

Alvingham Road

Ayesha Chouglay

these hands hold soil from the verge like it's a holy book
turn it over with the fork so naturally *it's like the nuns I saw*

*in Rome entering a church, making the sign of the cross
bobbing in front of the altar, smooth hands gently rolling
fruit in the market, the peach skin holding the summer heat*

hold my hand, duck, a daily rhythm *like the call to prayer
in Finsbury Park, many hands, many feet, and the three of us walking past the gates*

*one saying oh I'm dreaming of a pub garden and now we sit within one, half a lager, twice,
unintentional pint of apple juice, and yes it's small, but*

there is something prayerful about it, about working the land, *the conversation,
I imagine you stooping over the hole you dug, a weatherbeaten tree*

*hands like the leather rucksack I carried for years on the Northern Line
the saddle soap dousing*

pressing the body of the tree into place, thick shoes
tamping it down, *did you talk as you worked,*

*when I worked outside, teenager on placement, I was taught to ask the spirits
to let me fell the elder, I thought*

do they remember after the years have come?

Note: This is another two voice poem, written with the same method and intentions as **listen to them cows beeling**. Sam once planted the trees along the left hand side of Alvingham Road.