

PROVERSE HONG KONG

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PROVERSE DECEMBER 2015 NEWSLETTER

Exodus to the U.K? Believe it or not, but in 1983, a lecturer at Reading University in England (without a tongue in his cheek) suggested that the entire population of Hong Kong of (then) 5.5 million inhabitants should be relocated in Northern Ireland. A member of the British Foreign Office thought that there was something in the idea and brought it to the attention of a colleague. The idea was not, of course, taken up which is just as well since the Hong Kong population has now grown to over 7 million. It is interesting, however, to speculate about what the effect would have been. Who knows? The potato crops would not have been at risk from a large population which prefers rice.

Since we are contemplating the unlikely, it is interesting to know that a team of scientists has recently determined that woolly mammoths, although extinct, many now be cloned. We are not in favour although, admittedly, “woolly” is quite a cosy word.

Closer to reality than the woolly mammoth is the present President of the United States. Although his father’s name was Barack Hussein Obama, his mother was a venturesome Caucasian lady, Stanley Ann Durham, an anthropologist with a particular interest in people who live in remote areas of Indonesia. Stanley liked to travel but she knew the value of stability (for others) and made sure that, following visits with her to Indonesia, Barack was enrolled in one of Hawaii’s best schools, named Punahou. It was at Punahou School that Barrak learned to argue peacefully and where he began to hone his skills as a debater, a skill that he would certainly need later in life when embroiled in fractious discussions with rumbustious Congressmen.

Having separated from her second husband, Lolo, Stanley enrolled in the University of Hawaii (and the East-West Center) to study for a master’s degree in anthropology. There, her student grants and an allowance from the East-West Center were used to support her, Barack and his half sister, Maya. If our information is up to date, Maya now lives in Hawaii.

Like most countries and territories, Hawaii has an interesting history. We recommend that visitors to Hawaii might enjoy the State Museum for the Arts which began life as the original Royal Hawaiian Hotel. When we were there, the whole of the second floor had been turned into a Museum featuring, for example, the story of the “Hula.”

From the State Museum, it is but a short distance to the well-known Bishop Museum and an exhibit about the Hawaiian Monarchy that began with King Kamehameha (1791-1819), and ended, alas, with the house arrest of Queen Liliuokalani.

Yes, there is a lot more to Hawaii than the sun and the sand, pleasant as they are.



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**PROVERSE RECEPTION**

Tuesday 24 November saw a large number of friends and well-wishers of Celia Claase and Philip Chatting, winners of The Proverse Prize 2014, at the Helena May, Central Hong Kong, for the launch of their books, *The Layers Between* (Claase's collection of fantasophical essays and poems) and *The Snow Bridge and Other Stories* (Chatting's second book, following his earlier publication in the UK of a novel). Both authors gave excellent presentations which were warmly praised by members of the audience. Philip's presentation can be found on the Proverse website, [proversepublishing.com](http://proversepublishing.com).

Both books are available in Hong Kong and worldwide from the Proverse distributor, Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, [www.chineseupress.com](http://www.chineseupress.com). They can also be ordered from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) as well as the UK [amazon](http://amazon.com).

Visiting from South Africa was writer Gustav Preller, who, with Lawrence Gray, founding president of the Hong Kong Writers' Circle, was announced as a finalist in the 2015 Proverse Prize competition.

Congratulations to these writers and also to all those who entered for the Proverse Prize 2015. It takes dedication, discipline and very hard work to prepare a manuscript to submit for this Prize.

**Proverse Prize 2016**

If anyone, reading this, is thinking about entering for the Proverse Prize 2016, now is not too early to begin! The terms and conditions will be similar to those for 2015, except that there is a loosening of the regulations with reference to works translated into English. These are now eligible even if already published in their original language, provided that entries are the first and unpublished English translation.

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INTERNATIONAL READINGS BY TWO PROVERSE POETS

On 13 October 2015 and for the first time, Gillian Bickley took part in the London UK poetry scene. At the Poetry Café, 22 Betterton Street, WC2H 9BX, she read at "Poetry Unplugged", hosted by Niall O'Sullivan (7.30pm to 10.30pm). A fascinating experience. Twenty-eight (or was it thirty-eight?) poets put their names down to read, arriving between 6.00-7.00pm as required. O'Sullivan knew his regulars, poetry, and literature well. Even for those who did not read, extremely good value for the GBP5.00 entry fee!

Another Proverse poet, Andrew S. Guthrie, read in Orange, California, USA, earlier in the summer, at "Two Idiots Peddling Poetry". (The cover charge in this case was USD3.00.)

Here is Andrew Guthrie's account of the experience:

"Los Angeles has a surprising number of poetry open mics and events, some of them leaning towards the 'slam' while others meet more quietly at local libraries or organizations dedicated to the propagation of poetry. I was recently in California and wanted to try to promote *Alphabet*



(Proverse Hong Kong 2015). Most of the Los Angeles venues or organizations had been booked in advance for months (if not a full year), but I was finally able to find a slot at a project amusingly named “Two Idiots Peddling Poetry” located in Orange, California, a small city about an hour’s drive (of course depending on the vagaries of Southern California traffic) from the heart of Los Angeles.

Given that *Alphabet* details literary (and more specifically, poetic) failure, it is clear that the plethora of opportunities for poetry in the greater Los Angeles area demonstrate that the form is most definitely extant if not actually thriving. One might still refer to poetry as a kind of cult but one that finds a niche in even the outlying cities, offering a much needed old school slow-down from the ubiquitous overload of electronic media. This is what I found at “Two Idiots Peddling Poetry”, where I shared my book launch with Pushcart Prize nominee, Kelsey Bryan-Zwick, who introduced her new collection of poetry, *Watermarked* (Sadie Girl Press), in what might be described as the ‘breathing’ school of recitation, declaiming her lines in an incantatory mode.

I was also happy to have the opportunity to exercise my own recitation or acting abilities, as this aspect of poetry coincides with its continuing viability, that is - the act of hearing as opposed to silently reading. The broken line free verse form offers, in these ways, two such readings. This is also the double bind for any poet, as most of us don’t really think of ourselves as actors but indeed must somehow emote when the work is read out loud. I did my best; along with a few poems I also included a brief introduction outlining the current state of poetry (and its relation to failure). I was warmly received by the “Two Idiots Peddling Poetry” audience (of about forty people) and was even able to sell a few copies of *Alphabet*.

These should be (and frankly are) the ordinary tasks of the poet – writing, reciting, emoting and for sure, promoting. The assignment of the poet calls not only for a text (a published book), but a self-motivated act that addresses (as articulated in one poem from *Alphabet*), ‘The poet’s obscure meritocracy.’” – Andrew S. Guthrie

Alphabet by Andrew S. Guthrie and four of the five poetry collections by Gillian Bickley (*Moving House*, *Sightings*, *China Suite* and *Perceptions*) are available from the Proverse distributor, Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, www.chineseupress.com. ~~~

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**FUTURE EVENTS**

**The Proverse Spring Reception** is scheduled for Tuesday, 19 April and will be held at the Helena May, Garden Road, Central Hong Kong, 7.00-9.00. Please mark your diaries and register to attend as soon as the notice is posted on the website to be sure of your place!

**PROVERSE READERS’ CLUB ►**



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PROVERSE READERS' CLUB

PROVERSE is organising a series of twenty events beginning 16 January, to introduce the books of several Hong Kong-based authors to a wider readership. These are planned to take place on Saturday afternoons, 3.00-4.00pm at Dymocks Bookshop and Café, Discovery Bay, Lantau. The names of the books to be discussed on each occasion will be announced soon. If you plan to ask questions and wish to read the books in advance, you can get them from Dymocks, DB as well as other Hong Kong bookshops and/or by order from chineseupress.com

In the meantime, please mark the following dates in your diaries:

Jan 16, 23, 30. Feb 20, 27. Mar 5, 12, 19. Apr 2, 9, 16, 23, 30. May 7, 21, 28. Jun 4, 11, 18, 25.

The venue is about one minute's walk from the DB ferry and bus termini. -- You get to DB by ferry from Central Ferry Pier No. 3 OR by MTR to Sunny Bay and then direct link bus. -- You may like to make it a nice day out?

Coffee / tea / soft drinks and cup-cakes are available for purchase at the venue. ~~~

EMAIL ADDRESS

As you know, for the time being at least, we are sending our E-Newsletter from our gmail address. If you know anyone who says they have ceased to receive our E-Newsletters, please recommend them to look in their spam folder, in case it has been directed there.

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Proverse books are available from our Hong Kong-based distributor, The Chinese University Press, Shatin, NT, from their website, [www.chineseupress.com](http://www.chineseupress.com). Dymocks Discovery Bay and other Hong Kong bookshops also have stock.

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