# The Dysfunctional "Family of Man"

## *Mary Anne Venning and Barbara Hofland Classify Human Races in Pre-Darwinian Primers*

A Desire to form an acquaintance with the whole world, though very comprehensive, is natural to the youthful mind. . . . The study of mankind tends to enlarge the understanding, at the same time that it prepares the reader for action upon the great theatre of the world.

—Jehoshaphat Aspin, *Cosmorama*

[Soon] British enterprise shall have fully developed that which nature has provided, and shall have welded together the colonies and the mother country by the most indissoluble of all ties—that of blood relationship.

—Mrs. Carey Hobson, *South African Stories*

In the late eighteenth century, the impulse to catalog and classify data into tables and charts extended from the pages of encyclopedias to the specimen cases in museums to the practices of ethnographers, naturalists, and cartographers. As Michel Foucault's work has shown, the visibility of power is essential to its function, hence the importance of developing classification diagrams that were "both a technique of power and a procedure of knowledge."[1] Models of knowledge display the data in such a way that the distribution and analysis are clear at a glance, facilitating supervision and intelligibility. Working according to this paradigm, postcolonial critics and geographers have argued that cartography itself can

be read as another instrument for measuring, displaying, and thereby knowing territory and the peoples who lived within it.[2] Eighteenth-century science from anthropology to botany to cartography sought the means of showing relationships between data. A precedent for this was set by Carl Linnaeus's revolutionary work on botanical classification during this period. Linnaeus organized a taxonomy of plants according to the number and size of their reproductive organs, and in so doing, he effectively solved a problem that had long troubled botanists. Perhaps more important is that he established a pattern by which other living things could be neatly ordered in a carefully plotted grid: nineteenth-century scientists could, and did, create "a scale that ascended from the minerals, through vegetables, animals and humans, towards angelic beings."[3]

The classification of human beings that followed in the wake of Linnaeus's work proceeded with what Robert Young has termed an "obsessive delineation" as peoples were placed into categories and subcategories by races and then by types.[4] The subdivision and classification of human beings sprang from both a Linnaean desire to understand and categorize the world and an urgent need to assure Europeans of their superiority over the peoples they sought to colonize. As Europeans came into increasing contact—sexual, ethnographic, commercial, and military—with other cultures, scientists and imperial administrators and especially writers for children struggled to construe their human data in a way that would support their domination of other races. The organizing strata of imperial science had practical as well as ideological importance in providing what Ann Stoler has called "the psychological scaffolding for the exploitative structures of colonial rule."[5] Science, wittingly or unwillingly, could be yoked into the service of imperial ideology, and its hypotheses about racial origin and difference could be seized upon to support political and military policies.

Collusion between these scientific discourses and imperial policy making and practices has been subject to critical attention since the 1970s and the inception of postcolonial studies. Homi Bhabha asserts, "The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction."[6] Though this seems to make sense in terms of the necessary ideology required to galvanize one population to establish themselves as masters of another, how

it was actually transmitted, especially before the high imperial period, remains something of an incomplete puzzle. The understudied primer texts written by women in the first half of the nineteenth century constitute an important piece of the larger puzzle showing the collusion between imperialism and science in literature for young people.

Though their voices may not have been welcome at scientific forums, primer writers such as E.R. (Elizabeth Roberts; *Geography and History*), Priscilla Wakefield (*A Family Tour through the British Empire* and *The Traveller in Africa*), Barbara Hofland (*A Panorama of Europe* and *Africa Described*), Mary Anne Venning (*A Geographical Present*), and Jehoshaphat Aspin (the pseudonym of the unknown female author who wrote *Cosmorama*)[7] could and did bridge the professional scientific discourse of lettered men with a child audience of future imperialists. These early primers provided the scaffolding for Britain's imperial expansion after the Napoleonic Wars and into midcentury in the primers of Favell Lee Mortimer (*Near Home*) and Mary F. E. Boscawen (*Conversations on Geography*). In ways previously unacknowledged and unexamined, these writers mustered a variety of rhetorical strategies for classifying racial difference and promoting imperial ideology, yet they also lobbied for a system of imperial governance based in a model of familial responsibility through which colonial children could be perfected and shaped by a firm parent country.

Within this highly charged imperial-scientific context, primer writer Mary Anne Venning took up her pen. Like her early-nineteenth-century contemporary Priscilla Wakefield, Venning seems to have been a woman who channeled her interest in science into a socially acceptable career of writing for the young. While reconstructing Venning's feelings about her work is difficult, given the few, bare historical facts known about her, her work can be framed as subject to social constraints that would have blocked a scientific career but would have presented no such obstacles to scientific pursuits directed toward a pedagogical purpose. Early in her writing career, Venning learned the importance of framing her work in the literary marketplace. Her early text *Simple Pleasures, Designed for Young Persons above Twelve Years of Age* (1811), a guide for young people on their moral and social development, was dismissed as simultaneously derivative yet also dangerously transgressive in an issue of *Monthly Review* of that year, which stated, "The fair author has composed it according to the plans and hints contained in Mr. Edgeworth's book on 'Practical

Education': but she carries his system too far when she describes a girl who receives exactly the same education as her brother, and is afterward taken into partnership with him, and made a clerk in her father's counting house!"[8] The writer of this review emphasizes that a woman's education should polish her for the private sphere rather than provide her with the skills for the public workplace. To that end, it is also significant that the reviewer credits Richard Edgeworth, not Maria, as the author of *Practical Education*. Though one cannot know the degree to which such views may have influenced Venning, it is striking that her future body of work shifted to a focus on adapting scientific theories for young readers, an occupation in keeping with socially acceptable womanly duties but still insistent upon interpreting and remarking on important scientific conclusions.

Her most successful work, *A Geographical Present; Being Descriptions of the Principal Countries of the World; with Representations of the Various Inhabitants in Their Respective Costumes, Beautifully Colored* (1817), skillfully blends quantitative statistics about manufactures and major rivers with qualitative judgments about national greatness. This combination propelled the text into two more editions in 1818 and 1820, and it was later published in America (in 1829, 1830, and 1831) as three separate volumes on Europe, Asia, and Africa by children's publisher William Burgess. Her later works often list her as the author of *A Geographical Present* even though the work was originally attributed only to "M.A." Venning's ideas had a broad circulation, launching her career as a scientific writer and establishing her authority as an educator of the young. Venning's texts were marketed as educational aids of keepsake quality with red morocco bindings and gold-gilt lettering in the American editions and featuring hand-colored plates to illustrate the dress of the peoples of various regions in her geography text.

Venning compiled *A Geographical Present* from the accounts of male explorers, missionaries, travelers, and geographers, spending only a few pages on each country. As a result, the writing is choppy at times, with seemingly disconnected facts culled from various sources. In one instance, she observes, "Goa was once the key to the commerce of the East, and the first mart in the Indies; but it has declined considerably from its former splendor. It is inhabited by Portuguese, mulattoes, and natives. Strangers from all nations are seen there. The climate is very unhealthy."[9] While the description might seem initially disjointed and confusing (what does

commercial decline have to do with the racial makeup of the inhabitants and the climate of the country?), the position of the sentences implies a causal relationship in which the decline is illustrated by mixed-race peoples who become "strangers" and create an "unhealthy" climate for commerce and social interaction. As this example suggests, even though primer writers were often unable to travel to make firsthand field observations, they could still assemble their sources in subtle ways that allowed them to make claims about race, sexual politics, and imperial privilege.

Venning begins the text by organizing her human data from the very first page. The text divides the world into Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, and the world begins with Europe. After establishing her cartographic ethos with the statement, "That portion of the earth which is situated between 10 degrees west and 65 degrees east longitude, and extends from 36 degrees to 72 degrees north latitude, is denominated Europe,"[10] Venning proceeds in the rest of the paragraph to build on this authority, noting Europe's physical boundaries and numbering its seacoasts. Though this information would have been available to Venning or her readers from dozens of texts written for adult professional audiences, what she does next indicates that her authorial agency comes not simply from synthesizing and simplifying materials from various sources, but from the way in which she weighs facts and assigns meaning within her system.

Venning continues in a sudden departure from quantitative cartography to qualitative value judgments: "Europe is the least extensive of the four great divisions of the globe; but its inhabitants have made the most decisive advancement in science, in useful and ornamental arts, and in general civilization. It is also distinguished for the excellency of its government and its laws; but above all for the establishment of the Christian religion throughout the Continent" (*Europe,* 1–2), Venning moves seamlessly from a discussion of Europe's physical geography to a statement of its supremacy, suggesting perhaps that its climatological placement has a priori positioned it to rule.[11] From Europe, Venning narrows her focus to England in particular, describing its physical situation, its climate, and its copper-ore and iron mines. She again moves swiftly from these bare facts to an unequivocal claim about its greatness: "London, the capital of the kingdom, is situated chiefly on the north bank of the Thames, 60 miles from the sea; and with respect to commerce, manufactures, arts, literature, and charitable institutions, surpasses all other cities on the globe"

(*World,* 11). As in the prior statement about Europe, Venning's style allows unsophisticated readers to draw subjective conclusions about greatness from the quantifiable, though often unrelated, facts about place that they follow. This slippage is an important and cagey rhetorical strategy on Venning's part.

While her preference for England may be understood as an expression of nationalist zeal, when the topic turns to Africa, the statements take on an imperial charge with implications that are more troubling. Classifying Africa as an "immense peninsula,"[12] rather than according it equal status and perhaps equal footing with Europe as a continent, Venning sets up the relationship between Africa and the European nations that would begin dividing it into territories by the end of the century. West Africa is discursively divided here into "four portions, called the Grain Coast, the Ivory Coast, the Gold Coast, and the Slave Coast" (*Africa,* 73). The division, common in primers of the period, effectively commodifies Africa as a rich source of goods, raw materials, and even human beings for the benefit of European colonizers. Indeed, Venning later continues this process, stipulating that "Guiana has five divisions, viz.—Portuguese Guiana, belonging to Brazil; Spanish Guiana, belonging to the Republic of Columbia; English Guiana, Dutch Guiana, and French Guiana" (*World,* 151). Consider the issue of audience here—child readers were introduced to Africa or America as a series of annexed pieces, each belonging to a European imperial power, rather than primarily as separate or sovereign territories and nations in their own right.

Venning also introduces Africans to readers by classifying them into three distinct races: the Moors, the Negroes, and the Caffres:[13] "The first are distinguished by their handsome features, lofty stature, olive complexion, and silky hair; the second by their black skin, round heads, projecting faces, flat noses, thick lips, and woolly hair; and the latter unite the leading characteristics of the other two, having the high forehead and expressive features of the Moor, with the woolly hair and shining black complexion of the Negro" (*Africa,* 8–9). In organizing human data according to physical characteristics, Venning's methodology is akin to the ways that other scientists classified plants or animals.

Taken alone, this classification scheme might be simply a curiosity, but placed in context alongside Venning's later work, it shows that her interest in classifying human data is continuous with her methodology

in classifying plants, shells, and minerals in three texts written for young people: *A Botanical Catechism: Designed to Explain the Linnean Arrangement to Children, etc.* (1825); *Rudiments of Conchology: Designed as a Familiar Introduction to the Science, for the Use of Young Persons, with Explanatory Plates, and References to the Collection of Shells in the British Museum* (1826); and *Rudiments of Mineralogy Designed for Young Persons, with References to the Collection of Minerals in the British Museum, to Which Is Added a Short Introduction to the Study of Fossils* (1830). The conchology text went into at least one more edition in 1837. This text in particular suggests a sophisticated audience; her stated intention in the text was to compare the classification systems of Linnaeus and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck to aid young persons' understandings. This showcases Venning's conversance with the scientific arguments of her day. Considered within this framework, Venning's work becomes more erudite, cosmopolitan, and current, rather than seeming to be nothing more than singular overwrought rantings. The aim of her text, as with all the texts discussed in this chapter, was to figure out a way to show the relationships between human beings of different nations; the relationships not only had to display the connections in a transparent manner but also, more subtly, had to set up a hierarchy that would support imperial privilege.

Venning represents Africans categorically as peoples who could benefit to a great degree from enhanced commercial and religious contact with Britain. "Although possessing such an extent of sea-coast, and watered by several large, deep rivers, Africa does not share extensively in the advantages of commercial intercourse" (*Africa,* 2). Venning points out the advantages to Britain in establishing a firmer foothold in Africa. Within various sections, while describing the inhabitants, their crops, and their habits, Venning lauds the Cape as a promising watering place for British ships on their way to India, and asserts unequivocally, "The interior of Africa offers a wide field for philanthropy and Christian zeal. Possessing few of the arts of civilized life, debased by ignorance and superstition, the natives are in general Pagans, or rendered more fierce by professing the religion of Mahomet" (*Africa,* 9). Here, the lack of religious instruction is yoked with a lack of "the arts of civilized life"; Venning points out specifically that these arts include gender-specific, modest clothing choices and sanitation. In Cairo, Venning moves quickly over the pyramids to describe the city: "The environs of the city are filled with [an] accumulation of

dirt and rubbish, while the multitude of tombs, and the effluvia of the sewers, are offensive to the sight and smell" (*Africa,* 19).

Yet not every European nation can be trusted with the serious task of introducing Africans to the benefits of Christianity, European habits, and commercial congress. Venning represents the motives of rival imperial powers as not always being beyond reproach. She speaks proudly of the colony of Sierra Leone, established by the British African Society "for objects of philanthropy rather than commercial advantage" in 1792, going on to detail how this promising enterprise was plundered by the French two years later "and the colonists reduced to the most destitute condition" (*World,* 125–26). Happily, however, Venning notes that the company resumed its work "to make the natives acquainted with the arts of civilization, and to rescue them from habits of idleness, immorality, and barbarism" (*World,* 125–26). With this example, Venning sets the standard for paternalistic imperial relationships in which indigenous peoples require rescue not only from other imperial nations but also from their own inclinations and immoral desires. In contrast with the British, rival imperial nations are represented around the world as perpetrators of religious oppression: the Spanish Inquisition at Goa is "noted for the cruelties which it has inflicted" (*World,* 100); or as greedy opportunists depriving the world of disinterested information: the Portuguese, "who alone have settlements upon this coast, exclude all others with the most jealous care, and by the same means deprive us of knowledge respecting it" (*Africa,* 83); or as instigators of political instability: the Cacongo peoples are represented as having become "fraudulent, turbulent, and treacherous" after trading extensively with the Dutch (*World,* 127).

Yet at times, Venning's syntax suggests that race itself, not merely association with rival imperial powers, produces objectionable behaviors. In Guinea, she observes, "[t]he natives are of very black complexion; they seldom wear clothing, and suffer the beard to grow. They possess some degree of talent, but are thievish" (*World,* 125). In Venning's sentence structure, the thievishness of the people is listed as a racial characteristic after skin tone. In addition, no attempt here is made to qualify this point; instead, a sweeping generalization is made to cover men, women, and children in this region. Venning also employs this technique when discussing the inhabitants of the Congo, who are mapped in relation to the Senegalese. Venning again generalizes about their character, establishing

physical characteristics and then adding on other behaviors and customs: "The negroes of Congo are well made, with lips less thick than those of Senegal. They are accused of ignorance, superstition, and licentiousness" (*World,* 128). Just as Europe's greatness is made to follow a statement of its latitude and longitude, here too the Congolese character follows a description of bodily form. In the case of the Hottentots, whose skin color is less dark (hence closer by degree to European skin tone), the character of the people is represented as less immoral or martial than the Congolese or Senegalese: "In features the Hottentots resemble the negroes, but the colour of their skin is more brown than black: they are well-made, mild, humane, and hospitable in character" (*World,* 132). In a similar move, Venning distances the Goree islanders from mainland Africans by stating, "The natives are of a fine shape, with black, shining skin. They have not, like the negroes, flat noses and thick lips. They are ingenious and quick, but indolence prevents their progress in the arts of civilized life" (*World,* 121). That remark concludes the section, and a new heading, "Negroland," moves on to new territory.

These statements are culled from various short sections on different African territories, no single one of which provides a sustained reading of place or a truly engaged investigation into the culture of the peoples. Only when these sections are taken together do patterns of rhetoric begin to emerge. Venning's work is important in that it provides insight into the ways through which imperial ideology was transmitted to children as well as evidence for the ways in which well-read women struggled to find a field in which they could apply the knowledge and expertise they acquired from reading, visiting museums, or collecting specimens. Venning also utilizes several different methodologies (common to other primers in the period) to establish imperial privilege: she unilaterally organizes and catalogs human beings as data, she positions the data as requiring imperial guidance to ameliorate existing vices that are part of the display, and she discredits imperial rivals and their fitness for colonial rule. As a typical example both of the types of imperial claims made in the text and of the rhetorical flourishes with which authors make them, Venning's text will be an important case study to structure the findings of this chapter, contextualized within the framework of prevailing ideas about science, religion, gender, and child rearing. Venning's interest in cataloging human beings, while certainly troubling to modern audiences, should

be considered within the frame of pre-Darwinian debates about the origin of human beings; the question of whether human races evolved from a single source as the monogenicists proposed or multiple separate sources as the polygenicists maintained was a hotly contested issue in Venning's day, with significance not only for science but also for imperial politics and social life.[14]

While dispersing European culture, commerce, and religion abroad, imperial agents often engaged with local populations in unscripted ways, resulting in a population of mixed-race offspring whose claims to European citizenship and rights posed administrative and ideological difficulties. Venning's system of classification by skin color and racially typed facial features began to break down as generations of mixed-race parentage came to blend distinct cultural experiences and racial markers, challenging and frustrating those who sought to preserve clear distinctions between races to preserve imperial power and privilege. These tensions had reached a boiling point by midcentury, as evident in Harriette McDougall's account of her life as the wife of a missionary on the island of Sarawak, near Borneo. In a series of letters written to her young son Charlie in England and later published as *Letters from Sarawak,* McDougall comments that the inhabitants of Malacca are a "curious mixture" of Portuguese, Malay, Dutch, and English races, reflecting the range of imperial interests in the region. McDougall's narration of these alliances displays her anxiety about how to classify the children of these unions. She explains that the races "are so intermingled, that you may go into a gentleman's house and see an old Malay grandmother dressed in her sarong and baju, and if you know her language, she will introduce you to her son, a dingy Portuguese man, or thickset Hollander, whose half-English wife will tell you that her daughter, Rose, must go 'home to be educated.' While you are wondering whether the 'home' is Johore, Lisbon, or Amsterdam, you hear that it is England, which place, neither parents nor grandparents most likely ever saw."[15] The act of mapping these relationships affords McDougall the authority to stipulate who may claim access to notions of "Britishness" and when and where such claims may be validated. While the children of English families living abroad in the empire were urged to identify England as home, the same privilege was more vexed for British colonial subjects, especially those of mixed-race parentage. McDougall's mapping of the "curious mixture of races" she

encountered in Malay homes reveals not only her proprietary claim to notions of "home" and "Britishness" but also the attempt by inhabitants in an oft-colonized population to craft a British identity for themselves, recognizing that with such allegiance will come imperial privilege. As Stoler dryly notes in her research on mixed-race offspring in the Dutch colonial provinces, "European status was a valuable commodity."[16]

In addition to the census problem posed by a mixed-race population was the more abstruse notion of racial purity propounded by those polygenicists who believed that the separate human origins should be maintained. Arthur de Gobineau, who argued for three racial divisions—the white (Caucasian, Semitic, Japhetic), the black (Hamites), and the yellow (Altaic, Mongol, Finnish, Tartar)—warned of the importance of keeping the races distinct to preserve the superior beauty and physical strength of the white race over the others.[17] He contended that "the peoples who are not of white blood approach beauty, but do not attain it. Those who are most akin to us come nearest to beauty" (146), suggesting a racial hierarchy privileging the white race and plotting those who came closest to it as nearer to the ideal of beauty, strength, intellectual prowess, and stamina. Gobineau's warning that humankind is incapable of infinite progress was underscored by his assertion that if the white race were to be diluted by mixed-race unions, its power would diminish and its "monopoly of beauty, intelligence, and strength" (209) would be compromised.[18] In addition to representing, as Robert Young has noted, "a major assault on the Enlightenment theses of the perfectibility of mankind,"[19] Gobineau's theories had real effects in the world and shaped imperial policy and cultural perceptions. In turn-of-the-century Britain, Gobineau's ideas laid the foundation for the science that Francis Galton, Charles Darwin's cousin, dubbed "eugenics," a movement designed to elevate and privilege superior races over others that are classified as inferior.[20] Henry Hotze, a translator of Gobineau's work, was chosen by the Confederacy to help lobby the British to intervene in the American Civil War. Hotze was charged with publishing a Confederate paper in London to draw a line between the American South, which "for generations back, has been proud of its closer affinity of blood to the British parent stock, than the North, with its mongrel compound of the surplus population of all the world, could boast of."[21] Hotze attempted to draw a parallel between British rule in India and Southerners' practice of slavery, employing theories

of racial science and ethnography. In addition to reaching across the Atlantic, Gobineau's arguments about racial purity are also thought to have influenced Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and his Final Solution: the extermination of Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, and the mentally disabled, as well as the forced sterilization of German women who gave birth to non-Aryan children.[22]

The bottom line here is that ideas about race transmitted in primers such as Venning's were not merely idle philosophical or physiological speculations divorced from political or social life. Instead, they were instrumental in shaping the ways that people of other races were regarded, governed, and evangelized by white imperialists, administrators, and missionaries. Primers present scholars with an unprecedented opportunity to study how these ideas and policies were transmitted in a systematic way. However, a close examination of numerous primers shows that they were not always in lockstep with imperial policy or with prevailing characterizations of Africans or Asians or Pacific Islanders as subhuman. To uphold, as many primer writers did, the monogenesis model (which contended that human beings derived from a single source and were members of the same Family of Man) was in many ways a radical political act because of the implications it held for imperial practice. While the theory of separate human origins offered a model for a type of colonialism that did not have to be rooted in an acknowledgment of relationships, affiliation, or stewardship, the Family of Man monogenesis model dictated a different practice of governance. As the parents in this family, white imperialists—particularly, nationalized white English imperialists—had a familial responsibility to improve their colonial children through exposure to English cultural ideas, manners, government, and religion. Though scholars and historians have argued that this model represents the negative paternalism, racism, and infantilism that have come to be associated with the imperial system, what has been overlooked is that this logic also suggests the belief that Asian, African, and American peoples had souls and minds that were capable of improvement as a result of exposure to European cultural ideas, manners, government, and religion. Though still problematic, this point of view was actually more progressive than the perception that would come to dominate after midcentury insurrections in Jamaica and India led to the popular belief that people of other races were "lesser breeds without law" (in Kipling's phrase) who could not be

taught and were not construed as appreciative or worthy of the benefits of European culture. In some sense, then, the will to colonize may in part have been motivated by—or at least represented in the primers as—an Enlightenment belief in perfectibility and progress.

### *"Mother, May I?" The Mother Country and Her Runaway Children*

For primer writers and their readers, whose experiences of travel and contact with colonial populations were probably few, the easiest and most accessible vision of power, hierarchy, and authority existed in the readily available vision of the nuclear family ruled over by a strong patriarch with a firm and compassionate wife and mother at his side whose duties included the daily disciplining, teaching, and grooming of her sometimes unruly or disobedient children. By adopting the rhetorical model of the nuclear family to talk about complex issues of subjugation, colonization, and rule, primer writers could present readers with readily comprehensible models of power.

In her critical work, Anne McClintock has dated the emergence of the Family of Man trope to the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), contending that "Britain's emergent national narrative took increasing shape around the image of the evolutionary Family of Man. The family offered an indispensable metaphoric figure by which national difference could be shaped into a single historical genesis narrative."[23] This trope, while certainly gaining more currency at midcentury after the publication of Darwin's work, actually predates 1859 and has its roots in the particularly vexed and contentious discourses on race in the eighteenth-century natural science, medicine, anthropology, and ethnography fields. Evidence for this is found within the primers, texts that mobilize various techniques of classification and display to showcase imperial privilege. Likening imperial relations to a family model renders them not only benign but also transparent in terms of where the power and authority are located.

It is tantalizing to speculate about the degree to which this ideological model affected the real ways that colonies were conceptualized and governed. After all, in 1801 the Colonial Office was created as an appendage of the Home Office and did not become a separate office until the 1850s, paralleling the ways that colonized peoples were welcomed into the Family of Man until midcentury events such as the 1857 First War

for Independence, or Indian Mutiny as it was known in the British press, and the 1865 rebellion of former slaves at Morant Bay in Jamaica. The ruthlessness with which both insurrections were dealt with did cause a public outcry in some quarters, but nonetheless, these events signaled a sea change during which attitudes toward race shifted. Stung by what they perceived as a rejection of the imperial blessings they sought to deliver to subject races, Britons began to wonder whether, as Thomas Metcalf couches it, "[r]eform was pointless as well as dangerous."[24] The hardening of the attitude that colonized peoples were fundamentally different from Europeans and thereby incapable of civilization was a departure from the type of governance and care urged by the primers.

As suggested by the Home Office administrative paradigm, the colonies were represented as the offspring of the British home. The thrust of the imperial project, then, was to reshape these colonial children in the image of the mother country. With that in mind, one primer explains to readers that "people have gone out from our country to other countries and settled there, and have thus colonized or peopled other lands. So, if you were to go to many far-distant countries you would find people speaking the same language, worshipping the same God, and having the same laws, and subjects of the same queen, as ourselves."[25] If colonization is discursively rendered as a process of cultivated resemblance and grooming, then who better to facilitate this rearing of colonial children than a gendered vision of imperial power as mother country?

The tableau of mother country flanked by her colonial children is memorably represented in Barbara Hofland's *Panorama of Europe: A New Game of Geography* (1813), a text that went through at least eight editions between 1813 and 1840.[26] Utilizing a narrative frame in her text, Hofland presents readers with the Davenport children, who are engaged in learning geography, but (as Lewis Carroll's Alice would later complain) these children find the memorization of countries and their manufactures and principal landmarks to be tedious, repetitious, and dull. To galvanize the children to learn this material, Mr. Davenport assigns each of them a country whose principal physical, commercial, and cultural features they must memorize. The performative twist is that the children must then personify their countries, appearing in a signifying choice of costume and carrying props. In a festive oral exam, the children, prompted by Mr. Davenport, recite information about their country—these recitations

constitute the geographic text in this primer. Elsewhere, Richard Phillips has suggested that the "heterosexual nuclear family was chosen as the building-block" of colonial systems, especially for agricultural settlement as emblematized in the family farm.[27] For our purposes here, that metaphor also holds true: the nuclear family is the necessary unit for producing geographic discourse. The family is the sum of voices through which the world will be made known; all the members must come together to represent the world.

In response to their father's program, the Davenport children and their cousin commence squabbling over which of them will win the coveted right to represent England. Father Davenport intervenes by casting his wife to personify "the queen of the islands . . . [for] she is our own country—our *mother*" (92). In this fascinating discursive sleight of hand, Hofland plots Mother Davenport as the most appropriate and logical representation of the nation.[28] She ascends to this position not through unseemly vying or petty squabbling like her children but because of her status as a domestic manager and mother who compels the loyalty of her child subjects. The conflation of nation and mother into a stylized vision of mother country offers Hofland a richly symbolic vision of female power as well as a field on which to represent women as holders of authority and knowledge. It is endorsed by, rather than threatening to, the patriarch.

Readers can argue that Mother Davenport's authority is simply symbolic, whereas Mr. Davenport is the one who dictates, organizes, and supplements the information that the children recite in their geographic play. While this is certainly true, we must also remember that on another level, Mr. Davenport is merely a symbolic vehicle for Hofland's ideas about geography as well as about the importance of women's roles within their local family and imperial families. He not only supports the mother country's authority over her children but also functions as Hofland's adopted male voice through which she can ventriloquize about the potential of women's intellect and literary expressions. Mr. Davenport lauds his niece Rosa's inclusion of Madame Dacier among the scholars, poets, and philosophers of France, saying, "Good! Never forget to speak a word for your own sex, my little Rosa!" (54). While such praise may have been seen as pushing or untoward had it come from Mrs. Davenport's mouth or been presented through Hofland's narrative voice, Mr. Davenport offers Hofland a way to safely commend women's contributions to

literature. Nor does this commendation apply only to women across the channel. Mr. Davenport encourages his wife, Mother England, to follow Rosa's lead in noting what women authors have contributed.

After questioning her about the great writers and poets of England (whom she names as Milton, Shakespeare, Byron, and others), Mr. Davenport observes that Mother Davenport has "omitted all female names, save in the last-cited poems" (138). She politely demurs, stating that in such a brief survey, "I did not think myself authorized to name ladies as authors, lest I should seem to place them on an equality with the great names I have mentioned" (139). As children's literature scholars have noted, this omission is typical: "The conventional literary system is, after all, very like the traditional family: adult male literature dominates, women's literature is secondary (and grudgingly recognized)."[29] Yet Mother Davenport goes on to affirm that "it is, however, perfectly right to consider their advancement in literature, whenever the state of a country is contemplated, since their ignorance or knowledge affords proof of the degrees of civilization attained by the state to which they belong" (139). The education of women, in short, benefits the nation. She goes on to note the "highest talents" of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Maria Edgeworth, and Sarah Trimmer, as well as the poetry of Anne Radcliffe, Amelia Opie, Charlotte Smith, Jane West, Joanna Baillie, and Anna Seward and the writing of Hannah More, who "holds distinguished rank" because of her moral and theological expertise (140). She then continues to enumerate: "Cowley, Inchbald, and Lee, are dramatic writers of great merit; and there are numerous well-written novels, by Bennet, Meeke, Roche, &c. &c." (140).

Hofland's emphasis on the importance of women's literary work is significant given her prolific career, which began after she was widowed with an infant son and supported herself by penning a book of poetry. Her first children's book, *The History of an Officer's Widow,* traverses ground that may have been familiar to her from her own experience; it is the story of a family struggling after the death of the patriarch. In 1810, she married talented but inconsistent landscape artist Thomas Hofland, and she continued to support her family with her industrious pen, publishing over forty books for children as well as adults in her career, sometimes two or three a year. Her works range from the English countryside to the British empire: from adventure tales such as *The Young Northern Traveller* (1813), *The Barbadoes Girl* (1816), and *The Young Crusoe* (1828) to geography

primers such as *Africa Described in Its Ancient and Present State* (1828) and *Richmond and Its Surrounding Scenery* (1832). Her work was commended by Queen Charlotte and Maria Edgeworth. Her financial success was due in part to the eighteenth-century rise of a profitable book market, "concurrent with the rise of a middle class sufficiently leisured to undertake the 'instruction and amusement' of its children's minds, and sufficiently affluent to pay for the books that this required."[30] Through her writing for children, she found the means to rear and care for her own children, functioning as the family's breadwinner while her husband occupied the role of a more distant authority. Her most successful book, *Son of a Genius* (1812), reached a fourteenth edition by 1826 and was reprinted in America and France. As her biographer Dennis Butts characterizes it, it is the story of a talented but imprudent artist who wastes his gifts and nearly ruins his family with his erratic, unstable temper, a plot Hofland could easily have drawn from her own experience.[31]

In her novels for children and adults, including *Son of a Genius, The Merchant's Widow* (1814), and *Ellen the Teacher* (1815), Hofland's female protagonists continually manage affairs from behind the scenes so as not to undermine their male counterparts or hurt their husbands' feelings. The way Hofland's writing negotiates this slippery dynamic affirms what second-wave feminists have noted since the 1970s, when they "began to reconceive women's sociopolitical situation and retell it not as a story of victimization, but as a story of survival."[32] It is tempting here to read Hofland's autobiographical and literary narratives back onto the Davenports. Mr. Davenport seems to direct the action and assign roles, yet Mrs. Davenport may be seen to embody the real work of the mother country: the grooming and rearing of colonial children.

Considered in context with Hofland's other literary work, *Panorama of Europe* offers insight into how Hofland's writing afforded her a means to critique the patriarchy's distant authority. Written a decade after *Panorama,* Hofland's novel *Distress* (1824) celebrates female industry in the face of male ineffectuality. Called "almost a subversive book" by Butts,[33] Hofland's novel follows a plot she would reproduce in many of her fictional tales. It is the story of a gentleman who lives beyond his means until his wealth is exhausted and his indignant but industrious daughter decides to go into business to support the family. *Decision* (1824) offers a model for women's activity within the public sphere, while safely motivated by private,

domestic necessity. Daughter Maria at age nineteen goes into business as a wholesale iron merchant (interestingly, Hofland's father, who died when she was only three, had been an ironmonger by trade), earning a measure of success while selling steel in small quantities to local artisans. She is able to support her family and gain enough independence to turn down two marriage proposals. Through the character of Maria, Hofland elevates the support of domestic family life as a reason for entering the public sphere as she did by writing her novels and primers.

Given the richness of her experience as a wage earner, a plot she elaborated on in her fictional works, Hofland's use of the Family of Man model in *Panorama* not only conveys to readers a sense of the connectedness of nations but also offers her an opportunity to craft a vision of female authority on an imperial stage. The long-term effectiveness of such a model is fascinating to contemplate, since her child readers would come of age during and after Victoria's accession, growing up to fulfill a destiny that they had seen mapped out in their faithful primers. Additionally, her work complicates Benedict Anderson's quest "[t]o see how administrative units could, over time, come to be conceived as fatherlands."[34] Though overlooked in the historical record, primers such as Hofland's do not simply bridge administration and nationalism but do so while exposing and preserving the tension between the complicated interplay of ideas of motherhood as a model of national and imperial authority.

Towering over her many children in the *Panorama,* Britannia (Mother Davenport) is wreathed with flowers, "more emblematical of power and ease than any other nation in Europe" (14). Her power and ease are signified by the positioning of other countries as child subjects. The children personifying Spain, Italy, and France appear as decrepit warriors, rather than active rivals. Attired in a cloak and hat with a plume of feathers, carrying a spear and an unstrung guitar, the child arrayed as Spain shuffles forward, clutching an imagined wound on his body politic and gasping that "the irruption of France" "would, ere now, have completely ruined me, if Great Britain had not generously assisted me, notwithstanding I had been for many years her enemy; her exertions have been conducted with so much policy, and her brave armies behaved with such unexampled courage and skill under Lord Wellington" (83). Here, the mother country's mediatory skills in mending quarrels among her

children are in demand on the world stage in the wake of what is represented in the primer as France's covetous empire building.

The relationship between France and England during this period was marked by "mutual antagonism and anxiety," according to historian Linda Colley.[35] As a result, in Hofland's *Panorama,* no one in the immediate family wants to represent France, thus underscoring its estrangement from the European family of nations headed by Britain. The children resist "appearing even for an hour her [England's] enemy" (9). Part of the animosity toward France was certainly attributable to the ongoing Napoleonic Wars that were raging while Hofland was writing her primer; *Panorama* was published in 1813, but the wars would go on for another two years, until Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo in 1815. The genius of Hofland's use of the family trope here is that she was able to use the intimate architecture of the family structure and sibling rivalry to explain complex concepts such as international alliances and political coalitions to her young audience through familiar patterns of sibling rivalry and bullying. The child Spain suffers as a result of the bullying of a forceful France, whose aggression has to be checked by a firm but fair mother Britannia. As the leader of the family, Mother Davenport embodies "the only power in Europe that has made a successful stand against France, and has not only maintained its own independence, but given aid to its distressed neighbours, and generously extended protection to its enemies" (95–96). Like any good and comforting mother, Mrs. Davenport/Britannia listens calmly to her children's woes, assuring them with parental calm "that the affairs of Europe, so long involved in ruin, will shortly exhibit a very different aspect," thanks to her wise and timely intercession (95–96).

When not mending quarrels, Mother Davenport stands at the center of a tableau, flanked by her children: "On her right hand stood William, in a suit of tartan plaid, with the ancient Highland bonnet on his head, leaning on a sword, but with a book under his arm. On her left stood Charley, in a beautiful green mantle, with many devices denoting antiquity . . . along with a cap of liberty, which was torn and bloody" (14). Accompanied by her son Scotland at her right hand and her other rebellious son, Ireland, on the other, the mother country is immediately flanked, even at home, by her imperial conquests. This tableau represents what Kathleen Renk has called the "archetypal Victorian colonial

family compris[ing] the superior, moral, 'enlightened' parental country, a country that possessed heavenly truth, and the inferior, acquiescent, 'un-civilized' but cheerfully submissive child country."[36] The child countries here have been disciplined by Britannia so that they can be enfolded into her imperial family; though both bear the scars of rebellion against her authority, Scotland has balanced its martial interests with book-learning, whereas Ireland's roughshod appearance is indicated by the schoolboyish torn cap, suggesting that this country still has some growing up to do.

Though identified as part of the British nation, the nineteenth-century Irish population had a particularly fraught relationship with this designation. Beneath the umbrella term "British," primer writers maintain a clear distinction between the Irish and the English, noting that the Irish do so as well. The primers seem to want one British family, yet they trouble to make distinctions of seniority among the colonial children within this family. To some extent, this may have been a result of longer kinship; although Scotland and Wales were united with England in the 1707 Act of Union, Ireland was not brought into the family until the 1800 Act of Union. To stretch the metaphor in a critical context, Robert Young has noted that the term *British* is used to "mask the metonymic extension of English dominance over the other Kingdoms with which England has constructed illicit acts of union."[37]

Infantilized by the primers with overindulgent appetites, unsanitary living conditions, and sullen disrespect for British authority, in texts such as Priscilla Wakefield's *Family Tour* (1804), the maligned Irish are strategically linked in their habits and manners to the French: "The easy, polite manners of the higher ranks [of the Irish], resemble those of the French."[38] By marking the Irish with French signs, both nations are removed from the English body and its accompanying descriptors of industry, gravity, frugality, and cleanliness. Colley observes that the British "defined themselves against the French as they imagined them to be[:] superstitious, militarist, decadent and unfree."[39] The rivalry with the French is nullified by their association with or resemblance to a colonized people, the Irish, whose unhappy domestic condition requires particular patience and care. Recall that in Hofland's *Panorama,* Ireland is represented as the British mother country's bedraggled and unruly little child. Dressed in a green mantle, Charley appears, carrying "a cap of liberty, which was torn and bloody" (14). Charley/Ireland is mapped here as a child who

has mussed his clothes, tearing and bloodying them by tussling in a silly act of rebellion. Despite Ireland's errantry, Mother Davenport welcomes him to her side. Under her steady guidance, he will learn to temper his appetites and passions.

The representation of Ireland as a child requiring motherly firmness occurs also in primer writer Favell Lee Mortimer's *Near Home* (1849). Mortimer negotiates the political tension by welcoming Ireland into the family of nations and placing it under Great Britain's care, asking readers a leading question: "Does not Ireland look like the little sister of Great Britain?"[40] By characterizing the relationship between England and Ireland as a caretaking one, Mortimer imposes a familial responsibility as the impetus for colonial control. As big sister, Britannia has a responsibility to discipline and protect her young charge. In other texts of the period, Ireland was sometimes figured as the bride of an English bridegroom; in all cases, the English mother/sister/groom is in charge of Ireland, and the insistence on a family model to explain the relationship between the two nations demonstrates the implicit caretaking responsibility that England must undertake.

If Ireland's rebelliousness represented one direct threat to Britannia's happy family, then the Americans' determined independent streak represented another. Jehoshaphat Aspin's *Cosmorama: The Manners, Customs, and Costumes of All Nations of the World, Described* (1827) maps countries by highlighting their resemblances to other nations, thus building connections that will not only help readers retain information but also shore up the conception of an imperial hierarchy.[41] The staged resemblances between countries, much like ones noted among family members, are a means of codifying particular features of national character, as Aspin does with the Americans. Aspin was an unknown female author who utilized this pseudonym as well as "A Lady" in publishing works on astronomy, history, sports, manners, and naval exploits for child readers. Though keeping her antecedents cloaked in mystery, Aspin maps a world or "cosmorama" in which resemblances between countries help readers to build knowledge through grouping and contrasting. By building knowledge in this way, Aspin departs from traditional geographic enumeration of harbors and mountain ranges. She makes this plain in her introduction when she states, "Supposing my readers to have already learned Geography from the Abbé Gaultier's excellent book, I shall not

here trouble them with the boundaries, divisions, and other geographical particulars of the countries we must visit: the *people,* not the *place,* now claim our attention" (viii). Indeed, characterizing peoples rather than the territory in which they live is a means that primer writers adopted to classify races and groups and to put them into relationships with recognizable power dynamics. It fits Mary Louise Pratt's assertion that a nation's "vast contents would be known not through slender lines on blank paper, but through verbal representations."[42] I would contend that territory is known and possessed not only by maps and surveys and grids but also through discursive representations that seek to perform the same types of classificatory work, though using the writer's tools of rhetoric instead of the cartographer's coordinates.

In introducing readers to America, Aspin identifies a resemblance between this former British colony and the dreaded French. She proclaims, "The most conspicuous trait in the American character is consummate vanity, which transcends all that has been attributed to Frenchmen" (215). Even if the terms of this resemblance had not been so deliberate (vanity), this resemblance still would not have been designed by Aspin or perceived by readers as flattering to America. In Aspin's primer, the French represent a military and moral danger as well as a handy antithesis to British sobriety, moderation, temperateness, and industriousness. Moving beyond the vagaries of national character, Aspin specifically contrasts the French with the English in the areas of literature, science, the arts, and the behavior of their women: "In science, France has several distinguished names; but does not seem to be replacing those she is losing with any thing like their equals. In medicine, she is decidedly inferior to England. In the fine arts, she has some eminent men; but her painters and sculptors are too apt to disgrace their professions by a meretricious taste and an immoral prostitution of their talents" (50). The strong language with which Aspin characterizes French artists ("immoral prostitution of their talents" indeed!) as well as her hopeful prediction that the sun is setting on French science and medicine would have granted her English readers a steady sense of satisfaction and superiority in regard to these rivals.

In associating Americans with these French rivals (to whom they chose to turn during their war for independence from Britain), Aspin simultaneously in the same discursive move distances the American body from too near a resemblance to the English. In her primer, Aspin specifically

frames the relationship between England and America as a parent-child one, yet she stipulates that once America left the British family, the resemblance between the child and its mother country faded: "The population of this immense republic was for the most part originally British; yet, from peculiar circumstances, the present inhabitants have obtained characteristics and adopted manners differing from those of the parent state" (214). Aspin establishes a contrast here between the "original" inherited British character, which the Americans have eschewed, and the character and manners "obtained" and "adopted" after the "peculiar circumstances" (that is, the American Revolution). Her use of "obtained" suggests mercantilist associations, and "adopted" emphasizes again that these are not the natural or inherited characteristics. These associations set up the ways in which the American class system will be based on successful commerce and the acquisition of wealth—unlike the British class system, rooted in the genealogical transmission of social status.

Aspin's difficulty with defining the Americans in relation to both the French and the English supports Colley's assertion that "[f]or mainland Britons, . . . Americans were (and perhaps still are) mysterious and paradoxical people, physically distant but culturally close, engagingly similar yet irritatingly different."[43] Aspin marks those differences by making careful distinctions between the English and the Americans just as Mortimer and Wakefield did with the Irish. In describing the "wealthier classes of Americans, particularly in large cities, as much politeness and good breeding prevails as with most of the middle classes of Europe" (215). Aspin establishes a hierarchy in which America's upper class is equated with "most of" the generalized middle classes of Europe.

Despite the fact that primers such as Aspin's worked to disavow too near a resemblance between America and its parent country, on the other side of the Atlantic it was a different story. Though Americans had fought a revolution to separate themselves governmentally from their mother country, primers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's, the anonymously authored *A Rapid Tour* (1846), and Emily Taylor's *Glances at the Ball We Live On* (1856) demonstrate that maintaining a cultural resemblance to Britain was important and necessary for America to assume a powerful place in the Family of Man. Though American primer writers might be expected to have eschewed or resisted the characterization of the British primers that figured their nation as the runaway child of the

mother country, in actuality, American primers proudly insisted on this link. American primer writers situated their nation as the cultural inheritor of Great Britain, attempting to cultivate a resemblance and a genealogy leading back to this mother country. In her *First Geography for Children* (1855), Harriet Beecher Stowe traces the path of national origin across the Atlantic: "Then you would sail towards the east, at the rate of about three hundred miles a day, for ten days; and all this time you would see no land. Then you would see the shores of Great Britain, which is the country from which our forefathers came."[44] By effacing the "forefathers" from other European nations, including Spain, France, Holland, and Italy, who had also established communities in America, Stowe cultivates a strong family resemblance between the United States and its English mother.[45] The resemblance or relatedness of these two nations did not mean that Stowe's primer would do for a British audience, however.

Before being published in England as *A New Geography Revised by an English Lady* (1855), Stowe's work was revised and refocused. The British edition is structurally similar, with the exception of pointed revisions of Stowe's thoughts on the most efficacious form of government (monarchy versus democracy). Additionally, the relationship between Britain and America is emphasized; in the English revision, the Americans are lovingly described as fond children who continue to dutifully follow English traditions and customs: "The people living in the United States are mostly descended from the English; so our forefathers were their forefathers; they speak the same language as ourselves, worship the same God, and in many other things are like us; and this, then, is the reason that I wish you to learn something about America before the other parts of the world which are nearer to us" (*New Geography,* 122). The "nearness" of America to England is calculated not by physical proximity or a scale of miles but according to a cultural scale of beliefs and practices. America is specifically framed here as genealogically linked to England in terms of shared forefathers and cultural practices.

Stowe's primer draws a literal line on the map connecting America to Britain not only in beliefs and practices but also in importance and power on the world stage. Since 1884, Greenwich, England, had been the starting place for world time and space, the literal ground zero, at zero degrees longitude. Stowe's American geography primer works to draw a direct

line between London and Washington, linking them in importance, using the imposed lines of latitude and longitude: "The line that runs through London, in England, and through Washington, in our country, are the two places from which we calculate longitude. . . . [T]hese lines are from Greenwich, which is close by, and considered a part of, London, and at the bottom of the map the figures show how many degrees these lines are from Washington" (*First Geography,* 162). Indeed, picking up on the "nearness" issue, Stowe's primer works to show that there is not a great degree of difference between the two nations and that they are connected by bloodlines and map lines.

Despite the attempts of English primer writers such as Aspin to put distance between the two countries, especially regarding issues such as slavery, American primers insistently cultivated the supposed likeness between the mother country and its former colony. By associating their burgeoning empire with the one across the sea, Americans hoped to establish their political importance. An 1846 American primer acknowledges the imperial might of "[t]he Englishman [who] looks upon his country as the mistress of the ocean, the arbiter of commerce, and superior to all other nations in power, wealth and knowledge. The sway of England is truly immense, extending completely round the world."[46] After offering readers a gloss of this admirable empire, the primer writer relationally plots the American character, associating this figure with the English: "There is another thing which is a noble trait of American, as it is of English character; and this is unfolding itself more and more; namely, a cheerful philanthropy, which seeks, with great pains and sacrifices, to impart unto other nations, the blessings of learning and religion" (108). In light of the dawning age of American imperialism and manifest destiny, this is a significant representation of America following in the footsteps of the mother country by benevolently aiding other members in the Family of Man. Indeed, American primers such as Emily Taylor's *Glances at the Ball We Live On* look wistfully at the world as it has been mapped by British imperialists: "In Africa, at the Cape of Good Hope, the English have a large tract of land; and in America they have Canada; and also some of the West India Islands, and possessions high up in North America, reaching into the frigid zone. . . . Thus one small country has gained power over many countries much larger than itself."[47] The tone of the primer suggests admiration for these colonial acts.

After losing the American colonies at the end of the eighteenth century, the British had to take a long look at their empire, which in its new phase would come to be embodied not only by the colonies in Canada and Australia, home-ruled by largely white populations, but also by territories such as India and South Africa, where British authority did not have the advantage of numbers. Here again, it is important to return to Hofland's *Panorama* with its vision of the Davenport parents similarly outnumbered, but not overrun, by their colonial children. Mother Davenport is "the just representative of a country, which, like her, not only spreads her matronly arms over her own children, to rear them to virtue, and refine them to elegance, but extends the blessings to strangers also, and bids the children of many a distant land rejoice in her protection" (15). The appeal of this model of benevolent motherhood that she scripted may have influenced Hofland three years after the publication of *Panorama* when she agreed to take in her husband's illegitimate son in 1816 and raise him as her own. Similarly, the English Mother Davenport absorbs foreign children into her family, beginning with the Irish in Europe and then increasing her brood across the oceans in India, Africa, and the Americas, in an attempt to "refine" child countries and "rear them to virtue." By identifying the colonized as children, the primer writers were not simply infantilizing them but were also arguing that these non-European peoples were capable of progress and perfectibility, an argument in which polygenicists were not invested. After all, as historians and scholars of children's culture have shown, Enlightenment writers saw the child as "a chrysalis from which a fully rational and moral being would duly emerge, providing parents and educators did their job properly."[48] This vision of the child as someone for whom, and also to whom, its parents and educators were responsible energized the maternal and familial imagery in primers such as Hofland's, offering a significant symbolic and practical vision of the imperial enterprise as a Family of Man in which an image of the colonized as unruly, though perfectible, children persisted even late into the century.

Hofland's Mother Davenport demonstrates the need for supervision as she contemplates her extended imperial family and enumerates her growing imperial claims: "In the East Indies our possessions are increased, and our power established; and we have obtained several islands, formerly possessed by the Dutch. We have large possessions in America,

including immense fisheries" (172). In addition, the growth of commercial interests is linked to the promulgation of national-imperial progress; an authorial addendum promises "a general state of prosperity and commercial importance commensurate with the interests of this extended empire" in the future (201). Presumably, Britain's family of empire will increase as the century continues, as the example of the fecund Victoria would later encourage after her ascension to the throne in 1837. Renk emphasizes Victoria's impact as a specifically gendered matriarchal symbol of empire: a "lily-white mother figure, she is the resplendent, chaste, and untouched attendant of the hallowed hearth, the quintessential angel in the house, the pervading moral influence in the home."[49] Stationed by the hearth, surrounded by her subjected children, this vision of mother country builds on the domestic authority of English mothers and their charge to rear children with a firm hand, strong morals, and clear sense of duty.

### *Sibling Rivalry: A Map of European Brethren*

If proper management, discipline, and supervision on the part of the imperial parent were the keys to producing dutiful, respectful, and industrious colonial children, then primers were quick to point out the ways that other European nations had failed, especially in territories where the English had competing interests. The case of the Dutch offers one such example. Dutch interests in South Africa conflicted with British plans for expansion and development. The two nations engaged in almost a century of warfare over the region, beginning with the British taking possession of the Cape Colony in 1795, an area that had been colonized by the Dutch for 140 years. After briefly losing control of the region, the British regained it in 1806, setting off a series of contests, skirmishes, migrations, and invasions that would culminate in the Boer Wars at the end of the century. The authors of the primers were attuned to these conflicts and represented them in their texts not as two rival powers seeking territorial prowess but as contests between two different systems of governance. A series of brief examples of primer representations of Dutch colonial practices in the first half of the century, when taken out of the context of the individual primers and placed side by side, present a pattern, a consistent profile of the way the primer writers presented British imperial practices in distinction to rival European methods.

In 1816, a primer written by "A Lady" represents the Dutch as "a dull heavy set of beings" who are "very fond of drinking, smoking, and skating."[50] Suggesting that the Dutch cannot regulate their appetites, the primer makes clear that they cannot be responsible for restraining the appetites of the colonized. Priscilla Wakefield, writing about the same time, is even more decided in her gloss of the Dutch in *The Traveller in Africa,* a text written as the travelogue of Arthur Middleton, a character whom readers would have been familiar with from Wakefield's other geography texts, especially *A Family Tour through the British Empire* (first published in 1804, in its fifteenth edition in 1840), which focus on the travels of the Middleton family. Arthur embarks on his African travels, remarking on trade, settlements, and the evils of slavery and even enduring captivity at one point. Relying on the authority of this male narrative voice, Wakefield makes strong pronouncements about the Dutch and the way they govern in Africa. Her description characterizes the Boer planter as an "absolute master of an extensive domain; and he lords it over a few miserable slaves or Hottentots, without control; his pipe scarcely ever quits his mouth, except to give him time to swallow a glass of strong spirits, to eat his meals, and to take his nap after dinner. Such is the life of the African planter: devoted to sensual gratifications, he rises but one degree above his cattle."[51] The planter is described here chiefly in terms of appetites: his hunger for his pipe, strong spirits, and meals. As we have seen, too consistent a focus on gratifying the appetites may lead, at worst, to other forms of "sensual gratification"; at best, too ardent a love for the satisfaction of appetites is associated with animality. Instead of spending time conciliating his workers, the planter "lords" it over them and renders their lives miserable.

To ensure that readers comprehend that colonialism itself is not an evil, but rather that poor management is the problem, Arthur stipulates that with strong governance and industriousness, Africans can transform their homeland into a simulacrum of the English country village. He describes one settlement where Moravian missionaries have been working: "Every part of the settlement showed marks of industry and order. The church is a plain building, the corn-mill is a good one, and the garden produces [an] abundance of vegetables. The Hottentots live in huts, dispersed over the valley, with each a little garden, and furnished with the comforts of an English cottage. They are encouraged to support themselves by their own

labour, and example has done much to overcome their natural indolence" (289). The benefits of imperial management are evident in the civic details: the orderly appearance of the community, the agrarian village life with private properties dispersed appropriately, and the cultivation and production of food. In addition, Wakefield's description points out the moral elevation of the community as symbolized by the presence of the church and the regulation of the "natural indolence" of the inhabitants.

Her description of a successful community suggests that such success is contingent not only on conquering territory and amassing wealth but also on colonizing the hearts and minds of the people and introducing them to the less tangible benefits of religion and industry. Her narrator explains to readers, "In this age of improvement, a hope may be entertained, that a friendly intercourse between the Europeans and the natives of this country may one day be established, when, by the light of instruction, the minds of the latter may be opened to receive the precepts of Christianity; and, instead of the degrading traffic in men, the number of commodities may be increased by cultivation, and exchange of the productions congenial to each climate promote the general welfare of mankind" (335). What is notable about the hope voiced here is its emphasis on the "general welfare of mankind," in other words, the belief that both Africans and Englishmen are part of the same Family of Man, and as such the English have a responsibility to share the "light of instruction" while simultaneously initiating a "congenial" commercial exchange that does not depend on the degraded traffic in human flesh. As a noted Quaker and philanthropist, Wakefield could use moments such as this in her texts as platforms for her views, especially regarding slavery. Arthur asserts that other nations must join Britain to abolish the slave trade to achieve the "grand design, carried on though various channels, of making Africa free, which, by educating her youth, civilizing her inhabitants, and instructing them in the principles of the Gospel, must finally crown, with complete success, the labours of Smethman, Sharpe, Clarkson, Wilberforce, and their noble coadjutors" (345). The English set the example for colonial governance in the world with their attention to morality, commerce, civilization, and the abolition of slavery within the human family.

Like Wakefield's text, Aspin's *Cosmorama* (1827) also represents British colonization as humanitarian rescue, in specific contradistinction to the Dutch methods. Characterizing the Dutch as "mostly without even the

rudiments of education" and describing "their notions of religion and morals . . . [as] extremely relaxed" (164), Aspin calls into question their ability to extend good colonial governance if they lack a moral compass. She characterizes their rule in the following example: "The Cape of Good Hope, discovered by the Portuguese, was colonized by the Dutch, who held the neighbouring country in servile bondage for a century and a half, till they were dispossessed by the British" (164). Though contemporary readers will observe that the Africans only seem to trade one set of colonizers for another, to the primer writers, the swap indicates a sea change from "servile bondage" to membership in an empire in which they will enjoy the benefits of British values, morals, and customs. Taken alongside Wakefield's example above with its emphasis on rescuing the Hottentots from their "miserable" existence in which they are lorded over by an absolute ruler, Aspin's characterization of the Cape also implies that good governance should be tempered with the bringing of culture rather than simply the imposition of dominion and bondage. By infantilizing the African population as wayward children in need of firm and fair governance, British imperialists could position themselves as "altruistic humanitarians rather than self-interested conquerors."[52]

Barbara Hofland in *Africa Described* (1828) characterizes the Dutch colonial project: "[T]he Dutch have never taken the proper means of conciliating the natives; being always found cruel task-masters to the slaves in their West India possessions, they have extended the same spirit to their black brethren here also."[53] Like Wakefield and Aspin, Hofland seems to be writing about the Dutch, but in reality she is constructing this rival nation as a foil to demonstrate the superior colonial practices of the British Empire. In contrast, Hofland states that her countrymen "treat the Caffers with kindness and confidence, and have established . . . fairs between themselves and the Caffers, from which great benefit will be derived to both" (256). The model of colonial governance that Hofland offers readers is one in which both colonizer and colonized will benefit from a mutually agreeable relationship whereby commerce and kindness are explicitly linked, a practice referred to by historian Bernard Porter as materialism in line with philanthropy, or "God in harness with Mammon."[54]

Unlike the Dutch, whom Hofland characterizes as "cruel task-masters," the British are represented as reformers who would instruct and perfect members of the Family of Man, whether in Africa or in the West Indies

or in Oceania. Primers note the inefficiency of the Dutch in all of these regions, setting them up as a moving target of inappropriate colonial practices. At midcentury, in *Letters from Sarawak,* Harriette McDougall states regarding the Malay people that Dutch "injustice and oppression drove them to despair and desperate actions" (23). In contrast, McDougall testifies to the kinder, gentler colonialism available under British rule in Malacca: "The natives indeed were but badly treated, by either the Portuguese or Dutch, and it was a happy day for them, when an English fleet signaled into the harbour, in the year 1795, and made the Dutch surrender to the British flag" (130).

These brief, seemingly casual references to inappropriate Dutch colonial practices sprinkled through primers from 1816 to 1854 demonstrate a consistent conviction about the favorableness of British imperial rule. By presenting readers with contrasts between the two imperial powers, within the context of the Family of Man model, primer writers make the argument that England was the most just parent because it recognized its responsibility to a program of improvement for its colonial children. Within this program, Britain's duties included the regulation not only of domestic spaces such as the Irish home but also commercial loci such as ports in Africa, which needed to be supervised and regulated so that unseemly commerce in human flesh was not undertaken.

Whether the Dutch were actually guilty of appetitive cruelty and immoral rule or the British were characterized by restraint, moral virtuousness, and interest in mutually beneficial commerce is not the point, and certainly competing examples that contradict both stereotypes can be located in the historical record. Such questions are not the focus of this study, and in some ways they are irrelevant to it. The issue here is not the historical, material experience of colonial administration (about which primer writers would have had no direct experiential knowledge anyway); the focus is on the ways these imperial powers were represented in the discourse of the primers in the first half of the nineteenth century. In other words, the focus here is on the ways in which the primers made the debate about the character of a colonial administration (that is, the *national* character). What is often overlooked is that imperial discourse debated the character of the ruling as well as the ruled.

For example, E.R.'s *Geography and History, Selected by a Lady, for the Use of Her Own Children* (first published in 1790, republished through 1859) discusses

the European nations in terms of national character, assigning each country a quick adjectival description that defines that nation for the rest of the primer. E.R.'s description indicates that "[t]he general character of the English is, between the gravity of the Germans and the liveliness of the French: they are solid and persevering, and have a natural inclination for arts and arms. . . . A well-educated Englishman is the most accomplished gentleman in the world, and understands arts and sciences the best."[55] Placed side by side in the imaginations of readers, the English body occupies a moderate middle ground between the polarities of the overly grave Germans and the too-frivolous French; this creates a hierarchy in which the Englishman becomes "most accomplished" and therefore most fit to rule.[56] By associating character flaws with particular nations, the primers aid their young charges in imagining the world as a series of national bodies arranged in a hierarchy.[57] In her work on history textbooks, Kathryn Castle has asserted that these texts "gave to the information they imparted to young minds the legitimacy of historical fact and analysis."[58] E.R.'s work legitimized the imperial worldview, which asserted the privilege of the English body. Referential non-English bodies were arranged according to their narrated relationship to the English body.

Though it is common critical practice to investigate the differences between Europeans and non-Europeans that anthropologists, ethnographers, military personnel, novelists, and civil servants registered in their written discourse, I also examine the strategic resemblances that these texts may also propose. The Family of Man monogenesis model, with its avowal of shared human origin, allowed primer writers to point to, or manufacture, resemblances within this family that would again shore up the superiority and singularity of the English body as the parent of the family. The primers strategically mark other European rivals such as the Italians, Spanish, and French with resemblances to colonized populations. In showing forth this supposed relatedness, the primers make the argument that the French are not suited to rule, because they are too closely related in their shortcomings to those they purport to colonize.

In her 1827 primer, for example, Jehoshaphat Aspin associates the Italians with the Malay peoples, calling the Malay language "the Italian of Asia" (119). She goes on to disparage the Italians as brooding, lazy, and ungrateful, charges that also were also ranged against the Malay peoples in other primers. Taken alone, the conjunction of Italy and Asia may be

seen as offhand. When examining a range of primers, however, one can clearly see that this was a consistent strategy of targeted and strategic resemblances. In a similar rhetorical move, Hofland associates the Spanish with the African Moors. In discussing the Moors in *Africa Described,* Hofland observes that "the present race are altogether far degenerated from the same source which produced the conquerors of Spain, and the princes of the Alhambra" (118). Hofland thereby traces a relationship between the Spanish and the Africans, effectively othering the Spanish; this mapping associates the Spanish with the colonized, reducing the threat of Spain as a rival in the race to colonize. As in Aspin's example above, the Spanish are marked with phrases consistently used to describe colonial populations, such as E.R.'s characterization of the Spanish as "mistrustful, idle, and prone to revenge" (64).

Primers also map resemblances between Spain and Portugal, relating them to one another as family members in reduced circumstances: "[T]hough Spain and Portugal are not one kingdom, they are very much alike—as much alike as if they were sisters. There are the same sorts of beautiful trees and flowers, the same sort of miserable houses and ignorant people."[59] By likening Spain and Portugal to impoverished sisters, the primer exploits the family trope in familiar ways, promoting and sanctioning what McClintock identifies as a "national *hierarchy* within a putative organic *unity* of interests."[60] The purported familial connections in relational geography plot a hierarchy to facilitate the unified interests of promoting the wealth and prosperity of the British Empire.

Annie Wright Marston, a writer and missionary supporter who followed up her popular *Children of India* (1883) children's book with *Children of China* (1884), associates the Chinese and the French through food, which she alleges is not as "absurd" as other books contend; nonetheless, the Chinese fare "is not very much like English food, but rather more like French, because instead of having joints and plain food, their dishes are made up of a little of a good many things mixed together in hashes or stews."[61] Given the characterization of China in the primers as "very far behind the Europeans, both in knowledge and [in] science of all kinds,"[62] relational geography that associates France and China could hardly have been read as complimentary to the French; rather, it was calculated to display resemblances between the French and Chinese, distinguishing England's superiority to both nations.[63]

As these instances demonstrate, establishing geographic relationships or resemblances within the Family of Man was a strategic imperial move. Within the Family of Man model, primers could show not only the different evolution of Europeans and non-Europeans but also the distinctions between the countries in Europe. While particular nations and rivals such as the Dutch and the Spanish were marked as insufficiently civilized or evolved to colonize others, countries such as France and Italy were also identified as bearing too much resemblance to non-European subjects to rule effectively. Lest English children should wonder whom they resembled in this family, the primers offered a genealogy of past empires—specifically, Greece, Rome, and Egypt—through which they could find appropriate imperial precedents.[64]

As Tony Watkins reminds us, "the stories we tell our children, the narratives we give them to make sense of cultural experience, constitute a kind of mapping, maps of meaning that enable our children to make sense of the world. They contribute to children's sense of identity, an identity that is simultaneously personal and social: narratives, we might say, shape the way children find a 'home' in the world."[65] In fashioning that home and the family within it, primer writers practiced a geography in which techniques of comparison and resemblance were as important as readers' personal experiences of being parented or bullied by a sibling. Through these multipronged approaches, primer writers diversified the ways they could communicate to young readers, far beyond the formalized classification techniques of the geographic discipline. Primer writers such as Hofland consciously chose the Family of Man model to introduce their readers to hierarchies of power, duty, and imperial responsibility.

In summary, in the primers, colonized territory is read through the metaphor of the nuclear Family of Man, briskly managed by the firm mother country who guides, disciplines, and grooms her colonial children. To ensure her continued authority, the primers identify European colonial rivals such as the French, Spanish, and Dutch, practicing relational geography to establish supposed resemblances to support Britain's imperial claims. Child readers were invited to map other national bodies, not in terms of global proximity but based on supposed familial resemblances and relationships. Thus, England resembled the great empires of the historical past, while her European rivals were likened to colonial populations. The monogenesis narrative of a Family of Man, in which

some members resemble the child nations and others are clearly set up as the parents, held great appeal for the primer writers as it represented a clear, biblically driven imperative for imperial administration.

Within this vexed and shifting discourse of multiple scientific disciplines crossed by religious allegiances and European colonial rivalries, Mary Anne Venning, Barbara Hofland, and their fellow primer writers grappled with presenting scientific issues to an audience of young imperialists. Their work, though now largely unknown, is part of a larger body of nation-making propaganda deserving sustained attention, seen by scholars such as Helen Tilley as essential to illuminate the ways in which "intellectual intermediaries (explorers, missionaries, administrator-ethnographers, assistants, translators) served as a bridge between these two worlds (anthropology and administration), frequently helping to shore up each side."[66] Women such as Hofland and Venning would not have been welcome in universities, scholarly societies, or professional gatherings, yet it is a mistake to assume that they did not make important contributions as educators and translators of imperial doctrine. I have specifically chosen the term *translators* here (as opposed to the more passive *transmitters*) because these writers took an active role in interpreting, framing, and marketing imperial privilege in ways their readers could understand.