

POTATO SECRETS

Smooth as Moroccan leather, they rolled
each time the grocer tried to make pyramids
of them. I selected mine one by one,
paying more than the 5-pound bag price.

Matching in size and symmetry, the shade
of pecan shells and almost as firm,
they lay basketed in my pantry
for weeks, dreaming their long lineage.
Now when I open the door, they insinuate
earth smell, an old insistent musk
reeking of history and ethnos.
Darkness has activated their eyes;
pale blips poke out of their sockets.
My mother, always honing my kitchen skills,
says those pointed knurls reaching
for new life must be dug out;
they're poison raw, and they steal
flavor if cooked.
Their frail future ends in a trash bag
hurried past my curious cat
while their bulbous brown origins
hiss at me from the oven.
And my mother hums in alto monotones,
as she prepares her closely guarded recipe
of sour cream laced with salsa and chives.