

ability to convey natural beauty without abandoning his concern for scientific accuracy.

To prepare watercolours of insect metamorphosis, Abbot collected eggs and caterpillars of butterflies and moths or larvae of beetles and grasshoppers. He raised these larvae to adulthood, recording the date of each stage as it occurred, and by the spring of 1813 knew the life history of around 350 different lepidoptera species.¹⁹ Studies of this type required extended periods of waiting. For on-going reference, Abbot prepared a master set of watercolours with descriptive notes which he constantly updated with new discoveries.²⁰ Abbot's reliance on a book of model watercolours and notes on the life cycle of an insect occasionally resulted in duplicate compositions. For the most part, however, compositions appear only once in the existing Abbot corpus.

By 1793 James Edward Smith, founder and president of the Linnean Society of London, had acquired a collection of 106 Abbot watercolours of lepidoptera illustrating discoveries since his arrival in America. Abbot's manuscript catalogue accompanied the drawings and described the first 104 in detail. Quite possibly Smith received them from Francillon, who acted as Abbot's agent throughout this period. In the 'Introductory Notes' of the manuscript catalogue, Abbot stated that he believed the collection was suitable for publication. If this was not feasible, he added, he would be content to have his name mentioned 'now & then' since 'we are all naturally fond . . . of recording and immortalizing our great Works'. He advised his prospective publisher to 'Prune and trim what you please of the following rude Notes' since they were not expressed 'in any scientific manner'.²¹

Smith's preparations for publication took approximately three years. He hired the London printmaker John Harris to prepare many of the etchings while he organised the text. In the preface to the volumes, Smith was careful to give Abbot credit for his role in the creation of the publication. He explained that Abbot was responsible for the descriptions of the habits of the different lepidoptera and the illustrations showing their metamorphoses together with the plants upon which they depended. His own role, Smith wrote, was simply to arrange and edit Abbot's manuscript so that it was suitable for publication. To distinguish Abbot's comments from his own, Smith placed each of his essays in a separate paragraph in a different typeface. He added that he alone was responsible for the classification and assignment of scientific names, which the untutored Abbot had completely neglected. In 1797 Smith completed his work on Abbot's manuscript and arranged for its publication in London as a two-volume work.

The Natural History of the Rarer Lepidopterous Insects of Georgia