

Poetry Series

Jacqui Thewless
- poems -

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Jacqui Thewless(November,1955)

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The author, whose surname before marriage was Hardman, lives in Pembrokeshire, West Wales.

9 Haiku For My Kids

Rowen, my first child:
her first glimpse of me / her mum's
first hint of glory.

Jessie and Rowen:
two stars I steer by. Each day,
the sun and the moon.

Winter of '80:
children see diamonds in snow...
The heart's lens freezes them.

Julian pee-pees
as soon as he's been born - its
huge arch, triumphant.

Twin boys who are dead
on arrival. Empty pram,
and not even names.

Jules, like Paddington
Bear in duffle-coat and red
wellies on the sledge.

Shift to Pembrokeshire:
Jess and her bro rifle
wet bogs. Watch out, toads!

Rowen, the eldest,
keeps to herself in her room,
drawing Tutankhamen.

These, my final babes -
twins, sharing one crib - sucking
each other's wee noses.

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Jacqui Thewless

A Good Poet Is Also A Weaver

A good poet is also a weaver.

No two cloths are the same
but the fabric of one wears well
while, soon, the other falls apart.

A few short years is for me the testing time.
Or one verse. Or a single line.

Jacqui Thewless

A Poem Contains That

A poem contains that
wee moth-like thing you may call interest,
fixing itself at a distance
on this independent life.

In this instance,
let us view the white moon which,
till now, has been reflecting something else's
light without your notice.

A few words are
enough to cause the ego's own eclipse;
a net lifts, over you.
When sunlight
goes, you notice the stars.

Jacqui Thewless

Advent

Christmas approaches.

Every star-struck sense

shuts down for the snow

though a cappella codes of carols -
interpreting the tingling elements
as if nipped noses and chapped lips
were necessary notes -
assuming the means,
make fingers do jingle bell dances in pockets and bags,
snap purses open and unhand
wads for gifts (wrapping with bows and ribbons
being the best bit
of Baubles-and-The-Tree
or cards carrying Robins and Santa through the letterbox) .

But God's scot-free and

rebirth comes unplanned.

This makes me shiver, as always. O...

Jacqui Thewless

Advent 2

Till March saps spring,
Everything falls away,
all passes, except this

mysterious spiral I
am moving in. You can call here
winter if you will:

invisibility rules
as single leaves
in the wet woods begin disappearing,

losing all mass,
all weight,
all shape -

and the sky widens eyes
glimpsing
the nearest thing I'll see to infinity.

Jacqui Thewless

After 3

After 3 the air's
sucked into the chimneys
as if it were grenades;
force ten gusts
batter the windows with ram-rod rain-shot.
I note
the violence of walls'
battles with the elements.

In my room,
there's a yellow door
lit by a cool bulb under an innocent shade.
White curtains
fall like Swiss mountain mists
from the frame of the closet where I keep my clothes.
Most of us
in this street are asleep.

Jacqui Thewless

All I Could Want In Life Is...

1. A mega-fantastic Lotto win (£3,000,000 would do. I'm not greedy) .
2. Somehow, and despite the 1st item, to retain my soul and
3. To paint some good pictures.
4. To write some half-decent poems and
5. To ride, even once, in a sleigh pulled by Reindeer over a snowy white landscape in Finland and yet
6. Not to die, because of this guilty pleasure, of bronchitis, flu, pneumonia, or just of cold.
7. Not to outlive my kids or my favourite poet or my sister or my best friend, Elizabeth Henderson.
8. That my most favourite female poet keeps writing her wonderful poems, well into her nineties.
9. That Scotland shall get its deserved independence and soon. And
10. That every one of the world's mercenary, two-for-a-penny, Politicians gets its rightful come-uppance and
11. That Mharie Black becomes ever-more universally-popular than the Windsors were.
12. That Scotland gets its independence, much sooner than you could guess.
13. That all of the psychopathic elite shall fall dead in their sleep, sooner than later.
14. That I get to ride, twice, in a sleigh pulled by reindeer in snow fields in Finland.
15. That Scotland gets free of England. SOON! !

Jacqui Thewless

Apocalypse

in council houses
and manicured estates -
imagine whistles!

conducted by wind
the chill shriek of the first notes
like any banshee!

Hark! I hear a flute
they say, Krishna's returning -
everything's at stake!

our armies
are terrified -
bag-pipe airs and brass-band
anthems ricochet

instead of gunfire.
sax riffs rip up
banks and sergeants
and road-workers

drill to the rhythm
of clarinets.
do people
change their tune
or do ears hear differently? –
a cappella

vocals shift pitch.

football fans roar like piccolos,
grannies natter like bassoons;
lovesongs sound like
alpenhorns -
and when the saints come marching in
they blow
kazoos.

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Apologia

I gave up churches,
even the ones that recognised
silence as a river of sacred possibilities:

diving for pearls
-of-wisdom by priestly-permission, the faithful
servants were won with prizes, while I

still preferred poems
that open their shells by themselves
to fickle folk with searching

attitudes, who're secretly fervent,
ravenous for truth – and
fed by fluke.

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Autumn

Too much spoils the fruit:
theft, the inclement weather,
a season of loss -

despite the long hours
and toil of our arms, our backs
stiffened by the wind.

In the flight of these
crows – free-wheeling and scandalous -
there is much to praise.

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Autumn (2)

I admire you, Crows.
The Heron is more like me:
slow, careful, alone.

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Autumn (3)

The year falls. Again,
a grey wind rifles the sea.
No travelling geese.

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Autumn Wood

The whole year's answered
prayers in these quiet leaf-falls'
whimsical landings.

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Ayer's Rock (For Katie)

over Uluru

I can almost hear the sun's
new boomerang of light

can almost see those
rivers of rain then the wind
leaving a green trail

even in retreat
the sun dreamed Ayer's Rock red
on its cooling plain

the rock wave resting
under its crest of matter
even the lens dreams

the rock is not rock
that is not the sky either
the bush is not bush

there are no landmarks
but an awful sheltering
in ochre and blue

that is not a bird
perched on another sacred
branch of the sun's dream

with its eye on fire
this is the storyteller
and she knows everything

Jacqui Thewless

Betty

I never saw your dad -
hard, dark
at yon hot
Stirling foundry -
digging your pit
in sand and
pouring your dangerous metal,
hell's-bells bent
over
your cradle..

I heard
of your dear old mum's
closeness extolled in sounds
of your towered soul -
near, pure, like water
in a bowl
of glass.

That bell cast
at your birth
is still singing
in peals
of your girlish laugh

though I
envisage you
swinging freely -
free! free!
over all of your kin -
and hear your own top-notes
ringing, bright, braw Betty.

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Birthday Gifts

on this grey morning
a bowl of sea-silver-winks
and trees holding shores;

a brown heart - broken
edge, locked, lovely, in a wall;
a scarf of warm wool

woven on Arran;
pennies from dad and heaven;
Richie Havens songs...

Jacqui Thewless

Blessing For Your Heart

On your far journey,

with the sun at your back,
may you be always meeting
Kindness, Gentleness and Pardon,
on your way to the Sun of Christ,
coming home to the Sun of Christ.

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Blue Mood Rules (For Lloyd Merritt)

The good have been a.w.o.l. for a long time
and the blue mood rules
Europe, making fury futile,
reconciliation necessary as middle-aged bathroom-
trips in the night. O big-hearted man, you could move it
though, in your day of beatniks - alone in your room with
the tape-deck, electric guitar, a drum-kit
and syncopated rhythms - with angry lyrics.
I mourn the news that you, too
have left the sham party, early, in silence. Your last night -
ironic lips, stilled; huge eyes, closing. The picture of you
slips when someone younger's coming - it didn't seem right
for my kids to know why this old hippie's weeping,
given the mess they're in and we are all leaving.

Jacqui Thewless

Boris

Surely, it's more British to do what you can
for those who can't:

to say kind things about those who don't have
two smart sentences to repay you in kind, with interest;

to do your English job, with a social conscience
behind the smirking gob. If not,

what's an Oxbridge fellow known for but for
his friends in high places? –

Educated better, meant to care more;
not as the poor do, actually.. scribbling on the walls

of London's history, poorly spelled but graphically:
over the cartoon of a clown with floppy hair:

"N E 1 remember diss prick? " – over which your
infinitely betters will have written in a few years: "No, thank you".

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Carningli

a friendly mountain:
three graceful figures meet me -
Rowans in berry

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Christmas

this year, for Christmas
both daughters receive dressing-gowns
from their lovers.

for me: island songs.

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Christmas Candelabra

Thank God for Gaia's winter refusal,
that she turns her back on the sun
and the expense of growth;
inside the deeps and darkness occupied
with roots that are no one's business
but her own.

Let's be quite clear about the matter:
the bleak status quo is her sanctuary
and the long barren night, her need.

Thank God cold comes,
closing the door firmly
against human incontinence:
Go away, it says,
If you want more floral festivity,
you will have to wait till March.

Waiting is good
and refusal is fine by me.
We'll take a leaf
from Gaia's book,
light our invisible lamps and
be our own Ash tree.

Jacqui Thewless

Church Rock

She wants to know
what is so special
about this beach –
been here a hundred times before
under a hundred skies unnoticed
arched across that rock
that is the only constant
in a hundred seas –

today
the sea is luminous;
a string of single purple clouds
forms a bruised line across the blue –
I say: it's just a rock, out there:
it doesn't have to mean the same to you.

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Conversion

My old head melts
on a rose-red bloodstream:
Where have you been for so long? says the Flame.
Let me dissolve those antique eyes;
I'll have no more
peering at the banks,
fussing about their slow collapse as though
land-life was yours.
Talk to me
and I will answer:
You must become all wax
and I, the constant
change of heart, will hear.

Jacqui Thewless

Crone

I fold the towels by night.

The longer I stay and age,
the more I'm like the moon:
patiently waning, waxing
lyrical for white sheets.

I place them,
multi-coloured, on a shelf in the bathroom
and smooth them flat.
A vase of flowers
punctuates the right-hand
corner of a small table.
I read,
before I sleep in a small bed, in the small hours.

This kind of thing is my handwork:
painting with objects in rooms of your house.
It's not
rocket science.
It's what I do:
from me: for you.

Jacqui Thewless

Crop

Lying
caused this blight:
half-light
filtered through chiaroscuro
windows.

Things that trick us are named
routinely with antonyms:
it's said that oil glistens
and ignorance
is bliss.
Each family's bed-rock
of faith is mocked.
Has common sense grown so un-
fashionably dangerous
to the health of our heads? -

I tell you:
politics is dead.
Personally,
I will shut my mouth this year
if it will mean less
terrible damage to the heartlands.
I intend to nurture the wood-stock,
and bring home fruit in my hands.

Jacqui Thewless

Damselfly

damselfly resting
on a pinpoint in the air
changes direction

Jacqui Thewless

December 13th 2014

This time, last year:

the prayer flags, rain-blackened
rags, limp on a rope; air-less
hopelessness, pain-racked; daughter's
dad, teetering on death's frost edge. Then, gone.

O, spring

sun came to me with summer breath and seashore salt,
fresh as life always is.

My grief is a dangerous flame

time doesn't quench at night or dim by day.

Only his photographed smiling face

softly lit by candlelight,

next to the Buddha I'd brought from the town where his body lay,

gave me back stillness;

gives me safety, still.

Jacqui Thewless

Dylan T.

I was twelve years old.

The one-man band from Duluth
with harmonica
blowing in the wind. Not you, true
boyo
destined
to die forever
young;

a few of us

kids brought your into-
nations back to life
on Saturdays after classes
at the Dundee Rep.
The others read.
Fumbling into love
with consonants and tones,

the idea of Wales

suddenly began to regurgitate a mouth -
organ for blowing raspberries
and getting lost and passionate, and all
without even knowing
I had swallowed
Llandudno
at the age of two.

Jacqui Thewless

Easter Is Cold In 2016

Clematis leaves are greening the tangles of vine
but I am not painting a canvas
with five-coloured prayer flags.
Even the hands' dry
upper surfaces are unconvinced;
no winter of our lives has been as cold as this time is
with its too many madmen,
too much violence,
too many lies of the filthy rich for too long.
I am waiting for warmth
to take us by surprise
and show us something smaller than the planet we know:
an opening
the size of a palm, an un-clenched fist,
or a baby's first, free,
miracle steps in a room, on grass, on sand, on a rock, in the sea.

Jacqui Thewless

Easter Saturday,2010

today's violence
an ice-cold front sleets in
crows squabble over crusts

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Easter Sunday,2010

remembering Him
clouds open above our heads
the first butterfly..

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Egos

Some flow. Some, like rocks.
Some are like impatient winds
driving the world's ships.

Jacqui Thewless

Et Tu

Love's loss is
endless.

There will be no recovery
of the thing that is lost –
whatever shall I call it? –
something prime, key, critical,
required.

In feeling this
I'm not alone.

Millions of people every moment every day -
old wo/men, children, teens, our mothers, fathers, friends -
have this invisible
enclosure ripped away.

Love
only has short use, now. We should expect it
to flick out,
the instantaneous blast
to rip our homes apart, the after-shock
to break our hearts,
the loss of what makes him, him,
or you, you
to bruise the innerspace we crawl into.

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Exhibit

a modest ash twig
enhances the raku pots
with lichen flowers

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Faith

the number-cruncher

coolly informs me that stars'

bright light has gone out

it's an illusion

he says with serious eyes

- I don't believe him

Jacqui Thewless

February 2011 Middle East Memorial

I'm a romantic, myself.

Culture's my own hushed garden as much as, say, yours, ever -
which is why, my true loves, under today's blue sky,
I'd be pruning my rose arch, wearing leather gloves,

were it not for, lately,

noticing that all the roses are shot - nipped in the bud -

and I'm asking myself: what colour is blood?

- does the ripped skin-colour matter when the hacked-at head is severed?

Do I care

whose kin are spattered with red; battered; dead; not coming back and never
had a chance?

So - as I say - instead of gardening or popping up to the shops, I stay
hugging the web as if you weren't just here - safe and well - but 'there'...

- Romance? Tweet streams are the only love songs, now, I tell you.

Jacqui Thewless

Fireworks

They were still
sorting it ready we thought
you never know the time
in Wales and dinna bother tae
read the programme it's usually late not eight as they write
when
the fireworks went off
boom on the hill
and the night over wir castle lit with a big wow-
wee of explosions fifteen minutes before
we were ready for it.

Boys! Boys! stop it wi they mugs of tea –
run! –
then there's me
thinking about getting my coat down from the peg –
they've skeltered up the street
halfway round the millpond before I'm
slow-
ly catching up with them
because
I've put on weight

too many fags, too,
and – let's face it –
I'm no a kid now, either
and comin home after all
agree with them
there's nothing better
than a real storm
wi fast
crackin forks
of lightnin. Wicked!
-We didna miss it
much.

Jacqui Thewless

For Alan Thewless

stories of marriage

re-write themselves in my sleep

- always the same end

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For Haiku Writers

at war with the sea
we build our own sand-castles
and take photographs

Jacqui Thewless

For International Women's Day

Check the calendar. It's March.

And, technically, winter's

over.

I go for a walk in the cold

wind, feeling the scar

and wondering what has changed

for the girls

that men get their hands on.

Permanently tangled.

Picture the still

image of single wild cherry trees in white

bloom in front of a massive castle, built on rock.

Nothing

alters the shock

of rape

if it happens to you.

Jacqui Thewless

For Kai At Easter,2010

a greeting heart,
this is what I'm thinking:

the wee honey bee sheltering
in a white shell:

his hill burial
the clay without a flower;

the hail, his
cold cradle;

wind wailing
his name.

Jacqui Thewless

For Lloyd

You didn't believe me at the time:
how could I be so fond?
But it's true, I said:
poets are always
falling in love for life with a single line

and I wanted the others
to hear who you were
as I'd heard you that year
by phone so I
wrote the haiku
of the story, three times over

losing those beautiful
spoken links
to distance
between then and

later
began to
file your own poems to me
by email;

it was easier to show them
even though nobody could know then
I really loved You.

Jacqui Thewless

For No Reason

Sometimes a marriage goes
to plan, as when a girl wheels barrows of hay
over a frozen hill, for the cow and her calves.
Before this, though,
the same obedient person
ran amok,
chased by a cock in the farmer's yard,
shouting with out-
rage,
or giggling, when he pecked her,

depending
on the whims of the air -
as winter ferries from The Dock to Rosslare
have to crash into Irish Sea troughs,
because storms blow,
or middle-aged men in pleasure-boats will skim
the surface of Ceredigion's blue bay
only when low grades of wind make
this pastime
possible..

And, being female, there came a hollow
afterlife for Mrs G., when even the moon
left the farmer's wife
and the lap once filled with baby boys -
from the hubby who is dead -
then, emptied itself.
No matter
if someone's hopes
or schemes of happiness
floundered in a single sunk ship,
torpedoed by Gerries, far out from the Haven;
later, there can be more venturing.
For no reason at all

this old girl,
raised, from the backside of the Great War,
by two siblings and a bitter widow,

didn't just die gently in her nineties,
but tumbled down a well.
Perhaps you remember the fairy
tale of Hunda Land -
more or less as Fraulein Wild described it to Grimm?
The 'too, too, solid' earth that was this solid person's life,
softened to liquid and she melted
for miles - or those long years, decaying in limbo-land

until her limbs forgot what treading to and from
the local village Spar once was, when she was not
nursed round the clock but still
her own, strong, swimmer in the fizzing ocean..
And Mrs G. returns from timelessness - to time
for meds and sips of sweet
potions through a bendy straw,
now, with her head
propped on its bank of pillows -
giving a master class in how to shine like starlight
on this thin, last, stubborn phase of the night,
with two smiling eyes admitting sunrise.

Jacqui Thewless

For Now

Living without plans is easy.
The sunlight helps..
Spring races by itself overland and we
have dozens of yellow
low-growing glowing
dandelion rosettes to show for it.
Returning crowds of butterflies
will not desire more - and
nor shall I, for now.

Jacqui Thewless

For Suzy Chaple

travelling alone

I follow the flight of birds

the song of sky-larks

Jacqui Thewless

For The Big Rock Outside Scapa Studios Orkney

The silent potency of a big rock
seems more intensified under the buzz
of that electric light at night,
as pungent Ransoms are in grass -
not in the shock of their white stars over green
leaves, but in their stalks' three-cornered awkwardness
so clearly not like easy roundness from which unseen seeds depend -
as if identity itself,
once glimpsed,
breeds all the difference.

Jacqui Thewless

For The Girl In The Shelter

Brick by brick
we are building a future
with our own hands -

this is not easy:
we have not been trained;
our ground's un-
even and our spirits re-
fuse the equilibrium
of rest;

at best,
no one
will kick us
out of the place we've made,
at worst
our future -
like our past -
will shake
and that will be that.

At any rate,
no unwelcome rat-a-tat at
a door
will close us in.

Meanwhile,
this
picking up of bricks,
this
careful placement of
impossible storeys

makes up our Life-
story.
Our house
is
lifted

up in our hands.

Jacqui Thewless

For Troy Anthony Davis 1

I prayed for him. Last night
no holds barred,
his life-my-life.

Stars in the firmament
of my biography were
on death row with us in the dream that came later,

as though changing places levels injustice -
or there's no difference between us in bad times or good.
The some-when-saviours of mine

stood in his shoes; I witnessed them
who'd showed the way, in the death cell losing their light.
My innocent

brothers
shuffled with his feet.
We punch the air -

if the killers do not come. There
were the mentors of mine, I swear, wearing his face
in place of these white ones.

Our fingers fold slack hands on dead wrists
if such miracles might not be shared by midnight.

Jacqui Thewless

For Troy Anthony Davis 2

Three mandatory drugs are made in factories
for Georgia's homicides.

It goes without saying that the crime's as organised
as the factory lines that make cars.

I want you to pray about this:

at first, the lackeys
strap a living victim to a gurney

as if this was a medical act.
There may be a long wait..

twenty years. In Davis's case,

we count the torture of three false alarms
designed to destroy the spiritual part.

At a signal, they introduce the first drug
into an artery, via an IV drip. This poison makes you sleep.

If you wake later, there will be no eyes for you to open.

Regardless of the candle vigils of millions,
two medics must agree at this point

that your consciousness has been completely snuffed
and it is safe for them to proceed with the next, lethal, injection

which stops your heart. They need paralysis

before the last drug finishes it. This
is enough.

For Troy Anthony Davis, Martyr.
Murdered 10.53pm 9.21.11.

Jacqui Thewless

G14 (A Cave In Dewisland)

For us,
communion gifts were otherwise.
We went to sing the song O,
 Thou, pure, divine
Virgin – when Easter stripped the beach of tourists,
sowing the sand with rain. You harvested
rich harmonies, so close, my God in silent rock...

Midsummer, once,
we found a single flower, glowing
 on the cave's hearth-stone.
Out, in the inglenook of sky,
the sun blazed afternoon.

By moonlight, at
Michaelmas, it might have been Non nobis,
Domine – we sang, heads bowed,
under the low roof, just
for you, One God, Who' s listening.

So it was not myself in G14,
all night at Christmas, wreathed
in the duvets. They slept soundly,
 - though the long sea boomed
 to the pitch of a gale. He

split to the West,

 and I've come home in the south
 to the cave of my mouth.

Jacqui Thewless

Glen Gairn (For Elaine)

i

Native loneliness -
thigh-deep in that bracken moor
under standoff skies -

the flight of a single bird, or a God -
an eagle - and me, a child.
Then, winter; the cold blizzard

catching me again, alone
on the Tor; a drift
in the midst of the white-out:

what is God meaning?
Spring at the long since crofts;
forsaken, forlorn

rainfall rivulets; my own
self hearing unexplained songs;
then, June, sheep-shearing -

the shepherd's unforgettable
smile, his head tilted: ah weel...
- himself and the dog.

ii

Wynding down the stair,
my slippered feet on the pine
bare treads, to morning

breakfasts, where fire smoke
in the peaty-smelling room
mingles with syrup

floating the porridge;
scaling the brae at the back;

fetching birch-bundles:

it is the same lass
practising her soprano
vocals by the burn –

Lizz-y Lind-say.
It is my dad's favourite.
I win a silver

medal for singing
this: the Lang prize, in the school;
Mr Patterson's

nails clipping the keys
as he's playing piano,
softly, tenderly...

iii

When I was grown up
I took my own child; the Dee
wide as her brown eyes

under the stone bridge.
She had no shoes; the pebbles
as smooth and rounded

as slippery toes.
In the cottage, gas lamp glows
and thin candles lit

the girl's room, our room
under the same old apex.
After prayers at night,

the Skye Boat Song sung
over and over, she'd sleep
in the same high bed;

her days, not like ours;
our days not like the others'

who dwelt before us.

Jacqui Thewless

Grey Seas

I stayed in Scotland as a girl, on the East coast:
a kind of salty smell and gritty sand.

When I was ten I learned about selchies;
those seals who are only sometime-seals; sometimes human

standing on my rock with deep water
washing about, I could imagine
a seal
rising from the waves.

There was a crevice like a kind of cave nearby,
that was sheltered from wind
and from the ordinary people passing.

We dwelt by a lighthouse. There were stories
of whales, once - stranded on the big shores of Dundee.
I saw
seal pups on our small beach one day,
their mother keeping her distance.

My mother said - Keep off the bay till they have gone.
Look! You can see them from up here.

I might have wanted to go down
to hold them
as the grey seas had held me.

Jacqui Thewless

Haibun 1

The winter of 2009/10 will be remembered by many folk across Britain for its arctic temperatures, deep snowfalls and fearfully prolonged period of ice. The hard weather – experienced all over Europe and Russia - forced thousands of people to change their plans, stay at home, look for other ways to do business, and – often –to struggle to survive. Two elderly friends of mine both slipped outside their own back-doors; each breaking a limb. - A terrible shock!

The young and middle-aged live in their limbs with more-or-less easy confidence. Unless life deals them sudden blows of severance, they don't perceive the awful difference between their urges and their possibility to act. Old stalwart trees which, in the Fall and through the Winter, lose their leaves, become like skeletons but, after a short time only, surge forth potently again as in the last year's summer. We people are not fastened to the ever-living earth. Our old folk have seen decades pass, have walked through countless human passages, on the same legs they were given to begin with. With the same hands, now worn, how have they spoiled, salvaged or recharged and enhanced the world – often invisibly to others? Our feeling of respect for life increases with time.

On January 7th 2010, a satellite image of Britain revealed two uniformly white land-masses, covered (in the case of Ireland) or surrounded (in the rest of Britain's case) with cloud that looked like sheep's wool, roughly teased with frosty fingers. Here in Pembrokeshire, on high ground above Cresselly Quay, a vista through an opening in the hedge offers a frozen silence:

in the bottom field
a single frosted oak tree –
the last leaf, falling

Jacqui Thewless

Haibun 2

Every year in winter I forget what spring is like. Here in Pembroke, and throughout the county, the first harbinger is a white froth of Blackthorn blossom – before the first greening of trees. Yet white is cool; a chaste colour. Later, when the first young green leaves in the hedgerows peep, a sense of warmth to come is quickened and our spirits lift.

At home, I feed the garden birds until the end of March. It is a rare treat to catch a glimpse of the wren.

buoyant winter bird
hidden in the dead thicket –
no bigger than a leaf

Jacqui Thewless

Haibun 3

A fine rain falls as the two of us stand quietly on the path before going indoors. Joan is pointing to the snowdrops: I'm listening to the lively sounds of birds singing inside the hedge, when, all at once, we hear a single, startlingly deep, loud, rook's croak.

Joan turns, quickly, points up into the sky, her arm behind my head: Look! There he is! Can you see him? I follow her directing finger, peer across the distance to the branches of the giant fig that grows by the barn - another croak! - but I can't discover the source. Look! He's moved! Joan's sense of everything in this landscape is almost uncanny: ubiquitous, laser-like, sensitive, precise.

We spend the day by the fire; chatting, reading. She lets me fall asleep, and when I wake I'm astonished to find her standing in silence at my elbow. On looking round, the bay branches are already scratching at a black window. While Joan cooks supper, I stand on the wide doorstep leaning on the closed front door. The dark is almost absolute, except for the strangely mesmeric slow winking of solar lights, lining the garden path.

so many dark nights -
even the day seems to listen
with a fox's ear

Jacqui Thewless

Haibun 4

Where the present church stands now, legend has it that St Deiniol built a simple hermitage on this brow of the hill in the 6th Century. The much developed structure has once more become a home for birds and, no doubt, other small creatures who find access to the ruin. Ivies grow where they will upon the roof and walls, and, all around the building, wild flowers - such as double-headed daffodils, snowdrops and Wood anemones - grow in careless freedom in the spring. Saplings have seeded themselves. Thick brambles yield abundant fruit in summer. Walking on from here, you can look through a break in the hedgerow, downwards onto Pembroke town; and, conversely, from the old town walls or from the railway platform, you can see the tall church spire as a feature on the southern horizon.

I make my own way to this site each spring. It's said that there was once a holy well here - where now the lofty spire rises from the place.

drink hangs from a rope
hand over hand it swings
into the daylight

Jacqui Thewless

Haibun 5

At my age, I am often surprised. I count this willingness to wonder about changes as one of the blessings which came naturally when I tumbled 'over the hill'.

As in many villages and small towns, the Pembroke Post Office is an important place, far more personally so than any other institution. From here, folk deliver hand-written letters and parcelled gifts to friends and family who live so far away. There is a curious solemnity about the ritual weighing of packets at the threshold of the Post Office counter, and in the liturgy of questions as to their appointed 'class' and value. Oddly, I've never seen two of the three persons who sit behind the counter anywhere else in the town. If I were a child, I might believe that they lived and worked under house arrest! Maurice is the exception.

Maurice's local is 'The Waterman's Arms', a fine old pub at the far end of the bridge across Pembroke millpond, which has outdoor seating from which you can watch the swans pass or congregate - or see otters, if you are lucky. Inside, on weekend nights, I've seen Maurice 'let down his hair', propping up the bar with pints and conversation. Tie-less, in mufti, he loses his influential air: one of the rest of us on this side of the barman's counter. On Monday mornings, however, his long face framed by a neatly parted hairstyle which features a short, thin, straight, fine fringe, Maurice represents all that is enduring about one of the oldest British social institutions. His droll, dark, voice and melancholy features, the laconic tilt of his head and shrugged shoulders which answer to questions as to the scale of his hangover, are as familiar as the sight of one's own right hand curved round a pen.

En route to the train station last week, I noticed that the Post Office was locked except to workmen, whose large white van was parked outside. On Wednesday of this week, after shopping for groceries and flowers, I went to fetch some money from my Post Office account. At the entrance, I stopped; surprised. A doorway to the right had disappeared! Now, the blank entrance porch - without familiar posters or notices - gave into a new door to the left. Inside - more strange chaos! The whole interior had been gutted, deepened, and re-vamped, reminding me - in a disconcerting way - of the bland and featureless Post Office in Tenby. There were now three counters: two at the far right and one at the far left, and the back wall - which had used to lie behind the single Post Office counter, lined with shelving, bearing Post Office equipment and the Post Office clock - now served for fixed-display of infants' clothing, toys and fancy-dress costumes. Islands of turnable cards-racks, like free-floating icebergs in the post-deluge Post Office landscape, confused a unanimously disoriented queue. As each

new-comer entered through the door, a look of bafflement and disbelief fell swiftly on her face. Glancing round the room, eyes straining to take in multiple counters, soon afterwards would come the question: which one is the Post Office? One of the staff – flustered, but anxious to inform us that it had been ‘high time for the changes’ - acted as an usher, directing bewildered folk towards the next vacant window or base. Mercifully, I found myself being sent to Maurice’s counter, his unchanged appearance a welcome haven in the newly obliterating flood.

Later, I received an email from my sister in Orkney, enquiring, among other things, about our Pembroke weather. I told her: here, primulas are already thickly budded, snowdrops are in bloom, leeks - like fleurs de lis - are fully grown. The weather is mild and we are on the cusp of spring.

Maurice’s parting
divides flat hair to the right;
his fringe, a staple

Jacqui Thewless

Haiku (5) : For The Way The Wind Blows

i

before it recedes
a tide brings you the present
of a star-shaped fish

ii

asleep on the train
a child and his grandma are
folded together

iii

the earth-bound seed speck's
still held by a pale thin thread
the spider has left

iv

green long willow leaves
shooting from this new spring's tree
gathering showers

v

the world's sands shift
when you begin to notice
the way the wind blows

Jacqui Thewless

Haiku In July (2015)

Sparrow

Thin clematis shoot,
not without purpose; tiny
claws grip, before flight.

My weather

For pliant stalks, dry
roots: rain. Sun soon, favouring
roses, sends West Wind.

Jacqui Thewless

Haiku In May

entering this world,

the scent of Hawthorn blossoms

and grass: new old friends

Jacqui Thewless

Haiku In October 2015: Slow Leaf-Fall

The TV programme

tells of trees' survival fight.

Why this peacefulness?

Jacqui Thewless

Harvest I

the most perfect drupes
caught in spiders' spiral nets
the white moon cuts loose

Jacqui Thewless

Harvest II

at last, the brown year's
homecoming from the fields –
grey skies, white billows

Jacqui Thewless

Hermitage In September

There lived
a single soul
with his just plea for life
in no more darkness than these
islands knew in winters past,
with no less brilliance
than his difference of consciousness.
Silence accompanies
the urgency of clans to kill
while solo innocence refuses death
till breath's oblivion.

This year, a travelling Visitor
entered the hermitage in September
bringing talks.

No tribe or Church or School of Thought can
go the distance with me,
the Guest said,
though inner men and women walk this way:

the hand that barred and gripped and bruised's the same
that later fails, is powerless to fend,
then folds and prays and mends
and tends and soothes but may cast pity out again
until the cycle's run its course [...]

A simple spider's web, the Traveller said,
like confidence, hangs in a window,
glistening. The sun
rises
and its moon sets on authentic remorse.
You just don't see the links, the symmetries
as often as I do:
truth and real
kindness
must
come sooner
or later...

Jacqui Thewless

Hermit's Romance

Saturday night:

two

dancing feet.

One red shoe

swings to the same music as its
footstool partner.

Jacqui Thewless

Ho Hum

Unemployed for months,
folk paid for me to work at intervals, over decades
when I was younger - think of scrubbing ovens,
cleansing sinks, toilets, all surfaces - madly spring-cleaning;
polishing mirrors, windows, wooden chairs and tables, metal taps;
dusting skirting boards and ornaments and the backs of pictures;
vacuuming rugs, mats, stairs and vinyl floors – piped or not - and
ironing shirts, bed linen, dresses, knickers! , socks! ! ;
un-blocking loos; washing pans and dishes...
leaving other people's flats, houses or schools or
even multiple-use buildings spruce, as if
a cheery Wren had sprinkled magic dust
from a feather in its wing, leaving
unexpected notes
of cheery goodbye, sometimes
with a gift of fragrant blooms...

Maybe it's as well my Eagle-eyesight has turned dim:
I'm thinking homely debris settled in those rooms like virgin
winter snow in weedless gardens.

Jacqui Thewless

Home

in His own county
the sun still makes small rainbows
in wild flower bays

Jacqui Thewless

Housemates

How do I explain
the still silence of haiku
to a barking dog?

Jacqui Thewless

How Important Is It To Have Even A Small Mountain To Look Up To?

How important is it to have even a small mountain to look up to? -

Not conquered but always near you;

the huge size of it, always higher.

How much more so are the few marvelous poets I admire

and turn to

as you turn to it, morning or evening sun-lit,

sinking in mist, or target

for sudden lightning.

Jacqui Thewless

Imaginary Spring

let me believe
the outside
possibility

you call me
or else
miraculously

the doorbell rings
you wearing that hat
at the door: I've come

requiring the love
I was scared of
before. I say

ok I do not
fear any more
ice. I imagine
a thaw.

Jacqui Thewless

In My Wintermonths

I don't say that perfectly formed green
beginnings, rising from the thaw, did not
to me once hint of wheat, though empty
grass;

or that I never longingly
spied good seed scattered
with glass on fields I tip-toed over,
lonesome in autumn.

These things that happen
to doves, occurred for me, too.
Nothing is perfect.
I couldn't be

the same bird in my wintermonths,
losing the ability to cluck or coo,
I began to
tar myself

black as the Ravens,
with awful feathers and a voice
even I am still
partly afraid of; picking and choosing

among words,
endlessly concerned with everything contrary
and just so. Like a strange
hen, finding grain of my own. I became Crow.

Jacqui Thewless

Jessica!

Stunned by the bolt
of genesis, high-browed,
big royal-blue eyes
wide awake,
pale-faced princess,
we gave you the title
of a queen - Elizabeth, the third
girl, our fifth off-spring,
sister of twin, John;
our last-born
sugar-darling.

As soon as you could
shuffle over our floors
you found that you could open a door
by pulling yourself upright
with the aid of its knob.

With this
inside intelligence
there was nowhere safe:
our stuff was yours, and the house
became your pen.

Rowen, the eldest, Jessie and Jules -
even then were your slaves,
stooping and skivvying for you.
I caught your sister,
scooping you
from your nest-bed like a bird.
Pointing
an imperial finger,
Jessica! you said - with zest -
your first word.

Jacqui Thewless

Joan

my cherished photograph of her -
the silver weave
of Seer's hair

Jacqui Thewless

July 2014

From west to east, a baby beams

like sunlight in a wicker cot.

Grandmas fold hairless grandsons two days young

in the crooks of their bare arms;

grandfathers hold the spheres of their new heads

easily in their old palms,

smiling. From north to south,

an infant is playing in dust

with water and a stick.

A military man stops on the track: "did you see it? -
the red fox, caught in a wire trap".

Your grown-up daughters, sons,

graduate from school, at last:

all pals in their group, like them, gowned, capped, photographed.

In the middle of the world -

in little Palestine - light's snuffed out.

There is no one to carry. There is no one to hold.

There is no one to catch.

Jacqui Thewless

Keeping It Real (For Jessie)

Keeping it real, a snake makes progress
through a desert of baked clay. She can
only imagine the flight of eagles,
the strength and faith of lions, by tasting the spoor
of Life in the grit of rocks
with her scissors-tongue.

The snake, who is lonesome, grows
tired of sand, hatches a brood of her own kind,
calls it 'man', bites her tail, and changes into a river
of blood. - This red stream etherises.
Worlds die. Still burning, no one speaks, yet
people out themselves and enter the caves.

There are deep pools left from the deluge
of words in mountains: shelter
from heat, short passages to green
fields where everything edible is food
but anything written down is not bread. Again,
the sun in the heights waxes language, but the new air

tempers it with clouds, balancing drops
of spring water on the filaments of glass. A kind of
Serpent/lion/eagle-man sees Gods/ the Big Bang/the Apes/
the Ancestor in smashed splinters of a mirror. In fact,
though, the snake's only daughter is a lamb.

Jacqui Thewless

Kindness And Mercy (Easter,2013)

Kindness and mercy
outlast the lesser virtues.

Something in the sap's
rising and falling arranges this,
knowing the heaviness

of all the rest will be jettisoned
when both weigh too much more than
the human I Am that passes

almost unnoticed
into paradise

when something more than peace
between old enemies is lost -
a core of surplus

bitter behaviour ripens, with unseen
shame, always gaining density; one day
it drops from the tree of life

and budding continues, as green
and plenteous as new grass.

Jacqui Thewless

Late Summer

After days of rain
flowers open their blouses
to butterflies' lips

Jacqui Thewless

Lent

Sometimes,
the door is shut.
There's no entrance: a wall.
My friends' songs, a long way off,
rising to the place my heart can't reach,
are the voices of strangers.

I want to know if He's waiting
for me to speak –
to kindle a confession
He has never heard:
words spoken to the three walls where they meet
in these tri-angled cold corners.

Yesterday,
there was an angel near me,
patiently translating tongues and shouts:
all day
was Easter-easy as our praise.
Today,
my lonesome soul is choked with
spiritual clinkers.
Flames that flickered in my bricked hearth
have burnt out.

Jacqui Thewless

Lunar Eclipse

Now I can compare
something huge and tangible.
(No) imagination.

Jacqui Thewless

Ma Bod

The auld conjugal body jist went bust
so this one's for me:
thighs thicker than they used to be, its waist
has billowed fit I dinna care.
All innocently I wear these flowing garments
under which the corpulence sits
like fat cells relaxing in a warm plasma bath.

My unmolested mouth smiles more. I laugh, and plod where
before I thinly skimmed the air like a long-legged gnat.
You could say that I shouldna lick the buttered toast
as though midnight bara's a greasy kiss.
Wi' flicks of my imaginary tail, sich a
qualm's dismissed. Tho' I might fancy a bit o' fond fuss
from some ither kind o' bos taurus...

Jacqui Thewless

March 8th 2014 Day

Someone once said
(though how he knew this,
no one knows) that women
are re-incarnated men
and vice versa: both primitive
sexualopposites play their parts
in everlasting time, he opined.
Thank heavens, then, for the new gays, bi's,
trannies and lesbians, I replied...

Jacqui Thewless

Market Day

... those moments when my lip-stick's applied, hair's brushed and scrunched and three scarves of different colours are hung from my neck and the big bright orange bag that crosses my chest lands on my hip...

I pause in the doorway,

stop leaving

and ask: what was I needing to buy, beside tomatoes?

The mind is blue, open.

The only cloud, ephemeral: the tang of a vine...

Jacqui Thewless

Memorandum '09

In June, we tackled weeds.

Big clouds brewed
while we pulled, on our knees,
nubs that gave way to the gouging of prongs.

All day, we barrowed roots

from beds to compost bins, through static air,
finding a few words. We made openings
that longed for this rude awkwardness, all-thumbs;

the awesome fall

of hush before a thunder crashed.
Just this: us, guileless,
criss-crossing your grass.

Jacqui Thewless

Metanoia, While Walking To School

I was struggling to find
links to the Things that were new
and coolly alien, originally: gifts
from the Unknown Word
God, including
my peculiar first
taste
of lentil soup and Scottish consonants,
aged six.

It was an awful difficult thing for an English kid
to put a face to the name
'sleekit'...
till
encountering a Vole,
picked up
and held by its tail,
while walking to school.

I found it, mind...
'timorous', as Burns said.
It never made the journey
in my hand:
just slipped
from its thin mouse-skin
into oblivion.

Jacqui Thewless

Midwinter

With a two-fold cleft
this solstice sets about its clearance
someplace separate –
maybe it is stellar – in space.

First light
shears the landscape,
cold spears everything
and frost
forms an edge
for every margin.

Then, coming suddenly,
each brittle question
cracks:
Open.

Jacqui Thewless

Minutiae

I stay up all night -
three discordant visitors:
my past, my futures..

Jacqui Thewless

Mood Swing

I get the lonesome blues sometimes
and turn to those who
do not,

like this butterfly, mimicking flowers-on-wings
while sipping the last mead
from the beds' last blooms -
this tender slip of light, so much more rarely seen
in withered late October than in fresh July -
or these rough birds on the roof:
Rooks, with impeccably tough feathers;
eye-balls and beaks and claws of cleverness,
racing from the Rookery for just one thing:
fast food;

and truth to tell: I do not know
why my black heart aches so.

Jacqui Thewless

Moving (I)

Why do we go to the sea,
for solace? Here, at the vertical
edges of the steady place we stand our lives up on,
we have to assume repeated storms'
savage attacks to the surface of land
mass. And then, the sand flat opens horizon,
splitting the rocky chaos from flows.
I know people who feel like this, talk like it, sometimes.
Even so broken open, grit holds the assumed interior.

Jacqui Thewless

Moving (Ii)

Any one of these stones on the beach
could be It. Picked (and pocketed) by me for form -
circle of quartz, cross, spiral, fixed in a sea-smoothed bit of grey cliff, black cliff -

or else chosen for being rosy pink,
mauve, green; gem with sparkling trails of light in it.

But I am holding myself back now, leaving the strand alone,
unnoticed, contents random and unspecified.

It will not be long before I'm home,
sitting quietly at table
with my own milky white stone, green-flecked, rust-tinged, like a flat planet
or like an egg, left by a goose
back in the time
when people were giants.

Jacqui Thewless

Moving (Iii)

A cold, concrete, block on the beach was where I sat
when we talked about old loves. His ex and mine.
My grown-up son was standing, walking, sometimes still.

The wind remembered the month, bitter February, giving nothing warm away
and the sea
was as far off as summertime. I said: I blame myself,

then, steeped in stories; Once Upon A Myth,
despite the facts. He said: And yet...

I think it's best to hold for keeps the memories of kindness.

Jacqui Thewless

Moving (Iv)

With each extra year,
the heel-treads sink
deeper in sand, in mud:
weight, unimaginable

as my self. I open
poetry books as slim as every one of them is.
Spiritual
whale, swallowed whole,
inverted Jonah, I

read only a single poem's five
brief lines and slip,
naked as the familiar sea,
into me.

Jacqui Thewless

Moving (V)

Out in the road, quick
big cars carrying
single people, zooming
past walls
where
armies of millions of
mosses hold up their heads to the sun.
Still.
Standing
between half
a centimetre
and one
inch
tall.

Jacqui Thewless

Muse

When I discover new poems from her
on the fresh pages, she takes me softly
to an evening window to see stillness gather
and lightning flashing, a comet's slow trail
lingers in darkness everything alters in
a cosmic moment. But after
this – forget about that, says my sun-lit soul.
And even the memory of magic leaves me alone.

Jacqui Thewless

My Nights And Her Mornings

If someone asked, I'd say:
I wanted something
made of matter or not
that comes once-only in a lifetime.

This means I've lived
ages watching daybreaks and waiting
for my shadow to stop re-
counting the old moon's arcs and phases,

weighing the new night against sun-days;
so, growing comfortably used to
lonesome evenings,
even anguish becomes a friend

with acceptable habits.
Sometimes she moans:
if only, today...
and I listen, as always

with an open mind. I know
my lengthy passages through nights become
her mornings, but every
single light is mine.

Jacqui Thewless

My Old Man

Sometimes, a body cannot see.
There was a blight on the rose tree,
a rat among the strawberries
and I cared not, ladies,

I cared not, though water reeked
in glasses wherefrom posies peeped
on tables laid, so neat
I couldna' see.

Jacqui Thewless

Nant-Y-Cwm Steiner School, July '13 End Of Year Festival

Biding its birth in stone, the unborn place
for meeting is a tent that's open to the mixing elements:

today's dry heat, an earth-scent; trodden floor
of grass, a base for infants' feet in transit;

breaths of notes of violin and double bass, recorders
and keyboard; songs of the teenagers in French;

the plays of the classes, learned week-in, week-out
by heart and free grace of movement.

As always

each child is a growing wonder,
a gift

Hawthorn and Hazel and Ash
lean in and listen to at playtimes, and after school

the peedie Nant still rushes, brim and fresh, in the Cwm.
And bees in the old Nissan hut that once was the hall
will swarm - as all these youngsters will

when they have grown older,
leaving a honeyed-beginning
for everything to come

after fourteen - and teachers will follow
them - with fondest of memories.

Jacqui Thewless

Nant-Y-Cwm, Summer,2012

Since an old wall was opened
one of the footpaths on the grass hill leads
to a plot of grains, beans, fruit...

nearer the main schoolhouse, a little higher up,
a building that's invisible
shows itself. Among elements with weight,

it is as yet unborn as my kids'
grandkids' who'll trap Ash keys
for a day by making stick-and-stone

dams over a river.
I visit the spiritual blueprint, twice
passing its double-dome-shaped heart

which still rests
on the air's arboreal lungs that never
were rib-locked,

almost shocked to witness
how the germ of a new school hall
already has a pulse.

Jacqui Thewless

Nations, Laws, Castles

Nations, laws, castles:
short-lived, when you think of it.
A Redwood giant.

Jacqui Thewless

Nations, Wars, Prisons

Nations, wars, prisons:
short-lived, when you think of it.
A Redwood giant.

Jacqui Thewless

Nonet: Phases (For Adam)

Inside the earth, the white clay is full.
It is the potter who lifts it
up to the librating wheel,
gathering emptiness -
The interior
of the round jar
turns dark as
a new
moon.

Jacqui Thewless

Noon

a rose-coloured light -

morning's benediction.

over- cast by noon.

Jacqui Thewless

Not Now, As Then

Not now, in August nights - as when
I walked wide sands alone,
where sea pulls shore,
and wished for him who'd paused with me
to hear this hush below the Perseids -
I'd hide from this common moon

whose light floods sparks that streak black skies again...

Now no sad oceanic trails
remind this empty hand of his-in-mine,
nor leaving or oncoming tides
of turning waves endow what's lost or spent.
I could not wish for more -
not now, as then.

Jacqui Thewless

November

birthdays loom

from the places they keep secret among years

unanswered queries

hang from vacant limbs when the old leaves fall

Jacqui Thewless

November 23rd

First, early frost
strikes with dawn-sulphur
and melts by nine.

The yeast-light of warmth then
lifts the ropes of almost-still prayer flags
August had bleached, September has
curled, the Autumn wind frays.

Tomorrow is my birthday.

Today is all morning, embers flaming.

Jacqui Thewless

October

crows stream past ice clouds
unlikely in October
like winter candy

Jacqui Thewless

October (I)

this month reverses
as clearly as water, sky,
warm-cool-weather-march

Jacqui Thewless

October Haiku

sighing and plodding -
flashes of vacillation -
how else do I live?

Jacqui Thewless

On Taking Leave 2 (For W.P.)

It'll be hard
to leave this
guardian Cwm of childhood;
each mild morning and all through the night,
missing the river's tune
that sang in my ears when I stood
among haven woods
where quiet rain-veils fell
and drifted (filtered through
the tallest Pines or lower Ash
and lesser Birch) to
wrinkled Hazel leaves over berries and buds.

But I'll not lose it.
Though I must find
another bee-lined lane
opening ways beyond these
well-known banks of Creeping Jenny's
yellow stars, Ox-eyed open wide
Daisies, glossy Hart's Tongue ferns
and steeply-leaning Foxglove sentinels,
all that is left behind will not leave me
since youth itself (rooting when seeds fell
in the soil where we moved stones, and weeded and dug}
must bloom in my mind with the home I've loved.

Jacqui Thewless

Orkney Future

One day
another giant will come –
almost certainly a woman
with hindsight and a strong
weakness for uncommon gems –

striding across the standard globe;
one of her high-heeled feet
lands in Hoy Sound.
We natives must assume a metropolitan
lodging for the other foot.

As this gorgeous colossus sweeps by us,
cupping cosmetically-treated hands
she lifts the archipelago
with one deft elegant movement;
her flunky sets the stolen jewel in a crown
for her: Brodgar's returned to new-look Jotunheim.

Jacqui Thewless

Orkney Islands

The light's faith-keeping with the land
in those wee isles of Rousay and Egilsay -
it made the sea's third wave's curve, pale green; the flower's cup,
a whiter shade than Hakon's tower-kirk;

it frames, on one Chinese White strand, today's
loose brushstrokes with a tide of fresh calligraphy in seaweed-inks.
Light sinks the floundered war-ships in less bloody hue
than sunset on a bluebell-blue sky's rim.

Yet there are stark shores, where a spate of boats left home
and came in with the dawn, in floods of fishing folk -
and here, we've drowned the sea's nights, brim with dark alone -
O, come the morning...

Jacqui Thewless

Painted Lady

poised on this foul edge
the emblem of innocence -
typical of love.

Jacqui Thewless

Pembroke Haiku:

(i) September View over the Park

Today's long rainfall:
tin ribbons trying to hide
yesterday's gold trees...

(ii) Westgate Terrace

Medieval terraced
homes of the privileged rich
with less stuff than us.

(iii) Millponds

Loops in time. No ships
but the white sailors
with feathers and beaks.

(iv) Main Street

Eight markets each month
and Wisebuys, Wisebuys, Wisebuys! !
Down-hill, laden with bags.

(v) Estuary Dam

From four o'clock, kids
from the big school in the Dock
storm across the sluice.

(vi) Info for Tourists. (not really a proper haiku, but still)

Most people who live
in Monkton have never been

inside the castle,

outside of Wales, or
onto a plane that flies to foreign shores.
Under the radar.

(vii) View from my own window, through rain (also not really haiku)

Who else puts a vase of sunflowers on a blue cloth
on a table, outside -
under the prayer flags, limp with rain -
to fake her own view of cheerful flowers?

Jacqui Thewless

Pembroke Paparazzo (As If) .

Sometimes I wish
my little Samsung had a zoom,
to snoop on this white-feathered
closeting of Swanlings -
just so
difficult to glimpse them between
guardian wings of royal cobs and pens...

and (if I could) I'd dig a photograph
of the cool shaved heads of the Cormorants
as rock-stars witnessed swimming over there -
but then unguessably (sans that quick lens!)
elsewhere
under their screen
of shining green water...

or (with the focus on wee tiny things)
among the skimming pond celebrities
I'd like to spy my favourites
(as dun cotton-wool balls,
hid in these reeds under the walls of
our medieval Castle) - limning
this season's un-numbered
ducklings...
wobbling
by.

Jacqui Thewless

Perhaps You, Too

Perhaps you, too, become
reclusive, the element of choice
seemingly invisible -

a will-o-the-wisp you think
you followed in autumn
mists on the moor,
letting your compass fall from your hand.
Where can an uncertain future find you?

Tell me, in wintering buds and
suddenly flowering leaves,
opening and falling
in forests of poems

where all of the crones
grow singly in stature
and silence is talking at last.

Jacqui Thewless

Plan

I'm thinking of shifting to
Something bigger than this.

I have contained myself
in this small place, but I've forgotten who's here.

The plan is to make my Self visible by unpacking things
that are mine, like neighbours

who will visit Her with interest, as if
the girl-next-door had gone

and Someone Else had come.

Jacqui Thewless

Poem For Ben, Who Said: There Is No Money In It.

A book of poems
isn't worth the price of petrol
for someone's gas-guzzling battle
into work one day by car.
A motivated poet will hardly
go outdoors- but to breathe the air.
So far it's fortunate
that s/he is always busy with
the internal combustion
of a single flame of light's
assumption:
or a kind of cud-
chewing bovine business
and all s/he tends to need are the fertile
fields of the night.

And there again,
poems are much too penny-pinching
for the lavish modern world.
Most people can afford to live
very comfortably without them.
Think of it (almost soul's heresy to link the two) :
the 'highest art-form' yields
the poorest purse.

I reckon only fellow-poets
would trade almost anything
for the no-thing
of a poem:
the route of our fight -
with too many words -
is by the most lean line,
leading the hungriest verse.

Jacqui Thewless

Poem For Jimmy

Gone is the Garden, O!
and all her loveliness brought down in one wee blink of time:
seed-harvest to the four wide widths of space blown freely;
the great Ash uprooted and a cavernous ground.
After the outpouring dark sky's lashing
and this year's winds, unleashed,
there is nothing left of flowering fields
and the green has given up its ghost.

The earth is still
too soft to tread upon.
Put by your gud auld wellingtons, James Anderson
this winter walk the tarmac road, in leather shoon.

In spring-time there'll be nae more craws at the planting,
but, in the town, there'll be a thousand, thousand stars,
like you, pacing the pavements with a frown or smile.
And every face and every footfall has a place in
The New Albion that will be built next year..

and the celestial crowd'll warmly love thee, dear.

Jacqui Thewless

Poets' Rooms

Few folk will talk about shadows
after a long winter
except poets, who listen
to what shadows say.

Perhaps the morning's warm light
tip-toes through the day
to afternoon.

In poets' rooms, there is quiet
stillness – as if snow
was falling ...

Jacqui Thewless

Precious To Me Is My Sunny Welsh Shore

Precious to me
is my sunny Welsh shore.

I am leaving it not
until death parts
everything from me.

For you, their father,
there are new
vast spaces where your five
children's faces are not seen.

But here by the strand
where racing tides break, I am
faithful to flows and
the time slow seasons take.

Jacqui Thewless

Presence

My son leaves home
and later, a thought
of absence
stalks the room;
an otherwise dumb
visitor
from someone else's gloomy house. -
Not this one -
I quickly note,
ignoring her weariness,
her endless harping on years
when I was not quite here at all...

Jacqui Thewless

Questioning The Well-Known Vision Of Fish

Questioning the well-known vision
of fish who swim as many in shoals,

or birds of a feather
in the impersonal flock: I miss
you,
lots.

Jacqui Thewless

Rain

Acquiescence is
an opening into the world as you
have never known her;
quietude inside you
leads to an encounter that is new
with the rain, for example,
and
or
any
simple element, approaching
you in the silence that she's brought you to –
sit, still, and listen –
spurn sulking –
a more tender apprehension,
tightly closed for a long time,
will slowly open a view
more lovely than you've been accustomed to.

Jacqui Thewless

Randompoems

1 shoreline

The old place seemed to have mirrors
everywhere: the same windows on a well-worn-way-side.
I wanted foreign-ness, a landscape with a shore-
line; no mirror except the sea.

2 nightgarden

this evening's journey
spreads blue pillows from the west
and fog wets the beds

Jacqui Thewless

Recipe For Smiles

fish chili lime zest
lemon grass and ginger -
the humble beetroot

grated in a bowl
with cloves of crushed garlic, oil
coriander - mix

Jacqui Thewless

Remembering Rob (For Elaine)

Dwelling on no-thingness is
just not the same as to be empty

and open, like the Heather bells
on the hills, when the huge sky towers over them.

Even these small things can perfume the wind.

That purple blooms and summers pass,
is not a thing worth noticing.

Remembering Rob -
who would care less?

Jacqui Thewless

Rip

The quietude of this small settlement
depends upon the brooding elements
in unison. Since July's come,
their calm Adagio
for Pampas Grass and reeds
and the leaves of the Willows hangs in the air
as if with quick
hawk's wings
our Fall will thunder
and the Last Movement
for us won't be like this
too easy Summer.

Jacqui Thewless

Roadside Tree

Contemplative scribe,
how much silence do you need? -
See the roadside tree,

peacefully awake
in its springtime covering,
not hiding the sky;

unnoticed, perhaps,
by speeding motorcyclists
in lines of traffic,

or cops in fast cars
whose sirens shriek their mission,
ripping the spring air;

like human culture,
its roots are complicated;
its sap-flows – up to sunlight

from hidden places
of unimaginable
darkness – seldom praised.

Thank you, we say, for
the cherry's blooms, forgetting
its cycles of change,

so much like our own
passages between dark and
light, noise and silence.

Jacqui Thewless

Rob's Elegy

If I have light
Yours was the first twinkle to kindle it;
If I have joy
Yours was the first laugh meant for me;
If I can bless
And if my heart knows simple modesty
I still remember thee, my dear,
I still love thee.

In Winters past
Your coming softened cruel December's freeze;
In Summer's fires
Your tales were like the cool burn's melodies;
In Autumn's lonesome air
And Spring's abandoned gardens
Your presence there, good shepherd, made a place for me.

If I have light
Yours was the first twinkle to kindle it;
If I have joy
Yours was the first laugh meant for me;
If I can bless
And if my heart knows simple modesty
I still remember thee, my dear,
I still love thee.

Jacqui Thewless

Scapa Studios

It used to be Mrs Humphrey's
hospital for Norway's whalers, anchored in Hamnavoe,
stricken with scurvy, back in the day. It's the Henderson's house, now.
The sea's souging and the skiffs are skimming the Flow
with single fishermen; the ferry's wake
makes its perfect Vs visible from the workshop window.
Back-ground radio 3 voices drone on through Elaine's
days at the wheel, her hands in clay that grows as it spins...

Mike's lens traps northern Scottish
islands' changing light with photographs of long-horned
cattle on Hoy: gold, big - in the narrow track,
impassable, under the sullen mountain; mist rising and opening

purple crocuses in spring; a ruined bothy, standing in fog, still
loved by the camera at dusk. And then, when blustery weather
hurls on the land its might in the thin winds laced with brine,
screaming like fiends, whipping up spumes
of green froths, hooting through gaps under doors,
my sister's kiln is baking peedie mugs, with sea birds
beautifully sketched on pristine porcelain under a clear glaze.

They'll pack their fine pictures and these pots and bowls and tiles
for you in carefully-boxed tubes and cubes
and rush them to your own address...
where denser airs and neon lights make skies blush at sunset.

Jacqui Thewless

Scottish Sonnet: Grangemouth (For Betty)

Slumped at the keyboard in the afternoon,
I live off-grid and click on a virtual box
to open my otherwise lonesome room
to somewhere where action happens. Now it is the Scots –
my family included and friends who go way back when
I was un-medicated and busy with wee causes and real effects –
who have been screwed by one man who more or less owns them.
So much for social media: only my sister in Stromness
posts a remark on the tragic news, with link
to the story of how a psychopathic monster got what he plotted,
as per usual; knowing the ropes, holding the purse-strings.
It's colder up there in the North. Controlling the bulk of their fuel is not
without its power-buzz, for the addict on top.
Business as normal for those billionaire freaks, or what?

Jacqui Thewless

Seeding

Do not speak of love,
lasting.

Like spring, it is not kept still; like summer, it wavers;
by fall, it is already seeding.

Love is busy, molding the perfect architecture of your heart.

No need to notice the changes it goes through to make you who you are.

Think of the being you might have been, 'if not

for the silent arrows', 'if skies hadn't fallen', 'if earth hadn't shook',

'if you hadn't chosen to...'

Jacqui Thewless

Selchie (For John)

I'm looking at the journey
we might have made at sea.

When we were young, I dreamed
we slid into the waters
like mad lemmings
from impossible cliffs,
breaching the deeps
with mouths open
and still singing.

A pair of pneumatic Icarus-wings
pulled us down
far under our airy element.
Some drowned
but after all,
you have grown shells.

The ocean passed through us
as we breathed water
with our own initiated lungs.

And me?
I am half human soul;
I write
small necklaces from cultivated pearls.
Your voice
reminds me of the painful grain of grit:
there are echoes in it from fathoms deep
beds under grumbling waves.

I love you has, of course
now been forgotten -
like your limbs
once used to land -

come into my arms is
an impossible plea,
make love with me's a mute

refusal of crustacean
pain and nothing
makes you mumble but
the memories of Catholic songs.

And me, the born-again shape-shifter? -
I was fisher-
wife and half a human soul:
I've thrown a frock of oysters back into the sea.
In this boat,
I'd sail with you in my lap;
your shells might split
under the sun;
I might
wile distances away between us
with the stories that I'd tell
on my own rosary of pearls?

I close my seal eyes, sick of seeing.

Ladies
and gentlemen, roll up! Roll up!
You are about to see
how this girl flips
herself with one strong leap
onto the solid Rock of Ages;
lets the boat go down
with this sealskin vestment still dripping
yet

look how she keens
for that poor one
milky-white pearl,
lost in an oysterman,
drowned
in a moment.

Jacqui Thewless

Snowdrops For St Bridie's Day

They might be flowers
of mercy
or small emblems of
the sun's

inevitable rise;
clusters of grey-green spears,
miraculously piercing last year's

fallen foliage
without disturbing
a thing.

Earth's first birth is
whiteness - one
simple dependence
from

this little
stalk -
where hope rises
with modesty,
surprise... springs!

Jacqui Thewless

Spring

Exquisite vortices peel open like
the fists of multiple newborn babes.

But this bud-breakage
of unseen veins is the sweetest
on the Maple tree -
with colour of cherries dipped
in mint chocolate -

who would have thought it? !

Jacqui Thewless

Steps Into The Air

I compare my verse

almost incessantly to the stars'
perfectly luminous structures

and sentences,
believing:
it is possible to climb

their heights of dizziness
step by step.
I fail

but continue to work -
taking my kit of angst on my back -
I keep climbing;
each syllable a black mark

spilled on my name.
In every margin there may be
invisible commentaries,
especially where anguish
flexes its claws

when sorrow slips into language.
Who cares if I like to write such things
at two o'clock in the morning
about your departure or about you?
Either they stumble
through thoughts querulous

to the sudden chasm,
or maybe they try to clamber to the stars
trusting in stairs
as I do in darkness,
believing such
steps into the air
are more than just possible...

Jacqui Thewless

Stereotype

the shadow enquires:
who can say if crocodiles
can become lessons?

Jacqui Thewless

Stevie

Nearly sixty years ago, a fiery-tempered little dark-haired lass married a calm and quiet gorjer man, lived in a big house near the butcher's shop and had her firstborn child they called Steven.

He was a handful and she wasn't ready. So, the young Mammy did what she could: handed him over to her own good Mammy. Nanny was a paragon of gypsy womanhood.

Stevie grew up in love with his Daddy from a distance. He and Nanny lived in the trailer, under the trees. His gorjer siblings did real well at school. Stevie didn't write or read.

Daddy liked to watch the local football team. Stevie loved boxing; trained in the gym. His Daddy travelled far to see him winning the matches, passing the belts to him across the ring-ropes after every win.

Stevie, the wonderful Welsh Never-Lost-a-Fight Boxer, got famous. Daddy, the Gorjer, used, secretly, to cry. Mammy was proud of Stevie when she saw him on telly. One day, Stevie's darling Nanny died.

Stevie stopped fighting and began to train again; became a diver then a master plasterer, instead. And a pub bouncer; drinking and staggering instead of swaggering; Pulling ladies. Oiling his shaven head,

Stevie became the Prince of alcoholic whores. But then again, he'd slip away into the woods for a few weeks of freedom:

drinking dew, eating raw bird's eggs, slugs
and shellfish from the estuary shores.

In early middle-age,
Stevie would strip off all of his clothes
and race across the Cleddau bridge -
for charities - and laughs.
I'm physical, he'd say, with eyes half closed.

A lass gave him a snake - a growing
Boa constrictor, kept in a tank in Mammy's tidy spare room.
He took it out for walks, sometimes, around his fit shoulders
in July. Mammy raged after the snake pushed the glass
lid off its tank, with a shattering crash one afternoon..

Unstoppable,
she got another lid
and this time
put
three concrete blocks on top.

In his broad face, Stevie has got
the biggest, cheeky, laughing, sky-blue eyes.
He has a wide and sunny, childlike - almost toothless - smile.
The few teeth left might make me think about the stone
marking the place where the old bones of Nanny lie.

But Stevie's left his haunts.
His happy soul's not here. He's gone to ground.
The landlord lost his Dancing-Doorman when the clown -
who once was The Big Name and then got drunk - grew up.
Word is that Stevie's...settled down.

Jacqui Thewless

Strange Thoughts, Tonight.

Last evening
sharp-snipping scissors cut my hair

and white cream squeezed from a nozzled
tube in a box turned
my locks
black

and tonight I have strange thoughts
about love
like ash
stirred in a bronze dish with
the stub of my pen

when I wore
a patterned silk kimono
smelling of
patchouli oil
and moved inside the slight
ghost of my long-haired youth

after the lover's cigarette
I slept
on newly-warmed
white wedding-bed-sheets
then you were green too weighty in-
between my tender thighs

tonight
it must be the waxing
moon
the red lip-stick's
smiling reflection and my

black cut glossy hair
I have strange thoughts that are
soft shadows flickering

behind the grey eyes
gazing from the nakedness I wear.

Jacqui Thewless

Stromness Haiku:

(i) Sbrpool Neighbours

I'm told: two horses
once filled the horizon; huge
neighbours in the West...

(i) Morning

Because of the rain,
we don't go to Hoy. Gazing,
all day, to its hills..

(iii) Copse

There are no Birch trees.
No matter: sunlight silvers
Whitebeams' lichened boughs.

(iv) August

So late in the year...
Rowan-berry time. Half-way-
home to Bridie's Day.

(v) Evening light

That violet roof
under the far hills, blue sea –
up-staged by gold sheep.

- -

Jacqui Thewless

Sudden Wind

Because I am used to this slow life
pondering the baby
growing week by week in her womb -
when the sudden wind blows
at night, I have to rise with open mouth
to watch the spinning leaves.

I wonder...

Jacqui Thewless

Swan- Song

Trust was a tame bird in the hand,
unlike this crow
on my shoulders, she'd sing in my palms.
When she flew –
O sometimes she'd fly –
she'd turn back soon,
her wings folded in my fingers like
a soft bud. Heart-shaped, when held;
blush-feathered like a collared
dove. I miss her
monotonous swan-song: true love,
true love, true love...

Jacqui Thewless

Tender

Pembroke in autumn:
wet soils almost too tender
for the press of boots

Jacqui Thewless

The Eating Club

The eating club
meets
regularly, now,
on Wednesday evenings
to eat:

that is its primary purpose,
since,
for various reasons,
its members enjoy food.

Only the cook is fat, however.

Around a small mahogany table
that has been dressed with all
the paraphernalia of ritual eating
four people sit opposite each other in my dining room.

Two people bring the wine.
One brings taciturnity,
cigarette – smoke,
and a hopelessly swinging leg.

Each person, in turn, chooses the menu
for the next week's banquet
and I make all
the necessary preparations
as faultlessly as I can.

There is always
An entree, usually from the sea,
such as local crab- meat
with a silky dressing made of virgin oil
and vinegar and yolks of eggs,
a spoonful of brandy and tomato-sauce.
Prawns, perhaps,
with wild rocket and a cucumber or else
a bowl of green-lipped mussels
from antipodal seas.

We all enjoy the colours of their shells while we are eating them
and I put everything into their broth.

The main course can be anything we like
so long as it involves meat,
fish or game or poultry,
vegetables or grains and fruits –
and O, eggs, and the products of a dairy; -
any combination of these marvellous foods.

We talk
about
our lives
while we are eating.

Puddings are my speciality.

To everyone, with every choice dessert, I tender cream.
I tell them it is fine to become fat, and to enjoy the rice with cream and
cinnamon.
I urge them to revel in the tarts,
to savour sweet bananas and the home-made strawberry ice-cream.

Fancy, I find, is a seasonable thing,
and frequently depends upon the weather.
Red cabbage with apple and sultanas, quince jam and mashed
potatoes goes so well with steaks of venison in spring.

Parsnips, being sweet, go well with lamb -
provided that the leg is roasted with garlic and rosemary.

Frankly, everything depends upon the flavour
and consistency of each accompanying sauce.

We chat.
We drink our wine, and eat.

Meanwhile,
one of the four suffers in silence.
She fights with pain
from the involuntary movement in her leg

and heart's aching.

The rest are only sitting here because of her.

I found her in a hospital for poorly souls.

We sat outdoors together,

smoking cigarettes and

quietly becoming friends.

Then, sitting next to her,

a man who works with her husband,

who knows everything-there-is-to-know

about birds and seals and cows,

because he's worked with them, too, now comes here to eat.

Next to him, my friend's husband is dipping a crust into a sauce.

I put everything into my sauces; -

Science as well as sensuality and years

of stirring pans.

When my friend has finished

with the wine, the conversation, and the pain

they all rise from their chairs.

Then comes the putting on of coats

and the agreement, once again,

on Wednesday

to meet

and eat.

Jacqui Thewless

The Fader Of Heven, By P. Maxwell Davis. (For Betty)

Only we recall
the hours of awful practice,
trying to sing it:

our ears battling
for the perfect pitch of two
pure notes, meant to be

close seconds, but more
like needle and magnet, or
brooches - half-hanging,

hinged to a vest and
scarf, 'till we got it. Just so:
twin zones, poles apart.

Jacqui Thewless

The Letter (I)

I came in peace
waving a flag, a white sheet
lined with blue,
looped ink folded
and delivered by hand.
Read my lips: an enveloped
dumb imprint:
a kiss.

Jacqui Thewless

The Letter (Ii)

I'm stepping out today.
Climbing the hill
before these clouds
empty. The sky
tilts
as though June were now November
though
stalks are green.

I'm wearing the beret of
most tender wool, the colour black.
So much like fur.
I'm walking, not talking at all.
In deed the words

I have been trying to say
have just become
a letter fall-
ing in to a
box.
It's possible you won't hear them
though you read them.

Jacqui Thewless

The Letter (Iii)

Even the leather writing
case's hinges are shot:
the strips
of hide
that bound
the lid decayed;
the lock –
a small lock
involving only a sideways
click to open it -
still works its
mechanical metal slot.

Inside the case your letter's
yellow pages of script
slowly
rewrite
their gist,
an ideal
content –
the content
between me and you the long dead
master of sub-text –
hints at its
continuous narrative.

Jacqui Thewless

The Miracle Of Love, The King Of All The Elements

One day love
opens the door.
In comes freedom, with a light step:
you've heard it before,
but that is just what happens, one day.

Consider it
a death of some kind;
a spiritual summons
from the highest tide of mercy;
a surge sweeps unwillingness to play, away.
Or else a birth:
Wonder, instead, moves in;
takes charge; raises a sail; before you can say
'Why me? ' - you've left land-locks behind.

And it's ok
to float.
Every stony betrayal, each
cliff-fall refusal was not love's fault.
Look -
here are the greatest waves in motion
under the moon and sun.
Wisdom can soothe, of course, but real love still knows best.

Who comes towards you
across waters, walking? -
the Miracle of love, the King
of All the Elements.

Jacqui Thewless

The Plot (For The Poet, Lloyd Merritt And Ivan, His Dad)

Two years ago, the Ferris Wheel
offered you a view.

It's true that time runs out
to an ordered plan
of Swings-and-Roundabouts.

This, plainly, is
your real property:
a foreign garden
bordering your neighbour's land.

Under a hat in France, Ivan
picked ripened strawberries; like you,
docile as a child who dreamed
of breaking rules and making clean
fast getaways at night.
And though your old man's last loss
of the plot earned him that right
to See-Saw-down the next-door-
fella's tree,
the snoring sway of circumstance
snuffed out his chance to flee England-
while you soared, free.

Jacqui Thewless

The Writing Class At Lampeter

Pens are lifted
and there's the click;
the shuffling of sheaves as we out-breathe
and then's the intersection of an insistent bird's trill;
voices outdoors
and a crow's caw, and a thud.

Some one coughs.
A boy. It is
a Tenor Cough.
A girl coughs in a higher key.
The boy responds unconsciously with
a more emphatic, melodious, baritone cough
and now it seems
the conversation outside's growing louder.

I'm roused by the clicking, then, of someone's shoes
on the floor of the hall
and the muted closure of this writing-room's door
as the teacher leaves.
Sweet, open, fluting of the bird-sound in the tree calls me
and I rise,
making my own quiet
discordant disturbance.

Walking round the square concrete block
outside this old Canterbury building,
I hear a sympathetic symphony of sounds,
conducted by the queen of mornings
- a clear sky, golden;
there are the tiniest of small
breeze-motions in the single tree's umbrage;
the swing-door bangs shut, thrice, in succession, quickly, as it must;
a bi-plane drones;
footfall of perpendicular people, crossing the campus, sounds;
Hark! Now the chapel bell rings in the hour.

I return to

the class.

A man called Ken is busy with a hammer and a maniacal drill outside the door.
From time to time, he sings a few bass phrases of a song.
The devilish drill, though,
and the knocking of his hammer are persistent in
wrecking the day's choice literary music.
In every long pause that he lets us have,
outdoor laughter and conversation salves unsettled nerves
restoring to the air a more
civilised, satisfactory
and genteel score.

Ken comes into the classroom, gently
asking, in a whisper,
Can I come in?
The hand-tool is more well-behaved
when driving into our small window frame.
Ken leaves.
The teacher enters
and the pens
- thank God -
go down.

October,2007. Revised July 2010.

Jacqui Thewless

Three Days

On September 1, we lay in the sun, she polishing
her smooth milk chocolate tan;
on September 2, sharp coolness arrives -
the same cloudless heaven now dimples my skin.

Remembering iron, rust leaves mass
where my feet brushed, lately, the precious few last
young buttercups, daisies in dry grass on Monday -
but apples are weighting the tree's branches down.

Seeds, burrs cling to my clothes.

Then, my grandson's birthday, I'm all afternoon
cake-baking and making his favourite icing
stick to its sides. The offering for tea's a plate
of savoury: paella.

He's fifteen.

By September 3, all tourists have gone.
We keep the Pembroke morning rains
for ourselves; fine, soft, grey as herons,
falling fast,

like summer.

Jacqui Thewless

Tin Tabernacle 2

the clock's heard ticking..

folk rest peacefully in prayer

the warm sunlight, still

Jacqui Thewless

Tin Tabernacle, Pembroke

All week,
I'm waiting to go in
to that little, homely, stable-of-a-place
where nothing could be simpler than the grace of God.

On hot days, the large fan whirrs softly overhead,
the narrow, high, windows are opened and,
outdoors, you'd hear the free streaming of praise.
On cold days, someone lights the stove

and we come just as we all already are.
Nobody dresses up
or down. The same familiar friends talk openly
to God: His Spirit gathers everyone

with a small voice.
Sometimes, a nutshell cracks:
a man weeps, tenderly;
an old woman finds a secret joy;

the quiet peace sinks into
the hearts' beats and lungs
of every body's breathing. Jesus

comes near
in these warm-hearted meetings.
We drink tea, later: there's a kitchen,
mugs and kettle out the back.

Old friends, around a table,
catching up with God:
and all of us plain
folk go home easy.

Jacqui Thewless

Today

Today,
encountering
the edge
of ease into nowhere-like-nearness,

I make three steps,
pirouetting around enlightenment
inside myself, on grounds of silence
offering places to be with no feet

and no hands holding
the feeling of hosanna with You
in the lowliest of places
and no eyes to see:

all Things are reeling
this Way, like always,
including
We.

Perhaps
deaths are trials of gratitude,
I say to myself
in witness,

having missed hope,
unnameable
and pure,
that needs Nothing to survive

the puncture of the rubber
ring of living
with shock-stillness,
but gives - after this - more than today it takes?

An instant
reconciliation
with October's wan sons
some twenty-eight years dead

settles in mind like a pond where unseen lilies
continue to float or like white wounds
on the surface of my skin
and today I'll cry, though later may laugh and sing
with Them: hosanna in the highest of places..

Jacqui Thewless

Traveller

a different address -
from my new window, the stars
make another arc

Jacqui Thewless

Triptych (For Adam)

Why do we require
conspicuous reminders
of the singular -

objets d'art, like these -
each more or less uniquely
invaluable?

Is it because we -
controversial, as they are
peerless and solo -

have no more vocal
key-notes with which to address
our forgetfulness?

The triptych is not
different in this respect
for a hidden self

mostly neglected.
Not once, but thrice told; over
and over again:

no one is the same.
We have in common this much:
no more, and not less.

Jacqui Thewless

Two Wee Garden Daffodils In A Pot

Here are two wee daffs
for St David's Day, in a pot
my sister made a few inches high -
blue as the winter sea that laps Stromness,
rimmed with a green so close
to the cut stems you can see why

I placed them here. In Pembroke, the third
month of the year, like these two Welsh
emblems, seems to separate
a visionary's outlook from the cynic's
jaded view: one looks on,

with six-pointed perianth of shaded lemon
facing the window, with a frilly skirt no less
common than the sun - like someone who
knows the ropes, expecting nothing to surprise;

the other's golden garment falls beneath
the star-like Frisbee that simply
shows - as Blake's or Burns' or even
Wordsworth's verses do -
the way we ordinary mortals see daylight

after far-too-long-lasting nights, or on
the first day of spring, when garden daffodils come in.

Jacqui Thewless

Uncommonly Long Winters

At the flowering,
Solstice makes Poppies' frills flash in its cornfields,
leads Rose petal silks along garden paths,
lets folded Foxglove-fingers ruby and open for bees
and couples moan in grass,
and ghosts of the widows breathe on window-glass,
drawing newly-broken hearts that bleed, seeing that
this season still breeds lovers.

Uncommonly
long winters shutter the springs and falls
but never summers -
no, not ever summers.

Jacqui Thewless

Under The White Foam

Under the white foam,

the child I am
is restless, until

an almost dissident knee
emerges from washing.

The pink knee has slowly
slid over the water's horizon,

thanks to my hidden heel,
pressing on metal with a cunning purpose:

a soap-scented bluff,
rising like an unconquered island hill.

I walk two of my proud red fingers on it
as if the flesh belongs to me.

(C) Jacqui Thewless March 22nd,2013

Jacqui Thewless

Until

Eating my breakfast,
so full of myself. Until
this miracle rain.

Jacqui Thewless

Untitled

(1)

A dream enactment:
the slow-growing feeling of
it's ok to kiss
under his wild hair,
my lips on his own shoulder -
license-filching, stopped
for years in real life;
something so transgressive it
must hide, like a thief
or like a promise
of some skill only the next
life may offer me -

even more wondrous,
his returning kiss as safe
as air on my skin,
as certainly not
half-heartedly there: his touch,
placed. Even in dreams,
I am kindlier
to me, these days. As one door
has been shut, at last
an interior
existence develops roads
with public transport.

(2)

All morning, I brood
on him and the dream's unlikely
images making
egg and mushroom break-
fast in the hot frying pan's
clear liquid that spits;
while lifting the forked
food from plate, cupped coffee from
surfacetop - brushing
my hair, blindly face-

ing the mirror's bright reply -

morning becomes mid-
day; work-time, wasted; lesson
plan still unwritten.

The question, not asked:
how to convince my learners
of haiku's value -
bearing in mind their
lives of action, practical
minds far sharper than
mine? - The old woman's
bus pass seems to slip
from her open purse.

(3)

The bus conductor
is no longer a lover;
the driving-seat is
occupied by me:
Where do you expect to go
with nothing to lose? -
All kindness evaporates
at action's threshold:
as if (like Arjuna's will
before the battle) .
I'm lily-livered..

ordinary life
is terrifyingly close
to the dream's steep edge.
I topple over - as I
first did when I was a kid,
suddenly on the rocks, then
landing on rough sand
with brain out of sinc,
gazing at an inner sky,
asking my non-sexed-self:
why am I lonely?

Jacqui Thewless

Vessels

A wide white Cup for the teapot. The squat Teapot
for tea. Various and pretty Plates
for the two kinds of my home-made cakes;
almond or else milk chocolate.
A wooden Bowl for sugar and
for the beautiful spoon.
The tiny Pot you painted on a summer's afternoon
for salt
and a round Table out of doors for us.

An entire House for all the rest of the furniture.
Today's transparent Sky for passing clouds.
The plastic Seat that's green
for my old friend to sit upon
and, for her man, the Steps from which he leans.

My Skin, for my bulges, like any bag.
A rotting Crevice in the neighbours' fascia board
for the peeping birds;
and for the Garden we are in,
tall Hedges on one side
and on the other one -
a long
and timeless,
ivy-leaved
dry-stone
Welsh Wall

Jacqui Thewless

Violence

When empathy's flown,
war is hiding in the woods,
exploding feathers!

Jacqui Thewless

Visitation

in the tunnel there are blue grapes,
orange and red nasturtiums;
joan draws the mullein's
pale green fruits, felt leaves,
lemon-y flowers,

while lizabeth paints
the canvas sunshine-yellow,

i grate beetroots
and i finely slice
red onions, mix quinoa,
chop lime-pickle, pour the oil and serve;

all day, a river of light ripples
the table's surface
through two vine-leaved windows;

under the bay,
the last sweet-peas' perfume
floats; the willow
warbler sings from this lime tree -

and a snail's
munched progressed holes
in the plan thumb-tacked to a wall

so even the past
is still changing...

Jacqui Thewless

Votive

I wish for less
to influence
the kindness of stars'

flickering air that passes between them and us,
gathering the masses of sky-born form and water,
mixing the extremes, stirring the turbulence
of billions of voices, speaking or silent,

and our
own
world-
star's
dedicated satellite,

easing their task with time-keeping tides
of our prayers for pauses
for everything that matters, seen or unseen.

Jacqui Thewless

We

the circle-makers,
golden fish in a glass bowl;
single small raindrops

entering the deeps;
here are we, then, with the sun
the moon and planets

no differently
going about their business,
some of them slowly,

others eccentric
or quick as small fish aiming
for infinities

Jacqui Thewless

Werekidz

After `bed-time`, guys,
my grandsons become Werekidz.
'Specially at Christmas.

See wee angelic
Mummy's-boy baby-faced Luke?
- must be the moonlight:

Christmas Eve, his screams
bring neighbours to their front doors:
Who's killing that child?

There's Luke on the ground
splayed like Michaelangelo's
five-pointed star-man

in a trembling fit.
Help! Help! Help! AH! Help! Help! Help!
Kyle's broken my foot! Help! AAGHHH!

The neighbours go in.
Heard it all before. Those kidz!
It must be bed-time.

Dayne on Boxing Day -
for chucking cakes on the floor -
goes to bed early.

Unfortunately -
since he has the basement flat -
where the drum-kit lives,

the peaceful Pembroke
evening is shattered by the
loud bashing of drums.

Christmas Day itself
is fine till after midnight.
The boys stay up late.

All hell runs wild when,
let's say, around two o'clock,
it is time to go.

There are alarming
sounds of breakages - maybe
beds, doors or floor-boards -

coming from upstairs.
Downstairs, there is more mayhem:
Dayne thrashing about.

KYLE'S GOT MY CAM'RA! !
Luke yells, KYLE'S GOT MY CAM'RA! ! !
I HAVE NOT! ! yells Kyle.

Jessie turns to Jules:
Isn't the cam'ra charging
in the kitchen, bro?

- he's just been in there -
fetching another sandwich -
and he nods his head.

Dean screams: Your cam'ra's
In the bloody kitchen, Luke!
I WANT MY CAM'RA!

Didn't you hear me?
His father roars from downstairs,
IT'S IN THE KITCHEN! !

Silence. Then, footsteps
on the stairs as Luke comes down
looking like a saint.

He bows his gold head
on his mother's warm shoulder:
I love you, he says.

The whole palaver

gets an action-repeat; then,
suddenly, they sleep.

Jacqui Thewless

With Cockleshells, Like Mary

An occult garden grows from the house on this hill,
where I have played with cockleshells, like Mary;
openly visible in winter, disappearing when the trees'
foliage spreads. From the sky, in some Julys
you might glimpse holy bees and butterflies
on buddleias and me, meandering, like you through a gallery
extending through doors of privet or
ash or a metal frame for morning glory
or a scented rose's gorgeous exhibit
that comes, shows and
goes in secret season.

Jacqui Thewless

Woodsheep's Lament

Often it seems to be
the only way down,
on hands and knees
in long shadows, searching
the heather and gorse roots,
burned almost every year
by busy-bodying flames;

the morning alleyways
I found among purple bells,
the nut-flavoured flowers,
the aromatic thyme -
these have all been eaten by
the red-wind and wasted again.

The cloven beast, clothed
with shag like my tangled animal fleece,
was not welcome on this hill.
The message the tongues blaze
through the bracken trail is:
this is not your place. Move on.
but still

I return, ramlike, to the mountain's rim
of birch - stooped oaks are all hewn down -
and though without mercy
fires have scorched this ground
this hill -
this primitive hill
where I was born - hides
in its earth the blackened horn.

Jacqui Thewless

Xyris And O. Speciosa

For every time
and place, the right
encouragement.

A bog has small Xyris flowers,
budding on thin blades in the morning hours,
spreading yellow petals in the soggy afternoon;

the ordinary wayside's
O. speciosa is perfumed
and open by both day and night,

lives without water if it has to;
closing its showy primrose only when
the sun first rises.

Jacqui Thewless

Yang Yin

in your embraces
unthinkable at that time
these lonesome years

Jacqui Thewless

Yin Yang

when night is darkest
the first snowflakes of winter
arrive un-noticed

Jacqui Thewless

Yin Yang Yin

amid the petals
of human souls' flowering -
everything. no thing.

Jacqui Thewless

You

your face disperses
your visibility is
almost completely

gone but for the wound
where your subtle dialect
left a lasting mark

who can tell how long
this interior music
of your voice will stay?

Jacqui Thewless

Young Wind

The ancients' longing:

O young wind, carry our prayers

to the furthest shores.

Jacqui Thewless

Zzzz

martens swooping out and in
through bedroom windows

the drift of sweet peas
on the afternoon

his sonorous breathing falls
and rises
and falls

like an ancient lullabye
in the lap of sleep

Jacqui Thewless