

## **peeling potatoes**

in grandma Dottie's mint-walled kitchen,  
sock-clad feet slick  
on the wood floor,

we bake bitterness, rust  
orange leaves, pumpkin seed salt  
and butterscotch.

it's the season of cold noses,  
of uncles yelling at the TV while their wives  
clutch hands to say grace,

and grandma Dottie is one of the wives.  
her thin fingers work  
a pie crust,

flour sifting like first snow  
over the mountains of sugar and thick,  
smoky butter;

she cracks an egg,  
the yolk a marigold, and when it breaks,  
oozing into the batter, I watch it bloom.

we do this every year –  
the women in my family  
are familiar with the way cranberry sauce

jiggles out of the can,  
know the rich, earthy smell  
of cream of mushroom.

we brew caramel coffee  
and take the chest of silverware from grandma's closet  
to set the table.

after, my mom washes everybody's plates  
and her brown eyes catch the light  
as she scrapes crumbs

off the good china,  
shimmering fiery gold as fathers and sons  
stack more beer cans on the counter.

the pie is almost ready now –  
apple, this year,  
and the boys are getting rowdy waiting;

cinnamon spices the air  
and makes us all a little impatient, I guess.  
grandma Dottie puts another pot

of coffee on,  
lays her tea towel over a chair,  
and starts to sort the leftovers.