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Killian Quigley, *Reading Underwater Wreckage: An Encrusting Ocean* (London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 184 pp.

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Killian Quigley's *Reading Underwater Wreckage: An Encrusting Ocean* begins and concludes its interdisciplinary exploration of the submarine not with the ocean's multispecies matrix itself, but with exhibitions of eco-artifacts procured from its sunken depths. From the Victoria and Albert Museum's display of "sea sculpture" ceramics from an 18th-century merchant shipwreck to the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco's 2019 show *Lost at Sea: Art Recovered from Shipwrecks*, Quigley's analysis of these marine and manmade concretions reveals these aquatic ecosystems' potent alchemical agencies. Throughout *Reading Underwater Wreckage*, Quigley seeks to establish "a rhetoric and imagery of encrusted and encrusting things [that] partakes of wider and heterogenous representational patterns, patterns that also involve the ornamental, the exterior, the superficial, the secondary, and even the bejeweled" (12). His book takes up these subaqueous reconstitutions, to wrestle with the ontological mutations of shipwrecks and their wrecked fragments as they interact with and integrate into defamiliarizing submarinal environments. Spanning the realms of the aquatic, linguistic, literary, artistic, and the biological, this ambitious title examines how submerged materials become encrusted, extracted, studied, and displayed as more-than-human matters imbue them with new meanings.

Organized across three central "habits"—fouling, concreting, and artmaking—Quigley establishes encrusting as methodology, not just as an aesthetic affect but as a critical tool "sensitive to concreting growths [which] contributes to the emerging project of complicating and pluralizing our sense of what constitutes oceanic matter" (26; 98). To embark on such oceanic natureculture studies, Quigley argues, involves a rejection of terracentric assumptions and requires new adaptations to our forms of scholarly description, sensorial understanding, and cultural heritage interpretation—a suspension, if you will, that embraces symbolic, perceptual, and ontological fluidity. Among the new vocabularies Quigley introduces are "wreckly assemblages" and "growings-together." These are linguistic ways to theoretically untangle the ocean as a site of disorientation and defamiliarization without entirely unraveling these entangled undersea sensibilities. Microbiological phenomena, human material histories, and more-than-human marine temporalities play out

across these submerged artifacts' growing, corroding, and contaminated surfaces (21; 32).

Quigley's critical study of encrusted histories and marine aesthetics does not just seek to articulate the material properties of these dynamic tidal flows and living compositions of aquatic organisms. To discuss the sea, one must also wrestle with a larger, global history of oceanic imaginaries, how the sea has operated as a cultural and commercial resource marked by circulations of colonial trade networks and imperial economies. These unruly underwater spaces disrupt our sense of time and relationality, rendering the objects that sink into its depths estranged through encrustation's generation and destruction. While it might be a challenge to balance discussions of the biological, material, and ecological with the theoretical, historic, and symbolic, Quigley deftly weaves together these maritime events and poetic narratives without sacrificing the ocean's weird, disorienting complexity. Where a scholar might prefer to scrape off these encrustations as excess and ornament, Quigley employs this methodology to reflect on how wrecked objects can become materially illegible to our conventions of human understanding, reshaped by literal tidal pressures, transformed into marine habitats, objects of manmade pollution, unruly and precarious. This survey spans eras of Romanticism and Enlightenment, early marine science, and devotes significant attention to the emergence of diving and wreck salvaging as professionalized, yet highly exploited, forms of maritime labor. Quigley takes a critical look at how the ocean has been framed as a wild frontier, an opportunity for colonial conquest, and an untapped resource for anthropocentric expansion. The introduction of scholarly voices and texts such as Rachel Carson's 1937 essay "Undersea," Adrienne Rich's 1973 poem "Diving into the Wreck," observations by Jacques Cousteau, and Caitlin DeSilvey's reflections on decay's potential for new knowledges in heritage preservation all offer invaluable subversions and ruptures in our oceanic understanding. This submerged, salvaged poetics, one of storytelling through the diving and the drowned, charts a new critical course through long-standing circulations of oceanic storytelling and academic study.

Some of *Reading Underwater Wreckage's* most impactful and promising insights can be found towards the end of the book as Quigley wrestles with the role of encrustation in marine archeology, aquatic heritage preservation, and museum conservation. Quigley presents a fascinating tension in the field: "the preservative tendencies of algal, bryozoan, spongy, and other-than-animate concretions appear to make them exceptional assistants to reading the artifactual identities of seafloor stuff. At other times, they are critically antagonistic to legibility" (112). Where encrustment prohibits clear categorization, it also provides an unexpected kind of underwater preservation as a living archive that reinterprets these wrecks on its own tidal, other-than-human terms. These concretions, despite altering the appearance of artifacts, keep their fragmented integrity partially intact by fusing to the coralline seabed. Quigley underscores the importance of not disregarding or devaluing these marine processes of dis- and re-articulation, to see these submerged processes as practices of ecocultural stewardship. Where our anthropocentric notions of conservation

would be quick to remove these ornamental substrates, Quigley argues that heritage scholars should view recovered objects as part of an active material interrelationship with the sea. While water has historically been the conservator's and the curator's nightmare, Quigley urges the heritage preservation field to embrace encrusted matter's ambiguous, indeterminate identifications, to address these transformations and give credit to the marine species that kept these objects intact underwater. As these systems of identification become unstable and unruly in the submarine, perhaps we must expand our conventions of description and perception to encompass the totality of their encrusted assemblages.

Reading Underwater Wreckage's interdisciplinary odyssey from the depths of our oceans to terrestrial gallery displays and across vast temporal swaths of maritime colonial histories and artistic, academic, and poetic contemplations provides a necessary intervention into practices of subaquatic ecocriticism. By refusing anthropocentric legibility for his encrusted subjects, Quigley embraces new forms of marine heritage mutualism, ones that challenge tropes of sea exploration, extraction, and frontierism. Quigley's analysis of encrustment, manifested through biocultural processes of fouling, concreting, and artmaking, does not center on one particular species or system. Rather, he focuses on the ocean's matrix as a transformative site for, in the words of Karen Barad, "intra-active becoming" (2014, 231). These studies of the bottoms of harbors, along maritime trade routes, and circulations across imperial ocean geographies wrestle with histories of marine environmental aesthetics that have influenced the fields of literature, art history, philosophy, and archeology for centuries.

The hybrid forms of language and methods of interpretation presented in *Reading Underwater Wreckage* give new meanings to sunken debris without requiring human rescue and intervention, unsettling generations of maritime research conventions. This book's revelations will profoundly transform approaches to multispecies scholarship within the environmental humanities, cultural heritage studies, marine science, and beyond. Quigley's text invites an "immersive unknowing," an acceptance of the sea's denial of traditional knowledge collection, a turn to more-than-human enactments that at times bear the mark of human histories (151). In a time when renewed interest in the ocean as a potential extractive resource demands novel assertions of protection, *Reading Underwater Wreckage* provides critical tools for a more fluid understanding of the undersea's uncanny transformative, preservative, and interpretive potentials. From within these aquatic disorientations, a new kind of encrusted spatiotemporal sense-making emerges.

Works Cited

Barad, Karen. "Invertebrate Visions: Diffractions of the Brittlestar." *The Multispecies Salon*, edited by Eben Kirksey, Duke University Press, 2014, pp. 221-241.