcely begun the operation when they began to ask me for advances in money, & kept repeating the demand till we got thro'—and I advanced in this manner 2540. Dol as you see. It is true that about 500 Dol of it were for other things purchased out of their store &c.—But I am at this day in advance 2000 Dol.<sup>51</sup>

If Barlow's account is accurate, it easily explains the Conrads' demise. Surely they were not so dazzled by the illustrations, even if supplied gratis by the author, to commit themselves to such elaborate bookmaking with only a twenty per cent commission and only on their copies. Surely they had in mind something more like Pike's contract: the printing costs to be

<sup>50</sup> Barlow to Fulton, July 28, 1811, Houghton Library.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*



the concern of the author (so that Barlow's two thousand dollars were not advances but reimbursements), the publishers to collect a twenty per cent commission on all copies sold, and the rest to be the author's property.

Barlow took sixty-four copies of the duodecimo edition on his own account and probably more of the quarto edition; he may have had the right to sell others in certain circumstances—such as to booksellers overseas. Richard Phillips ordered forty copies of the quarto and ten of the duodecimo directly from Barlow, and it was Barlow who sent him word on American prices and who 'ordered my bookseller C. & A. Conrad & C<sup>o</sup>' to have them sent off. In reply to an inquiry from New York, however, Barlow noted that *The Columbiad* had always been available at the bookstore of Peter A. Mesier. Should he be out of them, which was unlikely, the Conrads could be contacted directly, or better yet Mesier himself should order some. When the quarto was published, friends in the New Haven area volunteered to buy 'a number of them . . . at the lowest booksellers discount.' Barlow was flattered and more than eager to do business, but not without first consulting the Conrads.<sup>52</sup>

Advertising was the publishers' responsibility. Ostensibly based on 'a hasty perusal of a proof-sheet copy,' a prepublication notice in the Conrads' semiannual *American Register or General Repository of History, Politics and Science* included an almost book-by-book summary of the poem and several lengthy extracts from it. *The American Register* never reviewed unpublished works, the editor remarked, but in this case 'the importance of the performance here mentioned' justified the exception.<sup>53</sup> In late October 1807 the Conrads' publication announcement appeared in the Philadelphia *Literary Magazine, and American Register*; the New York *Public Advertiser* (October

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.; Barlow to Phillips, July 21, 1809, Beinecke Library; Barlow to H. P. Dering, November 12, 1809, New York Public Library (photostat); Barlow to Abraham Bishop, May 16, 1808, Beinecke Library.

<sup>53</sup> *The American Register* 1 (1807):[217]-20.

30); and the Baltimore *American & Commercial Daily Advertiser* (October 30), which seems to have picked it up from the Philadelphia *Aurora*. A slightly different version in the November *Monthly Anthology and Boston Review* was probably derived from another Federalist journal, the Philadelphia *Port Folio* (October 31). T. and G. Palmer had taken over the publication of *The Literary Magazine, and American Register* from the Conrads, and they printed the Conrads' *American Register* as well; their version of the announcement should be reasonably faithful to the original press release:

THERE will soon be published in Philadelphia a new and interesting work, entitled 'the Columbiad, a poem, in ten books, by Joel Barlow.' This work will be ornamented with twelve engravings, which have been done in England by the most eminent artists, and at great expence. They are in the first style of elegance. The typographical part, wholly American, is executed in a manner highly creditable to the several artists employed. The paper by Amies, the type by Binny and Ronaldson, and the printing, with consummate taste and care, by Fry and Kammerer; it will be published by C. and A. Conrad and Co., in one volume, quarto. A work like this, on a great national subject, must excite a high degree of interest. In the present instance, we are confident that the public expectation will not be disappointed; and while the Columbiad will be cited as a monument of American genius, the publishers are determined that this edition shall do equal honour to our arts.<sup>54</sup>

A later Conrad advertisement had even more to say about the plates, naming Smirke and some of the engravers, and even greater praise for the printing, 'the most elegant specimen of typography hitherto produced in this country.' For an endorsement of the poetry itself, the Conrads seized on an obliging prediction in Phillips's *Public Characters*, 'a late English critic says, "[it] is now probably destined to stand the epic song of his (Mr. Barlow's) country.'" <sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> *The Literary Magazine, and American Register* 8(1807):204-5.

<sup>55</sup> 'Catalogue of Books Published by C. and A. Conrad & Co.,' *The American Register* 2(1808):2.

Viewed as fine printing, *The Columbiad* continued to enjoy a good press. The New York *Public Advertiser* reported that there was no hope or intention of recouping the printing costs, that it was judged superior to European workmanship and that Barlow himself was to send some copies to England 'to shew them what American printers can do.'<sup>56</sup> When the duodecimo edition came out in 1809, 'a few copies' of the quarto were still available, 'dressed in the highest Typographical luxury hitherto attained on either side of the Atlantic.'<sup>57</sup> The American graphic arts had progressed so far, a French reviewer concluded, that such achievements could rival the best work of Paris, Parma and London.<sup>58</sup> Even Henri Grégoire, incensed at the sacrilegious 'Final Resignation of Prejudices,' had to admit that *The Columbiad* would be a credit to the American Press.<sup>59</sup>

As literature, it did not fare so uniformly well. Francis Jeffrey found kind things to say about the poem in the *Edinburgh Review* but nothing whatsoever to justify its epic pretensions. American critics were less generous. Robert Fulton lashed back at one of them in the *Aurora* of April 11 & 12, 1809. He also urged Barlow to send Phillips twenty or thirty guineas to have it properly reviewed in England. As much as desperate measures were called for, bribery wasn't necessary in this case; Phillips's *Monthly Magazine* had already extolled *The Columbiad* in two successive issues.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the best efforts of Phillips, Fulton and the Conrads, *The Columbiad* sold poorly. By June 1811 some four hundred copies remained in the Conrads' warehouse and, having prob-

<sup>56</sup> New York *Public Advertiser*, February 9, 1808, p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> *National Intelligencer & Washington Advertiser*, February 6, 1809, p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> *Extrait du Magasin encyclopédique. Numéro de Mai 1809* (Paris, 1809?), p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> Henri Grégoire, *Observations critiques sur le poeme de M. Joel Barlow . . .* (Paris, 1809), p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> *The Monthly Magazine* 26(Dec. 1808 & Jan. 1809):403-9, 518-23; Fulton to Barlow, March 1, 1809, Huntington Library. For Jeffrey's review, see Howard, *The Connecticut Wits*, p. 323.

lems of their own, the Conrads declined to handle them any longer. Not only that, they sent the author a bill for \$718. Barlow was then preparing for his diplomatic mission to France, and although he figured that they actually owed him \$3995, he was in no mood to haggle. He authorized Fulton to collect whatever he could from the recalcitrant publishers and to repossess the unsold copies; he was also to find a bookseller who would consent to sell them, negotiate a final settlement with the Conrads and undertake a new edition in octavo, duodecimo or both. Fulton had the Conrads' copyright endorsed in his name, and he commissioned William Fry to have the *Columbiad* stock counted and crated—but little else could be done. No one would sell it except on consignment, and by 1812 the Conrads, on the verge of collapse, could not account for the number of copies delivered, sold or given away, much less pay for them.<sup>61</sup>

#### ROBERT DESILVER, BOOKBINDER

The Conrads supplied the trade with *The Columbiad* in sheets or in boards, apparently without any attempt at an edition binding. They charged their retail customers (and Barlow himself) five dollars to have it bound 'in the first style of elegance,' and Barlow paid an extra dollar each for copies in boards.<sup>62</sup> I have, however, found no copies that can be proved to have been bound for the Conrads, nor have I found any binders named in the Barlow-Fulton correspondence. When Robert Fulton rescued the *Columbiad* stock in 1812, it was in unbound sheets. A copy in folded sheets at the Alderman Library, University of Virginia, lacks the plates and the cancel-

<sup>61</sup> Barlow to Fulton, July 17, 1811, Houghton Library; Barlow to Fulton, July 28, 1811, Houghton Library; Barlow to C. & A. Conrad & Co., July 30, 1811, Houghton Library; Barlow to Fulton, August 2, 1811, Houghton Library; Fulton to C. & A. Conrad & Co., September 16, 1811, Houghton Library; Fulton to Barlow, April 19, 1812, Houghton Library.

<sup>62</sup> New York *Public Advertiser*, February 9, 1808, p. 2; Barlow to Fulton, July 28, 1811, Houghton Library.

lantia for pages 169–70 and 179–80; no doubt the cancellanda were meant to be cut out and discarded later. Quite possibly it survives just as Fulton found it in the Conrads' warehouse. Another copy at the Alderman Library, inscribed by Ruth Barlow to a Dr. Bull, is in early, possibly original tan unprinted boards.

Of six known presentation copies, not one is in a presentation binding. Both Ruth and Joel Barlow were generous with the quarto edition, and Joel made sure it reached the right places. But Barlow had several good reasons—to be examined below—for feeling compromised by the extravagance of his creation; to present a copy in any but the simplest garb would be to compromise himself even further. So when Barlow donated a copy to the American Philosophical Society (to which he had just been elected), the Society had to have it bound in the shop of Jane Aitken, who returned it in April 1812 in full calf, also donated. Dolley Madison noted in her copy, now at the Huntington Library, that it was a gift of the author. If Barlow had it specially bound (she was, after all, wife of the Secretary of State and soon to be First Lady), there would be signs of the binder's knife. The leaf size of copies in early bindings averages about  $11\frac{1}{8}$ " by  $8\frac{3}{4}$ ", whereas the Huntington copy, currently in red morocco by Zaehnsdorf, measures  $11\frac{3}{4}$ " by  $9\frac{3}{8}$ " and preserves much of its deckle; Barlow must have presented it to Dolley Madison in boards.

Again, if Barlow had commissioned presentation bindings, surely Thomas Jefferson would have merited one. Barlow sent a copy to Monticello within a month of publication: 'I beg your acceptance of a specimen of the typographical art which I think equal to any that Europe has produced. The paper type & ink are made in Philadelphia, and I regret that the engravings had not likewise been committed to American artists.' Clearly this copy arrived in boards, or otherwise Barlow would have commended the bookbinding too. Jefferson thanked him promptly and sent his *Columbiad* off to the Georgetown shop

of Joseph Milligan, who charged four dollars for binding it in calf, gilt, in April 1808.<sup>63</sup>

The copy that Barlow gave to his friend William Lee in Paris, August 1812, is now at the University of Pennsylvania, rebound. The Library Company of Philadelphia owns a copy originally donated by Ruth Barlow to the Philadelphia Museum, which appears to be responsible for binding it in serviceable red straight-grain morocco.

Barlow and the Conrads must have contracted for book-binding on a book-by-book basis or in batches too small to be noticed statistically. Nevertheless, about a decade after publication the Philadelphia bookbinder Robert Desilver took a significant interest in the 1807 *Columbiad*, an interest that can be accounted for statistically and in contemporary documents as well. At least twenty-seven of the quarto edition's surviving contemporary bindings came from the Desilver workshop. I have found eight with his ticket, 'Bound by R. De Silver N<sup>o</sup> 110 Walnut Street Philad<sup>a</sup>,' and nineteen others decorated with the same tools as the ticketed ones. Most, but by no means all, of the Desilver bindings are in full calf, with morocco spine labels, gilt panel spines, gilt turn-ins, sprinkled edges and marbled endpapers. A wide roll-tooled border often surrounds a gilt lozenge or a stained central panel, the outer border composed of the same roll repeated in gilt and in blind. A typical Desilver *Columbiad* with a characteristic roll-tooled border—a rosette and detached flowers—is illustrated in *Early American Bookbindings from the Collection of Michael Papantonio* (New York, 1972); this copy is now at the American Antiquarian Society. Despite such similarities, the Desilver bindings are not quite uniform enough to be edition work; some

<sup>63</sup> E. Millicent Sowerby, *Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington, 1955), 4:429. Jefferson confessed he had no time to read it just then, but he did admire the printing: 'the eye discovers at once the excellence of the Mechanical execution of the work, and he [speaking in the third person] is persuaded that the Mental part will be found to have merited it.'

are quite plain and others comparatively grand, as if intended for show.

The evidence is all but conclusive that the Desilver firm, somehow associated with William Fry, remaindered the 1807 *Columbiad*. Entrusted with urgent treaty negotiations, Barlow followed Napoleon from Paris to Wilna and then, fleeing before the Russian army, back again by way of Warsaw. He died of pneumonia in a small village near Cracow on Christmas Eve, 1812, *The Columbiad*'s fifth anniversary. Fulton was then solely responsible for what was left of the two Conrad editions, but not for long. He died in 1815, willing all but 'fifty of the proof and embellished copies in quarto' to Barlow's widow. Fulton's bequest did not include any clues to its whereabouts, and Ruth Barlow commissioned Charles Willson Peale to find it for her. Peale, she thought, had some copies on deposit, but he had only what Barlow himself had presented to the Philadelphia Museum. He had assumed that *Columbiad* affairs were still in the hands of John Conrad.<sup>64</sup> Some months later, Peale uncovered the *Columbiad* remains in the warehouse of William Fry:

It gives me pleasure to inform you that I have found that the Columbiad at the failure of M<sup>r</sup> Conrad was taken by M<sup>r</sup> Fulton and deposited with M<sup>r</sup> John Fry.<sup>65</sup> . . . M<sup>r</sup> Fry expects an order from the Executors of M<sup>r</sup> Fulton before he can deliver it [to] any one. They are in Sheets, and the Plates are in the Philadelphia Bank which if I understood him, he [?] has an order or can get them. M<sup>r</sup> Fry also says that the work will not sell at the high price it first sold at, that he believes, as many was sold at that price as Costomers could be found; and that so many Copies of a cheaper price must have lessened the demand—he is willing to undertake to get you a small price for it the best he can. I will not undertake to give you an oppinion on his offer. you can I hope have good assistance towards the disposal of it. I asked

<sup>64</sup> Peale to Ruth Barlow, September 11, 1815, American Philosophical Society.

<sup>65</sup> Peale means William Fry here. After having packed up the *Columbiad* quartos in 1812, William Fry was to hold them until Fulton sent further instructions—which evidently never came. Fulton to Barlow, April 19, 1812, Houghton Library.

Mr Fry if there was none of the *Columbiad* folded & bound, his answer was not any, such he supposed was sacrificed. that it was fortunate that they were taken from Mr Conrad at that time, for all left on the shelves would have been lost.<sup>66</sup>

A month or so later the botanist William Darlington bought a quarto copy at auction for nine dollars; inscribed in his hand to that effect, with his bookplate, in the standard Desilver binding and with the Desilver ticket, it is now in the Orlando Public Library, Orlando, Florida.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps the book market was already so glutted with *Columbiads* that the quarto was selling for less than half its list price. But Darlington's bargain purchase could be evidence that Mrs. Barlow took Fry's advice and immediately cut her losses.

In 1815 or 1816 William Fry moved to the back of 110 Walnut Street, no doubt bringing the *Columbiad* stock along with him. Whatever went with Fry went through the door—or rather, the back door—of Robert Desilver, who had been at 110 Walnut Street (presumably at the front) since 1808 and who would share the premises with Fry until 1820.<sup>68</sup> Mrs. Barlow died in 1818. She or her heirs must have come to terms with Fry or with Fry as an interested intermediary, for the 1807 *Columbiad* reemerged at the 110 Walnut Street address a few years later.

Reissued copies are easily identified. Of the ninety-two copies I have located to date, thirty are extra-illustrated with facsimile autographs of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence. Engraved without ornament on two facing plates (or perhaps a double plate), the autographs proceed across the page in two columns, below which is the imprint, 'Published by R. Desilver N<sup>o</sup> 110 Walnut S<sup>t</sup> Philad<sup>a</sup> Engrav'd by

<sup>66</sup> Peale to Ruth Barlow, January 26, 1816, American Philosophical Society.

<sup>67</sup> Darlington's papers are part of the Fitzpatrick Botany Collection at the Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas; Alexandra Mason, Spencer Librarian, very kindly verified his handwriting and bookplate for me.

<sup>68</sup> Brown, 'Directory of the Book-Arts and Book Trade in Philadelphia,' pp. 391, 448.



J. Warr J<sup>r</sup>: N<sup>o</sup>: 110 Walnut S<sup>t</sup>: Philad:<sup>a</sup> Ten of these thirty copies are, in fact, in attributable Desilver bindings, eight are obviously rebound, and of the remaining contemporary bindings, four are almost certainly the work of one binder, as yet unidentified.

Several common features suggest that these copies went through the same hands at about the same time, long after publication. Not one is a presentation copy, nor are any of the Desilver bindings ticketed. A roll border similar to one used by J. Katez of Philadelphia<sup>69</sup> figures prominently in eight *Columbiad* bindings, all with the Signers inserted and all but one easily attributed to the Desilver shop. Eight out of the eleven copies I have located with India proof plates also include the Signers, not counting copies extra-illustrated in the mid-century or later. In seven Levis 'Second best' copies, five of them with the Signers, signatures of Amies 'best fine' were mixed in the preliminaries—or, in at least one copy, throughout most of the volume.

At least eleven of the copies with the inserted Signers were further extra-illustrated with a plate portraying Washington, Adams, Jefferson and Madison in medallion vignettes. Both the Signers and the presidential portraits were printed on similar poor quality wove paper, and since the portraits always accompany the Signers, they too may have been a Desilver enterprise.

The enterprise seems to have been to take over the *Columbiad* stock through the good offices of or in association with William Fry and to contrive a suitably patriotic pretext for putting it back on the market. A prestige item like *The Columbiad* would fare ignominiously in a simple, straightforward remainder sale. By inserting the Signers and then the presidential portraits, Desilver had a pretext to remind Americans that their national epic was still available.

These copies probably passed through Desilver's shop in

<sup>69</sup> Reproduced in *Early American Bookbindings*, item 34.

the early 1820s. A later state of the presidential portraits includes James Monroe and John Quincy Adams, and the plate was reworked yet again to admit Andrew Jackson. The first state as used in *The Columbiad* is therefore likely to have preceded the presidency of John Quincy Adams, 1825–29. The presidential portraits were engraved by David Edwin and by George Murray, who died in Philadelphia on July 2, 1822. The U.S. Department of State accessioned a copy with both Signers and portraits, now at Duke University, on August 1, 1823. Besides engraving the Signers for the Desilver firm, John Warr, Jr. executed charts and astronomical plates for Thomas Arnold's *American Practical Lunarian*, which Desilver published in August 1822. Since the Signers imprint placed him at the 110 Walnut Street address, Warr could have been a Desilver employee at that time.<sup>70</sup>

#### A COST ACCOUNTING OF THE COLUMBIAD

Barlow believed that *The Columbiad* deserved the most sumptuous paper, printing, and illustrations; although not willing to admit it in public, Barlow paid about half of the total publishing costs himself. He estimated that it took 'about ten thousand dollars to get it into boards,—painting, engraving, paper & printing.' In 1809 Fulton asserted that his share of the expense was five thousand dollars, and he repeated this figure in his will of 1814. Barlow contributed several thousand dollars of his own, having contracted to pay Robert Smirke two hundred guineas for ten paintings and having advanced, much against his will, approximately two thousand dollars to his publishers. Altogether, the illustrations cost him about £1200.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Mantle Fielding, *Catalogue of the Engraved Work of David Edwin* (Philadelphia, 1905), pp. xv, 33; George C. Groce & David H. Wallace, *The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America, 1564–1860* (New Haven, 1957), p. 462.

<sup>71</sup> Barlow to Abraham Bishop, May 16, 1808, Beinecke Library; Fulton to Barlow, March 1, 1809, Huntington Library; Reigart, *Life of Robert Fulton*, p. 210; Barlow to Vanderlyn, December 20, 1804, Houghton Library; Barlow to Fulton, July 28, 1811, Houghton Library; Barlow to Phillips, May 18, 1807, Beinecke Library.

Fulton's and Barlow's collaboration on *Columbiad* book-making became so close, protracted and entangled in the complexities of their friendship that they could hardly remember what each had done, nor did they really try. Barlow had his own reasons for being less than candid in acknowledging his friend's artistic and financial interests in the work. Leon Howard has shown that Barlow, national bard and republican epic poet, discerned embarrassing contradictions in his royal quarto, so aristocratic in form and price. One way out of this predicament was to compose an extravagant dedication to Fulton, incidentally assigning to him all publishing responsibility and suggesting that the plates were prepared only at his initiative:

This poem is your property. I present it to you in manuscript, that you may bring it before the public in the manner you think proper. . . . My poem, having grown up under your eye, much benefited by your observations, as well as by those of my excellent wife, is to come forward, I find, ornamented by your taste. You designated the subjects to be painted for engravings; and, unable to convince me that the work could merit such expensive and splendid decorations, you ordered them to be executed in my absence and at your expense. So that the whole work, as committed to the publisher and estimated by its cost, is chiefly yours already. For my proportion has cost me nothing but that leisurely and exhilarating labor in which I always delight.<sup>72</sup>

Barlow's enemies easily saw through his disingenuous dedication; if intended to conceal his role in *The Columbiad*, it failed utterly and inevitably, for Barlow was too much in the public eye. When Madison nominated him Minister to France in 1811, the opposition press vociferously disputed the appointment and for all sorts of reasons, some more pertinent than others. Barlow was inexperienced in commerce, a speculator, a dangerous Francophile, a known atheist and a self-indulgent poetaster: 'The same attempt to court most coy and unwilling

<sup>72</sup> *The Columbiad* (Philadelphia, 1807), pp. iii-iv.

fame, induced Barlow to supply the poetical deficiencies of his *Columbiad*, by the richness of paper and elegance of type and engravings; greatly, as we are informed, to the injury of his private purse.<sup>73</sup>

However, it was not the derision of Barlow's political enemies that hurt the sales of the 1807 *Columbiad*, nor even the spite of those who thought it a rich man's folly. To pay twenty dollars for a copy in boards and five dollars more to have it bound was a staggering expenditure, way beyond the comprehension and capacity of most American bookbuyers. Why invest twenty dollars in fine printing—even with a Philadelphia imprint—when thirteen dollars and twenty-five cents would buy the Conrads' Select Novels in twelve volumes? For the price of the binding alone, the Conrads' four-volume *Don Quixote* could be had embellished with engravings and on fine paper. Of all those who asked to look at this latest prodigy in Charles Willson Peale's Philadelphia Museum, few were likely to pay for one of their own, Peale predicted.<sup>74</sup> Unwilling to invest in it himself, Senator Samuel Latham Mitchill managed to have an early look at the 'enormous quarto' by buying a copy for the Library of Congress; he reassured his wife, 'You need not pine with grief, at not possessing the whole work, after having seen the prints and a sample of the type & paper as you have done.'<sup>75</sup> Clearly, America was not yet ready for luxury bookmaking. Published before its time, *The Columbiad* never yielded even a symbolic return on investment: a century and a half after publication, the 1807 edition still sold for less than its published price.

<sup>73</sup> *Alexandria Daily Gazette*, March 27, 1811.

<sup>74</sup> Peale to Barlow, February 21, 1808, American Philosophical Society.

<sup>75</sup> Letter from Cynthia Owen Philip, September 7, 1980; Samuel Latham Mitchill to Catherine Mitchill, February 25 & March 9, 1808, Museum of the City of New York.

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