

reckless looks different when set against the background of so many career trajectories that were generating little in the way of either prestige or income.

Beyond those with a special interest in naval topics, this book will be of great value to those who study professions and professionalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Wilson provides a detailed and historically contextualized discussion of what formal or informal training might be involved for each role, including qualifying examinations. Historians of gentility and “the gentleman” should take note of this book as well, although gender or masculinity do not really make an appearance as categories of analysis, even in the discussion of uniforms or in the extended section on honor, dueling, and duty. In an overview chapter, “Naval Officers’ Social Status,” Wilson speaks directly to readers of Linda Colley and David Cannadine and offers many suggestive remarks on where these trends fit onto our bigger picture of British society in this period.

There are a number of missed opportunities to speak to a wider academic readership. An interesting subsection on the influence of the evangelical movement among naval officers is buried in the chapter “Patronage and Promotion Prospects,” and a discussion of naval officers who also served as members of Parliament gets the same treatment. A thoughtful digression on the challenges of command as it might relate to deeper social tensions (44–48) is subsumed in a chapter on careers. The successes, and failures, of the officers when they faced discontented or even mutinous crews were surely informed by their exact social background and their associated attitudes. However, Wilson’s focus quickly returns to professionalism in its narrow, technocratic sense: the officer was to “maintain discipline ... [and] exercise his ship into good working order; and to face the dangers of the sea and the enemy” (56).

In a work that presents itself as a “collective biography” (3) with a particular interest in social status and upward mobility, and despite the nuanced discussion of how naval status might or might not translate into gentility, there is no sustained analysis of how these men fit into their communities on shore. This subject receives only intermittent attention: “Both commissioned and warrant officers ... attended parties and balls, made friends with members of the landed gentry, and wooed the daughters of rich merchants” (183). On this point, Wilson is content with anecdotes rather than data. This stands in contrast to the studies of the social impact of the slave trade in Liverpool, for example, which quantify the marriage prospects of the slave ship captains in detail, as well as their property purchases and the location of their retirement. *A Social History of British Naval Officers*, then, is undeniably a useful contribution, although one that works from a somewhat constricted definition of social history’s appropriate scope and depth.

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NATHANIEL WOLLOCH. *Nature in the History of Economic Thought: How Natural Resources Became an Economic Concept*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2017. Pp. 272. \$149.95 (cloth).
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Nathaniel Wolloch’s *Nature in the History of Economic Thought* is a study concerned with intellectual continuity. It argues that underpinning the analyses of nature developed by mainstream economic theory, has been a single core theme: “the emphasis on the ineluctable need to maximize the use of natural resources and thus further human development” (x). This thesis is supported with an impressive range of evidence. In part one Wolloch traces the emergence of this conception of natural resources in antiquity and its use in medieval, Renaissance, and

mercantilist thought. In part two he shows how Enlightenment writers put natural resources at the center of their analyses by conceiving of resources' effective utilization as the driving force behind material progress and material progress itself as the key determiner of social and cultural development. These ideas, and the form of stadial history they helped to support, Wolloch argues, went on to provide the intellectual framework for the classical tradition in political economy. In part three he explores the specific policy recommendations regarding natural resources advanced by Enlightenment and classical writers. With an epilogue, Wolloch continues the story into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Wolloch's argument is both a significant and a convincing one. As the study emphasizes, other historians of economic thought have tended to focus on moments of change and transformation. Through rejecting such an approach and identifying, and scrupulously documenting, a core general consensus regarding nature, this account makes an important contribution to our understanding of the foundational ideas of political economy. Equally significantly, Wolloch is careful to show that his concern is with continuity not stasis. The point being made here is not that economic thought has failed to change, but rather that its development has involved a series of ever more sophisticated elaborations on a core premise. At one level, such a claim serves to demonstrate the fundamental originality of modern ecological economics. It was the increasingly evident modern environmental crisis, Wolloch argues, that led to the rejection of the idea that the utilization of nature was a human prerogative that could, and should, be continued without any limitation. The insight ensured the emergence in the latter part of the twentieth century, "finally," of a truly "novel development in the economic consideration of nature" (211). The book, however, is not a defense of this new direction. Indeed, Wolloch emphasizes that ecological concerns remain very much at the margins of modern economic debates, and is directly critical of a form of leftist environmentalism based around a "Rousseauistic dream of suspended-animation progress" (196). What is required instead, he suggests tentatively, is an approach that avoids both the untrammelled environmental exploitation of neoconservative analyses and the simplistic ecocriticism of the left and provides "greater, but more careful and sophisticated utilization of nature" (196). As a consequence, *Nature in the History Economic Thought* is both an account of the evolutionary development of the dominant tradition in economic thought and a broad defense of its continuing value.

The notion of intellectual progress that underpins such comments is responsible for many of the book's merits. It also creates some problems. The commentary is structured around a conventional taxonomy of increasingly sophisticated eras in economic analysis; the mercantilism of the seventeenth century gives way to the Enlightenment political economy of the eighteenth century, which in turn is succeeded by the classical economics of the nineteenth century. Some writers are conceived of as firmly rooted in the dominant intellectual paradigms of their era. Others, meanwhile, are shown to be partially out of kilter with contemporary thought; thus, the eighteenth-century writers Josiah Tucker and James Steuart are presented as retaining a loyalty to outmoded, mercantilist ideas, while their predecessors William Petty and Josiah Child are said to foreshadow future Enlightenment advancements. Key to this approach is the suggestion that a series of accepted economic doctrines and practices characterize each stage of political economy's development. As a result of this, however, little room is given in the book's methodological framework, particularly in discussions of mercantilist and Enlightenment texts, for debates *between* contemporary writers. Indeed, it is noteworthy that Steve Pincus's influential account of competing Tory and Whig versions of mercantilist political economy, each dependent on its own understanding of natural resources, is not referred to (Steve Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* [2009], 366–99).

Wolloch's emphasis on consensus, rather than conflict, undoubtedly has its advantages and he is able to trace, with admirable clarity, a narrative of intellectual progress across multiple centuries. What gets lost at times, however, is a sense of the contextual significance of the issues under discussion. To give one example: the book's account of Josiah Child's conception

of natural resources, makes no mention of the role his work played in the development of Tory foreign and imperial policy. Rather, the local impact of his work is ignored and he is conceived of as “evincing on occasion certain quasi-Enlightenment notions of progress” and “preceding the logic of eighteenth-century thought” (22). Such issues also have consequences for the book’s readability. Wolloch warns his readers in the preface that some sections will be “difficult reading to all but specialists” (x) and, rather ominously, makes reference to the “lackluster” (127) nature of the source material that he intends to discuss in the book’s third part. The root cause of these issues, however, seems to lie less in the weaknesses of the primary material under consideration and more in the book’s own reluctance to trace the economic and political issues that were at stake in discussions concerning nature.

Despite such criticisms, this study constitutes a considerable achievement. It is well researched, well organized, and, through Wolloch’s eschewing the historiographically “easy”—or perhaps “easier”—option of focusing on change, makes an important contribution to debates about the development of economic theory over the *longue durée*.

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