



Figure 4: Large yellow spotted black Swallow tail Butterfly, *Equites Troes* [ca.1804] watercolour and graphite on wove paper,  $30.4 \times 23.8$  cm. Shows *Papilio palamedes* Drury with *Magnolia virginiana* L. (Sweet Bay). Formerly John Francillon's personal collection, now British Museum (Natural History).

foliage, although his attention to botanical detail remained inconsistent throughout his career.

The idea of illustrating the metamorphosis of an insect with its food plant did not originate with John Abbot. Maria Sibylla Merian developed this approach in the seventeenth century. Before Merian, the naturalist Johannes Goedaert had illustrated life cycles of insects but he did not include food plants. Innovative as they were, Merian's compositions expressed an energised quality not found in nature. Others followed Merian's lead, including the English artist Eleazar Albin. Although Albin's insects and plants appeared more natural, he often relied on contrived geometric compositions, balancing insects in opposing positions at the corners or along the sides adjacent to the food plants. Abbot's contribution was his