

**SECOND LIGHT POETRY COMPETITION 2012
JUDGE: KATHERINE GALLAGHER: PRIZE WINNERS**

I greatly enjoyed the challenge of judging, the juxtaposition and evaluation of short and long poems making the competition rather different. The ambition, range and assurance of the writing impressed, with the variety of subject matter. The writing skills offered a wonderful spread of voices. Poise, a taste for experiment and the sense of a poem's dramatic space came through again and again...

Katherine Gallagher



Short Poem First Prize Winner: Doreen Hinchliffe

The Newlyweds

I think about you often, how only hours after
priest pronounced you man and wife, you drowned in shallow waters.
Did you make a pact to paddle there, enticed by thoughts
of scrambling in secret on wet rocks while waiters

were busy serving wine to guests at your reception?
Were you drunk on pink champagne, as one report implies,
or like excited children, unaware of danger, daring
each other to leap from bank to bank in three great strides?

If you had only waited, chatted to the locals,
might they have stopped you, warned you to be wary of the current,
told you how, with nearby Bolton Abbey heavy with cloud,
the river gathers force and quickly turns to torrent?

I doubt it. I'm sure they would have known that newlyweds
and cautionary tales don't mix. Wishing you happiness,
they'd probably have waved, then watched you stride off hand in hand
towards your death in morning suit and bridal dress.

I'm haunted by the question of what happened next.
Was it the swirling force of sudden flood that pulled you under
or a lovers' tiff, a teasing push, that tipped you in
the weight of wedding clothes causing you to flounder

in the icy flow? Did you slip, then tumble
both at once, or did one of you fall first perhaps,
the other bravely risking everything to help? I think
of how they found you three days later, hands still clasped

and wedding rings intact. Were your final moments
snatched by fear and rising panic as you guessed that this
must be the end, or, as you clung together swallowing water,
was there time and space enough for one last kiss?