AT THE ENOSBERG FALLS CEMETERY

Heat, enough of it that the yews
hiding the headstone raise a rash
on my arms as I pull them back.
Below, the Mississquoi River lifts
a languid brown body toward headwaters
where the blue herons breed.
No one else here on this unkept ground;
train tracks just beyond the boundary
are the only sign
that anyone’s recently passed near.

Forty years, mother, and I drop to my knees—
with bare nails claw grass and sod
from the ground plate to free your initials,
struggle with thumb-thick branches.
I twist and tear them, scratching my arms,
hurl them to the ground.
Hot, drudging work—pain, a healing thing.

Such wildness here that I wonder
what lies beneath it, want to dig until I hold
in my arms what I lost as a child,
breast bone, pelvis, skull,
whatever might be left of you.
Instead I lug armloads of boughs to the weeds
beside the tracks, unload them heavily there.
An Amtrak clatters minutes or a lifetime by,
window after window—brief curious faces.