

Puget Sound Whales for Sale
The Fight to End Orca Hunting.

SANDRA POLLARD

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2014. Illustrations, notes,
bibliography. 190 pp. \$19.99)

Pollard's history of commercial orca capture in Washington State's Puget Sound comes at an opportune time for anti-captivity advocates of killer whales, with the recent documentary *Blackfish* and its widely seen and compelling tale of orca whales caught and utilized in the entertainment industry. Pollard's is narrative with significant parallels—not least because both include marine fisherman Donald Goldsberry as a principal agent in the hunting and capture of its cetacean prota-gonists—though it succeeds in significant breadth and depth the former.

Making liberal use of interviews, correspondence, and newspaper accounts, as well as less intensive use of legislative, government agency, and nonprofit records, Pollard constructs an easily digestible narrative for lay individuals curious about the origins of the orca hunting which took place of the Northern and Southern Resident whale groups of Puget Sound between 1965 and 1976. The text spends a full chapter each on the corralling of Namu and Shamu, the first two orcas successfully captured and sold to marine parks for the public's entertainment, before tracing the larger arc of the commercial capture industry in the area which began in 1967,

peaked in 1970, and began its decline in 1972 with the passage of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

The most successful and provocative moments in the text are when Pollard demonstrates the uneven terrain of the first years of orca hunting by Donald Goldsberry and partner Ted Griffin and reveals the need for critical interrogation of how multifarious commercial, scientific, and military impulses come together in exploiting natural resources. This often messy and contentious sociology of knowledge resulted in not only basic physiological and biometric data of the Puget Sound killer whales like size, sex, diet, and eyesight, vocal, and echolocation abilities, but basic behavior and intra-pod relationships as well. Indeed, the most interesting scenes come when Pollard demonstrates the degree to which these various interests converged in the hunting of killer whales to produce much of the early understanding of their wild existence but also play tug-of-war with their future. Unfortunately, such instances in the text pass quickly by with little in the way of the further reflection they would need to interest scholars combing the secondary literature.

Ultimately too, and unfortunately, *Puget Sound Whales for Sale* constructs a narrative that is too one-dimensional and lacking in nuance and depth. Characters are quick brush strokes, defined by their actions, and uncomplicated beyond single-factor motivations. Hundreds of Puget Sound whales were captured during the period

Pollard covers, often forcing her into a series of short vignettes which are over almost as soon as they've begun (partially, and understandably, because so many whales often died shortly after capture).

The reader will however wish for far more engagement with, for instance, the construction of legal language in any of the related conservations laws as it was informed by the various legislators, researchers, commercial interests, and the public looking to end orca hunting. Lawmaking constitutes a balancing act which rarely occurs smoothly, especially when lucrative contracts promise commercial hunters tens of thousands of dollars for each captured whale, scientific institutions get wind of exciting new research subjects, and the military senses potential use. Likewise, the narrative lacks sufficient explanation for what drove officials to begin calling for a moratorium on whale hunting in the first place, or sustained public antagonism. Occasionally, for instance, Pollard hints at the wider concerns that stirred up opponents—like fear for the whales' well-being during the capture or in captivity, or the exploitation by private individuals of the state's public resource—but neglects to interrogate such nuance at any length, and in the end "the public" emerges as a monolithic entity

Ry Marcattilio-McCracken
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