

Lichen
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We grow from the inside out and I know this because
the color brown seeps up under our skin
and stains our flesh in flecks. It bleeds along imperceptible
trails in skin the way ink creeps through grains in paper
from a single dot made with the tip of a ballpoint pen.
Under a microscope the crossed fibers of tree pulp pressed
into sheets of paper would be indistinguishable
from the constellations in the skin.

We grow from the inside out
the way trees expand ring after ring from a deep brown
core the size of the seedling when it began to sprout.
Stripes of shimmering flesh band our thighs and our stomachs
and mark us like the ballpoint freckles speckling
our flesh.