

## PROVERSE HONG KONG

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### Proverse January 2016 Newsletter

#### **The Poet is not a Murderer**

I am in possession of a rather dusty, but delightful, book which seems, in its early life, to have belonged to the late lamented British Council Library in Hong Kong. The author of the book was the writer, Osbert Sitwell, who introduces the book, "Laughter in the Next Room," as the fourth volume in his series, "Left Hand, Right Hand." There are far too many anecdotes and personal reminiscences in the book to repeat them here, but one stands out for me. It is Sitwell's account of his sister, Edith's, poems; their first presentation to an audience, with accompaniments, overture and interlude by the young composer, William Walton, and the use of a megaphone-like, fibre trumpet called a Sengerphone (invented by a singer named Senger). There are fourteen poems in all and these are listed by Osbert in his book, with an acknowledgement to a Mrs. Edwin Evans and a Mrs. Donald whom, he believed, were in possession of a copy of the programme – the sole example extant. For those interested in Edith Sitwell's work, the poems are reproduced under the title, *Façade*, and I list them here, in particular because they reveal some of the early work of Walton, as well as Edith's poetic dexterity:

- (1) Overture.
- (2) Madame Mouse Trots.
- (3) The Octogenarian.
- (4) Aubade.
- (5) The Wind's Bastinado.
- (6) Said King Pompey.
- (7) Interlude.
- (8) Jumbo's Lullaby.
- (9) Small Talk (1)  
(2)
- (10) Rose Castles.
- (11). Introduction and Hornpipe.
- (12) Long Steel Grass.
- (13) When Sir Beelzebub.
- (14) Switchback.

The first presentation of Walton's Overture, and the poems, received a mixed reaction from the audience who were, however, pampered after the performance with "an ample supply" of hot, rum punch, brewed (according to Osbert) by combining rum, green tea, sherry, China tea, and



the juice of a fresh pineapple. The liquid comforts did not, however, prevent one old lady, in an angry letter to the Editor of the *Spectator*, complaining: “of what do Miss Sitwell’s poems consist but *words, words, words!*” The *furor* took some time to dissipate and, for several weeks after the performance, Osbert Sitwell and his sister, Edith, found themselves having to move about London feeling as if they had committed a murder.

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The next featured writer in the “Proverse Readers’ Club” series of twenty free events will be Canadian, Gerard L. Breissan, born in France, to talk about his book, “The Day They Came”.

**THE DAY THEY CAME** is the gripping story of a teenager and young adult’s adventures in the South of France and the African Congo. Gérard meets and forms an unbreakable bond with the alien Eudoxus, who becomes his mentor and guardian angel. He recounts the fisherman Etienne’s story about a terrifying and extraordinary storm off Le Grau du Roi in the French Camargue, when six men lost their lives. The story ends when Gérard is twenty-one. Like the writer, whose name he shares, he joins the hospitality industry to see the world. Throughout the narrative and as he grows up and matures, Gérard struggles to remain true to himself, and to find the correct path in life.

**GERARD LOUIS BREISSAN** tells us that many extraordinary events occurred throughout his early years, which he has always felt a compulsion to divulge. In *The Day They Came* he finally speaks out. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish fact from fiction, but, he suggests, you, the reader, must decide.

"I liked this tale of a teenager's close encounters with an alien who becomes his guardian angel, rescuing him from various scrapes, once in the guise of an ageless Jesuit missionary in the Congo. An imaginative and delightful read, even if you're not a ufologist." – John Russell, SJ, formerly long-time Warden of Ricci Hall, University of Hong Kong.

"Breissan's tale poses many questions for readers puzzled by UFO phenomena. – Alien from another world? Angel from Heaven? Who, or what is the mysterious but benign Eudoxus?" – Margaret Clarke, acclaimed translator of the future fiction classics, *The Last Man* and *The World As It Shall Be* and formerly lecturer in English at Notre Dame College of Education, Glasgow, United Kingdom.

Join us on Saturday, 23 January and take the chance to ask questions to find out the real truth from the author himself!

**Venue:** Dymocks Books and Café, 104B, 1/F, D’Deck, DB Plaza, Discovery Bay, Lantau, NT, Hong Kong SAR.

**Day and time:** Saturdays, 3.00-4.00pm

**Dates:** Within the period 16 January to 25 June 2016 (except holidays).

**ALL WELCOME!**

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Also in the “Proverse Readers’ Club” series, on 30 January, Birgit Bunzel Linder will introduce her prize-winning beautifully self-illustrated poetry collection, “Shadows in Deferment”.

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**The International Proverse Prize for Unpublished Fiction, Non-fiction or Poetry, 2016**

The entry documents for the Proverse Prize 2016 are already on our website ([proversepublishing.com](http://proversepublishing.com)). If you have a book-length work that you would like to be published, why not enter it for the Prize? The Winner receives publication and HKD10,000.00. If two people tie for the Prize, both are published and they receive HKD5,000 each. Depending on the quality of entries in any year, supplementary publication prizes may be awarded.

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