

## PROVERSE HONG KONG

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### Proverse February 2016 Newsletter

#### All the best for the Year of the Monkey!

This is the third version of this Newsletter. The first two versions were sabotaged by a nasty little villain known to us all as "Wipeout." Wipeout's system is quite simple – wait until a document is well underway, say three or four typed pages. Then, as the "writer" congratulates himself, or herself, on a job almost well done, wipes it off the screen, never to be recovered, despite having been "saved." I have no doubt that there is a tiny, malevolent creature hidden in most, so called, computers. Has yours appeared yet? Oh, it will. It will. Just you wait.

So far, I have not received any prizes from my computer. At school, however, I did receive two gifts to mark my seven year stretch. On the first occasion, I was given a choice of books, either a biography by the actress and singer, Gracie Fields, or a recording by the Benny Goodman band of their engagement at Carnegie Hall in 1938. To the contempt of my friends, I chose Gracie Fields and ignored Goodman, Count Basie, Gene Krupa, Lionel Hampton, Teddy Wilson, Lester Young, Ziggy Elman and others. Perhaps news of my mistake had got round and reached the staff because, a year later when I walked up to the platform to collect my book prize (only the second that I had been given at the school), I received Ernest Hemingway's, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. I had the feeling that after seven undistinguished years at the school, it had certainly tolled for me. I was about to join the Navy as a cadet. What next?

I have recently become attached to Oswald Sitwell's autobiography, *Left Hand, Right Hand* or, rather, its fourth volume, entitled, *Laughter in the Next Room*. I referred to the autobiography in my January, 2016 Newsletter when I reported the reception received at a performance of Oswald's sister's poems. *Laughter* is rich in anecdotes, on almost every page. One of my favourites was reported by Sitwell who described his incarceration in a Military Hospital in December, 1918. One day he was allowed out of the hospital for a walk and met the painter, Roger Fry, in the street. Fry promptly invited Sitwell to lunch in his studio. This was set out for two "amid the confusion, the rags, paints, turpentine, piles of drawings, books, shoes, dead flowers, cracked looking-glasses and shaving-brushes." Fry had ordered oysters for the lunch and, after Sitwell's enquiry, noted that he had bought them from a "charming, dirty, little shop round the corner." Sitwell absorbed this information and hid his oysters under their shells.

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**Join us on Saturdays**, at Dymocks Books and Café, 104B, 1/F, D'Deck, DB Plaza, Discovery Bay, Lantau, NT, Hong Kong SAR, 3.00-4.00pm. **The Proverse Readers' Club** of 20 sessions, hosted mostly by Gillian Bickley, continues up to 25 June 2016 .



The next featured writer in the “Proverse Readers’ Club” series of twenty free events will be **Proverse Publisher, Verner Bickley**, to talk about the second volume of his memoirs, *Steps to Paradise and Beyond: Hawaii to China, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong and Elsewhere*.

In **STEPS TO PARADISE AND BEYOND**, which follows *Footfalls Echo in the Memory* as the second volume of his memoirs, **VERNER BICKLEY** describes the events and issues that were important to him during a period of his life spent in Hawaii and Saudi Arabia.

In Hawaii from 1971 to 1981, he served as the Director of the Culture Learning Institute at the East-West Center, established by the U.S. Congress in Hawaii in 1960 and functioning as a U.S.-based institution for public diplomacy with international governance, staffing, students and Fellows.

For nine years (1972-1980), Verner led a small team of anthropologists, cross-cultural psychologists and linguists, focusing on the different ways in which individuals and whole societies cope in bicultural and multicultural contexts and how they address problems presented by different cultural norms. In this book he recalls some of the highlights of his stay in Hawaii; he touches briefly on President Obama’s education in Oahu and on the life of the President’s mother as an East-West Center “grantee.”

He recalls the impact made by Captain Cook on the Hawaiian Islands and the much later controversy surrounding Hawaiian claims to regain its independence from the United States. He mentions the support that his Institute provided for the pioneering voyage of the canoe, *Hōkūle’a*, from Hawaii to Tahiti, disproving the theories of Thor Heyerdahl, and he describes his personal hasty retreat from South Korea when he was informed of the assassination of President Park Chong Hee. (The *Hōkūle’a* continues in the news and was featured in a programme shown last night (23 February) on TV.)

After nine interesting years in Hawaii, Verner moved to Saudi Arabia for a two-year assignment with the national airline, Saudia. Responsible for a multi-national staff of 100 persons, mainly, but not exclusively, in Jeddah and Riyadh, he recalls in particular the dare-devil driving of newly-rich Saudis; an interesting visit to a staff member imprisoned in one of Jeddah’s gaols; the restrictions suffered by women, in particular the ban on their driving any form of vehicle, and the adherence in practice to the precepts of the 18th century divine, Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab.

**VERNER BICKLEY'S** experiences have created in him an interest in cross-cultural experiences and attitudes and a desire to communicate what he has learnt. He hopes he can not only interest his readers, but encourage them to build on their own desire to learn about and empathise with other cultures.

**Dr. Bickley's book should remind us that the present emerges out of the past, and that much of what we today take for granted about our world derives from the ingenuity, labor and persistence of those who came before.**

– Charles E. Morrison, President, East-West Center, Hawaii.

**Come to meet Verner on Saturday, 27 February**, at Dymocks Books and Café, 104B, 1/F, D’Deck, DB Plaza, Discovery Bay, Lantau, NT, Hong Kong SAR, 3.00-4.00pm

**ALL WELCOME!**



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Also in the “Proverse Readers’ Club” series, on 5 March, Elbert Siu Ping Lee will introduce his debut poetry collection, *Rain on the Pacific Coast*. On 12 March, Jason S Polley (Associate Professor at Hong Kong Baptist University) will speak about his book, *refrain*. On this occasion, Viki Holmes will be the host. On 19 March, Akin Jeje will be hosted by Victor E. Apps. There will be a break for Easter and we will resume on 2 April with Celia Claase, Winner of the Proverse Prize 2014.

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

To see and hear six of the writers, among those previously successful in the Proverse Prize competition, speak about their books, please watch the video of the Proverse Prize Library Talk hosted by The University of Hong Kong Libraries reading club at the following link: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_S5ToqqAVdE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_S5ToqqAVdE). This was published on 21 September 2015, uploaded by HKU Libraries.

The online archive of Newsletters from the present and previous year, with a few Press Releases, media notices and links to media interviews, give information about the founders and background of the Proverse Prize, previous winners and successful works already published, including entries from Australia, The Bahamas, Canada, Hong Kong, New Zealand, and the UK. There are also many photographs of related Proverse events. To see these, visit the Proverse website <<http://www.proversepublishing.com>>.

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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### **RADIO APPEARANCES OF PROVERSE AUTHORS**

We are most grateful to Phil Whelan who has invited several Proverse authors, participating in the Proverse Readers’ Club, to his weekday morning music and chat show, “Morning Brew” (RTHK). Among them are Jason S. Polley (*refrain* and *cemetery miss you*), Gerard Breissan (*The Day They Came*), and James Tam (*Man’s Last Song*). On Friday, 4 March, about 11.30am, Elbert Siu Ping Lee (*Rain on the Pacific Coast*) will be on the show. All these interviews can be heard on the RTHK website archive.

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### **NEW EDITIONS OF PROVERSE BOOKS**

Gillian Bickley’s first poetry collection, *For the Record and other poems of Hong Kong*, is now published in a second edition. Please visit <<https://www.createpace.com/5955541>>.

Now available in a third edition is: *A Magistrate’s Court In Nineteenth Century Hong Kong: Court In Time* Edited by Gillian Bickley, with chapters by Gillian Bickley, Verner Bickley,



Christopher Coghlan, Timothy Hamlett, Geoffrey Roper, Garry Tallentire and a Preface by Sir T. L. Yang. Please visit <<https://createspace.com/5857144>>.

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We do upload our newsletters to the website, [proversepublishing.com](http://proversepublishing.com); but this is usually quite some time after we send them out to our newsletter subscribers.

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