Huggan, Graham. "Sperm Count: The Scoresbys and the North." *Colonialism, Culture, Whales: The Cetacean Quartet*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. 25–56. Environmental Cultures. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350010925.ch-002>>.

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Sperm Count: The Scoresbys and the North

For Scoresby, [the] greatest significance [of the northern sea] was that it provided whalers with a livelihood that could make an enlightened contribution to the nation.

Michael Bravo ('Geographies of Exploration and Improvement')

[W]e can't read the darkness, Mr Scoresby.

Serafina Pekkala (*Northern Lights*)

Prologue: Double acts

One of the most colourful characters in Philip Pullman's Arctic-oriented trilogy *His Dark Materials* (1995–2000) is the gun-toting Texan balloonist Lee Scoresby, a kind of high northern cowboy from the deep south who, as Pullman suggests, combines the looks and some of the characteristics of the strait-laced nineteenth-century English explorer William Scoresby and the famously sinister-looking American spaghetti-western villain, Lee Van Cleef (www.goodreads.com/characters/1160-lee-scoresby). Pullman's character is no villain, but it would not be entirely appropriate to describe him as a hero either; instead, he exhibits the moral ambivalence – the constitutive doubleness – that is often seen as being one of the principal features of Pullman's text (Lenz and Scott 2015; Rayment-Pickard 2004).

It seems probable that Pullman knows more than he is letting on about the historical Scoresby – or the two historical Scoresbys, to be more precise, for William Scoresby Senior's legendary exploits as a navigator in the Arctic would later be matched (some would say eclipsed) by those of William Scoresby Junior, his son (Bravo 2006; Hoare 2009). And it is probable that Pullman knows more than he cares to admit about the reasons behind the Scoresbys' celebrity. For both father and son, in addition to being explorers of the high north, made their fortunes from the northern whaling industry. And they did so seemingly just at the right time, during the so-called 'heroic age' (Barrow 2001: 2) that would run from roughly 1750 to 1850, even if the younger Scoresby, sensitive to the mounting difficulties caused by a potentially catastrophic combination of increasing competition, increasing risk, and increasingly inadequate technology, was far-sighted enough to retire in the early 1820s, whereupon he became a parish vicar, albeit one – as we will see – with a notably scientific bent. Finally, it seems likely that Pullman has knowledge of this unusual career shift as well, especially given the context of his scathing attack on the established church in *His Dark Materials*, which he also maps onto an equally blistering assault on the follies of Britain's expansionist ambitions in the high north.

In this chapter, I want to look at some of the different discursive strands – especially those relating to commercial whaling, northern exploration, and imperial masculinity – that can be pulled together around one of British

maritime history's most intriguing double acts, the Scoresbys. To some degree, my argument follows Philip Hoare's in his excellent 2009 popular historical study, *Leviathan* (see also Preface and Chapter 1). First, like Hoare, I use whaling lore, which I take here as combining scientific and popular understandings, to demonstrate the entanglement of *human* history and *natural* history, with violence (which is as much human on human as human on animal or animal on animal) being at once its most conspicuous by-product and its sometimes emotionally shattering result. Second – and also like Hoare – I place literary representation at the centre of this tangle of historical relations and events, adopting what might be broadly conceived (even if Hoare himself is not especially forthcoming about his own methods) to be an *environmental humanities* approach. This approach, first sketched out in my Preface then developed throughout the book, further challenges the boundaries between *cultural* history and *environmental* history, not least by looking at the reciprocal rather than one-way relationship between humans and animals, one presupposition being that whales have culture, too, and that cetacean cultures and the imaginaries that surround them are neither restricted to nor circumscribed by the human domain.

Finally, I place the Scoresbys – no more than bit players in Hoare's overwhelmingly Melville-inspired account – as key representative figures in the uneasy transition between two broadly defined eras in the history of British whaling: a time when whaling was not yet a full-fledged, fully mechanized global industry, but was no longer (or at least no longer primarily) a regionally based if internationally competitive artisanal trade (Barrow 2001; Bravo 2006; Jackson 1978). William Junior, in particular, was keenly conscious of this transition, and to some extent lived through it. An accomplished, forward-thinking scientist, he recognized the value of developing the innovative techniques that would be needed for whaling to flourish as a mass-scale maritime industry. But at another level, he wanted no part of that emergent industry, which from the early decades of the nineteenth century onwards would not just transform the social and economic conditions of whaling, but increasingly shift its geographical axis of commercial activity from north to south (Burnett 2012; Jackson 1978). This perhaps, in the broadest sense of that always tricky term, might be described as whaling history's 'imperial' moment, even if the Scoresbys' own historically earlier professional ambitions, which

acknowledged the political as well as economic advantages of combining whaling trips with (ideally) government-funded journeys of northern exploration and discovery, were bound up whether they liked it or not in a larger, international 'scramble for the Arctic' which had distinctly imperialistic overtones that remain present in British commercial and geopolitical designs upon the Arctic today (Craciun 2009; Huggan and Jensen 2016).

Fathers and sons

The Scoresbys' action-packed lives, like those of many a celebrated father-and-son combination, can be used as a kind of emotional barometer for testing the changing temperature of the times. It is tempting to turn here to one of the most famous British literary examples, namely Edmund Gosse's 1907 memoir *Father and Son: A Study of Two Temperaments*, which was read by its own author as 'the record of a struggle between two temperaments, two consciences and almost two epochs' (Gosse 1983 [1907]: 35), and by some of its later commentators as a modern existential 'manifesto announcing the right of the individual [acting] against the dictates of tradition and parental values to fashion his inner life for himself' (Abbs 1983: 12; for a different view, more sympathetically inclined towards Gosse Senior, see also Thwaite 2002). Still, we should be wary of turning the clock back and using this as a template for the Scoresbys. For while it is certainly the case that William Senior, like Philip Henry Gosse, could be a forbiddingly authoritarian figure, his authority was rarely challenged; and while his son, like Edmund Gosse, undoubtedly had the more subtly enquiring temperament, he never came close to, nor for that matter demonstrated the remotest interest in, shaking the orthodoxies of his inherited Protestant faith. It may also be the case that, like the younger Gosse, William Junior comes across as the 'softer', more impressionable figure, caught between two eras and never entirely comfortable in either. But in some ways, he was very much a man of his time whose university education in Edinburgh would give him access to some of the finest minds of the Scottish Enlightenment (Bravo 2006); and if he remains a quintessentially self-interrogating modern figure, that is less because he consciously breaks with tradition than because he brings together seemingly incompatible traditions, coming to inhabit the uneasy hiatus between the future and the past.

While some attention will be given in what follows to Scoresby Senior (1760–1829), dutifully described by his son as the ultimate practical man, distinguished by his ‘extraordinary enterprise’ (*Memorials* 121; see also Hoare 2009: 283–287), the spotlight will shine on Scoresby Junior (1789–1857), who was seen no less gushingly by his early biographers as an exemplary man of *action* (navigator and whaler), man of *learning* (scientist and educator), and perhaps above all man of *faith* whose tireless work for the church, arguably outstripping his earlier exploits as a ‘learned whaler’ (Bravo 2006: 533), spanned a period of over thirty years. Scoresby’s nephew Robert Scoresby-Jackson, availing himself of his memoirs three years after his death, would come up with the following comprehensive catalogue of his achievements. Scoresby, he says, was:

An individual of a singularly active and observant mind, who was ever careful to record and preserve his observations; who in early life enlarged the sphere of his researches by repeated voyages; was the first to make an accurate survey of the east coast of Greenland, and who penetrated further north than any of his contemporaries; who devoted the latter half of his life to the moral instruction and amelioration of his fellow-creatures; a philosopher whose acute intellect embraced some of the subtlest subjects of physical science; a sincere believer and earnest advocate of religious truth, and withal a zealous and indefatigable practical philanthropist. (Scoresby-Jackson 1860: vi)

Hyperbole aside, this is a passingly accurate list that highlights the broad sweep of Scoresby’s accomplishments. It also indicates what his nephew would describe as Scoresby’s supreme adaptability: equally at home in the rough and tumble of life at sea and in the more refined company of his Wernerian Society scientific colleagues, ‘[Scoresby] could be the minister, the sailor or the man of science as circumstances required – he could be everything, in short, that was compatible with his Christian profession’ (326).¹ Not that Scoresby was as canny as this implies; on the contrary, in his dealings with the Admiralty, in particular, he exhibited a good deal of naivety. This has been interpreted by more sympathetic biographers as a sign of the willingness of senior figures at the time – in particular, the famously manipulative Second Secretary to the British Admiralty, Sir John Barrow – to exploit the goodness of a clever if callow young man for their own personal and professional benefit;

and by less sympathetic ones as a confirmation of Scoresby's egregious lack of political acumen: 'For most of his life', says Fergus Fleming, 'he was to be the establishment's willing dupe' (1998: 32).

Probably the most balanced portrait to date is by the environmental historian Michael Bravo, who positions Scoresby as a Scottish-trained, Protestant-influenced Enlightenment improver whose remarkable scientific achievements in the maritime disciplines of hydrology, oceanography, and nautical magnetism, though critically acclaimed within his own inner circle, were only belatedly given the popular recognition they deserved. Scoresby was an improver in a philanthropic sense as well, and these altruistic sympathies – most evident in later life, but instilled in him at an early age by his father – were rooted in a Protestant work ethic that owed less to his own broad-church Anglican sentiments than to his father's more puritanical strain of Wesleyanism, and which was 'driven by a zealous spirit towards moral and natural truth' that would manifest itself, not just in his religious teachings, but in all aspects of his life (Bravo 2006: 533). Bravo usefully points here to what he calls 'the three profound ontological arenas in Scoresby's world – the oceans, Christian faith, and natural knowledge' (533). He then embeds these in a late eighteenth-century context of 'rapid capitalist expansion' (518) in which the British whaling trade both required and profited from the kinds of 'enlightened, useful knowledge' (519) supplied by an emergent bourgeois class of merchant-navigators like Scoresby, who succeeded impressively in harnessing the traditional skills of the industrial artisan to the modern discoveries of the scientific savant (533).

At the centre of all of this were Scoresby's unshakable religious beliefs, which saw to it that *observation* was dutifully combined with *observance* (as with his father, there could be no question of activity of any kind, commercial or recreational, on the Sabbath), and which had few moral scruples about whaling, the hunting and killing of God's creatures counting as one example among illimitable others of man's divinely sanctioned superiority over the rest of creation within a larger providential context in which all animals, however mighty, would inexorably 'fall victims to the prowess of man and [be] rendered subservient to his convenience in life' (*Account*, vol. 2: 240). Scoresby's unflinching professional dedication to improving the efficiency of methods for catching whales, although it predated the development of some of the techniques that would later become associated with modern industrial

whaling, thus needs to be seen in a double context in which *providence* is tied to *progress*, and both of these to the more mundane task of making money, which is as good a way as any of doing God's work. This suggests in turn that, whatever its well-documented flaws,² Max Weber's early twentieth-century account of the symbiotic link between the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism (his terms) has multiple resonances with the Scoresbys' work, particularly insofar as it insists on what Weber calls 'the providential interpretation of profit-making, [which in turn] justifies the [day-to-day] activities of the [forward-thinking] business man' (Weber 1974 [1930]: 163). Even closer to the grain is Weber's glancing reference to the acquisitive Wesleyan principles by which good Christians should, in Wesley's apodictic phrase, 'gain all they can and save all they can' (quoted in Weber 1974: 175). Scoresby Senior, an evangelical Wesleyan himself, would no doubt have approved of this; but so too his more accommodating son, who looked forward to what Weber calls the emergence of a full-blown 'bourgeois economic ethic' (177):

With his consciousness of standing in the fullness of God's grace and being visibly blessed by Him, the bourgeois business man, as long as he remained within the bounds of formal correctness, as long as his moral conduct was spotless and the use to which he put this wealth was not objectionable, could follow his pecuniary interests as he would and feel that he was fulfilling a duty in doing so. (176–177)

As is well known, Weber's work involves an attempt to sketch out the lineaments of a particular, Western form of capitalism that is backed up by the latest developments in the natural sciences and 'the rational ethics of ascetic Protestantism' (27). There can be no doubt that these two support mechanisms were integral to the professional careers as well as personal world views of the Scoresbys, especially William Junior, and if it might be pushing things a little to describe either man as 'ascetic', in neither case was there a contradiction (and Weber certainly wouldn't have seen one either) between the strictures of rational asceticism – temperance for instance – and what Weber calls the 'impulsive enjoyment of life' (167).

A further connection exists between the Scoresbys and two of Weber's representative rationalist types, the 'colonial entrepreneur' and the 'capitalistic adventurer' (20), although the inevitable sketchiness of both types fails to

allow for the kind of detail needed to distinguish William Senior from William Junior, or to account for the complexities of either figure. Notwithstanding, in the case of both Scoresbys, the adjective 'practical' was routinely invoked to cover many of the activities they pursued as well as to justify the violence, explicit or implicit, bound up in them. Hence Scoresby Junior's extravagant praise for his 'practical' father, who is presented in his 1851 biographical account as a paragon of common sense if not a man (like himself) of social refinement or formal learning; as a scientist by default rather than by design whose formidable 'applied intelligence' helped turn him into one of the most successful whalers of his times (*Memorials* 213). And hence the equally lavish praise that has often been meted out to Scoresby Junior himself, who was scarcely less successful as a northern whaling captain than his father, and more successful still in working out 'how to make whaling a viable vehicle for the scientific exploration of the Arctic' (Bravo 2006: 533): a parallel achievement that has since arguably earned him his place in the pantheon of famous British navigator-explorers even if, repeatedly marginalized as he was by the Admiralty, this recognition largely escaped him during his life.

Not a violent man by nature, Scoresby Junior is seen by most of his biographers as being somewhat timid and reserved, even if some of his more audacious exploits at sea gainsay this; however, he was directly involved in a business that was as violent as any in his day. In true hagiographic style, Tom and Cordelia Stamp try to downplay this by calling him a 'friend rather than an exploiter of nature' (1976: xii), but this depends on a rather charitable view of whaling that Scoresby himself would have been highly unlikely to endorse. On the contrary, in his scientific books, notably his two-volume *Account of the Arctic Regions* (1820) – the most comprehensive study of its time – Scoresby is only too clear about the dangers involved in hunting whales, speaking with some sensitivity about the pain involved for both whalers and whales themselves in capturing and destroying the great animals, only to insist almost immediately that 'the object of the adventure [and] the value of the prize' are too great 'to be sacrificed to feelings of compassion' (*Account*, vol. 1: 472). Here as elsewhere in his substantial body of written work, Scoresby is supremely aware of the violence of the whaling enterprise and its risks for humans and animals alike, but he also talks counter-intuitively about the 'joy of capture' (*Account*, vol. 1: 472). In the next section of this chapter, I want to associate this 'joy' with

the spectacle of whaling – a history, both experiential and representational, in which violence has long functioned as a standard commodity – and with what Scoresby calls the ‘beautiffulness of manly excitement’ bound up in the seafaring life (quoted in Scoresby-Jackson 1860: 378).

Beauty and the beasts

Scoresby begins the second volume of his *Arctic Account* with a thumbnail sketch of Western whaling history. Framed within the wider context of a providential narrative of humanity’s epic encounters with fearsome ‘beasts of prey’, this history is traced in terms of humanity’s progress from prey to predator, with an early ‘waging [of] a war of death’ with the whales eventually giving way to a gradual improvement in the industrial techniques needed for their harvest, and with the ancient enemy eventually being transformed into a profitable commodity via a grand narrative of overcoming that is seen as integral to the establishment of a global maritime system of mercantile trade (*Account*, vol. 2: 1–3; see also Bravo 2006). The history of whaling, for Scoresby, is enterprise in its broadest sense, born of both adventuring spirit and business savvy, while it is also incorporated into the parallel histories of *mercantilism* (the pursuit of profit in the national interest) and *imperialism* (the frequently violent playing out of national rivalries in which commerce is contingent on discovery, and both of these depend on creating favourable, that is competitively advantageous, conditions for trade).³

Key to all this is Scoresby’s understanding of *providential design*, which he doctrinally interprets in terms of a ‘power given [to man] over created nature’ that is directly attributable to the circumstances of Creation itself (*Account*, vol. 2: 241). In accordance with this pre-Darwinian understanding of nature’s bounty – and nature as bounty – each successful killing of a whale is adjudged to be a ‘joyful circumstance’ (*Account*, vol. 2: 249). Not that this joy is necessarily apparent in Scoresby’s dispassionate account of the modern killing and flensing process, which is shorn of the drama of his earlier, racier accounts of primordial encounters between human beings and whales. Instead, the latter are now to be seen for what they are (objects of commerce) rather than what centuries of ‘superstition and dread’ have made of them (monsters of

the deep). Once caught and cut up, they are little more than hunks of bone and blubber, with the drama consisting rather in getting the product back to port as expeditiously as possible so that the profits can be secured without sustaining damage to equipment or loss of life (*Account*, vol. 1: 451).

This is not to say that Scoresby doesn't find whales to be beautiful. On the contrary, as both ancient living beings and modern scientific specimens they are objects of wonder. This wonder then only magnifies as the animals' physiological and biological complexity, which Scoresby was astute enough to see had been drastically under-appreciated, is increasingly understood (*Account*, vol. 1: 446–447). In the first volume of the *Account*, in particular, Scoresby proves himself to be an adept natural historian; and while he might not have been especially competent at drawing whales, he was typically efficient at describing them, showing a natural historian's eye for physical detail together with a natural historian's sensitivity to the minute as well as the massive that later cetacean appreciators, Melville almost inevitably among them, would see as being characteristic of his work (Morgan 2016: 8). There is a beauty in facts that Scoresby's contemporaries would have immediately understood, and that more recent commentators have belatedly appreciated: the 'aesthetics of data,' the literary critic Benjamin Morgan winningly calls this, finding a fitting example in the distinctively inter-animating combination of '[intimate] quantitative description and [codified] aesthetic experience' to be found in Scoresby's popular scientific work (2016: 11; 16).

There is beauty of another kind, however, in Scoresby's oeuvre, which pertains to the codified realm of *male* experience. It is no surprise, of course, to find whaling being used to celebrate a certain, stereotypical kind of masculine endeavour (toughness, single-mindedness, bravery, etc.), although much of the classic whaling literature – again often taking its cue from Melville – has tended as much to undermine as underscore this, implicitly rejecting 'the masculine mystique by [explicitly] dramatizing [...] male heroism's awful result' (Baurecht 1986: 53; for a fictional example that draws extensively on the Scoresbys, see also Gaskell 1996). If, as Caleb Crain has it, sperm rather than sperm oil is the natural currency of many a whaling narrative, then Melville's persistent jokes about it tend to run closer to tragedy than comedy, eventually turning *Moby-Dick* into a multipurpose allegory for the violence that materializes when industrial capitalism drains any 'higher spirit [that might

be] found in [platonic] moments of community between men' (2012: 11). We shouldn't expect to find emasculating accounts of this kind in Scoresby's work – and we do not – but in occasional passages like the following one we can sense a threat to the very ideals of masculinity and male camaraderie that are being presented to us. Here, during the description of a storm (taken verbatim by Scoresby-Jackson from Scoresby's memoirs), Scoresby picks out four men tending to the wheel of a listing ship, the *Royal Charter*:

Every man there [Scoresby says] was the picture of energetic manly life. You saw in his face an expression, to be read of every one, that he felt that in the management of the wheel he held the destinies, under Providence, of ship and human life in his hands – and that the ship broaching to by his failure in seamanlike tact and management would be destruction; hence the picturesque adaptation of his strength and figure showed, in nature's true developments of expression and *beautifulness of manly excitement*, that the importance of his performance and duty was fully realized. (Scoresby, quoted in Scoresby-Jackson 378, emphasis mine)

On the face of it, this scene represents probably the clearest celebration in Scoresby's work of the sailor's life as an *aesthetic* as well as a *moral* enterprise, an illustrative example of the ways in which – and the appeal with which – a group of hard-bitten men, brought together under God's guidance, are subjected to gruelling trials that are at one and the same time providence's chosen mechanism for testing their capacity for collective physical effort as well as their individual religious faith. But it is also clear that providence holds the cards, and that for all Scoresby's championing of homosocial endeavour (which anticipates Conrad's 'fellowship of the craft' rather than Melville's more contemporaneous, also more sexually ambiguous, seafaring community),⁴ such efforts are strictly subordinate to his belief in the controlling will of God.

Muscular Christianity might be a less ambivalent way of describing this, if without the larger (British) imperial context that would later help define the twin Victorian myth models of the 'Imperial man' and the 'muscular Christian', a dyad usually seen in terms of an amalgam of 'manly' qualities: 'physical prowess', 'intellectual energy', 'moral purpose', and all in the service of national pride (Benyon 2002: 27; see also Hill 2008). Some caveats are needed here. For one, it would not be strictly accurate to describe either Scoresby as an imperialist. However, they were both staunch nationalists throughout

their lives and their various maritime achievements, especially in the field of northern exploration, were shamelessly exploited by the Admiralty as an exercise in imperial public relations, as for that matter was the theatre of British Arctic operations at large (Fleming 1998; Hill 2008). And for another, muscular Christianity as a particular, identifiably late Victorian form of British imperial masculinity doesn't quite fit the Scoresby mould – and not just for the obvious reason that they both significantly predated it, but also because, for them, imperial narratives of ambition were considered secondary to providential narratives of improvement that saw God's work on earth as a shared human duty, albeit one that required strong leadership by men of unsullied virtue, enlightened knowledge, and experience-backed common sense.

Still, there is a degree to which Scoresby Junior, in particular, looks beyond his time, whether by combining Skoumand's four principal aspects of the stereotypical Victorian gentleman figure, namely the 'officer and gentleman' (Scoresby as captain), the 'scholar gentleman' (Scoresby as scientist), the 'Christian gentleman' (Scoresby as cleric), and the 'gentleman-sportsman' (Scoresby as explorer), or by anticipating the supposedly milder characteristics that would later come to popularize the equally typecast figure of the 'new man' (Skoumand, quoted in Benyon 2002: 29–30).⁵ Whatever the case, it needs to be borne in mind that neither Scoresby was a progressive in most accepted modern senses of the word. Quite the inverse, both men were deeply conservative in outlook, shaped as they were by their strict religious upbringing as well as by a lineage of Scoresby patriarchs who prided themselves on their competitive combination of physical strength, intellectual enterprise, and moral restraint (*Memorials* 22).

There was a strong element of *regional* pride as well, with both Scoresbys finely attuned to the northern locations of their birth (Whitby) and education (Edinburgh), as well as compulsively attracted to the northern latitudes (the Greenland Seas) that would provide the primary theatre of exercise for their life's work. As I will now go on to discuss, the Scoresbys also contained, deeply embedded within both their personalities and their philosophies, some of the ideas and ideologies that have come over time to be popularly associated with the north. As the literary scholar and art historian Peter Davidson has argued, there is no such thing as a single idea of north. Rather, there are multiple, conflicting ideas and imaginings that have proved hugely influential in shaping

attitudes and perceptions which, in turn, have driven activities in the Arctic and other high northern regions that have made vast fortunes for some and early graves for others, providing a rich site for ambitions both achieved and not, adventures both brilliantly realized and spectacularly backfired (Davidson 2005; see also Craciun 2009).

Ideas of north

Near the beginning of the first volume of his 1820 *Account*, Scoresby Junior places himself in a long line of British Arctic discoverer-explorers (Davis, Baffin, Hudson), praising their 'laborious exertions, notwithstanding the many disadvantages under which they were conducted' (*Account*, vol. 1: 22). This, in turn, gives us a good sense of his own lifelong commitment to the practical prosecution of intellectual curiosity and hard work. 'Curiosity' is euphemistic, perhaps, given Scoresby's well-trained eye, inherited from his father, for the latest commercial opportunity, though true to form he sees a larger, providential design behind northern voyages of discovery and exploration, which may serve mercantile and/or geopolitical interests but are still primarily to be seen as ways of extending human knowledge for the morally upstanding purpose of better performing God's work on earth (*Account*, vol. 1: 23). Again like his father, Scoresby Junior was perfectly well aware of the risks involved in pushing ever further north, whether in search of the North Pole or the North-West Passage.⁶ Both of these grail-like goals he saw as being accessible, if only under the right circumstances, but he also recognized the need for men such as himself, who were practically minded and professionally experienced, to apply their growing scientific understanding of the region to the perilous task of navigating Arctic waters, which required 'an extensive knowledge of the nature, properties, and usual motions of [sea] ice' (28).

Not that the Admiralty was listening, and while both Scoresbys would lead a number of successful expeditions to the high north, sensibly offsetting their costs by combining them with whaling and hunting (Bravo 2006: 533), the younger Scoresby was repeatedly snubbed in his plans, either by being seen as a professional whaler rather than as a suitably qualified naval commander or (what amounted to the same thing) by being overlooked in favour of a

mostly dismal procession of establishment-backed figures with precious little practical experience of the Arctic and still less common sense (Fleming 1998; Stamp and Stamp 1976). Fergus Fleming is especially harsh in his judgement of the man who was almost invariably at the centre of these decisions, Sir John Barrow, whose unrivalled enthusiasm for Arctic exploration was only matched by his singular incompetence: 'Perhaps no man in the history of exploration,' Fleming witheringly remarks of Barrow's obsession with the North-West Passage, 'has expended so much money and so many lives in pursuit of so desperately pointless a dream' (1998: 423).

Fleming probably goes too far in seeing the history of British Arctic exploration *tout court* as an unparalleled disaster – a toxic combination of daredevil adventure, political intrigue, and out-and-out farce, with the North-West Passage headlining as 'an eternal symbol of futility' (419) – but some of his general points still hold: that far too many expeditions achieved far too little; that many of them were spectacularly mismanaged; and that the imperial fantasies of discovery and conquest that sustained them were almost by definition unfounded, with loss of life, equipment, and money – hastily repackaged as 'heroic failure' – being one of the most notable results (423; see also Hill 2008). Significantly, Fleming grants a rare exemption to Scoresby Junior (listed among his pantheon of British Arctic explorers at the end) on the grounds that while he was an 'Admiralty pariah' (444), he was also a man of considerable talents whose practical experience and specialist knowledge would have greatly benefited the very establishment that chose so foolishly to ignore him, stubbornly refusing to see him as one of their own. But this again appears to be overstating the case; for as Michael Bravo suggests, Scoresby in fact 'played multiple and significant roles in Arctic exploration during the Regency' (2006: 533), advising such scientific luminaries as the naturalist Sir Joseph Banks, helping to reform the government regulations surrounding financial rewards for exploration achievements, and offering a viable funding model for Arctic expeditions that was duly taken up by several of his contemporaries, although, marginalized as he continued to be by the Admiralty, it would take him the best part of two decades to set the record straight (533).

Fleming and Bravo are agreed, though, that Scoresby's reputation today has been partially restored, even if when set against the semi-mythical likes of Ross

and Franklin he cuts a minor figure, still better known for his whaling exploits than his scientific discoveries, and still relatively neglected in the history of British Arctic exploration despite his startling achievements in (to cite just one of many possible examples) mapping some of the more intractable stretches of the jagged East Greenland coastline, an extensive area of which now bears his name: 'Scoresby Sound'. Scoresby deserves credit, too, for his *written* work, which, while of uneven literary quality, still succeeds in shedding insight into the Arctic imaginary of his early nineteenth-century contemporaries as well as the various, often politically motivated ideas of north that have been invested for many centuries in the Arctic, which remains 'as much ideological as physical terrain' (Hill 2008: 3; see also Ryall, Schimanski, and Wærp 2010). As Peter Davidson argues, it is the *doubleness* of north that has helped attract generations of literary visitors to the Arctic, most of whom have had little intention of actually going there (2005: 46–47). This ideational north, he suggests, comprises a vast, internally differentiated realm that includes both all-too-real and preposterously imagined places. It is also a highly dangerous space in which the mental traveller, confronted with the outer limits of his or her own imaginative capacities, runs the risk of over-reaching them, stepping into potentially life-threatening territory where 'beyond the fields we know, there may either be horrors or islands of the blest' (25; see also Huggan 2016: 335–336).⁷ Such doubleness is a defining feature of the travel narratives that would have been instantly familiar to many of Scoresby's contemporaries, and which helped to turn the Arctic into something of a public obsession during the first half of the nineteenth century (Garrison 2008: 381). This obsession was later consolidated in the Victorian period, when it fed into imperial narratives of heroic adventure sustained by a burgeoning public interest in what Jessica Richard calls 'the business of empire', which was a natural consequence of the competitive expansion of de-monopolized regional trade (2003: 297).

How do we fit Scoresby Junior's work into this imperial romantic context? One possible answer to this is that we don't need to. After all, Scoresby himself would have had little patience with Arctic/northern imaginaries of the kind sketched above, just as he had no time for popular explorers' accounts, the standard embellishments of which are sternly brushed aside in the first volume of the *Account* as reprehensibly self-serving instances of a 'prevailing desire [...] to communicate extraordinary circumstances [which]

has a tendency to bias the judgment of the most candid person' (*Account*, vol. 1: 44). As should be clear by now, Scoresby hated showing off, and much of the *Account* is written expressly against this; instead, it sets out its stall by the quality, quantity, and above all *accuracy* of the multidisciplinary information – historical, geographical, biological – it supplies. As Robert Morgan contends, Scoresby's two-volume text, which was widely read and admired at the time, is best understood as belonging to the popular genre of the nineteenth-century descriptive account, which is a literary vehicle for the presentation of factual information; thus, while it plays to some extent on its readers' expectations of a maritime voyage narrative, it is first and foremost a fact-based compendium that should be read – and demands to be read – 'for the scientific data [it] contain[s]' (2016:1). Expansive, general, informed: sweeping natural-historical accounts of this kind were generally aimed at an educated if non-specialist audience that they then sought to persuade of the calculated rationality of their arguments by alternating between appropriately unostentatious forms of storytelling (Scoresby's *Account* tends almost automatically to apologize for its periodic lapses into sublime or dramatic registers) and the patient explanation of biological and/or geophysical phenomena via technical language that was specialized enough to carry scientific authority, but not so specialized as to alienate or talk down. Needless to say, there is nothing transparent or literal about this; and nothing 'non-ideological,' either, insofar as the dominant interpretative framework – natural history – comes equipped with what Mary Louise Pratt calls a 'benign imperialism' (1992: 34) that expands the supposedly innocent art of scientific classification into the kind of systematizing fervour by which 'every species on the planet [is extracted] from its particular, arbitrary surroundings and [is then placed] in its appropriate spot in the system (the book, collection, or garden) with its new, secular European name' (31).

But what kind of Arctic is Scoresby's? And what kind of north? As might be expected, there is no easy answer to this: for the Arctic of the *Account* is both richly imagined and vividly real, both geographical *oddity* (more strange than sublime) and scientific *opportunity* (for such strangeness to be explained). Scoresby's Arctic – and, more generally, his north – is above all a working space, resembling at times nothing less than a scientific laboratory in which different biological, hydrological, and meteorological experiments are to be conducted, both for the general furtherance of human knowledge

and the particular reconfirmation of God's plan. At one level, Scoresby's experiments are vigorous empirical pursuits of first cause – recorded observations of how things come to be, and of what effects are produced by the action of one thing upon another – but at another, they are humble acknowledgements of a divine sanction that supersedes the 'accuracy [that even the best of scientific] opinion, experience and observation [can] confirm' (*Account*, vol. 1: 397). As Alison Winter observes, 'for Scoresby, the study of nature [is] a heroic expression of one's religious calling' (1998: 254, also quoted in Morgan 2016: 7), while Benjamin Morgan draws attention to the 'compatibility of religion and science' in his work (2016: 7). Both are right, although neither of them mentions the contemporary word that seems best to describe this dual impulse: the American biologist E.O. Wilson's term 'consilience', which he uses to call for a much-needed reconciliation of 'scientific' and 'religious' apprehensions of the phenomenal world (Wilson 1998). Then again, Scoresby would have seen no need for reconciliation at all since, for him, the ultimate authority of God is unchallenged. What remains for His servants on earth is to understand His workings and, in so doing, to admire the profusion, intricacy, and infinite variety of what He has created – and to admire it all the more for its reaching out even into 'the regions the most remote from human observation', thereby rendering the Arctic as simultaneously an *exceptional* and an *exemplary* domain (*Account*, vol. 1: 477; see also Morgan 2016: 7).

This Edenic vision of plenitude – a version of the sublime after all – extends to the animal kingdom as well, as would later be captured in Oliver Goldsmith's absurdly overcrowded illustrations (a pictorial effect of natural-historical inclinations towards the encyclopaedic, styled self-consciously after Scoresby) of Arctic marine life (Goldsmith 1870; see also Hoare 2009: 266). In fact, for all Scoresby's fascination with whales, there is a fully engaged attention to all creatures great and small throughout his writings. In one typical sequence in the first volume of the *Account*, he relishes the opportunity to perform experiments on the body of a tiny 'medusa' (jellyfish); to calculate composite measurements on the basis of these experiments; then, extrapolating from all this, to praise the 'immensity of creation, and the bounty of Divine Providence, in furnishing such a profusion of life in a region so remote from the habitations of men' (*Account*, vol. 1: 179).

Here as elsewhere, Scoresby's (scientific) discoveries are not necessarily new, nor are the (religious) conclusions he draws from them; what is remarkable, if still conventional enough for the particular descriptive genre he is drawing upon, is the range of topics covered and the breadth of knowledge contained. The *Account*, in this and other respects, has both the advantages and disadvantages of a miscellany; and it articulates a similarly miscellaneous view towards a natural world that, in scriptural fashion, it reads in terms of a complex tracery of conventional signs. These signs all point (as they must) to God, but they also have other commonly accepted referents: hence Scoresby's occasional recourse, particularly in geophysical descriptions, to contemporaneous aesthetic conventions of the sublime and the picturesque. Here, for example, is an early passage from his description of the island of Spitzbergen (modern-day spelling Spitsbergen), which seems to come straight out of the manual of eighteenth-century environmental aesthetics:

This country exhibits many interesting views, with numerous examples of the sublime. Its stupendous hills rising by steep acclivities from the very margin of the ocean to an immense height; its surface, contrasting the native protruding dark-coloured rocks, with the burden of purest snow and magnificent ices, altogether constitute an extraordinary and beautiful picture. The whole of the Western coast is mountainous and picturesque; and though it is shone upon by a four months' sun every year, its snowy covering is never wholly dissolved, nor are its icy monuments of the dominion of frost ever removed. The valleys opening towards the coast, and terminating in the back ground with a transverse chain of mountains, are chiefly filled with everlasting ice. (*Account*, vol. 1: 94)

Such scenic views are disrupted, however, when Scoresby proceeds to recall one of the numerous opportunities he has had to step on shore. Again, the conventional signs are all present and correct, as Scoresby climbs high to a position from which, 'as if elevated to the heavens', he can contemplate being 'superior to the dangers to which I was surrounded' – a textbook definition of the sublime (128). But he and other members of his landing party are soon in trouble once the descent is commenced: now 'the way seemed precipitous' (129), and the men, forced to cross a stretch of solid ice, are struck with 'astonishment and fear' (130). This about as dramatic as the *Account* gets, at least in Volume 1, but what is most revealing about it is Scoresby's tacit recognition of the limits

of his own descriptive vocabulary; it is at such moments, as Morgan puts it, that Scoresby turns away from the 'controlling poetics of the sublime and the heroic' to articulate a 'more ambivalent aesthetic' that captures the strange and unexpected, turning these into sources of anxiety and self-doubt (2016: 8, 10). Morgan is probably labouring the point insofar as such ambivalence is of a piece with standard literary accounts of the high north (Davidson 2005; Huggan 2016), but he is still right to point out the difficulties this poses for Scoresby, whose explanatory impulse – a function of the calculated rationality that governs his Arctic expeditions – is short-circuited upon confrontation with the seemingly inexplicable or unknown.

That this same rationality underpinned Scoresby's experiences as a whaler should be clear enough by now, as should his understanding of the symbiotic relationship between Arctic scientific research and commercial whaling: for the implementation of one improved the effectiveness of the other, also helping to create more favourable conditions for the safe exercise of both. Such research, Scoresby firmly believed, had practical implications for improving the often desperate living and working conditions that were the daily reality of those who turned professionally to Arctic whaling, which by definition was an extremely hazardous pursuit in a no less dangerous part of the world (*Account*, vol. 1: 444). Accidents on the job were rife, fatalities were common, and there was always the risk of cataclysms, such as sudden shipwreck or, still worse, protracted tragedies such as those of 1835–1836 and 1836–1837, when a number of whale ships were forced to winter over in the Davis Straits (off the west coast of Greenland) and, lacking sufficient food and clothing, many of their crew members expired (Barrow 2001: 89).

By then, Scoresby had long retired from professional whaling, which – in the Greenland fishery at least – was in its own death throes as a combined result of 'free trade, commodity substitutions and increasing difficulties encountered by the whalers themselves' (Barrow 2001: 93). To what extent Scoresby foresaw this demise is a matter of dispute among maritime historians: Tony Barrow, for instance, sees him as having been aware of the threat but not necessarily attentive to it, although the timing of his retirement might suggest otherwise (2001: 93; see also Bravo 2006 and Jackson 1978). Whether Scoresby was exercised by the broader *ethical* implications of whaling seems less contentious – he almost certainly was not – although his recorded experiences as a whaling captain

(anticipating his later philanthropic work for the church) suggest that he had a lively concern for the safety and welfare of his men. The safety and welfare of the whales themselves was another matter, although, practical businessman that he was, Scoresby was both alert to and informative about the dangers of overfishing certain areas, which had the effect of driving the whales further northwards – into increasingly precarious territory – as well as potentially reducing stock to levels that were not only no longer profitable but no longer capable of being sustained. The rights and wrongs of whaling itself were highly unlikely to have troubled Scoresby's sleep; and while this was the norm for whalers of his times, it is still worth enquiring into the discrepancy between his acute moral intelligence and his seemingly chronic lack of understanding for an industry that, for most contemporary observers, has always borne the seeds of its own destruction, eventually ushering in its own extinction even as it came to threaten the existence of the very animal it depended upon: the whale (Burnett 2012; Hoare 2009; see also Chapter 1).

Greenland rights and Greenland wrongs

Whaling was a 'filthy business' (Hoare 2009: 124). Relentlessly profit-driven, it sought to turn oil into gold, transforming the professional whaler into what Philip Hoare memorably describes as a kind of 'pirate-miner – an excavator of oceanic oil, stoking the furnace of the Industrial Revolution as much as any man digging coal out of the earth' (108). It is perhaps above all the sperm whale that Hoare has in mind when, towards the end of his wide-ranging historical study, he numbly contemplates the variety of ways in which 'the cetacean population of the world [has] been hunted, harpooned, blown up, ground down and consumed in a manner unrivalled by any other exploitation of the earth's living resources' (349). For, as Hoare suggests, sperm whales are the most iconic cetacean species of all: 'ask a child to draw a whale, and he [*sic*] will trace out a sperm whale, riding high on the sea' (65); ask an adult, and he or she (but still most likely he) may well reference *Moby-Dick*, whether he or she has read the book or not. Sperm whales are not only the most ancient of whales but also the most imagined. Animals whose lives 'came to be written only because [they were] taken', they are 'so wreathed in superlatives and

impossibilities that if no one had ever seen [them], we would hardly believe that [they] existed' (65). No wonder, Hoare wryly remarks, that Melville's novel, a mythological tale about a monomaniac, would come to haunt later writers and still continues to exercise a massive popular influence today (66).

Sperm whales, however, would have little effect, real or imagined, on the Scoresbys. After all, when *Moby-Dick* was first published in 1851, Scoresby Senior was long gone, and Scoresby Junior would only have a few years left of his life. (Both Scoresbys were well known to Melville, though, who praised the latter and poked fun at the former, giving him a suitably ridiculous cameo role in the novel as the storm-tossed veteran Greenland whaler, Captain Sleet.) More to the point, sperm whales were neither man's main target in the Greenland Seas, where they were few and far between; instead, the principal quarry was *Balaenus mysticetus*, which today would be known as the bowhead, but in the Scoresbys' time usually went by the name of the common whale or, in its more technical-sounding if no more scientifically accurate version, the Greenland right.⁸ Greenland rights, like other right whales in different parts of the North Atlantic, were so known because they were the best ones to capture. As the economic historian Gordon Jackson asserts, Greenland rights were reasonably common, suitably plump, and relatively easy to find; they were also sluggish movers, with 'all the docility of a grazing animal and none of its timidity', plus the added advantage of being buoyant once caught and slaughtered, a major occupational hazard should – as was the case with most other cetacean species – the situation be the reverse (Jackson 1978: 8).

This basket of attributes was not lost on the Scoresbys, who gave thanks to God for the 'great First Cause' that had originally granted man power over nature (*Account*, vol. 1: 241). God's grace was also made manifest, William Junior wrote, in the relative tameness of some of the earth's largest inhabitants, which duly allowed them to succumb to human ingenuity and courage, although this last asset, he was generous enough to acknowledge, was evenly demonstrated on human and animal sides (*Account*, vol. 2: 472). Irony comes too easily, perhaps, and Scoresby Junior deserves considerable credit for his zoological work on whales, which was assiduous and (mostly) accurate without being unduly authoritative: like the good scientist he was, he was always aware of what and how much he did not know (*Account*, vol. 1: 446). He was ahead of his time as well in recognizing that certain, observable

aspects of cetacean behaviour, for example the ability to remember and adjust, or the affection shown by whales for their offspring, were not just worthy of respect, but 'would do honour to the superior intelligence of human beings [themselves]' (*Account*, vol. 1: 472).

This unashamedly anthropocentric view of the natural world might seem odd today at a time when it is generally, if by no means universally, accepted that non-human animals have culture, and when calls are increasing for their moral standing to be accounted for, with some, including cetaceans, now being considered entitled to the personhood that human beings have historically reserved for themselves (Whitehead and Rendell 2015: 300; see also Chapter 4). Still, the occasional glimmerings of sympathetic imagination shown in Scoresby Junior's work were fairly unusual for his time, and were almost unheard of for a whaler. This again raises the question of his view of whaling. A few facts and figures may help put this into perspective. As Tony Barrow's research on the north-east England whaling trade has shown, the Greenland fishery was a massively lucrative source of whale oil, supplying nearly half of the oil sold on the British market by the mid-1780s (Barrow 2001: 35). Most of this was supplied by northern English ports, with the number of Greenland-bound whale ships increasing fivefold between 1783 and 1787 alone (35). Whitby, the port from which the Scoresbys operated, accounted for a good portion of the Greenland trade, which increased exponentially during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, with the Scoresby-skippered vessel, *Resolution*, being by far the most successful in the fleet (53). Indeed, Whitby in general and the Scoresbys more particularly were nothing if not Greenland specialists, with the entire Whitby fleet sailing to the Greenland Seas in 1819 and 1820 (93).

Given the gains to be made, the place they grew up, and the values instilled in them by their upbringing, it was not surprising that the Scoresbys should turn their hand to whaling, with both father and son counting among the most successful whalers of their times. Scoresby Senior, in particular, was a major talent, capturing a record thirty-six whales on the first voyage for which he acted as captain, and going on during a half-century career to 'claim the lives of no fewer than 533 whales' (Hoare 2009: 283). The father's values were transmitted to the son, including the principle of 'Divine enactment', which decreed that the catching and killing of whales was not just a highly profitable

enterprise, but also a righteous pursuit (Hoare 2009: 286). In many ways, William Junior was destined to join his father, having sailed on the *Resolution* from the age of fourteen (Hoare 2009: 286; see also Scoresby-Jackson and Stamp and Stamp). However, as previously explained, the Scoresbys were by no means one and the same, and biographers have sometimes made too little of the tensions that existed between them. It is true that, in many respects, William Junior could be seen as 'a refined version of his father: rational, scientific, pious, inquisitive; a combination of disciplines that the era allowed' (Hoare 2009: 287). But at the same time, William Junior, as I hope to have shown, was both an externally multifaceted and an internally conflicted figure; and though his well-documented sensitivities did not always go down well with his father, they still give us insight into some of the issues that were exercising many of his scientific colleagues at the time.

One burning issue was how to improve the efficiency of industry by putting scientific discoveries to the test – and, as might be expected, Scoresby Junior was exceedingly interested in the effect these latest discoveries might have on whaling, and on oceanic navigation as a whole. (In his own specialist area, nautical magnetism, he would help improve the navigational accuracy that was intrinsic to the success of northern whaling and northern exploration alike.) However, he was also keenly aware that times were changing, and not for the better as far as the northern whaling trade was concerned. The early nineteenth century saw a general downturn in northern whaling – although there were still some spectacular individual successes – with the withdrawal of government support, the spread of coal-gas lighting, and some heavy losses in appalling weather conditions all contributing to the widespread perception of a regional trade in possibly terminal decline (Barrow 2001; Jackson 1978). Scoresby had these misgivings, too, and he was conscious that Greenland whaling was as dangerous as it had ever been, but no longer as profitable as it once was. It remains unclear to what extent his retirement was timed, but it certainly turned out to be prescient, and although the Greenland trade would continue well into the 1830s, the birth of modern industrial whaling – which would look increasingly to other parts of the world to turn its profits – saw to it that the kind of life that he and his father had once taken for granted was all but dead (Jackson 1978). What Scoresby emphatically did not foresee was the devastating impact that whaling would come to have on whales, though unlike

his father he seems to have been aware at some level that nature's resources were not unlimited, and that the sustainability of cetacean species (even of the *right* species) could not be vouchsafed. That awareness was not widely shared, with far-reaching consequences for right whales, whose numbers dwindled alarmingly in some places; and although the North Atlantic right would go on to become the first cetacean to be officially protected in the early twentieth century, contemporary marine biologists are increasingly concerned that its 'gene pool is now so restricted that it is unlikely to survive' (Hoare 2009: 207).

Epilogue: Scoresby sites and Scoresby Sound

Lest the Scoresbys be forgotten today, it might be recalled that they were once minor celebrities, and that neither of them was exactly averse to reminding the world of the significance of his own life. That significance has been underscored, in turn, in sycophantic biographies by relatives (Robert Scoresby-Jackson); celebratory accounts by local historians (Tony Barrow; Tom and Cordelia Stamp); and in the various, more or less self-serving memoirs and memorials bequeathed, not least to each other, by the Scoresbys themselves. The Scoresby legacy is also visible in other forms: in the twin portraits in Hull's Maritime Museum; in the now mostly dismantled whale-bone buildings and arches of Whitby; and in the Gothic monument erected to William Junior in Torquay (his resting place), in the church where he had latterly served as an Honorary Lecturer, which features 'an open Bible, a ship and anchor, a mariner's compass, and other mathematical instruments' in a panel on its base (Scoresby-Jackson 1860: 399). The symbolism is appropriate for a man who, not always fully appreciated in his day, now seems 'assured of a place in the history of science [for] his pioneering work in the Arctic and [...] the science of the sea' (Stamp and Stamp 1976: 246; see also Bravo 2006 for a more measured assessment). This also suggests that it is William Junior who has made his mark rather than the more charismatic William Senior, who was famous during his lifetime but is now mostly remembered for the wrong reasons, as a butcher of whales whose suicide (imputed at the time to derangement) was unlikely to have been motivated out of 'any sense of guilt over the five hundred whales he had killed' (Hoare 2009: 287).

The most obvious memorial to the Scoresbys, however, lies neither in books nor in buildings nor in monuments, but in a particular place, first mapped by William Junior in the early 1820s and now bearing the family name, Scoresby Sound. Whether Scoresby Sound, an isolated fjord system in northern Greenland, is a fitting tribute to the Scoresby family is another matter. Colonized by Denmark in 1924, the area was populated in 1925 with Inuit families shipped in from over 1,000 miles away in a crude geopolitical effort to assert Danish sovereignty over north-east Greenland. Included among those moved were the grandparents of the late Danish Greenlandic visual artist, Pia Arke, who, after returning to her birthplace in the late 1990s, would go on to assemble an emotionally wrenching photo-history, published posthumously in 2010 as *Stories from Scoresbysund* [*Scoresby Sound*]. The book, like all of Arke's work, makes for uncomfortable reading, providing a stark reminder of the connections between Greenland's neocolonial present and its multiply inscribed colonial past (Huggan and Jensen 2016; Jonsson 2016). Folded into this history is the Scoresby name, which is remembered today even as the names of the Inuit who have lived for generations in the area are not. Arke's project is one of postcolonial counter-memory, ranged against those official versions of history that have effectively erased the presence of people whose lives are considered unimportant by those in positions of authority; considered unimportant, that is, unless they can be seconded to the needs, both real and imagined, of colonial power. These people, argues Arke, also have a right to be remembered. The current population of Ittoqqortoormiit (Scoresbysund) is difficult to ascertain, but recent census figures suggest a number of around 500. Arke's efforts aside, these 500 people's lives still remain largely unknown and undocumented. But at least they have not been taken from them, which is more than one can say for William Scoresby Senior's 500 whales.

Notes

- 1 The Edinburgh-based Wernerian Natural History Society (frequently abbreviated to Wernerian Society) was a nineteenth-century learned society named after the German geologist, Abraham Werner. It was founded and led by the Regius Professor of History at the University of Edinburgh, Robert Jameson, who was a

key patron and mentor for Scoresby Junior, and who – as the fulsome dedication to Jameson at the beginning of Scoresby's 1820 *Account of the Arctic Regions* clearly indicates – would exert a considerable influence on his work. For more on the relationship between Scoresby and Jameson, see Bravo 2006; also Scoresby-Jackson and Stamp and Stamp.

- 2 Standard critiques of Weber's work, both at the time and more recently, are that it is far too sweeping, effectively homogenizing both Protestantism (especially Calvinism) and capitalism while also paying scant attention to gender and promoting a culturalist understanding of capitalism that overplays its psychological implications at the expense of its material effects. For an early collection of critical essays, see Green 1959; for a more up-to-date assessment, see Lehmann and Roth 1993.
- 3 Mercantilism and imperialism are both much-debated terms, as is the relationship between them. The former has been defined in terms of a combination of 'controlled commercial expansion' and 'national identity and assertiveness,' thereby creating (in the British context) a connection between 'a new pattern of economic development,' generally associated with the Elizabethan era, and 'the rise of the British nation state' (Ormerod 2003: 3, 6; see also Wallerstein 1980 [vol. II]). This is far from an agreed-upon definition, however, and some imperial historians – notably John Darwin – have little time for mercantilist theories, although these have recently made something of a comeback in the work of, for example, Stern and Wennerlind (2013) and Phillip J. Smith (2015). Smith, in particular, sees mercantilism as a driving force behind British imperial expansion, although clearly this also depends on what is meant by the term 'imperialism,' which is usually seen – albeit from a variety of sometimes conflicting perspectives – as *both* a theory *and* a practice of governance linked (in complex combinations that vary from time to time and place to place) to territorial expansion, cultural domination, the rise of industrial capitalism, and the consolidation of regional and/or national interests within a global system of international trade. For a useful overview of some of the issues, definitional and otherwise, at stake (focusing on the British context), see Darwin 2013 and Johnson 2002.

Whaling, as explained in my Preface, has been connected to both imperial and mercantilist interests. As Gordon Jackson argues (again in the British context), 'the prospect of a national whaling industry was consistent with the aspirations of the embryo mercantilists of Elizabethan England' (1978: 15), while for Philip Hoare it would later help build 'the foundations of empire' (2009: 277), not just by establishing 'new routes of oceanic colonization' (279),

but by exerting influence in both the northern and, later, southern hemispheres (280) as well as creating and servicing a lucrative market in oil, among other whale-based commodities, that would see after-dark London by the mid eighteenth century glint and glitter as ‘the best-lit city in the world’ (277). That the Scoresbys were bound up in the cultural as well as the economic work of empire is indisputable, and while it would be too loose to describe either of them as an out-and-out imperialist, they both contributed to late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century efforts to establish ‘the northern ocean as a national space over which control [could be] increased by a range of military, commercial, regulatory, and rhetorical means’ (Bravo 2006: 522). To this might be added their Enlightenment-inspired views on a range of subjects, including whaling itself, which they both saw as making ‘an enlightened contribution to the nation’ (Bravo 2006: 522), but which might be better considered in terms of a ‘dialectic of Enlightenment’ (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997 [1947]) that reveals the continuing will to dominate behind supposedly progressive ideologies of improvement and development: the dark heart of Enlightenment itself (see chapter epigraphs above).

- 4 In C.F Burgess’s words, the ‘fellowship of the craft’, probably best described in Conrad’s 1906 memoir *The Mirror of the Sea*, consists of ‘the subtle, unspoken, and unseen tie which binds together all worthy seamen, each to the other, in dedication to the service of ships and the mastery of the sea’ (quoted in Barrow Jr. 2015: 218; see also Burgess 1976). These bonds of solidarity are not as unequivocal as Burgess implies, being considerably complicated by issues of seniority, race, class, and indeed gender (e.g. different modes and models of masculinity) across the body of Conrad’s work. Conrad still never quite manages to do what Melville excels at: upset and challenge the rigidly coded expectations of male behaviour that are the skewed accompaniment of a ‘womanless world’ (Baurecht 1986: 53). There is no space here to go into detail on the different forms of masculinity encoded in the life and work of the Scoresbys, both of which embrace many of the models critically examined by Raewyn Connell, who draws attention to (among several others) the figures of the ‘imperial adventurer’, which she also links to Weber, and ‘the man of the frontier’ (Connell 1995: 185, 187).

Similarly, there is no time to dwell on the broader connections between masculinity and the imperial imaginary, which remains a favourite topic of imperial history and postcolonial criticism, reflecting the fact that, as John Benyon puts it, possibly unaware of the double meaning, ‘[t]he [British] Empire generated a huge *demand for manpower* to serve its diverse needs,

abroad at home, as leaders, administrators, clerks, soldiers, seafarers, merchants and so forth' (Benyon 2002: 26, emphasis mine). As discussed below, *northern* codes of masculinity also loom large in any assessment of the Scoresbys, whether in the context of the Arctic or that of northern England, although due attention needs to be paid to significant generational and temperamental differences between them, which are reflected in their recreational writing as well as their professional work.

- 5 There are of course as many different versions of the 'new man' as there are new men, each adapted to its particular historical context: hence the inadvisability of pushing comparisons too far between the Regency-style gentlemanliness of William Scoresby Junior and the more modern sensitivities, which are both a product of and a reaction against late Victorian/Edwardian social mores, of Edmund Gosse. Still, the fact remains that, separated though they are by the best part of a hundred years, they are both 'new men', if less by virtue of being in the vanguard of a new era than by inhabiting an uneasy space *between* eras. This, in Scoresby's case, can also be seen in terms of a transition between two different forms of *science* (involving a shift towards the professionalization of the scientific disciplines) and two different forms of *whaling* (involving a shift to more modern industrial methods of capturing and 'processing' whales).
- 6 Unsurprisingly for the time, the Scoresbys were both obsessed with finding a way to the North-West Passage, and a lively discussion of this possibility leads off the first volume of Scoresby Junior's *Account of the Arctic Regions*, which – in typical fashion – makes a rational case for the existence of the Passage, only to exercise a certain scepticism towards its own arguments: as Scoresby wryly remarks, northern voyages of discovery have provided 'a full illustration [of the maxim] that *what we wish to be true, we readily believe*' (Account, vol. 1: 3, emphasis Scoresby's). However, while both men were accomplished explorers, with Scoresby Senior sailing further north than any British navigator of his time, the twin goals of the North-West Passage and the North Pole remained elusive, with Scoresby Junior's mostly sensible ideas for reaching both destinations being repeatedly knocked back by the Admiralty (Fleming 1998; Stamp and Stamp 1976).
- 7 Davidson provides an entertaining long-historical account of the myths, for example those surrounding Ultima Thule, that have long swirled around the idea of north, which has been alternately imagined as a *profane* space, malign and destructive, and a *sacred* one: a region in which to purify and clarify the spirit and a place of beneficent transition in which high north, in particular, functions

as a kind of way station, a bridging territory between the world of the living and the world of the dead. See Davidson (2005: 47, 59, 64, 121); also Huggan (2016: 335).

- 8 It seems suitably ironic that right whales – at least in the Greenland Seas – were wrongly classified by the Scoresbys and their contemporaries. In the famous ‘Cetology’ section of *Moby-Dick*, Melville suggests that a working distinction might be observed between the ‘Greenland whale’ – which was also seen at the time as a right whale – and the ‘American Right’. Melville was correct without knowing it: for the ‘Greenland whales’ that the Scoresbys were capturing and killing in their hundreds were in fact *bowheads*, a species related to but non-identical with the genus of the right whale. No small thanks to the Scoresbys, bowheads are almost gone now off the Greenland coast, although their numbers are healthy in other Arctic regions; however, what Melville calls ‘American Rights’ are in deep trouble, and rights more generally are among some of the most endangered whales on earth.

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