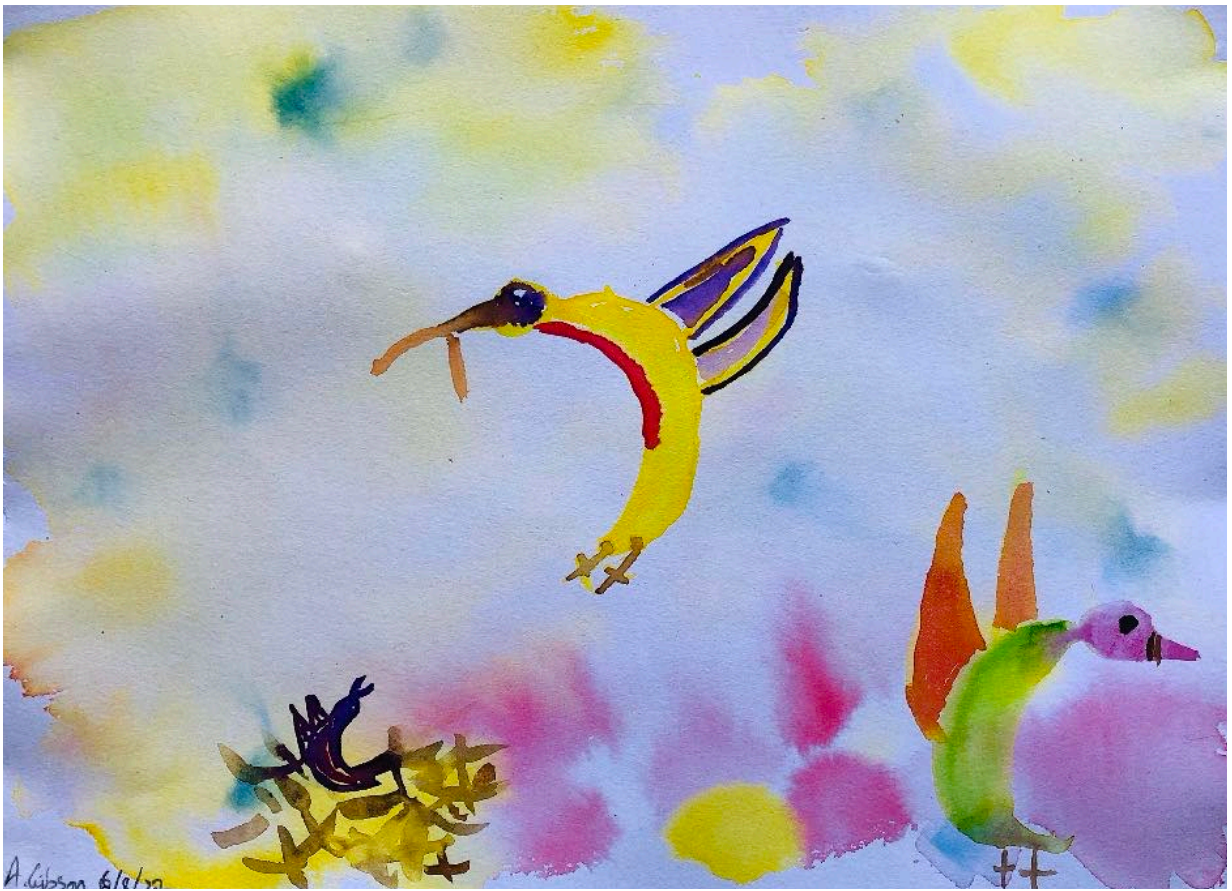


In a Time Between Times



An Isolation Anthology

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Nova Art and Life Writing are both creative engagement and learning programs offered by Hawthorn Community House. The art in this collection is part of an online exhibition by Nova Artists entitled 'A Room with a View' <https://www.hch.org.au/mentalhealthweek2020>. The written pieces come from the participants and volunteer mentors (Encouragers) of the Life Writing Program.

Foreword

'A Room with a View' emerged as an art theme from our wintery Melbourne lockdown; where for what seemed an eternity we were confined to quarters.

Our rooms became our worlds and our views became a portal to a real, imagined and at times absurd world. We captured change and flux embodied in the sky, the weather, the trees, plants, birds and insects. Nature became an infinite source of creative inspiration and personal solace.

We painted and drew the views from our window using many experimental and exploratory techniques such as continuous line drawing, painting and collage.

Artists connected weekly via telephone link or video with a facilitator. Through this process of art making we shared ourselves, and our views became connected.

**Amanda Florence,
Studio Facilitator, Nova Art**

The innovations introduced by the Hawthorn Community House team ensured that our creative community of Life Writers stayed connected and the stories continued throughout 2020. Observing and discussing together this strange time of contrasts and uncertainty helped balance out the distractedness of life in the time of Covid.

Writers, tutors and Encouragers listened to each other's fears for health and family wellbeing, also nodding in recognition at the frustration of having so much time and yet so little motivation. The soothing influence of nature was a shared inspiration. As keen observers of their life and surrounds, our group noted many of the anomalies of the restricted and locked-down days and took the opportunity to write about this strange moment in history.

Thank you to all involved in the Life Writing Program for continuing – even in the difficult times – to pay attention, take note of the tiny details and then tell your stories.

**Carolyn Cuming
Coordinator, Life Writing Program**

Acknowledgements

Both the Art and Writing programs acknowledge the Wurundjeri people, who are the traditional custodians of the land on which our groups meet. We pay our respects to Wurundjeri Elders past and present, and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We value the ongoing contribution to the cultural heritage of this land.

We also thank the team at Hawthorn Community House (HCH) for their creative support in a difficult year and Jo Marchese for her invaluable guidance, creativity and patience with the book layout and design.

Thanks is also extended to the following people and organisations:

The Studio Facilitators of Nova Art – Amanda Florence and Claerwen Leahy – are grateful for the continued assistance of Emma Scally, Judy Crowe and Vivienne Hardisty from HCH.

The Life Writing Program owes a great debt to Janine Johnston, who facilitates *The Rendezvous to Write* and Hedley Sutton writing groups. In addition to giving stimulating writing guidance, the sense of connection and shared creativity provided to these groups gave welcome respite from our restricted realities in 2020.

The Life Writing Encouragement Team were once again an invaluable sounding board throughout a challenging year. Sincere thanks goes to: Elizabeth Cameron, Fran Cassar, Elizabeth Duff, Janine Johnston, Bob Leschen, Lilli Lipa and Sue Lloyd.

Many life writers work with volunteer Encouragers to develop their writing skills and to share the stories of their lives. We greatly appreciate the time, skill and enthusiasm our volunteers give to the participants of the program. Many thanks to Doreen Berry, Sue Braint, Elizabeth Cameron, Giulia Campopiano, Fran Cassar, Sharon Donoghue, Moyra Dovolil, Elizabeth Duff, Elisabeth Hanscombe, Janine Johnston, Robyn Lance, Sarah Lang, Bob Leschen, Lilli Lipa, Sue Lloyd, Liz Newton, Maree Pane, Bridgit Phillips, Hinda Rosen, Elizabeth Smith and Alan Whittaker. The team of Encouragers are integral to the success of the Life Writing Program.

Two of our valued Encouragers, Doreen Berry and Moyra Dovolil passed away in 2020. Although both they and their contributions will be greatly missed, their legacies continue in their work and in the writing of those they encouraged.

Ongoing thanks goes to:

Access Health and Community

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Golden Days Community Radio (95.7FM) for continuing to broadcast Life Writing stories each week

Central Bayside Community Health Services, in particular Gulay Cevik for Telelinks

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A Little Ironing Music

By Alan Whittaker

It's a long list. I'm a very slow, though really quite meticulous ironer and so my *Ironing Music* playlist is necessarily long — very long. A linen shirt, such as the one that waits at the top of the hot-iron basket, can easily take me five or ten minutes. It's one my wife wore to work, BC (before Covid) and, as my mother might once have said, needs to be 'properly smart'. I take a systematic approach dividing by temperature range. I start with the cool-iron modern fabrics, where the soleplate barely touches the material, swing into one hundred percent cotton items and finish in a flourish with the hot-iron linens.

In recent times I've even taken to ironing our one pair of linen sheets. My wife advises that if I just fold them as I remove them from the line, then the ironing is unnecessary. However, this is an exercise that demands unprecedented skills in origami and calisthenics, combined with an uncanny degree of spatial awareness. It simply cannot be done without dragging some corner of the sheet on the ground as it is taken from the line. Far better to just get it off the line in a clean state, stuff it in the basket and take the iron to it at a later date. Perhaps we are the only couple in East Kew to settle in between freshly pressed sheets of a Sunday evening?

Occasionally, I will vary the routine according to the song on the playlist. When Sumi Jo sings Morricone, I need stout denim jeans, or something of the ilk, as I stop the iron mid stroke to listen to the unutterable beauty of the voice. Some delicate nylon number would clearly bare the stamp of the iron long before the song had finished. Similarly, Jimmy Nail's, 'Cowboy Dreams', demands one of my old Levi shirts with the twin breast pockets and I'm either the enigmatic stranger riding across the plains or the eleven-year-old boy at the flicks on a Saturday afternoon gazing up at Yul Brynner or Henry Fonda as they sort out the unruly west. When I really feel the urge to colour outside the lines, I will pick the song first and then the item in want of pressing. Mark Knopfler's, 'Why Aye Man', and the iron is venomously forced down into the fabric as he sings of receiving 'the back of Maggie's (Margaret Thatcher's) hand.'

Of course in the midst of Covid-19 there has been little urgency given to ironing; tops have been worn for more days than is wholly conscionable and track suit pants, I would argue, do not warrant an iron at all. But now we are at an end; the chests of drawers lie fallow and the overflowing ironing baskets stand accusingly in the corner. It's time to add to the playlist.



Sue Conchie, 2020
Room with a View II
Digital photographic print

The Beast

By Patricia Brown

April 2020. It was just another ordinary day in Kew. Ordinary that is, not considering the Covid-19 impostor, a beast that was unleashed on the world that year, causing cities to lose their sparkle, borders to slam shut, families to isolate within their own houses, economies to falter, even toilet paper to be stockpiled. But strange times called for strange strategies in the home.

Lindsay rushed to tear the wrapping from the insignificant-looking box that was delivered on that day, making sure to sanitise his hands and a metre and a half radius before revealing The Beast – a set of hair clippers complete with various attachments suitable for ... the Home Barber. Looked promising so far.

The instruction leaflet required a magnifying glass to read, but Lindsay was soon observed feverishly snapping the combs to the clipper one by one in readiness for his hair trim. The only catch was that I was to be the nominated barber.

Out to the garage I was lured, where a chair had been placed in readiness for the hair trim. After a quick practice demonstration based on Lindsay's observations from his own hairdresser's techniques, my hand quivered as I started the trim with the conservative Number 3 comb. 'You must hold the comb close to the scalp', he said, 'Otherwise the hair won't trim properly'. 'Try to do it evenly'.

Soon I was in a world of my own, following the contours of his head from crown to nape, and then the other way from nape to crown. Getting the knack of this, I relaxed into it, jauntily working across the scalp from left to right, and right to left, even humming a little with the rhythm. Lindsay suggested I change to the Number 2 (shorter) attachment to work around the ears and for the hairline. Done, no worries. This was easy, with the hair trimmings satisfyingly dropping softly onto his shoulders.

Lindsay was pleased with the final outcome, but checking the back of his head in the mirror, he had one more suggestion. 'Sure', I replied. He snapped off the Number 2 attachment and said 'Just move the bare clippers along the hairline on the back of the head in short and light flicks'. Not a problem.

I started work, but oh my goodness. I obviously misunderstood the definition of 'flick'. That's when my handiwork went haywire. That's the moment when the earth really tilted on its axis that year. Inexplicably I had laid bare a tract of white scalp from the neck up the back of the head. The back of my hand and The Beast itself were covered in hair that was no longer connected to Lindsay's head. And there he was in his chair, head bowed innocently as if in silent prayer and none the wiser, at least for a split second.

Now there were two Beasts to be reckoned with, the Virus and the Clippers. Both of them remain silent in our household at this stage, the second having been packed away with all its attachments at the back of a dark cupboard. If only we could do that with the other Beast on our doorstep. Social distancing for us has now taken on a whole new meaning. This year Lindsay and I will celebrate forty-five years of marriage. With luck and an unstated agreement never to talk of the incident again, I hope we make it to forty-six!



Fiona Shanahan, 2020
Magical Vegetables Fill my View
Watercolour on paper

Day 84

By Sue Lloyd

The magpies are carolling, is it morning already, what a way to start the day, maybe I'll stay in bed a bit longer and listen, after all I don't have to go anywhere today, picking the paper up from the door, there's a pair of eastern rosellas on the front step, not particularly bothered about me, oh good it's porridge day today, always look forward to that with maple syrup drizzled over, happy memories, went with my mask on to the little bookshop across the road, borrowed some wonderful books, saw someone walking without a mask tempted to say something, didn't though, a phone call from Julie in England, how long have we been friends, think we were eighteen when Graham brought her up from London and said they were going to get married, an invitation to a zoom meeting in my emails, to think I didn't want anything to do with zoom, now it is so valuable, if we can't meet people at least we can see each other and have a chat, need to add butter to the shopping list to go with the silver beet I picked from the vegetable garden, mother-in-law always used to cook those two together, saw the rabbits have been digging holes in the garden again, where is the fox that used to regularly visit at night, actually I'm cross with him since I heard he caught the resident peacock that visited on summer evenings, such a loss, his mournful cry always heard on warm nights with the crickets chirping their chorus, wonder what will have happened with this lockdown when it gets to summer again, seems a long way off now, although we are well past the shortest day, keeping a daily eye on my eight orchid spikes, any sign of them opening and straight into the house they come, a pleasure for months, thinking of months the cyclamens have been flowering outside the back for literally months, four actually, brilliant, best value ever, learnt two things from my grandchildren today, something called 'found poetry', never heard of it will have to get on to mr google and see what it's all about, and how to make a film on your laptop, they are far more tech savvy than I'll probably ever be, it's very quiet in the road today, just the whoosh of bicycles racing down the hill, last week one actually passed me as I was driving down on my one allowed outing to the supermarket, they're crazy the speed they go at, no more night time hoons doing wheelies, the road covered with snaking black s-bends the next morning, waiting for a parcel to come, actually not sure which one, I seem to have joined everyone else with online shopping, current situation made it hard for grandson's birthday last week, no party, there are heaps of ripe lemons all of a sudden on the trees, usually I take bags to friends, not this year, wonder what to do with them, lemon curd maybe, tried juicing and freezing that did not seem to work too well, better go and fill the bird bath, we haven't had much rain and it's always well used, currawongs get first turn, there is a definite pecking order, the last in line are the bronze wing pigeons, they are the shyest, what to have to have for dinner, got some left over vegetables I cooked in the oven so just take something out of the freezer to heat up perhaps, all the washing actually got dry outside today, super, much preferable to indoor drying,

had an actual letter in the box, a couple who have steadfastly refused to have anything to do with computers, think they will have to succumb in the end, anyway lovely to have the precious words from England on that fine arctic blue notepaper, their letter prompts me to ring a couple of people who are not well, made some banana muffins, very easy, one bowl, mix and put in the oven, my sort of cooking, a plane flew over while I was in the garden, what an unexpected noise these days, poor people who had booked and paid for overseas holidays, thank goodness the family are all still employed and likely to be, dreadful for so many others given these difficult times, think I'll go and pick some of the pale pink camellias for inside, just a few, heard the children next door, new neighbours, moved in just before the lockdown, hard for the children to move and then go to home learning, got a new book to read for the book club, it isn't too long which is good, the library have been excellent in providing them before the second lockdown, two months ago we had to source the book ourselves, rang the local book shop, can't go in, have to stand at the door, several shops now have a limit on how many people can be in the building at one time, the cafes are still doing ok with take-away coffees, pity we can't sit and have one, I really need some new shoes, don't think I can get them online though, since I'm not going anywhere suppose it doesn't matter, hope the daily Covid tally has improved today, looking forward to one of my favourite TV shows tonight, it's a series, six parts possibly, wonder what my grandparents would have thought of life today, perhaps they were well practiced with staying at home and growing their own vegetables, with world wars and the depression, what a ramble of thoughts, hope the sun will be shining again tomorrow and I've got a new jigsaw to start, proving a terrific challenge which I am enjoying, ordered online of course.

**We were surviving survival itself.
We were in a time between times.
The fear was that we would be in that minute
for a long time.**

From 'Lest We Forget' by Timo Savimaki p.25

**Monique Anderson Ellen Bailey Sue Banting
Jennifer Barnes Bill Berryman Jenny Bottriell
Patricia Brown Elizabeth Cameron Giulia Campopiano
Jean Carter Fran Cassar Hana Chehade
Jess Clare Dee Clements Sue Conchie
Sharon Donoghue Erica Downard Iris Edwards
Anthony Exell John Gellie Abigail Gibson
Chris Gordon Emma Griffiths Elisabeth Hanscombe
Lydia Henry Jan Horwood Janine Johnston
Ian Jones Jennifer Keating Lynne Kells
Lloyd Knight Natalie Leibowitz Bob Leschen
Tessa Lim Daniel Liu Sue Lloyd
Carmel Mariani Lois Mathieson Christine McCallum
Georgina Menuel Joanne Morgan Anabella Nachumow
Liz Newton Kate Norman Christine O'Brien
Nini Priestley Robert Rosmarin Timo Savimaki
Fiona Shanahan Elizabeth Smith Kylie Steinhardt
John Thorborn-Reed Marg Tucker Lynette Tyack
Janice Vass Denise Weiss Alan Whittaker
Barbara Williams Orion Yaskewych**