Financing America's First Literary Boom

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ALTHOUGH THIS PAPER is focused on the American book trades in the 1820s and specifically on the rise of the literary publishing market then, the story of course has earlier roots. The maturing of the American press in both material and ideological terms clearly has to be traced to the Revolutionary era. Numbers help paint the picture. In 1765, about 330 imprints were issued in the thirteen colonies. By 1776, this figure had nearly tripled, reflecting both the greater activity of American writers and the growing capacity of the late colonial press. That capacity was crucial, in turn, for the broad and relatively quick circulation of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* in its original Philadelphia editions and in the dozens of reprints issued across 1776 in many other towns, from Salem and Newburyport to Hartford and Charleston.[1]

1. For the complex story of the publication of Paine's pamphlet, see Richard Gimbel, *Thomas Paine: A Bibliographical Check List of Common Sense* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956). In his last will, Paine himself pointed to the role of reprinting in the dissemination of his ideas: 'I Thomas Paine, of the State of New York, author of the work entitled *Common Sense*, written in Philadelphia, in 1775, and published in that city the beginning of January, 1776, which awaked America to a declaration of Independence on the fourth of July following, *which was as fast as the work could spread through so extensive a country*,' *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Moncure D. Conway, 4 vols. (1894–96; reprint New York: AMS Press, 1967), 4:508 (emphasis added). Had Paine issued such a work even twenty years earlier, the infrastructure for spreading it through the country with such relative speed simply would not have existed. The growth of the press in the period 1765–75 had helped create it.

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Even as it helped start a war, *Common Sense* also marked a reversal of the recent expansion of both American political discourse and the press. During the Revolution, the output of the press was cut by more than half, and not until 1790 did it return to prewar levels. By 1795, the total had increased half again as much, to 1,500 items that year, after which its recovery remained relatively steady. By 1810, it had reached two thousand; by 1820, around three thousand.[2] By current standards, these absolute numbers are quite small, but the trends are impressive. Furthermore, they represent deep changes in the scope, capacity, and typical habits and procedures within the reading public, the writing public (if I may so term it), the book trades, and indeed the American economy at large from the adoption of the Constitution to the start of the Jacksonian era. Those changes form the proper topic of the present paper. In particular, it explores how the maturing of the book trades, especially in financial terms, had the effect of inducing literary production narrowly understood and how creative writers themselves took an active part in the shifts by using not only their pens but also their pockets. 'Follow the money' will be the guiding principle, since it is clear that the cash nexus among authors, printer-publishers, and readers by the mid-1820s became the means by which a post-colonial country previously without native literary forms suddenly acquired them.

We can appreciate the force of these changes by exploring the typical situation that obtained at the start of the forty-year period. Here one might point to the career of J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur. Everyone recognizes Crèvecoeur's name as an important one in the traditional story of America's literary awakening. In his *Letters from an American Farmer*, published in London in 1782, the onetime French officer, turned Hudson Valley farmer,

2. My figures, which are rounded off for the sake of comparisons, are based on Charles Evans, *American Bibliography*, 14 vols. (Chicago: Blakeley Press, 1903–59); Roger Bristol, *Supplement to Charles Evans' American Bibliography* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970), and Clifford K. Shipton and James E. Mooney, *National Index of American Imprints through 1800: The Short-Title Evans*, 2 vols. (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1969).

established any number of compelling themes and images. Probably the most enduring is the notion of the melting pot as a homely analogy for the diverse new society emergent in Revolutionary America. Yet Crèvecoeur was not viewed as an American spokesman in this country in the 1780s and 1790s—indeed, not really until the twentieth century. Today it is common to see him as a rising voice in a rising land: like Paine, he is portrayed as a writer profoundly in touch with ideas circulating in the former British colonies. Book history, however, does not confirm these usual views. If we examine how he wrote, why he wrote, how he published, how his works circulated, and how they were sold and read—we will come to the conclusion that Crèvecoeur has been sorely misapprehended.

To begin with, whereas the social origins of Paine's most famous pamphlet are clear, with Crèvecoeur we cannot specify a similarly powerful context. Of course the war conditioned most of what he wrote—yet there was no ongoing public discussion with which Crèvecoeur was connected, as there obviously was with Paine.[3] Crèvecoeur liked to write, and liked writing well enough that he did so in his adopted English rather than his native French. When he started putting his pieces down on paper in the late 1760s and early 1770s at his farm in Orange County, New York, however, he hardly was intending to produce anything but a serial miscellany of descriptive pieces, historical narratives, fables, and quasi-autobiographical sketches. We do not know when he began thinking that there might be a 'book' in all this writing—a book either as a printed artifact or a more-or-less unified text. In

3. By the term 'social origins,' I refer to the larger political movement that would result in the Declaration of Independence and the Revolution and to the specific deliberative context that had developed in the American colonies following the Stamp Act and that, by the time Paine wrote his own essay, had resulted in the penning of several hundred such publications. See Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), for an analysis of the kinds of arguments put forward in this collective body of work. Paine, who had arrived in America in late 1774, hardly had attended to, let alone participated in, that decade-long debate. However, he was astutely aware of the political setting of his own pamphlet. The flood of political publications in turn had helped bring the American press to its new levels by 1775.

some ways it may even be more appropriate to think of him at this point as participating in manuscript culture rather than print culture: not only in how he produced and aggregated and copied and archived the separate pieces before his book eventuated, but also in how he shaped that book as a collection of supposedly private letters exchanged in script between the fictional 'Farmer James' and his English correspondent, 'Mr. F. B.'

Writing out of curiosity and self-indulgence, in fits and starts, rather than for a specific market, Crèvecoeur had no publisher in mind as he wrote. Why he brought his trunk of disparate papers with him when he went to British-held New York City early in 1779 is unclear. Perhaps there was an inkling of possibilities here—or perhaps he just wanted to keep these unique handwritten scripts near him (and it was a good thought, since his wife was murdered and their home burned in his absence). In any case, there was little chance of his publishing them in the city even at his own expense right then. Only after having survived his own sufferings in New York and made his way to England did this situation change. In London in 1781, he chanced upon the Covent Garden bookseller Thomas Davies, who, finding the man's story intriguing, offered him the sum of thirty guineas (a typical amount paid for novels at the end of the century) for the rights to a volume to be culled from his papers. Then it was that Crèvecoeur set about making a book. *Letters* was to include about a third of his materials in somewhat altered form, as well as an entirely new introductory sketch that gave prominence to the fictional 'Farmer James,' a figure who is only indifferently present in some of the other sketches but who is often taken to be the coherent narrator of the whole.[4]

4. *Letters from an American Farmer; Describing Certain Provincial Situations, Manners, and Customs, not Generally Known; and Conveying Some Idea of the Late and Present Interior Circumstances of the British Colonies in North America. Written for the Information of a Friend in England, by J. Hector St. John, A Farmer in Pennsylvania* (London: Printed for Thomas Davies, in Russell Street, Covent-Garden, and Lockyer Davis, in Holburn, 1782). The first letter in the book (called 'Introduction' in the 1782 edition) was written by Crèvecoeur for the Davies and Davis edition while he was preparing the book in London, as its absence from the manuscript of the rest of the volume indicates. See Howard C. Rice, *Le Cultivateur*

When the book was published in 1782, it was the latest in a long line of colonial reports issued in Europe and essentially for European readers. The later history of Crèvecoeur's various writings confirms his detachment from the context of American history, including American book history. Once *Letters from an American Farmer* had appeared in London, he set about expanding it by a process of elaboration and translation (from his at times colorfully original English back into his native but somewhat rusty French) that resulted in a pair of more deeply European publications drawing much of their new material from the same old trunk. Those books, both entitled *Lettres d'un Cultivateur Américain*, appeared in Paris in 1784 and 1787.[5] Their most immediate cultural context was not the rising American republic, in the middle states of which Crèvecoeur was then serving as French consul. Rather, it was the salons of Paris, into which Crèvecoeur had been introduced on crossing the Channel in August 1781—and where his first book made him famous, thereby leading to his consular appointment. As Howard C. Rice put it

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Américain: Étude sur l'oeuvre de Saint John de Crèvecoeur (Paris: Champion, 1932), 229. The absence of 'James' from parts of the book can be felt especially in Letter XI, the one supposedly written by a Russian traveler. But in more subtle ways much of the book is only intermittently subsumable under the viewpoint of its supposed 'author.' How, one might ask, would a farmer in Pennsylvania have the leisure or the time to visit Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard or Charleston? Furthermore, the letters that cover these far-flung places, occupying the heart of the book, betray little if any evidence of the 'simple' farmer who at the start of the book professes himself unequal to task of describing his own domestic economy, let alone the sorts of issues tackled in Letters IV-IX. Most importantly, although James takes pains to indicate that his own farm is located in the middle landscape, not on the frontier, readers regularly assume that the final and bleakest of the twelve letters, 'Distresses of a Frontier Man,' unequivocally represents James's own experience. To the contrary, one might better regard that final letter as having been plucked by Crèvecoeur from among the various Revolutionary narratives he wrote at the end of his stay at Pine Hill—and used by him as a means of gesturing toward the war that, by the time his book was being readied for the press in 1781–82, had effectively ended. In other words, the 'Frontier Man' is the counterpart of the 'Frontier Woman,' or 'Mrs. B.,' of the so-called *Sketches*, not a portrait of James. My point is that the apparent coherence of the book as such is only apparent; inside, it continues to bear marks of its miscellaneous origins.

5. *Lettres d'un Cultivateur Américain, écrites á W. S. Ecuyer, depuis l'année 1770, jusqu'à 1781. Traduites de l'Anglois par* ***, 2 vols. (Paris: Chez Cuchet, Libraire, 1784), *Lettres d'un Cultivateur Américain, addressées [sic] à Wm. S . . . on, Esqr., depuis l'Année 1770 jusqu'en 1786, par M. St. John de Crève Coeur*, 3 vols. (Paris: Chez Cuchet Libraire, 1787).

seventy years ago, in *Lettres* Crèvecoeur's original book 'was melted down and poured into the moulds dear to the French literati of the day.'[6]

Despite his return to America as a French diplomat, Crèvecoeur, the *philosophe*, was slow in breaking into the American book market, and he probably had very little to do with how that happened. Not until 1793, for instance, did the very active Philadelphia printer and publisher Mathew Carey bring out the first American edition of *Letters from an American Farmer*. We may venture some guesses about how (if not why) Carey decided to do so. Like Crèvecoeur, he was something of an outsider in America at the time. A native of Ireland who was familiar with the piratical habits of the 'reprinting' book trade there, he probably had seen *Letters* in the unauthorized versions issued in Dublin in 1782 and Belfast in 1783.[7] By 1792 if not earlier, Carey was offering for sale in his Philadelphia bookstore an imported edition of *Letters from an American Farmer*, undoubtedly one of these Irish reprints. From a copy of it the next year he probably set his own edition.[8]

Carey probably was the first American dealer to import *Letters from an American Farmer*, but we know that other booksellers became interested in it about the same time. In 1793, a Boston shop was marketing Davies's second (1783) edition side-by-side with Carey's once the latter became available in March.[9] A Baltimore

6. Rice, 'The American Farmer's Letters,' *The Colophon*, 18:3 (1934): 18.

7. *Letters from an American Farmer* (Dublin: Printed for John Exshaw, 1782); *Letters from an American Farmer* (Belfast: Printed by James Magee, 1783).

8. 'American farmer's letters,' *Mathew Carey's Catalogue of Books, for August, 1792* (Philadelphia: Printed by Mathew Carey, 1792), 7 (Evans 24173). The same title appears in the September 1792, *Catalogue* (Philadelphia: Printed by Mathew Carey, 1792), 7 (Evans 46403). Rice, *Le Cultivateur Américain*, 75, asserted that Carey's edition 'suit exactement la première edition publiée à Londres en 1782,' but my own examination of both, and of the two Irish editions, has not established which of the three European editions Carey used as copy text.

9. *David West's Catalogue of Books, for Sales, Wholesale and Retail* (Boston: for David West, [1793]), 20, listing both octavo and duodecimo editions—the former certainly Davies and Davis's, probably in their new edition of 1783, which contained 'an accurate index' (Evans 26468).Carey, like the Irish reprinters, used a duodecimo format.

dealer was still advertising the London edition in 1794; three years later Isaiah Thomas was offering both editions—the London and the Philadelphia—in Worcester.[10] Carey clearly did not create all this rising interest, and may have sought to profit from it. For one thing, four or five years before he first stocked the book, we know that the Philadelphia Quaker merchant Miers Fisher borrowed the 1787 edition of *Lettres* from Francis L. Dupont and, with his tolerably good knowledge of French, delightedly read it aloud to his family. That Fisher knew the author's name and in fact wrote Crèvecoeur to praise the book, is significant—given the lengths to which Crèvecoeur went to mask his identity and his relative obscurity as an author in the country then. Significant as well, however, was the fact that Fisher regretted he had never yet come across the book in any of its previous forms, English or French, in the United States.[11] His comments are confirmed by a 1787 note in a New England newspaper that identified Crèvecoeur (then visiting Boston) as 'the author of the celebrated letters of an American Farmer, which for sensibility and pathetick description are unequalled,' but also reported that his writings were 'not to be procured' in America.[12] It is clear that there was some recognition of the book and its virtues—indeed, even of the pseudonymous author—in American circles in the years leading up to Carey's edition.

10. See advertisement for 'American Farmer's Letters, 8vo.' at the back of Thomas Paine, *Prospects on the War, and Paper Currency* (Baltimore: Printed for S. and J. Adams, 1794) (Evans 27465); *Catalogue of Books to be Sold by Thomas, Son & Thomas* (Worcester: Thomas, Son & Thomas, [1796]), 21 (Evans 31290).

11. Rice, 'American Farmer's Letters,' 18-19. Interestingly, one of the most active French booksellers to operate in the United States in this period, Hocquet de Caritat (of whose role in the emergence of literary publishing some discussion is offered later in this essay) did not stock Crèvecoeur's *Lettres* in either French edition among his many offerings at the end of the century; see *Catalogue des livres français qui se trouvent chez H. Caritat* New York: [printed by M. L. and W. A. Davis], 1799; Evans 35278), although he did offer Carey's (see note 14 below). The other major French bookseller at the time in the country, Moreau de St. Méry, did offer the 1787 edition for sale in 1795; see *Catalogue of Books, Stationery, Engravings, Mathematical Instruments, Maps, Charts, and Other Goods of Moreau de St. Méry's Store* (Philadelphia: [Moreau de Méry], 1795), 46 (Evans 29107).

12. See story headlined 'Boston (Massachusetts) Sept. 29,' in the *New Hampshire Spy* of Portsmouth, October 2, 1787.

However promising for Crèvecoeur's reputation, Carey's edition appeared at an unfortunate time. In the summer of 1793, Philadelphia would suffer through a very bad visitation of the yellow fever. It is sometimes stated that, as a result, Carey lost money on the book. I am not so sure about that assertion, or about Norman Grabo's view that the book in Carey's edition 'fell on deaf ears and did not sell.'[13] It certainly persisted in his own catalogues up to 1798 and was regularly listed, usually at around eighty cents per copy, in those of other dealers in various cities and towns beyond those already mentioned: Philadelphia, Boston, New York, Portsmouth (New Hampshire), Albany, Halifax (North Carolina), and Petersburg (Virginia).[14]

13. *Letters from an American Farmer, Describing Certain Provincial Situations, Manners, and Customs, and Conveying Some Idea of the State of the People of North America. Written to a Friend in England, by J. Hector St. John, a Farmer in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: from the Press of Mathew Carey, March 4, [1793]); see Norman Grabo, 'Crèvecoeur's American: Beginning the World Anew,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. ser. 48 (1991):172.

14. For Carey, see, for instance, the broadside headed *Philadelphia, June 23, 1798, Mathew Carey's Exchange Catalogue* (Philadelphia: Printed by Mathew Carey, 1798), listing 'American Farmer's Letters . . . 80 [cents]' (Evans 33497). Carey's fullest advertisement for the book appeared in *Catalogue of Books, Pamphlets, Maps, and Prints, Published by Mathew Carey* ([Philadelphia]: Printed by Wrigley and Berriman [1795]), 9–10 (Evans 28388). This listed the titles of all the chapters, also giving the price as '80 cents.' For the other cities, see the following: *A Catalogue of Books Now Offered for Sale by Thomas Stephens* (Philadelphia: Printed by Wrigley & Berriman, 1794), 7 (Evans 27741); *Henry & Patrick Rice's Catalogue of a Large and Valuable Collection of Books* (Philadelphia: Printed for H. & P. Rice, [1795]), 32, item 770 (Evans 47580); *Stephens's Catalogue of Books, &c. for 1795* (Philadelphia: [Thomas Stephens, 1795]), 15, item 162 (Evans 47610); *A Catalogue of Books, for Sale or Circulation, by William P. Blake* (Boston: Printed for William P. Blake, [1793]), 25 (Evans 25206); *Thomas and Andrews's Catalogue of Books* (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, [1793]), 20 (Evans 26252); *Joseph Nancrede's Catalogue of Books in the Various Branches of Literature* (Boston: s.n., 1796), 2 (Evans 30833); *Samuel Campbell's Sale Catalogue of Books, for 1794* (New York: Samuel Campbell, 1794?), 19 ('American farmer's letters, . . . Philad. 1793') (Evans 26728); *The Feast of Reason and the Flow of the Soul. A New Explanatory Catalogue of H. Caritat's General and Circulating Library. Intended also to Answer the Purpose of a Sale Catalogue, Respecting those [items] Marked with a Star (*), which H. Caritat has an Assortment of, for Sale, in his Book-Store* (New York: Printed by M. L. and W. A. Davis, 1799), 9 (*American Farmer, Letters of*—marked with a 'star') (Evans 35279); *A Catalogue of Books for Sale or Circulation, by Samuel Larkin* (Portsmouth [N.H.]: Printed for Samuel Larkin, 1796), 6 (Evans 30672); *American Publications. Catalogue of Books, for Sale . . . at the Bookstore of Thomas, Andrews & Penniman* (Albany [N.Y.]: Printed by Barber and Southwick, 1796), unpaged ('American Farmer's Letters . . . 87 cts' (Evans 31293); see also same firm's 1797 catalogue (Evans 32918), 1); *A Catalogue of Books, &c. Now Selling by Ross & Douglas* (Petersburgh [Va.]: s.n., Jan 1800); (Evans 38237); and 'A. Hodge has for Sale at his Office,' Advertisement in *North-Carolina Journal*, November 27, 1793.

Crèvecoeur's writings were also known to American readers through means other than books. The habit of reprinting certain parts of his *Letters*, which had begun immediately after the book's first appearance in 1782 and continued through that decade and the 1790s, indicates wide familiarity with his writings. Even Carey reprinted the infamous description of the caged slave (from the ninth letter) in the third issue of his new magazine, *The American Museum*, in March 1787. Such reprintings argue for at least some 'partible inheritance' of Crèvecoeur's ideas and images across the period, if such a term may be applied to his intellectual legacy. While such disassembling of books in the periodical market at the time was not uncommon, in his case I think it reflects his overall fate as an author and explains how he practiced his craft. Instructively, when Miers Fisher got his hands on those three volumes of *Lettres* from Dupont, he did not commence reading the book at the front; instead, he 'dipped into several parts of it,' and when he read it aloud to his wife and son, he followed the same disjointed method, reading the third section, 'the story of Andrew the Hebridean' first and then, once it had been applauded, skipping seventy or so pages to read aloud Crèvecoeur's anecdotes about celebrated Quaker Walter Mifflin. Thumbing through Crèvecoeur is confirmed as a general habit of the period by any investigation of how his writings in fact were snipped and reprinted, often with no attribution to him, across the newspapers and magazines of the early republic.[15]

That habit was not incidental to Crèvecoeur's own manner of writing and conceiving of his books—or of his method of expanding, rewriting, and translating *Letters* for the two French editions. Literary critics of the past seventy years have labored mightily to find aesthetic coherence in Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*. Yet that work, historically regarded, remains an anthology of topics and themes, and indeed of narrators and points of

15. See Rice, 'American Farmer's Letters,' 18–19.

view. Even more so, the French versions became infinitely extendable collections of loosely related items, which could easily be cut and pasted elsewhere—as they were. Owing to the immaturity of the American book trades, Crèvecoeur did not know for whom he was writing and hence did not really know how to shape his work as a whole, so that it became an unending series of related but not unified or even organized sketches.

In one respect, Crèvecoeur's entry into the world of books *was* predictive of future patterns. At the time his first book appeared in 1782, he hardly would have received cash in America for it, as he did in London. One recalls that even Tom Paine published *Common Sense* on shares, not for cash up front—and indeed had to fight for his half with his publisher, the infamous book pirate Robert Bell, an earlier immigrant from Ireland.[16] In America, authors were used to publishing on shares or self-publishing—not only in 1776 and 1782 but up to and into the 1820s. Such a financial arrangement offered little inducement to write books as such and submit them for publication. Political arguments raging around him pushed Paine into the literary marketplace—not the prospect of monetary gain.

Early attempts to break from these older financial arrangements and follow the newer British habit (witnessed in the operation of William Lane's Minerva Press in London) were largely unsuccessful.[17] Charles Brockden Brown, the most productive American novelist prior to 1820, is a case in point. Brown had given the initial parts of his first finished work, a philosophical dialogue on the subject of women's rights called *Alcuin*, to his friend Elihu Hubbard Smith, who paid for them to be printed in New York in the spring of 1798. Smith's disagreement with Brown over the author's

16. See Gimbel, *Thomas Paine*, 22–49. See also Paine's 'Autobiographical Statement' (1779), *Writings*, ed. Conway, 4: 430–31.

17. On Lane and his press, see Dorothy Blakey, *The Minerva Press, 1790–1820* (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1939).

simultaneous reprinting of *Alcuin* in the Philadelphia *Weekly Magazine* meant that the rest of the work, though finished in 1798, was not published until 1815 and was not reunited with the first two parts until 1970.[18] The partible nature of that work is reminiscent of the problems Crèvecoeur faced two decades earlier. One has in the history of this disjoined book a fair representation of the state of the book trades in Brown's period. Lack of articulation in handling literary projects among the parts of the book trades—from writers to booksellers—led to a lack of articulation within the texts of the works themselves. When Brown himself went on to write six not-completely-distinct novels in two years, working on several at any one time and issuing one of them, *Arthur Mervyn*, in two parts, he showed that he had not overcome the handicap. The way in which his 'Memoirs of Carwin, the Biloquist' grew out of the seemingly finished *Wieland* betrays a similar pattern. And the nested, first-person narrations in the interrupted *Arthur Mervyn* likewise suggest an author more concerned with generating his texts than shaping them for a definite market.

To be sure, in the case of at least two of his novels, Brown's arrangements do indicate the influence of the somewhat more organized British literary marketplace in republican America. For *Wieland* in 1798 and *Ormond* in 1799, the French émigré bookseller and subscription library owner Louis Alexis Hocquet de Caritat in New York paid Brown cash. In these instances, author and publisher were following the example of Lane's Minerva Press. Caritat was Lane's American agent, and he sold and rented out many of the sensational novels Lane was issuing at the time. Although Brown did not follow the Minerva model precisely in writing his melodramatic novels, he clearly sought to exploit some elements of current sensationalist taste. And there is strong

18. See Harry R. Warfel, *Charles Brockden Brown: American Gothic Novelist* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1949), 81–82; David Lee Clark, *Charles Brockden Brown: Pioneer Voice of America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1952), 113-17; Charles Brockden Brown, *Alcuin: A Dialogue*, ed. Lee R. Edwards (1970; reprint, New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971), 92–104.

evidence that Brown's works were viewed by Lane himself as compatible with the typical fare of the Minerva Press, for Lane reissued both *Arthur Mervyn* and *Edgar Huntly* and at least planned to issue *Wieland* in the first years of the new century. Caritat himself took copies of *Wieland*, *Arthur Mervyn*, and *Ormond* to London with him in 1800 and gave them to Lane. In this regard, as in Caritat's willingness to pay Brown for his work, the influence of the British parallel is clear. Lane typically did not publish on shares or at his authors' expense; rather, as Dorothy Blakey indicated long ago, he paid on average thirty pounds for each of the many novels he issued.[19]

The Lane-inspired arrangements between Brown and Caritat fell flat. They were optimistic gestures, not shrewd innovations. Although *Edgar Huntly* in fact went into a second edition in the United States, no one made real money on any of his novels. 'Brown's merchant brothers,' in the words of his biographer Harry Warfel, 'warned him again and again that the market was insufficient to support native authors.' Brown himself concurred: 'Book making,' he confessed to one of the brothers in 1800, 'is the dullest of trades, and the utmost that any American can look for in his native country is to be reimbursed in his unavoidable expenses.'[20] There were two parts to this failure. First, mere optimism did not create readers—and Brown might have helped had he been shrewder in his ability to read what American readers (especially American readers of Minerva Press books) might want. Second, in 1790 Benjamin Rush had concluded that in America literature hardly was an available economic calling, no matter how shrewd the would-be practitioner. Social conversations, Rush sardonically commented in a pamphlet written for Europeans contemplating

19. Warfel, *Charles Brockden Brown*, 100, 126. Blakey, *Minerva Press*, 73. See also William Charvat, *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800–1870* (1968; reprint, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 26–27. On Caritat in general, see the series of publications by George Gates Raddin, especially *Hocquet Caritat and the Early New York Literary Scene* (Dover, N. J.: Dover Advance Press, 1953).

20. Warfel, *Charles Brockden Brown*, 142, 185.

immigration, begin in America 'as in England with the weather—soon run into politics—now and then diverge into literature—and commonly conclude with facts relative to acquiring and improving an estate.' Rush went on: 'Literary men, who have no professional pursuits, will often languish in America, from the want of society'—and, he might have added, want of cash.[21]

From the time of Brockden Brown's birth in Philadelphia in 1771 to the year 1820, about one hundred novels were written and released in some printed form or other by American men and women, usually in a relatively fugitive manner.[22] Brown and his most important rival, Susannah Rowson, were rare among these authors in penning more than a single work of extended fiction and making something, however little, from their efforts. Not until that fifty-year period ended would a third repeat offender, James Fenimore Cooper, come forward. He began his career by following the old protocols. His first book, *Precaution*, was set in type, printed, and bound entirely at his own expense. The nominal 'publisher,' New York bookseller Andrew T. Goodrich, was hired at a modest commission by Cooper to manage the project. Cooper wished to keep his perpetration of the book secret, and therefore permitted Goodrich to copyright the novel in his own name. Goodrich also was authorized by Cooper to enter into negotiations with possible British reprinters so as to snag potential profits from London as well. But the book was Cooper's property.

Cooper had known Goodrich for some time. In 1818, he was a subscriber of Goodrich's circulating library—one of several imitations of Caritat's—and he obviously knew from his visits to Goodrich's shop that the proprietor occasionally handled new publications, usually at the author's expense. In an edition of 1,000

21. Benjamin Rush, *Information to Europeans who are Disposed to Migrate to the United States* (Philadelphia: Carey, Stewart, & Co., 1790), 1.

22. These works are ably discussed in Henri Petter, *The Early American Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971), which provides the basis for my statistics (see pp. 466–475).

copies, production of the two-volume *Precaution* probably cost Cooper about sixty-five to seventy cents per copy. By Cooper's insistence, the book sold for $2.00 retail, meaning that $1.35 above production costs was realized on each copy sold. However, not all this went to Cooper. Aside from Goodrich's fee, probably 5 percent of the total value of wholesale distributions, the biggest deduction involved discounts to booksellers, which depending on the numbers of copies ordered and how they were paid for, reduced his gross by another 50 to 66 cents per copy.[23]

Money was of great significance to Cooper at this time. In 1820, he was teetering on the edge of insolvency in his own right and as the final executor of the once-lavish but now virtually bankrupt estate of his father, Judge William Cooper. He had many irons in many fires, few of them very hot. He had set up a frontier store on the Canadian border with a cousin in hopes of earning money to pay off his own debts, but that had proved a bust by 1819. Across that year, he therefore discharged some of the debts by hurriedly selling off a good deal of the real estate he still owned. Furthermore, even as the novelist produced new pages of *Precaution* for Goodrich, a whaleship Cooper had bought and fitted out in 1819 was making its way back from the South Atlantic with a cargo that would yield him substantial profits—which he would tap to pay for *Precaution*, although far more went toward readying the ship for its second cruise.[24]

Aside from his use of whaling profits, the financial side of Cooper's first self-published book was not unusual for America in 1820. Self-publication did not mean that he was uninterested in selling fiction outright or unengaged with the market; what it meant was that, regardless of the Caritat-Brown experiment, by 1820 there was little if any chance for American fiction writers to

23. *Precaution, A Novel*, 2 vols. (New York: published by [*sic*] A. T. Goodrich and Co., 1820); copyrighted by Goodrich as 'proprietor' of the book. For the background on *Precaution*, see Wayne Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper: The Early Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 247–69.

24. Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper*, 216–39; 302–34.

sell their works outright. When Cooper wrote a new preface for the third edition of his second book, *The Spy*, early in 1822, he acknowledged both points: 'While the book was in press,' he stated, he had consulted with friends 'on the subject of abandoning it entirely, under the apprehension of losing by its publication. . . . Could we have found a bookseller who would have given enough for the work to pay the scribe, we might have been tempted to dispose of the copy-right—but none offered.'[25]

The nearly contemporary case of Washington Irving suggests how widespread this lack of financial inducement for literary texts was. When Irving and his brother William and their ally James Kirke Paulding had set about the creation of the amusing New York periodical *Salmagundi* in 1806, they had little thought of its being saleable. They therefore neglected to copyright the numbers, allowing bookseller and directory publisher David Longworth, who handled the serial work for them, to do so. Longworth made so much from the immensely successful run that his profits amounted to ten thousand or perhaps fifteen thousand dollars. At last, with the twentieth number done and public applause for the effort still loud, the authors cut short Longworth's free ride—much to his displeasure.[26]

Irving had learned his lesson. For his first independently written book, a comic spin-off of *Salmagundi* called *A History of New-York*, issued in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and Charleston in 1809, he did not find a publisher willing to pay him for it upfront. He therefore kept possession of the copyright himself, arranging with a pair of booksellers to distribute it for him. Those bookmen, Andrew Bradford and Abraham Inskeep, were allowed a low, 20 percent discount off the list price of $3.00 for

25. James Fenimore Cooper, *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground*, ed. James P. Elliott et al. (New York: AMS Press, 2002), 10–11.

26. *Salmagundi; or The Whim-Whams and Opinions of Launcelot Langstaff, & Others* was issued as a periodical and in this original form is not included in the Shaw-Shoemaker lists. Pierre M. Irving, *The Life and Letters of Washington Irving*, 4 vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1862–1864), 1:176–79; 210–11.

the two volumes, and Irving further insisted that they bear the loss of any unsold copies. Fortunately for them and the author, the book did very well, allowing Irving to clear $3,000.00 before a second edition was called for.[27] Although these results were very good, they should not cloud the fact that Irving was more lucky than shrewd. Owing to his self-publishing arrangements, his sense of the nascent literary marketplace and of public taste as a formative influence in its creation in Britain and the United States at this time was blunted and indirect. Like Crèvecoeur two decades earlier, Irving was suiting himself, following out an impulse and as a result creating a kind of work for which the current market, such as it was, offered no real parallel.

Irving's next work, *The Sketch Book*, written in Britain but first issued in America, exemplified the same disconnects between writer and public. Irving once again self-published the work, issuing it in seven parts from June 1819 to September 1820. New York printer Cornelius S. Van Winkle was listed *as* printer only on the title pages: the copyright was also taken out in his name as 'proprietor' for each successive part, but that was a dodge to cover Irving's genteelly concealed identity, since he in fact retained ownership. The management of the project was divided among Van Winkle and Irving's brother Ebenezer and their good friend Henry Brevoort, and the work was distributed by bookseller Charles Wiley. Irving had written Brevoort from London early in 1819 to explain his purpose in making these arrangements: 'I wish the copy right secured for me, and the work printed, and then sold to one or more booksellers, who will take

27. The details of the book's publication are on the title page and its verso: *A History of New York, from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty*, 2 vols. (New York: Inskeep & Bradford; Philadelphia: Bradford & Inskeep; Boston: Wm. M'Ilhenny; Baltimore: Coale & Thomas; Charleston: Morford, Willington, & Co., 1809); verso: 'Copyright secured according to Law.' Irving recalled his arrangements with Bradford and Inskeep in a letter of August 12, 1819, letter to Henry Brevoort; see *The Letters of Washington Irving*, 4 vols., ed. Ralph M. Aderman et al. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978–82), 1: 554. On his earnings from the *History*, see William Charvat, *Literary Publishing in America, 1790–1850* (1959; reprint, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 75.

the whole impression at a fair discount & give cash or good notes for it. This makes short work of it—and is more profitable to the author than selling the copy right.' Whether any publishers would have paid for the copyright was an issue Irving left unexplored, but he knew from his experience with the *History of New-York* that this approach would work and so he followed it again.[28]

As with the 1809 *History*, Irving's new work was simultaneously put up for sale in several cities by an assemblage of booksellers. Unlike the *History*, however, *The Sketch Book* was issued in a serial format that to some extent derived from the practice Irving and his co-authors had followed with regard to *Salmagundi*. In part, the serial nature of the new project reflected Irving's tight financial situation at the time he began work on it—another parallel with Cooper. His family's importing business having failed, Irving had lost his usual source of support. He hoped that he could fall back on his on-again, off-again literary talents, but until that assumption was proven true he probably could not have paid the costs of producing two thousand copies of the whole text of *The Sketch Book* at the outset. Besides, part-publication proved ingeniously lucrative for the author. Since his costs for the first part, which ran to about a hundred pages in the ample format Van Winkle employed, must have been around four hundred dollars—the whole book, if printed in that format right then, would have cost close to three thousand dollars. There was another side to the finances: because each of the seven parts was priced at seventy-five cents, as William Charvat emphasized, the final cost to the reader for *The Sketch Book* was in excess of five dollars, 'an enormous price in those days,' and one that yielded Irving enormous profits of around ten thousand dollars.[29]

28. *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, No. 1–No. 7 (New York: Printed by C. S. Van Winkle, 1819–20); versos of the seven separate title pages indicate that each number had its own copyright notice. *Letters of Washington Irving*, ed. Aderman, 1: 542; Charvat, *Profession of Authorship*, 32–34.

29. Charvat, *Profession of Authorship*, 33.

Irving was not done milking this cow. He gathered the first four parts of the serial into book form even as the serial continued to appear, publishing the volume at his own expense through London bookseller John Miller early in 1820.[30] By the time Miller's business faltered later that year, *The Sketch Book* had acquired such fame that the greatest literary publisher of the day, John Murray, agreed with Irving to take over the publication, buying out the remaining stock of that first volume from Irving and soon issuing the remaining three parts in a second volume. Murray published this combined edition at his own expense, sharing the profits with Irving. It sold so well that, although Murray could not legally copyright it in Britain under current law, he nonetheless paid Irving a sizable fee, 250 guineas, and soon brought out a complete new edition in two uniform volumes.[31]

The relationship with Murray was financially very important to Irving. With Murray's 1822 publication *Bracebridge Hall*, a sequel to *The Sketch Book*, at last Irving had found a full-fledged publisher. There were ironies here. While Murray paid well, he pushed Irving to write new books along the lines of his old ones, rather than to suit some existing market. Heretofore, Irving had operated on the supply side of the literary market, more concerned with the process of writing than with the sale of his manuscripts or their fit with current public interest, taste, or demand. Invention mattered more than distribution. If the manner in which he marketed *The Sketch Book* reflected his financial worries, its open form and serial nature at the same time betrayed the relatively loose connection the author maintained with his readers. Should the first sample of his new project not attract readers, he need not go on with it; should it succeed, he remained free to improvise later installments, bound only in the loosest manner by

30. *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, vol. 1 [all published] (London: John Miller, 1820).

31. *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, vol. 2 [all published] (s1.: Murray, 1820); *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, 2nd edition, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1820).

what had come before and having no predetermined end point. Furthermore, in producing the first number, Irving wrote to no expectant audience. There was no contractual form, as it were, within which he was to present his wares, as there would have been had Irving been producing fiction for Lane's Minerva Press operation.

Once John Murray took him on, on the other hand, the publisher sought to bind Irving not only to produce manuscript at an expectable rate but also to reproduce his own earlier works. Irving was flattered by the attention of the great London publisher, who after all had handled the immensely popular and lucrative poet Byron. But he was also misled by Murray. Irving wrote his brother Ebenezer from England in the fall of 1821 that the publisher was 'extremely desirous' for the new work, adding that 'the success of my former writings would ensure a run to any thing I should now bring forward.'[32] This being Irving's first experience with publishing in the modern sense, he profoundly misunderstood the way the new system was to work. When both *Bracebridge Hall* and its follow-up, *Tales of a Traveller*, hit the market, their imitation of his one big hit did not guarantee him success. They sold well, but that was because they existed in the shadow of *The Sketch Book*—in both the good and the bad sense.

We may conclude by returning to Cooper. He in fact relied on Irving for help with getting his own books before the English reader in a manner that would profit their author. Through their mutual friend, bookseller Charles Wiley, who was managing *The Spy* for Cooper while he also was handling *The Sketch Book*, the novelist asked Irving to try to interest John Murray in that book in 1821. But although even Cooper's first pale novel had been pirated in Britain, where it did better than in America, Cooper was as yet an untried commodity for Murray. Besides, because Cooper's

32. *Letters of Washington Irving*, ed. Aderman, 1: 647.

second novel already had been issued in America, it had no potential of copyright in England. When *The Spy* was duly pirated in London and helped make a name for Cooper there, Murray offered to publish Cooper's third book, *The Pioneers*, at his own cost and risk, dividing the profits with the author, although he insisted on prior publication in London in order to allow copyright there. His edition of *The Pioneers* therefore became the first of Cooper's books to be published anywhere in the technical sense.[33]

Even so, because in this case Murray did not buy the work, but rather published it on shares, the principle of market inducement cannot really be said to have been in operation for Cooper yet. Murray certainly did not pressure Cooper to produce *The Pioneers*, which was offered to him as a work already nearing completion. Perhaps if the two men had kept up their dealings, a genuine publishing arrangement similar to that which Murray worked out with Irving in the same years might have come into being. Owing to Cooper's perception that Murray neglected *The Pioneers* once it appeared in London, however, he dropped Murray and published on shares with other London booksellers for a time. Even so, Cooper, having already internalized a quite shrewd estimate of the literary marketplace, did not need Murray or anyone else to stand at his elbow, as a reviewer of Irving's *Tales of a Traveller* wrote in the *London Magazine*, 'jingling a purse of sovereigns' and urging him on in the manufacture of books—books to please his publisher rather than the public.[34]

Even Cooper's first book showed him to be an astute reader of current literary trends in a way Irving was not. For instance,

33. *The Spy; A Tale of the Neutral Ground*, 2 vols. (New York: Wiley & Halsted); copyrighted 'by Wiley and Halsted.' For the British piracy, see *The Spy; A Tale of the Neutral Ground; Referring to Some Particular Occurrences during the American War: Also Pourtraying American Scenery and Manners*, 3 vols. (London: G. and B. Whittaker, 1822). *The Pioneers, or the Sources of the Susquehanna; A Descriptive Tale* (New York: Charles Wiley, 1823); *The Pioneers, or the Sources of the Susquehanna; A Descriptive Tale*, 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1823). On the dealings with Murray, see Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper*, 352–57.

34. Quoted by Ben Harris McClary, ed., *Washington Irving and the House of Murray* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), 65 n30.

whereas Irving's literary models were bookishly outdated—they came from his readings in eighteenth-century British literature, especially from *The Spectator* and *Tatler* and from Goldsmith—Cooper's were fresh and current. He modeled his whole career on that of 'the author of Waverley' (Sir Walter Scott), about whom Cooper had much inside information very early on. He chose Scott as his model partly because Scott's kind of fiction appealed to him, but partly too because Scott was making great gobs of money from his novels, and the debt-ridden Cooper had turned to authorship quite consciously as yet another of his frantic speculations. When Cooper determined on writing a second novel even before his first was done, he adopted Scott's mode—historical fiction centered on what one may call the 'matter of the nation'—as well as his marketing goals. This was a shrewd move of the sort that Irving never managed. Cooper's new novel was such a hit with American readers, who, like Cooper himself, could barely wait for the next Scott romance to appear, that the author knew with certainty that his audience had been won.[35] Nor did he, except in the most general sense, repeat his formula in the books that quickly followed. Cooper's next book, *The Pioneers*, dug even more deeply into the uniquely American themes that, while his treatment of them accorded well with Scott's focus on history and nationality, weaned readers from the Waverley novels and made them loyal to their American knockoffs.

Both *The Spy* and Cooper's third novel, *The Pioneers*, were self-published in America: Cooper received the influence of the literary marketplace, in other words, not through some American Murray but rather from the readers who bought his books. Those books, it is worth stressing, were his by virtue of production as well as invention. For his new novels he used a new agent, Charles Wiley, a man more fully imbedded in the bookselling scene in New York than Goodrich. Wiley was a reader and an active agent

35. On Scott as Cooper's model, see Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper*, 248–50.

for Cooper in intellectual terms, but he had no conclusive power to dictate to Cooper or even push him in one direction or another with regard to subject matter or manner of treatment. Cooper listened to him—the two became very good friends—but for the most part Cooper understood what readers wanted and would pay for and he set about supplying it.

By 1823, Cooper aimed to one-up Scott even more dramatically. He began his fourth novel, *The Pilot*, specifically to show how poorly Scott's most recent book, *The Pirate*, handled the sea—which ex-sailor Cooper knew far better than lawyer, judge, and poet Scott. (Scott, once he read Cooper's book, admitted as much.) Having written the first successful American historical novel, and the first espionage novel to boot, in *The Spy*, and having invented the Western in *The Pioneers* the following year, in *The Pilot*, Cooper pulled off his next coup by inventing the sea novel as such masters as Melville and Conrad would practice it. That he did so in a book that rehabilitated British-born American patriot John Paul Jones, long roundly condemned in Britain, made the accomplishment even more satisfying to Cooper. That novel was again self-published in New York but issued, through Irving's old agent, the resurgent John Miller, on shares in London.[36]

After his first success with *The Spy*, which had been quickly reprinted twice in the six months following its first appearance in New York at the end of December 1821, Cooper paid for each new book (or each new printing) from the proceeds of the titles themselves. Charles Wiley was required by their contracts to withhold from Cooper only sufficient funds from sales to cover his 5 percent commission and all expenses on the book in question. The novelist was in the literary business in a quite literal sense now, running a kind of factory that subcontracted parts of the process to various other entities and individuals. Furthermore, having cut into Scott's

36. *The Pilot; A Tale of the Sea*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Wiley, 1823 [for 1824]); *The Pilot; A Tale of the Sea*, 3 vols. (London: John Miller, 1824). See Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper*, 400–10.

market in America, Cooper was also eagerly expanding his overseas operations. When one concludes that Cooper wrote because he needed to, one means first that he needed the money. Yet it is remarkable that virtually on his own he had, in a scant four years, created a functioning literary marketplace in which his own wares had very high value. So the need was more than financial. Or, perhaps, the profound financial embarrassments of the Cooper clan called into being some rich, deep creative energy by which, while at the same time establishing that literary marketplace, Cooper was able to rescue himself from disaster and invent both the American novel and the career of the American novelist.

The important Philadelphia firm of Carey & Lea, owned by Mathew Carey's son Henry and son-in-law Isaac Lea, had been eager to capture some of Cooper's profits from as early as 1822. They knew well about Cooper because their unrivalled function as book distributors through much of the South had shown them just how well he sold. As the American reprinters of much of Scott, they also knew exactly how important Cooper's example was for the American market at large. Their role as Wiley's correspondent firm in Philadelphia and their similar ties with John Miller in London helped them learn something about the inside of Cooper's system. The one thing they knew about that system from their own experience, they did not like: the closeness with which Cooper controlled discounts for booksellers and, as in their case, distributors. As they had with Irving in the case of *The Sketch Book*, they found such author-owners stingy. Irving had allowed merely 25 percent on that title, much or all of which Carey & Lea would have to pass on to the other booksellers they supplied. Cooper started out allowing a higher discount: in the case of the second edition of *The Spy*, 33⅓ percent for large orders paid for with six-month notes, ranging down to 25 percent for small orders paid for in cash. As time passed and his readership grew, he tended to press these percentages even lower. Since he was paying all expenses by having Wiley assign booksellers' notes to his suppliers, Cooper had virtually no exposure on these editions

even though he theoretically could wind up liable for all expenses if a given book fell flat.[37]

He clearly was aiming to remove that exposure as soon as possible by selling his new books to some bookseller who was able to assume the whole risk in his own right. Owing to exceptional financial pressures in 1824, Cooper revised his contract with Wiley for his fifth novel, *Lionel Lincoln.* Whereas Wiley initially was to serve in his old role as Cooper's agent, under the revision he was to publish the book on his own, paying all expenses and giving Cooper $5,000 for the exclusive right to market the book for a full year in the western hemisphere. Wiley thereby became the novelist's first 'publisher' in the modern sense of the term. For him, it was not a happy arrangement, since *Lionel Lincoln*, although it sold more than 4,500 copies within six months of publication, barely broke even. Probably as a result, when the two men reached agreement on Cooper's sixth book, *The Last of the Mohicans*, in July 1825, they reverted to the old self-publishing plan.[38]

When Wiley, always on the edge of financial failure, died with his business in disarray in January 1826, *The Last of the Mohicans* was still being produced under his supervision in New York. Cooper at this point turned to Carey & Lea, who had carried on unfruitful discussions with him, directly and through Wiley, over the past several years. In an effort to resolve the impasse about discounts that so exercised them, Carey & Lea had sought to work out better marketing arrangements for Cooper's books. In 1822, as Cooper was about to follow up on the wildly successful *Spy* with *The Pioneers*, Carey & Lea complained bitterly to Wiley about the author's mandated terms. They could, they boasted, sell 2,000 copies of Cooper's third novel to Southern dealers and therefore readers, but unless he was more generous—they demanded a fifty percent discount—they would see to it that this market went

37. See Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper*, 502–5.

38. *Lionel Lincoln; or, The Leaguer of Boston*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Wiley, 1825/1824); copyrighted by Charles Wiley. See Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper*, 495–46, 502–3.

largely unsupplied. Cooper refused to accommodate them, instead offering better terms (a 40 percent discount) on the third edition of his current best-seller, *The Spy*. On this, Carey & Lea indeed sought to make their dire warning come true by *not* ordering as many of *The Pioneers* as they thought they could sell. When the book appeared on February 1, 1823, total first-day sales nonetheless reached 3,500 copies, an extraordinary coup for that time.

Even in 1822, having cut off Cooper's nose but spited their own face, Carey & Lea recognized the coming boom in Cooper's sales and therefore sought to coax him to their own house. In the fall of 1824, the Philadelphians offered to purchase *Lionel Lincoln*, then in the works, for a price that he found too low. He came back with a counter: he would sell them exclusive rights to the edition of the novel then being produced under Wiley's supervision in New York, if they paid its costs, about $2,500, and in addition gave the author $4,300. They rejected this offer plus his second counter, which provided that in exchange for slightly more money, $5,000, Cooper would sign over to Carey & Lea all rights to that book for four years, meaning that they could print as many other editions as were called for in that period. The firm huffily replied that they would make only fifteen dollars on the first arrangement, and did not like the second much better. The real fruit of the failed negotiation must have been Cooper's almost immediate decision to offload the novel on Wiley through their revised contract, which resembled those rejected by Carey & Lea.[39]

When, in October 1825, it became clear that Wiley not only had made no money on *Lionel Lincoln* but in fact had failed to pay all his bills for it, Cooper moved quickly to relieve Wiley and retrieve his books from the bookseller's hands. Assuming the debts for the book himself, he received as partial payment for that action the remaining copies of *Lionel Lincoln*.[40] While still allowing

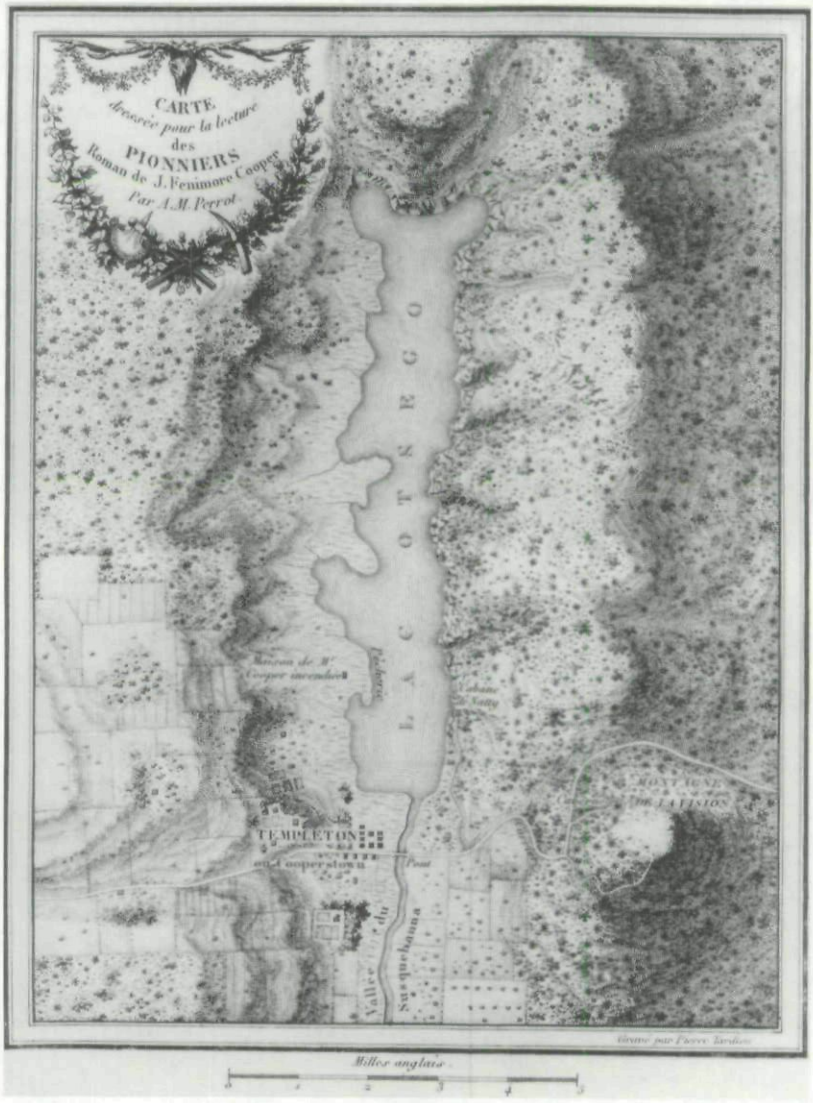
39. On Cooper's early dealings with Carey & Lea, see Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper*, 502–10.

40. See Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper*, 497–502.

Wiley to supervise production of his next book, *The Last of the Mohicans*, in New York, Cooper contacted Henry C. Carey and worked out a hasty deal by which Carey & Lea bought four years' rights on that book for $5,000—precisely the arrangement for *Lionel Lincoln* that they had rejected the year before. The new contract was signed early in January 1826, shortly after 'poor Wiley' (as Cooper feelingly called him) died. Cooper now had his second American publisher, although he again significantly leased the book to Carey & Lea for a set term. Some months later he would assign the remaining terms of copyright in *Mohicans* and most of his other writings to that firm for an additional payment, but that was a move intended to raise funds for his pending European trip, during which he would, among other things, successfully work out arrangements with publishers and printers and translators in England and on the Continent that would bring more of the earnings of his art into his own hands. Assigning the books to Carey & Lea also relieved him of the need to supervise his older works from afar while he was focused on producing and marketing new ones.[41]

There is of course more to this story. It can be brought to a fitting end here with an anecdote that illuminates Cooper's sudden effect on the American literary marketplace. Probably the most telling consequences of his masterful management of his early career accrued to his own benefit, since first and foremost he recouped his fortunes. Yet his example opened the way for other would-be writers in a way that neither Charles Brockden Brown—nor really Washington Irving, either—did. As early as 1824, a pair of New York publishers reported that they could not keep up with the flood of imitations of Cooper's fiction that was deluging them and, presumably, their colleagues. All of those books, replete with 'the backwoods, an Indian, a panther and a squatter,' bespoke the brilliance with which Cooper had divined the coming mood among American readers.

41. Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper*, 515.



'Carte dressée pour la lecture des Pionniers,' Pierre Tardieu, after A. M. Perrot, 1828. This tinted map was made for an 1828 French translation of Cooper's third novel, The Pioneers. It promoted the tendency of readers to equate Cooper's fictional landscape with his biographical one, showing Lake Otsego and the village of Templeton (or Cooperstown). Natty Bumppo's cabin (Cabane de Natty) and cave (Caverne), the Vision (Montagne de la Vision), along with the original site of Cooper's stone mansion at Fenimore Farm, which had been burned by an apparent arsonist in 1823 (Maison de Mr. Cooper incindiée). American Antiquarian Society.

Moreover, the publishers went on, all the would-be novelists eager to follow Cooper's lead in penning frontier tales had also learned a good deal about the potential market value of literary works. To a person, after all, they were demanding 'a large price . . . half the profits.'[42] In 1820, when Cooper diverted some of the profits from his whaling venture to pay the expenses of his first novel, such books were thought to have little or no commercial value. Now, barely four years later, he had succeeded not only in writing popular American tales—but he had as well created the career of the American author. America's first literary boom was fully underway.

42. 'Conversation between the Publishers [Elam Bliss and Elihu White] and the Editor [Robert Sands],' *Atlantic Magazine* 1 (1824): 1.