

way back when i was first diagnosed

when i first started my parkie life
that is when a doctor first said
“i believe you have parkinson’s disease”
and paused before she added “i’m sorry”
referred me to a neurologist in the system
i kept thinking “there’s been a mistake”
even though it perfectly explained
so much of what was going wrong with me
i couldn’t imagine it was factually accurate
as an eye exam would be or
dependable as apples falling from their tree

“this too shall pass” i thought
“like a virus or a bad dream”
of course it didn’t
this kind of cheap grace pseudo-spiritual
pop-culture dissociation
was the first outer skin i needed to peel
those easy memes we were taught in sunday school
in elementary classrooms in refrigerator magnets at home
all the old “you’ll get over it” ways we learned
to ignore our own bodies their needs
had to come off like bandages
which had stayed too long
grown part of the scabs the tender scars
ripped off while Job’s friends stood by
with their self-righteous taunting

that was the second tough layer to tear away:
i did nothing to deserve these symptoms
i was not to blame
it had nothing to do with my behavior my karma
certainly not original sin
it’s just what happens
in a poorly designed universe
which led to the third layer of resistance
to scrape off:
it didn’t mean a goddamn thing
in any micro/macro cosmic scheme
it didn’t mean shit
it was just something that happened
like windshield bugs

of course it happened to *me*
so leaving it meaningless
was not an option:
i wrote a poem

and i couldn't ignore the meanings
i tentatively composed:
i chose a treatment program
to help my poems help me
 help me
 help me

so it goes the rest of my life i suppose
which is the last early-onset layer
of protective dermis to shear away:
i'll get better
i won't!

parkinson's is progressive degeneration
it gets harder every year

the big surprise has been
how much better
the poems have gotten