

*Poems*<sup>1</sup>

**Teri Merlyn**

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**Narrabeen Dreaming**

There's a house somewhere  
in our collective memories,  
where white sails fletch a blue horizon,  
and washing flaps lazily on the Hills  
against a priceless backdrop;  
of a time when endless days  
drip minutes like a leaky tap  
and the wash of waves  
sings a wombsong,  
lulling us into reverie  
of afternoon naps that  
make new days from old.

They were once as young as we,  
our lives merging into this house  
as it lays alone on the dunes.  
Neighbours all gone,  
ghosts of holiday's past  
ululate in empty lots  
and we slip into its dreaming,  
of laughter for its own sake,  
skin peeling like paperbark,  
icecream melting on salty tongues  
time melts like Dali's clocks.

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A kite surfer-laden breeze brings  
croaks of boys, squeaks of girls  
interspersed with throbs  
from juke-box cars of another era  
to us, eternal now inhabitants,  
lost in the warp and weft  
of the house and its dreaming;  
salt-washed stone, silvered wood  
dead orange jessamin, live oleander.  
Driftwood moments of lazy  
breakfasts meandering into daydream  
lunches, drifting into teas of various descriptions.

Small joys echo in odd corners  
of a kitchen that doesn't work,  
spaces of mysterious purpose  
built by a man who liked to be handy.  
How many children, friends,  
cousins, aunties, uncles and ring-ins  
lay in the bath wondering why  
it was the wrong way around;  
went to open the side windows  
at the noreaster's knock,  
found them fixed, and sighed  
minor irritations, soon forgot.

This was the last of its kind.  
A mnemonic for missing kin.  
Each floorboard trembling  
with long gone footsteps  
of an endless to-ing and fro-ing  
by husbands, wives, children,  
home from the sea, off to school,  
from the shop, to the factory  
windows waiting, watching,  
visitors, passers-by, anyone?  
Now the house is gone  
and it's memories are homeless.

We drive past often,  
eyes straining, hearts yearning,  
longing for an evocation,  
some vestige to remind  
others of it's passing;  
all those lives, stories,  
grassed over, as if they never were.  
It wasn't a pretty house.  
No artist preserved its image,  
and when we are gone  
no one will know it was there.  
No one will care.

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## **Christmas Tree**

The Stringy Bark in my backyard  
is in a slow dance of deshabelle,  
decorating all about with bronze streamers  
as it has, at this time, every year, here.

In the fecund moistness of our northern origins  
Life slumbers, sequestered beneath a chill cloak,  
and our ancestors celebrated the persistent evergreen of pine  
at its darkest moment, as the cycle turns towards the sun.

Two millennia past, in a distant, desert land,  
the dream of a kinder kind of human lifted roots in  
a dance of angels and air, with each spin spreading, taking  
us further from Nature's pattern, into the pulse of Man.

In the Stringy Bark's home, ancient rhythms  
call seasons to us in a quieter, deeper note,  
in their gentle shedding, a stately waltz of renewal  
that has taken two centuries for us to recognize.



**Teri Merlyn** (b. Sydney 1949) is a creature of her own creation. A feral child, jettisoned into independent life at fifteen, she developed self-taught couturier skills by her early twenties, designing and making for private clients, including Australia's first glitter band, Hush, and in designer label partnerships until 1990, when she entered academe at UNE and fell in love with the life of the mind. However, the adage, 'timing is everything' made its verity felt when she graduated with her PhD (*Writing Revolution*, Griffith University 2004) on the history of the British radical literary tradition, its nexus with working class literacy, and role in the development of Australian culture, just in time to join the queue of left-wing intellectuals losing tenure with the rise of the vocationalist paradigm in universities. Having long written poetry that received acclaim from the 'FF Brigade' (friends & family), she has turned now to play that string on her bow as a third, and hopefully timely, career option, kick-starting with a Masters (Research) in English (Poetry) book project with the University of Sydney under the supervision of Judith Beveridge. (Email: [teri.merlyn@optusnet.com.au](mailto:teri.merlyn@optusnet.com.au))