**Boggy Groun**

*(“Boggy groun it wer and hevvy muck” - Riddley Walker)*

1.

Much can be found in bog and muck

silt from living things in one big sticky

deep where limbs lie strange to purpose

and jumbles of teeth spit no names.

A leather cheek grins at millennia.

2.

Here is a blade off a digging pole

whose mistress arm was hacked

when Windeby girl was put to drown

her hair sheared like shivers of bird

to beautify the sacrifice.

3.

Unfavoured by the gods because of limp

Kayhausen Boy got hogtied with cloth and fur

while the elders held him fast

for the sacrificial slash at the throat

though it was clear

the child could not outrun

his history in the sphagnum bog.

4.

A frail thin-faced creature

called just Yde Girl was dragged

too famished for struggling

so they looped her own girdle

round the passive pulse of her neck

saying rope was too good for the bog.

5.

Old Croghan Man took the barrage of blades

in silence as his tongue flew out loud

to the crows flapping for spoils watching

his left side leaving his right as the axe

parted him clean to the ground

to find his eternity in heavy muck.

6.

At *Alken Enge* a skull-headed dagger tells

of the turn of a crown when a thousand warriors

resplendent in blood to appease their god

sank in bog meadow with swords and oaths

their shrivelled bones now a patchwork tale

retold by a hundred thousand others

quagmired in the rich slaughter bogs

of the Somme, Flanders, Passchendaele.