

# Mermaids

ECL 305: Literature and the Environment

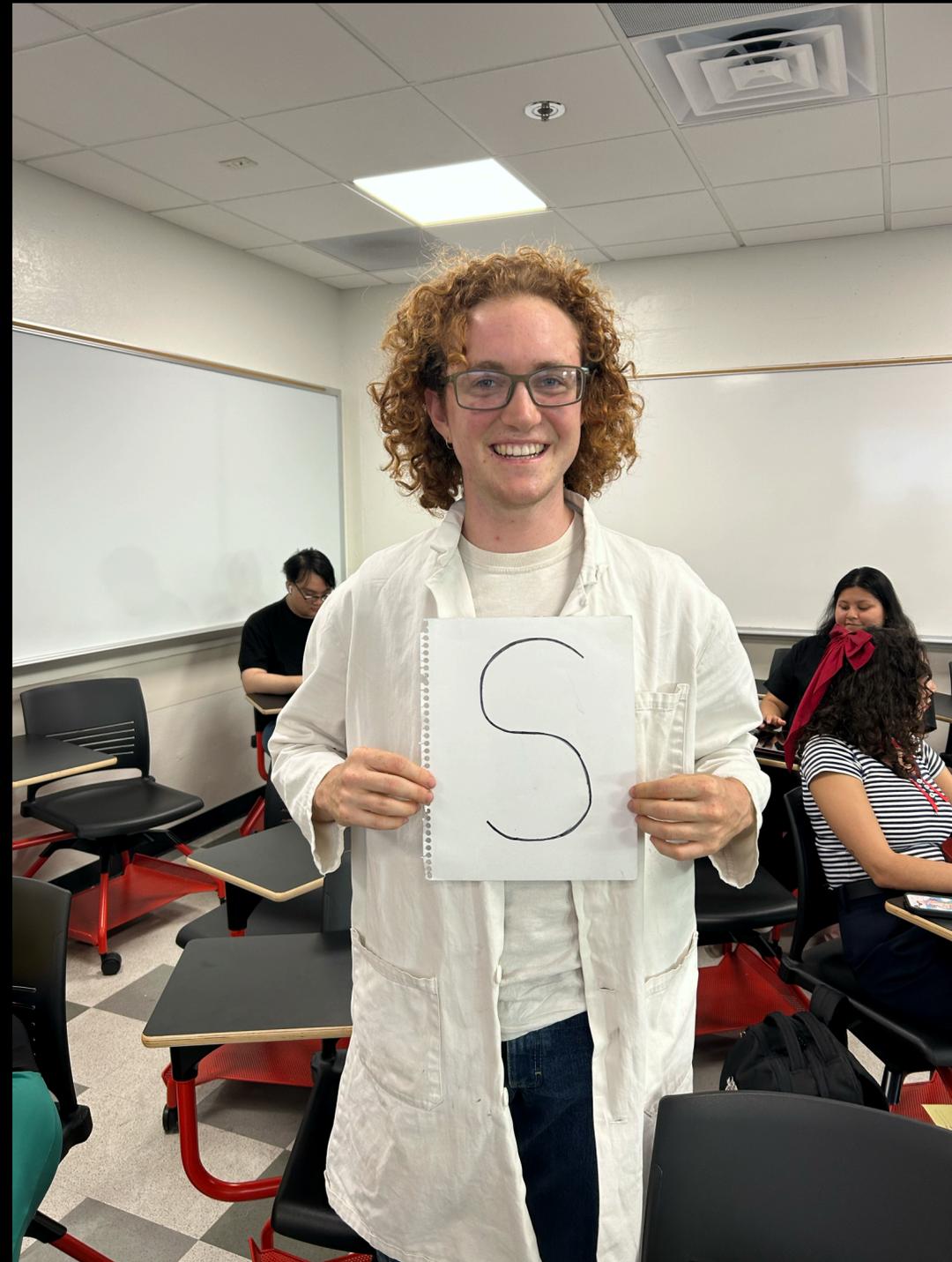
Spring 2025. Professor Pressman

Day 18: Ocean History

# Halloween!



# Halloween!



# Essay 2 Pre-Writing

- WHAT object/text do you want to close read?
- WHY that object/text? What do you want to say about it? How does it operate?

# Discussion

- Main topics, passages, questions to discuss

# From your blogs- rethinking the ocean

- **KAILA:** The idea of the sea as developing, aging, or transforming is unknown, as these are qualities humans associate with land, not water. Finally, to describe the ocean as “a place of dynamic change” asks humans to reimagine the ocean as active, unstable, and alive. Reframe human vision to establish a new connection with the environment, founded on awareness of change rather than nostalgia for timelessness.

# History of Oceans

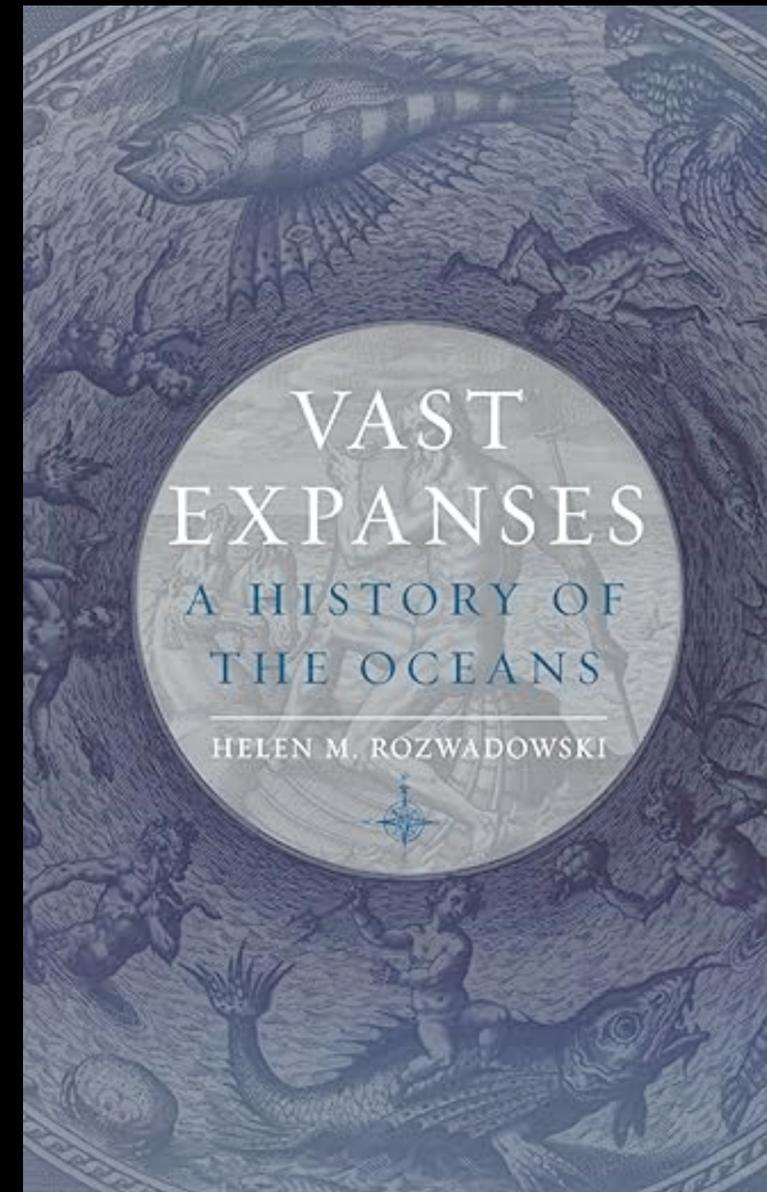
Dark to Middle Ages (500-15th C)=

“The sea existed externally to society, constructed as a space devoted to trade. It represented a distance to be crossed rather than territory belonging to the state.” (47)

15th-18th C= Age of Discovery, Slavery, Navy and State building, capitalism

“By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, conceptions of land and sea had shifted. New worlds had once been imagined as islands..... Discovery of the sea reorganized geographic understanding of the globe, so that continents rather than islands become the primary unit of land territory.” (98)

—Helen M. Rozwadowski, *Vast Expanses: A History of the Oceans* (Reaktion Books, 2018)

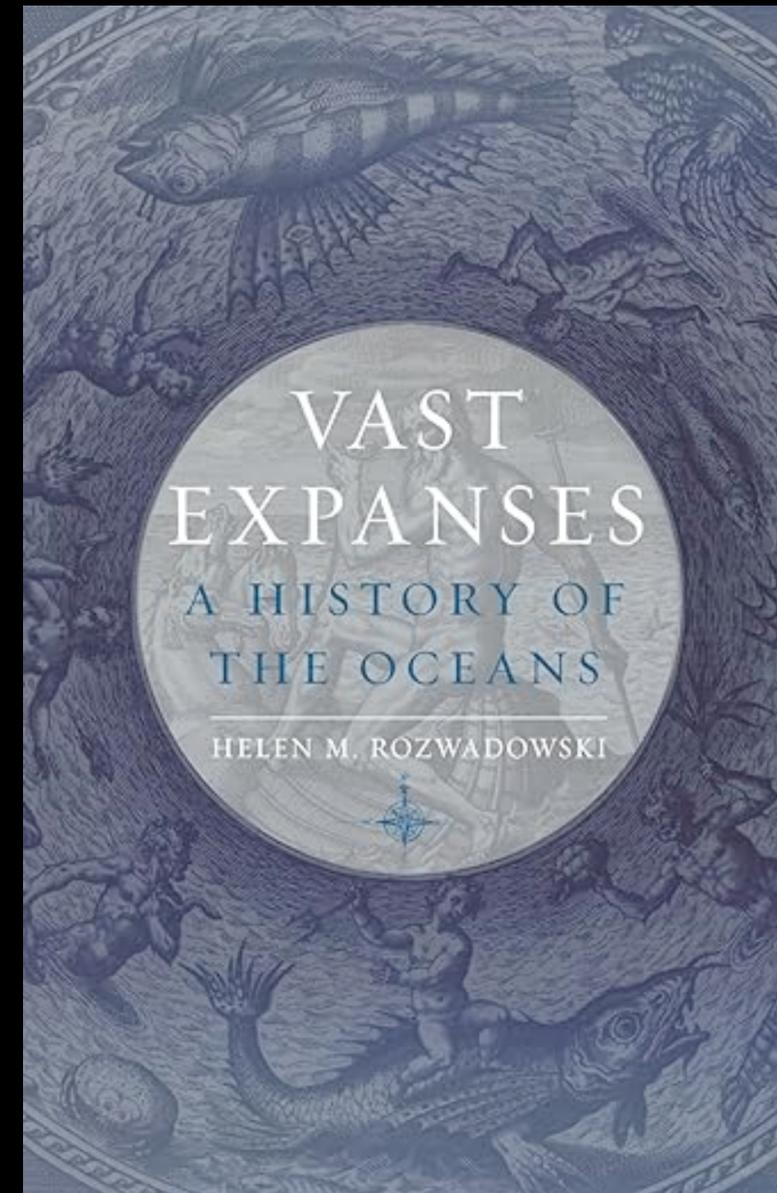


# History of Oceans

19th C: “Traditional uses of the sea, especially fishing, trade, emigration, and travel, intensified during the nineteenth century as industrialization transformed the blue water into a workplace on an entirely new scale.” (104)

“More revolutionary than the increased scale of work at sea was the innovation of playing by and on the ocean.” (105)

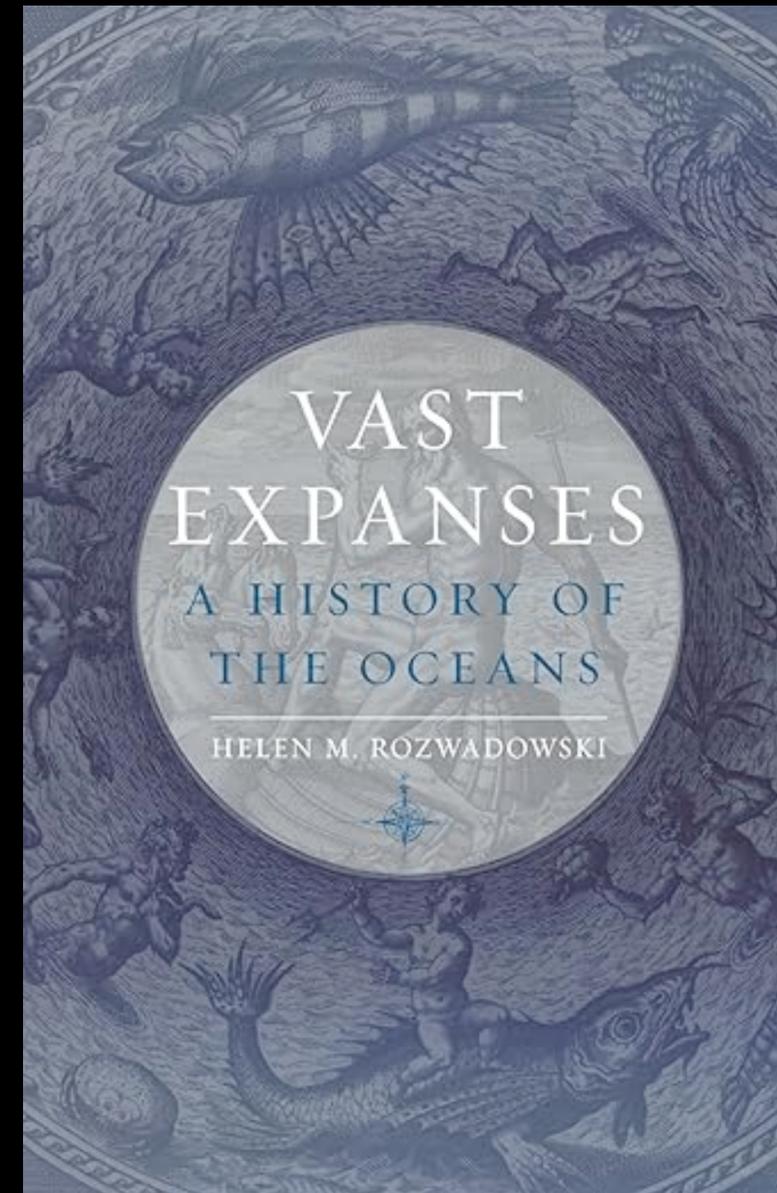
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# History of Oceans

19th C: “New to the nineteenth century was an appreciation of wilderness, which began with the Romantic embrace of its sublimely mysterious, dark and frightening elements and shifted to the desire to experience the intensity of personal encounters with the sea.” (147)

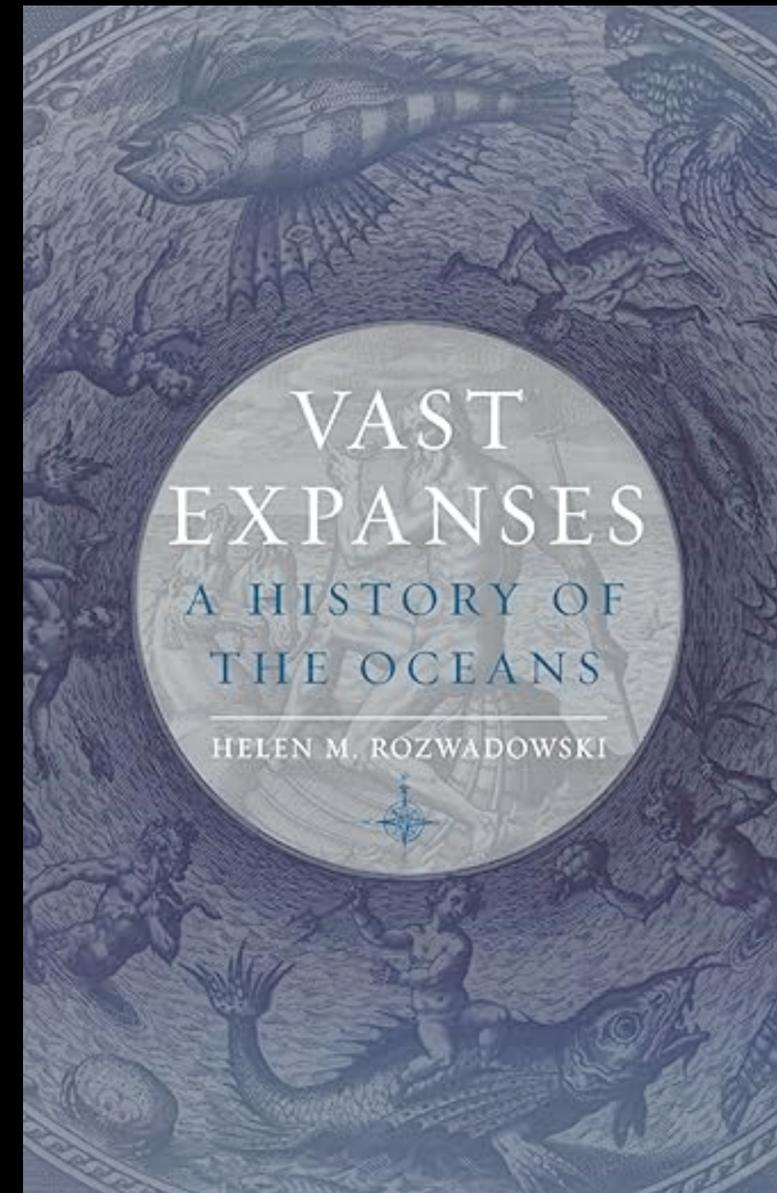
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# History of Oceans

20th C: “The ocean came to be viewed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the cultural prism of the ‘frontier’.” (186)

—Helen M. Rozwadowski, *Vast Expanses: A History of the Oceans* (Reaktion Books, 2018)

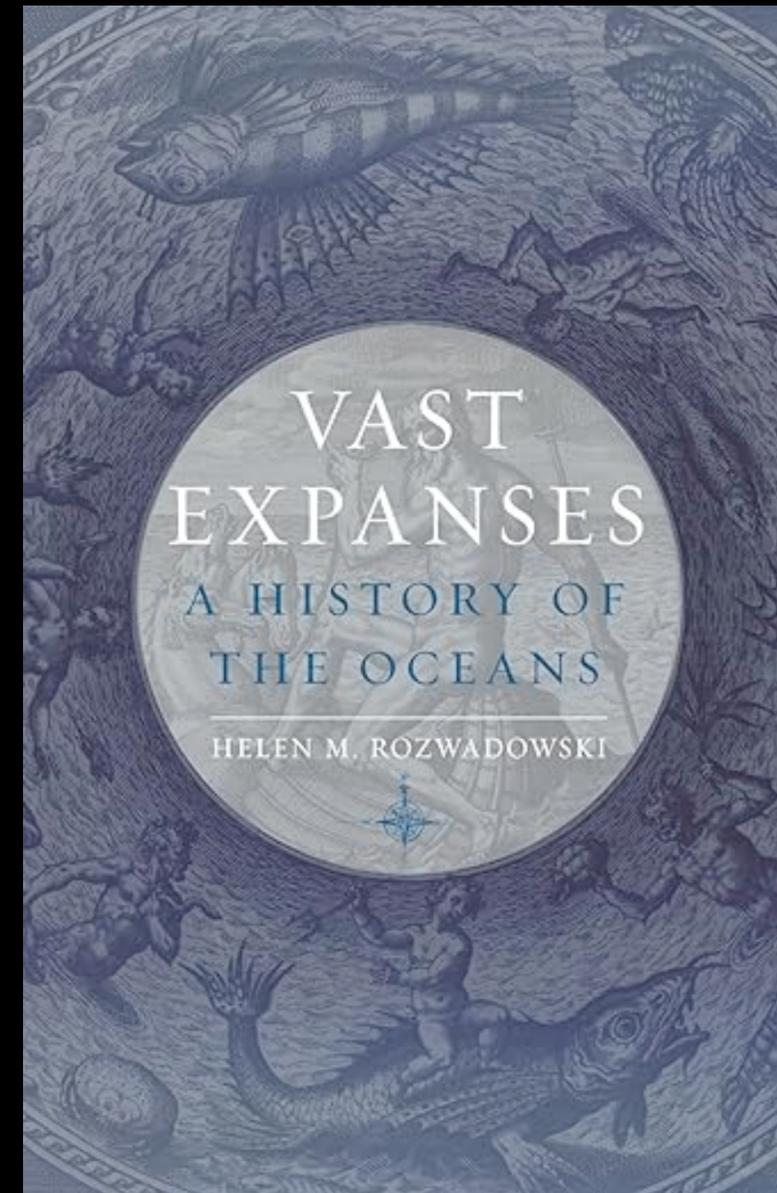


# Role of language and metaphor

20th C: “The ocean came to be viewed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the cultural prism of the ‘frontier’.” (186)

“The frontier metaphor encouraged the assumption that the sea’s resources were essentially limitless and the expectation that engineering and technology would enable firm human control of the ocean and its depths.” (187)

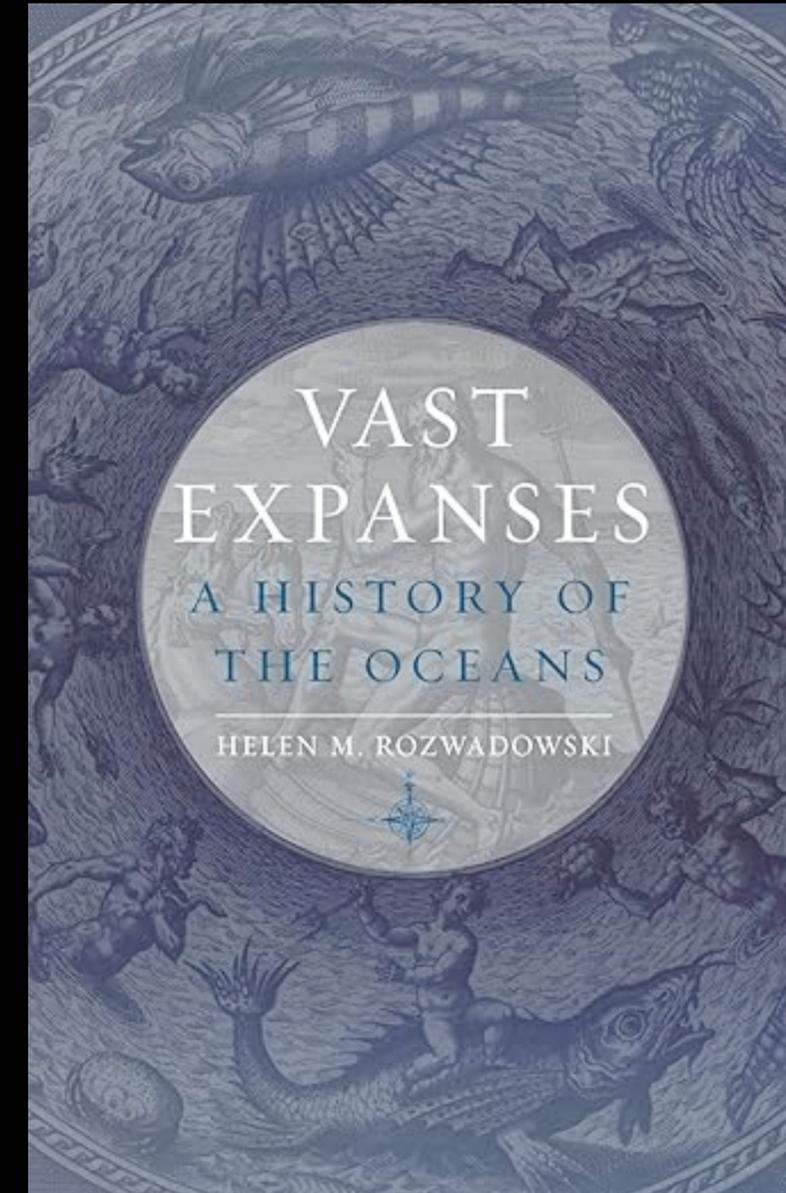
—Helen M. Rozwadowski, *Vast Expanses: A History of the Oceans* (Reaktion Books, 2018)



# The role of language, literature, and the Humanities

“The importance of the humanities, and the very power of metaphors, such as ‘frontier’ or ‘wilderness’, hold out hope. We must jettison our perception of the ocean as a timeless place, apart from humans. We must transform our understanding of the sea to one bound with history and interconnected with humanity.” (227)

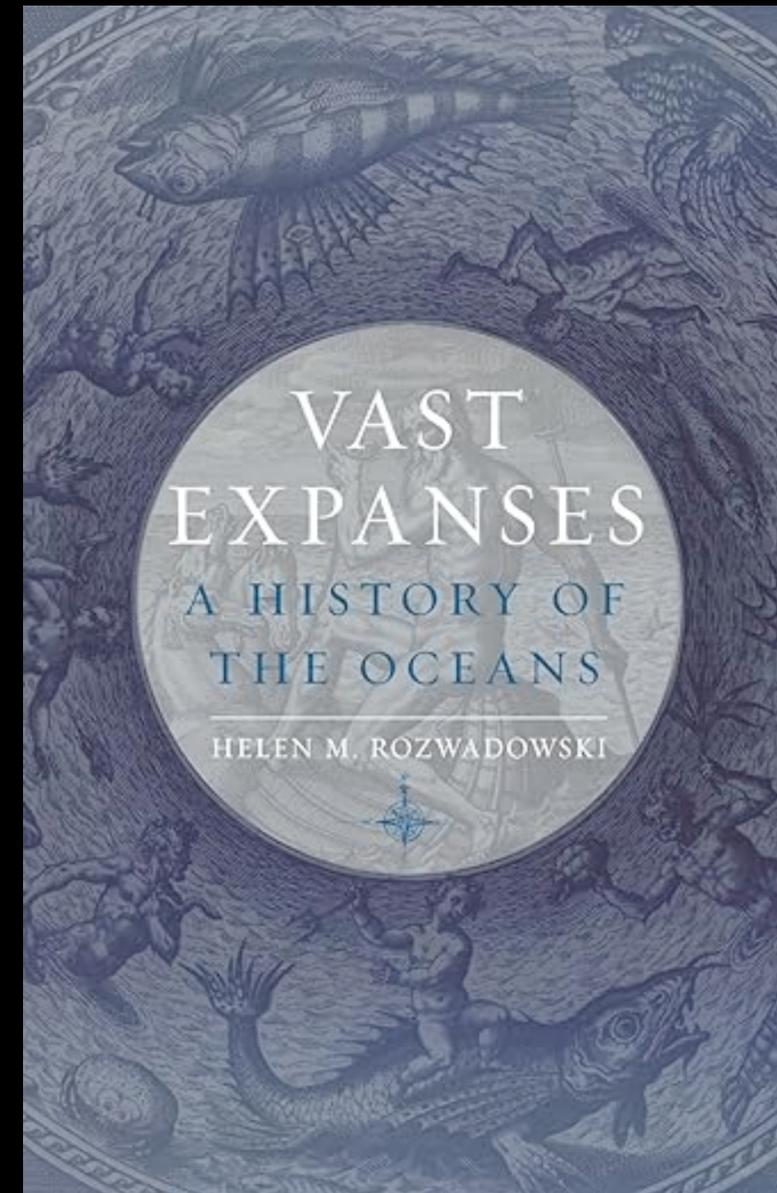
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# A History of Oceans

“Government support for science and the scientific study of the sea the nourished imperialism emerged conjointly. Indeed, the very term ‘scientist’ was coined by the physicist William Whewell in the context of his investigation of global tides.” (101)

—Helen M. Rozwadowski, *Vast Expanses: A History of the Oceans* (Reaktion Books, 2018)



**Take aways?**