ABSTRACT


Knowledge of nature, both scientific and literary, became a political discourse in colonial America and the early republic. Eighteenth century representations of nature functioned in the imaginary of the colonial Anglo-American republic of letters as an emblem of order, harmony, and economic and political potential. Circulation of plants, rocks, animals, technology, and ideas across the Atlantic World enabled a discourse of natural history that sought to describe, and thus imagine, what exactly was natural in North America. Natural history enveloped Native American polities into the discourse of nature by representing them as objects within a landscape. This thesis examines the explorations and writings of John and William Bartram; it seeks to reinterpret of their careers to recover the latent political motivations and consequences of their explorations into the territories of a number of indigenous American polities from the 1740s to the 1770s. Writing about the environment of the western and southeastern frontiers, the Bartrams constructed representations of colonial America as a garden. This image of the continent functioned first as an extension of the natural development of the British Empire and second as a natural site of the republican empire of the American nation. Ideas originating from taxonomy, economics, the sublime, and theology informed how the Bartrams read and described Nature and the indigenous polities of North America.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family and friends who have encouraged me along the way. Mike and Linda Blakley have supported my education and my passion for history without question and inestimable generosity. David Sepkoski instilled his enthusiasm for the history of science in my life as an undergraduate student, and his support of my education and curiosity has been invaluable. Lynn Mollenauer impressed upon me a passion for cultural history as a mentor during my undergraduate years, for which I am continuously appreciative. My mother in law, Susan Cook, has endured my grousing with her about what science is and what scientists actually do with patience, enthusiasm, and sincerity, which has been a great comfort over the years. My wife, Belinda Blakley, has been a tireless supporter of both this project and my professional aspirations. Belinda has read drafts, edited sentences, and talked about this project for two years now with infinite patience, grace, criticism, and loving encouragement.
BIOGRAPHY

Christopher Blakley received his BA with honors in History and graduated magna cum laude from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. In December of 2011 he explored the site of William Bartram’s landing at Amelia Island, Florida, by complete accident.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dr. Judy Kertész has supported this project and my career as a graduate student with indefatigable enthusiasm, criticism, and unparalleled magnanimity. Professor Kertész has guided my thoughts on colonialism and natural history in American history, and has shaped the tenor of this thesis. I could not ask for a more generous and dedicated advisor. Dr. Mi Gyung Kim led me as a first year student to think about the co-production of scientific knowledge and empire-building in a seminar and as a mentor; her influence remains critical to my orientation as a scholar. Dr. Ross Bassett has provoked me to consider broader historical questions relevant to the histories of technology and the environment, which have enriched my writing and perspective as a scholar. Dr. Matthew Booker generously read and edited chapter two and supported me in applying for and obtaining the Fothergill Research Award. Dr. William Kimler challenged me to think about the continuing history of science and empire in an independent study course, which has refined this project. Dr. Eric Casteel generously read and gave thoughtful comments on chapter three through his seminar on science and religion. I would like to thank the members of the Comparative Colonialisms workshop who read and gave insightful comments on chapter one, particularly Robert Rouphail, Michael Mortimer, and Bradley Dixon. I would like to thank the executive board of the Bartram Trail Conference, Chuck Spornick, Kathryn H. Braund, John Hall, and Thomas Hallock, who granted me the 2012 Fothergill Research Award. The Department of History, especially Dr. Jonathan Ocko and Dr. Susanna Lee, deserve thanks for awarding me a generous travel grant which supported this project. Dr. S. Max Edelson gave thoughtful
comments on an abridged version of chapter one at the University of Virginia graduate conference on “Historicizing the Present”. This project is also indebted to the invaluable and gracious assistance offered by Linda August, reference librarian at the Library Company of Philadelphia, and Charles B. Greifenstein, curator of the manuscripts department at the American Philosophical Society Library. Joel Fry, the curator and archivist of the John Bowman Special Collections Library at Bartram’s Garden, provided me a great deal of assistance in using the Bartram papers and explaining the spatial history of the Bartram estate and gardens.
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Introduction: Still Nature

Now every authentic and well-written book of voyages and travels is, in fact, a treatise of experimental philosophy. From these sources natural history derives its most copious streams: and the observations which, in compositions of this kind, every where occur on winds and seasons, soils and climates, in short, on the whole of what may be called still nature, are undoubtedly of the greatest advantage to physical science.

- Anders Sparrman, *A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope*, 1776.

Prying open a crate packed with pressed plants, terrapin shells, deer antlers, and fossils, would have been an exhilarating experience for Peter Collinson, a London wool mercer and Fellow of the Royal Society. Steady deliveries of “Bartram’s Boxes” across the Atlantic Ocean from the 1740s to the late 1760s promised Collinson novel curiosities of natural objects from the American backcountry which could be either presented to his fellow cognoscenti at Crane Court or sold to a circle of wealthy natural history collectors. John Bartram, the Philadelphia botanist and traveler who collected the materials, would be paid a share of the sale, earning him enough to pursue a life seeking the marvelous natural world. Inside the boxes were not only the wonders of nature themselves, but an embedded set of interrelated meanings about nature, empire, the labor of natural history, and the credibility of observers. Plants, rocks, and preserved animal remnants signified a frontier of natural phenomena waiting to be classified, transported, sold, and displayed in a private cabinet or a public museum collection. Eliding the work of science, the boxes erased any real sense of the North American continent as a politically and culturally heterogeneous space; rather, the boxes projected a uniquely British, and rational, image of what nature was and could become.
This thesis seeks to reconstruct that image of nature, to recover the processes and practices of constructing knowledge about the natural world in colonial America. It does so by re-interpreting the careers of John Bartram (1699-1777) and his son William Bartram (1739-1823). As naturalists, the Bartrams were connected to a trans-Atlantic network of plant collectors and enlightened patrons who funded their numerous ventures. Beyond simply collecting and transporting plants across the Atlantic, the Bartrams wrote about their expeditions and produced texts that combined travel narrative, taxonomy, speculative history, and natural history. This project makes use of those texts, but also engages their private correspondence, the research publications and texts of their peers, their artworks and the maps they and their peers drafted, and the material technologies that facilitated the mobility of the plants they gathered such as the herbarium. Functioning as a kind of alembic, the herbarium operated by dually transforming plants into analytical specimens and easily movable and preserved commodities. Finally, this project seeks to track an Atlantic World economy of plants, seeds, natural objects, and travelogues, which were circulated between North America and Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. I stress the term economy because this trading zone was situated in a period of British America in which prospectors, patrons, scientific societies, collectors, and go-betweens began to consider specimens removed from their natural environments as objects and commodities which could be distributed and consumed through networks of exchange.\(^1\) Other historians have mapped

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the itineraries of the Bartrams expeditions, and I refer to them in this analysis, but I am more interested in this Atlantic World economy and the mobility of the specimens themselves as commodities signifying trading networks.

**Methodology**

This project draws on a number of methods and insights from theoretical works and interdisciplinary fields including studies of the British Atlantic, Native American studies, science and technology studies, material culture, and literary criticism. Primarily, its orientation is guided by the vocabulary and logic of Mary Louise Pratt, whose monograph *Imperial Eyes* laid out the foundations of engaging the concatenated histories of science and empire in the early modern period.² Arguably Pratt’s greatest insight in that work is her notion of anti-conquest, a term which denotes the strategies of innocence and erasure available to and utilized by naturalists whose work relied dually on the information of indigenous polities and knowledge, as well as their ability to establish their own singular authorial voice to an audience of their patrons and peers. Pratt’s attention to the oftentimes unconscious relationship between scientific explorers and imperial administrations and agencies has led this project to search for further conceptual resources on not only the social construction of knowledge but also the informal and formal junctions of scientific and state power.

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Sheila Jasanoff has argued that the idiom of co-production, the feedback loop between scientific knowledge and state power, is a pivotal one that demands attention in both political history and the history of science. As the stock of knowledge about the natural world increased, including inventories of material natural resources and the boundaries of natural and political geographies were made clear, so too did the ability of states to govern, manage, and exploit the territories they encompassed. Finally, this project has been informed by a set of ideas advanced by historians, sociologists, and cultural theorists affiliated with science and technology studies, namely Donna Haraway, Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, and Bruno Latour. Read together, these works emphasize the materiality, locality, and contingency of the production and practice of science. The interrelated complexities of these phenomena, which have previously been neglected, reveal a more complete image of the political and cultural backdrops of science.

**Historiography**

A number of historians have begun to engage the history of science and empire in early modern America and in the early republic, to which this project is indebted. First and foremost, the collected volume on science and empire in the Atlantic World edited by James Delbourgo and Nicholas Dew has inspired a new set of questions about the circulation of

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knowledge, people, and objects throughout the colonial period of North America which links to earlier histories of science focused around authorship, materiality, political economy and sovereignty.\(^5\)

That volume drew on the conceptual resources already laid out in a number of monographs on the state of natural history in the seventeenth century and the Enlightenment including Joyce Chaplin’s *Subject Matter*. Chaplin’s book has opened a set of questions relative to the social and political functions of race in British America, arguing that climatological ideas and notions of anatomical essentialism dictated the colonialist logic of British settlers along the eastern seaboard throughout the seventeenth century.\(^6\) Chaplin’s notion of triangulation, which denotes a strategy by which her work reads English natural philosophy, material culture, and colonial travel writing as cognate elements of a wider intellectual framework of colonization, has been taken up in this interpretation of the Bartrams. Pursuant to the questions raised about climate in Chaplin’s volume, two exceptional monographs on climate and natural history have been introduced by Susan Parrish, *American Curiosity*, and Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment*.\(^7\) Parrish devotes attention in her book to the roots of the degeneracy theory and its continuous controversy among colonial naturalists throughout the seventeenth and

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\(^7\) Susan Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006; Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). Here I am referring to the degeneracy theory broadly speaking as a number of ideas which emerged in Europe linking climate to health from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, particularly mental and physical health, which posited that the environment of North America had a debilitating effect on European bodies and minds.
eighteenth centuries. Golinski furthers this line of analysis by examining the attention to weather and climate both at the British imperial center, the scientific societies and colonial administrations of London, and its peripheries in scientific treatises and popular literature and culture.

Extending the chronology of this subject out from the colonial period to the early republic, Andrew Lewis’ *A Democracy of Facts* provides a framework for understanding the moral economy and intellectual communities of natural history in early America.\(^8\) Lewis’ general argument that within the early republic existed two competing groups – the elite naturalists who led the *empire of reason* and the populist crowd of natural history collectors and brokers who constituted the *democracy of facts* – has both informed and forced historians to consider the professionalization of natural history and those individuals, including William Bartram, who positioned themselves as participants within both intellectual regimes. Moreover, Lewis critically situates the work of several members of what he calls the American natural history circle as natural theology; this emphasis on the linkage of natural history and natural theology is particularly important in considering the *Travels* of William Bartram.

A second set of monographs that have informed this project come from historians who have dedicated their attention to early modern science and the discourse of natural economics. Richard Drayton’s survey of the co-development of natural history and economics is charted in *Nature’s Government*, which argues that natural history became

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enjoined to the directives of political economy in early modern European states which
engaged in either informal or formal colonial empire-building. Drayton’s work has been
extended by Londa Schiebinger in her monograph *Plants and Empire*, and by Lisbet Koerner
in her study of the career of the Swedish taxonomist and naturalist Carolus Linnaeus,
*Linnaeus: Nature and Nation*. She identifies the work of botanists such as the Bartrams as
bioprospecting – a program consisting of plant identification, transport, and acclimatization.
Schiebinger has also argued that this enterprise can be synopsized as the search for “green
gold”, or a new political economy organized around the concepts of renewable resources and
balanced trade.⁹

A number of monographs that have specifically addressed the Bartrams offer a range
of interpretations. The only dual biography to date is Thomas Slaughter’s *The Natures of
John and William Bartram*. Slaughter’s methodology and approach to the Bartrams has been
received with criticism; his interest lies in not only examining their lives but also in creating
a new genre of “emotional history” which ostensibly seeks to establish a personal emotional
bond between historians and their subjects.¹⁰ In enacting this project, Slaughter not only
romanticizes the Bartrams, but he obscures their ideology of what Nature is and can
historically signify. It is especially tempting to craft a heroic portrayal of William Bartram;
he was a fascinating figure in his own time for having travelled much of the southeastern
borderlands, and his writing did indeed represent a convergence of travelogue, natural

⁹ Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World*, (Cambridge: Harvard
history, and Romantic prose. However, Slaughter’s monograph elides the problematic nature of his project that uncritically repeats the performative anti-conquest rhetoric of both of the Bartrams. A number of more critical monographs and anthologies have offered a counterpoint to Slaughter’s work, but none has sought to compose another dual biography. Pamela Regis’ *Describing Early America* situates William Bartram’s travelogue alongside his contemporaries Thomas Jefferson and John Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur. Regis’ general argument is that Bartram’s *Travels* constructed a pastoral imaginary of the American southeast as a garden that could be naturally assimilated into the early republic. I share this argument, but unlike Regis I see a precedent in John Bartram’s *Observations*. Thomas Hallock’s *From the Fallen Tree* continues this line of argumentation about the *Travels*, classifying the text as an “imperial elegy”. Hallock briefly discusses John Bartram, but not in the detail which I have provided in the subsequent pages of this thesis. Finally, a volume of critical interdisciplinary scholarship on William Bartram edited by Kathryn Holland-Braund and Charlotte Porter, entitled *Fields of Vision*, has advanced and further complicated the arguments previously made by Regis and Hallock by examining the role of archaeology in Bartram’s work, his use of language, and his self-conception as both an artist and a naturalist.\(^{11}\)

I seek to intervene in this literature by not only critiquing Slaughter’s “emotional history” but also by renewing focus on the Bartrams via a comparative history of their

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careers. This project is organized in three successive chapters, which examines first the
Bartrams episodes of actual travel and exploration, and second their texts meant to represent
the travels and their attendant meanings. I argue broadly that the most significant linkage
between the Bartrams expeditions and writings are their unconscious complicity with
imperial ambitions.

Chapter one engages John Bartram’s 1743 expedition to Onondaga, the center of the
Haudenosaunee, and his subsequent account of that voyage, the 1751 Observations. It argues
that Bartram’s Observations must be read for its unambiguous political content alongside its
natural history; throughout the text Bartram routinely addresses the suspect origins of the
Haudenosaunee, and their dubious claims to civility, alongside descriptions of the plants he
collected and eventually shipped across the Atlantic to his circle of gentlemen clients
throughout Europe. Juxtaposing these two strands of the text will reveal a trend to naturalize
the Haudenosaunee, which is to locate them within nature, as a people with a diminished
claim to sovereign rights over their territory.

Chapter two engages William Bartram’s expedition through the southeastern
borderlands from 1773 to 1777 (Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and parts of the western frontier)
and his interaction with various Native American polities including the Cherokee, Muscogee,
Chickasaw, and Seminole peoples. It interrogates Bartram’s written account of this voyage,
the Travels, 1791, and its description of the natural world of the southeast and its broader
context as a work of narrative travel writing in the early republic period. I pay particular
attention to the lapse in time between the expedition itself and the published account of it that
morphed from a brief report to Bartram’s patron made in 1774 to a lyrical travelogue for an audience of elite readers in the early republic. Here Pratt’s term anti-conquest is most significant, as Bartram’s *Travels* must be read as a production of both the colonialist impulse to imagine the landscape vis-à-vis the categories of political economy, namely productivity. Moreover, its emphasis on providing a uniquely American natural history in the early republic makes it a crucial example of an emergent American environmental mentality.

Chapter three continues this examination by focusing on a nexus of seemingly disparate themes throughout the *Travels* – natural theology, natural economy, the ethnography of the indigenous polities of the southeast – and tracing the interconnections of these discourses to reveal a more complete image of Bartram’s embedded philosophy of science and political imaginary. Consider Bartram’s neighbor and colleague Benjamin Smith Barton, who inquired about the political, social, and cultural observations Bartram made about the indigenous peoples he encountered. Barton intended that his responses would yield new evidence to the theory that Native Americans were in fact not native but rather usurpers of a once glorious civilization sometimes referred to as the Mound Builders. Together, chapter two and chapter three present a sustained argument about first the motivations, production, and logic of William Bartram’s expedition and his published *Travels*, and second the system or philosophy of science undergirding Bartram’s career.

**Conclusion**

My intention in this project is not to provide an exact counterpoint to Slaughter’s dual biography; indeed, I have not attempted to write a biography of the Bartrams here. Instead, I
have sought to provide critical analyses of key episodes and ideas in both of their professional careers as naturalists. This strategy has allowed me to sidestep the problems of biography as a genre, and to challenge Slaughter’s conception of the Bartrams while adding to the scholarship on William Bartram provided by Regis, Hallock, Braund and Porter, which have generally neglected or minimized John Bartram. Furthermore, my aim has been to join together a number of themes, which have heretofore been considered as discrete and possibly unrelated ideas such as natural economy, natural theology, the politics of travel writing and taxonomy, and the patronage networks of naturalists. This work joins not only the historiography on science and empire in the early modern world that I have discussed, but also the historiographies of the early republic, science and religion, and the environmental history of early America. I intend to raise new questions about the image of nature botanists like the Bartrams produced, and to situate those questions alongside the rhetoric of vanishing Native Americans.
Chapter One: Good Land in a Happy Climate

Natural history, as all the other histories, depends not always upon the intrinsic degree of probability, but upon facts founded on the testimony of people of noted veracity.


On July 3, 1743, the botanist John Bartram left his home on the outskirts of Philadelphia for Onondaga, the spiritual center of the Haudenosaunee confederacy. He had joined the entourage of the culture broker and adopted Mohawk, Conrad Weiser, along with the Oneida sachem Shikellamy. Bartram observed of the bright summer day, “The weather was exceeding hot.” His erstwhile companions had an important diplomatic mission ahead of them. The Pennsylvania Council, in concert with the governor of Virginia, dispatched Weiser as an intermediary to meet with and formally apologize to the Haudenosaunee confederacy, in regard to a skirmish on the western frontier in the early winter between a combined party of Oneida and Onondaga men and an outfit of Virginia frontiersmen. Weiser’s mandate was to address border grievances between the two colonies and the Six Nations, and to cautiously lay the foundations to negotiate a military alliance against France. Forging diplomatic relations with the Six Nations and their allies would prove


crucial to the expansion of the British Empire in North America. Within a year hostilities would break out as Britain and its colonial forces pitted themselves against New France and their allies from the Wabanaki Confederacy in what would become King George’s War. Governor Thomas Penn invited the botanist, along with the surveyor and cartographer Lewis Evans, to join the travelling enclave led by Weiser and Shikellamy. Bartram’s mission was to search for “Flora’s beauties” such as cucumber tree, swamp bay, white pine, and ginseng seeds, which might bring acknowledging nods from academicians across the burgeoning Republic of Letters, and procure a worthwhile sum in the botanical marketplace. In Bartram’s words Weiser served as his “general Interpreter” whose “business was to settle an affair with the Indians at Onondago”. Throughout the text Weiser and Shikellamy became withdrawn from view; becoming ghosts on the page as Bartram foregrounded his own singular voice and vision. Natural history, in order to render the natural sensible, entailed

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18 Bartram, 10.
erasure of competing articulations. Exploring the frontier, prospecting for new botanical curiosities, agricultural staples, and pharmaceuticals, became the colonial practice that tended to reinforce sensibilities of British political economy if only to impose a structure on the borderlands.\textsuperscript{19}

Weiser and Bartram’s interests became mutually reinforcing as both asserted the English authority to traverse and map the North American landscape. At the core of this episode lie the problematic histories of science and empire in the early modern period—specifically; to what extent did these institutions co-produce each other? Bartram’s journey served to expand the boundaries of an empire while extending them in the geographic imaginary. Encapsulated within this event are a set of components which will be analyzed here in detail: the network of patronage and exchange Bartram operated within, the rhetoric of speculative history in British America, the colonial ideas embedded within anatomy in early modern Europe, the cultural context of gardens and gardening, the emergence and utility of Linnaean taxonomy among the Atlantic empires, and the joint interests of botany and mercantilist political economy.

Weiser, having successfully laid the groundwork for the 1744 Treaty of Lancaster, was not the only one to see the fruits of his labor come to maturation at journey’s end.\textsuperscript{20} In 1751, eight years after the almost six hundred mile trek across the Allegheny Plateau, Bartram outlined the potential for expansion and extraction of natural resources into


Haudenosaunee territory with his *Observations on the Inhabitants, Climate, Soil, Rivers, Productions, Animals, and other Matters Worthy of Notice, made by Mr. John Bartram in his Travels from Pennsylvania to Onondaga, Oswego, and the Lake Ontario, in Canada.*

Bartram’s natural history was praised in the colonies and by the European naturalist cognoscenti, which positioned him to become recognized as, in his colleague Pehr Kalm’s words, a person of noted veracity in the Atlantic World.\(^{21}\) “Natural history” quipped Kalm, “ought to be studied as *a collection of facts*; not as the history of our guesses and opinions.”\(^{22}\) Probing the people, wildlife, and flora, at the borders of the colonial frontier made Bartram one of the few English settlers to experience the space of the contact zone between Europeans and the people of the Americas through the perspective of what was ostensibly objective natural history.\(^{23}\)

Anxiety over race, place, and identity pervades Bartram’s *Observations*, so much so that it is in essence the text’s most pervasive motif. Science, specifically anatomy and the natural philosophy of bodies, licensed him to oscillate between curiosity, neglect, and contempt for the natives.\(^{24}\) One evening, around dusk, while camped along the banks of the Susquehanna during the summer tour, Bartram described, “a fine warm night…one of the Indians that had so generously feasted us, sung in a solemn harmonious manner, for seven or eight minutes, very different from the common Indian tune, from whence I conjectured it to

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\(^{22}\) Kalm, 145. My emphasis.


be a hymn to the great spirit as they express it.”

Not knowing what to make of such a gesture of reverence, Bartram asked Weiser what the meaning of the music was. To no avail, the confused interpreter could not determine the song’s meaning, leaving the botanist uncertain and anxious about the identity of these “Indian” people he had encountered. Few of these native informants are ever named in the text and rarely are their polities of origin specified, rendering them something like the invisible technicians of the European learned societies.

Throughout the text the author brusquely acknowledges an anonymous “Indian guide” who was “sullen, illnatured, and I believe, a superstitious fellow.” Oral traditions, such as the story of a sacred hill upon which corn, tobacco, and squash were revealed to the natives by a supernatural being, fell on Bartram’s ears as merely one “silly story” after another.

Bartram’s animosity towards Indian peoples derived from his family’s own tragic history; his father, a planter in the Cape Fear region had been killed in a raid by the Tuscarora in 1711. Discrediting his native informants also enabled their erasure as claimants to the land; wholly ignoring the immense agricultural engineering complex of the Haudenosaunee dignified the naturalist’s authority to survey this territory. Obliging the coterie of gentlemen collectors gathered around his patron Peter Collinson ensured that notes on oaks and mosses, rivers and lakes, and mountain ranges abounded while reflections on

25 Bartram, 29.
27 Bartram, 56.
28 Bartram, 37.
native beliefs such as blowing smoke into a dead bear’s mouth to prevent it from haunting “future sport in hunting” remained in the background as curiosities told by parochial brutes for the entertainment of cosmopolitan dons. Employment of a botanist and a mapmaker on a diplomatic mission guaranteed that subtle imperial desires could be shrouded innocently behind the parameters of plant classification and topographic charting.

A work of natural history, ethnography, memoir, and travel writing, the text presented an image of the native polities Bartram encountered as “much mixed with superstition”, “the most warlike people in North America”, and in dire need of “proper education”. Juxtaposed to the image of the indigenous peoples was the description of the undiscovered “dismal wilderness” of the British American frontier including treacherous rivers, valleys, and sublime mountains. Native Americans lived in the “simplicity of ancient times” according to Bartram, and thus made no improvements to the land to claim it as their own. Operating upon this environmental imaginary permitted a colonial sensibility to proclaim the western frontier an empty space, a virgin terrain.

Lewis Evans drafted and circulated his “Map of Pensilvania, New-Jersey, New-York, and the Three Delaware Counties” (1749) after the mission; the map was a similar colonial and imperial document which served to geographically render the presence of the British on the continent. Evan’s map and a “curious” testimony of the cataracts at Niagara drafted by the Linnaean disciple Pehr Kalm were included in the final published form of Bartram’s

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30 Bartram, 25.
31 Bartram, 16.
Observations.\textsuperscript{33} Inside the flyleaf of the volume, the expanded London edition of Cadwallader Colden’s \textit{The History of the Five Indian Nations} was advertised, encouraging readers to imagine the Haudenosaunee through the words of another colonial botanist. Colden, a surveyor and physician from New York, had written the history to advocate an alliance between the Haudenosaunee and the English.\textsuperscript{34} Other titles, which appeared in the advertisement, included a manual on farming entitled “The Modern Husbandman” concerning the improvement of farmsteads and timberlands, and \textit{The British Merchant}, an anonymous promotional tract. Folded in two folios, the frontispiece adorning the volume depicted an aerial diagram of “The Town of Oswego” consisting of a territorial map of the settlement, the adjacent trading posts and trader’s houses, a castle, and the Onondaga River. Above this image was a sketch of the kind of longhouse where the itinerant sojourners rested. In 1755 Evans published his own natural history of the expedition entitled \textit{Geographical, Historical, Political, Philosophical and Mechanical Essays, The first, containing An Analysis of a General Map of the Middle British Colonies in America}, a text which relegated natives to the margins of America through cartographic silencing for the conquest of profitable “good Land, in a happy Climate”.\textsuperscript{35} In order for Anglophone writers to establish themselves as natives in a land they had settled, it became necessary to erase the Indian peoples who

\textsuperscript{33} David S. Wilson, \textit{In the Presence of Nature}, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1978), 89.
\textsuperscript{35} Lewis Evans, \textit{Geographical, historical, political, philosophical and mechanical essays. The first, containing An analysis of a general map of the middle British colonies in America}, (Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin & D. Hall, 1755).
inhabited the landscape both textually and geographically as the imperial border shifted westward.\(^{36}\)

**Making Nature**

Peter Collinson, a wool mercer and Fellow of the Royal Society of London, acted as Bartram’s patron and broker across the Atlantic beginning in 1734 and continued to do so for much of his career. Bartram profited greatly from the journey by collecting plant specimens and seeds and forwarding them to a network of European aficionados, gardeners, botanists, and scientific adepts. Among these were Carolus Linnaeus and his disciples assembled in Stockholm including Daniel Solander, Philip Miller at the Chelsea Physic Garden, the gentry horticulturist Robert James Petre, Baron Petre, the Oxford botany professor Johann Jacob Dillenius, the naturalist-physician and President of the Royal Society Sir Hans Sloane, the Dutch savant Jan Frederik Gronovius at Leiden, and the artist-naturalist Mark Catesby.\(^{37}\)

Catesby’s *Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands* (1731) set the criteria of taxonomic precision and objectivity for observation to the American natural history circle.\(^{38}\) A student of the taxonomist John Ray, Catesby sought the patronage of Hans Sloane after having earned the respect of the Virginia planter William Byrd II and the

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\(^{37}\) Collinson himself maintained a cache of noble buyers during his tenure as a plant dealer in London which included noblemen imbricated within the landscape garden movement including the Duke of Bedford, the second Duke of Richmond, the ninth Duke of Norfolk, and the third Duke of Argyll. Seed shipments also found their way to professional nurserymen like Christopher Gray, James Gordon, Nathaniel Powell, and John Williamson, Fry 159.

apothecary James Petiver in London by forwarding to them collections of specimens
gathered during his travels.\(^{39}\) In 1714, Catesby explored the Appalachian Mountains, the
Bahamas, and Jamaica. Selected by Sloane and a circle of London plant collectors including
William Sherard, Samuel Dale, and Charles Dubois, Catesby ventured into the American
wilds again in 1720, this time scouting south from the Carolinas to the West Indies. Upon his
return in 1726, Catesby endeavored to complete an illustrated edition of his travels, which
was partially funded by Peter Collinson. His 1731 *Natural History* included an appendix
compiled by John Bartram.\(^{40}\)

Circulating plants connected the British nation to its colony by demonstrating the
potential for new plants, as well as new people, to take root in either the metropole or the
periphery.\(^{41}\) In his business as a naturalist in the colonies, Bartram was connected to
Benjamin Franklin (with whom he co-founded the American Philosophical Society), the
physician and mapmaker John Mitchell, the Colden family in New York, the gardening
devotees Alexander Garden and Martha Logan in Charleston, South Carolina, the Virginian
botanist John Clayton, and other luminaries of the Atlantic World. Trade in botanical
specimens was a thriving enterprise; once Bartram established his garden at his home in
Philadelphia he left his former life as a rural farmer. Gardening, a scientific practice
embedded in classical schemas of ordering and classification, was never far from his mind.

502-675. Petiver is perhaps best known for his role in leading the Temple Coffee House Botany Club.

worth mentioning that Catesby produced, posthumously, the first complete flora of North America entitled,
*Hortus Britanno-Americanus, or, a Curious Collection of Trees and Shrubs, the Produce of the British Colonies in
North America; Adapted to the Soil and Climate of England*.

\(^{41}\) Joyce Chaplin, "Nature and Nation: Natural History in Context." In *Stuffing Birds, Pressing Plants, Shaping
Gardens occupied a unique space in the mentality of the English as embodied claims of possession over land; they signified that the husbandry of the gardener established their ownership of the space transforming it from the wild commons into private property.\textsuperscript{42}

An endeavor of this scale was clearly not without an ideological screen. Bartram was part of a colonial scientific community of naturalists, but also the broader body of settler colonists in North America. In their writings, colonial Anglophone naturalists erased or made legible the native, the slave, and other local informants as it suited them in order to propel their collecting endeavors and produce an image of themselves as modest natural geniuses.\textsuperscript{43}

Becoming indigenous through elimination, as Patrick Wolfe has argued, laid at the kernel of the settler colonial project in North America.\textsuperscript{44} An example of this practice comes from the 1741 edition of Poor Richard’s Almanack in which Bartram published an article on “true Indian Physick,” which detailed treatments for a number of ailments discovered by unacknowledged Seneca medicine elders using snakeroot.\textsuperscript{45} Tracing the continent for its natural potential and majestic totality was intrinsic to securing the authority to rule it without question.\textsuperscript{46} Bartram’s Observations constitutes a critical example of the convergence of science and empire in the early modern period. Anti-conquest, the discourse that Mary Pratt identifies as the strategies of innocence used in scientific exploratory prose as gloss over

\textsuperscript{42} Patricia Seed, Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995),16-41.
\textsuperscript{43} Shapin, 243-310.
\textsuperscript{45} Kevin J. Hayes, A Colonial Woman's Bookshelf. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 90.
imperial ambitions, is suited as a model by which to read the *Observations* 47. Fittingly, Kalm’s journal affixed to the book concluded in this mode, “You must excuse me if you find in my account, no extravagant wonders. I cannot make nature otherwise than I find it.” 48 Making nature was precisely what men such as Bartram and Kalm were trained to do. In order to construct the garden being discovered in the British American backcountry as a manageable, useful space, it had to be rhetorically crafted into the scientific imaginary. 49

*Dominion Unbounded*

Upon arriving home in Philadelphia, the tired botanist concluded the journal of his travels with some reflections on the peoples he encountered throughout Indian country.

They are a subtile, prudent, and judicious people in their councils, indefatigable, crafty, and revengeful in their wars, the men lazy and indolent at home, the women continual slaves, modest, very loving, and obedient to their husbands. As to the natural dispositions of their Nations, they are grave, solid, and still in their recreations, as well as in their councils. 50

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47 Pratt, 8. Thomas Hallock makes this argument generally in *From the Fallen Tree*, however his treatment of the *Observations* is not as scrutinizing as mine. Moreover, my argument is an intervention toward addressing the simplistic treatment of Bartram’s career that has been made by previous historians, specifically what was presented by Thomas Slaughter in *The Natures of John and William Bartram*, (New York: Knopf, 1996). Slaughter’s “emotional history”, as others including Alan Taylor have already noted, fails to address the political dimension of Bartram’s career. Slaughter’s gloss over the imperial motivations of the text reproduces Bartram’s own erasure of the political context of this expedition.


50 Bartram, 77.
John Bartram’s conception of the native population was deeply embedded in a racialized discourse that had developed throughout the seventeenth century; understanding that mentality will be essential to situating his Observations as a text within the problematic interconnection between exploration, science, and empire. English planters and colonial administrators had already fixed an image of the uncivilized Irish savage as incapable of altering their own environment to exploit its potential in their cultural unconscious. Now it would become the image of the indigenous American. In the preface to his journal, Bartram’s London publisher rendered clearly his mission,

Knowledge must precede a settlement, and when Pensilvania and Virginia shall have extended their habitations to the branches of the Mississippi that water these provinces, on the west side of the Blue Mountains, we may reasonably hope to insure a safe and early communication with the most remote known parts of North America, and to secure the possession of a dominion unbounded by any present discoveries.

Framed by the editor, not by the naturalist, this statement excused the virtuous botanist from making transparent the implicit discourse of conquest embedded in his texts. Eighteenth century naturalist voyages and travelogues were articulated within a discourse of wonder, curiosity, and marvel. Observing nature for its wonders and marvels served as a prelude to cultivating the land. Cultivation was the ultimate certificate of authority for Bartram, one he and his compatriots used against the Native American groups they

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52 Bartram, 2; There has been speculation among historians as to the authorship of this preface, the two most probable authors would have been Peter Collinson or John Fothergill.
dispossessed. European identity as a discrete set of ideas and beliefs became contingent upon the construction of alien identities, such as Native Americans, which served to clarify and mutually reinforce each group as singularities in a global imaginary. Progress in civilization became a metric for Bartram and other Anglo-Americans by which to determine legitimate claims to possession of the Americas.

Fixing an identity to the Haudenosaunee, especially a contradictory one in which they played the role of both the uncouth brute and the noble savage, in the British imaginary became essential to excusing imperial contempt and dispossession. In his 1755 edition of The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada, which are Dependent on the Province of New-York in America, the botanist-turned-governor Cadwallader Colden, an associate of Bartram’s, prefaced his text noting, “The Five Nations are a poor, and generally called, barbarous People, bred under the darkest ignorance; and yet a bright and noble Genius shines through these black clouds.” Colden’s romantic primitivism inclined him to compare the native nations as similar to ancient Romans—brave, honorable, and noble warriors who deserved European esteem. Romantic primitivism became a useful discourse of empire in its ability to legitimize the English claim to the American past. Taming and domesticating the barbarians functioned as a noble banner under which to dispossess the natives.

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55 Cadwallader Colden, The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada, which are Dependent on the Province of New-York in America. 3rd ed. (London: Lockyer Davis; J. Wren; and J. Ward, 1755).
Europeans conducted their bodies with rigor while Native bodies succumbed to the oftentimes-paradoxical sway of their base nature.

English assessments of types of bodies and bodily capacities naturalized colonialism in the Americas. Bartram would have understood the native polities through the anatomical models of Galen and Aristotle and through the classical ethnology of the dispersion of the Sons of Noah. In this framework English bodies adapted to the temperate zone of Europe were capable of sufficient cooling which enabled them access to privileged rationality, while African tropical bodies were unable to cool themselves sufficiently and thus were unable to rationalize. Moreover, Africans were physically able to endure hard manual labor making them the ideal people to serve as enslaved labor. Native American bodies posed a problem to this ideology initially, but ultimately their identity came to be located under the sign of natural history, per their environmental circumstances, and as such their existence was reduced from subjectivity to materiality in the colonialist vision of the English. Bartram’s associates naturalized conquest, technological capability, race, and rationality, to deliver a license to empire making.\(^{57}\)

Anatomy served this colonialist vision well. John Mitchell, Bartram’s colleague at the American Philosophical Society, published his theory of racial development, “An Essay upon the Causes of the Different Colours of People in Different Climates”, in the *Transactions of the Royal Society* in 1744. In the essay, Mitchell argued that climate and varying exposure to the sun, which would come to be called the heliotropic theory, affected bodies historically by either making them cooler and more rational (as in the case of white Europeans) or hotter,

\(^{57}\) Chaplin, 235.
denser, and incapable of sustained reason—as in the case of Africans, the sons of Ham, whose bodies developed a reticular membrane. 58 Mitchell relates the climatic impact on European bodies in the Americas by way of a report from the English soldier-explorer John Smith from 1608, “Captain Smith tells us, that, even in Virginia, an Englishman, by living only 3 years among the Indians, became ‘so like an Indian, in habit and complexion, that he knew him only by his tongue:’ and what might his children have turned into in a succession of many generations, by these same ways of life, which had altered him in 3 years?” 59 Bartram had read Robert Beverly’s The History and Present State of Virginia (1705) in preparation for his journey, and had acquired some of its speculations as to the relationship between climate and the origins of man. 60 Beverly concluded that Virginia was a robust land due to its location on the “same Latitude with the Land of Promise,” Judea, and that it presented a promised land to the English. 61

Bartram considered the relationship between nature and man in an environmental fashion, which anticipated the later polemic literature of the dispute of the New World, hearkening back to the cosmographies and colonial promotional literature of the sixteenth

60 Bartram, 32.
and seventeenth centuries including Richard Hakluyt, Thomas Harriot, and Walter Raleigh. Access to the private library of his mentor James Logan, William Penn’s ambassador to the Indians and an enthusiast of natural history, and to the Library Company of Philadelphia provided Bartram an entree to the premier literature in natural history, taxonomy, philosophy, and travel. Presenting himself as an autodidactic creole, Bartram displayed his cultivated acumen by mentioning his familiarity with endowed sages like Isaac Newton and Thomas Burnet. He recounts a story of a woman in the Observations that recalls the speculation that a land bridge continued to connect the Americas to Asia. This anecdote foregrounds the critical theme of Bartram’s volume: the suspect origins of Native Americans.

I have been lately informed of an Indian woman, well known by a person in Canada, and after an interval of many years met again by the same person in Chinese Tartary; he could not be convinced she was the same, till by discourse he had with her, she told him, that she had during many years been transferred by captivity, sale, or gift, from one nation to another till she was brought where he found her. If this be true it must be Continent most of the way.

Indigenous peoples became configured as suspicious occupants of the land in order to be eliminated by the colonial gaze. Native Americans figured in Bartram’s drama of civilization as uncultured descendants of any number of ancient peoples. A speculation he

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64 I use the term “creole” here in the way others, including Delbourgo, Parrish, and Bauer, have used it to denote British subjects born or living in British America.
borrowed from the *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (1590), a work of the sixteenth century Spanish Jesuit missionary and naturalist Jose de Acosta, concluded that natives were the descendants of ancient Israelites.  

Perhaps, Bartram conjectured, they descended from the Norwegians or other Scandinavian people. Bartram had likely read the 1709 travelogue of the naturalist-explorer John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, which considered the hypothesis that Native Americans were the descendants of Asiatic peoples. Bartram also considered the possibly fictive nature of a genealogy of the Indians, namely the hypothesis that they were descendants of the Welsh prince Madoc,

I am not ignorant that these traditions of the Norwegian colonies, as well as many others to the same point, particularly that of prince Madoc has been treated as meer fiction; but let us not forget that Herodotus’ account of the doubling the Cape of Good Hope has been treated so likewise too, tho’ the fact be now established to the degree of moral certainty.

Madoc operated as a mythical figure in the eighteenth century beginning as a heroic icon that historically certified the English claim of possession of the Americas. Bartram might have read the poem “Upon Prince Madoc’s Expedition to the Country now called America, in the 12th Century” which appeared in the Philadelphia magazine *American Weekly Mercury* in 1743. The Madoc legend figured as a certification of British, and subsequently American credentials for empire building by claiming an ancient heritage to the

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65 Scheick, 238.
66 Bartram, 75-77.
68 Bartram, 76.
territory of the Americas and by establishing an aptitude for both naval and economic traffic in the New World.  

Efforts to delegitimize Native claims to originating in the Americas often recalled the problematic effect of the climate on their bodies. A theory of continents emerged from the discourse on human nature, prior to the sophisticated environmental degeneracy theory embedded in the biogeography of George Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, which posited that exposure to geographical areas could alter an individual’s essential character. James Drake has argued that this increasing discourse of latitudinal determinism naturalized race in the early modern world for thinkers such as Montesquieu who believed natural boundaries defined the character of the patrimony. Europe, by contrast, had "natural divisions" that created "many medium-sized states in which the government of laws is not incompatible with the maintenance of the state." Montesquieu’s treatise on political economy, published first in 1754, furthered the hypothesis that climate came to be a determining factor in a civilization’s potential for complexity and development.

Exposure to the American climate and environment could, and did, complicate notions of European bodily identity and integrity, leading to tremendous anxieties for colonists in what became known as the querelle d’Amerique. Creole naturalists could become problematic figures in the Atlantic scientific circuit, because their credibility as theorizers of

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70 Spradlin, 44.
nature could be directly challenged by the scientific understanding of climate put forth by European theorists such as Buffon.\textsuperscript{73} In his *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière* (published between 1749–1788), Buffon argued that the climate and environment of the Americas would degrade the bodies of Europeans into more primitive forms. Questioning their credibility led to the rationale that while creoles could not capably theorize about Nature, they were capable of making clear and useful observations. In the *Histoire naturelle* Buffon wrote, “In America … animated Nature is weaker, less active, and more circumscribed in the variety of her productions; for we perceive, from the enumeration of the American animals, that the numbers of species is not only fewer, but, in general, that all the animals are much smaller than those of the Old Continent.”\textsuperscript{74} In Bartram’s eyes the degeneracy of the Natives was clear in their inability to control themselves and the land they inhabited.

Colonists distinguished themselves from both Natives and Africans in their scientific proficiency as describers of nature, opposed to objects within the landscape itself.\textsuperscript{75} Scientific knowledge in the Baconian schema indicated civic and cultural status, and theirs was unparalleled.\textsuperscript{76} Bartram’s occupation, naturalist and botanist, also had a genealogical lineage in the program of English colonialism. At the dawn of the colonial project in America, the


\textsuperscript{74} Quoted in Sivils, 342.


late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, natural philosophers, learned men well practiced in the fields of mineralogy, astronomy, botany, and geographic survey, functioned as authorities within corporations such as the Virginia Company whose rhetoric lent credence to the prospect of developing the land and exploiting its natural resources.\footnote{Chaplin, 20.}

\textit{Casting Eyes}

Between the chaos of the wilderness and the order of the city lies the image of the middle landscape: the pastoral garden in which technology invisibly disciplines nature to create a habitable zone for man.\footnote{Marx, 22.} At the kernel of the \textit{Observations} lies this image of an American garden, a hidden potential covered by the wilds of flora, fauna, and native peoples. Gardens figured as images of order and control in the colonial period. By the eighteenth century the English landscape garden movement had fashionably gripped the minds of the wealthy noblesse that hired famed landscape architects like William Kent and Lancelot “Capability” Brown to manicure their green estates into spectacular miniature worlds, which showcased their gentility and affluence.\footnote{For a discussion of both the landscape garden movement and the relationship between botany and imperialism see Jill Casid, \textit{Sowing Empire: Landscape And Colonization}, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).} Before the orientalist splendor of the Chinese pagodas at Kew Garden, London, the Bartram Garden in Philadelphia collected and organized plants gathered from the American backcountry alongside flowers sent from Collinson and Linnaeus. Trafficking five guinea seed boxes to the esteemed Loddiges family nursery connected Bartram to the chic trend of landscape gardens. Farms also occupied a
cultural space as images of order and American identity in the colonies. In his *Letters from an American Farmer*, John Hector St. John de Crevecoeur used the image of the farm as a metaphor of American culture; cultivation of the soil and natural husbandry marked the people of America as morally naturalized individuals connected to the land.\(^{80}\)

Letter XI of Crevecoeur’s *Letters*, posed by the narrator James, envisages a Russian gentleman, Ivan, encountering John Bartram, “The Celebrated Pensylvanian Botanist”, at his homestead, which is both a farm and a garden.\(^{81}\) Laura Rigal identifies Bartram in both the *Letters* and his *Observations* as being a representative individual of the “natural genius” trope in American letters.\(^{82}\) Natural geniuses were characterized as, or self-fashioned as, individuals whose intellect and philosophical capability derived from being products of the American environment. John Bartram’s career adumbrated this style of scientific-republicanism that would be glorified in the new nation’s popular rhetoric. Ivan asks Bartram to relate the origins of his botanical interests, to which Bartram offers,

> One day I was very busy in holding my plough (for thee seest that I am but a ploughman) and being weary I ran under the shade of a tree to repose myself. I cast my eyes on a daisy, I plucked it mechanically and viewed it " with more curiosity than common country farmers are wont to do; and observed therein very many distinct parts, some perpendicular, some horizontal. What a shame, said my mind, or somthing that inspired my mind, that thee shouldest have employed so many years in tilling the earth and destroying so many flowers and plants, without being ac- quainted with their structures and their uses!  

\(^{83}\) Crevecoeur, Letter XI.
Educating himself in Latin and the Linnaean system provided in Linnaeus’ *Genera Plantarum* (1737), Bartram was able to botanize in his realm and “send many collections” in boxes to “the old countries” and make enough profit to make natural history his business.

Natural genius, the characterization of creole naturalists, engineers, and experimenters, came to be a most powerful trope of American science.\(^{84}\)

**Linnaean Science**

High praise came to John Bartram from the prince of botany and scientific classification himself, Carolus Linnaeus, who lauded the yeoman-turned-gentleman as the “greatest natural botanist in the world.”\(^{85}\) Linnaeus’ acclaim in European scientific circles in the eighteenth century is difficult to exaggerate; his accomplishments lie in creating “one global classificatory tree encompassing all life on earth, and divided into five levels of generality: class, order, genus, species, and variety.”\(^{86}\) Prior to the Linnaean system naturalists relied on a number of popular guidebooks from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries such as Conrad Gesner’s *Historiae Animalium* (1551), Caspar Bauhin’s *Theatri Botanici* (1623), John Ray’s *Historia Plantarum Species* (1686), Joseph Pitton de Tournefort’s *Éléments de botanique* (1694), as well as their popular translated and abridged

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\(^{84}\) Perhaps the most famous example of this phenomenon lies in the honor accorded to the astronomer and engineer David Rittenhouse by numerous American statesmen and naturalists.


versions. In 1731, in his *Systema Naturae*, Linnaeus laid out a classificatory scheme that was artificially designed in order to quickly instruct new botanists into the principles of taxonomy. Lisbet Koerner characterizes the Swedish botanist as an “Enlightenment improver” who inculcated his students in the botanical/climatic acclimatization theory. Improvement meant South American or African orchids blossoming in Stockholm nurseries, wresting dominion of nature’s products from the wild to the province of man. Consequently, Linnaean taxonomy and evidence of “improvement” allowed states, such as the Netherlands, France, and England, to construct a map of potential profit vis-à-vis economic botany and political economy by which to build trans-Atlantic empires.

Disciples of Linnaeus went voyaging with ‘memorials’, or order-lists of plants and animals to be described. They were also charged with collecting local knowledge and technologies, which would be brought into the syncretic science of the economy of nature. Classification and taxonomy remain immensely powerful epistemological modes for sorting and arranging the world: at its foundation, any theory of knowledge making rests on a foundation of knowledge organization. In his *Philosophia Botanica* (1751), Linnaeus set out the epistemological foundations of his new science, “Knowledge of botany bears on these hinges [classification and nomenclature]; thus all plants become known in a single year, at first sight, with no instructor and without pictures or descriptions, by no means of stable

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87 Daniel Margócsy, ""Refer to folio and number": Encyclopedias, the Exchange of Curiosities, and Practices of Identification before Linnaeus." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 71, no. 1 (2010): 63-89. All of these titles were available to Bartram at the Loganian Library.
88 Koerner, 148.
89 Koerner, 151.
90 Koerner, 152.
recollected. Therefore anyone who knows this is a botanist." Linnaeus set his disciples loose to explore the frontiers of North and South America, Asia, Africa, and the Pacific, often accompanying the English naturalist administrator Joseph Banks’ network of agents. Bartram himself was inducted into this mentality through his correspondence with Collinson dating to the late 1730s. In his personal gaze of the North American wilderness, vistas of plants, animals, and native peoples were phenomenological objects readily perceived and reconstructed into a Linnaean episteme.

Linnaeus made contact with Bartram and the then farmer and surveyor Cadwallader Colden who lived in the Province of New York in the 1750s. Cadwallader’s daughter Jane became an esteemed botanist who was praised by Bartram and ignored by the misogynistic Linnaeus. Her brother, in contrast, David Colden, became a respected electrical experimenter and correspondent with Benjamin Franklin. Jane Colden’s career, which hinged on her sex and gender more so than her character as a creole naturalist, informs the historiography of science and empire about the kind of embedded bodily philosophy Linnaeus and his disciples practiced and reproduced in their writing and letters. Linnaean science relied on a Galenic anatomical theory of bodily capacities. Women’s bodies could not physically achieve the intellectual heights made possible by men’s advanced physiology. John Bartram applauded

92 Many of Linnaeus disciples joined Banks or served Banks in his numerous missions, most famously Daniel Solander who joined Captain Cook on the *Endeavor* voyage in 1771.
the lady naturalist and encouraged her to continue her work, hoping she might join his son William as a collector-artist, and sent her specimens and flora descriptions to Collinson in London and Gronovius in Leiden. Martha Logan, a gardener-collector and Linnaean admirer located in Charleston, met and corresponded with Bartram, much to the amusement of Collinson. Masculine friendship as a social protocol marginalized women like Colden and Logan while encouraging collegial letters sailed across the Atlantic from Bartram to Collinson.  

95 Alexander Garden, a physician and resident of Charleston, South Carolina, wrote to his friend John Ellis at the Royal Society in London asking for an introduction to the Swedish virtuoso sometime around 1754. 96 Garden hoped to join the ranks of the Linnaean network in America, visiting both the Coldens and the Bartrams and inspecting their libraries and correspondence with the Second Adam. 97 After having been tasked by Linnaeus to re-trace and confirm the work of Catesby in South Carolina, Garden established himself as a credible figure for correcting several errors and omissions made in the first and second volumes of the *Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands*.

Bioprospecting for the Empire

Settler colonialism and empire were deeply tied to the science of botany in the long eighteenth century. Embedded within the broader genre of natural history, botany joined territorial surveillance to knowledge production. Spaces of local environments came under the erasure of a global, imperialist ambition to overshadow a unique concept of place. Illustrations which exhibited plant specimens in an idealized space, free from environmental context, furthered this imperial agenda. Captured from the inchoate woodlands of the frontier, plants became specimens through the technologies of the herbarium and taxonomic classification. With the classificatory schema set out by Linnaeus in the Systema Naturae, botany offered a new epistemology with which to order reality. Conceptions of natural, artificial, the curious, and the useful, vied for attention in the numerous other competing systems such as the historicist orientation of Buffon’s Histoire naturelle. Botany was integral to the emerging mercantilist framework of the early modern state and held in esteem as the discipline that embodied the elegant convergence of theoretical methodology to economic boon.

Gathering plant information served wider planting trades such as agriculture, horticulture, and medicine. Pehr Kalm mused, “*Historia naturalis* is the base for all economics, commerce, and manufactures.” Linnaeus and his disciples developed a program of bioprospecting that served to connect botanical practice to state interests. Londa Schiebinger has identified the coordinates of this program as, “plant identification, transport, and acclimatization”. Pharmacological plants, such as stargrass, spikenard, devil’s-bit, and bloodroot which Bartram collected, were particularly valuable on the botanical market. For the Haudenosaunee, plants, among other phenomena of the natural world, were not only known for their pharmacological and agricultural uses, but were situated within a sacred cosmology which was bound to their social, political, and cultural identity. Bartram’s plant catalogues erased that knowledge and subsequent identity. Bioprospecting extended the boundaries of the nation into an empire, in which new lands could become developed and reordered into productive peripheries. David Mackay argues that bioprospectors were directly linked to the project of empire and became political agents in their capacity to relocate and domesticate new plants. In this fashion, empire was constructed in the form of a metropolitan center networked to a number of disparate peripheral backwaters where information circulated from the margins to be analyzed by central scientific bureaucrats.

Centers of calculation in the Atlantic World circuit, such as London herbaria and hothouses,

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102 Schiebinger, 6.
103 Fry, 178.
became zones of near absolute authority. Scientific practice also came became bound, and
dignified, into a religious discourse. Explorers imagined themselves to be adopting the role
and power of Adam, naming all life in the Garden of Eden under divine mandate. Raised
in the tradition of the Society of Friends, Bartram adhered to the doctrine that all things in
nature were inhered with a kind of divine “inner light” which could be read as a sign of
divine origin. The Society of Friends saw natural history as a wholesome activity among
its brethren because it led to knowledge of God’s design in nature.

Trading for plants also replicated the commodity form of the European markets, in a
sense effecting the commodification of nature itself. In two ways the herbarium embodied the
kernel of this process; first, it functioned as a storehouse of knowledge including the
taxonomic nomenclature and details about the geographic location of the plants, and second,
it functioned as a repository of capital, as seeds were traded and sold for a range of sums in
the botanical marketplace. Imbricated within the discourse of political economy was the
Linnaean science of the economy of nature. John Bartram would have understood the natural
world as it was formulated in this mode. From as early as the mid to late sixteenth century,
English colonial prospectors envisaged nature as a homeostatic system conditioned by a

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series of inputs and outputs that could be calculated through simple arithmetic exchange.  

Naturalizing the protocols and regulations of nature’s economy became the priority of political economists once the global circulation of agricultural and pharmaceutical products came into being.

Shipping collections of specimens and seeds across the Atlantic was a profitable business for an American naturalist. Bartram and Collinson made a fortune in the late eighteenth century plant trade selling boxes stuffed with seeds anywhere from five to ten guineas.  

In the opening of his correspondence with Bartram, Collinson praised him for, “thy Two Choice Cargos of plants which Came very Safe & in good Condition, & are very Curious & Rare & Well worth my Acceptance. I am very sensible of the great pains & many Tiresome Trips to Collect so many Rare plants scattered att a distance.” Collinson requested animal specimens such as deer horns, terrapin eggs, and insects - profitable wonders all – which were then sold to private collections or learned societies.  

An introduction from Collinson could lead to invaluable trading and gentlemanly correspondence. For example, in 1741, Bartram introduced himself by way of his patron to the naturalist Hans Sloane and profited from an exchange of books and specimens for a

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Nicholas Wrightson has argued that Collinson was the singularly most important scientific go-between of the British Atlantic and did more to promote and develop colonial natural history and philosophy than any other English figure, “During the 1730s, seeing himself as a facilitator of the transmission of colonial scientific discoveries … Collinson also sponsored collaboration between these three groups in the hope of ultimately integrating them into one intercolonial scientific community capable of contributing substantially to European knowledge.”

As a naturalist seeking credibility and authority in the Atlantic World, the modest, self-effacing, and analytical Bartram made use of a strategy of authorship, which pivoted on deference to European learned gentlemen and silencing of Indian voices. His Observations served natural history and the European license to empire in the Americas. A taxonomy of bodies and plants served to naturalize the frontier and the territory of the Americas to certify English conquest and possession of the land. He fully understood his role as a backwater American agent to an elite clique of scientific doyens in Europe. In the summer of 1746, Bartram received a missive from Gronovius at Leiden which praised his voyage to Onondaga and related that Linnaeus had named two new floral genera: *Bartramia* and *Coldenia*.

Naming plants after individuals signified relationships in the moral economy of botany;

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Gronovius had welcomed the ascendant Philadelphian to the elite. As the British Empire ventured westward into the Americas it required the accompanying sciences of botany, cartography, and natural history. Without these schemas of knowledge production, conquest could not be fashioned as an innocent endeavor. Casting his eyes on Indian country required Bartram to imagine the landscape as a barren one, even in the face of its obvious cultivation by the Haudenosaunee.
Chapter Two: Not Quite a Systematick Botanist

Here many a tour the lonely tutor takes,
Long known to Solitude, his partner dear,
For rustling woods his empty school forsakes
At morn, still noon, and silent evening clear.
Wild Nature’s scenes amuse his wand’rings here;
The old gray rocks that overhang the stream,
The nodding flow’rs that on their peaks appear
Plants, birds, and insects are feast to him,
Howe’er obscure, deform’d, minute, or huge they seem.


In the spring of 1774, William Bartram made his way into the country of the Muscogee in northern East Florida. Joining a retinue of trading company men who sought to “[delegate] to treat with the Cowkeeper and other chiefs of Cuscowilla, on the subject of re-establishing the trade”, Bartram set his vision on “very curious and beautiful shrubs”, birds, snakes, “visionary scenes” of ponds and lakes, an “absolute crocodile”, sink-hole vortices, fish, tortoises, and “vile dwarf” southern magnolias. Upon their arrival he met with Ahaya, the Cowkeeper, leader of the Cuscowilla who resided in the Alachua Savannah. “The Chief, who is called the Cowkeeper”, Bartram reported was, “attended by several ancient men”. Ahaya himself was a powerful Muscogee leader who had experience negotiating with representatives from Great Britain. In his memoir of the event, Bartram noted,

[Ahaya] was then informed what the nature of my errand was, and he received me with complaisance; giving me unlimited permission to travel over the country for the purpose of collecting flowers, medicinal plants, &c. saluting me by the name of Puc

Puggy or the Flower Hunter, recommending me to the friendship and protection of his people.\textsuperscript{118}

A new name for the Pennsylvania botanist and explorer signified the alien quality of his presence in the borderlands of the American southeast, territory still not fully mapped and understood in colonial British America. Frontiers represented the unknown wonders of the landscape in the imagination of first the colonial and then republican naturalist, “the mind is agitated and bewildered, at being thus, as it were, placed on the borders of a new world!”\textsuperscript{119}

Populated by the Muscogee and Seminole, runaway slave communities, and British outposts, the backcountry of East Florida would prove to be a contact zone in which a set of people, ideas, spaces, and languages converged. Two critical registers of Bartram’s \textit{Travels} must be recovered in order to situate his text firmly within the political and scientific contexts of his writing: first, the inventory of his natural history and its impulse to catalog the nature of the southeastern borderlands, and second, the aesthetic and political motifs of his elegiac prose.

Bartram noted the cultural exchange of the southeast in his observations on the Cuscowilla, “The manners and customs of the Alachua, and most of the lower Creeks or Siminoles, appear evidently tinctured with Spanish civilization. Their religious and civil usages manifest a predilection for the Spanish customs.”\textsuperscript{120} In his travels across the southeast, Bartram also met with and visited towns throughout the Cherokee and the Choctaw confederacies. Politically, these populations existed as decentralized autonomous groups of

\textsuperscript{120} Bartram, 186.
people within a broader network, which could be mobilized to act as a singular hegemony through a process of cycling.\textsuperscript{121}

Bartram’s journey into the frontier of the American southeast began in 1773, embarking from Charleston, South Carolina. Sailing onboard the \textit{Charleston Packet}, the earnest traveler began his expedition into “the vegetable kingdom” and Indian country to collect “original or novel productions of nature”.\textsuperscript{122} Production was at the forefront of Bartram’s mind; he used the word in some variation – natural, animal, vegetable, novel, native, useful, remarkable, marine, curious, - forty nine times throughout the text. Surveying this assemblage of productions provides access to one channel and one objective of Bartram’s voyage: to assess the economic, political, and environmental potential of the southeastern lands. Bartram did not merely “discover” these productions. He observed the uses of plants as pharmaceuticals entirely from indigenous Americans whose pharmacology included thousands of years of medical and economic botany.\textsuperscript{123} For instance, Bartram observed native polities in Carolina using what they would have called man-root or man-of-the-earth for its “dissolvent and diuretant powers” as a “remedy for nephritic complaints”. In the \textit{Travels} he recorded the Linnaean name of the plant, \textit{Ipomoea pandurata}, which is also known as wild potato vine. Shifting plant names not only signified their ability to cross cultures, but also their transformation from a traditionally sacred status within Native American polities to a newly reduced status as commodities within a botanical marketplace, which valued utility or

\textsuperscript{121} Patricia Galloway, \textit{Choctaw Genesis: 1500-1700}, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).
\textsuperscript{122} Bartram, Chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{123} Daniel F. Austin, \textit{Florida Ethnobotany}, (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2004). Austin, a professor of botany at the University of Arizona, has compiled this immensely useful ethnobotany which includes indigenous medical knowledge from Florida and a number of southeastern Native polities.
novelty. Bartram also observed Muscogee artisans using what they called *tale’wa*, a root used for dying textiles red. A sampling of the medical plants which Bartram “discovered” includes *Lagenaria*, a gourd plant used for preparing a medical tea, *Liquidambar styradflua*, a black gum resin used to prepare a salve for treating wounds, *Mitchella repens*, a herb which can be prepared into a tea to treat pain, fevers, and menstrual pains, and Red bay which the Muscogee called *eto mico*, which was used variously as an analgesic, an emetic, an abortifacient, a diuretic, and a laxative.

Notes on the medicinal qualities of each plant were likely included in Bartram’s shipments across the Atlantic to his patron John Fothergill. What was obscured in those shipments, however, was an entire history of indigenous medicine, a pharmacosm which encapsulated not only the systematic and empirical study of plants made by indigenous physicians, but also a cosmology which explained the intensive connection between man and nature in the Muscogee imaginary. Perhaps the most striking episode that telescopes this aspect of Bartram’s Travels would be his witnessing of a Muscogee black drink ceremony. In the last year of his travels, 1777, Bartram observed an assembly of “aged chiefs and warriors” at Ottasse, a Muscogee town near the Tallapoosa river, “each having very large conch shells of black drink”. These headmen proceeded to ritually consume the black drink before their leader, while simultaneously a spiral circle of dry cane burned. Bartram noted

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125 Austin, 176-871.
that they exuded a “religious awe”, but what he could not have known is the environmental and theological context of this ceremony. Black drink rituals signified a purification of the individual and a strengthening of the social ties of mutual responsibilities and obligations to the entire community.\footnote{127} A number of scholars have made apologies for Bartram and have casted him as a quixotic foreseer of the American empire, namely John Seelye and Pramod Mishra.\footnote{128} However, that is not the argument made here. William Bartram was not an innocent witness to the continual colonial expansion of North America; conversely, he was complicit, even if unconsciously, in the broader colonizing program of both the British Empire (at the time of his travels) and the American nation (at the time of his publishing).

Accenting this line of analysis to a set of factors germane to Bartram’s *Travels* will elucidate this argument: the patronage of Fothergill that he relied on and the nonlinear route of his collecting voyage; the process of the text’s publication, advertisement, and its intendant audience; the conventions of producing useful knowledge, a critical idiom of the colonial and early republic periods which corresponds to a standard of natural history praxis; the number of coetaneous natural history tours and their political contexts; the cultural and intellectual site of science in the formation of the state; the networks of circulation and vectors of mobility by which specimens trafficked in the Atlantic World via Bartram; the oblique entrance of the *Travels* into the discourse of the environmental affect in early America; the


unconscious imperial rhetoric of the text; and finally, how collecting and authorship mutually determined the object of Bartram’s gaze and his sense of his own role as an observer and a writer of natural history.

**Travels**

Spanning four years, the expedition took the naturalist through the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida, and swaths of the western frontier before returning to Philadelphia in 1777. Bartram did not travel in a linear circuit, but rather made episodic excursions from either trading posts or the houses in which he sojourned. Bartram’s travels were endowed under the patronage of the wealthy English Quaker physician and botanist Dr. John Fothergill who commissioned the expedition in 1772 and paid 50 pounds annually. His mission was to collect and ship plant seeds and specimens, which were sent off to London, and to draw sketches of curious flora and fauna. Bulbous roots, counseled Fothergill, could be dried in shade and wrapped in paper or sand; acorns and fruit kernels were best preserved in moss. Fothergill was an associate of Peter Collinson, another London naturalist and Fellow of the Royal Society and the Medical Society of London. In addition, Fothergill was a corresponding member of the Royal Medical Society of Paris and the American Philosophical Society, positioning himself to be *au courant* to the palaver of the trans-Atlantic republic of letters. Collinson had supported Bartram’s career as a naturalist since

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1768 when he secured for him a commission from the Duchess of Portland to sketch all American marine shells for £21.\textsuperscript{131} Upon Collinson’s recommendation that his colleague examine the young Bartram’s illustrations of plants, Fothergill offered his wealth and patronage to the colonial botanist in return for the fruit of his further herborizations. Fothergill admonished the young naturalist to heed not only the professional intent of this task, but also the moral profit of such an endeavor,

\begin{quotation}
In studying nature, forget not its author. Study to be grateful to that hand which has endowed thee with a capacity to distinguish thy self as an artist. Avoid useless, or improper company. Be much alone, and learn to trust in the help and protection of him, who has formed us and everything.\textsuperscript{132}
\end{quotation}

Lionel Chalmers, a Charleston physician and botanist, would act as a go-between for Fothergill by sending Bartram’s collected specimens across the Atlantic to London.\textsuperscript{133} Chalmers was the son-in-law of the lady naturalist Martha Logan and an associate of Alexander Garden. Known for his climatological medical text, \textit{An Account of the Weather and Diseases of South Carolina} (1776, two volumes), Chalmers was an established and credible plant broker. Fothergill warned Chalmers that the young naturalist could prove to be a tardy and distracted associate,


\textsuperscript{132} Fothergill, 86.

He is not quite a systemick botanist. He knows plants and draws prettily. I received a letter from him this summer from Charles town, offering his services to me, in a Botanical journey to the Florida’s.134

Fothergill confirmed his patronage to William to his father John Bartram in a letter that was sent the same year as letters were sent to William and Chalmers. In that letter he also offered to purchase ferns and the seeds of the Tetraganotheca plant, a genus of the daisy family, from John Bartram Jr., who was now directing the family garden in Philadelphia. Contact between the parties involved in this exchange was infrequent but steady. An abiding interest in pharmaceutical plants, due to his studies in materia medica at the University of Edinburgh, kept Fothergill’s interest in the Bartram Garden. In September of 1773, Fothergill wrote to William reminding him not to exhaust himself trying to make a complete natural history of each locale he toured but to only prospect for plants Fothergill would find curious and potentially profitable,

I do not want every little diminute plant that grows; drawings of Such would be sufficient. But plants remarkable for their beauty, fragrance, singularity of appearance or known usefullness, I should be glad to possess.135

Fothergill was often frustrated with the disjointed jaunts of his American agent; in a 1775 letter to Chalmers, Fothergill complained, “I could wish Will Bartram would confine

his rambles within narrower bounds.” Chalmers expressed a mutual concern for the dilatory nature of Bartram’s contact with his benefactor in a 1774 letter in which he related that he had, “feared the Creeks must have caught you, in some of your peregrinations” due to the absence of correspondence.

Once the boxes reached Fothergill at London they could circulate to any number of destinations including his private botanical garden at his estate in Upton; to his protégé John Coakley Lettsome, the founder of the Medical Society of London and a student of natural history at Leyden University; or to the naturalist and scientific promoter Joseph Banks. Banks accompanied Captain James Cook on his 1768 voyage to the Pacific alongside Fothergill’s other most notable envoy, the illustrator-naturalist Sydney Parkinson.

Parkinson’s posthumously published *A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas* 1773, provides a germane comparison to Bartram’s *Travels*. Like Bartram, Parkinson noted indigenous politics, language, religion, and culture alongside observations on the flora, fauna, geology, and the “romantic” and “picturesque” vistas of the South Seas. Lettsome maintained ties across the Atlantic with Benjamin Franklin, and his distant relative William Thornton, the physician and polymath who would eventually design the United States Capitol. From

139 Sir St. Clair Thomson, *John Coakley Lettsom and the Foundation of the Medical Society*. (London: Harrison and Sons, 1918); Gordon Brown, *Incidental Architect: William Thornton and the Cultural Life of Early Washington D.C. 1794-1828*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009); Fothergill’s garden at Upton contained plants from territories explored by British merchants and naval missions including China. From the biography of Fothergill published after his death, Lettsome reported that he was, “Intent… to promote so many articles of
Banks’ intellectual hubs based out of his home at 32 Soho Square, The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and the Royal Society, the plants and drawings could have circulated as far north as The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences at Stockholm, and may have eventually found their way back across the Atlantic to the museum of the American Philosophical Society. In 1774 Fothergill contacted Bartram with a proposal from Banks to send dried specimens of flowering plants and fruit bearing trees at the rate of “1 shilling or 5lb a hundred”. Bartram replied the next year that the proposal “cannot be done with tolerable Conveniency for Less than £100. a Year.” Bartram himself forwarded plants collected from the expedition upon his return to Robert Barclay, a Philadelphia brewer and friend of Fothergill; to the younger Carl von Linne at Uppsala (1741-83); and to his neighbor the physician and botanist Benjamin Smith Barton.

Given this extensive traffic of plants across the Atlantic to Europe, and Bartram’s own erasure of native and African figures in his *Travels*, this labor must be read within the register of a transnational circum-Atlantic history of the commodity exchange of scientific products (specimens) and the consumption of travelogues for their learned audiences. Bartram’s enterprise must be situated on the one hand as an undertaking embedded within the

commerce, manufacture, and convenience, he could not lose sight of those departments of natural history, which were immediately connected with medicine.” John Coakley Lettsom, *The Works of John Fothergill, M.D.* (London: Charles Dilly, 1784).


co-production of science and empire-building in its objective to catalogue the various productions of the southeastern lands, and on the other as a literary narrative which was organized to project an image of the southeast as a harmonious garden which captured the quintessence of the emerging relationship between the American nation and the nature of America. Examining these lines of thought will reveal not only the politics of science in the early republic but also the uses of invoking and imagining Nature.

**Publishing**

For a colonial American far from the European metropole of London, writing a natural history in belletristic prose was an effective mode of establishing scientific and aesthetic credentials.\(^{143}\) In the proposal for the publication of the text, the publisher Enoch Story described the *Travels* for would-be subscribers,

> WHILST the study of NATURAL HISTORY is cultivated throughout every part of Europe, with that laudable ardor which distinguishes the philosophers of the present age of scientific enquiry; and whilst the objects of this study are of the most interesting nature, it is not a little remarkable, that the productions of our own country (which are so numerous and various) should hitherto have been so little attended to...It is but lately that AMERICA has become an independent country, and that she has taken her station as such among the Empires of the Globe...and from that important Æra we may doubtless expect important discoveries in the Arts and Sciences.\(^{144}\)

What became the complete account of the expedition, *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, the Cherokee Country, the Extensive*

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Territories of the Muscogulges or Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Chactaws.

Containing an Account of the Soil and Natural Productions of Those Regions; Together with Observations on the Manners of the Indians, was composed throughout the 1780s but not successfully published until 1791 by the Philadelphia firm James and Johnson, and in 1792 in London by Joseph Johnson. 145 An avant-text, “Travels in Georgia and Florida, 1773-74, A Report to Dr. John Fothergill”, was penned by the botanist as a chronicle of his progress to his patron. Entries from a journal diary were transformed into a proto-narrative in that account, but lacked the rhetorical image of the lone voyager boldly scouring the vegetation of the outlands. 146 Periodic exclamations, “What a beautiful scenery is Vegitable Nature!” are interspersed throughout the “Report” and it is primarily written in the present voice. 147 Manuscripts of the Travels circulated before its eventual publication. Benjamin Smith Barton tried to publish the journal in Europe in 1783, while Story, publisher of the Pennsylvania Mercury, unsuccessfully tried to market the book in 1786 in spite of his affirmation of the immensely stimulating impression the text had on its readers. 148

Story envisioned the book would, “tend to enlarge the bounds of NATURAL HISTORY in general, but of BOTANY in particular.” The book could be picked up by subscribers at a number of booksellers in Philadelphia including William Prichard and Joseph

145 Cox, 51.
Cruikshank’s store on Market Street, at the store of Thomas Dobson and “M. Poyntell” on Second Street, at Mr. Carey’s “Printing-Office in Front-street”, and at Story’s own “Printing-Office on the East-side of Second (between Chestnut and Walnut-streets)”. In 1792 a copy of Bartram’s *Voyage dans le parties sud de L’Amerique, Septentrionale* was published by a P.V. Benoist and could be purchased in Paris at the Chez Maradan along the rue Pavee Andre-des-Ares. Across the English Channel copies of the *Travels* could be bought in London from the publisher “J. Johnson, in St. Paul’s Church-Yard”. A year later readers in Dublin could shop for pirated copies of the English edition sold by “J. Moore, W. Jones, and R. McAllister”.

The book not only widened scientific knowledge of the American landscape but also a kind of natural divine revelation. Book one of the manuscript for *Travels* consists of a verbose plea to the “Universal Father” that,

> We by the excellency of our Economy and government, not only amongst ourselves but also in our Demeanor toward all creatures put under our charge we may be worthy of being guides and examples to them, And empress on their understandings a just sense of the dignity and superiority of our high and distinguished Station here on earth!  

Fourteen years had passed since the traveler’s return and the account was made public. Colonies had been transformed into a singular republic, faced with the challenge to conceive a nation. Subscribers who paid to own a copy of the travelogue included figures of the American Revolutionary War such as George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas

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Jefferson. Inscribed at the outset of the text was a dedication to “His Excellency, Thomas Mifflin, Esq., President of the State of Pennsylvania.” The significant gap of time between the journey’s end and publication brings to mind a set of questions regarding Bartram’s text and its relationship to his voyage. The Travels were published in a period of American pastoral literature that was not crowded by novels and poetry, but rather travel writing, natural history, and prose. It was as if, as the literary critic Pamela Regis has argued, American novels could not come into existence until the country itself was written into existence. Moreover, because of its position in such a transformational period in American science and literature the questions of the rhetorical dimensions unique to Bartram’s prose are pertinent. Natural history was founded on the practices of observation and collection, as a genre its conventions did not include the kinds of florid details and moral reflections included in the Travels. An objective, analytical natural history was not an expected media for expressing grief over hunted animals (for example, Bartram wept openly after having witnessed a hunter shoot a black bear). The Travels represent multiple expositions of the American landscape: natural, republican, sacred, and faced with the challenge of either colonial’s assimilation of or coexistence with Native polities. The Travels literally illustrated indigenous peoples as objects of Nature itself from its opening pages; the frontispiece of the text was a copper plate engraving of “Mico-Chlucco the Long Warrior, or King of the Siminoles”. Long Warrior, a Seminole leader, is portrayed with all the grandeur of traditional

151 Regis, 3.
152 Regis, 6.
regalia including silver gorgets, a plumed head-dress, and traditional costume and weaponry. Bartram described Long Warrior in chapter nine of the *Travels* as “a king and a very cunning man… acknowledged by the Indians to have communion with powerful invisible beings or spirits, and on that account esteemed worthy of homage and great respect.”153

**Producing Useful Knowledge**

Writing a natural history of the American southeast, Bartram was engaged in shaping the imagined boundaries and image of the nation. Useful Knowledge, an epistemological category hailed by scientist-engineers including Benjamin Franklin and David Rittenhouse under the aegis of the American Philosophical Society, became the rubric under which an era of republican science and technology was explicitly directed by patriotic interests.154 Ambitious to discover “some original productions of nature, which might become useful to society”, Bartram scoured plants with potential medical and pharmaceutical properties. Enumerated throughout the *Travels* are examples of “useful observations”, “useful information”, “useful tribes”, “useful metal”, useful snakes and other animals, proposals for useful calendars of animal migration, “useful as well as curious exoticks”, “useful vegetables”, and “useful science”.

Bartram’s complicity in this project appears clearly in his joining a cadre of agents sent to survey the landscape surrounding Augusta, Georgia, in 1773, after the cession of

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153 Bartram, 257.
Muscogee territory agreed upon by treaty during a congress held between Muscogee and Cherokee representatives and the British Superintendent for Indian Affairs, John Stuart.

The preparatory business of the surveyors being now accomplished, Mr. J. M`Intosh, yet anxious for travelling, and desirous to accompany me on this tour, we joined the caravan, consisting of surveyors, astronomers, artisans, chain-carriers, markers, guides and hunters, besides a very respectable number of gentlemen, who joined us, in order to speculate in the lands, together with ten or twelve Indians, altogether to the number of eighty or ninety men.  

Discovering the nation, by way of projecting a narrative of the richness and expanse of the American wilderness, would prove to be the most useful knowledge of all.

**Natural History & the Early Republic**

Complicating our understanding of Bartram even further is his relationship to major figures of the American Revolutionary War and early republic including Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Rush, Charles Willson Peale, and Thomas Jefferson. William’s father John Bartram had been a close friend of Franklin and a co-founder of the American Philosophical Society. Franklin hoped to inspire rational wonder and amusement in his audiences at his electrical experiments in Philadelphia and shape minds to the attention of the operations of Nature. Peale was something of a socialite and naturalist-patrician; for example when the biogeographer Alexander von Humboldt and his botanical assistant Aime Bonpland visited Philadelphia in 1804, Peale took it upon himself to host one of his Wistar Parties, a soiree of wealthy and prominent citizens, in honor of the German naturalist. In attendance that evening

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155 Bartram, 35.
was William Bartram and his protégé Alexander Wilson. The Philadelphia Museum curated by Peale was the first major institution to graphically render the Linnaean system to an American audience. Jefferson had been a member of the American Philosophical Society, its third president, and had written his own natural history, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1785.

Discursively, the *Notes* and the *Travels* are related texts informed by the racial idioms and climatic degeneracy theory of the French taxonomist and natural philosopher the Comte de Buffon, whose widely read *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière* was published in thirty-six quarto volumes between 1749 to 1788. It was Buffon’s *Histoire naturelle* that introduced the climatic degeneration theory, which posited that environmental conditions effected physical as well as mental degradation on bodies outside of the temperate zone of Europe. Buffon’s ideas would have circulated to Bartram through his father’s network of Linnaean clients and from his fellow colleagues at the American Philosophical Society. It was not until Benjamin Smith Barton gave him a copy of the translated *Histoire naturelle* that he could have a chance to read it in its entirety.

A creole naturalist such as Bartram could be dismissed from the Atlantic scientific community given his state of degeneracy from adapting to the American landscape. Colonial natural history written by creoles sought to transform nature into an asset accessible via economic botany and also into an emblem of natural national or cultural identity. Why then

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would Bartram produce a pastoral travelogue rather than an analytical treatise on the flora and fauna of the southeast? Mark Catesby, an English naturalist, had already traversed this ground from 1731 to 1743 and published his own natural history of the region. His father’s own travelogue, the *Observations* (1751), fell within the analytic tradition of natural history without romantic pastoral sensibilities. Furthermore, John Bartram had already explored the St. John’s River in East Florida in 1765, after receiving the title, and accompanying salary, of the “King’s Botanist to the Floridas” due to Peter Collinson’s repeated solicitation to George III for a pension for the colonial botanist. His father’s diary of that expedition, which William had joined, was published in the second edition of William Stork’s *An Account of East Florida with a Journal, Kept by John Bartram of Philadelphia, Botanist to His Majesty for the Floridas* (1767). The 1765 expedition was a formative one for Bartram; he and his father joined John Stuart and the British representative James Grant at the Congress of Picolata, a political conference between the Muscogee and the British in which the Bartrams witnessed the customs of Muscogee diplomacy including the calumet ceremony.

While not an official agent of the state, perhaps we can consider Bartram as a forerunner, and eventually a conspicuous collaborator, of the kind of Jeffersonian science

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practiced by early republic naturalists.\footnote{164 William was invited to lead the Lewis & Clark expedition by Jefferson but declined due to his age and health. By Jeffersonian science I mean to identify Jefferson’s vision of the mutual interests of the state and scientific organizations in mapping the nation – its people, animals, plants, geography, climate… - in order to increase the stock of useful knowledge and national prestige.} Bartram’s expeditions were coterminous to the exploring careers of John Ledyard and Andre Michaux, and preceded, and arguably served as a model for, the Corps of Discovery expedition led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to the Pacific coast. Ledyard explored virtually the entire Russian Empire from 1787 to 1788 upon a suggestion made by Jefferson who was then ambassador to France.\footnote{165 Edward Gray, "Visions of Another Empire: John Ledyard, an American Traveler across the Russian Empire, 1787-1788." \textit{Journal of the Early Republic} 24, no. 3 (2004): 347-80; Edward Gray, \textit{The Making of John Ledyard: Empire and Ambition in the Life of an Early American Traveler}, (New Haven: Yale University, 2007).} Edward Gray has argued that Ledyard’s explorations were motivated by an inquiry into whether the political and natural geography of Russia could sustain a republican empire such as the one being imagined by American politicians and intelligentsia in the early national period. Michaux served first the French monarchy as a royal botanist and subsequently the American government as an explorer of the western frontier throughout the 1780s.\footnote{166 Gilbert Chinard, "André and François-André Michaux and Their Predecessors. An Essay on Early Botanical Exchanges between America and France." \textit{Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society} 101, no. 4 (1957): 344-61; James Ronda, "‘To Acquire What Knolege You Can’: Thomas Jefferson as Exploration Patron and Planner." \textit{Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society} 150, no. 3 (2006): 409-13; Emma C. Spary, \textit{Utopia's Garden: French Natural History from Old Regime to Revolution}. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.} A natural history of the nation, not the colonies, was necessary to craft a public image of the American pastoral. Writing and drawing the American garden in his \textit{Travels} would undoubtedly inspire his pupil Alexander Wilson to construct a federal image of nature in his \textit{American Ornithology} (1808), his student and great-nephew Thomas Say to write both the \textit{American Entomology} (1824) and \textit{American Conchology} (1830), and his neighbor Charles Willson...
Peale to organize nature, manufactures, and artifacts in his Philadelphia Museum. Wilson, Say, and Peale were exemplary naturalists of the early republic; each imagined Nature to contain a harmonious and orderly plenitude which could be rationally displayed and inspire wonder. Nature, as they imagined it, was not a neutral environment but a generative space, which principally nurtured the order and stability of their republic.

Pastoralism, in a multitude of forms, can be read in each of these works as a common trope of describing an ideal natural and political world. A farm represented a well-ordered land in which men and plants were adapted into a productive rational schema. Farms were spaces of cultivated civilization apart from the unstable and disconnected traffic of merchant commerce. Bartram and his contemporaries rhetorically crafted an image of an American garden, a locus of spatial and rational order that triumphed over wilderness. American nature itself demanded the discipline of the naturalist, in this discourse, because of the degenerating effect of its climate on its inhabitants.

**Science and the Nation**

Given his connection to the leading figures of the early republic scientific community, and his position as a capable and educated botanist, the *Travels* must be situated and read for its political, scientific, and literary content. The 1780s and 1790s were a period of republican celebration in America, in cities such as Philadelphia the Grand Federal Processions were joyously extolling the virtues of “federal mechanics” and the empire of

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liberty.\textsuperscript{168} Natural philosophy offered the racial idioms and classificatory schemas to fundamentally order the world of the settler colonialist and implant himself (and it was often a masculine program) as a native of the land.\textsuperscript{169} Botany was a scientific discourse at the core of this imperial imagination; the relocation of plants signified a power to reorder the world.\textsuperscript{170} Carolus Linnaeus, the Swedish botanist and natural philosopher, joined plant collecting and identification to the destiny of the state in both his \textit{Economy of Nature} (1749) and \textit{Polity of Nature} (1760).\textsuperscript{171} Oeconomia was the name of the Linnaean science of the economy of nature, a schema that mapped out the natural world wholly in relation to the state and its mercantilist network.\textsuperscript{172} Inspired by the Baconian belief in scientific and technological reordering of land and nature and Pettian political economy, the Anglo-American frontier became the subject of a natural management scheme dictated by bioprospecting and nature’s economy.\textsuperscript{173} Bartram’s father trained him in the Linnaean system of classification as a child and it would prove to be a useful worldview for his son in his travels and at home.\textsuperscript{174} Bartram was trained in the logic of the program of bioprospecting from a young age, accompanying

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Rigal} Laura Rigal, ""Raising the Roof": Authors, Spectators and Artisans in the Grand Federal Procession of 1788." \textit{Theatre Journal} 48, no. 3 (1996): 253-277.
\bibitem{Schiebinger2} Schiebinger, 6.
\bibitem{Bacon} Here I am referring to Bacon’s \textit{The New Atlantis}, not the \textit{Novum Organum}. For more on Pettian political economy refer to Ted McCormick, \textit{William Petty: And the Ambitions of Political Arithmetic}, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
\end{thebibliography}
his father to the remote wilds of the Catskill Mountains, New England, the New Jersey Pine Barrens, and East Florida.

Writing in the contact zone, in his encounters with Native polities such as the Muscogee, Bartram’s work served to reflexively contrast an alien “native” identity with a uniquely American one that was intimately defined by its claims to scientific objectivity, European heritage, and an appreciative knowledge of nature’s economy.\(^{175}\) Empire-building, a political category by which to read the *Travels*, often follows this path: the indigenous society is eliminated at the frontier by distant imperial centers acting through numerous agencies and far-flung agents.\(^{176}\) Rhetorically Bartram erases his Native American and enslaved African informants throughout the text to foreground his own authorship. While individuals such as Ahaya are mentioned by name, many of the native, African, and Euroamerican, people who assisted his travels are erased in order to not only establish a singular authorial voice but also to exalt and present a majestic and idyllic representation of Nature. Often throughout the text Bartram refers to unnamed Indian guides who lead him along established trading paths, the only other mention of a guide is God himself. Forests and vast expanses of wilderness would be subjected to rational agricultural and technological practices in the wake of American expansion into the region. Undiscovered hinterlands and countryside become transformed through the adventurous narrative of the text into the ordered terrain of the American garden, a space that was rationally catalogued, mapped, and

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made recognizable alongside its inhabitants. This point may be most clearly rendered in Bartram’s contemplation on the southeast as a theater,

The land rises from the river with sublime magnificence, gradually retreating by flights or steps one behind and above the other, in beautiful theatrical order, each step or terrace holding up a level plain; and as we travel back from the river the steps are higher, and the corresponding levels are more and more expansive; the ascents produce grand high forests, and the plains present to view a delightful varied landscape, consisting of extensive grassy fields, detached groves of high forest trees, and clumps of lower trees, evergreen shrubs and herbage.\footnote{Bartram, 393.}

Wielding this trope of the world as a stage upon which actors play their parts with precision and grandeur, Bartram coupled the seventeenth century baroque notion of the \textit{theatrum mundi} to the emergence of the American republican empire.\footnote{For a sense of what I mean by \textit{theatrum mundi} see John Hunt \textit{Garden and Grove: The Italian Renaissance Garden in the English Imagination 1600-1750}, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986).} Further on in the \textit{Travels} Bartram refers to the “theatrical ascents” and the “grand sublime” of the Mississippi river. Moreover, Bartram describes phenomena in nature as “tragical scenes”, “scenes of power and grandeur”, “animated scenes”, “luxurious scenes of splendor”, a “scene of primitive simplicity”, the “mutable scenes of human events on the stream of life”, “enchanting scenes”, a “shocking scene”, a “visionary scene”, “new and unthought of scenes of pleasure and disgust”, and the “Indian scene of primitive unmodified nature”. For each scene of wild nature there is an equivalent contrast of stately plantations Bartram visited on his tour each complemented by their “spacious”, “open”, “blissful”, and well-ordered gardens.
**Circulating Nature**

By the eighteenth century, Nature became a readable entity, whose material history could be interpreted for its divine, moral, and economic lessons.\(^{179}\) William Bartram’s studies of the landscape of the American southeast were embedded within the problematic enterprise of natural history in the early republic that was joined to national interests. War with England drew to a close, but the Revolution, in the words of the physician and natural philosopher Benjamin Rush, was incomplete, “It remains yet to establish and perfect our new form of government, and to prepare the principles, morals, and manners of our citizens for these forms of government after they are established and brought to perfection.”\(^{180}\) Perfect government was also absent in the domain of American natural history as competing systems of taxonomy and kinds of natural history writing jostled for ascendancy. In his meditations on education in the early republic, Rush advocated fashioning Americans as self-effacing “republican machines” whose desire to serve the republic outweighed any personal quest for renown.\(^{181}\)

Moreover, Bartram’s Garden in Kingsessing became an informal salon and touring destination for a group of American savants and foreign cognoscenti in the new nation including Manasseh Cutler, the clergyman botanist; Gerardus Clarkson, a faculty member of the College of Physicians in Philadelphia; Alexander Martin, the Governor of North

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Carolina; dozens of members of the Federal Convention; George Washington; Johann David Schöpf, the Brunswick army surgeon and naturalist-traveler who published his natural history of North America as *Travels in the Confederation* (1783); Johann Heinrich Ferdinand von Autenrieth, the German physician; Andre Michaux, the French botanist-explorer; Thomas Nuttall, the English botanist, traveler, and zoologist; Frederick Pursh, the German-American botanist and director-gardener of The Woodlands, William Hamilton’s estate; Sir Augustus John Foster, the secretary of the British legation who in 1805 ordered plants from the Garden to be sent to Lord Liverpool, Lord Aberdeen, and a host of other English noble collectors; Duke François Alexandre Frédéric de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt the French reformer who was apprised of the gardens plants by a catalog sent by John Hector St. John de Crevecoeur; and a number of other elite nobles and middle class industrialists from Poland, Italy, and England. European collectors including the Abbe Nolin, garden advisor to Louis XV and Louis XVI, and Anne-Catherine de Ligniville Helvetius, a regular salon host to French and American philosophes, could contact Bartram directly for plants or order them through catalogs of his collection like the one prepared by Benjamin Franklin in 1784. This network of buyers and visitors gives a sense of the itinerary of the plants Bartram gathered in his travels and alludes to the massive grid of trade in plants contingent on his labor.

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Naturalists from the educated middle class wrote to each other in a vibrant set of exclusive societies to discuss the state of order in the consensus among naturalists. Andrew Lewis identifies natural history in the early republic, “as an ill-defined and capacious set of practices that resists easy delineation; an fragmented cluster of activities pursued by ordinary folks as well as those who moderns would regard as putative scientists, many if not most of whom slipped easily and effortlessly from one discipline to another.” The bureaucratic apparatus of metropolitan administrators and itinerant collectors established by the botanist-administrator Joseph Banks reigned as paragon of scientific practice into the early nineteenth century. As a naturalist, Bartram occupied both the world of the democracy of facts and the empire of reason: he felt at ease among the rural farming class of the backcountry, but could perform with genteel sociability and cosmopolitanism among his fellow members of the American Philosophical Society. Government officials in the nascent republic sought naturalists as surveyors and natural resource assayers tasked with charting not only the borders of the nation but its latent agricultural potential. Integral to their exchange at the various society meetings was the question of indigenous American assimilation. Bartram at times countered or sustained the ideology of his father who saw Native Americans as fundamentally warlike and savage degenerates, thinking embedded in the Linnaean racial epistemology, and instead compared them to the ancestors of European heritage,

Thus we see that war or the exercise of arms originates from the same motives, and operates in the spirits of the wild red men of America, as it formerly did with the renowned Greeks and Romans or modern civilized nations, and not from a ferocious, capricious desire of shedding human blood as carnivorous savages; neither does the eager avarice of plunder stimulate them to acts of madness and cruelty, that being a trifling object in their estimation, a duffield blanket, a polished rifle gun, or embroidered mantle; no, their martial prowess and objects of desire and ambition proceed from greater principles and more magnanimous intentions, even that of reuniting all nations and languages under one universal confederacy or commonwealth.  

Even though he adopted more complex views than those of his father, Bartram was deeply embedded in the taxonomic style of natural history practiced by his contemporaries such as Thomas Jefferson and Charles Willson Peale. Christopher Looby has argued that the early republic period marked an intellectual turn in American history characterized by intense interest and anxiety over taxonomy. Naming nature, a point made by Benjamin Rush in his views on education, was the divine duty and province of Adam in the Garden of Eden and in studying nature “we imitate the conduct of the first teacher of man”. Looby argues that taxonomy linked natural history and republicanism in a powerfully synchronic mode, “What Rush did not explicitly say – but what was implicit in his discussion…was that knowledge of the names and qualities of the beings in nature was not only the basis of the American’s control over his environment, but might also be, in some sense, the foundation of the collective life of the new nation of which he was a member.” In their surveys of the landscape, naturalists not only transformed land into property but also knowledge of the land.

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186 Bartram, 392-393.
into a kind of intellectual property. Bartram’s taxonomic style accentuates this trope; he recounts flowers as “communities, “nations of fish”, and butterflies as “kindred tribes”, indicating his belief in the appearance of rational organization of nature while simultaneously mapping natural attributes on to human society.\textsuperscript{188} Birds, for instance, live in a republic in Bartram’s \textit{Travels},

Birds are in general social and benevolent creatures; intelligent, ingenious, volatile, active beings; and this order of animal creation consists of various nations, bands or tribes, as may be observed from their different structure, manners and languages or voice, as each nation, though subdivided into many different tribes, retain their general form or structure, a similarity of customs, and a sort of dialect or language, particular to that nation or genus from which they seem to have descended or separated: what I mean by a language in birds, is the common notes or speech, that they use when employed in feeding themselves and their young, calling on one another, as well as their menaces against their enemy\textsuperscript{189}

Animals naturally seem to exist in nations in Bartram’s natural history; what must be emphasized however is that this representation is homologous to Bartram’s descriptions of indigenous polities. Cane and cypress trees live in tribes; juniper and mimosa belong to “ herbacious and suffruticose tribes”; shellflowers (\textit{Pistia stratiotes}), green frogs, turkeys, and strawberries live in “communities”; and equally so the Seminole, Muscogee, Cherokee, and Choctaws live as nations, tribes, and bands. An adumbrated illustration of this naturalizing tendency comes from Bartram’s expedition through the Alachua Savannah, At the same time are seen innumerable droves of cattle; the lordly bull, lowing cow and sleek capricious heifer. The hills and groves re-echo their cheerful, social voices. Herds of sprightly deer, squadrons of the beautiful, fleet Siminole horse, flocks of turkeys,

\textsuperscript{188} Looby, 259. 
\textsuperscript{189} Bartram, xxxi.
civilized communities of the sonorous, watchful crane, mix together, appearing happy and contented in the enjoyment of peace, 'till disturbed and affrighted by the warrior man. Behold yonder, coming upon them through the darkened groves, sneakingly and unawares, the naked red warrior, invading the Elysian fields and green plains of Alachua.  

**Degeneracy**

Thomas Jefferson, in his debates with the Comte de Buffon over the existence of the American Mammoth, studied nature in order to prove the complementary permanence of American natural history and the potential for permanence, and greatness, of the American nation. Weather diaries, comparisons of European and Native American crania, and the vast array of American animals, fill the pages of the *Notes on the State of Virginia* in what is a volume length treatise against the degeneracy theory. Charles Willson Peale, who successfully excavated the remains of a mammoth in Newburgh, New York, 1800, positioned the fossils in his Philadelphia Museum as a simultaneous emblem of a patriotic American nature and an object heralded under the sign of Linnaean science and Enlightenment order. Peale, by glorifying the mammoth in his museum, visually refuted Buffon’s degeneracy theory. Paul Semonin has commented on Peale and other naturalists’ engagement with Buffon, noting, “In effect, Buffon’s theory was an attack on the manhood of the American

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190 Bartram, 187.
193 Looby, 267.
patriots and was particularly galling to those republicans who saw themselves as the Anglo-
Saxon masters of a future empire extending across the continent to the Pacific Ocean.”\(^\text{194}\)

Only a powerful and potent Nature would sustain a powerful nation.

In Europe Buffon’s ideas were advanced by two other figures whom Jefferson was in
dialogue with: the lettered French writer the Abbé Raynal, who published *L'Histoire
philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux
Indes* (1770), and the Dutch geographer and courtier Cornelius de Pauw who published
*Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains, ou Mémoires intéressants pour servir à
l'Histoire de l'Épèce Humaine. Avec une Dissertation sur l’Amérique & les Américains*
(1771). In the *Recherches* de Pauw observed,

> The Europeans who pass into America degenerate, as do the animals; a proof that the
climate is unfavourable to the improvement of either man or animal. The Creoles,
descending from Europeans and born in America, though educated in the universities of
Mexico, of Lima, and College de Santa Fe, have never produced a single book. This
degradation of humanity must be imputed to the vitiated qualities of the air stagnated in
their immense forests, and corrupted by noxious vapours from standing waters and
uncultivated grounds.\(^\text{195}\)

De Pauw’s words stung viciously in the mind of a naturalist in the early republic.

While Bartram certainly was embedded in this national debate against the degeneracy theory
waged by Jefferson and Peale, his lyrical prose seems to suggest a Romantic anxiety about
the possibility, or impossibility, of the American nation to harmoniously exist with either an

\(^{194}\) Paul Semonin, *American Monster: How the Nation's First Prehistoric Creature Became a Symbol of
\(^{195}\) Cornelius de Pauw, *Selections from Les Recherches Philosophiques Sur Les Americains of M. Pauw*. N.p.:
Gale ECCO Print Editions, 1771.
idealized Nature or the Native American polities. Assimilation had been a long hoped for political resolution held by naturalists since John Lawson. In a letter from 1807, Thomas Jefferson expressed his vision for planting the Native Americans into the garden, “They are our brethren and our neighbors; they may be valuable friends, and troublesome enemies. Both duty and interest then enjoin, that we should extend to them the blessings of civilized life, & prepare their minds for becoming useful members of the American family.”196 Bartram joined this enterprise in his cataloging of America’s natural history that extended its reach from plants and rocks to Native governments and culture. Race itself, the premier social construction of English colonialism and empire, became simultaneously a discourse of visibility and erasure in Jefferson’s discussion of European, native, and African bodies in the Notes on the State of Virginia. For instance, African slaves figure in the Travels as nameless “invisible technicians” who navigate riverboats to ensure Bartram’s passage into the frontier.197

**Anti-conquest**

Solitude in the wilderness fashioned an image of the traveler as heroic naturalist-explorer risking his life; for days at a time William often found himself “Abandoned...all alone in a wild Indian country, a thousand miles from my native land, and a vast distance

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from any settlements of white people.” Travel writing is perhaps the most imperial discourse in its implicit distinction of those who belong to the center and those who are encountered on the margins, the alien people of foreign outlands. Travelers envisage new landscapes with the imagined schemas of their homeland in mind. Naturalizing conquest could take the form of naturalist rhetoric. In a letter to Archibald Stuart, Thomas Jefferson wrote, “Our confederacy must be viewed as the nest from which all America, North and South, is to be peopled.” Graphically, the nest of America and its ancient past was rendered by exhibiting native artifacts in Jefferson’s Indian Hall, replicating the classical epistemology of rational order and naturalized conquest. Mary Pratt uses the concept of anti-conquest to delimit the rhetorical strategies which explorers and travelers make use of to signify their innocent intentions, whether consciously or not. The textual protagonist of this discourse is the “seeing-man” whose vision and intellect rationally orders the phenomenological world into a usable schema, which is both useful and appeals to the sensibilities of the traveler and their audience. Thomas Jefferson masterfully demonstrated this style in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* in which he presents himself as a self-effacing naturalist who simultaneously erased and joined political history to natural history in order to foreground an image of the American natural sublime. Wandering in its prose, the *Travels*
describes Bartram’s journey as a series of seemingly spontaneous “peregrinations.”

“The attention of a traveler” the author began “should be particularly turned, in the first place, to the various works of Nature, to mark the distinctions of the climates he may explore, and to offer such useful observations on the different productions as may occur.”

Nature reflected a divine artistry which could be located in the both the physical environment and the primitive indigenous polities of the southeast,

These floating islands present a very entertaining prospect; for although we behold an assemblage of the primary productions of nature only, yet the imagination seems to remain in suspense and doubt; as in order to enliven the delusion and form a most picturesque appearance, we see not only flowery plants, clumps of shrubs, old weather-beaten trees, hoary and barbed, with the long moss waving from their snags, but we also see them compleatly inhabited, and alive, with crocodiles, serpents, frogs, otters, crows, herons, curlews, jackdaws, &c. there seems, in short, nothing wanted but the appearance of a wigwam and a canoe to complete the scene.

Natural evidence of design, both sacred and economic, could be conveyed using the metaphor of the machine, a trope descending from the mechanical philosophy of the seventeenth century. Bartram perceived all life to be “inimitable machines” crafted by God. One dawn morning he noted in his journal,

At the return of the morning, by the powerful influence of light; the pulse of nature becomes more active, and the universal vibration of life insensibly and irresistible moves the wondrous machine: how cheerful and gay all nature appears.

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203 Hallock, 119.
204 Bartram, xiii.
205 Bartram, 89.
206 It is not surprising that Bartram would have conceived of the world as a machine, his neighbor and colleague David Rittenhouse, perhaps the most famous ‘republican machine’, constructed an acclaimed orrery as a spectacular gift for Queen’s College.
207 Bartram, 179.
Bartram led his reader into the curious depths of not only the world as a theater or as a machine but also as “the vegetable world” created by God,

This world, as a glorious apartment of the boundless palace of the sovereign Creator, is furnished with an infinite variety of animated scenes, inexpressibly beautiful and pleasing, equally free to the inspection and enjoyment of all his creatures. Perhaps there is not any part of creation, within the reach of our observations, which exhibits a more glorious display of the Almighty hand, than the vegetable world.²⁰⁸

Visible to the eye and intelligible to the mind, plants are transformed into signs of divine order and excellence in the Travels: magnolias instruct us in magnificence and dignity, the live-oak with “awful veneration”, the papaya with gracefulness, the lily with pride and vanity, and the azalea with mirth and joy.²⁰⁹ Animals also represent the wonderful power and manifest wisdom of the divine: whales, alligators, lions, mammoths, all created for some purpose such as human survival or to be icons of the Creator’s aesthetic.²¹⁰ Naturalizing the objects of scientific inquiry and imperial expansion was a concurrent literary theme across the Atlantic; in the same year the Travels were published Erasmus Darwin’s The Botanic Garden made its debut among English and American poetry circles.²¹¹

Self-effacement was the protocol of gentlemanly discourse set out by Benjamin Franklin, which Bartram and his contemporaries emulated. Authorship in the American Enlightenment required objectivity that could only be gained through erasing, not entirely,
one’s self from a scientific treatise or text. Visibility was the physical and phenomenological quality, which established an object’s existence in the Lockean epistemology Bartram was an intellectual heir to. Plants, people, and animals were made visible in the text through engravings of exemplary specimens, indigenous Americans, and through maps of spaces such as the Alachua Savannah. Michael Gaudio has contended that the natural history the Enlightenment virtuosi were deeply invested in was embedded within the phenomenology of visibility and the concomitant political ramifications of visible objects being self-evident. Gaudio locates the emergence of the ontology of self-evident objects in the work of the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, namely Thomas Reid, and argues that Bartram’s catalog of the natural history of the southeast was a corollary to the political language of the Continental Congress. Gaudio argues for the relationship of naturalists to politicians; “In America Reid’s self-evident truths were seized upon by Thomas Jefferson as the building blocks not for a systematic philosophy but for a republic. Writing the Declaration of Independence as Bartram was practicing natural history in the southern colonies, Jefferson drew directly on the social possibilities inherent in commonsense philosophy.” Jefferson’s republican nature was required to be a visible and legible one in which subjects could be rationally ordered. A heroic exemplar of the naturalist-technician in Jefferson’s republican nature is Charles Willson Peale. Excavating the remains of a

212 Delbourgo, 14-50; Lorraine Daston, and Peter Galison, Objectivity, (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2007).
214 Gaudio, 8.
mastodon in Newburgh, New York in 1800, was an enterprise which combined the art of natural history to the art of engineering in a way which emphasized American capability and proficiency alongside the quest to make nature visible.\textsuperscript{216} Moreover, Gaudio reads the *Travels* as an inversion of Jefferson and Peale’s optimism concerning visibility; Bartram describes numerous caverns, sinkholes, and Alligator habitats as foreboding sites of terror and the strange. This reading is nonetheless myopic, Bartram’s travelogue sought to render visible the landscape of the southeast with clarity in order for it to be conceived as a natural extension of the nation.\textsuperscript{217}

**Collecting and Authorship**

Authorship has emerged as a recent discourse within the historiography of science and technology because of the problems it poses in discerning how scientists and engineers fashion public and private identities to secure credibility and authority.\textsuperscript{218} Pamela O. Long has argued that authorship itself is a historically contingent category, which can give new meaning to texts by understanding the perceived and received role of the author.\textsuperscript{219} For naturalists in colonial America and the early republic authorship hinged on first the collection of observations and specimens and second the representation of the elements collected as complementary modules of a total aggregate. Bartram organized the plants, animals, and

\textsuperscript{216} Gaudio, 10.

\textsuperscript{217} Gaudio, 9-16.


people of the southeast he encountered as productions under the rubric of useful knowledge, which could be ordered into natural taxonomies and located in the scenes of nature, the machinic theater of the world, and the apartment of God whom ordained his trek.

Furthermore, the *Travels* manipulated this mesh of ideas and images into a mnemonic by which the environment and indigenous societies could be understood by Bartram’s audience.

This pursuit of authority was coterminous to the broader emergence of national identity and sovereignty. Racial patrimony, established usufructuary rights to the land, and the known natural boundaries and qualities of the environment it occupied defined a nation in the eighteenth century. Continental political geography could be employed as an exercise of simultaneously knowing the nation and the environment. James Drake has argued that colonial and early republic Americans began, through natural history, to understand themselves as people of the North American continent, and constructed an imagined affinity with Native Americans to a establish a seemingly transcendental heritage to the land.

Continental authorship is then one of the designations appropriate in characterizing William Bartram’s *Travels*. As he sought to describe the trails and people of the southeast, while collecting the natural productions he transformed them into mobile trans-Atlantic commodities.

Natural history operated upon established protocols of authorship by which naturalists strategically overemphasized their own authorial voices by erasing the sources of their

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Christopher Iannini has proposed that Bartram’s *Travels*, particularly its artwork, represents for its readers a catalog of both wonderful and profitable species-emblems of nature, which graphically replaced the older degeneracy theory with an image of sacred nature, licensing readers of natural history to imagine their right to steward the land and improve it. A number of scholars have argued that this was not Bartram’s image of the American landscape, but rather that his was a more nihilistic vision. Bartram observed moments of natural destruction in his writing; he saw the inevitable march toward death in alligator sinkholes, pitcher plants, wasp nests, and indigenous conflicts (the Seminoles were after all the “sons of Mars” pitted against the “intrepid” Choctaws in chapter nine). Douglas Anderson has observed that Bartram’s dark imagination was plagued by a sense of decay in all things, “The wisdom of the Creator expresses itself here not in an a Edenic peace – which Bartram dismisses as a ‘mere representation’ – but in a balance of terror that Bartram presents as a kind of dark parody of Madison’s argument in Federalist 10 that republican ‘representation’ functions as a restraint on the bitterness of faction.” Philip Terrie has affirmed this thesis by further arguing that Bartram’s oscillation between images of the sublime and images of horror suggest his own pessimistic view of human nature.

Degeneracy, for Bartram, may not have been bodily, as racial theorists would have, but rather

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a physical certainty binding the fate of man. Bartram’s vision of the American landscape was hardly serene, but nonetheless it was a projection of order and a new space: scientifically classifiable, divinely ordained, and sublimely rewarding. These scholars, unlike Iannini, ignore the totality of the text, which is largely bound up with imagining the environment of the southeast as productive, useful, and meaningful for the new nation.

William Bartram remains a problematic author for a historian to understand given that his writing is a hybrid of taxonomic natural history and pastoral travelogue. Imagining the nation through its environment was a way to think through the problems of race and nature while obscuring a map of the future territory of the American empire that would emerge within it. Placing himself in the American garden, looking backward to its ancient and romantic origins, illuminated an early republic story of self-discovery and justification for conquest. William Bartram’s *Travels* constituted a fantastic narrative that set a precedent for both scientific travel and discovery, serving as a model for the Corps of Discovery led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, and the Romantic poets of the early nineteenth century.

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225 Anderson, 10.
Chapter Three: Marvellous Scenes of Primitive Nature

This paradise of fish may seem to exhibit a just representation of the peaceable and happy state of nature which existed before the fall, yet in reality it is a mere representation; for the nature of the fish is the same as if they were in Lake George or the river; but here the water or element in which they live and move, is so perfectly clear and transparent, it places them all on an equality with regard to their ability to injure or escape from one another.  

Gazing into the cloudless water of Lake George, Florida, and spying a school of fish, William Bartram witnessed a microcosm of the economy and the state of nature. “This amazing and delightful scene” of fish darting in all directions elegantly signified their equal status as divinely created animals whose existence was conditioned within the stability and reality of the economy of nature. Images of other “marvellous scenes of primitive nature, as yet unmodified by the hand of man” saturate the narration of the *Travels*, 1791. Musings such as this provide a view into Bartram’s philosophy of nature and framework for understanding the natural world, which is related to the processes and motivations that produced the *Travels*. Due to its attention to nature’s design and the flux of life within it, *Travels* is befittingly interpreted as a volume under the rubric of natural theology. Where later authors such as William Paley imagined fish jumping from a stream to be an image of divine beneficence and the happiness of all creation, Bartram adopted a more naturalistic idea of the world in which moral knowledge was imbued within all living creatures in the form of

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an internal “divine monitor”. Contradicting his peers within the natural history circle of the early republic and the natural philosophers of Europe, Bartram conceived of animals as morally intelligent beings whose behavior indicated the influence of God’s imprint. In the prologue of the text Bartram adheres to this conjunction of natural theology and natural history,

How wonderful is the mechanism of these finely formed, self-moving beings, how complicated their system, yet what unerring uniformity prevails through every tribe and particular species! The effect we see and contemplate, the cause is invisible, incomprehensible, how can it be otherwise? When we cannot see the end or origin of a nerve or vein, while the divisibility of matter or fluid, is infinite. We admire the mechanism of a watch, and the fabric of a piece of brocade, as being the production of art; these merit our admiration, and must excite our esteem for the ingenious artist or modifier, but nature is the work of God omnipotent: and an elephant, even this world is comparatively but a very minute part of his works.

Bartram’s conjecture on the “society of beauties” among the world of plants created by the “sovereign Lord” was juxtaposed in his writing to the “civil society” of the Muscogee, Cherokee, and Seminole. Bartram generally praised Native American polities for possessing morally advanced societies, and asked his reader to consider the possible benefit of Native assimilation into, “European modes of civil society”. In the preface of the Travels Bartram proposed his own policy for Native American assimilation.

It may, therefore, not be foreign to the subject, to point out the propriety of sending men of ability and virtue, under the authority of government, as friendly visitors, into their towns; let these men be instructed to learn perfectly their languages, and by a liberal and friendly intimacy, become acquainted with their customs and usages,

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229 Bartram, xxiv.
religious and civil; their system of legislation and police, as well as their most ancient and present traditions and history. These men thus enlightened and instructed, would be qualified to judge equitably, and when returned to us, to make true and just reports, which might assist the legislature of the United States to form, and offer to them a judicious plan, for their civilization and union with us.\textsuperscript{230}

An offer of union into the civilization of the United States, in Bartram’s schema, would have benefited both peoples by establishing a nation founded on the “natural politics” of the indigenous Americans. However, this bid belies a political ambition of the text itself, which is to envisage a future of North America as a singular empire occupied by the United States.

Upon returning to his home in Philadelphia in 1777, Bartram lived a relatively simple, reclusive life while enjoying the fellowship provided by his competent brother John Bartram Jr. and family members who managed their estate and business. Possessing relative wealth and comfort, Bartram could reflect on his travels and his contact with Native peoples from a distant point of solitude. Opening his ethnography of the Native Americans of the southeast he articulated that their bodies formed a “perfect human figure”.\textsuperscript{231} In a sardonic response to a set of queries sent by the naturalist and botanist Benjamin Smith Barton, Bartram stated,

Yet I may be allowed to conjecture that we might possibly better our condition in civil society by paying some more respect to & impartially examining the system of Legislation, Morality, and OEconomy, of those despised, persecuted, \textit{Wild People}, or

\textsuperscript{230} Bartram, xxxiv.
\textsuperscript{231} Bartram, 483.
as they are very learnedly called Bipeds, I suppose meaning a creature differing from Quadrupeds.\textsuperscript{232}

Barton had inquired about indigenous Americans ever since Bartram returned from his expedition to the southeastern borderlands. Barton was a neighbor of the Bartrams in Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{233} An educated gentleman, having been trained in physiology by the anatomist William Shippen at the College of Philadelphia, Barton studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh from 1786 to 1788. Upon his return to Philadelphia in 1789, Barton began lecturing on materia medica and botany at the College of Philadelphia. He published a textbook for his students in 1803 entitled Elements of Botany; or, Outlines of the Natural History of Vegetables.\textsuperscript{234} A voracious reader and bibliophile, Barton possessed the largest personal private library of any naturalist in the early republic and was engrossed by the subject of indigenous antiquarianism.\textsuperscript{235}

Barton obtained a manuscript copy of the forthcoming Travels, which he attempted to publish in Europe in 1787; upon lending a copy to John C. Lettsome, he was discovered by

\textsuperscript{233} Barton’s maternal uncle was the eminent astronomer and instrument maker David Rittenhouse.
Bartram’s publisher in Philadelphia, Enoch Story. That year he wrote his first inquiring letter to Bartram asking where he discovered “Artificial Mounts or Eminences” in his travels, what the “Indian” tradition concerning them was, and if Bartram had encountered any other “Vestiges of Antiquity” in his excursions. Bartram had made note of the “great tumuli, and conical mounts” of the “aborigines of America” in his travels; he remarked on every occasion that an ancient and long extinct indigenous people had constructed the mounds. These observations exuded a touch of melancholy, but also they seemed to echo his father’s suspicions about the indigenous Americans lawful claim to owning their territory,

In the morning I found I had taken up my lodging on the border of an ancient burying ground; sepulchres or tumuli of the Yamasees, who were here slain by the Creeks in the last decisive battle, the Creeks having driven them into this point, between the doubling of the river, where few of them escaped the fury of the conquerors.

A year later Barton wrote again hoping to ingratiate himself into the favor of the botanist, this time coaxing Bartram to let him publish the journal of his travels in Germany,

All Europe is alive to these studies [botany and natural history]: Under the patronage of monarchs, they grow and acquire a permanent vigor; they afford even to the ambitious politician, and the indolent petit maître, an interval of content and of amusement. 

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238 Bartram, 139.
Barton maintained a network of contacts with European naturalists including the Welsh naturalist and antiquarian Thomas Pennant and the English parson-naturalist Gilbert White, author of *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*, 1789. Barton fashioned himself as a virtuoso of all matters pertaining to Native American antiquarianism; his expertise and interest in Native languages, culture, and artifacts, attracted the interest of President Thomas Jefferson in 1803. Barton propounded the latest version of the Asiatic theory of Native origins in his *New Views of the Origin of the Tribes and Nations of America*, 1797, which was dedicated to Thomas Jefferson. Bartram was a collaborator with Barton on several projects, which involved botanical and zoological illustration; however his views on Indian civilization were more nuanced and complex. Bartram’s association with Barton is an important one to understand; both naturalists sought to categorize plants and Native peoples within a natural history of the American continent, a telling fact which elides their shared purpose in writing natural history to not only codify knowledge of the American environment, Nature itself, but also to imbricate Native peoples as natural factors of the landscape they surveyed.

Interest in ancient earthwork architecture was a central aspect of the fascination held by many naturalists in the early republic as to the prehistory of the continent and its inhabitants. Barton collaborated with the Federalist politician Winthrop Sargent in 1796 to

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produce a volume on the subject entitled *Papers relative to certain American Antiquities*. In a letter dated November 1788, Bartram offered his own speculation on the mounds as the “pattern of the Tower of Babel” or the remnants of the “Posterity of Nimrod”,

That the Greate mounds (If I may Venture at a conjecture) are not Tumuli or cemeterres of the Dead is very likely since they are never found to cover human Skeltons or Bones And they appear to be uniform that is the same form in every antient Town Where they are found, But Rather were constructed for Towers, Greate publick Alters, for Religious purposes.²⁴²

Expanding his response to the queries sent by Barton into a paper entitled “Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians”, 1788, Bartram entered the debate into the origins of the Native Americans in his answer to Query II which contradicted other popular positions on ancient indigenous origins, “I have no reason from what I have observed myself, or from information derived from others, to suppose that any of the nations or tribes came from the old Mexicans or Peruvians.”²⁴³ Query III inquired as to whether the observer had witnessed evidence of Indians producing hieroglyphic symbols or pictograms. Bartram recalled images of men, wolves, turkeys, snakes, and animal-man hybrids not unlike the hieroglyphs of the Egyptian pantheon.²⁴⁴

Bartram himself situated his observations on plants and animals alongside his ethnography of native peoples in a manner consistent to many naturalists of the

Enlightenment. In the *Travels* he contrasted “natural mounds” to the ruins of “artificial mounds” created by the “ancient inhabitants” of the continent. Thomas Slaughter has argued that Bartram, who described himself as a “philosophical pilgrim”, should not be considered a scientist conversant in the discourses of the Enlightenment and the republic of letters, but rather a nature writer, a Romantic precursor to the American transcendentalists. 245 This view is deleterious to understanding both science and Romanticism in the eighteenth century.

Berta Lee, writing in 1972, offered a much more complex view of Bartram as a naturalist-poet whose career and writing embodied traits of both worlds. Rigid distinctions between the two, or portrayals of science and romanticism as being radically divergent or opposed are problematic and misguided for they rely on professional and epistemological boundaries that did not truly exist. 246

Bartram ventured anthropological speculations, which at times contradicted the views of his father John Bartram, and the philosophers and stadial theorists of the Scottish

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245 Thomas Slaughter, "The Nature of William Bartram." *Pennsylvania History* 62, no. 4 (1995): 429-451. 429; For a more complex criticism of Slaughter’s book and his “emotional history” presented in *The Natures of John & William Bartram* I refer the reader to this review of the book, Alan Taylor, "A Historical Fiction, Not a History: Slaughter's "Natures of John and William Bartram"." *Taxon* 46, no. 1 (1997): 195-200. See also Berta G. Lee, "William Bartram: Naturalist or "Poet"?" *Early American Literature* 7, no. 2 (1972): 124-29. What Taylor neglects to critique Slaughter for is his rather simplistic treatment of the historical category of Romanticism itself. I do not have the space here to parse this category further, but there is considerable difference between the British, German, and American traditions of romantic literature and philosophy, which must be addressed if one is to claim that Bartram is a wholly Romantic author without any interest or personal identification with science, as Slaughter claims.

Enlightenment, by arguing for citizens of the early republic to respect and take note of the societies of the southeast. Bartram tended to romanticize native peoples as lofty ideals of primitive and thus antediluvian society. While critics have rightly chided Pamela Regis for overstating Bartram’s understanding and use of taxonomy, her analysis of Bartram as a taxonomic writer and Enlightenment intellectual is nonetheless apt and can inform a reading of his categorizations of Native society and politics. Bartram not only sought to plot through the stages of man’s development through his observations in the southeast, but to reflect on the morality of civilization and its adherence to the divine monitor.

Bruce Silver has argued that in many respects Bartram was a Jeffersonian scientist; his expedition was not intended to map onto nature a human moral universe but rather to understand the place of man in the natural world. Bartram was not among the numerous expeditionary agents sent out to the frontier by Jefferson including Andre Michaux (1793), Meriwether Lewis & William Clark who led the Corps of Discovery (1804-1806), the Red River Expedition (1806), and the Pike Expedition (1806-1807). He was not sent with detailed instructions on the kinds of observations he was to make concerning Native customs and language. Yet, the family garden was an influential salon and an admired space in the new nation and was visited by leading figures of the early republic including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, the novelist Charles Brockden Brown, Charles Willson Peale, the chemist


\[248\] Silver, 598-99.

Benjamin Silliman, and Benjamin Franklin.\textsuperscript{250} His work may also be characterized as Jeffersonian in its embedded desire to construct an image, or imagined unity, of the American republic as an egalitarian and naturally virtuous nation. Vistas of ancient mounds, “sublime forests”, and other “visions of terrestrial happiness”, described in poetic fashion provide a contrast to the analytical physical geography, or global physics, which would characterize the instrument-minded Alexander von Humboldt in his travels through South America. Bartram’s poetical form preceded the globalist vision of Humboldtian science, conflating moral sensibility with an encyclopedic scope of the phenomenal continuum of Nature, which included human societies.\textsuperscript{251}

Indeed, the word sublime itself is used in the text twenty seven times to discuss lakes, forests, mounds, rivers, and other “prospects” of the borderlands. Bartram’s science represented an affinity of natural history and civil history, not wholly dissimilar from his contemporaries, the planter-historians in British colonial Jamaica.\textsuperscript{252} Bartram must be situated as a figure of both science and imperial politics in the early republic, not as an innocent nature writer as Slaughter would have it. He was not a disinterested and wholly objective naturalist; he crafted moral judgments about swarms of mayflies, dying brown bears, and the moral authority of civil societies such as the Muscogee and the United States.

Focusing on the ethnography which concludes the \textit{Travels} and the “Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians”, which was written in reply to Barton as one of his many

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{250} Slaughter, 430.
\item\textsuperscript{252} Here I am referring to Edward Long, Patrick Browne, and Bryan Edwards.
\end{itemize}
correspondents he contacted while writing his speculative archaeological text *New Views of the Origin of the Tribes and Nations of America*, 1797, reveals Bartram’s complex approach to understanding Native Americans. Bartram simultaneously resisted the simplicity of Enlightenment classifications of human societies, yet was also complicit in this project and the politics of classifying. In his vision the natural unity of all living things could only be restored by a return to the moral guidance of the divine monitor and the cosmic insight it offered. However, it is critical to situate his career within the tangled parameters of empire, which he did not acknowledge. Ethnography and antiquarianism proved to be sources of anti-conquest in the eighteenth century as discourses which relegated Native peoples to a prehistoric status as natural objects within the landscape, jeopardizing their claim as sovereign polities in the early republic.

Bartram’s philosophy of science can be detected within the discourses of natural theology, taxonomy, the economy of nature, and ethnography. Establishing the affinity and logic of this series of intellectual pursuits is paramount to understanding Bartram. Readers of the *Travels* would not have necessarily grasped this philosophy with facility, as Bartram did not order the text in such a way as to overtly state his overarching idea of nature. Nevertheless, the axis by which the worldview of the *Travels* revolves is natural theology. Upon establishing that nature can be interpreted as a divine artifact, the ancillary discourses of the economy of nature and the science of man (or in Bartram’s words, “natural politics”) may be ascertained. Numerous scholars have pointed to these salient dimensions of his career and writing in discrete analyses. However, none have sought to examine this nexus of ideas
for its totality and its broader political, historical, and cultural context. Finally, Bartram’s philosophy of science is embedded within the broader colonial project embedded within the *Travels* as discussed in chapter two. Situating Bartram’s thought in its entirety will reveal how he imagined not only the Nature of the southeastern borderlands, but also the possible future of the American nation.

**The Divine Monitor**

As a member of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, Bartram’s pastoral narration evoked the belief of an “inner light” penetrating and permeating not only the southeastern outlands but the universe itself; moss oaks, hummingbirds, black bears, trout, stones, and valleys, shared a spiritual bond in his vision. Bartram found moral lessons in observing the life cycle of insects, “the tumult is great indeed”, pondering the mystical wisdom and plan guiding earthly creatures.\(^{253}\) In the *Travels* he counseled his readers,

> Let us rely on Providence, and by studying and contemplating the works and power of the Creator, learn wisdom and understanding in the economy of nature, and be seriously attentive to the divine monitor within. Let us be obedient to the ruling powers in such things as regard human affairs, our duties to each other, and all creatures and concerns that are submitted to our care and control.\(^{254}\)

Early Quaker theologians drew an interest in nature from the seventeenth century occult philosophy and the intellectual tradition, which claimed that the analogy of the


\(^{254}\) Bartram, 58.
microcosm and the macrocosm extended to observable natural phenomenon and knowledge of the cosmic.\textsuperscript{255} For the Quakers of the early republic, whose rhetoric had a decidedly deistic tone, nature was to be understood rationally. Though his father and family became estranged from the Society because of political reasons and their reluctance to free their slaves, Bartram’s \textit{Travels} and later writings attest to this belief in natural theology. Philosophical naturalism in his views on nature represents a convergence of Quietist tradition and Enlightenment ideas; Bartram did not seek to necessarily resolve discrepancies between Biblical or sacred history and natural history.\textsuperscript{256} An education in studying nature, the Society expounded, would lead to morally educated men and women. In their encounters with Native Americans, the Quakers were generally friendly and hospitable. William’s father stood against most of his brethren; John believed that indigenous Americans were essentially warlike and incapable of civilization.\textsuperscript{257} Adopting a strikingly different stance, William believed indigenous Americans to be generally honest and compassionate people.

Considering that American Quakerism taught that a divinely originating inner light permeated all life, it is critical to discern Bartram’s descriptions of the divine. Bartram’s names of God figure in the \textit{Travels} in a number of manifestations: the “Sovereign”, the “great Author”, “Almighty”, “Supreme”, and “Great”, “Creator of the universe”, “God omnipotent”. Variations of divine forces are also denominated throughout the text: “divine and inimitable workmanship”, “a divine and powerful preceptor”, “divine light”, “divine

\textsuperscript{255} Clarke, 440. Arthur Raistrick, \textit{Quakers in Science and Industry: Being an Account of the Quaker Contributions to Science and Industry During the 17th and 18th Centuries}, (London: Bannisdale Press, 1950). For instance George Fox claimed to know God “experimentally” and through “Egyptian Learning”.
\textsuperscript{256} Walters, 162.
\textsuperscript{257} Clarke, 444.
hymns of the feathered songsters”, “divine aid”, “divine harmony”, “divine principle” and “influence”, “divine wisdom”, “divine simplicity”, and “divine truth”.

Imagining species arranged into an ordered continuous whole from the least demonstrable anatomical or physical complexity to the most revealed not only the wisdom of the inner light but the foundation of the ancient idea of the great chain of being, a philosophy of nature which persisted through a series of permutations from Aristotelian natural history through to the Enlightenment. Man had been understood as God’s finest and most perfect creation from antiquity to the eighteenth century. Prior to the Philadelphia natural history circle’s focus on the chain, conceptions of nature had been mostly aesthetic and idealistic images like the illustrations found in Mark Catesby’s *Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands* (1731-1743). Catesby sought to portray beautiful and exotic curiosities without reference to their local context, establishing natural objects as monuments of a benign and largely Platonic natural world. Catesby’s *Natural History* continued the precedent among natural histories of mapping the commodity prospects of the landscape onto the grid of colonial missions and projects. “One sees that Catesby”, Amy Meyers has observed, “was interested not only in characterizing the associations between species that he interpreted as native to American soil; he wished also to describe organic relationships recently introduced to the colonies through European settlement and global trade. He saw the

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260 Wilson, 179.
integration of new animals and plants into the fabric of the natural world...as continual, promising to yield rich possibilities for human use”. In the early republic naturalists modified this image to situate both the economic potential of nature and to reveal its divine structure.

Charles Willson Peale, a neighbor and colleague of William Bartram at the American Philosophical Society graphically rendered the chain of being in his Philadelphia Museum exhibits on natural history. Plenitude, continuity, and gradation, were the three guiding principles of the chain by the eighteenth century, and each were visually staged in the museum. Plenitude denoted the vast diversity and supply of species within the natural world provided by the creator, which were systematically connected through networks of dependence and predation. Continuity referred to the ascending complexity and order of species; while gradation meant that species could be organized into discrete groups. The museum impresario hoped to open a portal to the “world in Miniature” for his visitors, which included significant figures of the early republic such as Thomas Jefferson, to inculcate them with the moral and physical evidence of the order of nature. Unveiling the mystery of the operations and organization of the economy of nature became the motif of Peale’s defining self-portrait, The Artist in His Museum, 1822. Bartram shared this vision of the “order of


nature”, the “order of animal creation”, “grand order”, “imbricated order”, “regular order”, and various other orders in the pages of his *Travels*.

Nature was both hierarchical and harmonious in the schema of the chain. Peale’s displays gestured towards an anthropocentric world in which animals represented the naturally beneficent morals of man imbued by God, a trope that appears in the introduction to the *Travels*. Natural history museums and private cabinets of curiosity were spatial microcosms of the cosmic natural order. Gardens, including the Bartram family garden at Kingsessing, also functioned as pastoral images of natural and national order.

Bartram and Peale shared an understanding of the world as being created for mankind by God and endowed with an Adamic stewardship to manage and husband the planet. Pamela Regis has argued that the subject matter of the *Travels* presented in Bartram’s introduction is nothing short than the “entire animate world” presented in a chain of being: eleven paragraphs on the vegetable kingdom with teleological and physiological speculations on contemporary botanical problems, eight paragraphs on animals and their moral intelligence, and four paragraphs on Native Americans including his political plea for recognizing their civil society. Evidence of Bartram’s analogical reasoning, an established methodology of botany in the eighteenth century, indicates that Bartram was conversant in the details of contemporary natural history problems and debates. For Bartram, man’s place in nature was attested by his possession of the divine monitor and rationality. Providential

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264 Brigham, 189.
265 O’Malley, 213.
266 Regis, 48-51. Regis makes the point that Bartram’s attention to the sexual system classification attests to his knowledge of Linnaean taxonomy.
knowledge of the Creator’s logic could be understood by reading nature as one would read a book and by controlling one’s moral actions to be in tandem with one’s naturally implanted sacred conscience. Kerry Walters has observed, “The world as a speculum dei, as ‘a glorious apartment of the boundless palace of the Sovereign Creator’ is then, much more than a temporal series of chemical and organic relationships. It is also an exemplar of the spiritual order, which serves as its necessary condition. In reading the book of nature we discern, between the lines as it were, the necessary order and beneficent design of reality.”

In his Travels Bartram sought to read the chain of being with attention to animals and plants that demonstrated “sensitive existence” which could be considered evidence of their spiritual and moral faculties. In an unpublished treatise, Bartram uses analogical reasoning of human and animal artifice, such as beehives, mayfly swarms, and schools of fish, to argue by analogy their capacity for intelligence,

Now since we have no certain knowledge that animals below the order of mankind have no intellectual powers, and that we suppose that all metaphysical knowledge is attained by analogy…[.], if we examine and compare those actions and movements of animals which they have in common with us, we find little or no difference [:] why, then, have we not every reason to believe that those actions and movements are excited and proceed from the same motives or cause?

Intelligence had proven to be the metric by which human superiority and its concomitant position in the chain was demonstrated by natural philosophers. Gradations of

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267 Walters, 312.
intelligence were identified by Peale who, following the stadial theorists and to some extent the degeneracy theorists, argued that white Europeans were capable of rationality while Africans and Native Americans lacked the biological complexity for advanced intellect.\textsuperscript{270} Peale hoped to include specimens of each race in his Museum as part of a dramatic collection of man’s natural history; exemplars of the races would be adorned with their, “arms, dresses, and tools” following Linnaeus’ designation of races by fashion and temperament.\textsuperscript{271} In a treatise on the abolition of slavery, Bartram argued that God did not consider racial differences, even if those classifications, and their concomitant taxonomy of racial intelligence, was part of the Linnaean science he engaged within,

Consider these important Truth & serious interesting matters, in time, & render justice & tribute to your Friends, preservers, & helpmates. Consider God is no Respecter of Persons, & that the Black White Red & Yellow People are equally dear to him & under his protection and favor.\textsuperscript{272}

Moreover, civilization itself did not designate human intelligence for Bartram, but rather the opposite. Kerry Walters’ reading of the \textit{Travels} has demonstrated that Bartram

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\textsuperscript{270} Brigham, 200; This taxonomy of racial intelligence is largely due to Linnaeus’ \textit{Systema Naturae}. Hans-Jorg Rheinberger and Staffan Muller-Wille have argued that Linnaeus’ raciology of the four kinds of man (African, Asian, American, European) had precedents in Latin American and Iberian world cosmography and medieval anatomical writers. Hans-Jorg Rheinberger, and Staffan Muller-Wille. \textit{A Cultural History of Heredity}, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 105.
\textsuperscript{272} William Bartram, "Antislavery Treatise." In \textit{William Bartram: The Search for Nature's Design}, Thomas Hallock, Nancy Hoffmann, and Joel Fry, 377-380, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2010). While others have disagreed with Regis’ argument that Bartram was not very informed by the ideas of Linnaeus, namely Charlotte Porter, I agree with her reasoning and evidence presented in her work.
\end{flushleft}
introduced a sustained critique of the directives of “civilizations” to amass riches, personal and political power, drawing contempt from the Enlightenment conceit that man is the most perfect of all creation.273 Bartram doubted the potential for Euroamericans to regain their sensitivity to the divine monitor; only societies emerging “after this life, in a future state of existence and perhaps in another world or planet” could possibly fulfill that vision.274

In an unpublished treatise referred as “The Dignity of Human Nature”, which is preceded by a letter to an “A. Laribore, 1795”, Bartram expounded upon his conceptions of the place of man and animals in nature,

Thus The Divine Intelligence may Act Arbitrarily or Independently, of the System of order, established by himself for the Various orders of his Works in the Vast Universe, for altho every part of his works, may be in themselves perfect, agreeable to the intent & design for which they created, Yet imperfect in compareson to their Creator or of the Universal System.275

Imperfection in human civilization derived from an internal shift away from the “Archetypal Ideas” of the divine virtues and towards vice in Bartram’s cosmology. “Yet hard & difficult as it is with me I must Own that in a certain degree Mankind, especially those nations who have adopted the present system of Refined civilization could not Live without associating some degree of this pernicious Vice in their Moral System.”276 Dissimulation, Bartram warned, undermined the natural tendency for moral character in mankind and animal

273 Walters, 323.
274 Walters, 324.
276 Bartram, 349.
Equating “Reason or That Divine Monitor”, Bartram navigated between Christian doctrine and a rationalist approach to the study of nature. Using Linnaean taxonomy and Buffonian zoology, Bartram established his case for the evidence of intelligence among animals and man,

> If we examine and compare those Actions, & movements of Animals, which they have in common with us, we find little or no difference, why than have we not every reason to believe that those actions & movements are executed & proceed from the same motives or cause. After all the pains & labour which Buffon has taken to explain away their Intellectual and Rational Powers, He has thereby sufficiently establish a truly Wonderful Instinct, An Intuitive Knowledge.\(^\text{278}\)

A desire to read the book of nature was directly connected to Bartram’s work being embedded within the ideas of the economy of nature. Bruce Silver has argued that where natural theologians tended to overlook violent predation such as spiders tightening their grip on their prey trapped in their web, Bartram accepted the warlike reality of nature, “For Bartram it is the entire scheme, the clockwork of nature, that testifies to a principle of benevolence. Separated from the general system into which it fits, a particular phenomenon is inconclusive as a basis for arguing for or against nature’s goodness or that of its creator.”\(^\text{279}\)

As previously mentioned, Bartram’s understanding of morality and the divine monitor was most likely the result of his exposure to Quaker beliefs and moral teachings, which had a connection to Continental Quietism.\(^\text{280}\) Burt Kornegay has claimed that the

\(^{277}\) Bartram, 349.  
\(^{278}\) Bartram, 352.  
\(^{279}\) Silver, 606.  
\(^{280}\) Walters, 160.
doctrine of inner light unites Bartram to the vitalist tradition in Enlightenment science, “at heart what activates plants is the same inner impulse or faculty that prompts animals and humans too to move and to act. It is a secret, God-given impulse, and Bartram variously calls it ‘the vital principle’, ‘the vivific principle of life’, and ‘the intellectual system’.”281 Knowing nature’s system, through natural theology, was coterminous and complementary to knowing nature’s productions, natural economy. In order to fully theorize as to the productivity of the southeastern borderlands, and by analogy the North American continent and national borders of the embryonic United States, Bartram needed to understand its design and the traces of its creator’s craft.

**The Economy of Nature**

William’s father, John Bartram, was a correspondent and colonial agent of Linnaeus who learned the sexual system of classification in order to establish his credentials as an American botanist. The power of Linnaeus’ ideas extended beyond his taxonomy presented in the *Systema Naturae*, 1766, to a framework of natural history which unified knowledge to its pragmatic ends outlined in his *Oeconomia Naturae*, 1749. William Bartram, while never formally studying the *Oeconomia*, referred to the “human economy”, “the economy of the animal creation”, “the economy of nature”, “man’s system of economy”, and the “family economy” throughout his travels, indicating his familiarity with Linnaean concepts through either conversation, correspondence, or popularized accounts of the idea. Conceptions of an

economy of nature dated to the late seventeenth century and were discussed in the works of the English natural philosopher and courtier Kenelm Digby and the taxonomist John Ray.

In the Linnaean economy of nature, the particular environments of the globe were understood as components of a planetary system, which autonomously regulated the complete ecology of life, the processes of geology, climatology, and so on. Linnaeus’ oeconomia joined a moral understanding of nature to a national vision for unity and progress. Sweden, in Linnaeus’ vision, would become a political and economic power in Europe if it could adapt its population, both agrarians and merchants, to the patterns, cadences, and structures of nature. Lisbet Rausing has observed that, “Viewed more philosophically, it involved rationally calibrating human action to the observable regularities of nature’s plenitude, and to do this through ‘policing’—a mechanism Linnaeus saw as universal to nature and ideal to society. Law, order, and regulation was how ‘the Creator,’ or Ens Entium—Linnaeus liked this Aristotelian term for God—calibrated natural equilibria by ensuring each species kept to its station.”

God could also, in Linnaeus’ private belief documented in his Nemesis divina, intervene on behalf of his creation in order to maintain balance within nature. Donald Worster has demonstrated that man occupied the seat of honor in this natural economy, and that God had ordained the human use and management of nature. In the Oeconomia, Linnaeus’ natural economy and theology is manifestly clear,

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283 Rausing, 186.
All these treasures of nature, so artfully contrived, so wonderfully propagated, so providentially supported throughout her three kingdoms, seems intended by the Creator for the sake of man. Every thing may be made subservient to his use; if not immediately, yet mediately, not so to that of other animals. By the help of reason man tames the fiercest animals, pursues and catches the swiftest, nay he is able to reach even those, which lye hidden in the bottom of the sea.  

Linnaeus believed that because nature was a stable system that species themselves were fixed ontological categories that did not change beyond simple variations, species could neither be created nor become extinct. The Comte de Buffon found the Linnaean philosophy and taxonomy presented in works such as *Systema Naturae* (1735), *Philosophia botanica* (1751), and *Species Plantarum* (1753), to be egregiously analytical and thus ahistorical. In his *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière* (1749-88) and the *Les époques de la nature* (1778), Buffon advocated a synthetic historicist and nonidealistic interpretation of nature which, he argued, was contrary to Linnaeus’ Cartesian and Newtonian system of fixed, mechanical nature.  

Nevertheless, the practical matter of Linnaean science aimed to calculate a mercantilist national economy and to develop the stock of scientific knowledge of the nation’s academies. Fredrik Jonsson has argued that a debate between natural historians and economists emerged over which party would be more qualified to advise the nation over matters of global trade and prospecting in the early modern period. “Natural history”,

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286 Robert Wohl, "Buffon and His Project for a New Science." *Isis* 51, no. 2 (1960): 186-199. Wohl explains his critique noting that Buffon was reacting to the popularity of Newtonian science in France and intended to critique the limits of the analytical approach to natural laws and mechanisms while admitting the real limits of knowledge gained from the senses and logic itself.

Jonsson observes, “was ideologically ambiguous, attracting Swedish cameralists, British neo-mercantilists, French physiocrats, and even republican figures such as Humboldt and Thomas Jefferson. But beneath the diversity of political opinion was a common assumption that expertise about natural systems should have a central place in the making of modern polities and economies.”

Throughout Books IV and V of *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith argued, like Linnaeus, for rational administration of a bountiful and self-regulating planetary system largely immune to large-scale disaster, which could be managed by a sovereign nation through political economy. Conservation and sensitivity to ecological balances became a point of division, as some naturalists such as the French horticulturalist and colonial administrator Pierre Poivre developed new models and approaches to scientific conservation while others persisted in their belief of the fundamentally self-regulating idea of nature.

Concordantly, the idea of nature as an economy functioned as an alembic by which Bartram understood the plants, animals, and people he “discovered” in the course of his journey. In effect, Bartram’s vision of the economy of the southeastern outlands joined the Baconian archetype of systematically registering nature to a Romanticist and proto-nationalist aesthetic. Understanding this intellectual history provides an entrée into his mentality and the ineluctable task of natural history to categorize all of nature, thus

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289 Jonsson, 1356.

transforming people, places, and the vibrant totality of nature into self-contained analytical specimens.

Nature was imagined by Bartram on the one hand to be a harmonious emblematic refuge of divine delight and nurture, and on the other a logically ordered economy. This construction proved a stark contrast in the *Travels* between Euroamerican settlers whose technological, scientific, and economic knowledge was wholly artificial in comparison to Native Americans such as the Muscogee who only began to approach “true civilization” in the late eighteenth century.291 Furthermore, Bartram gestures towards Native people’s own naturalness in describing their “government and civil society” as,

> The constitution or system of their police is simply natural, and as little complicated as that which is supposed to direct or rule the approved economy of the ant and the bee, and seems to be nothing more than the simple dictates of natural reason, plain to every one, yet recommended to them by their wife and virtuous elders as divine, because necessary for securing mutual happiness.292

### The Science of Man

Chapter two of William Bartram’s ethnography which concludes the *Travels*, entitled “An Account of the Persons, Manners, Customs and Government of the Muscogulges or Creeks, Cherokees, Chactaws, &c. Aborigenes of the Continent of North America” consists of an investigation of the origins of indigenous American civil society and government. Bartram begins with a general observation on the executive power of each polity,

> The mico or king, though elective, yet his advancement to that supreme dignity must be understood in a very different light from the elective monarchs of the old world,

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291 Bartram, 490.
292 Bartram, 494.
where the progress to magistracy is generally affected by schism and the influence of friends gained by craft, bribery and often by more violent efforts…No one will tell you how or when he became their king; but he is universally acknowledged to be the greatest person among them, and he is loved, esteemed and reverenced, although he associates, eats, drinks and dances with them in common as another man, his dress is the same, and a stranger could not distinguish the king's habitation, from that of any other citizen by any sort of splendor or magnificence: yet he perceives they act as though their mico beheld them though invisible. In a word, their mico seems to them, the representative of Providence or the Great Spirit, whom they acknowledge to preside over and influence their councils and public proceedings.  

As previously stated, Bartram considered the indigenous polities to be “simply natural”, and so this ethnography effectively initiated Bartram into the Enlightenment discourse of the state of nature of the 1770s and 1780s, typified by the intellectual exchange between philosophers such as Adam Ferguson, John Millar, and David Hume. Nathaniel Wolloch has identified the shared contours of this discourse, “Enlightenment stadialism claimed that human societies universally developed according to a generally fixed stadial pattern. The number of stages varied, but the most popular version consisted of four: a hunting stage, which then moved to a shepherding existence, then an agricultural one, finally arriving at the most advanced stage, that of commercially-based civilization.” For instance, in his *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1776, the English historian Edward Gibbon outlined similar claims to the stages of man’s civil development in a two stage theory in which the transition from nomadic to sedentary society marked the progress of a civilization, “The original right of property can only be justified by the accident or merit

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293 Bartram, 495-96.  
of prior occupancy; and on this foundation it is wisely established by the philosophy of the civilians. The savage who hollows a tree, inserts a sharp stone into a wooden handle, or applies a string to an elastic branch, becomes in a state of nature the just proprietor of the canoe, the bow, or the hatchet.”

Man’s husbandry of nature was often repeated and critical in these accounts of the stages of civilization.

Buffon articulated a theory of society and nature in his *Histoire naturelle*, “Man has searched for surety and peace in society, he has augmented his power and knowledge by uniting them with those of other men: this union is the best achievement of man, it is the wisest use of his reason. In effect his tranquility, his force, his grandeur, *his command of the universe*, all depend primarily on his ability to command and tame himself, to submit to and impose laws; man, in a word, is unique only thanks to his knowledge of uniting with his fellow men.”

Moreover, language itself was a significant metric of a civilization. Lord Monboddo, the Scottish jurist, argued that speech distinguished the English from Orang-Outan, the wild man or savage.

Concurrent to the discourse of the science of man was the complementary subject of race in the eighteenth century. Snait Gissis has argued that race emerged in its most sophisticated conception in the synthesis of social and travel writing within natural history and natural philosophy. Gissis argues the debate over the concept of hierarchy of natural species informed ideas of race in the human sciences. Situated in a work

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295 Quoted in Wolloch, 254.
296 Quoted in Wolloch, 252. My emphasis.
of natural history, Bartram’s observations on Native American societies must be read as contiguous to the broader Enlightenment discourse of nature, human societies, and racial categories.

American naturalists and physicians in the early republic contributed to this discourse by critiquing the excesses and degenerative capacity of the final stages of society: industrialization and commercialization. Benjamin Rush, a fellow of the American Philosophical Society and professor of medicine at the College of Philadelphia, observed of the stages of civilization in his autobiography,

Civilians divide mankind into three great classes, viz, savages, barbarians, and civilized people. The savage lives by fishing and hunting, the barbarian by pasturage, and the civilized man by agriculture. There is a certain chain which connects each of these classes together, so that they appear to be different parts of one circle. All extremes meet in a point. The highest degrees of civilization border upon the savage life. The individuals of the human race are once men, and twice children, so nations are once civilized and twice savage. 299

Rush advocated against the luxuries of an effeminate industrial civilization, a form of society that he believed endorsed immorality and bred alcoholism. 300 Nomadic savages, pastoral herdsmen, and industrious merchants figured not only as historical personifications, but also as broad categorizations of Native Americans and Euroamericans in these stadial dramas, which justified the advancing conquest of the newly formed United States.

Thomas Jefferson, serving dually as President of the United States and as President of the American Philosophical Society, entered the discourse of stadial theory by questioning

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300 Kunitz, 39.
the very categories of savage and civilized. Jefferson believed in the moral and social purity of an agrarian society, which maintained a distinct connection to and boundary of the nation and nature. Peter Onuf has characterized Jefferson’s view of indigenous Americans in the *Notes on the State of Virginia* observing, “Uncorrupted by civilization, native Americans reflected man’s true nature…For Jefferson the Indians were *natural republicans* who showed that society did not depend on submission to the authority of a governing class but was instead the spontaneous expression of man’s sociable nature.”\(^{301}\) A natural aristocracy, whose talents and virtues were derived from nature itself, proved in a meritocracy, would lead the republic against the corruption of a hereditary aristocracy.\(^{302}\) Bartram joined Jefferson’s argument in the ethnography,

> How are we to account for their excellent policy in civil government: it cannot derive its influence from coercive laws, for they have no such artificial system. Divine wisdom dictates and they obey. We see and know full well the direful effect of this torrent of evil, which has its source in hell, and we know surely, as well as these savages, how to divert its course and suppress its inundations. Do we want wisdom and virtue? let our youth then repair to the venerable councils of the Muscogulges.\(^{303}\)

Republicanism had been argued as the most natural state of man by Jefferson’s predecessor as President of the American Philosophical Society, David Rittenhouse, who had argued in an oration to the Fellows of the society that even extraterrestrial life forming on

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301 Peter S. Onuf ""We shall all be Americans": Thomas Jefferson and the Indians." *Indiana Magazine of History* 95, no. 2 (1999): 103-141. 103-104. My emphasis.
303 Bartram, 493.
distant planets would naturally progress towards republicanism. John Carson rightly identifies Jefferson and John Adams in their debate on human nature as interlocutors in a trans-Atlantic Enlightenment dialogue that included Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, Claude Adrien Helvétius, Immanuel Kant, and Adam Smith, among others. Meritocracy, Carson argues, emerged from scientific inquiry into natural divisions of virtue among humans, “If Enlightenment authors justified distinctions and even stratifications in republican civil society and allocations of power on the basis of differences in individual virtues and talents understood as natural objects, then scientific investigations able to substantiate the reality of such attributes and give them form could shape the horizon of possibilities for the new societies Enlightenment political thinkers were theorizing.” Helvétius developed a rigorous psychology, which concluded what may have been the most radical position on human nature, that all minds were physically and metaphysically equivalent, and as such no distinctions could be made as to any natural mental superiority between peoples.

Bartram’s ethnography approached this analytical argument, as he concurred with the belief that the state of nature had produced naturally just, equitable, and prosperous societies among the polities of the southeast. Describing the Muscogee, Bartram noted their astounding natural civility,

Their internal police and family economy is what at once engages the notice of European travellers, and incontrovertibly places these people in an illustrious point of view; their liberality, intimacy and friendly intercourse one with another, without any restraint of ceremonious formality, as if they were even insensible of the use or

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305 Carson, 83-84.
necessity of associating the passions or affections of avarice, ambition or covetousness.\textsuperscript{306}

In chapter four of the ethnography, “Concerning Property, Agriculture, Arts and Manufactures”, Bartram argues that what “has been said by historians, who have written concerning the customs and usages of the aborigines of America, that they have every thing in common,” is a misleading understanding of Native societies. “The state” founded on a “natural constitution”, Bartram observes, permits individual families to maintain a private share of foodstuffs grown from the “common plantation”, while the remainder is divided into a communally shared surplus and a tribute to the “king’s crib”.\textsuperscript{307} Moreover, natural government consisted not only of a singular political executive, but also of a spiritual leader, “a high priest, usually called by the white people jugglers, or conjurers”,

The ancient high priest or seer, presides in spiritual affairs, and is a person of consequence; he maintains and exercises great influence in the state; particularly in military affairs, the senate never determine on an expedition against their enemy without his counsel and assistance. These people generally believe that their seer has communion with powerful invisible spirits, who they suppose have a share in the rule and government of human affairs, as well as the elements; that he can predict the result of an expedition, and his influence is so great, that they have been known frequently to stop, and turn back an army, when within a days journey of their enemy, after a march of several hundred miles, and indeed their predictions have surprized many people. They foretell rain or drougth, and pretend to bring rain at pleasure, cure diseases, and exercise witchcraft, invoke or expel evil spirits, and even assume the power of directing thunder and lightning.\textsuperscript{308}

\textsuperscript{306} Bartram, 490. 
\textsuperscript{307} Bartram, 511-512. 
\textsuperscript{308} Bartram, 497.
In this framework natural politics could only be enriched by the influence of religion. Furthermore, the ethnography covers a range of topics including indigenous fashion, feasts, property rights, agricultural technique, arts and manufactures, marriage and funeral ceremonies, and language and manners. Bartram’s natural history of the southeastern indigenous polities contributed to the science of man by naturalizing Native American peoples and by situating them rhetorically as elements of the southeastern environment itself. Indeed, what Bartram did not credit to indigenous Americans, as we have discussed in the previous chapter, the knowledge gained by their empirical medical botany. Politically, Bartram’s observations ratified the theory of indigenous Americans as natural republicans; however, his descriptions also served as curiosities, which could be consumed by his reading public in Philadelphia and across the Atlantic.

Mounds

Fascination with ancient American cultures such as the elusive remnants of the Mound Builder people figured into the science of man in the early republic by means of a constructed historical drama in which the indigenous American polities of the 1790s were imagined to be the descendants of an invading western force, which had displaced the noble civilizations of American antiquity.309 In England the ancient Druids operated in the national mythology in a similar fashion as venerable icons of British civilization and origins. Annette Kolodny traces the archaeological interest of early Anglo-Americans to the Puritan minister

Samuel Mather, who sought to situate America in both a biblical past, or sacred history, and a redeemed future.\textsuperscript{310}

Benjamin Smith Barton’s \textit{New Views of the Origin of the Tribes and Nations of America} promulgated the hypothesis that the lost races that had been displaced by the Indians were as civilized as the ancient Greeks, Romans, or Egyptians. Barton dedicated \textit{New Views} to Thomas Jefferson with whom he shared regret over, “the evanishment of so many of the tribes and nations of America.”\textsuperscript{311} “Natural history”, mused Barton, would teach the new citizens of the American nation a “mortifying truth”: that civilizations rise and fall and once glorious empires could collapse into ruin. Gordon Sayre has argued that the trend in visiting ancient mounds which became popular for naturalists such as Barton, Jefferson, and the French historian and diplomat Francois-Rene de Chateaubriand should be situated as an exemplar of the intersection of antiquarianism and the emergence of a national identity, “Although the Mound Builders became an hallmark for American antique grandeur, the neoclassical fantasy that created them had close parallels in contemporary Europe. The English cultural elite at this time had made a ritual of the Grand Tour, visiting the ruins of Italy, musing over the meaning of fallen civilizations, and bringing back mementos of ancient Greece and Rome.”\textsuperscript{312}

In tracking the development of early republic antiquarianism as a discourse to establish scientific credibility, Andrew Lewis argues that the construction of the mound

\textsuperscript{310} Kolodny, 701.
builder mythology functioned dually to both elide western national expansion and to provide a gentlemanly gloss over excavations which were used to imagine an idyllic ancient America which was lost to a savage race of latecomers from Asia. In a letter to the chemist and clergyman Joseph Priestly from 1796, Barton offered his own account of the tumuli he excavated in the Ohio country,

From the obvious antiquity of the tumulus in which they were found; from their general fabric, or appearance, and from the materials out of which some of them are formed, it must at first sight, seem very improbable, that these articles are the work of any people in the state of society and improvement of the Indian or savage nations of North-America, that they are known to us. These nations…actually rank higher than many of the ancient and modern nations of the old-world, it must still be confessed, are in a very humble stage of society: humble, at least…in manners, in arts, and in sciences.

Archaeology was complemented by linguistics as part of the speculative historical fascination of ancient Native Americans. Jefferson dedicated a portion of Query XI in the Notes on the State of Virginia to hypotheses concerning the linguistic relations between native nations.

Great question has arisen from whence came those aboriginal inhabitants of America? Discoveries, long ago made, were sufficient to shew that a passage from Europe to America was always practicable, even to the imperfect navigation of ancient times… So that from this side also, inhabitants may have passed into America: and the resemblance between the Indians of America and the Eastern

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inhabitants of Asia, would induce us to conjecture, that the former are the
descendants of the latter, or the latter of the former: excepting indeed the Eskimaux,
who, from the same circumstance of resemblance, and from identity of language,
must be derived from the Groenlanders, and these probably from some of the northern
parts of the old continent. A knowledge of their several languages would be the most
certain evidence of their derivation which could be produced.\footnote{315}{Thomas Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia." In Notes on the State of Virginia and Other Related Documents, edited by David Waldstreicher, 142-52. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.}

In a letter to the physician and scientific promoter Thomas Beddoes from 1803,
Barton explicitly adopted the rhetoric of the Enlightenment science of man,

In the course of my inquiries into the languages of the Americans, I have discovered
many instances of affinity between the words of the Asiatic and American nations,
and those of the English… Of themselves, they have, I think, some value: but when
they are taken in connection with innumerable other facts, they seem to establish this
important point, which I have not a doubt will, ultimately, be the opinion of all
philosophers, either that all the existing nations of the earth are specifically the same,
or (for I do not positively contend, with Blumenbach and Camper, that all mankind
constitute but one species), that the ancestors of all the present races of men, were

In his travels through Georgia, Bartram commented on the number of mounds he saw
there and compared them to the *Sacro Monte* constructed by the followers of Saint Francis in
northern Italy.\footnote{317}{Sayre, 230.} In his response to Query IX of the “Observations on the Creek and
Cherokee Indians”, Bartram recalled his observations on the Muscogee *Chunky-Yards* and
speculated on their historical origins,
I inquired of the traders for what reason this area was called the Chunky-Yard; they were in general ignorant, yet they all seemed to agree in a lame story of its originating from its being the place where the Indians formerly put to death and tortured their captives…Indeed, I am convinced that the Chunky-Yards now, or lately, in use amongst the Creeks, are of a very ancient date—\textit{not the formation of the present Indians}.\footnote{William Bartram, "Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians." In \textit{William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians}, edited by Gregory Waselkov and Kathryn E. Holland Braund, 133-87. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995. My emphasis. This text was prepared in response to a set of queries on “artificial mounts or eminences” solicited by Benjamin Smith Barton in 1788. The text was, interestingly, recovered by Josiah Nott and forwarded to Samuel Morton sometime around 1842.}

Bartram’s ethnography reversed the sense of progress attributed by the stadial theorists and instead positioned sedentary and particularly industrialized, civilization as a morally corrupt degradation. In describing Creek society he observed,

If we consider them with respect to their private character or in a moral view, they must, I think, claim our approbation, if we divest ourselves of prejudice and think freely. As moral men they certainly stand in no need of European civilization. They are just, honest, liberal and hospitable to strangers; considerate, loving and affectionate to their wives and relations; fond of their children; industrious, frugal, temperate and persevering; charitable and forbearing. I have been weeks and months amongst them and in their towns, and never observed the least sign of contention or wrangling: never saw an instance of an Indian beating his wife, or even reproving her in anger. In this case they stand as examples of reproof to the most civilized nations, as not being defective in justice, gratitude and a good understanding; for indeed their wives merit their esteem and the most gentle treatment, they being industrious, frugal, careful, loving and affectionate.\footnote{Bartram, 490.}

This is not to indicate that Bartram took a wholly objective view concerning the polities he encountered; in several passages of the \textit{Travels} ethnography he comments on “national character” and other essentialist observations that echoed his father’s \textit{Observations}.

In writing of the Creeks he noted,
The national character of the Muscogulges, when considered in a political view, exhibits a portraiture of a great or illustrious hero. A proud, haughty and arrogant race of men; they are however, brave and valiant in war, ambitious of conquest, restless and perpetually exercising their arms, yet magnanimous and merciful to a vanquished enemy, when he submits and seeks their friendship and protection: always uniting the vanquished tribes in confederacy with them; when they immediately enjoy, unexceptionably, every right of free citizens, and are from that moment united in one common band of brotherhood: they were never known to exterminate a tribe.  

In several passages throughout the *Travels* ethnography, Bartram repeated an argument of the noble savage, a consistent trope in American natural history writing. In describing the primitive nature of the southeastern polities Bartram notes,

> It is astonishing, though a fact, as well as a sharp reproof to the white people, if they will allow themselves liberty to reflect and form a just estimate, and I must own elevates these people to the first rank amongst mankind, that they have been able to resist the continual efforts of the complicated host of vices, that have for ages overrun the nations of the old world, and so contaminated their morals; yet more so, since such vast armies of these evil spirits have invaded this continent, and closely invested them on all sides. Astonishing indeed! when we behold the ill, immoral conduct of too many white people, who reside amongst them: notwithstanding it seems natural, eligible and even easy for these simple, illiterate people to put in practice those beautiful lectures delivered to us by the ancient sages and philosophers, and recorded for our instruction.  

Evoking a “natural” society again positioned Bartram’s natural history as one which imagined the indigenous Americans as objects within a landscape. In *Some Hints & Observations, concerning the civilization of the Indians, or Aborigines of America* (speculatively dated to 1792), Bartram offered a complicated treatise on Native Americans and their future exchange with “White People” which echoed his father’s voice and his own trembling doubts. Summarizing that history Bartram observed that relations between natives,

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320 Bartram, 478.
321 Bartram, 491.
though not ‘strictly consider’d Aborigines of these Countries’ and Europeans. After commenting on the perceived treachery of some native nations during the American Revolution, Bartram posed a program for uniting the two people’s in a common world,

In order to recover the friendship & union of our neighboring, uncivilized nations, perhaps no more eligible, or laudable step can be pursued, than the introduction of our Language, System of Legislation, Religion, Manners, Arts & Sciences, & by the reestablishment of Trade & Commerce, in a peaceable & friendly manner amongst them.

Bartram’s ruminations on Native American origins must not be isolated from his other seemingly variegated pursuits; rather, the interlocking theories of the economy of nature and natural theology amount to a complex natural history of the early republic, which must be situated as a political and scientific document. Bartram’s oscillation between disbelieving and believing the antiquarian hypothesis that the present indigenous Americans were descendants of a barbaric western invasion further complicates his natural history as a program which could either excuse or critique the creeping conquests of first the British and then the American empires. In summation, by naturalizing Native Americans vis-à-vis natural history, Bartram configured indigenous peoples as simply one more element of natural theology and nature’s economy. In doing so he subtly denied their claim to sovereignty and thus apologized for empire.

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322 Bartram, "Some Hints & Observations, concerning the civilization, of the Indians, or Aborigines of America." 366. “Our Ancestors who first landed on these Coasts, were received by the Fathers, and Grandfathers of those Tribes, in the most friendly, and hospitable manner. They humanely and cheerfully treated them as welcome Guests…and voluntarily evacuated their Towns to accommodate them.”

323 Bartram, "Some Hints & Observations, concerning the civilization, of the Indians, or Aborigines of America." 368.
Conclusion: The Track of Bartram

In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs—in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time.

Titian Ramsey Peale and George Ord set sail from Philadelphia in the winter of 1817 for Savannah, Georgia. Upon arrival they joined their colleagues of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, William Maclure and Thomas Say. Peale, the son of the painter and museum impresario Charles Willson Peale, had united these men to follow the “track of Bartram” through the southeast. Ord was an ornithologist who had received zoological specimens from the Corps of Discovery Expedition, and established himself as a respected scientist in Philadelphia who completed the final two volumes of Alexander Wilson’s *American Ornithology*. Maclure secured his fame by surveying and composing the first complete geological map of the United States from 1807 to 1809 when his labors were published by the American Philosophical Society as *Observations on the Geology of the United States explanatory of a Geological Map*. Say, the great-nephew of William Bartram, would prove himself a competent observer of nature’s marvelous forms in his *American Entomology, or Descriptions of the Insects of North America* (1824-28) and *American Conchology, or Descriptions of the Shells of North America Illustrated From Coloured Figures From Original Drawings Executed from Nature* (1830-36). Ostensibly the outfit was convened to gather novel botanical, zoological, and geological specimens, as well

as Indian artifacts for analysis and display at the Academy. However, Peale brought along a copy of the *Travels* which, Say reported, he read diligently over the course of the trip, which suggests the journey was a kind of pilgrimage for the young artist.

Reports of violent skirmishes and attacks between Seminole, Muscogee, pirates, and American forces deterred the cadre of artist-naturalists at every turn of their trek into East Florida. An American naval squadron had been deployed to the Florida frontier the same month they began their journey. By the following winter the travelers decided, with disappointment, to turn north and return to Philadelphia by April of 1818. Retracing the trails Bartram rode upon would have not only have been a profitable collecting mission, but one that would have connected the rising generation of savants to their forefather whose work heralded a new wholly American scientific enterprise.

William Bartram’s influence on these men can be identified in their careers as naturalist-explorers and as writers who catalogued their discoveries. His influence looms in their scope and subject matter. Alexander Wilson, arguably Bartram’s most notable protégé, attempted to make an inventory of every bird that nested in the American landscape from the coastal plains to the mountainous backcountry. Say hoped to produce a compendium of every insect and shell he discovered. They convened in the Academy of Natural Sciences, an organization Bartram joined in its founding, which counted the naturalist and paleontologist Richard Harlan, the artist-explorer Charles Alexandre Lesueur, the naturalist-explorer Charles Pickering, among its first members. Corresponding members who joined the

325 Porter, 433.
Academy in its first decades included Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Nuttall, Georges Cuvier, and Alexander von Humboldt.\textsuperscript{326}

\textit{Concluding Remarks}

From their international cast of contributors, the American Philosophical Society and the Academy of Natural Sciences became truly global scientific institutions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. American science had ascended to international repute with engagements and collaboration across the Atlantic Ocean in England, France, Germany, and Scandinavia. Naturalists of the colonial and early republic periods crossed national and disciplinary boundaries and collected, and circulated across the ocean, specimens from the natural sciences (botany, geology,) as well as anthropological artifacts (objects plundered from indigenous burial chambers and towns), technological marvels and gadgets, and masterpieces from the arts of painting and statuary.

Lines of collaboration and participation across the Atlantic World would both be painstakingly cultivated, as in the friendship and exchange between John Bartram and Peter Collinson, or they could be the fruitful result of previous associations such as the mutually beneficial relationship between William Bartram and John Fothergill. Narratives of exploration and discovery could be expansions of terse diaries kept such as the \textit{Observations}, or epics of the American landscape and its moral grandeur such as the \textit{Travels}. Both volumes dwelled on the question of the antiquity of America, offering competing explanations of

ancient European settlement and the settlement of the Americas by native people. Additionally, both texts recommended their readers to consider the “improvement” of the nation through manipulating nature to economic and political ends. Narrating the natural history of the American landscape piqued the curiosity of not only naturalists and colonial administrators but poets and men of letters such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth, both of whom were inspired by William Bartram’s descriptive writing. What this history demonstrates is an intertwined co-production of science and empire. These expeditions were planned and executed under the banner of Baconian science; the fruits of these travels would not only benefit the travelers but the empire and the nation by mapping the productive capacities of the North American landscape. As naturalists in the colonies sought to establish their credibility and prove themselves to their metropolitan colleagues, they did so by reflexively diminishing the claims to knowledge already systematically made by indigenous Americans and presenting that knowledge as the hard won reward of their own endeavor.

Furthermore, this disenfranchisement of knowledge extended the imperial ambitions of both the British and American empires as they expanded westward and removed indigenous American populations from their territorial homelands. Finally, natural history and natural philosophy justified this removal through a racial science of man, which delegitimized Native Americans as unfit to inhabit the North American landscape. Versions of first environmental utility and second romanticism elided a nationalist program of
managing the landscape, recapitulating both British and American claims to being naturally destined and chosen to husband the North American continent.

Parallel narratives following this logic exist; one has only to consider the naturalistic explanations and apologies in the eighteenth century for Atlantic slavery. Susan Parrish and Judith Carney have made inroads into that history with respect to the British appropriation of African medical, agricultural, and botanical knowledge; however, given the limitations of this analysis I have not probed that dimension of early American natural history equally.³²⁷ Similarly, I have briefly touched on the subject of gender in natural history in this project in chapter one; however, there exists a need for more scholarship on this dimension. Susan Parrish and Sara Gronim have already laid the groundwork for that endeavor. Furthermore, while my analysis has sought to reconstruct and understand the image of nature the Bartrams produced through their work, there exists a tremendous gap in the historiography on the reconstruction of indigenous knowledge (pharmacology, botany, geology, etc…) in order to provide a kind of alternative history of science in colonial America and the early republic. Making matters more complicated, any future study will need to reconcile that history alongside the historical experiences of diaspora among both African and indigenous communities in the wake of the imperial expansion of Britain and the United States.

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