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Meadows on the one hand and marshland on the other. It is perhaps not surprising that in Iceland the mires and bogs ooze and are unstable. In Treviso’s Middle English translation of the Norse of Iceland, the term for the boglands of Dartmoor as a ‘feather land’ demonstrates its overlaying saturated peat. It is in their midst that Haggs seem to find a life of their own – coming adrift from their practice was through the Scottish colloquial phrase ‘guddling about’ for giving voice to nature, and evoking play through onomatopoeia.

To return to the opening poem, what we have are multiple expressions and instabilities under the term earth – where we are buried, where things come to rest, where we share the fabric of the world, where excavation is violence. As Jeffrey Cohen notes the ‘lyric insists upon the inherent metaphoricity of the material as well as the sheer materiality of metaphor’. The earth here is also a recording device for the seasons and climates past – though one that takes science to read the beautiful section drawings of haggs sit then alongside sparse scientific photography. It is a landscape at once bare and yet vibrant in which so much ‘nature writing’ luxuriates. These denuded landscapes though call forth a sense of being an unfinished world: a composition – a poesis - and one that literally can’t be seen as a simple repository of systemic effects imposed on an innocent world but has to be traced through the generative modalities of impulses, daydreams, ways of relating, distractions, strategies, failures, encounters, and workings of all kinds.

The peat landscape here acts. We might ask it what has it known? The earth here is both a wandering and a grounding, a name and a substance. Moss Flats speaks of the wild places, and the high places, yet its curiously alien and bare surface renders the matter of the earth apparent.

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