



There will
ALWAYS BE
VOICES

in this place

There will always be voices in this place,
 voices of prayer and promise, sounds of laughter and longing,
 plain speaking truth and tales of need and beauty.
 There will always be voices in this place,
 voices that belong to hearts learning mercy,
 hearts that are at home here, one with its history and purpose.

At first it was the *fresh air of the farms of Fitzroy*,
 in a settlement a mere twenty or so years established,
 Flinders Street Station a couple of years old,
 the great Cathedral and Exhibition Buildings not yet built,
 and these two rickety, leaning houses watched a city change:
 the Victorian edifices the gold rush ushered in,
 the ambiguous scrapers of the current sky,
 as successive peoples escaped from war and strife,
 the varied cultures and races seeking life,
 that made this city great.

hearts learning mercy, hearts that are at home here

All the while the Women lived here,
 spinners of kindness and culture, singers of hope and of spirit,
 an eclectic mix of the fit and the frail.
 The city spread, the needs beckoned,
 their responses diverse and innovative,
 while monarchs, mayors, bishops and baristas—
 the generations—flourished and fell, one to the next.

The women lived and grew old here,
 dispersed each morning just out the door or along the tramlines,
 at end of day gathered back in by the house for sustenance,
 and for the unique companionship of the affiliated.
 The women knew the seasons of the spirit
 and the phases of the body,
 they braved the loneliness and loveliness of their vocation
 that had brought them from as far as Ireland,
 and as close as the suburb adjoining.

spinners of kindness & culture

Their span has known almost breakneck change,
 former customs now quaint and curious,
 new ways asserting and evolving,
 wars and wonders,
 diseases now unseen and diseases terribly new,
Titanic the event and its movies,
 Charles the Dickens and the Darwin,
 Brahms to Beatles,
 Dame Nellie to Dame Edna,
 Phar Lap and Ned Kelly,
 Olympics and Westgate Bridge,
 the disasters and triumphs of the city within earshot,
 the great dome and the spires, the hospitals and theatres,
 chalk to computer,
 costumes medieval to modern,
 horse to steam to petrol,
 moon landing, climate changing:
 the teeming, tumultuous life of the city.

their span has known almost breakneck change

The noble elms that line the streets have seen
 the seasons through and grown old with the women.
 The newer choices have made their choice rare,
 their paradoxical success in enhancing life for women
 has narrowed the number in their own house.
 Instead of choirs there are small ensembles still singing,
 Spirit blowing where it wills.

There will always be voices in this place,
 and hearts will be learning mercy.
 Eras pass and songs come to an end.
 There is sadness, a deep grief of the world turning.
 They leave, the last of the line to call it home,
 and one history is finished.
 A wistful but grateful *Amen* we say.
 But the bones of the one who began it—they stay.
 The old walls weep and the spirits whisper their stories:
 it has been a fine time.

it has been a fine time

There is peace and promise in the uncharted future:
 who can say where the Spirit will drift?
 Who will sing?
 Who will sing?
 You?
 Will you sing?
 Yes, I will sing
 We will sing.
 Eras begin, new history is ready for the making,
 and fresh songs will shift the air.
 Hope lifts and faith lifts,
 as new melodies of mercy
 are begun and sung,
 and sung
 and sung

new melodies of mercy are begun



*There will
 always be voices in this place*