Backbone (West Virginia Tells It Like It Is)

The hardest thing to do would be
To move away.
Can’t let them have another
Ten acres, you say.

You say it’s easier to stay
And drink the slurry water.
You say it’s easier to stay
At the foot of a crumblin’ mountain.
You say it’s easier to stay
Than to think of drivin’ out of that driveway
For the
last
time.

(I reckon it’s hard to go anywhere when they
slash
your tires.)

Well, Sisters.

I-79 ain’t my backbone
And the strip mine hurt but
I proved ‘em wrong in the end.
You should see them frilly little daisies I poosh up in the summertime
and the pizen ivy too. Mmhmm.

Listen here: my backbone is made up of the
Hairy-legged hillbilly women of West Virginia
Like you, your Momma, your Grandma, and her Grammy Martha,
Like Maria Gunnoe, like Lorelei, like Donetta and like Joan Linville.
Y’all do me proud.

…

You say the hardest thing to do would be
To move away.

Well, Sisters.

That’s because I ain’t lettin’ ya go without a fight.
Stitches

My seeds are the stitches from my mother’s quilt
And my soil is the belly of my child.

My rake is made up of the roots of my ancestors
And my hoe is carved from springhouse stones.

My water is the tears that sop in the soles of my shoes
And my plot is the family cemetery.

My hands are my own
But they are calloused and cracked like my father’s.

And in my palm I hold the hope of this hellish heaven.

Now how was it
You growed your garden?