

animals were recovered and we lost 13, for a recovery of 94 percent — very similar to the sealers' claim seventy-five years earlier. Later, Murray argues that fish provide only a small part of the fur seal's diet. Food habits of fur seals have been studied repeatedly, and it is well established that fish comprise over 90 percent of the total annual diet.

The era of uncontrolled pelagic killing of fur seals was a black period by any standard. Canadian shipowners, skippers, and hunters contributed their share to this sorry picture. Murray tells us about it, but he is not content that we see the blackness of it all; he wants it blacker than black. By emphasizing Canadian and British villainy, he diverts attention from the outcome which — late though it was — was not too late. The international agreement of 1911 was a first for maritime nations seeking to protect a common marine resource and, not only a first, it worked. With protection, seal numbers quickly recovered from the alarming low of 1911 to the near-normal levels of today; a victory for the seals (and the biologists), and for the politicians and lawyers who thrashed out the final international agreement.

The Vagabond Fleet includes colour plates of marine paintings by Maurice Chadwick. Chadwick's splendid illustrations provide the reader with a graphic reminder of both the old sealing schooners and the changing moods of the west coast: from a howling nor'wester to the fog-shrouded hills of a calm anchorage.

South Pender Island, B.C.

DAVID J. SPALDING

Whalers No More: A History of Whaling on the West Coast, by William Arnold Hagelund. Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Publishing, 1987. Pp. iv, 211; illus., maps, diagrams. \$24.95.

On The Northwest: Commercial Whaling in the Pacific Northwest, 1790-1967, by Robert Lloyd Webb. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988. Pp. xxi, 425; 71 b/w photos, line drawings, maps. \$29.95.

The whaling industry off the British Columbia coast has finally found almost simultaneously not just one but two historians for a story not widely known, even in the province. Since one is a popular history and the other a research monograph, they nicely complement each other.

The heart of Captain Hagelund's volume is an account of his season in 1941 as a green 17-year-old seaman on a steam whale hunter off British Columbia's Queen Charlotte Islands. It's a lively piece catching all the echoes of those times — the desperate search for a job, the lack of proper gear even to adequate clothing, the tough conditions, the stingy employers, the appalling lack of safety. Yet, too, it has a rather romantic and more universal note — the excitement of the chase, the wonder of the sea, and that unquenchable optimism of youth so celebrated by another seafaring writer, Joseph Conrad.

Hagelund's trip to the whaling grounds took place on board the Norwegian-built steam whaler *Brown*, one of the fleet of the Consolidated Whaling Corporation, based in Victoria's Inner Harbour, where the ships were a familiar part of the winter landscape. His whaling was from one of the two stations in the Queen Charlotte Islands — Naden Harbour on the northwest tip of Graham Island at the northern end of the Queen Charlottes — but he also called in at Rose Harbour, the other station on Kunghit Island at the southern extremity of the island group.

His detailed descriptions, supplemented by diagrams, of the whale catcher, the Foyn gun and harpoon, and the process of catching and bringing in the huge mammals, as well as similar descriptions and diagrams of the whaling stations and the methods of rendering down the carcasses, are based on first-hand observation and constitute one of the most valuable parts of the book. Useful too are his appendices with lists of the whale catching fleet, the whaling companies, and the catches by year.

However interesting Hagelund's personal experiences are, they are too brief to make a full-length book — comprising in fact less than a quarter of the text — so he has supplemented them with a popular history of Pacific Coast whaling companies. In the second part of the volume, Hagelund sets out to tell a history of the twentieth-century industry through interviews. "The whaling industry in its glory years," he argues, "was mainly a story of the men who made it: the full-time gunners and pilots and the entrepreneurs who provided the crucial management." So it is to the survivors of those days that he turns, mostly to those connected with the successive Victoria companies that terminated with his own employers, the Consolidated Whaling Corporation. But the accident of surviving to be interviewed, of course, determines the author's sources. In spite of his dictum, cited above, on the relative importance of gunners and pilots, two of his liveliest interviews are with marine engineers, Charlie Watson of the whale catchers and Harry Osselson of the tender *Gray*. But he does interview whaler captain "Dode" MacPherson, and narrates the life of captain

William Heater through his grandson Allan, a contemporary of Hagelund and himself a master mariner.

The book's account of the entrepreneurs in the industry is much less immediate than that of the men who manned the ships. The founder of the Victoria whaling enterprise, G. W. Sprott Balcom, was bought out of the whaling business in 1910 by Mackenzie and Mann, the Canadian Northern magnates, and was dead by 1925. So Hagelund's account comes from Balcom's son Lawrence, who was too young to have participated fully in the family enterprise. Likewise with Balcom's partner, captain William Grant, an almost legendary seaman and well-known Victoria figure at the turn of the century — that interview is with Jim Goodwin, who knew Grant only by sight through his father who was in towboating in Grant's time. The same kind of interview is also used to trace the activities of the most prominent whaling entrepreneur of Victoria, William Schupp. Here Hagelund has access to company records through Schupp's grandson, William Lagen, but Lagen's interview mostly recounts his own experiences as a boy travelling with his father and mother to an Alaska whaling station which the father managed for Schupp. For more direct memories of the Victoria Whaling Company he cannot turn to the late Alfus Garcin, general manager for two decades before its windup in 1947, but just to his son. William Mackenzie and Donald Mann, whaling company operators from 1910 to 1915, are simply mentioned. Presumably, as heads of a railway-based conglomerate, they do not qualify as whaling entrepreneurs.

The last whaling venture on the B.C. coast is much closer in time. Western Whaling operated from its Coal Harbour station at the northern end of Vancouver Island from 1948 to 1969. So Hagelund is able to interview both Hector Cowie, the general manager for most of the time, and Arnie Borgn, a Norwegian whaling captain brought in to deal with problems caused by Western Whaling's shortage of experienced men.

Hagelund's work illustrates one problem of using oral sources. What do you do with the product of interviews — keep each one together to increase the impact of individual narratives, or divide each up and group the treatment of a single subject by different interviewees? Hagelund, though not consistently, opts for the first. The result is a set of stimulating portraits but also a good deal of repetition.

The monograph by Webb has a different balance from Hagelund's work. As we have seen, Hagelund begins his detailed narration, as befits an oral history, at the very limit of living memory in 1905, when Scott Balcom and William Grant began their whaling company. But Webb

reaches 1905 only at the halfway point in his 300-page text, a fact that neatly illustrates the overlap of the two volumes.

Webb's book is a research history beginning with pre-commercial whaling by those Nootkan peoples of the west coast of Vancouver Island and the adjoining Washington state coast who were whalers at the time of the first European contacts. For Webb, the historical record begins with eighteenth-century explorations. The names of Bering, Perez, and especially James Cook appear in the unfamiliar context of contemporary comments on whales and whaling. Webb even offers a novel analysis of the Nootka Sound crisis, the first clash on the coast of European powers in the 1790s, documenting his claim that it was partly about the perceived whaling potential of the area. He then shows what happened when the whaling grounds of the North Pacific came within the orbit of a commercial industry expanding world-wide from its North Atlantic base.

Webb covers in some detail the era of sailing ship whalers à la Herman Melville, who came to the North Pacific as catches diminished in the southern part of that ocean. Most revealing to a modern reader is the incredible waste from the high proportion of whales "lost" after being harpooned and either killed or wounded. Closer to home, he reviews the largely unsuccessful efforts to establish local whaling ventures in colonial and early provincial British Columbia. Only those changes in technology that produced the harpoon gun, the steam whaler, and the Rissmüller patented method of rendering down whale carcasses made a successful industry possible after 1900.

The second half of Webb's text covers that twentieth-century industry which operated from shore stations in British Columbia, Alaska, and Washington state from its beginnings in 1904-05 to its closure in 1967. This is, of course, going over the same events as Hagelund. Webb's approach is, however, a scholarly one — he makes good use of his extensive bibliography of documents, reports, and secondary works to present a more elaborate picture of the interaction of government policy, corporate organization, changing market conditions, and altered social attitudes.

It would, nevertheless, be unfair to say that Webb's portrait, more nuanced as it may be, is more compelling than Hagelund's — in fact, in all the scholarly striving something of the colour of the industry is lost. A balanced judgement might praise Hagelund for flavour, Webb for fact — or, could we say, Hagelund for sizzle, Webb for steak (whale meat, naturally!).