

Cultures

vete

go out take the pick axe
take the shovel
my mother would tell me

hard brown earth with the axe
I'd pick at its dark veins
disinter a rotting tin can
unmold a shell from a lost ocean
bones of an unknown animal

with my eyes I'd measure out a rectangle
I'd swing and shove and lift
my sweat dripping on the swelling mounds

into the hole I'd rake up and pitch
rubber-nippled baby bottles
cans of Spam with twisted umbilicals
I'd overturn the cultures
spawning in Coke bottles
murky and motleyed

my brothers never helped
woman's work and beneath them
under the clothesline
three times a year, two feet apart

I'd dig and sweat and grunt
above me clothes flapping like banners
wire taut between the crossed posts
crucifixes over earlier graves

when it rots
trash replenishes the soil
my mother would say
but nothing would grow in
my small plots except
thistle sage and nettle.

Gloria Anzaldúa