

## THE OUTLAW OCEAN

Journeys across the Last Untamed Frontier

By Ian Urbina

544 pp. Alfred A. Knopf. 2019.

*Ian Urbina writes at the intersection of environmentalism and human and labor rights at sea. His work is investigative journalism at its best: thorough, exacting, and uncomfortable.*

[Ian Urbina](#)'s beat for the *New York Times* was the unbridled sea. The resulting [award-winning](#) front-page series in 2015 was the basis for this bestseller *The Outlaw Ocean*. Between Greenpeace's [Save the Whales](#) (ca. 1975) and Lonely Whale's [#Stop Sucking](#) (ca. 2018), Urbina enters the maw of the beast and finds whaling masquerading as scientific research in Japan; the coral reef bleached by climate change and illegal drilling in Brazil; the oil, sludge, and waste illegally dumped by cruise ships through magic pipes (contributing to the "more than 80 million gallons [ships illegally discharge] into the oceans" annually, 275); and much more. In fifteen essays, the author immerses himself in a myriad of offshore humanitarian, labor, and environmental offenses; collects data ("one of every five fish on dinner plates is caught illegally," 47); interviews maritime stakeholders; and bears witness. Greater demand for a dwindling supply of sea life; technological efficiencies—such as continuous fishing, which uses "long, cylindrical nets attached to underwater vacuums" (396); and greed are accelerating ecosystem collapse. "Destroying the world is now seen as just the cost of doing business" (405), says Adam Meyerson of [Sea Shepherd Conservation Society](#). Urbina gives hope, [suggestions to rein in abuses](#)—including eating less fish (opting for American, farmed fish) and supporting legislative reforms and advocacy groups. In our age of surveillance, the vast ocean offers instead anonymity, political apathy, and an easy escape route. — Lisa Thaler (author, *Look Up: The Life and Art of Sacha Kolin*), 19 July 2022