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“One of the most remarkable aspects of the founding era was the willingness of so many Americans to believe that their shaky young republic was somehow destined to dominate North America. . . . This elegantly argued, graceful, and rewarding book invites us not only to reimagine the American Revolutionary impulse, but to reassess the nature of the nation it created.”—**Fred Anderson**, author, with Andrew Clayton, of *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America, 1500–2000*

THE NATION’S NATURE

How Continental Presumptions Gave Rise to the United States of America

In one of *Common Sense*’s most ringing phrases, Thomas Paine declared it “absurd” for “a continent to be perpetually governed by an island.” Such powerful words, coupled with powerful ideas, helped spur the United States to independence.

In **THE NATION’S NATURE (September 2011; UVA Press)**, James D. Drake examines how a relatively small number of inhabitants of the Americas, huddled along its east coast, came to mentally appropriate the entire continent and to think of their nation as America. Focusing on the intersection between continental taxonomies and nationalism during the Revolutionary era, Drake demonstrates how British North American colonists’ participation in scientific debates and imperial contests helped form their notions of global geography. These ideas, in turn, solidified American nationalism, spurred a revolution, and shaped the ratification of the Constitution.

Synthetic and broad in its temporal scope—stretching from the late seventeenth century to the ratification of the Constitution—**THE NATION’S NATURE** also compares the development of thought in the British mainland colonies with that in Spanish America, the West Indies, and South Asia. In telling the story of how continental presumptions gave rise to the United States, this book elaborates upon existing literature on nationalism, historical geography, the history of science, the American Revolution, and Atlantic history.

James D. Drake, Professor of History at Metropolitan State College of Denver, is the author of *King Philip’s War: Civil War in New England, 1675–1676*.

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