The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, Life Under Water, is the often considered the least important of the seventeen SDGs by researchers, businesses, and governments (pp. 11-12). Yet human societies are dependent on the ocean in myriad ways, even as the sea as we know it is threatened by acidification, biodiversity loss, and rising temperatures. Editors Robin Kundis Craig and Jeffrey Mathes McCarthy highlight the aim of this volume to “foster a kaleidoscopic re‐imagining of the Anthropocene ocean” in their compelling introduction (p. 21). The titular, interdisciplinary “re-envisioning” is imperative to help understand and transform a troubled relationship with the ocean in the face of these crises. The volume brings together chapters from lawyers, environmental scientists, and literary scholars across three sections, alongside appendices of extracts from other ocean-focused writing.

The first section, “Re-envisioning the Ocean as Connection,” centers on humanities scholars’ contributions to understanding the connective power of the ocean, culturally, historically, and in an age of climate crisis. Jeffrey Mathes McCarthy’s re-reading of Moby Dick and Joseph Conrad’s Typhoon in “Literary Oceans” suggests the ways in which literature might offer an inclusive and participatory means of reckoning with climate disaster, rather than viewing it as spectacle. Steve Mentz’s chapter, “Creating Ocean,” edits sections of his 2020 book, Ocean, emphasizing how the debated origins of the sea reveal the long, though complicated, centrality of the ocean to human societies well before the Anthropocene. Shaul Bassi moves from a planetary ocean to an oceanic city: Venice. The annual tradition of marriage between city and sea here offers a parallel to a vision of Venice as a place where science and arts might entwine to address environmental crisis so tangible in the flooding of the city’s famous squares. Finally, Taylor Cunningham retraces Pacific voyaging revivals, stating they create and embody Pacific community and solidarity in the face of long-standing negative narratives about islands and peoples of Te-Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa, as many Indigenous scholars have demonstrated. These chapters demonstrate the value of humanities’ creative and critical approaches to connect and persuade at a variety of geographic scales.

The second section, “Re-envisioning Ocean Protection,” takes a legal focus, though noting how legal and political relationships with the sea intersect with Indigenous and scientific knowledges of the ocean. Jeremy B. Jackson traces human impacts in the ocean, as its apex predator, habitat destroyer, and climate changer, with flow-on impacts that echo across ecosystems beyond the bounds of current protective measures. While...
there are positives in initiatives such as marine protected areas and restoration efforts, he argues that more transformative, global thinking is needed to address the interconnected contemporary problems. The following four chapters all focus on different US legal, political, and administrative issues relating to ocean governance, collectively suggesting the challenges in achieving national, let alone global, change. Thomas Michael Swensen examines Karluk Village’s tribal government attempts to establish water rights in Alaska. Both Russian and US administrations historically asserted the “public good” in passing legislation that removed Indigenous engagement with and control over key species (salmon) and spaces (rivers and ocean). The Karluk experiences emphasize the locally specific and ongoing impacts of colonial and national systems for Indigenous peoples’ relationships with the ocean. Robin Kun-dis Craig highlights how the US legal system prioritizes an extractive view of the ocean, a view enshrined even in the rationale for recent marine reserves. The chapter demonstrates how, working within this system, recent presidents have instead achieved environmental priorities through creatively co-opting antiquities law to create federally protected marine spaces. Similarly, Nathaniel E. Broadhurst traces how US presidents’ executive orders have critically shaped national ocean policies, suggesting the need for an organic act to better streamline policy across state lines and shifting administrations. Finally, Abigail Benesh analyzes how international “rights of nature” policies might influence US law to move beyond anthropocentrism and better protect oceanic environments and species. The benefits and limits of approaches already taken in Ecuador, Bolivia, Australia, New Zealand, India, and Columbia, Benesh argues, show the potential advantages of giving legal rights or personhood to US marine protected areas. Overall, this section works well as a coherent grouping of chapters for the possibilities and pitfalls in reenvisioning the US ocean but is perhaps less accessible to a wider, global audience. There is limited connection of these case studies beyond the US context, and some chapters are considerably longer than those in other sections or awash in US legal terms and acronyms.

The third section, “Re-envisioning Ocean Action,” turns to more creative responses already underway toward a new oceanic understanding. The first chapter, “Plastic in the Pacific,” by Christopher Finlayson, nevertheless aligns more closely with the themes of the previous section. Finlayson draws on his experience as former attorney general of New Zealand involved in Tiriti o Waitangi settlements to explore the tensions between upholding Indigenous rights and relationships with the ocean and government initiatives such as marine reserves. Despite a questionable summary of the treaty (seemingly ignoring the wording of the te reo (Indigenous language) version in which Māori did not cede sovereignty, p. 247), he convincingly concludes that urgent changes to ocean governance in the Pacific must still be responsive to local conditions and attentive to hard-won Indigenous rights, complementing the argument made by Swensen.

The final three chapters in this section provided the most tangible reenvisioning, and thus for me, felt the most effective in achieving a coherent and inspiring pathway toward achieving the aims of the volume. Brenda B. Bowen highlights how she has used plastic debris from coastal California to make tangible the issues of pollution in her ocean science course for students based far from the ocean in inland United States. The student responses captured in her chapter highlight the importance of humanities-inspired and narrative-driven critical thinking in this science classroom, while also suggesting the troubling, ongoing tendency to situate waste as an individual problem. The coauthored chapter “Adaptive and Interactive Futures” demonstrates the potential of “serious games” to transform individual and collectively thinking about possible adaptations to future climate change impacts. Different games de-
veloped in Aotearoa all presented coastal climate adaptation as an interlocking environmental, social, economic, and political issue. The authors show how engaging with complex decision-making and experimenting with possible choices in a game setting where the risk is low nevertheless facilitated positive cognitive and attitude changes for participants. In the final body chapter, Tierney Thys draws on her experience as scientific consultant for the dance “Okeanos: A Love Letter to the Sea.” She recounts both the process of working across science and the arts and the power of the resultant performances to capture both ecological concepts and evoke emotional responses from viewers. The intersections between science, humanities, and arts knowledge and practices that underpin the book’s approach are best encapsulated within these individual chapters.

The book includes two substantive appendices to broaden the voices in the volume, adding historical and cultural depth through the inclusion of extracts from other ocean writing ranging from Hugo Grotius to Rachel Carson, alongside recent scholarship by Epeli Hau’ofa, Simon Winchester, and Philip E. Steinberg, among others. Rather than relegating these sections to the end, I wondered if at least some of these pieces might have been woven through the body of the book. This is one of the main places where contemporary Indigenous scholarship and voices are present in the volume, such as Craig Santos Perez and Joshua L. Reid, and these perspectives should be central to the wider goal of “re-envisioning” the ocean, as many of the chapters acknowledge.

The editors’ kaleidoscope metaphor for the volume is useful in evaluating its strengths and weakness as a collection. The chapters come from a range of disciplinary perspectives, providing a rewarding opportunity for readers to read and think across approaches. Consequently, there will be something new and thought-provoking among the chapters for most readers, even though the whole picture is somewhat fractured. The diversity leads to unevenness in style and length, as well as differences in authors’ assumptions about the identity and existing knowledge of their reader. I would have welcomed a clearer articulation within some chapters on their specific contribution to the project of “re-envisioning.” As a historian, I also wondered if a reordering of the chapters might have helped to create a pathway for the reader to navigate through the different chronological and geographic scales, while allowing for disciplinary difference.

The editors argue, persuasively, that “all humans depend intimately on the ocean, and we need to be more cognizant of that fact” (p. 1). Many peoples in the Pacific Ocean, and elsewhere of course, are already all too aware of this fact. Such statements, and the centrality of the US in section 2, therefore also raised questions for me about whom the writers envisage as the “we,” the audience. The book seems to have been written for a Western—and especially American—reader, and I imagine the volume as a whole collection (as opposed to its individual chapters) will have the most potential benefits for senior undergraduate or graduate classes in US colleges.

As Craig suggests in a short conclusion drawing upon wildlife photography, “capturing a focused picture” of the rapid and diverse changes to the Anthropocene ocean, with all their unfolding consequences, is “an impossible task” (p. 312). Nevertheless, I agree that taken collectively the blurry and varied pictures of Re-envisioning the Anthropocene Ocean have value as part of the kaleidoscopic and ongoing process of learning a new ocean relationship.