

While Camping at Fortescue Bay, Tasmania

Even though I get frustrated by my inability to focus
on any one thing, on any particular sport
or instrument, for example, even though
my relationships always flare up then wither,

so that I've tended to drift through life, succeeding
at very little, rooted in almost nothing, I'm comforted now
by a mango-orange lichen sprayed over these rocks
and left to dry: a huddled collection

of lichen settlements: spotted, stone-fringed and
huddled; and by my girlfriend there, her fiery hair
flowing out with the sweeping fan of the Tasman
Sea. Despite my lack of success I've succeeded,

incrementally, to make a sort of peace
with the future – by which I mean I've been calmed
by poems with freer lines, when Martin's voice trails
off behind me, or Robert's molten harbour is smeared

with five o'clock sunlight: these are the sweating hearts
of places within me. To think I'm on the periphery
of such a vortex while the dry, aching space
of atmosphere without canyons or signatures, time

flat, withdraws... but wet place sings: to you
whose land here we think we have stolen – whose
land could never be taken away – I thank you
because the silence beyond this poem is yours. Worry,

jealousy, spite, these big city numbers; out here,
settlements of peace and then of various,
unresolved murmurs: collections of mango, molten
glass, tragically enormous trees rising up: blue,

wooden, huddled. And the sense that, amongst
them all, we are still growing. If some of these things
include you, only to then whither before you return –
as you probably ought – to thoughts of bills,

conversations, snippets of films, think now of sodden
rocks breathing in and out of the bay, gently lapped,
submerged, magnified, heaving out
– not to say that meaning is this simple

or innate, but to suggest a slow growth,
a gentle addition, places and warm
sunlight tumbling down quietly
over pale, gathered forest.

Stuart Cooke