Chapter Title: MAPS, SPELLERS, AND THE SEMIOTICS OF NATIONALISM IN THE EARLY REPUBLIC

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Book Author(s): Martin Brückner
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chapter three

MAPS, SPELLERS, AND THE SEMIOTICS OF NATIONALISM IN THE EARLY REPUBLIC

After the Revolutionary war, it was a bitter irony for Anglo-Americans, eager to sever all representational ties with the former imperial power, that their discussions about Independence and self-government were by necessity conducted in the very language of the former oppressor. While some of the founders debated whether Hebrew or German should become the Republic's first language, diplomats at the Paris peace conference found it easy to imagine a future in which "the thirteen United States wou'd form the greatest Empire in the World" but also anticipated that such an American empire "from a similarity of Language, Manners and Religion . . . woul'd be *English*." The new American citizens also recognized English as the dominant language and lingua franca connecting the larger community of polyglot peoples living within the new national borders. However, the linguistic proximity to imperial England and its legacy of institutions, political practices, and concepts of national culture raised the question whether English, or for that matter any language, was truly capable of representing the new Republic and the meaning of independent citizenship.[1]

If we turn to the political arena during the first decade after Independence, Federalists and Antifederalists alike frequently expressed concern about how their reliance on the medium of language obstructed the definition of government. The Federalist James Madison questioned the efficacy of the spoken and written word for negotiating federal and state interests. Discussing the "arduous . . . task of marking the proper line of partition between the authority of the general and that of the State govern-

1. "Anecdotes of the Negotiations," in W. A. S. Hewins, ed., *The Whitefoord Papers: Being the Correspondence and Other Manuscripts of Colonel Charles Whitefoord from 1739 to 1810* (Oxford, 1898), 187, cited in Eliga H. Gould, "A Virtual Nation: Greater Britain and the Imperial Legacy of the American Revolution," *American Historical Review,* CIV (1999), 481.

ments," he despairs that the use of "words" and "language" fails to convey "complex objects" (such as the idea of a federal union) via "human faculties" to a self-interested people. He writes in Federalist No. 37:

> The medium through which the conceptions of men are conveyed to each other adds a fresh embarrassment. The use of words is to express ideas. Perspicuity, therefore, requires not only that the ideas should be distinctly formed, but that they should be expressed by words distinctly and exclusively appropriate to them. But no language is so copious as to supply words and phrases for every complex idea, or so correct as not to include many equivocally denoting different ideas.

Antifederalists seemingly shared Madison's sense of a linguistic crisis. "And where is the man," asked the voice of Denatus in the *Virginia Independent Chronicle,* "who can see through the constitution to its effects? The constitution of a wise and free people, ought to be as evident to simple reason, as the letters of our alphabet."[2]

Self-consciously inhabiting a logocentric world that revolved around the English language and its alphabetic writing code, both sides were flustered by the fact that the Constitution as a verbal construct lacked transparency and immediate recognition. For Madison, the new Republic's constitutional process was inherently threatened because its foundational document was "rendered dim and doubtful by the cloudy medium through which it is communicated." Similarly, those who opposed the idea of federal union feared that the Constitution's "dim" words ("Who can see through the constitution?") would become precisely the tool by which a central government would obfuscate the practices of power.[3]

For the union to work at all, both the Federalist and Antifederalist voices asserted that the Constitution would have to display its meaning as did the spelling book or picture primer, the most basic of literacy tools. For its meaning to be evident to simple reason, the Antifederalists pro-

2. James Madison, Federalist No. 37, in William R. Brock, ed., *The Federalist; or, The New Constitution* (London, 1992), 179, 180–181; "Address by Denatus," in Herbert J. Storing, ed., *The Complete Anti-Federalist* (Chicago, 1981), V, 262.

3. Madison, Federalist No. 37, in Brock, ed., *The Federalist,* 181. For materials discussing the fears and uses of logocentrism in the constitutional debates, see Robert A. Ferguson, " 'We Hold These Truths': Strategies of Control in the Literature of the Founders," in Sacvan Bercovitch, ed., *Reconstructing American Literary History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), 1–28; Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), 97–117.

posed the symbolic order of the letter alphabet. If we consider the Federalists' invocation of visual perception in relation to the medium of the word, their implied solution to ambiguous language invoked the picture pedagogy of the eighteenth-century alphabet lesson. For Federalist and Antifederalist alike, then, in the ideal world of post-Revolutionary communication the Constitution would operate like a picture primer, displaying its subject matter like an alphabet lesson in which words become meaningful through the visual representation of objects. Such a pictorial language would disperse the fear of linguistic opacity and make the Constitution "evident to simple reason," that is, accessible at once to the literate and illiterate American. To expand on the idea of a constitutional primer even further, the two political factions hoped to discover in the Constitution a language teaching a lesson similar to that of the alphabet primer: instead of reading "A stands for apple," ideally the Constitution would convey the meaning of a "free and wise people" so that "A stands for American."

The perceived linguistic crisis was resolved at least temporarily by the framers' shared culture of geographical literacy. When the time came to ratify the nation's founding document, the signers of the Constitution ceremoniously bypassed both the alphabet and the vexing ambiguity underlying the English language. As Robert A. Ferguson has pointed out: "The signers of the Constitution appear neither in alphabetical order, nor by presumed importance or seniority, nor in haphazard fashion. They are grouped, instead, by state with the states themselves appearing in *geographical* order from north to south, starting with New Hampshire in the north and working in sequence through Georgia in the extreme south." "The United States thus appear," he continues, "on the page in familiar map form—the perfect icon in answer to Madison's fears about indistinct objects, imperfect perception, and faulty language." Neither the alphabetically constructed word nor the collaboratively composed text of the Constitution, but the implied form of the national map thus capped at once the political debate over the Republic's new Constitution and the pervasive sense of language crisis that emerged from this debate.[4]

The national map had become so integral to the early national linguistic consciousness that even the country's fundamental documents were innately structured by the diction and grammar of the national map.

4. Robert A. Ferguson, "The American Enlightenment, 1750–1820," in Sacvan Bercovitch, ed., *The Cambridge History of American Literature,* I, *1590–1820* (Cambridge, 1994), 484.

Thus, early on, the map entered into the national linguistic reform movement, and the textuality of the national map informed primers and elementary lessons in print literacy in the early Republic. Many Americans self-consciously turned to the material form and rhetoric of the national map in order to negotiate and reconcile the competing interests laid bare by the Federalist crisis. Through geographical literacy, the new citizens adopted the national map as a proleptic text that enabled American politicians to ratify the Constitution and became a popular language by which ordinary citizens learned to imagine the contested idea of national unity.[5]

WEBSTER'S SPELLERS AND THE ACOUSTIC MAP

Prompted by the Revolutionary momentum, educational, linguistic, and political theorists did their best to redesign the English language. Several authors sought to revise the most basic element of language, the alphabet. Devising a national alphabet, James Ewing and Abner Kneeland expanded the number of letters from twenty-six to thirty-three; in an effort to provide a proper transcript of American speech habits they designed new symbols that represented these distinctive sounds. Thomas Embree went so far as to substitute syllabic letter combinations with numbers, such as "2 aw, 3 ah, . . . 8 ezhay, 9 eng." At their extreme, linguistic reform efforts went beyond the building of lexicons, pronunciation, and orthography; William Thornton suggested the gradual revision of the alphabetic code itself. Making his case for a whole new script, he exhorted the American audience, "You have corrected the dangerous doctrines of European powers, correct now the languages you have imported," which he then transcribed into print type as "Iu hav korektid ϸɔ deendȷra doktrinz ov Iuropiiɔn pɒuɔrz."[6]

5. The idea of a larger American nation-state and national culture was anything but well received. Historians have reminded us of the vehemence and pervasiveness with which local cultures resisted nation building in post-Revolutionary America. See David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1997), chaps. 2, 5; James Roger Sharp, *American Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis* (New Haven, Conn., 1993); Peter S. Onuf, "Federalism, Republicanism, and the Origins of American Sectionalism," in Edward L. Ayers et al., *All over the Map: Rethinking American Regions* (Baltimore, 1996), 11–37; Cathy D. Matson and Peter S. Onuf, *A Union of Interests: Political and Economic Thought in Revolutionary America* (Lawrence, Kans., 1990).

6. James Ewing, *The Columbian Alphabet: Being an Attempt to New Model the English Alphabet* . . . (Trenton, N.J., 1798); Abner Kneeland, *A Brief Sketch of a New System of*

More moderate linguists such as John Witherspoon, the teacher of James Madison, deplored the lack of federal English. He encouraged the incorporation of "Americanisms," advising his students to compile new dictionaries. The most prominent compiler and reformer of the English language was Noah Webster, who initially began his reform efforts by concentrating on the received standards of English pronunciation. Using the linguistic theory that written words follow the ear, he demanded that common schools adopt a new orthography in which alphabetic letters functioned like modern phonetic signs. To illustrate his argument, for example, he wrote, "There iz no alternativ."[7]

In Webster's 1783 primer, *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language,* his first successful publication in a series of spelling books, the alphabet lesson combined the pedagogic elements of reading and elocution manuals. Its directions maintained that "a child be taught, first the Roman letters, both small and great—then the Italics—then the sounds of the vowels." The various spelling exercises depended on a pronouncing-form method, which meant that students learned to cipher and spell the written word through the imitation of the stresses, breaks, and pauses that marked the word's spoken performance. Moreover, because these lessons in pronunciation required students to stand up as a group, the early national spelling exercises resembled a choral performance. Each of Webster's spelling lessons entailed a graduated theatrical element: students recited numerous tables that progressed from syllabic fragments

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Orthography (Walpole, N.H., 1807); Thomas Embree, *Orthography Corrected: or, A Plan for Improving the English Language . . .* (Philadelphia, 1813), vii; William Thornton, *Cadmus; or, A Treatise of the Elements of Written Language . . .* (Philadelphia, 1793), [iii–vii].

For extensive discussions of the linguistic reform efforts, see Dennis E. Baron, *Grammar and Good Taste: Reforming the American Language* (New Haven, Conn., 1982); David Simpson, *The Politics of American English, 1776–1850* (New York, 1986), esp. 19–28; Michael P. Kramer, *Imagining Language in America: From the Revolution to the Civil War* (Princeton, N.J., 1992), 35–63; Jill Lepore, *A Is for American: Letters and Other Characters in the Newly United States* (New York, 2002), 15–60.

7. John Witherspoon coined the term "Americanism" in "The Druid" (1781), in M. M. Mathews, ed., *The Beginnings of American English: Essays and Comments* (Chicago, 1963), 17; Noah Webster, *A Collection of Essays and Fugitiv Writings . . .* (Boston, 1790), xi. Webster's phonetic orthography was anticipated and influenced by Benjamin Franklin, whose pamphlet *A Scheme for a New Alphabet and Reformed Mode of Spelling* (1768) already bent the rules of English to reflect an American variant of English speech. See also Thomas Gustafson, *Representative Words: Politics, Literature, and the American Language, 1776–1865* (Cambridge, 1992), 39–40; Lepore, *A Is for American,* 31–37.

(table 1: "ba, be, bi, bo . . ."), to monosyllabic words, to the polysyllabic (table 2: "bag, big, bog . . ."; table 6: "ab so lute, ab sti nence . . ."), until they finally rehearsed short didactic narratives (table 42: "The Story of Tommy and Harry").[8]

In order to give the American language its own "sound" (and make it at the same time the basis of a new language), Webster focused on the oral component of the elementary spelling lessons and marshaled most of his pedagogic efforts toward introducing a national "standard of pronunciation." "Such a standard," Webster claimed, "universally used in schools, would in time, demolish those odious distinctions of provincial dialects, which are the objects of reciprocal ridicule in the United States." Webster, a staunch Federalist and ardent proponent of the union, hoped to mitigate political tensions by erasing local linguistic differences. Indeed, the expressed hope of the *Grammatical Institute* was that standardized pronunciation, not so much alphabetic orthography, would mediate among a regionally and socially differentiated people. If Americans would only adopt his reformed speller, Webster believed, "all persons, of every rank, would speak with some degree of precision and uniformity. Such a uniformity in these states is very desirable; it would remove prejudice, and conciliate mutual affection and respect."[9]

8. Noah Webster, *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language,* part 1 (Hartford, Conn., [1783]), 28, 29, 36, 113. Webster explains: "The syllables of words are divided as they are pronounced; and for this obvious reason, that children learn the language by the ear, rules are of no consequence but to Printers and adults. In Spelling Books they embarrass children, and double the labour of the teacher. The whole design of dividing words into syllables at all, is to lead the pupil to the true pronunciation; and the *easiest* method to effect this purpose will forever be the best." See *The American Spelling Book: Containing, An Easy Standard of Pronunciation, Being the First Part of a Grammatical Institute of the English Language* (Boston, 1794), ix (expanded and restructured from 1783 *Grammatical Institute*).

For the reconstruction of post-Revolutionary reading lessons, see William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780–1835* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1989), 34–42; David D. Hall, "The Uses of Literacy in New England, 1600–1850," in William L. Joyce et al., eds., *Printing and Society in Early America* (Worcester, Mass., 1983), 12–27; E. Jennifer Monaghan, "Literacy Instruction and Gender in Colonial New England," in Cathy N. Davidson, ed., *Reading in America: Literature and Social History* (Baltimore, 1989), 53–80; Monaghan, *A Common Heritage: Noah Webster's Blue-Back Speller* (Hamden, Conn., 1983). On Webster's influence in general, see Harry R. Warfel, *Noah Webster: Schoolmaster to America* (New York, 1936); Henry Steele Commager, "Schoolmaster to America," in *Noah Webster's American Spelling Book* (New York, 1962).

9. Noah Webster, *Grammatical Institute,* 6; Webster, *Dissertations on the English Language* . . . (Boston, 1789), 396–397. See also Kenneth Cmiel, *Democratic Eloquence: The*

By concentrating on pronunciation rather than orthography, Webster sidestepped the fact that he was still using the English language to create the proposed American variant. He acknowledged that English was a fickle instrument for creating a national community. He predicted that, even if there were an American English language, the new citizen "will claim a right to pronounce most agreably to his own fancy, and the language will be exposed to perpetual fluctuation." Webster's reform plan seemed already defeated, for he must negotiate the inherent flexibility underlying all languages, the fact that linguistic forms do not always follow rules but evolve constantly and are shaped by individual oral applications, local habits, and social settings.[10]

Webster resolved this dilemma by turning to the discourse of geography, in particular the spelling of place-names. He assured his readers that a geographical lexicon could overcome local differences. Commenting in the *Grammatical Institute,* Webster writes that "the advantage of publishing, in a work of this kind, the names of the United States, the counties in each, etc. will not be disputed by any American." Thus, while the opacity surrounding the English language was fueling the regionally motivated debates over the proper wording of the Republic's basic document, Webster imagined that the "undisputed" pronunciation of geographical words could provide a sense of clarity and a practical code when imagining a unified community.[11]

The assertion that the consensual pronunciation of geographic place-names was the nation's neutral linguistic ground provided Webster with a formula through which he simultaneously decolonized and nationalized his speller. Webster's self-assigned challenge was to displace the British schoolbook *A New Guide to the English Language,* by Thomas Dilworth, a speller that had dominated the classrooms and homes of British Ameri-

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Fight over Popular Speech in Nineteenth-Century America (New York, 1990), 53. Cmiel suggests that Webster's linguistic theory was driven by the search for an egalitarian, analogous language in order to defuse social and regional tensions, an observation that corresponds with my reading of Webster's use of geography.

10. Webster, *Grammatical Institute,* 5.

11. Ibid., 11. Webster's use of American toponyms has been commented on but with altogether different conclusions by Simpson, *Politics of American English,* 56–80; Kramer, *Imagining Language,* 38–49. Joseph J. Ellis comes closest to my analysis when he perceptively describes the use of place-names as "a secular catechism to the nation state" but leaves it at that. *After the Revolution: Profiles of Early American Culture* (New York, 1979), 175.

cans since the 1740s. On first sight, Webster's book hardly differed from his imperial predecessor. Both were written in the English language; both endorsed the alphabetic pronouncing-form method. But by focusing on Dilworth's textbook, Webster chose to compete against one of the more popular spellers that promoted geographical literacy. Dilworth's speller emphasized place-names as the literary context through which his British reading subjects would facilitate communication in the British commonwealth as well as uphold its imperial economy on a global scale; or, as Dilworth put it, it is only "by this means a Briton holds correspondence with his friend in America or Japan, and manages all his business." Webster targets this section, offering, instead of "twelve or fifteen pages devoted to names of English, Scotch and Irish towns and boroughs," eight pages of "the names of the United States, the counties in each, etc." Whereas Dilworth had been rehearsing primarily the place-names found in England, Webster now offered those of the new American nation-state.[12]

Indeed, in transforming his speller into an agent of national unification, Webster incorporated a spelling exercise that anticipated the founders' signing ritual. As if projecting the visual form of the United States map of 1783, he introduced the students to the proper spelling of American toponyms by including district and city names of all thirteen states. In print the alphabetic assembly of the national map looked like this:

The United States of America

States	*Capital Towns*
New Hamp-shire	Ports mouth
Mas sa chu setts	Bos ton
Rhode-Island	New port
Con nect i cut	Hart ford
New-York	New-York
New-Jersey	Tren ton
Pen syl va ni a	Phil a del phi a
Del a ware	New-Cas tle
Ma ry land	Bal ti more
Vir gin i a	Rich mond
North-Car o li na	New bern
South-Car o li na	Charles ton
Ge or gi a	Sa van nah

12. Thomas Dilworth, *A New Guide to the English Tongue* (Boston, 1783), x; Webster, *Grammatical Institute,* 10–11. Geographic place-names are generally absent in spelling

The effect of this spelling table was to establish the geographical order of the national map as an alternative to the alphabetical order of English. Names of states and cities were organized according to their geographical coordinates from north to south rather than from *A* to *Z*.[13]

Given the table's role in securing a "standard of pronunciation," it meshed the textual structure of the national map with the practice of oral alphabet lessons. The pronunciation of American place-names imitated the typographic hyperextension of place-names on maps. Just as the written word "Massachusetts" implied a larger territorial unit by being stretched across the face of a map, so too did the pronunciation of "Mas-sa-chu'-setts" imitate the territorial form of the geographic referent. Being sounded aloud, the place-name now signaled spatial demands, invoking territorial rights and borderlines for both readers and listeners. Moreover, as the chorus of students rehearsed its lines of geographic location, its tonal scale subordinated regional differences to the largest common territorial denominator. In Webster's lineup, pupils voiced the words "The United States of America" before those of the states. For the duration of these pronunciation exercises, as place-names wafted through American classrooms or parlors, students learning to spell also learned how to noisily claim the national map as the soundscape encompassing a common linguistic identity.

Having folded the pronunciation of the national map into his alphabetic spelling book, Webster uses geographical literacy as the touchstone of his language reform. Initially, his *Grammatical Institute* warned the reader that the American community was not so much threatened by the flexibility of the English language per se, but that the English variants and dialects were infinitely more debilitating to the project of unifying the national reader through one linguistic standard. Yet, toward the end of his introduction to the *Grammatical Institute* Webster concludes that spellers and grammars were not in need of improvement, but that language reformers needed better geographical primers. "The accounts from several states, are yet imperfect," he writes, "but care will be taken to collect, by the best means of information, such accurate accounts from

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books found on early American bookshelves; for example, [Ralph] Harrison, *Institutes of English Grammar* (London, 1777); John Fell, *An Essay towards an English Grammar . . .* (London, 1784); or Thomas Sheridan, *Elements of English: Being a New Method of Teaching the Whole Art of Reading, Both with Regard to Pronunciation and Spelling* (London, 1786).

13. Webster, *Grammatical Institute,* 92.

the several states, as to correct any errours and supply any defects, that the present imperfect and fluctuating state of geography in this country may unavoidably occasion."[14]

Describing the state of geographic literacy becomes Webster's way of describing the state of literacy instruction in America. During the first three decades of nationhood, as his spelling books rapidly replaced those of a colonial make, lessons in geographic literacy seeped into spelling exercises. For example, new editions of former colonial classics such as George Fisher's handbook *The Instructor; or, Young Man's Best Companion* (1794) appended their chapters on language instruction with a rehearsal of American place-names. For Enos Weed, the alphabetization of the map became the principal method of spelling instructions; his *American Orthographer,* part 2, *The Geographical Spelling-Book* (1798) had students practice their alphabetic skills in tables containing lists of place-names that, broken down into their syllabic components, imitated the stress and pauses of speech and also used the hyperextended printing of letters to demarcate geopolitical and cultural spaces on the map. With the emergence of schoolbooks like these, Webster's mapping gambit had succeeded beyond merely instituting place-names as a methodology of language instruction. As a result of his spellers and reading books, an entire generation of American citizens studied the English language through the geographer's lexicon and the cartographer's mode of projection.[15]

PRIMERS AND JEDIDIAH MORSE'S EXPERIMENTAL WORD MAPS

As much as the initial reading lessons of the early Republic revolved around Webster's oral approach, language instructions also depended on the visual pedagogy of the picture primer. In order to achieve an unmediated, transparent relationship between words and the material world, or between signifiers and their signifieds, proponents of English language reforms embraced and emphasized pictorial instruction schemes. In fact, after the Revolution the programmatic dissemination of dozens of newly conceived illustrated primers became the disciplinary site through which

14. Ibid., 10.

15. George Fisher, *The Instructor; or, American Young Man's Best Companion . . .* (Walpole, N.H., 1794), 259–282. See also Donald Fraser, *The Young Gentleman and Lady's Assistant . . .* (New York, 1791), 30–38.

the new citizens sought to train students into models of republican virtue and self-discipline. For such reformed primers, it was not only questionable orthography or slippery grammatical systems that rendered language inherently volatile and therefore open to factious appropriation, but the very nature of written language itself. Pictures, instead of serving as supplements to written text, became a second language. Authors repeatedly engaged a visual code to reimagine language and hoped to forge the new nation through this new language.[16]

By taking the pictorial turn, American educators worked in the tradition of revolutionary linguistic movements dating back to the mid-seventeenth century. Following the Thirty Years' War and the English Revolution, European linguists and political theorists blamed much of the social violence on miscommunications resulting from the variety and ambiguity of national languages. After decades of political instability and the related loss of meaningful forms of signification, Europeans searched for an ideally prelapsarian or Adamic universal language. As the idea of a universal language became the common goal of linguistic reform, pictures in particular were tapped for their ability to transmit meaning concretely, unambiguously, and free from verbal interferences.[17]

In the context of the post-Revolutionary United States it was thus not a surprise that American educators rediscovered the seventeenth-century philosopher Johann Amos Comenius, who created pedagogic schemes that first anchored the political order in the pictorial and only then turned to the written word. In his primer *Orbis Sensualium Pictus: Visible World; or, A Picture and Nomenclature of All the Chief Things That Are in the World* (originally published in 1659 and reissued in the United States as late as 1810), difficult abstract subjects, such as "Philosophy" and "Humanity" as well as geopolitical constructs like "Kingdom" and "Region," were represented through illustrations of material objects. "The Kingdom and the Region," for example, was established in a concrete and stable form through a woodcut with a neatly modeled landscape depicting the various elements of the early modern state (Figure 27). Through the picture, the student learned to read and comprehend the social order. The corresponding text is in the service of this image:

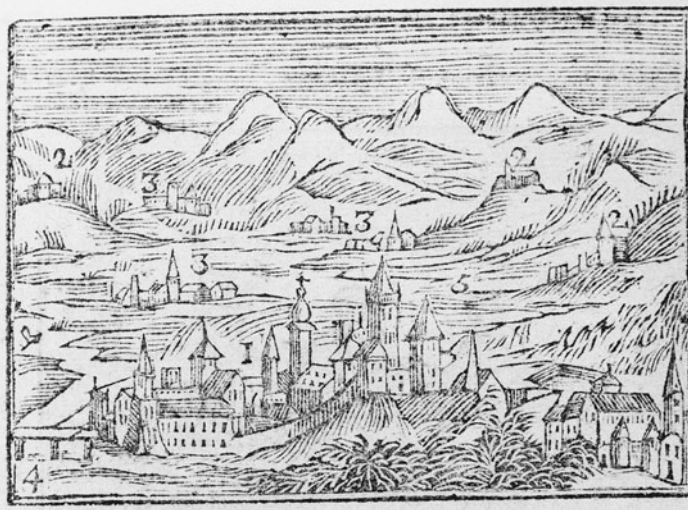
16. Patricia Crain, *The Story of A: The Alphabetization of America from "The New England Primer" to "The Scarlet Letter"* (Stanford, Calif., 2000), 55–95.

17. On universal language schemes, see Murray Cohen, *Sensible Words: Linguistic Practice in England, 1640–1785* (Baltimore, 1977); James Knowlson, *Universal Language Schemes in England and France, 1600–1800* (Toronto, 1975).

CXXXIX.

The Kingdom and the Region.

Regnum & Regio.



Many Cities *and* Villages
make a Region
and a Kingdom.
The King *or* Prince
reſideth in the chief City, 1.
the Noblemen, Lords,
and Earls *dwell*
in the Caſtles, 2.
that lie round about it;
the Country People
dwell in Villages, 3.

Multæ *Urbes* & *Pagi*
faciunt *Regionem*
& *Regnum*.
Rex aut *Princeps*
ſedet in *Metropoli*, 1.
Nobiles, *Barones*,
& *Comites* habitant
in *Arcibus*, 2.
circumjacentibus;
Ruſtici
in *Pagis*, 3.

H2

Figure 27. "The Kingdom and the Region." From Orbis Sensualium Pictus: Visible World . . . , *by Johann Amos Comenius. 1777.* Courtesy, University of Delaware Library

> Many Cities and Villages make a Region and a Kingdom. The King, or Prince, resideth in the chief-City; 1. the Noblemen, Lords, and Earls, dwell in the Castles 2. that lye round about it, the Countrey-people dwell in Villages. 3. He hath his toll-places upon navigable Rivers 4. and High-Roads, 5. where Portage and Tollage is exacted of them that Sayl, or Travell.

The picture thus functions not only as a mnemonic device for learning a basic political vocabulary but also like a map, illustrating the spatial organization of the state. The messy realities of human existence and complexities of political order vanish in the tidy graphic simplicity of the landscape overview.[18]

In American hands, picture primers assumed a dual function. First, just as in their European context, primers carried forth a latent ideology of universal language schemes. Second, and more particular to the post-Revolutionary order, pictorial primers worked to negotiate the representational tensions spurred by the Federalist debate; the picture, more powerfully than the word, was able to reconcile the political concepts of "union" and "states." But, while the pictorial primers like Comenius's were adopted because of their availability and status of promoting a universal language, these primers' European heritage entailed historic and practical limitations. Although picture primers paved the way for the entrance of the visual into America's language handbooks, the primer's traditional representation of words and images relating geopolitical spaces like the "kingdom" was no longer applicable. The invention of a new type of nation-state with a precarious and experimental relationship of the parts to the whole could not, many feared, be given proper expression through the pictorially mediated letters of the English language. Moreover, federalist educators feared that the sustainability of this new political form depended not so much on written decrees and charters and international treaties as it did on citizens' absorbing and comprehending the social relationships of this political hybrid.

Maps, themselves a hybrid form of word and image, provided primers with this language. Map images were not new to picture primers; after all, Comenius's *Visible World* contained maps showing the world as a

18. Johann Amos Comenius, *Orbis Sensualium Pictus: Visible World; or, A Picture and Nomenclature of All the Chief Things That Are in the World* (1659; rpt. Menston, Eng., 1970), 278–279. On American imports and editions of Comenius's and other picture primers, see Crain, *The Story of A,* 26–27, 55–95, 230–231.

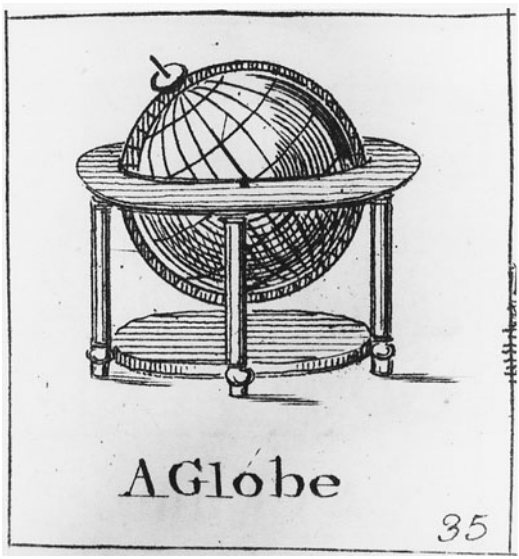


Figure 28. "A Globe." From The Child's Museum. *1804.* Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society

"Terrestrial Sphere . . . divided into 5 Zones" and Europe, containing "the chief Kingdoms." Eighteenth-century American primers and ABC books, following in Comenius's footsteps, incorporated the textual materials of the geographer into the display of alphabetized objects. For instance, primers such as *The Child's Museum, Containing a Description of One Hundred and Eight Interesting Subjects,* following the schoolbook definition that "a Map is a picture of the earth," included the picture of a globe (and the written subtitle, "A Globe") in the array of alphabetized objects (Figure 28). The seemingly arbitrary inclusion of the globe into the primer is a first comment on the materiality and availability of cartographic texts in the early American linguistic stock.[19]

More than simply illustrating the alphabet, the figure of the map worked conceptually to teach abstract principles of literacy. This is suggested by the primer *The Mother's Gift; or, Remarks on a Set of Cuts for Children* (Figure 29). This primer presents the student reader with a picture of a map, a subtitle spelling out the words, "A Map," and a narrative description: "MAP. As you get forward in the study of geography you will find great entertainment in maps. How pleasant is it to trace the progress

19. Comenius, *Orbis Sensualium Pictus,* 218–221; "A Globe," in *The Child's Museum, Containing a Description of One Hundred and Eight Interesting Subjects* (Philadelphia, 1804), table III, fig. 13; David N. Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise* (Oxford, 1992), 98–100.

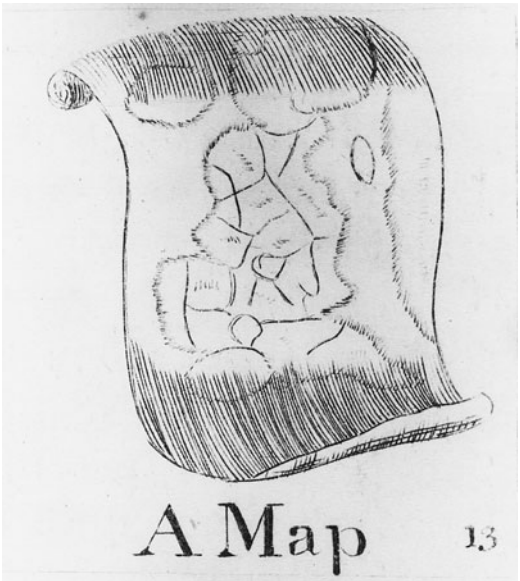


Figure 29. "A Map." From The Mother's Gift. *1809.* Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society

of a traveller of whom we read; and still more interesting where a friend is on a voyage or journey." Here, map literacy is taught as a reading skill and a life skill: maps are understood to inform the student's future geography lessons; they are considered textual companions of the leisured reader who consumes travel narratives and novels; maps provide the material link through which friends and families communicate with each other. As the titles of primers like *The Mother's Gift* suggest, alphabetic literacy was the product of a domestic ideology in which the child was the focus of alphabetic instructions provided by the ideal republican mother; in this context the map was introduced to the child reader by the most intimate member and designated disciplinarian of the early national household.[20]

But the alphabetic lesson surrounding the map was not only the pedagogic means of embedding the student inside a social network. The picture primer's rationale also created a visual narrative in which individual bodies were circumscribed by cartographic signs. In *The Uncle's Present: A New Battledoor* (1809) the letter *Z* is depicted by a street peddler who is carrying different sized maps while calling "Zealand, or England, and a

20. "A Map," in *The Mother's Gift; or, Remarks on a Set of Cuts for Children* (Philadelphia, 1809), 14. The map is thus another proscriptive tool in the process of identity formation that Richard H. Brodhead calls "disciplinary intimacy." See *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago, 1993), 13–47; for a discussion of this model in relation to alphabetic instruction see Crain, *The Story of A,* 103–142.

Figure 30. "Z *[for] Zealand, or England, and a Map of the World." From* The Uncle's Present. *1814.* Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society

Map of the World" (Figure 30). While in this picture alphabet the map appears in the form of a consumer article, the map also ties the market economy to the anthropomorphized ABCs. As the human figure associates maps with the alphabetic sign, it establishes a somatic link between the reader's body, the alphabetic reading material, and cartographic writings. Like the human alphabet, which instituted the notion that the body was subject to the authority and discipline of the written sign, in this example the alphabetized individual becomes intrinsically part of a largely commercial cartographic archive and expanded notion of geographic literacy.[21]

While American primers were establishing a deep structural nexus between alphabetic and map literacy, one of the more influential geography books consciously developed this nexus into a national form of print language. In the best-selling textbook *Geography Made Easy* (1784), the Federalist minister and geographer Jedidiah Morse tested the relationship between alphabetic and cartographic literacy. He pursued the question of how maps could aid the literary process of making the idea of

21. "Z," in *The Uncle's Present: A New Battledoor* (Philadelphia, 1810), appendix; also in the primer *The Cries of London* (Hartford, Conn., 1807).

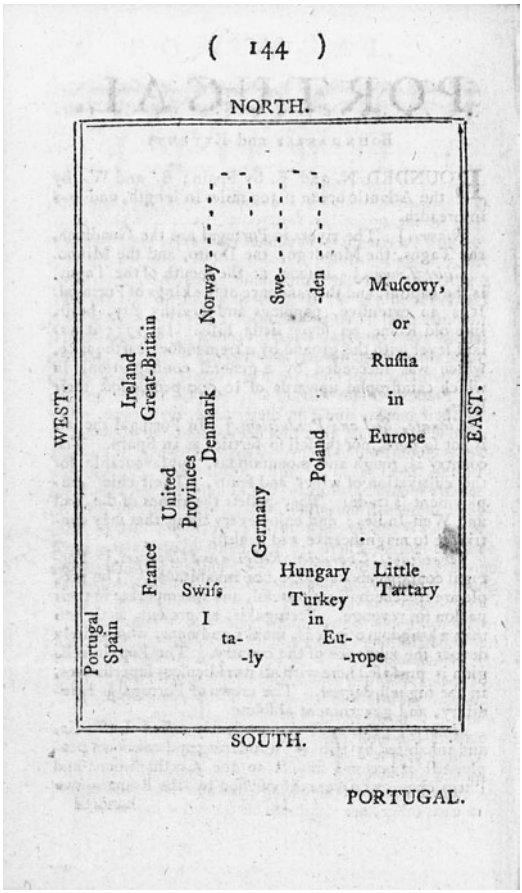


Figure 31. Word Map. From Geography Made Easy, *by Jedidiah Morse. 1784.* By Permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University

nation a permanent inscription in the minds of American students. "Calculated particularly for the Use and Improvement of SCHOOLS in the United States," the textbook was the first in a series of books whose intended goal was explicit: "That our youth of both sexes, at the same time that they are learning to read, might imbibe an acquaintance with their own country, and an attachment to its interests." To demonstrate a possible means for attaching youngsters to a national imaginary, Morse inserted two kinds of maps in his first edition of *Geography Made Easy,* experimental word maps and a conventional national map.[22]

22. Jedidiah Morse, *Geography Made Easy* . . . (New Haven, Conn., 1784), iv; and *Geography Made Easy* . . . , 3d ed. (Boston, 1791), vi. For a detailed account of Morse's publishing activities and his selection of maps and mapmakers, see Ralph H. Brown, "The American Geographies of Jedidiah Morse," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* XXXI

The word maps, advertised as "newly constructed Maps, adapted to the Capacities and Understanding of Children," demonstrate how Federalists like Morse imagined the geographic process of national unification as purely alphabetic (Figure 31). Each of these four maps, representing South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia, consists of a blank rectangular frame. Into this spatially delimited tabula rasa Morse spells out the names of existing nation-states, arranging the printed letters to indicate their geographic dimensions and relations. Having thus jettisoned the usual elements of map reading necessary for one's orientation and self-location—the geographic grid, local place names, and pictographic symbols—Morse represents each continent as the verbal approximation of political rather than geographical locales. In each continental map, the elaborately printed names of nations appear as synecdochic figures of actual places. Conversely, the geographical order of the world is upheld by the alphabetic construction of nations. More specifically, the word map subordinates the implied cartographic image to the machine-made appearance of the printed text, and the representation of continents and geopolitical entities to the conventions of print typography. With these word maps, Morse's geography imitated a spatial order derived from print technology, an order according to which "typographic control typically impresses more by its tidiness and inevitability: the lines perfectly regular, justified on the right side, everything coming out even visually."[23]

Yet—and this is the dilemma that Morse's experimental maps demonstrate—for the nation to become the perfectly regular alphabetic environment, the word maps had to reconcile a strain that lies at the heart of all cartographic representation: their formal arrangement had to negotiate the reader's imaginary freedom of movement offered by the hybrid textuality of the map. By reading the map as a quasi-blank and verbally

(1941), 145–217. For material on Morse's use of maps, see also John Rennie Short, *Representing the Republic: Mapping the United States, 1600–1900* (London, 2001), chap. 6; Richard J. Moss, *The Life of Jedidiah Morse* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1995), 38–51.

23. Morse, *Georgraphy Made Easy,* iv; Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York, 1982), 122. As with most geography books that were published from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, collaboration and plagiarism went often hand in hand. Morse modeled his word maps and most of *Geography Made Easy* on a relatively unknown textbook by R[ichard] Turner, *A New and Easy Introduction to Universal Geography* (London, 1780). I am grateful to Barbara McCorkle for this reference.

elastic text, the apprentice map reader was able to create a space of his or her own. Just as the alphabet enabled politicians to organize the world into political spaces, the unorthodox arrangement of Morse's letters undercut the fantasy of territorial control. The word maps established national alignment as a ludic activity; just as the printer's apprentice shuffled the typeface inside the letterbox, Morse's students learned how to playfully scramble the verbal markers of political territories. Through a random shuffle, nations vanish or become reconstituted as a different word.

In order to better control the reader's alphabetic literacy, Morse exploited the pedagogic (and political) authority by which the mapmaker shaped the signification and interpretation of political geography. It is telling that at the historical moment of 1784, when language threatened to upend the new nation, the alphabet and alphabetic maps seemed to be insufficient tools for stabilizing the new American nation. Instead of adding a fifth word map that spelled out the constitutive names of the United States, Morse turns to the conventional map and the iconic outline of the new federal state as the dominant lesson signifying the union. Upon opening the textbook, the student readers were greeted with the first picture of the nation, *A Map of the United States of America* (1784) (Figure 32). This map by Amos Doolittle was one of the first national maps published in the United States immediately following the Peace of Paris. The map is thus designed to show exclusively the territory of the nation-state, tracing its international borders from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Mississippi River in the west, and from British Canada to the north and Spanish Florida to the south.[24]

To the lower right of the map, a cartouche introduces through its visual

24. Domestic productions included Abel Buell's large-sheet map, titled *New and Correct Map of the United States* . . . (1784) and William McMurray's wall map, *The United States according to the Definitive Peace Treaty Signed at Paris* . . . (1784). Following the publishing success of Morse's school geography, Doolittle's map reached thousands of students for several generations. On the history of specifically "national maps," see Walter W. Ristow, *American Maps and Map-Makers: Commercial Cartography in the Nineteenth Century* (Detroit, Mich., 1985); Seymour I. Schwartz and Ralph E. Ehrenberg, *The Mapping of America* (New York, 1980). On the economics of mapmaking in the early Republic, see David Bosse, " 'To Promote Useful Knowledge': *An Accurate Map of the Four New England States* by John Norman and John Coles," *Imago Mundi,* LII (2000), 138–154; Bosse, "The Boston Map Trade of the Eighteenth Century," in Alex Krieger and David Cobb, eds., *Mapping Boston* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), 36–55; also see Susan L. Danforth, "The First Official Maps of Maine and Massachusetts," *Imago Mundi,* XXXV (1983), 37–57.

Figure 32. A Map of the United States of America. *By Amos Doolittle. 1784.*
By Permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University

narrative the relationship between map and alphabetic literacy. Hovering in a swirl of billowing clouds, the female figure of Liberty (or perhaps Columbia), together with the American eagle, lifts a banner inscribed "Per Aspera ad Astra" in order to unveil the new nation's name (in bold print) while the land is strategically placed underneath (in a rough sketch). When considered in juxtaposition to the map image, the cartouche suggests that as long as they are viewed separately the two discursive modes of either word or image foster imaginings that are easily clouded and distorted. If used jointly, however—as the dual gesture of

unveiling the geographic name of the nation and by analogy of the map image itself indicates—the cartouche celebrates the mixed language of geography as the ideal literary means for representing the nation in clear and unambiguous terms.

The map bears out the cartouche's invitation to conceive map reading as a hybrid product of print literacy. Inside the map image, cartographic symbols compete with the letters of the alphabet for the reader's attention. While pictographic dots, lines, and mountain symbols describe the nation's topography, an array of alphabetic names identify places from the locally specific ("Philadelphia") to the larger geopolitical unit ("Pennsylvania"). These toponyms are typographically differentiated according to political significance: the names of states appear in large capitals, the names of cities in roman characters, and those of villages in a running hand. The map, however, contains the typographic tension between regional and local places through the structural evenness of the geographic grid and borderlines. While the written names of concrete places and abstract political territories are located within the grid, the map orients its east-west, north-south base lines along the "Meridian of Philadelphia." As cartographic and alphabetic signs become thus aligned with the nation's capital, the map's diversified symbolic code becomes a grammatical construct: it expresses American independence from England (and the meridian of Greenwich) by providing a new baseline for imagining the nation's geographic framework.[25]

At the same time, it was the map's small-scale projection (it shows a relatively large area without attention to local detail) that invited readers to view the nation as a picture rather than a product of writing systems. Thick washes of watercolor marked the territorial outline of the nation's constitutive states, creating schematic images of the various states similar to today's didactic map puzzles in which color and shape rather than geographic content and location guide the student's memory. Some copies of the book map even included a thick trace of color marking the nation's external border line, thus presenting the image of the nation-

25. The typographic differentiation of place-names in writing and print goes back to Gerard Mercator. On the history and application of graded fonts, see Eileen Reeves, "Reading Maps," *Word and Image,* IX (1993), 52; James R. Akerman, "The Structuring of Political Territory in Early Printed Atlases," *Imago Mundi,* XLVII (1995), 144. On the role of the "zero" meridian on a later date, see Matthew Edney, "Cartographic Culture and Nationalism in the Early United States: Benjamin Vaughan and the Choice for a Prime Meridian, 1811," *Journal of Historical Geography,* XX (1994), 384–395.

state in the form of an iconographic symbol or hieroglyph, similar to modern cookie-cutter shapes or commercial logos.[26]

It was precisely the cartographic design of the nation's official borderline by which Morse imagined he could inscribe the student's visual memory and verbal literacy with the idea of the nation. Contemporaneous formulations of national ideologies, especially those by the German Johann Gottlieb Fichte, looked to the borderline rhetoric of the national map in order to unite a fragmented society under the rubric of a collective imaginary. Writing at a time when Germany (even under Napoleonic rule) looked like a puzzle on the political map, Fichte argued in his *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1808) that for a people to become a nation the "external frontiers" of the state (however loosely defined, as body politic, civic union, or bureaucratic institution) must become the "internal frontiers" of the citizen. According to this formulation, the nation-state always began and ended with the cartographic line demarcating political boundaries. Through a self-fulfilling logic of dialectic reasoning, these boundary lines—once they were established—were deemed to be natural boundaries dividing traditionally established political territories. With the stroke of a mapmaker's pen, the line became a cognitive and disciplinary tool transposing local into national identities.[27]

Like the Federalist language reformer Noah Webster, Morse sought to achieve a degree of national identity by aligning the overall practices of alphabetic training with geographical knowledge. Given the programmatic rethinking of elementary literacy instruction, the map became a product of alphabetic learning. Indeed, as the basic principles of literacy (the alphabet, representational sign systems, phonetics) became imbricated with basic principles of geography (notions of place, systems of measurement, taxonomic organization), the conventional words and verbal text were perceived through a geographic consciousness. By prefacing

26. For a quick example of an overdetermined tracing of the national outline, see the Readex copy of the 1784 edition of *Geography Made Easy,* Early American Imprints, 1st Ser., 18615.

27. See Etienne Balibar's discussion, "Fichte and the Internal Border: On *Addresses to the German Nation,"* in Balibar, *Masses, Classes, Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy before and after Marx,* trans. James Swenson (New York, 1993), 61–84. The words of Fichte are echoed by Emile Benveniste, who, in tracing the etymology of the word "region," writes that through the act of "tracing out the limits by straight lines" the author delimits "the interior and the exterior, the realm of the sacred and the realm of the profane, the national territory and foreign territory." See *Indo-European Language and Society,* trans. Elizabeth Palmer (London, 1973), 311–312.

his textbook with a map of the new nation-state, Morse invariably coupled the map reader's desire for visual self-location to the textbook's otherwise verbal representation of political identities. Students following the reading protocol of the textbook map, then, learned not only to privilege the geographic dimension of the nation-state over representations of local places but also to superimpose the cartographic signs representing the union over the textbook's alphabetic notations describing the states. Thus, while Webster relied on the national map to Americanize the spelling and pronunciation of English words, Morse's map-reading lesson transformed the study of geography into a nationalistic spelling bee.[28]

MAPS, ATLASES, AND THE MATERIAL RHETORIC OF UNION

Federalists like Webster and Morse who used the rhetoric of the national map operated inside an established cartographic tradition in which maps had historically accompanied the creation of national ideologies. Ever since Abraham Ortelius and Gerard Mercator published their world maps and atlases in the sixteenth century, single-sheet maps had presented the sovereign states as visually and territorially unified constructs. During the eighteenth century, the wealthier European nation-states had sponsored or were about to initiate the production of national maps. Developing out of the discourses of property surveys and regional mapping projects, the national map served a dual function. First, in the mapmaking process, surveyors left visible markers on the land (such as boundary markers and border crossings). Second, the map image as a material artifact provided a visual proxy and reproducible evidence of the nation's territorial, optically organic, and demonstrably material existence.[29]

28. Morse's choice of map here reflects the way in which child psychologists describe the cultural construction of national identity. In their study "The Transition from Egocentricity to Reciprocity," Jean Piaget and Anne Marie Weil seek to establish "the development in children of the idea of the Homeland and the Relations with other Countries." While they approach their test subjects from the positions of the cognitive (when does the notion of country become reality?) and the affective (when do evaluative attributes such as loyalty and patriotism emerge?), both authors presuppose the knowledge of geographic images like school maps. See Sarah F. Campbell, ed., *Piaget Sampler: An Introduction to Jean Piaget through His Own Words* (New York, 1976), 37–58.

29. On the mapping projects in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century absolutist European nation-states, see James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, Conn., 1998); Norman J. W. Thrower, *Maps and Civilization: Cartography in Culture and Society* (Chicago, 1996), 91–124; Josef W. Kon-

In the first decades of the United States' existence, the image of the national map was one of the few visual artifacts demonstrating what many perceived to be either an abstract or even untenable fiction, namely that there could be a national union between disjointed regions and politically disparate people. Unlike in Europe, where governments controlled the output of national maps, in the United States the national map quickly became the dual product of the federal government and the private economic sector. On the one hand, the federal government sponsored the production of national maps on two occasions. The passage of the Land Ordinance Acts of 1785 and 1787 anticipated a burst of mapmaking activities as it launched a national survey. The copyright law of 1790, which was advertised on the inside of every book printed in the United States as "an Act . . . securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books," protected maps by giving them the status of a preferred commodity.

On the other hand, the appearance of a state-regulated distribution of national maps would be misleading because the majority of maps and other geographical writings were produced by private individuals and small commercial publishers. The new citizens were most likely to encounter the image of the nation by reading inexpensive, small-scale maps, like the one inserted in Morse's school geography. The map image of the United States proliferated significantly when publishers like Mathew Carey of Philadelphia included national maps in various book genres and through multiple packaging reduced significantly the average price per map. According to Carey's sales catalog of 1795, single-sheet maps sold for as little as twelve and a half cents (by comparison, the folio edition of the *American Atlas,* containing twenty-one maps, was priced at five dollars—six if "coloured"). These numbers show that single-sheet maps rather than map collections were affordable texts and as such quickly absorbed into the nation's cultural landscape.[30]

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vitz, *Cartography in France, 1660–1848: Science, Engineering, and Statecraft* (Chicago, 1987); Monique Pelletier, *Les cartes des Cassini: La science au service de l'état et des régions* (Paris, 2002). On the history of borders in relation to nation-states, see Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism,* II, *The Nation-State and Violence* (Berkeley, Calif., 1985), 4, 49–51; Akerman, "The Structuring of Political Territory," *Imago Mundi,* LXVII (1995), 139–144.

30. Walter W. Ristow explains: "Most non-official compilers of state maps were not professional surveyors or cartographers. For the most part, they earned their livelihood from other vocations, and the maps they produced were generally one-time efforts." See *American Maps,* 20.

On atlas prices, see Mathew Carey, *Catalogue of Books, Pamphlets, Maps, and Prints*

Figure 33. Mrs. Noah Smith and Her Children. *By Ralph Earl. 1798.* Permission of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch, 1964. (64.309.1)

Indeed, the national map permeated American material culture in many and unexpected places. For example, after the Revolution families like that of Mrs. Noah Smith not only displayed their material belongings (and thus good taste) when they posed for portraits but opted to have the

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(Philadelphia, 1795). To give a later price comparison, *Mathew Carey's Exchange Catalogue* (Philadelphia, 1798) advertised Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* at $1.75 and a student's copy of the *Drawing Book for Human Figures* at $.25. The pricing of the national map was in large part the result of market forces. Carey had to negotiate negative reader responses when his traveling salesman, Parson Mason Locke Weems, reported complaints about the high cost of the school atlas (which in 1798 Carey offered at $9.00, or $16.00 if bought with Guthrie's school geography). This has led to the speculation that Carey's multiple repackaging of the same kind of maps into different atlas editions and books was a sign of a print investment gone awry and that, unable to sell his first print run, he kept hawking his maps in new venues. Here I would like to thank James Green of the Library Company of Philadelphia for his helpful comments. For a less skeptical interpretation, see John Brian Harley, "Atlas Maker for Independent America," *Geographical Magazine,* XLIX (1977), 766–771.

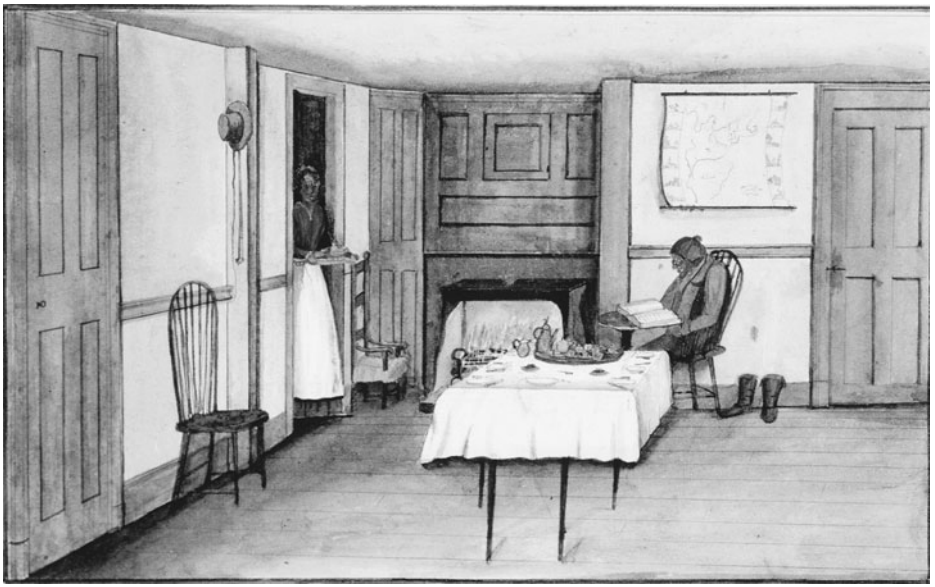

Figure 34. Dining Room of Dr. Whitridge's as It Was in the Winter of 1814–15: Breakfast Time (Pot-Apple-Pie). *By Joseph Shoemaker Russell. Circa 1850.* Courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum. ©New Bedford Whaling Museum

map of the United States close to the portrait's center to better demonstrate their new Americanness (Figure 33). Considering the domestic habit of putting maps on display inside private settings, the national map in all likelihood decorated the walls of American homes (Figure 34). The nation's map image certainly became a pedagogic piece of furniture in schools. It was a fundamental part of textbooks, globes, and wall decorations. Teachers and parents even experimented with the cognitive function of the national map by integrating it into didactic puzzles (Figure 35). Once we leave the domestic and institutional spaces of the home and the school, we discover that the nation's cartographic shape hung on rollers or under glass in public places. Wall maps were displayed in public offices and coffeehouses; as the genre painting *Barroom Dancing* by John Lewis Krimmel shows, the national map was displayed in taverns, where it functioned as decoration, conversation piece, and metaphoric touchstone of communal identity (Figure 36).[31]

31. On the presence of national maps in paintings, see Milo M. Naeve, *John Lewis Krimmel: An Artist in Federal America* (Newark, Del., 1987); Marshall B. Davidson, *Life in America,* I (Boston, 1974); Jane C. Nylander, *Our Own Snug Fireside: Images of the New England Home, 1760–1860* (New York, 1993); Elisabeth Donaghy Garrett, *At Home: The*

A spate of American-made atlases greatly popularized the image of the nation-state. Beginning with the publication of Mathew Carey's *American Atlas* (1795), four more national atlases almost simultaneously captured the public eye: Carey's *General Atlas* (1796), *Carey's American Pocket Atlas* (1796), Joseph T. Scott's *Atlas of the United States* (1796), and John Reid's *American Atlas* (1796). Each of these atlases privileged the national map. While the atlas as a printed form imitated the generic design of a book, the map showing the territory of the United States often functioned like a table of contents or prefatory chapter. Placed in this position, the national map more than introduced the states; in most cases it emphasized national unity over state autonomy.

The map of the "United States" by Samuel Lewis from Carey's *General Atlas* illustrates the way in which the image of the nation graphically subsumed images of the states. Lewis's national map was the twenty-fourth of forty-eight maps and served as the preface to the subsequent set of seventeen maps of the states and Maine (Figure 37). Located as the atlas's middle and turning point, this map separated international maps from those delineating the new nation-state. Designed for pedagogic uses (it was intended to supplement William Guthrie's schoolbook, *A New System of Modern Geography* [1794]), the Lewis map creates the nation as a self-contained entity. Lewis limits his workmanship to meticulously inscribing the graphic space of the United States; he leaves virtually uninscribed the surrounding spaces (thus making it difficult for the inexperienced map reader to tell land from water). With the name of the United States being visibly absent from the actual map image (it appears in the map margin inside an unembellished cartouche), Lewis downplays the alphabetic element used for hailing national identities in cartographic writing. Instead, he emphasizes the map's geographical aspect. Using the border line and topographic symbols, Lewis limns the nation in almost corporeal

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American Family, 1750–1870 (New York, 1990). On probate records, see Abbott Lowell Cummings, "Inside the Massachusetts Home," in Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, eds., *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture* (Athens, Ga., 1986); Kym S. Rice, *Early American Taverns: For the Entertainment of Friends and Strangers* (Chicago, 1983).

Francis Hopkinson wrote in "An Improved Plan of Education" for the *Pennsylvania Magazine* about the usefulness of the map puzzle, suggesting the efficacy of "teaching geography by maps pasted on thin boards, and cut into pieces, according to the divisions of counties or kingdoms." See Hopkinson, *The Miscellaneous Essays and Occasional Writings* (Philadelphia, 1792), I, 13.

Figure 35. Map Puzzle, A New Map of America. *1809?*
Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society

Figure 36. Barroom Dancing. *By John Lewis Krimmel. Circa 1820.*
Courtesy, The Library of Congress

terms. Similar to images describing the human anatomy in contemporary magazines and handbooks, the thickly shaded lines tracing the coastal and national boundaries in the east, north, and south resemble the epidermal layer visually protecting the land against the encroachment of oceans and neighboring territories. At the same time, the double-lined course of the Mississippi River invokes not only the nation's western border but also the anatomical imagery of a skeleton's spine or a body's vascular system. The constitutive parts of the national body, the states, recede inside the image of the nation-state. Their thinly drafted boundary lines collapse inside the map's corporealized gestalt of the nation's territory.

When considering the political conflict between the Federalist ideology and sectionalist interest groups that raged during the first two decades of independent nationhood, the rhetorical effect of the atlases' national maps by and large supported the Federalist cause. Each atlas promoted a cartographic system of checks and balances. While the national map was often afforded additional space in the form of foldouts, none of the state maps published in the early atlases were allowed to dominate optically. Each state map was cut to a uniform size, projecting the idea of equal

Figure 37.
"Map 24, United States." By Samuel Lewis. From The General Atlas for Carey's Edition of Guthrie's Geography . . . , *by Mathew Carey. 1795.* Courtesy, The Library Company of Philadelphia

Figure 38.
"South Carolina." By Samuel Lewis. From Carey's American Pocket Atlas. *1796.* Courtesy, The Library Company of Philadelphia

representation under one nation. When viewed in the context of the atlas maps' overt emphasis on boundary lines and visual unity, the national map functioned as the archival container and frame of reference for the smaller state maps. By virtue of its cartographic design the national map adumbrated the Federalist notion that there is "unity in diversity," a unity that is predicated on a national cartographic network that assumes authority over its local constitutive parts.[32]

What is significant, however, is that, at the same time as the first United States atlas maps seemed to provide a material palimpsest upon which readers could trace out nationalistic fantasies of interstate unity, it was precisely the unique material context of the atlas that deanatomized the nation's cartographic image. Early American atlas maps conceptualized the individual states not as dismembered parts of a larger corporate body but as miniature copies imitating the symbolic form of a larger nation-state. For example, in *Carey's American Pocket Atlas* the map of South Carolina (1796), also drawn by Samuel Lewis, appeared not only as a self-contained unit but was drawn to look like a geographically separate nation-state unrelated to either the United States or the North American continent (Figure 38). Its graphic presentation creates the geographical illusion that the state hinged between two oceans rather than between the states of North Carolina and Georgia. The impression that each state could be a separate nation was further enhanced by the use of map scale. States were depicted, not in relative proportion to their geographical size, but in maximal proportion to the textual space they were to fill on the

32. Early national mapmakers like Doolittle above and Lewis here anticipate the nineteenth-century theory proposed by the German geographer Carl Ritter, according to which regional geographies and particular topographies were simultaneously expressions of a divine creation and a national will. Arguing from this position, Ritter's book *Erdkunde* (1819) proposes that, as a kind of disinterested creation, geography rather than a people engenders specific historical events. Ritter applied this principle in a series of regional geographic studies. Each study bore out the nationalistic principle of a local a priori unity *(Zusammenhang),* concluding that specific regions "naturally" match the territorial claims made by modern nation-states. In the end, Ritter argued for the total congruity of place and people as a predestined national locale by applying the holistic and inherently aesthetic concept of "unity in diversity." See Richard Hartshorne and Klaus D. Gurgel, "Zu Carl Ritters Einfluss auf die Entwicklung der Geographie in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika," in Manfred Büttner, ed., *Carl Ritter: Zur europäisch-amerikanischen Geographie an der Wende vom 18. zum 19. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn, Germany, 1980), 201–219; Preston E. James and Geoffrey J. Martin, *All Possible Worlds: History of Geographical Ideas,* 2d ed. (New York, 1981), 126–131.

page. The maps of Delaware and Rhode Island covered as much paper space as did the maps of Maine and Pennsylvania. Optically, then, the state maps repeated the same cartographic designs that initially had been reserved for the national map. Like the national map, the state map turned on a binary structure of territorial representation, privileging the state's visual outline over its verbal identification, its geographical over its political anatomy, its interior over its exterior relations.

United States atlas maps here seem to confirm the Federalist and Antifederalist fear that even those writing systems that ceased to subordinate the reading experience to an exclusively alphabetical order were still incapable of representing the idea of a new nation-state in immediate and unambiguous terms. While the image of the national map seemed to uphold the constitutional principle of checks and balances (maps represented states optically in equal terms), the state map appeared to undercut the Federalist ideal of national unity by projecting the thirteen (or more) states as separate nations and unrelated to the larger union. The pictorial rhetoric of the national map failed to offer a design that established a hierarchical relationship between the union and state. Unable to give precedence to either unit, the medium of the map potentially undercuts its symbolic power by signifying opposite values: even as its visual rhetoric could serve as a tool of national integration, it also could promote the union's disintegration.

The ambiguity surrounding the image of the national map grew out of the post-Revolutionary debates over the issue of statehood. Federalists, Antifederalists, and local patriots like Thomas Jefferson were equally invested in the rhetorical trope of the national map, but for very different reasons. If we turn to the constitutional debate first, the national map appeared in the two opposing literatures—John Jay's Federalist No. 2 and the *Agrippa Letters* by James Winthrop—that were influencing both public opinion and the text of the Constitution itself. Jay invoked the map as a metaphor in order to persuade his audience of the Republic's natural predisposition to unity. As if he were reading one of the schoolbook maps, Jay traces out the geographical body of the new nation-state:

> It has often given me pleasure to observe, that independent America was not composed of detached and distant territories, but that one connected, fertile, wide-spreading country was the portion of our western sons of liberty. Providence has in a particular manner blessed it with a variety of soils and productions, and watered it with innumer-

able streams, for the delight and accommodation of its inhabitants. A succession of navigable waters forms a kind of chain round its borders, as if to bind it together.

In Jay's word map, natural boundaries become indistinguishable from the artificially imposed political ones. In a move that anticipates Fichte's call for the "external frontiers" of the state to become the "internal frontiers" of the citizen, Jay transforms his cartographic vision of connectedness into a vision of cultural uniformity: "With equal pleasure I have as often taken notice, that Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people—a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs." Implicit in his word map is the dialectical assumption that, by mapping the territory of the nation, the latter's inventory consisting of language, religion, and custom becomes inflected by the terms of the national map. Just as the word map upholds the imaginary fusion of "one connected country to one united people," Jay suggests that in order for Americans to imagine the United States they would have to interweave two different linguistic systems: if English was the language spoken by the "people," the word map emerged as the second language of "the country."[33]

The motive of Jay's deferral to geographical literacy is his desire to shorten the enormous distance separating many of the new Republic's constitutive parts. Jay's word map seeks to deflect the Antifederalist argument that, as a federal union that models itself upon the classical republic, the United States would be ungovernable because of its overextended size. Geographical dimension was the standard argument made by Antifederalists like James Winthrop, who invoked the image of the national map to dismantle the Federalist argument of unity. "The idea of an uncompounded republick, on an average, one thousand miles in length, and eight hundred in breadth, and containing six millions of white inhabitants all reduced to the same standard of morals, or habits,

33. John Jay, Federalist No. 2, in Brock, ed., *The Federalist,* 5–6. Jay's passage on "one united people" has been discussed differently by William Boelhower, "Nation-Building and Ethnogenesis: The Map as Witness and Maker," in Steve Ickringill, ed., *The Early Republic: The Making of a Nation—The Making of a Culture* (Amsterdam, 1988), 108–112. See also Ferguson, " 'We Hold These Truths,' " in Sacvan Bercovitch, ed., *Reconstructing American Literary History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), 5–6.

and of laws, is in itself an absurdity, and contrary to the whole experience of mankind." For Winthrop, the new nation's geography was politically debilitating, and the national map was the proof demonstrating the flaw in the Federalists' argument. It illustrated in certain terms how the geographical or, rather, natural dimensions of the United States would undermine the union's political structure and seriously impede the formation of a republican government. Because large distances separated the states from each other, it would prohibit political participation inside the union; looking at the national map revealed that distance would prevent the equal application of federal power, hindering the union's task to supervise the new citizens or to reconcile federal and state interests.[34]

But, while both Jay and Winthrop cited the national map in the forensic sense as proof of the feasibility or unfeasibility of a greater continental polity, the map's rhetorical clout had already become seriously defused in the writings of local patriots like Thomas Jefferson. His *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785) reveals how, through the practice of cartographic writing, the state of Virginia emerged as a geopolitical construct sharing the identical symbolic and discursive attributes that Webster, Morse, and the authors of the Federalist papers ascribed to the national map.

From the start, Jefferson locates the *Notes* inside the map image of Virginia; he opens his first query with the verbal recitation of the "Boundaries of Virginia," which corresponded to a manuscript map that had accompanied the original draft. Acknowledging that both his own notes and map drawings might be compromised, Jefferson grounds the authority of his *Notes* in two specific cartographic texts. When he states in his fourth query, "For the particular geography of our mountains I must refer to Fry and Jefferson's map of Virginia; and to Evans's analysis of his map of America for a more philosophical view of them," Jefferson refers the reader to his father's *Map of the Most Inhabited Part of Virginia* (1753) and the mapmaker's manual *Geographical, Historical, Political, Philosophical, and Mechanical Essays* (1755) by Lewis Evans.[35]

34. James Winthrop, "Letters of Agrippa," in Storing, ed., *The Complete Anti-Federalist,* IV, 77; also discussed by Benjamin R. Barber, "The Compromised Republic: Public Purposelessness in America," in Robert H. Horwitz, ed., *The Moral Foundations of the American Republic* (Charlottesville, Va., 1986), 45.

For a study examining how distance and territorial size affected early national politics, see Rosemarie Zagarri, *The Politics of Size: Representation in the United States, 1776–1850* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1987), chap. 4.

35. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia,* ed. William Peden (Chapel Hill,

In the chapter "On Rivers" Jefferson presents yet another argument for the way in which post-Revolutionary Americans embraced the map as a writing system superior to the English language and conventional literary forms, in this case the practice of note-taking and verbal description. Before describing the rivers of Virginia, Jefferson deliberately cautions the reader against his verbal efforts, because "an inspection of a map of Virginia, will give a better idea of the geography of its rivers, than any description in writing." Jefferson encourages readers to consult maps rather than his own text because, unlike any other form of "description in writing," only maps are capable of communicating the idea of rivers in ways that normal language could not—immediately and yet mediated, undistorted and yet artificially represented. Ever wary of language as a means of communication, Jefferson indicates that in order to ensure the proper representation of the state of Virginia he must defer his own writing to the signs and script of cartographic writing.[36]

While the map thus answered Jefferson's authorial scruples in much the same vein as it did for the framers of the Constitution a few years later, it also enabled Jefferson to appropriate the greater discourse of cartography as the foundation of state representation. In Query 13, writing on "the constitution of the state, and its several charters," Jefferson invokes the figure of the map as the state's original text. By citing the cartographically represented space of Virginia rather than history as the state's genealogical source of origin, he points to the language of cartography as the ideal agent of political mediation and representation. Moreover, when Jefferson concedes that the state's founding document was written at a time when "we were new and unexperienced in the science of government," he is quick to add that it was due to cartographic writing that Virginians discovered "very capital defects" in the constitution.[37]

N.C., 1954), 18. While the Evans manual was written to analyze the author's own map called *A General Map of the Middle British Colonies, in America* (1755), it acknowledged its debt to the Fry-Jefferson map. Both references illustrate the persistence with which older, outdated maps and geographic records informed colonial and postcolonial thinking.

36. Jefferson, *Notes,* ed. Peden, 5.

37. Ibid., 110, 118. During the debates surrounding the first state constitution of Virginia (1776), Jefferson used boundary maps as the rhetorical device exposing not only the potential for territorial misrepresentation but for lodging the demand that Virginia's territory should be defined according to the original colonial charters—meaning, its territory would extend indefinitely westward. For a discussion of territorial rights and the rhetoric of boundaries, see Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville, Va., 2000), 66–68.

By the end of this query, the implied map image of Virginia, though invisible throughout the *Notes* as such, has fulfilled the demand of eighteenth-century national ideologies. Jefferson's rhetorical use of the map facilitated the narrative fusion of the state's external boundaries with those of the individual citizen. The implied map image had succeeded in dividing the state into local working units (counties); its writing system implicitly was preventing "injury" among the state's citizens; and, more important, it had laid the groundwork for depicting Virginia as a homogenous culture working the land collectively (a point Jefferson further elaborated in Query 19). Jefferson's *Notes* thus illustrates how during the early decades the very terms surrounding the idea of nation were flexible. For Jefferson, the semantic application of "nation" was as dynamic and constitutive a concept as that of "state." Cartographic writing allowed Jefferson to keep alive this definitional uncertainty. As the word map of Virginia furthered Jefferson's sectionalist argument, it also prepared the argument for one of Jefferson's future political goals: the guarantee of autonomy for the individual state inside the proposed unified superstate.[38]

THE NATIONAL MAP AS LOGO AND CONSTITUTIVE LOGOS

What neither Jay, Winthrop, nor Jefferson had foreseen was the fact that the national map as a specialized print form controlled its potential for divisiveness; it functioned like a proleptic device, asserting the primacy of the union while anticipating and containing the local desire for self-definition. During the period marked by the constitutional debate and the tumult over states' rights, commercial mapmakers as well as ordinary map readers developed the nation's cartographic image into a hieroglyphic sign consisting exclusively of the nation's territorial outline. Indeed, as I will show below, in the hands of American statesmen and students alike the national map became what Benedict Anderson has identified as an avatar of modern nationalism, the "map-as-logo."[39]

38. On the flexibility of the term "nation" and focus on Virginia in Jefferson's writings, see Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*. On the arguments of state-union relations, see also Matson and Onuf, *A Union of Interests;* Onuf, *The Origins of the Federal Republic: Jurisdictional Controversies in the United States, 1775–1787* (Philadelphia, 1983).

39. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991), 175. Although Anderson is discussing the postcolonial conditions of twentieth-century Southeast Asia, the discursive dynamic he traces can be just as easily recognized in the decade immediately following the Peace of Paris. "In [the map's]

In the United States, one of the first examples showing the nation as a pure sign and logo appeared in William McMurray's wall map, *The United States according to the Definitive Treaty of Peace Signed at Paris* (1784) (Figure 39). In this map the nation's topographic image enters into a comparative dialogue with an inset map (on the lower right) showing the North American continent and its division into geopolitical units. The inset map distinguishes the new political nation-state from the continent by outlining its territory as a blank space bearing the bold print label "UNITED STATES." While the inset map thus announces the map title in lieu of a cartouche, when placed in relation to the larger national map the dialogue shifts the reader's attention from the comparatively locative stance (how do I find myself on the map?) to the more competitive and possessive stance (this map shows my country!). Its blankness erases local knowledge, regional claims, and above all the fact that the national space was not fully under federal control (west of the Allegheny Mountains, Native American nations were still officially masters of their domains). Through the map's metanarrative between the geographic and the inset parts, McMurray illustrates the way in which the nation's bare, skeletal outline functioned in the sphere of politics as a signifier of reconciliation and containment: the map simultaneously maintained and closed the gap between the nation and the states.[40]

While McMurray's map reached only a limited audience, the material proliferation of the national map vastly aided the dissemination of the United States map as a logo. In particular, the image of the logo map pervaded the self-representational culture of the educated middle class. Examining Ralph Earl's portrait of Mrs. Noah Smith and her family, a closer look reveals that the nation's outline becomes the direct prop of the young man holding the geography book (Figure 40). The pervasiveness of

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final form all explanatory glosses could be summarily removed: lines of longitude and latitude, place names, signs for rivers, seas, and mountains, *neighbours*. Pure sign, no longer compass to the world. . . . Instantly recognizable, everywhere visible, the logo-map penetrated deep into the popular imagination, forming a powerful emblem for the anti-colonial nationalisms being born." While Anderson's argument about how print culture facilitated the construction of national ideologies has held our attention, it is easily overlooked that the widespread diffusion of typographical images during the formation of national communities prompted him to speculate toward the end of his study that, generally speaking, neither the technology of print nor languages as such but the visual quality of printed signs and materials invented nationalism.

40. For a different reading of the map as logo, see Boelhower, "Nation-Building," in Ickringill, ed., *The Early Republic,* 109.

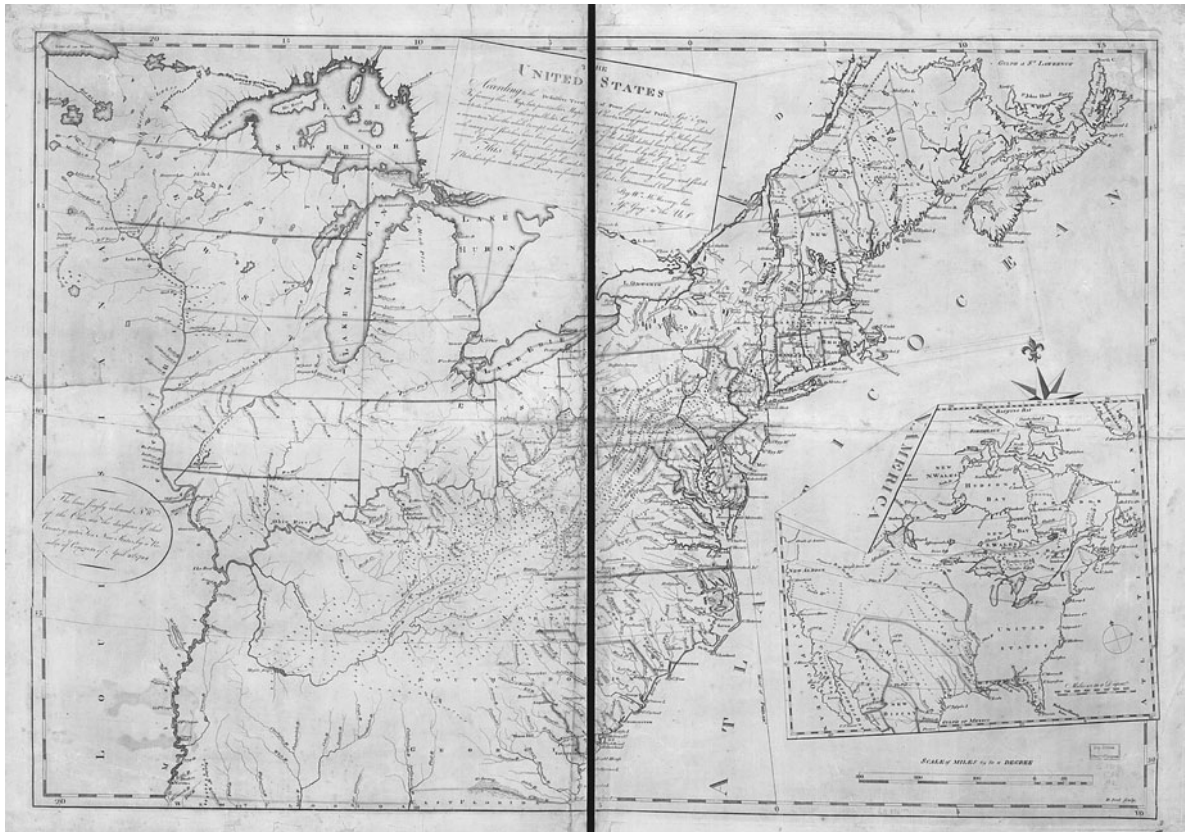

Figure 39.
The United States according to the Definitive Treaty of Peace Signed at Paris, Sept. Third, 1783. *By W[illia]m McMurray. 1784.* Courtesy, The Library of Congress

Figure 40. Detail from Mrs. Noah Smith and Her Children. *By Ralph Earl. 1798.* Permission of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch, 1964. (64.309.1)

the logo map, with its simultaneous integration into alphabetic and geographic training, is vividly exemplified in the needlework samplers created by American schoolgirls. Throughout the eighteenth century, formal alphabet lessons had been accompanied by needlework samplers reproducing the letters of the alphabet and didactic quotations. By the 1790s, however, as American literacy lessons were increasingly taking a geo-

Figure 41. Map Sampler, Eastern United States. By H[annah] Cockburn. 1808. Photograph © Worcester Art Museum. Permission of the Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts

graphic turn, the samplers' thematic range was expanded to include the reproduction of maps. While pupils continued to embroider the alphabet, they also took up pen, brush, and needles to draw, paint, and stitch the United States map outline and place-names on paper and on silk.

Hannah Cockburn's sampler, for example, displays both her needlework and her geographic knowledge as she faithfully imitates Morse's map-reading lesson by showing the border lines and names of the union and its states, including the "Twenty League Line" separating national from international waters (Figure 41). Mary Franklin's sampler, while depicting both the North and South American continents, nonetheless advertises the national form as the heavily traced border line of the nation-state distinguishes the political territory from its larger geographic context (Figure 42).[41]

41. These samplers are representative of an arts-and-crafts movement in education in the early Republic. For further examples, see Betty Ring, *Girlhood Embroidery: American*

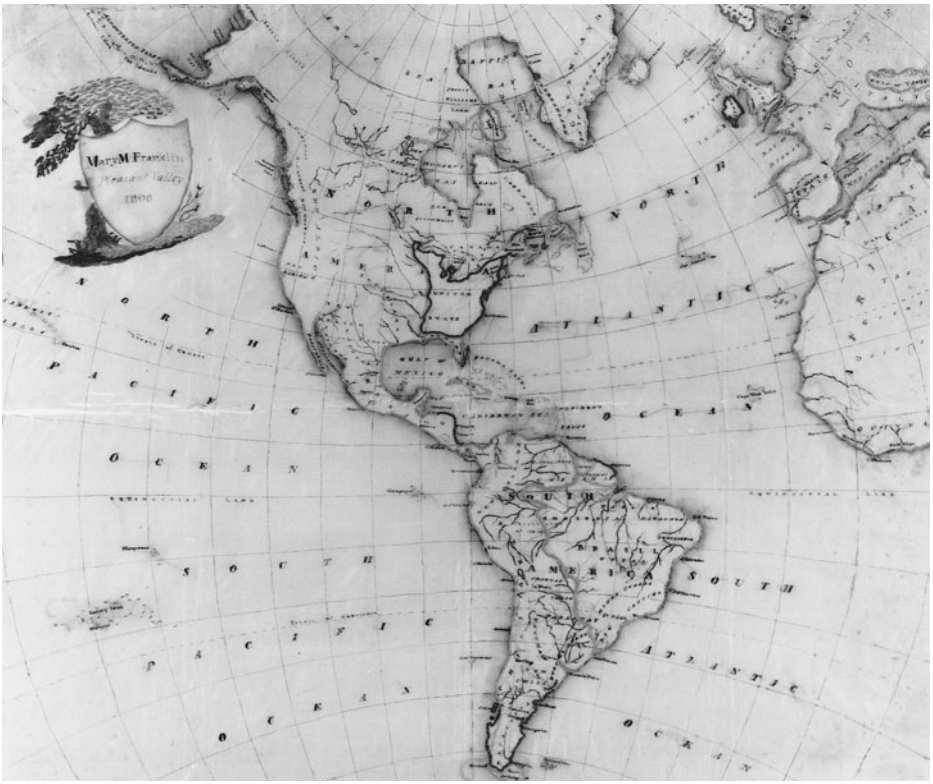

Figure 42. Needlework. By Mary M. Franklin. 1808. Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

Both samplers demonstrate that, because the national map shaped the methodologies of formal literacy instruction, the nation's outline had become internalized and was now shaping practices of self-representation and political identification. The samplers' representation of the national territory—using blazes of color, thicker thread, or wider brush strokes—privileged the outline map as the recognizable sign through which young Americans were taught to express their national identity. The samplers' materiality even suggested that the text of the national map was beginning to be understood quite literally as the nation's material texture.

Indeed, the logo functioned like a universal signifier when it was mass-produced and valorized as a sentimental object. As early as 1792, Ameri-

Samplers and Pictorial Needlework, 1650–1850 (New York, 1993); also see Judith Tyner, "The World in Silk: Embroidered Globes of Westtown School," *Map Collector,* LXXIV (1996), 11–14.

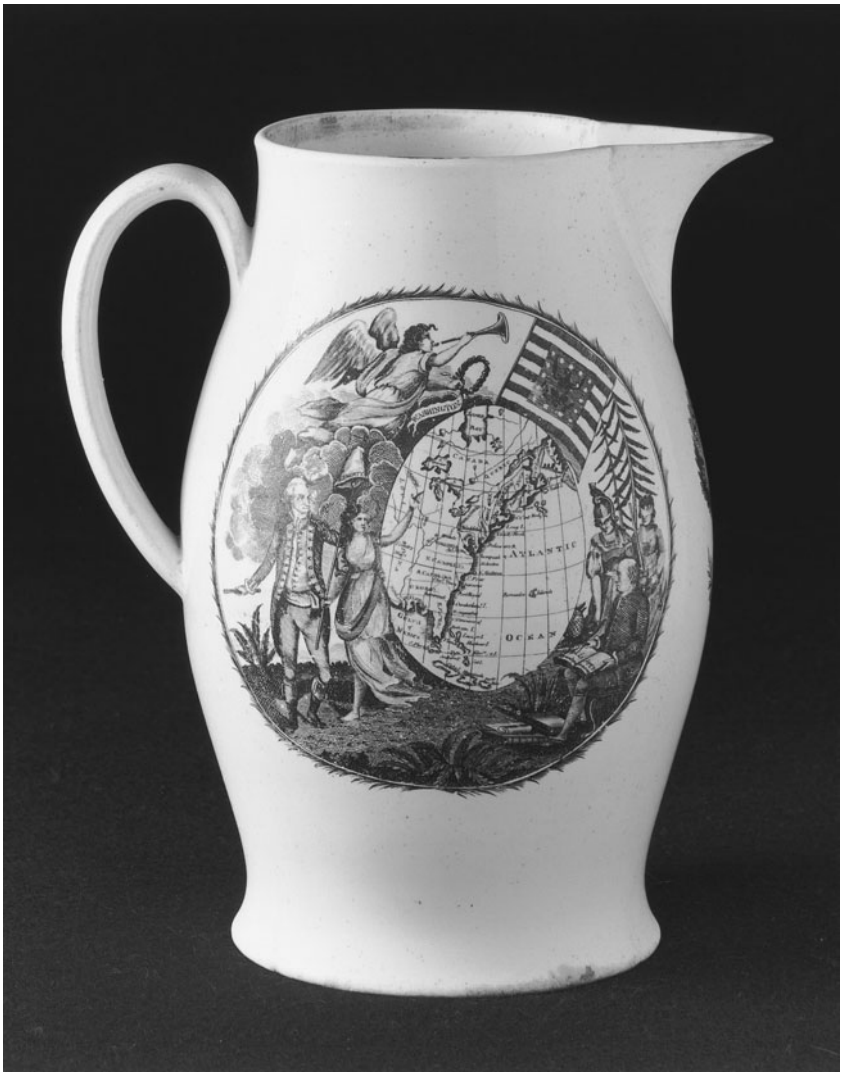

Figure 43. Pitcher. 1792–1810. Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

cans imported milk jugs on which enterprising Englishmen had printed the map-as-logo, surrounding it with the likenesses of two founders, George Washington and Benjamin Franklin (Figure 43). Americans thus appear to have viewed the cartographic image of the nation as more than a desirable consumer object. Considering the widespread circulation of national maps, citizens endowed the logo image with the kind of political-aesthetic value of "Americanness," which significantly would retain

and generate its sacred aura despite the fact that the logo was mass-produced.[42]

Central to this aura is that, emerging from within the postcolonial culture, the map logo assumed the very communicative properties so eagerly sought after by the proponents of a new American language scheme. But while language reformers concentrated on the alphabetic construction of a newly nationalized English, it was through the everyday popular use of the national map that its territorial outline became an emblem rivaling the letters displayed in the ABC books. Instead of redefining the alphabet so that "A stands for America," mapmakers and pupils discovered in the map logo the ideal sign representing the nation unambiguously and in diverse textual contexts: the national outline literally became a legible sign, a ready-made icon that was easily transported into the process of mediation and national identification.

Reduced to the shape of a logo, the map became the communicative agent through which a multitude of individuals were taught not only to imagine but to "read" themselves as parts of a national whole. Every time citizens recited "American" letters in spellers or drew or stitched the map image of the nation, they contemplated themselves as a local representation contingent upon a national geography. If the outline map established the nation as a material artifact, then during the 1780s and 1790s it functioned as a sign that American citizens were trained to recognize as we today are trained to recognize the logo of McDonald's golden arches. The most compelling description of a realized and representative model of an American linguistic community derives from the fact that people as different as John Jay and Hannah Cockburn simultaneously "read" the vernacular of the map logo. If nationalism invented the American people, it was common readers who inaugurated the nation by poring over geographic texts that produced and reproduced their cultural community as a geographic reality, as a recognizable American sign.

42. The images framing the logo were recycled materials taken from the cartouche decorating the map by John Wallis, *The United States of America* (London, 1784).