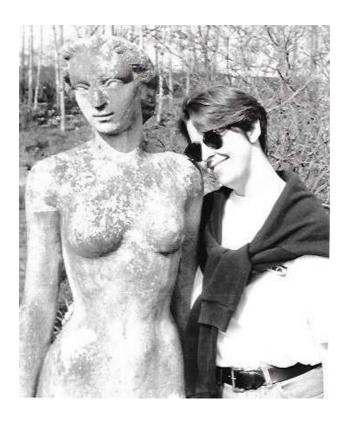


# collected poems 1996 - 2017

jackie scutt

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photograph by Linda Taylor

## Collected Poems 1996 - 2017

This is a collection of poems, spanning twenty years, each of which captures a moment, an emotion or an idea.

They are not presented chronologically, or with dates. Instead, the poems are arranged in themes that emerge from the body of work.

The first theme, Flight-path, is about making a journey or finding yourself in another place.

The second theme, To be with you, explores the experience of being in a woman to woman relationship.

The poems in the third group, Time and tide, are meditations inspired by the cycles of nature, in particular the element of water.

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The probability of separate worlds meeting is very small. The lure of it is immense. We send starships. We fall in love.

(Jeanette Winterson <u>Gut Symmetries</u> 1997)

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Flight-path

#### Flight-path

Planes curve through the skies overhead
Giving the illusion of nearness,
Seeming close enough to reach up and touch;
They move steadily forward
One after another
Remote
Marking their smooth procession through the air.

Up there,
Sunlight catches the angle of flight
Producing a silver vessel
Precious metal
Against a lapis lazuli sky.

Stretching into the distance
My gaze
Journeys with the planes;
So, too, my thoughts and dreams are
Uplifted
Airborne
Towards unknown destinations.

#### London on the train

City of glass dream towers dirty gutters so many stories glancing past; a world of choice and still the sky above constantly changing unchanging.

#### Poems on the underground 1: the kiss

In front
In the taxi queue
In the shop window
Indirectly
Reflected

She kisses him
Eyes huge and oozing
Tall against him
Moves in
Grazing on his face.

#### Poems on the underground 2: the fall

Crash

Clatter

Flutter

Fall

Behind me

On the smooth-moving

Metal stairs;

Downward-spread

Ungainly

Crashed

A crow

With broken wings

A crone

Black sprawl

At my feet

Fragile

Fearful.

Reaching

To help the

Grounded creature

Find her feet,

My hands

Sink into deep

Black soft

Cashmere

Covering –

Unexpected

Tactile

Touch.

#### Poems on the underground 3: the stranger

Riffling
Rustling
I'm wrested from my reading
By the searching
Scrabbling
Activity of the man
Next to me
On the Bakerloo line.

Sorry.
He hauls his recycled
Paper holdall up
On to the seat between us
Deep set smiling
Eyes on me.
I've lost it.
What do you call it?

East-European geniality -He touches his scrawny Tanned neck Points to my necklace. I ponder;

Respond.

Pendant?

Yes, yes

A present from my wife.
From Egypt
Special.
He turns back to the bag
Turns over and over
The spare shirt
Anti-perspirant
Papers

Touching
Personal effects.
Stolen!
I left it while I had breakfast
But see
They didn't find this:
An envelope,
A wad of euro notes,

A crinkled smile.

Can I go to her without it?
I smile, shrug, engage.
If I was your husband
What would you do?
How would you punish me?
Do the washing for a week?
Clean the floors?

I swing away and off
Smiling friendship farewell.
Then he's here again
At my heels
By my side
We reach the stairs
He takes my bag
Eager

Carries it up stairs.
In this city of strangers
My hand hovers close
Re-possessing
I go my way
Check I'm not followed
Before slipping
To my own destination.

#### London

Your face has changed: New lines Drawn on this Hereditary Imprint, Recognisable shapes **Evolved** Into new dimensions, A palimpsest of Experience, Overlayering Ideas made flesh and Blood rising Alongside Signs of decline, Where there was Wealth Energy Ambition Once, then displaced.

#### Brockwell Park

At the top of the hill, London lies at my feet;
Canary wharf
A piece of abandoned lego in the city-scape
Moves in and out of view amidst the trees of the park
A beacon in the skies
To air traffic level with my gaze.

I scan the vast semi-circular vista:
Domes, spires, towers, blocks,
Ancient, modern,
Crowded, isolated,
Familiar, strange,
Markers of my personal adventures,
Sites of passage through time,
My chosen landscape.

Descending a few steps
The panorama disappears from view;
Local life hums back into consciousness
Earths me
Beyond the boundaries of grand park gates.

\*

Three successive summers the sun shone as Grass-green counterpanes turned pink with Pride
Transformed by the rainbow
Colours that coalesced on common ground.

We held each other as darkness fell And were moved by explosions of fire overhead, For us For our ways For a change.

#### Brockwell lido

On lobster boiling summer days the lido banners bravely beckon:

The still cold pool tempting but daunting.

Think of it as an orgasm plunge in thrill to the shock:

Yes yes yes ecstatic embrace icy water on sun-warmed skin.

#### Gaining ground

I dreamed
we skied
together
and on Sunday
we climbed high
above the ski slope
hearts struggling
to reach the peak
where
icy wind and bright sun
combined
to hold us in thrall.

High land, low land, city sea, sky; hold me close because here is where I stay.

#### Fear of flying

High above firm ground My heart is in my mouth: Lurching Involuntary motion Impelled by Unanticipated fear. I look down Measuring the freefall Beneath me, The pause between Where I was And where I'll land. It is an act of faith Impossible to believe The speed at which I am travelling Through invisible channels In negative space And time Empty of content, A place of unbelonging, A vertigo of Disconnection From the earth.

#### Leederville

High in this ice-chai place

a thousand paper lanterns bloom.

#### Bush fire

Deep In whisky warm Yarra valley Heart song

We three Vouchsafe Couch companions Watch

Out of reach A fiery sky Spectacular Jaggy jolts

Lightning bolts Immaculate White Light energy Shoots
Sizzles
Tatters and
Scatters

Night's black veil Wrapping Our veranda Vista.

## Stranger in a bar

She sat on the Bar stool
Cool,
With allure,
And looked
My way;
I stayed.

## Village lights

Green, groovy cactus, String of jaggy, mexico-like light, Electrifies our night.

## Echo dog

From a nearby veranda a dog barks into the fruitbowl sky dim with stars and giant beetles jump between the legs.

#### Caithness

Silver darlings in seas that sheen, Land of dancing horses.

#### **Botanical Gardens**

In the hothouse Giant lily pads Float In tranquillity Exotic Excessive.

Scented air
Presses
Warm and damp
On my skin
Heavy with desire.

## Home-longing

Cool fresh linen Soft female flesh

Cat

Nap

Bliss.

To be with you

I dreamed

I was naked in your arms

Exposed

Exhilarated

And you kissed me

Gently

So

Here

For the first time

Beside you

So

Scary

Sexy

Sure but unsure

So

Like old, old lovers

We sleep

Snore

Snooze

Decadence with the everyday

Entwined

Inseparably

So.

#### To be with you

To be:
to exist,
live,
choose life and risk
(to be or not to be);
the infinitive,
continuous,
without past, future or conditional tense,
now;
to have identity,
awareness,
a sense of self,
of place,
potential.

With:
together,
in partnership,
alongside,
equally,
hand in hand,
sharing;

an intimate relationship, a conjunction.

You:
second person singular,
familiar,
other,
separate being,
not-me;
linked closely to I/me
through action,
in communication.

#### Double vision

Not my wedded wife

You are

My life

Line of vision

Connected

Not contracted

Out

In good faith

We vow

Commonality

Not family

Orientation

No blood

No swearing

Together

We look not

Through rose-tinted

But designed

Spectacles

Not one

But two

Ayes

Envisioning Possibilities.

(Written on the day that Elton John and David Furnish registered for their civil partnership.)

### Making connections

The probability of separate worlds meeting is very small. The lure of it is immense. We send starships. We fall in love. (Jeanette Winterson **Gut Symmetries** 1997)

Let's come together
Undivided:
No distance to part us
No occasions to oblige
No others involved
No reservations
No cover
No holding back.

Let's engage with each other: Body and soul Mind and spirit Hand and heart Flesh and blood. Time

Matter

Your self

My self

An exchange of energies

Imagine.

## Unfinished text

This is the story yet to be written of you and me starting

Once upon a time at the stroke of midnight of this new year,

A beginning which can be read in the past, and in the following pages unfolding.

\*

You are the stranger who I recognise, and have known always as the friend in my heart.

You are the lover whose unfamiliarity stirs memories of desires long felt never realised until now.

You are the companion I've only just met who has already shared all the days of my life.

\*

This is an eternal moment of narrative, a circular tale that plots our time together.

This is our world of words without end.

### Another country

In your absence,
Your not-here,
Your presence is
Mapped on my body.
You have left your mark,
Your imprint,
Here,
The scent of your skin
In every pore.

We have established the Physical geography
Of our bond;
We have touched,
Explored,
Discovered
The landscape of our desires,
The bounds of possibilities
In a shared terrain.

As the details of your flight
Disappear from the monitor,
I am alone,
No-where,
Exiled
For days, weeks
From where you are grounded,
The place I long to
Inhabit.

I have only your voice:
A lifeline
Direct to my heart.
I open a vein to let
The tangible warmth
Of our words
Enter my bloodstream,
Mingling dreams with ideals
In a promised land.

#### No rush

In this rush
Each moment is
Intensely
Sensory.
My blood
Like a tidal wave
Crashes
With the dance beat
Of my heart.

Charged particles of Desire
Pulse
With hectic rhythm
Through the
Porous membrane of
My being.

And when I'm with you Without a watch We stay Still as
Night falls and
Time flows
Without markers
On the shifting
Shore.

Non-urgency Descends Holding us Slowing us Into each Sit and stare Moment.

# Opening

Into the body-warm Closeness Of your outstretched Arm, Soft, I shift.

#### In contact

Full body Strong arm Wide open Love Matched.

# Omega

Desire is mortality:

a longing to perfect the circle of existence

to join with infinity.

# Alchemy

The palpable intensity of our desire transmutes, by secret natural lore, dull mettle to fool's gold.

A mixture of elements in pure blue flame, we burn together, bound to the promise of unmeasured wealth.

#### Sea-sure

Anchored
In my harbour
Water-tight
Circle by circle
I ride the waves.

Desire
Re-surfaces
In your warm touch
Your ocean-deep
Blue moves.

We float
In the love boat
Of our dreams
In perfect connection
Recollection.

If you abandon me

I am not

Lost

At sea

Not me.

## Speaking of love

We float
in semiotic
pre-linguistic
sexual
inter-locution,
in the comfort
of amniotic
amnesia
borne together
in bliss.

Re-entering the symbolic world we struggle for meaning, opened up to binary opposition separate tongues, a dialogue of misinterpretation.

Each articulates a subject position that abandons the other, forcing us into obscurity in difference.

# The tangled threads of glamour

Shiny person
Scintillating wit
Like shards of
Hard, clear glass
Your jaggy edges
Catch at me.

### Word-power

Mean with your words
Sparing
Sparring
You pare your meaning
Miserly
Hoarding in silent selfhood
Or obscurely
Toss your phrases
Glinting
So I flinch to catch them.

Indulge me with language of
Affectionate prose
Redundant remarks
Repetition
Elaboration
Excessive explanation;
Pour forth the riches of
Verbal generosity
In warm exchange
And holy communion.

# Emotional tyranny

Blood-red
waves
flood
our shared space
storming
the defences
of my breath
and being,

Hardening
into
blue-ice
noiselessly cracking
apart
the fragile ground
between
us.

### Every goodbye is a little death

So this is goodbye – don't say it don't say it.

All I know is now, here, you filling this moment.

Held in abeyance the hurt will come but I'll have forgotten to expect it.

This closeness now is heaven in the after-life of our separation.

#### Dis/solution

This connection finds my soul; bodies reach with desire, complete.

Dis-connection hurts profoundly; loss leaves me wanting, alone.

Non-engagement closes off the blood line; unreturned, unkind.

Separation requires organic dissolution of my being.

### Out of the ordinary

By chance
We find ourselves
In a mundane, morning queue
Three bodies apart
Say hello
Routinely
Falling in line
With each other.

Going through the motions
We pass
Security-checked
Into the lounge and sit
Over cups of tea.
I'm early,
You're delayed:
Untimely encounter.

Not out of the ordinary We find our way in words Two travellers Safe
On familiar ground
Watching our step:
Petering conversational
Normality.

Too familiar
Our farewell kiss
Mouth to mouth
Yet un-hugged
Recalls the times
Behind the scenes
The tears
The life less ordinary.

Time and tide

#### Time and tide

Way

Way out

The tide

Has gone far

Beyond

The furthest

Marker point,

The sea bed

Wide

Wet

Deeply waved

Beneath

My shoes

Shimmering in the

Half light of a

Spring night.

Shallow waters

Whisper to me,

Thin layers

Reaching

Round my

Walking feet

Flowing in

From far

Far out.

# Midnight

Down on the beach at Midnight I'm drawn to the darkness Out there

The blackness pierced Intermittently By the Fidra lighthouse One, two, three,

Four,
Like the stars above
Around me
Dancing spots of light.

The waves are
My breath
Full, regular, unconscious
My mood

Brimming in the dark No visible moon. I walk the water's edge

# Feel the tide edging

Edging
My feet treading alongside
Earlier imprints
In the wet sand

Boots, shoes, Bare feet Dogs' paws. Returning

My own marks are gone Levelled Under shallow Water

Coming in
In
In
As if I'd never been there.

#### Dark November

Heading homeward
Not late
But in full
November dark
The tide pulls at me
Makes me turn
Going with it
Away down the hill.

I button my jacket
Under my coat,
Pleat my wide-leg trousers
Inside my socks,
Pull on my beach-walking boots,
Draw my velvet scarf
Close around
My throat.

In primeval darkness The empty beach Shimmers wet And I walk
Way out to the place where
Water meets land
A moving border on the
Ridges of sand

Thick with debris
From the deep.
The waves come flooding
Relentlessly
Reassuringly
Like strong, sure breaths
In, in, covering over
What has been exposed.

# Heading for a crash

At 3pm
Weariness rolls
Wave-like
Through my limbs
Driving me dangerously
Into shut-eyed
Oblivion

Yet here again
At 3am
Devoid of dreams
Feverish
Itchy-eyed
I'm lost
In blue wakefulness.

## Going through the motion

At 4am

Words fail me -

Dreams drift

Across

Meaningless

Moving me

Nowhere.

A sinewed

Ague

Tugs me

Awake –

Into

Relentless

Restlessness.

A rubber belt

Past its best

Holds me

As I stretch each day against it -

Pulls me

Back

Again to pain.

5am

Half way place
Not morning bright
Nor pulsing night
Cold
In this dawning
Yawning space
A baby cries
As seabirds fly
Through empty skies.

## Winter-warm

A winter vest of a day -Pink edges Thread through Mottled grey fabric Over my head.

#### Horizons

In the sand
My feet mark
The centre point
Of my horizons,
The dot of the
Circumference

Of my visible world,
A circle that shifts
With every foot print
Distant snow peaks move
In then out
Of my sights.

Ice piles
At the edge of the waves
Bronze-headed ducks
Cluster and peck for worms
Sunlight dazzles;
It's jaw-achingly cold.

And I look up
At the place where you were
Close
For a while within my sights
But gone now
Gone far away.

#### Mixed blessings

Almost spring
Bulbs brave from sun
Brave wind and
Rain at random.

From the beach
Looking west
Carelessly smudged
By darkening grey

Landscape lines are lost But eastwards In crystal clarity Fidra lighthouse

Points like a finger White Bright as hope Blue-skyward And over there
On seas turned turquoise
A rainbow
Not fully formed

Washes the cliffs warm On this striped counterpane Of a day We edge to avoid the worst.

#### Inconstant Sky

This fence frames
Before me
My vista
Staked out in wood
Meshed in squares
Shaping
Bounding
This home patch
And beyond
Nowhere.

My semi-wild
Garden buds
Imperceptibly
Requires tending
Cutting back
Creating space
Against
This neutral backdrop
And beyond
Indistinct.

Light streams
Awakening
A new land of
Seeming-inaccessible
Rock-scape
Breathtaking-steep
Outlined massive
Against blue skies
And beyond
The deep.

Changing focus
A red painted ferry
Is moving, moving
A sharp line
Crossing the bay
A step away
Transporting
Re-patterning the water
And beyond
Unknown.

#### River-find

April's soaking comes this year in June; Waterproofed, I follow the Brimming bank -Our mud-rich river -Downstream.

The evening air belongs to swallows
A big dipper of sharp shapes
Skimming low
Wheeling wide
Cheeky-close

Playing with me
Showing off shades of indigo
Making me admire
Flashes of brilliance
Including me in their circles of joy.

Precarious by the fast-flowing weir
I count twelve tiny ducklings
Three eiders
Elders in charge
A wee one apart

Afright!
Over it goes
Tumbling in the fall
Splashing in the swell
Then takes a leap of faith

Disappears, reappears
Reaching the far side.
I hold my breath for the rest
As one by one they cascade
Repeating the drama:

They are lost
Find heart
Bob up in the estuary.
I count again to be sure
A dozen and three

All present
Apiece.
Warm in my layers
Dripping with rain
I make my way again.

### Spring

In early spring
my garden,
unknown,
produces
dazzling surprises:
depths of yellow
(daffodils bunched,
forsythia climbing high),
fresh green blades
pushing through the muddy earth
of winter,
dusty pink blossom
massing in front of my window.

Growth everywhere is luxurious; buds lush and mysterious promise riches of lilac, deep crimson peony, heady jasmine,

(what else?)
as I wait
for their flower
and fragrance,
a metamorphosis
into summer's
heaven.

The bare branches formerly marked sparely in silhouette against a neutral sky now multiply wildly enveloped in azure brightness. Secret abundance hidden beneath seemingly barren winter ground is revealed now in a myriad hues and the clarity of spring sunlight banishes the grey tones of a long winter.

#### Change of day

At change of day
water brims in the harbour
deep and full;
a single wave
comes and comes
breaking
strong and rhythmic
at the estuary point
searching for the shore
then spreading
swoosh
like a burning fuse
along the line
dividing land and sea.

At dusk
a washed canvas of coral
back-lights
blue-grey strokes of sky
moving
outlining the powerful
landscaped mass of Arthur's seat

veined white
with earlier snowfall
high
above the city
scattered now
with orange dots,
torches for ordinary life.

As day turns to night the waxing crescent moon holds the deepening blue world like a promise within her silver brightening horns and dark birds in synchronised flight swoop across the scene together.

## Let go of seeing

Sad at heart
By the sea
At the water's edge
I close my eyes
Listen
Breathe
Let go of seeing

Tune in
To the essence
Of the water moving
Around me
A message
Of no beginning
No end

But endless Dance Trance Tides A pattern

# In the chaos Of the moment

And I know The present Pain Will ebb And life And love

Will flow.

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