



Unlocked

heartlines

**Unlocked**

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# Unlocked

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## **Preface**

As we emerge from the physical lockdown we've collectively endured in 2020–2021, we are celebrating poetically with the very timely theme of 'unlocked'.

Heartlines writers is now a well-established group with its own website; [www.heartlines.uk](http://www.heartlines.uk). Four of the members run the very popular Soundbites open mic which happens on the second Monday of the month and group members have been published on a variety of platforms. This is our second pamphlet, a follow up to **sunglasses at midnight**.

The 26 poems explore multiple facets of the theme and reading the poems is like entering a hall of mirrors or gazing into a brightly cut jewel – you glimpse another view, another idea, another vision as you turn each page. Some poems are joyful, some thoughtful, some regretful, some fantastical, some playful, some touching, some sombre and each poet has their own unique voice.

You can also listen to the poems on our YouTube channel (accessed via the Heartlines website).

We are very grateful to The Arts Society Leeds for their generous support for Unlocked. It's been my absolute pleasure to curate the pamphlet and we hope that you enjoy savouring the feelings and emotions that the poems conjure up.

**Liz McPherson**

On behalf of all the Heartlines writers.

July 2021

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## **Free At Last**

Open the cage  
and see the bird fly,  
spreading her wings  
as she soars into the sky,  
over fields, mountains and streams,  
blood rushing through her body,  
breezes caressing her feathers,  
free at last.

Unlock my door and let me out.  
Let me run through the garden,  
through the streets and the parks,  
feet thumping on the pavement,  
then, rustling through fallen leaves.  
Laughing, breathing, dancing,  
blood pulsing in my veins,  
free at last.

Open the door to my heart.  
Let me tell you how I feel.  
Watch me break out through  
all the unnecessary barriers  
I carelessly erected around me.  
Let me be me, as you are you,  
and we can soar together once more,  
free at last.

**Marie Sheard**

## **Fantastic Break Away**

I got up and breakfasted extremely merrily  
The troubles of others on the news didn't bother me  
I switched off the twitter, the i-pad and the big telly  
Did my packing mentally and set off fantastically

Up into the hills with the tent and no rent to pay  
Pitched by a stream which splashed and gurgled all the  
day

Wet grass in the morning as I soaked my socks all  
recklessly

And tended to my blister in the vista very carefully

Exuberant and carefree as we spurned all the waterfalls  
And sped up Ingleborough with nougat and chocolate  
balls

And clambered in our thick socks and boots to the very  
tops

And met others there in their tee shirts and red flip flops

My imagination running wild to camping near Ingleton  
White Scar caves and Thornton Falls, lots of pretty  
villages

But ultimately all I see is lockdown life that's all humdrum

And by my bed an empty flask, Gripman's brand of  
laudanum

**Rosie Cantrell**



## **Awakening (an aubade to a morning in April 2021)**

Sometimes she is slow  
in the mornings  
unlocking herself gently  
from the nights storeroom of dreams  
stacked on shelves of untold meanings  
and fragments that fade with the light.  
She uncurls now, like a fern frond  
opening to the sunlight  
and the unlived mystery  
of the new day

It was a long time ago,  
in another land called yesterday  
it all happened  
The silence, the absence  
of the knock on the door,  
of the cars rumbling past,  
some with windows open and the beats breaking  
out across the pavements  
and the low rumble and curved  
white signatures of the planes overhead.

The sharp scent and bitter taste  
of the alcohol rub by the  
half glazed front door.  
The masks on the other side,  
some made with bright African cotton, some in  
blue denim,  
or that old flowered fabric,  
reshaped from a teeshirt.

Later, came the surgical strength masks  
she ordered in bulk  
on the internet.

The conversations and the classes  
with others of her species  
moving, and speaking  
from their postage stamp boxes  
stacked sixteen to a screen  
in a zoom room.

The familiar call of

“you’re still on mute!”  
as mouths moved, voices  
unheard.

All that is behind  
as she uncurls into this new day,  
green and fragile,  
consecrated with hope  
and spring sunshine.

She examines the shelves  
of the unlocked storeroom.

The possibilities are endless.

Today she will go out.

Today she will meet with a friend.

Today she will see her mum in the garden.

Today she will go to the hairdressers.

Today she will drink this coffee,  
warm, dark and fragrant with life  
in the corner café.

Today she will.....

**Eileen Neil**

## **A Whole Year Gone**

I am stuck in  
a scrolling screen,  
Is it January?  
or Tuesday?  
or midnight?  
I've been nowhere  
done nothing.  
A whole year  
a whole girl later  
a whole new child to measure.  
To greet.  
To hug  
To kiss.  
A whole year  
bittersweet and bruising.  
Not nightmare nor waking life.  
A whole year.  
My first grandchild  
locked in my phone  
A whole year.  
A fallen tree of a year.  
A whole girl later.

**Cate Anderson**

## **Block**

Contrary to popular stereotype,  
poets are hardy creatures.  
We suffer for our art.  
The struggle to unlock  
the right metaphor.  
It is a battle.  
Finding the key to  
the appropriate simile,  
invades our every waking hour.  
No peace for the poet.  
Writing in our centrally-heated cocoons,  
rather than watching Bargain Hunt on the tele,  
is like a priest flagellating himself.  
We must bare our souls  
and our etymological scars  
before the heavenly muse.  
We struggle with our stanzas,  
rebel against our rhymes.  
We are martyrs to our metaphors,  
slaves to our similes.  
But do we wave the white flag?  
Do we roll over like a slain boxer?  
No, we fight on,  
throw off the shackles  
to release lines,  
such as these,  
of beauty and insight,  
to enlighten those poor sods  
who are not poets.

**Malcolm Henshall**

## **The Locksmith of Mumbai**

The old locksmith sat by the open door of his shop  
Sharpening his pencils  
Watching the dusty dawning of the day  
The early risers walking to office, shop  
Or market pushing barrows of fresh picked produce.

The heat was rapidly rising this Mumbai morning  
As the shutters came down and awnings went up.  
He glanced at his work bench and key cutting tools  
As he sat behind his writing desk  
Wondering what the day would bring.

It was many years since his wife  
Was taken from him by the Gods.  
Every day he yearned to join her  
But he knew he had to be patient,  
Do good in the world before that happy reunion.

Each day since she had died he had written a short verse  
A reminder of why it was good to be alive  
About the joy in the world  
The consolations of service  
The happiness he still had to share.

Each day he pinned them to his shop sign  
A picture of an open lock and keys.  
His customers read them, admired his optimism,  
Took comfort from his fortitude  
His placid acceptance of bereavement.

As time passed, passers-by stopped to read  
Small groups would congregate each morning  
Waiting for the shutters to rise.  
The day's verse, pinned to the sign, brought smiles to  
their faces  
Lifted their spirits to face the coming day.

A steady stream of humanity would pause at his shop  
Some reading aloud for friends and strangers  
That could not read  
All marvelled at the beauty of the locksmith's words  
The passion for life, the glimpse of future peace and  
repose.

Some asked him to write a poem or letter  
To a secret lover, a favourite child, a betrayed wife,  
A despondent husband, or an unrequited love.  
Some were illiterate, others not well versed  
In the language of love, despair, hope and remorse.

The years passed by and he became revered  
A poet, a philosopher, sage of the secrets of the soul,  
Of the vagaries and vicissitudes of the heart,  
Hearts that need mending  
Hearts closed to hope and happiness  
Hearts to be unlocked.

At the end of each day  
Awnings down and shutters up  
He climbs to his room above the shop  
Eats his frugal meal, sat opposite an empty chair  
And tells his wife stories of the living.

In bed, as he slips into sleep  
He whispers a verse of love to the sentinel Gods  
To pass to his beloved as he patiently waits for the day  
He will unlock his own heart again  
In the peace of their everlasting embrace.

**Terry Wassall**

## **Another Shaming Secret**

Another shaming secret unlocked  
from the trick box of our colonial past.  
This time, the Imperial War Graves Commission  
flying false colours from a crooked mast.

Their task: to commemorate citizens of the British Empire  
who lost their lives in the Greatest War.  
Their pledge: that regardless of military rank  
or position in civil life,  
all would be treated equally in their graves.

A century on, duplicity is exposed  
and finally labelled.

Acred rows of tended sentries  
stand a white and watchful guard  
above the finest of the fallen.  
Meticulous monuments list the names of others missing,  
presumed dead.

Yet some were deemed too pagan to appreciate  
identified spaces and personal headstones.  
They expired too far from home,  
had families too poor or uncivilised  
to ever visit such resting places,  
so 'the erection of individual memorials  
would represent a waste of public money'.

Instead, registers were compiled and consigned to  
archives,  
or simply lost.

Those bodies were buried in mass graves  
outside the pristine walls and grassy slopes,  
abandoned to a legacy  
of scrubland, litter and dust.

So, yes, a secret is unlocked –  
another scandal of our racist history,  
admitted grudgingly  
with no possibility of redress,  
then privileged lips revert to silence  
though there's so much more to confess.

**Barbara Lawton**



## **Amnesia**

Unlock – All that grief, all that pain  
Unlock – Breath and breathe  
Unlock – A scintilla of hope  
Reaching into the past  
Unlock – the future  
Seek justice  
For the visceral horror  
Meted out against people of colour  
(Now and then)  
Unlock the bodies  
Crash through the centuries  
Excavate the mines of selective Amnesia  
(For some).  
Unlocked – A running sore that cannot heal  
Lock up hate  
Reforge the key  
Unlock love  
And live

**Myrna Moore**

## **When Galaxies Break Anchor**

When the Milky Way and Andromeda meet,  
It won't be love. It will be  
Destruction. Linking star-strewn arms,  
A Dance of death will begin.  
When Andromeda kisses, she takes a life.  
The whirligig will grow in pace,  
Suns will be thrown into space,  
Whole systems, linked for billions of years  
Will fail.  
Moons will perish,  
And comets lose their way.  
Matter will clash with anti-matter,  
The gods themselves will scatter.  
And, come the end,  
Their two black hearts will join  
To form one heart no bigger than a coin.

**Howard Benn**

## **When Galaxies Interlock**

When the Milky Way and Andromeda meet,  
It won't be destruction.

It will be love.

A marriage of stars, a consummation,

Two galaxies lost in one another,

Where gravity serves as a lock

To their embrace.

All heavenly bodies

Will have the room to breathe,

The space from sun-to-sun

Remaining.

Pulsars will beat with heart anew,

Moons of all colours will rise

Above planets where star-crossed lovers gaze,

And, from afar, where we call night,

One heart will shine a love so bright.

**Howard Benn**

## **The April Fool**

The man I met in my dream  
wore pantaloons maroon,  
upon his head a hat of straw,  
across his cheek a brawling scar,  
beneath his brow, squarish eyes  
of liquid mawkishness,  
he smiled, his bow-tie twirled,  
'meet me in the star-quilt sky',  
he lilted. I left the bar of gin  
and glittering garb,  
outside the dream he grew  
larger than a giant oak,  
with his country-city look,  
poor-rich man marooned,  
deep inside my head,  
let loose upon the world  
to play light-hearted tricks.

**Linda Marshall**

## **Breaking Through**

Who are we?  
Fighting to live  
Bursting through the canal  
To breathe our first earthly breath  
The first fight won  
Luck of the draw as to which golden madonna will nurture  
us through the rocky terrain of grazed knees and bumped  
egos, of shy stumblings.  
We may, dig deep inner strength from God knows where.  
To get up again and again  
To grow to transform  
Even through dark, thorny, strangling suffocating  
beginnings  
Some of us can breakthrough this hostile cocoon to warm  
our wings  
In another light  
To see the colours of a new world  
A world that allows  
That accepts  
That gives love  
To all it's creatures  
As we blink and stretch  
Into who we've become.

**Karen Byrne**

## **To Mr Denney and his Classroom Cell**

You tried to teach us but there were forty  
of us. So you pressured and poured scorn on  
our attempts to learn and made the year for me  
quite awful with your lash of rulers, wooden,  
rapped against your other hand, thrashed with threat  
as you strode down  
aisles of our classroom cell,  
growled sarcastic words – still we couldn't get  
what it was you meant to say, at least not well  
enough to understand, we just cheered the bell,  
(inside), jingling the start of joyful playtime,  
freeing us from your manufactured hell  
your pent up banged up scene of hate crime.  
How could the playground, with its concrete hardness,  
the outside ice-cold freezing toilets,  
seem much safer than the classroom, joyless –  
with you who seemed to want to harm us?  
Well, it could and it did, for you, Mr Denney  
might have been good for a few but not for any –  
one like me.

**Rosie Cantrell**

## **Out of Reach**

The heavy keys clank on his chain  
and he looks in as he passes the cell.  
Rainwater drips into a drain;  
far away there's the toll of a bell.

He looks in as he passes my cell,  
'You'll be lucky to get less than twenty.'  
Far away there's the toll of a bell;  
my brain feels shrivelled and empty.

'You'll be lucky to get less than twenty-'  
I dream at night that the door is unlocked,  
though my brain feels shrivelled and empty  
I see my passage to freedom unblocked.

Cold dawn light creeps in through the bars,  
rainwater drips into the drain,  
dreams fade, hope dies with the last fading stars  
as heavy keys clank on a chain.

**Dru Long**

## **Connections**

Yesterday, rummaging in an old drawer,  
I found a black and white photograph:  
stiff and Victorian figures,  
a message from past time.

A sepia-toned portrait of a young couple,  
artificially composed, a studio picture.  
He, stiff-collared and stern: she, enrobed  
in an iron-bodiced gown, no smiles  
upon their set faces. I stared in  
curious wonder at this scene out of time.

I had seen this picture before: memories  
stirred in the canyons of my mind.  
I recall my mother showing me this with pride  
and sadness—the only likeness she had  
of her grandparents, a relic of the family line.  
Was I ten when I had last seen this?  
No matter, for as I gazed at Time's reminder,  
I felt the flow of history and blood converge,  
forging their past and my present in a union  
indissoluble as eternity and love.

**Bill Fitzsimons**



## **Photograph**

Her memory is fragile lace, same face  
but not the character we knew. Behind  
the shaky smile are shadows, flitting  
to and fro, of family, work, another

childhood long ago. And like the sun  
behind a cloud her real self's allowed  
a fleeting flare, a shaft of sunlight in  
the dark, a rare and unexpected sight.

Tasks once relished fade away, the TVs  
left on most of the day to give the false  
impression of some company while intellect  
unravels almost imperceptibly.

A pot of tears instead of tea, a tap  
that can't be turned, a key that's lost, a cherished  
garden full of weeds, dead flowers in the vase,  
hours filled with loneliness, anxiety.

But on the mantelpiece a picture draws  
her gaze, despite the cataracts that cloud  
her eyes. Within the frame, a world away,  
a couple on the lake at Roundhay Park.

She slim and dark, he young and fair. She knows  
that soon she'll join him there. He holds  
her hand, I'm here my love, she hears him say.  
Preserved for sixty years, their perfect day.

**Liz McPherson**

## **Into the Light**

From the dark depths of  
The pond, larvae crawl out and  
Dragons fly away.

Wilting sun flowers  
Turn their weary heads towards  
Another new dawn

Leaf buds swell, drowsy  
Insects take flight, singing birds  
Are weaving their nests.

The solitary  
Heart is unlocked with the key  
Of an open smile

**Terry Wassall**

## **Grandma's Bedroom**

I unlock her bedroom, now empty of her.  
It is dark, with its heavy sculpted bed frame,  
its dark wardrobe which I open onto white linen  
And the scent of rosewater and lavender.  
The bed rests under a vast white lace eiderdown  
Looking like snow on the mountain tops.  
Two marble topped tall boys keep guard at either side  
and a vivid floral velvet cushion nestles in the armchair,  
a rare spark of colour in the silent gloom.  
At the bedside the big alarm clock with fluorescent hands  
Stares out blankly, while the bronze bulldog keeps an eye  
on  
The pink glass ball of the night light.  
Unlocking the room unlocks my memories.  
Here I am, a child, at the end of the day, sitting with  
grandma by the window,  
Grey wooden shutters pushed aside, net curtains  
fluttering.  
We count the few cars heaving their way up the steep  
road below.  
Church bells ring every quarter and men in blue overalls  
and berets  
Come and go from the café on the ground floor.  
And there I am, at night, lying cocooned in heavy cotton  
sheets,  
Watching rare lights flash by on the ceiling, sliced by the  
slits in the shutters.  
I listen to the regular beat of the alarm clock speeding  
towards morning,  
And count the quarters, halves and hours from the church  
bell.

**Marie Sheard**

## **I Do Not Sew**

Though I do not sew  
I've stitched my heart tight into my chest.  
Not French knots in brightly coloured silks, but  
with chains of steel.

I've stitched my heart tight into my chest  
to shield it from this darkest year  
with chains of steel,  
a year that deadened hope and smothered dreams.

To shield it from this darkest year –  
a funereal tapestry of fear,  
a year that deadened hope and smothered dreams.  
It's time to patch my withered heart with care.

No thick wool tapestry of fear –  
but French knots in brightly coloured silks.  
It's time to patch my withered heart with care  
though I do not sew.

**Cate Anderson**

## **The Key**

We saved the box until last. Clearing the drawers and wardrobe had taken longer than I thought.

The taffeta and brocade dress spun me back to 10 years old watching my mother's face light up the room as she greeted the guests. I ran my finger over the gold embroidery, it looked untouched.

The smile was fleeting. I smiled when she smiled but too often her brow had been furrowed. Anger came easily. Rage came easily. It had taken me a lifetime to understand these eruptions.

Would I put this ensemble on the pile for St Augustine's or should I keep it? I placed it on the pile that could not be discarded – yet.

Absence is a presence.

The box was embellished with mother of pearl trimmings. It had come back with her from the Holy Land tour in 1965. Opening the lid revealed yellowing receipts but buried in the folds of the fraying, satin lining was a key. I felt the weight of it, as I looked around, wondering what it would unlock.

**Myrna Moore**

## **Cop 26**

An exquisite teabowl falls,  
and shatters into many pieces;  
a leg bone snaps against the windscreen  
of a reckless driver's car,  
hearts break as lovers leave  
without a word or backward glance,  
and hourly, in some nearby ancient forest,  
earth's lungs are hacked and felled  
for fuel, creating deserts  
on our devastated planet.

We fear nothing will ever be the same,  
the bowl cannot ever be as perfect,  
the bone as tough, the heart as trusting  
or free of longing for a love that's lost.  
The earth will never be as lovely,  
the seas as clean, and free of plastic  
the forests of ancient oak and elm  
as full of life, or glaciers be as frozen.

There's no return to how it was,  
there can be no turning back;  
but we can unlock an ancient power  
and with the golden dust of restoration,  
see the hidden meaning in the scar,  
seal the cracked and broken bowl,  
heal the torn and trampled heart,  
know that the mended bone is stronger,  
seize the chance to halt the desolation  
of our one and only home, in the spirit  
of kintsugi, with a global golden joining.

**Dru Long**

## **Un[b]locked [One Letter Can Make All the Difference]**

She is 86,  
a born-again Christian.  
Bells and smells are not her thing at all.  
Clinging to life but  
assured of heaven.  
Is that a paradox?  
I spoke to her.  
She in the Hospice.  
"I am consecrated", she said  
Is that some form  
of last rites for those of  
an evangelical persuasion?  
I wondered.  
This was hard but, unlike her,  
I kept going.  
"I've never been consecrated before,"  
she said.  
Neither have I, I thought.  
"It must be the change in diet,"  
she said.  
The penny, unlike other matter,  
dropped.  
"Constipated"!  
"That's what I said, is the line bad?"  
'That must be uncomfortable for you?'  
"Yes, but I hope to be unblocked this evening"  
"Let's hope so,"  
I said movingly.

**Malcolm Henshall**

## **Here Lie Demons**

Who will unlock the dark dungeon  
of my deepest and most shameful  
secrets? All the accumulated dross  
of a lifetime of sin.

In the basement of my debauchery  
lurk demons – the howling monkeys  
of madness  
and psychic vampires  
that devour any decency  
that may have lingered.

In my sweat-stained bed I wrestle  
with the ghosts of my wicked past.

But to no avail. I cannot shake  
off the memories of my misdeeds.  
Oh God, please release me from  
this bondage. Please unlock the door  
of my dungeon and let the light shine in.

**Bill Fitzsimons**



## **Up in Smoke**

Trembling, she unlocked the box,  
its Gothic key ponderous,

mistiness rose towards her eyes,  
causing them to smart.

She remembered the bitter tang  
from his cigarettes,

how he used to blow smoke rings  
into her screwed-up face,

how she coughed, and hated it,  
put up with his selfishness,

his spending on clothes, music,  
how he sucked her dry,

lounged about in breakfast bars,  
and never paid for coffee.

True to form – his gift on the day  
of red-blood Valentine,

consisted of nothing, cost nothing,  
fog in a vampire's box.

**Linda Marshall**

## **New Year**

That oil painting course I meant to take,  
letters unwritten, library books unread,  
a special message for a birthday cake,  
scores of poems imprisoned in my head.

Those posh dinners that remained uncooked  
the room unpapered, the marathon not run,  
holidays and theatre trips I didn't book,  
photographs not taken, the diet failed again.

The ends of years are dusted with regrets –  
stillborn and stunted things, half formed schemes,  
drawers stuffed with forgotten projects,  
shapeless thoughts and embryonic dreams.

Time now to sweep them all away –  
New Year, new resolutions, another day.

**Liz McPherson**

## Earth Day

It took him so long to find his way  
through the interstellar dust  
wading through dark matter,  
electromagnetic radiation  
and stellar nurseries.

The last glimpse of his home  
was a pale blue dot, receding  
in distance and in memory,  
until his own warm yellow sun  
became a faint star  
in an unnamed constellation.

There had been ravines  
where water cascaded in silver droplets  
through honeyed strata of multicoloured  
craggs, clefts and towering cliffs.

Meadows of wildflowers  
with their oceans of nectar  
and the soft humming of the bees.

The trees arching their branches  
into webs of twigs wreathed with leaves  
of spring green, unfurling  
like flags, waved at the sun's light.

Wild creatures had prowled through jungles,  
wandered the hot dry savannahs,  
while the winged ones soared and  
warbled through the sweet air.

The scent of roses, or jasmine,  
or warm amber wafting like incense  
through a sacred landscape.

The gates of Eden were left unlocked; open  
for the bankers to ravage the garden.  
Ignoring the lone voice of the shepherd,  
wolves mauled the sheep,

and the lion devoured the lamb.  
The river Acheron was dammed  
and Charon the boatman was redeployed  
to manage the floodgate, as  
the Elysian fields became a building site.  
The blue planet grew grey and weary  
under the weight of concrete,  
the once flawless oceans suffocated

by multicoloured plastic particles,  
and used ring pulls.

Once, in another time it had been Earth Day.

Everything connected in the breath of life  
and the water of being.

Everything had been One.

All the names of God united  
in the Great Spirit, weaving  
in and out of the green  
and blue weft of the planet.

What happened?

What on Earth happened?

What in heaven and on earth happened?

Who allowed it to happen?

And why?

Why?

The last word was soundless  
in the unending ether  
of the universe.

**Eileen Neil**

## THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THE POEMS.

MALCOLM

### **Block**

The idea for this poem originated from a Heartlines meeting. We were to take a line from a novel and use it as a prompt to write a poem. From it came, I hope, a humorous piece suggesting that I, in my guise as a poet, shouldn't take myself too seriously.

### **Un[b]locked**

Whilst I didn't have this conversation myself it was one that was reported to me. I have embellished it, of course, to bring out the humour in what is a sad situation.

BARBARA

### **Another Shaming Secret or Duplicity Exposed**

A response to revelations that the War Graves Commission reneged on their commitment to ensure all citizens of the British Empire killed in the Great War received equal memorials.

TERRY

### **Into the Light:**

This collection of four haiku addresses feelings I have about the relaxation of the Coronavirus lockdown being eased in the Spring of 2021; the feeling of release in the lengthening days, the renewal of nature and the promise of good times to come.

### **The Locksmith of Mumbai:**

This poem was prompted by a true story broadcast of the BBC World Service. The general theme is that of problems that open opportunities and unlock potentials.

HOWARD

### **When Galaxies Break Anchor**

### **When Galaxies Interlock**

The galaxy Andromeda is actually approaching the Milky Way (they won't meet in our lifetimes). Happily, of the two scenarios in my poems, the peaceful one is more likely!

MARIE

**Free at Last.**

I wrote Free at Last to express the yearning for the release from restrictions during lockdown.

**Grandma's bedroom**

is about unlocked memories when visiting a place where those memories were once made.

LINDA

**The April Fool**

In The April Fool I describe a character who featured in a recent dream of mine.

**Up in Smoke**

This poem was written with my favourite steam punk trinket box in mind.

DRU

**Out Of Reach**

'Lockdown' always had a sense of 'lock-up' in my mind and the poem came from the thought of how that felt.

**Cop 26**

The Japanese concept of kintsugi, a golden joining, breakage and restoration, inspired me with the idea of the joining together of world leaders meeting at the COP, to stop global heating and repair the planet.

ROSIE

**To Mr Denney and His Classroom Cell**

It's hard to stand up to bullies as a child, especially if the bully is a teacher. But you can pick up a pen fifty years later.

**Fantastic Breakaway**

This was written when Covid meant we were restricted to our home area, so the best we could do was take imaginary trips.

MYRNA

**Amnesia and The Key**

Both poems have the same influences. They are a tribute to my English teacher introducing us to Seamus Heaney. He said, 'These poems will never leave you'. Unlocking secrets, the pain of the oppressed, are the raw materials.

EILEEN

**Awakening**

An aubade is a poem to the dawn of a new day. I wrote it in April 2021, when we were allowed to meet up again as two households out of doors.

**Earth Day**

Someone had sent me images of our blue planet from space, and I was reflecting on how rapidly and mindlessly it is being destroyed. The poem pulls from sources ranging from Greek mythology and the Bible to science fiction. The building site near my home is actually called "Elysian Field."

BILL

**Connections**

My first poem, was inspired by the discovery of some old photographs hidden in a drawer.

**Here Lie Demons**

My second one is an entirely imaginary piece, but possibly inspired by old guilt feelings.

CATE

**I Do Not Sew**

An attempt to reconnect with emotions kept under lock and key since the start of the pandemic.

**A Whole Year Gone**

A reaction to the restrictions in place to control the spread of the Coronavirus and which have prevented me from meeting my first grandchild – born last year in Jakarta.

KAREN

**Breaking Through**

A reflection on how individuals can break through nature/nurture to become who they want to be.

LIZ

**Photograph**

Written for my mother-in-law who, after the death of her beloved husband and in ill health herself, longed more than anything else to be with him. The poem was read at her funeral which took place less than a year after his passing.

**New Year**

I love writing sonnets – this one celebrates the time of year when we traditionally look forward to taking on new challenges.



Take a stroll through a glittering hall of poems created to fit the very timely theme of 'Unlocked'.

Stretch and breathe in a collection that celebrates the joy of release, tells stories of hopes and dreams, calls for wrongs to be righted and dabbles in make-believe and illusion.

Written with skill, precision and touches of humour these poems carry you along on an unforgettable journey.

There is much triumph and hope in these crafted poems which imagine, with great originality, the freedoms and change unlocking will bring. With this anthology, we can all look forward.

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