

Lichen: 13 points

- 1 They know the subtler shades of green and where each one belongs;
- 2 and some reds:
ochre, orange and something aching towards crimson –
all in a single patch;
- 3 they grow patiently
as little as a hair's breadth a year;
- 4 and live on bark and stone and brick and soil
and even on a bus abandoned near Jerramungup;
- 5 some eat that on which they live,
working hollows into stone,
making of diet and habitation one thing,
a modest economy;
- 6 they cope with hard things
and take on the colonising of a quarry;
- 7 some make minute fronds which can lift from bark into air
or wrinkle over protrusions;
- 8 they are sensitive – and have been used
to measure the pollution that we make;
- 9 both gentle and harsh terrains are their home,
rainforests and deserts, and they live according to their means:
it's in the Arctic that they grow most slowly;
- 10 they have humility:
most live for nothing but rain and air and sunshine.
- 11 There is, though, no such thing as lichen:
which is made of algae and fungi in intimate relationship
and is an image of no-self (*anatta*), the different elements
wound together to create the illusion of solidity;
- 12 and also an image of tolerance:
the different forms living as one.
- 13 In this they are a comfort.