

The Poetry Business comprises the Smith/Doorstop imprint and the acclaimed literary magazine, The North. We run an annual national poetry competition and both 'open' and 'advanced' poetry workshops. The Poetry Business was established in 1986 by Peter Sansom; with Janet Fisher as co-director. The current directors, Peter Sansom and Ann Sansom, are nationally-known poets, published by Carcanet and Bloodaxe respectively, and are widely regarded as among the best writing-tutors in the country.

THE POETRY BUSINESS

*recipere est beatas
poetica erant scribit
am quidet in se*

*et tunc se ips
miratur. nimir
idem omnes
fallitur. neque
est quisquam*

The Poetry Business seeks to make contemporary poetry accessible and necessary, without compromising artistic standards. By combining writer-development and a discerning, nationally-repped publishing list, it encourages and supports new and established writers alike.

Following a recent uplift in Arts Council funding and its subsequent move to Sheffield, The Poetry Business is now set to expand. Over the coming eighteen months, the business will host new literary events, launch a more diverse range of workshops, run writing residencies, make its mark on the online world with a new, fully interactivational and multimedia website, and form partnerships with a range of other businesses and organisations – both in and out of the poetry world.



Our Awards

- Poetry Book Society Recommendation: 1998, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2007
- Poetry Book Society Special Commendation: 1997
- TS Eliot Prize shortlist: 1999
- Aldeburgh Poetry Festival (First Collection) Prize: 1999; and shortlisted 2004 and 2005
- Forward Prize (First Collection) shortlist: 1997, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003
- Forward Prize (Best Poem): 2005; and shortlisted 1995, 2003
- Poetry Book Society Pamphlet Choice: 2003 (the first to be awarded) and 2004
- Children's Poetry Bookshelf Choice: 2005

The North



'Redressing the balance of English poetry' – Poetry Review
'Excellent' – The Guardian

Issue one of the North included early work by Ian McMillan and Carol Ann Duffy, alongside the first poems by Simon Armitage.

Twenty years on and the North is flourishing as a widely respected poetry magazine that people actually enjoy reading.

Regular features in The North include:

- The best poems by new and established writers from around the country – not just the North – with strong links to America and Ireland. The only criterion is quality.
- A broad spectrum of authoritative book reviews, from mainstream publishers and the smaller presses – rigorous but sympathetic and always lively.
- 'Blind Criticism': where two or three writers put their heads on the block and comment on a poem without knowing who wrote it.
- 'Poets I Go Back To': writers discuss the poets that continue to inspire them.

- ‘The Collection’: poets discuss a book that has been crucial to them: how they discovered it, what it meant to them then and how they see that book now.
- ‘Brief Guides’ to key contemporary poets: including so far Douglas Dunn, Elizabeth Bishop, Anne Stevenson and Edwin Morgan.
- Interviews and conversations between poets.
- The North is published twice a year and is available from selected bookshops and to buy online or by mail-order from The Poetry Business.

Awards

The North poets have been shortlisted three times for the Forward Best Poem Prize (in 1995, 2003 and 07); and Paul Farley won the Prize outright in 2005 for his poem, ‘Liverpool Disappears for a Billionth of Second.’

Smith/Doorstop

‘A small but enterprising publisher talent-spotting marvelous new poets’ – The Independent



Smith/Doorstop is an independent publisher of contemporary poetry. It has a reputation for high quality, and is one of the very few poetry publishers that readers actively trust.

Alongside attractive pamphlets and books, the press is currently expanding its audio of poets reading their own work.

Smith/Doorstop began in 1986 with double-pamphlets from Peter Sansom’s Huddersfield Polytechnic workshops. The first was Simon Armitage and Clare Chapman. In the same year, Ian McMillan and Martyn Wiley’s Smith/Doorstop pamphlet sold 2,000 copies (in poetry terms a best-seller!). The press has grown in size and reputation over the years, finding some of the best contemporary poets and retaining them – a loyalty inspired by the expert, supportive editing that each writer receives.

Smith/Doorstop publish contemporary poetry, academic texts, critical analysis and children’s literature, with work by both established and new writers.

Despite (or because of) its very select list – only a handful of books each year – Smith/Doorstop titles have won or been shortlisted for most of the major poetry awards, including the Forward and T S Eliot prizes.

The future

Smith/Doorstop will be rebranded in 2009 – introducing more hardback titles, and with a foray into print-on-demand, to allow for (even) more risks on the commercial front. The press will continue to run pioneering pamphlets alongside its outstanding full-length books.

The Poetry Business will host widely-publicised book launches and readings at their S1 premises, and hopes to increase its support to authors in terms of readings, workshops and other literary work.

Awards

Michael Laskey’s *Tightrope Wedding*, was a Poetry Book Society Recommendation in 1999, and was nominated for the TS Eliot Prize.

Jane Routh’s *Circumnavigation* was shortlisted for the Forward (Best First Collection) Prize; and Teach Yourself Mapmaking was a Poetry Book Society Recommendation.

Catherine Smith’s Smith Doorstop book, *The Butcher’s Hands* was shortlisted for the Aldeburgh Poetry Prize and her second, *Lip*, was a PBS Recommendation in 2007.

Book & Pamphlet Competition

The Poetry Business Book & Pamphlet Competition began in 1986, and is now firmly established as an important annual event in the poetry calendar. The business distributes 60,000 competition leaflets around Britain and Ireland, and carries out a strong online marketing campaign.

Each entrant submits a small collection of poems (20-24 pages) and, for the first stage, there are four prizes of pamphlet publication and a share of £1000 in cash. The second stage of the competition invites the four winners to submit a longer manuscript, with the overall prize of book publication.

This high profile competition has previously been judged by some of the country's finest writers, including Simon Armitage, Ian McMillan and Gillian Clarke, and the judge for 2008 is Michael Longley, TS Eliot Prize winner.

Daljit Nagra's *Oh My Rub!* is just one of the competition's success stories. Daljit won in 2003 with a short collection that became The Poetry Book Society's 'Pamphlet Choice' and one of The Guardian's 'Books of the Year'.

The Sheffield Prize

To celebrate the business' move to Sheffield, there will now be an annual Sheffield Poetry Prize to run alongside the national competition. The competition will be open to Sheffield poets only, and the prize will be £100 in book tokens, publication in *The North* and on-line, and a short reading.

All Sheffield-based entrants of the national competition will automatically be considered for the Sheffield Prize.

Workshops: Writing Days and Writing School

In line with its mission statement of supporting new and established writers, The Poetry Business runs two types of writing workshops: the monthly, open Writing Days, and the application-based Writing School for published poets.

Writing Days

The Poetry Business Writing Days are the bench-mark in writing workshop-provision. Unique when they were first introduced over twenty years ago, they have been continually popular with writers at all levels.

Writing Days are held monthly in the business premises (with occasional 'away-days' at festivals), and attract poets from around the region and from further afield. The morning's writing exercises generate several often excellent 'finished' pieces. This builds a trust and group-dynamic for the critical-workshop in the afternoon. The Settle poet Jean Harrison wrote 'Woman on the Moon' at a Writing Day, which was subsequently short-listed for the Forward (Best Poem) Prize; she comments:

'The Writing Days have given me confidence in myself as a writer [and] proven that writing poetry can be both inspirational and fun.'

Writing School

The Writing School was an Arts Council initiative, responding to the lack of support and mentoring for more established writers. It is a customised form of the MA Poetry that Peter ran for 10 years, and consists of writer-led workshops and peer-feedback, together with directed study in classic contemporary poets, poetry practice and method, and e-

mail exchanging of work and ideas. Places are limited to 12 for the 18-month course, and are keenly contested (application by portfolio and cv).

The Writing School meets bi-monthly, and attracts writers from around the country – who keep in touch by email and phone, supporting one another's work and providing editing and advice.

In 2006, a Writing School anthology was published of poems alongside commentaries that provide fascinating insights into the writing and the creative process in general. A second volume is in preparation.

The future

Over the coming months, The Poetry Business will be launching additional writing workshops, study days and writing residencies, as well as combined media workshops and exhibitions/readings. Ann, the new Director, has run a successful weekly writing workshop for women at the Doncaster YWCA for over twenty years, and is now planning a Sheffield women's writers' group to be launched in the autumn.

Applications for the new Writing School will be invited later in the year, to run from Spring 2009. Ann and Peter are members of the Poetry Society poetryclass, and hope to bring some of that project and other poetry and education development to Sheffield in the months ahead.