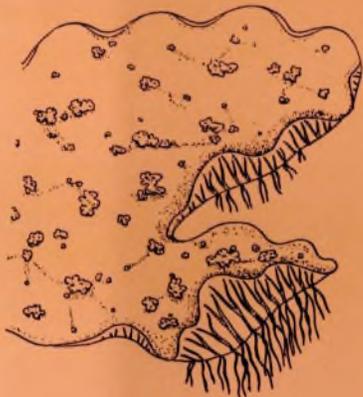


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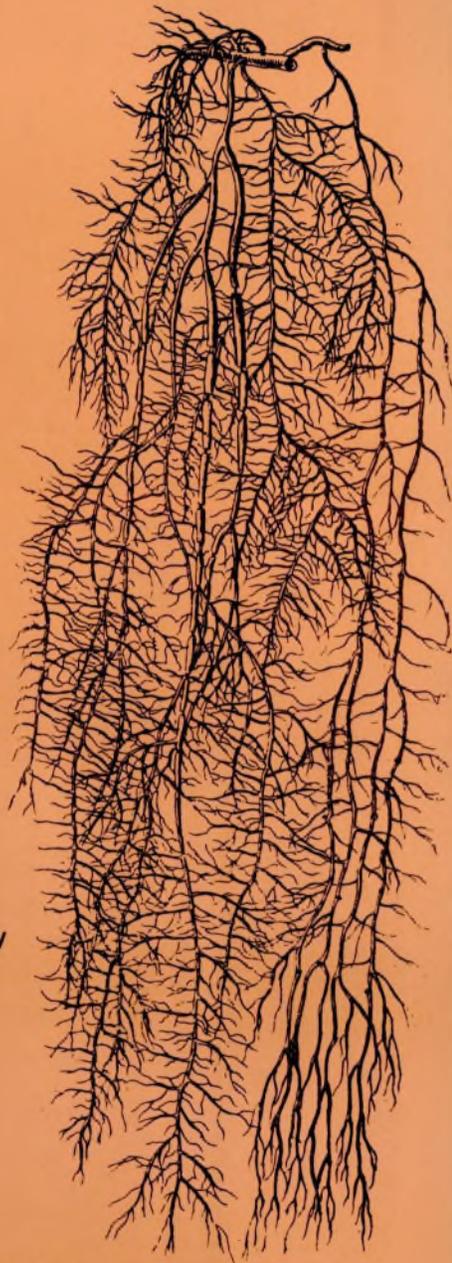
**BRITISH  
LICHEN  
SOCIETY  
BULLETIN**



*Nephroma*

*Peltigera*

chemistry



**Edited by Frank Brightman,  
South London Botanical Institute,  
323 Norwood Road, LONDON SE24 9AQ**

would perform a useful service to conservation without necessitating travelling long distances and attending meetings. A problem in this connection is that the membership of the society is far from uniformly distributed throughout the British Isles; we have few or no members in remoter parts where urgent conservation problems often arise. I would be glad to hear from members who will be holidaying in the highlands of Scotland this year and would be willing to look at certain sites and make preliminary assessments of their lichenological importance.

A man who over many years devoted more time than he could really afford to working as a conservationist was apt to reply when asked why he expended so much effort "Everyone needs a lost cause". If we collaborate with one another, it needn't be as bad as that.

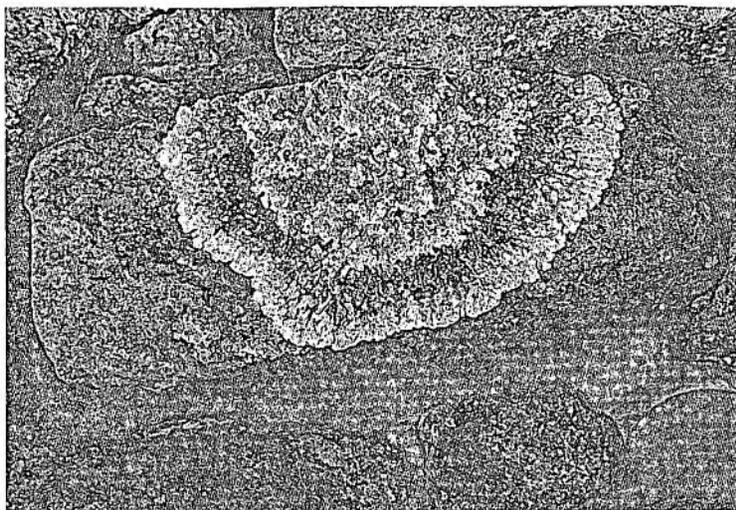
FRANK BRIGHTMAN

### APPROACHES TO LICHEN AESTHETICS I

Few Lichenologists would fail to assert the beauty of lichens. Yet the comments one encounters under this heading, verbal or printed, are little more than platitudes. Small attempt is made to explore the aesthetic qualities of lichens analytically or with any exactitude. This series will indicate some possible approaches, using examples from the range of lichen morphology. This first part will be mainly concerned with circular thalli.

#### 1. A Thomistic approach

Readers of Joyce's Portrait will recall the discussion there of the three conditions laid down by St. Thomas Aquinas as pre-requisites of beauty. These are (a) wholeness (integritas), (b) due proportion or harmony (consonantia), and (c) brightness or clarity (claritas). How do these three conditions apply in the case of the specimen of Parmelia saxatilis illustrated here?



a) Wholeness (integritas)

Foliose, placodioid or crustose plants of a discoid form immediately exhibit a quality of oneness which enables them to be readily differentiated from the background of their habitat, this separateness and unity of appearance inhering primarily, as seen in the illustration, in the circular or elliptical growth form of the thallus. The rotational or multi-axial symmetry shown by such cyclic thalli is highly unifying in effect. This roundness of form is the major factor in our apprehension of oneness/wholeness in such plants, although the role of colour, not so apparent in a black-and-white picture, should not be ignored.

b) Harmony of parts (consonantia)

Once the object has been apprehended as a thing separate, a oneness, the viewer perceives the relationship between its various main parts or sections. In the case of P. saxatilis we note the overall radial structure and orientation of the thallus emphasising and relating easily with the circularity already perceived, the light periphery of outer lobes, the darker area immediately within that, with another lighter circular region around the centre of the plant. A balanced relationship strikes the viewer.

c) Clarity or brightness (claritas)

The meaning and significance of St. Thomas' third condition, claritas, has been much debated. Here Joyce's interpretation of clarity as whatness, particularity (claritas = quidditas; cf Gerard Manley Hopkins' 'inscape') is accepted and followed. In our example of P. saxatilis, this quality consists in such specific attributes as the overall reticulate patterning, the formation with age of rodlike or coralloid isidia and consequent degree of darkening, later isidial regeneration leading to re-affirmation of 'roundness' in the shape of a second-generation light-edged thallus concentric inside the parent, and within this secondary thallus a region of competition between regenerative lobules ultimately resolved in a pattern of centrifugal growth. It is largely owing to detailed features apprehended at this stage that we become aware of the particular beauty we associate with the species, P. saxatilis and with this individual plant of that species, both genetically and environmentally induced.

Claire Dalby's notes in Bulletin 59 reveal the illustrator's need to analyse such features. Not unrelatedly, Dr. D. J. Hill's growth studies in Lichenologist (1984) 16, p.277, have shown how the different frequency of lobe engulfment manifested by different species may prove useful in taxonomic definition. For present purposes, it is noted here that such growth characteristics result in structural features which may be visibly and aesthetically registered and recognised as distinctive of particular species without engagement in the relevant mathematics.

Note

The Thomistic conditions are readily applied to such plane, discoid lichens as P. saxatilis. However, St. Thomas' three conditions are similarly applicable, mutatis mutandis, to semi-circular thalli (e.g. Caloplaca decipiens) or to annular thalli (e.g. Lecanora muralis plants with disintegrated central area), etc.; as, also, to subfruticose or fruticose thalli viewed from above. An instance of this last case would be a cushion of Cladonia portentosa, whose oneness, when account is taken of its three-dimensional nature, nears the perfection of the hemisphere rather than that of the circle.

A. HENDERSON