

Voices of the allotment- (inspired by the Alive community allotment in North Bristol, offering a gardening and socialising space for those living with Dementia.)

*Brassicas in that bed,
Over there, the raspberry patch-
This is mostly weeds
And behind you the wildflower meadow.
Here we mix comfrey in with rain water
To feed the plants.*

December wind whistles and shakes
The small shed
Where we shelter,
Stamp stamping our feet for warmth.
A tray of tea cups clink together.

*That's Mary's growing patch over there,
Beyond the compost heap.
We haven't put lids on them yet,
But the leaf pile will probably mulch
Down alright.*

What if we all realised that growing
One seed is akin to a rebellion?
That even when people are forgetting;
Slipping bits away from themselves,
Like a traveller washed up on an island,
Seeking familiarity -
That it might be found in:
the richly scented rosemary
Or the cloddy touch of soil,
Thick with clay
And reminiscent of art class.

Who knew that slips of self might
Be found between
The sprout stems and rhubarb?
That in the tracing of fingers
On the earth,
One's own place might be remembered
Or less misunderstood.

Who knew that in the weekly trundle
To this allotment,
That some folk might just be
Walking themselves home,
Weighty with plastic waterproofs
And heavy boots,
Heavy bodies -
Feet carving the path
Forging desire lines
Between the lemon verbena
And parsley,
Between the veggie beds,

Sweetcorn, kale and other
Non identifiable greens,
That *here*, might just be the place.

Sometimes we get blackberries, they remember.
It must be the juice imprinted over decades,
Where so many questions reach for the surface,
But are lost somewhere close to finding air.
What remains, is lost,
Or really, what gets to stay?

We study the compost,
We heap the soil onto plates and crumble it
As if we are very important and very knowledgeable
About this soil, this loamy, porous, silt loam stuff.
We pour some into a jar,
Add bicarb of soda, vinegar,
We shake it, watch it fizz,
Say, oh it means this now.

Can we add rock dust for the allotment?
Will it help?
We are all made of star stuff,
Studded with bits of others that made our
Living possible.
We are all turning the soil over and over,
Grappling, asking questions.
Like, shall we add lamb's wool,
Tuck her in for winter?

By Samantha Tucker