

slow dancing

my sloughed-off skin

floats down a sunbeam,
so I vacuum up my cells from
our soft blue sofa.

Skin, where I begin and end,
as porous and open as tree bark
under which insects build their busy cities.

Wrapped tight around my baby body
skin holds blood and bones, cauliflower brain,
and muscle together,

Step by step feeling air with tiny fingers
reaching for whatever to grab and chew,
cells already racing to build
a language of the body a song, a life.

And all our time, we are also
losing cells, they wander off like a mitt,
a sock, those stray heartbeats
that take a break, unnoticed.

How surprising now my eighth decade
forearm rippled as I hold it up
to feel the breeze on a country drive. Hair dry
as tall autumn grasses, burl of my ankle
bound in tensor bandage to walk me

along the boulevard where hidden roots
of very old trees rise above the ground
feeling their way around
what they had never seen

exploring
as my cells are now,
slow-dancing away
escaping the limits of just me,
they stray

into the great expanse of everything

unnamed untamed that flows beyond me—

that free.