**Overall Report**

I have really enjoyed the opportunity to read all of the poems submitted to the competition. It felt like a real privilege to see all of the vastly different ways in which people responded to the theme of horizons. There were the literal horizons from landscapes and seascapes and cloudscapes and skylines that held deep personal resonances; horizons explored but also horizons greatly missed during moments of lockdown. And there were the figurative horizons: the limits and edges of lives, relationships, perspectives, ideas and temporalities; the borders and edgelands that constrain and restrict. As was to be expected, considering the challenging times we are living through, the poems were often suffused with loss, sadness, grief and nostalgia. But they were others full of hope and anticipation and aspiration.

The poems I chose to shortlist each had qualities that I felt enabled them to stand out from over 300 entries, whether it was their unique take on the theme, their compelling use of voice, or their precise use of form. While it was a pleasure to read all of the poems entered into the competition, these were the ones that stuck with me after reading; the ones that left an imprint. And they were each so well-crafted and remarkable in different ways, that it was very, very difficult to choose winners from among them.

**The Deadline** (Lauren Barri Holstein)

I love the tension between movement and stillness in this poem, and the liminal, ethereal moment of pre-flight or un-flight which it inhabits. What stuck with me in particular in reading it was the way in which it explored delicate and subtle transformations; the way in which voices become bell chimes that become echoes, a set of transformations that reflects the ripples that flutter and spread following a great loss.

**Sacramental** (David Butler)

What I found most impressive about this poem is the forensic attention paid to the sonic texture of language. It has the tight brittle construction of a nautilus shell. And, like a seashell, the sounds of the sea are alive within it.

**Rings** (Michaela Coplen)

The emotional core of this poem has the impact of a body blow, delivered in a tone so brilliantly understated that it forces us to acknowledge ways in which some horrors have become – or perhaps have always been – disturbingly commonplace, everyday occurrences. It’s a poem that carries impossible weight within it.

**Notes addressed to the person who received my ex’s heart** (Sophie Dumont)

I loved the fragmented, bullet-point format of this poem, reminding us that stories of loss are seldom linear and straightforward. It’s also a great example of how the use of tone can take the reader on a journey through various emotions; in this case tragedy and reflection with an honesty that is painstaking and forthright, but that also makes space for the strange, the irrational, and the almost comic thoughts that grief and loss can bring up in the grieving mind.

**The Crescent** (Mike Farren)

I was moved by the humility of this poem, even as it negotiates, with grace, such a vast and ungraspable issue as how life passes us by. Its reflective register, as it navigates intergenerational empathy and the sense of one’s place within a community, has a timeless quality, even as time – in the poem – refuses to remain still.

**Me (Autistic and Unsociable) Dating a Neurotypical** (Naoise Gale)

There is an elegant simplicity to this poem’s oblique question and answer format. It articulates beautifully the failures in communication and connection that arise between very different cognitive ways of experiencing the world; something that is not always easy to capture in language.

**The Horizontal Sonnet** (John Gallas)

There’s so much to love about this poem. The razor-sharp precision of its metre and rhyme scheme, for instance. The complex studies of colour and light. The ability to sustain focus and attention on a single, vivid image, and bring it to life on the page. Or the tonal shift in its final couplet. A real formal accomplishment.

**incaendo** (Mara Adamitz Scrupe)

What I found most striking about this poem is the way that it creates connections by juxtaposing together seemingly unconnected images and ideas. From the voice of the marmot, inhabiting the abject domestic spaces under the floorboards, through a string of personal memories, the poems traverse the semantic horizons of the cultural concepts of wisdom and forbearance.

**As the cycle comes to an end** (Julia Stothard)

What struck me most about this poem was two things. Firstly, its skilful overlapping of two moments, creating a kind of palimpsest, upon which we can see one temporality superimposed upon another. And secondly, its very subtle way of defamiliarizing the familiar; of making everyday situations strange and otherworldly through its understated but unexpected use of language.