

JANETTE FECTEAU

CRANBERRY PICKING

New tombstones sprout beside the church,
where they've started burying folks on the hill above
your spot for cranberries. You scrabble in the timothy
for enough to make a pie. Splay
the grass where it grows like an animal pelt,
search between the winding lion's paw, the lichens
and sedge, the deer moss oozing tannin. Wet knees
under thin corduroy. Scattered partridge feathers:
a fox has had a meal. Berries drop into the empty pail
and you look up at the headstones of your neighbours,
squat upon the hill. Years ago, as a child, you tobogganed
in this churchyard! Slid, whirling
and screeching, under that wooden cross with its
limp-wristed Christ, then trundled like a drunkard
to the top, sucking your snow-wet braid. One day

your bones will lie beneath you, preserved in this bog, and mud
invade your clothing. Your ribs will not collapse. Today
you grub among delicate runners, pry the grass aside
to find cranberries, so brilliant, and so sour.