Lichen

Maeve Quinn

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.