

PRESS RELEASE: 5 September 2012

**THE PROVERSE PRIZE
FOR UNPUBLISHED WRITING 2012**

**THE PROVERSE PRIZE ADMINISTRATORS HAVE PLEASURE IN
ANNOUNCING THAT THE JUDGES HAVE RECOMMENDED THE
FOLLOWING SIX WRITERS TO BE LONGLISTED
(i.e. TO BE SEMI-FINALISTS)
FOR THE PROVERSE PRIZE 2012**

(in alphabetical order): Patricia Laverne GLINTON-MEICOLAS, Lawrence GRAY,
Birgit LINDER, Sophronia LIU, Laura SOLOMON, Penelope TREYAMNE

EVENT: This announcement was made at an event, hosted by the Founders of the Proverse Prize, Dr Gillian Bickley and Dr Verner Bickley, MBE, held at the Hotel Coma, Ordino, Principality of Andorra, Tuesday, 4 September, 1600-1700pm, at which were present guests from many different backgrounds. Guests were first welcomed by Sra Montserrat Figols, Hotel Coma, Ordino, Principality of Andorra; then by Sra Maria de la O Soto, Head of Tourism and Promotion Services, Ordino. Also attending was Mossen Joan Fenosa, parish priest of Ordino, Antoni Zorzano, Honorary Consul for the Ukraine and prize-winning Andorran writer, Albert Villaró.

BACKGROUND: This was the fourth time that The Proverse Prize for unpublished writing had been competed for. Its objective is to encourage writers and promote a range of excellence and usefulness in writing. The Competition is open to all, irrespective of nationality, residence, citizenship, or gender, and irrespective of whether the writers are previously published or not. The only stipulation is that entrants should be a minimum of 18 years old on the date they sign the entry documents. Entries should be of book-length, by a single writer, and may be fiction (e.g. novels, novellas, short-story collections) or non-fiction (e.g. (but not limited to) autobiography, biography, essay collections, journal, memoirs, diaries, letters) or poetry (poetry-collections or single long poems). Entries should be submitted in English. Translations into English are welcome.

FOUNDERS: Gillian and Verner Bickley founded the Proverse Prize for various reasons. First, because they love words in all their forms and would like to encourage writers and good writing. Second, as writers themselves, they have found that we are ineligible to enter most writing competitions (mainly because they live away from the country of their birth). They wanted there to be a prize that almost anyone could enter. As for the work that can be entered, this needs to be submitted in English, but may be a translation into English. Fiction, non-fiction, poetry collections – all are eligible. This allows writers to focus on their writing rather than searching around to find a prize which they are eligible to enter.

Support for this concept has been received from several writers. 2009 Finalist, Lelawattee Manoo-Rahming, who lives in The Bahamas but was born in Trinidad and Tobago, finds

herself ineligible to receive support from either country. 2010 Finalist, L.W. Illsley was delighted to find an outlet for his chosen genre, the epic poem, for which, he wrote, there is no considerable audience at the present time.

Olga Walló, one of the Honorary Advisors to the international Proverse Prize, made a different point when she said, "The Proverse Prize unites writers and readers all over the world."

HONORARY ADVISORS: To signal the international nature of the competition, the founders invited an international group of Honorary Advisors: Marion Bethel (poet, Bahamas), David Crystal (linguist, poet, lexicographer, UK), Björn Jerudd (linguist, Sweden), Larry Smith (cultural administrator, USA), Edwin Thumboo (poet, Singapore), Olga Walló (novelist, poet, translator, Czech Republic).

PROVERSE PRIZE 2012:

Gillian Bickley, Co-Founder of the Proverse Prize, reported that the standard in 2012 was a high as it has ever been (maybe even higher overall); and the judges reported that many entries were excellent. Of the total number of entries this year, 20% were novels or novellas, 60% were poetry, 10% were creative non-fiction, autobiography and memoirs, and 10% were short story collections. The shortest work was 2,700 words (a poetry collection) and the longest was 105,000 words (a novel).

This year, entries were received from those presently living in Australia, The Bahamas, Hong Kong, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. The writers include those born in those five countries (Australia, The Bahamas, Hong Kong, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom) and also in Germany, Hong Kong and the USA. Reinforcing the international nature of The Proverse Prize, the writers have lived even more variously than either their place of birth or their place of residence suggests. There was a broad age range among the writers (the youngest was 24 (the youngest in 2011 was 38) and the oldest was 91 (the oldest in 2011 was 65), spanning a range of 67 or so years. The existing publishing status of the writers varies between unpublished and published, even of award-winning works. (The actual work submitted for the Proverse Prize is necessarily unpublished.) Some of the writers are first-time competition entrants; some have been successful in previous writing competitions. 70% of the entries are from women, 30% from men. 20% are repeat entrants to the Proverse Prize.

Descriptions of their occupations given by the entrants include: community worker, editor, interpreter, minister of the church, teacher, translator, university professor, and writer.

TURNING TO THOSE WHO HAD ENTERED IN PREVIOUS YEARS, Gillian Bickley called attention to the fact that several books by successful entrants in previous years have already been published by Proverse Hong Kong and were on display at the event.

Other works, entered in previous years, will be published in November 2012 and March 2013.

Gillian explained that the writers, already published as a result of entering for the Proverse Prize, have benefited in other ways. Publication of their books has given them

initial or additional credibility as writers. Their books can be ordered from bookshops worldwide (including in the UK) and are on display in bookshops and gift shops (including in Andorra, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore). All are available from amazon (USA) and amazon (UK), and several other online retailers. Some of the books have been featured in the regular newsletters of the Dymocks group of bookshops in Hong Kong. Nearly all the writers have given public readings or talks, some to small and some to large groups, in bookshops, teashops, bars and literary festivals and some have read at private parties. Sally Dellow's readings are particularly sought after. Six have been profiled in daily newspapers (in Andorra, The Bahamas, Hong Kong, New Zealand, and the USA). Several are promoted online in a variety of publications (blogs, online literary magazines, several online book-sellers). Dennis Wong has created an "App" which helps promote his own book. Among those who visit the Proverse website, Jason S Polley's author's page has the largest number of hits. Rupert Chan spoke at a Proverse event at the Hong Kong International Literary Festival last year. Lelawattee Manoo-Rahming read and spoke at a literary conference in the West Indies. Rebecca Tomasis, Vaughan Rapatahana and Patricia Grey have been interviewed on radio programmes (Rebecca and Vaughan in Hong Kong, and Patricia in the USA). Emily Ho spoke at an OUP-sponsored event at the Hong Kong Book Fair some weeks ago. Lawrence W. Illsley took his book with him to the famous annual Edinburgh Festival this year. As for Rebecca Tomasis, an inaugural Proverse Prize joint-winner, she is increasingly asked to do paid freelance writing in various journals and magazines. Vaughan Rapatahana and Akinsola Olufemi (Akin) Jeje are building strong profiles in the poetry scene in Hong Kong. (Vaughan is also now working with Proverse to publish a poetry anthology.) Laura Solomon has had a short story translated and published in Czech.

Gillian read two of the testimonials given by published entrants:

- “Winning the Proverse Prize is a great boost to my literary career. I thank Proverse for the way it supports and encourages new writing.” – Laura Solomon
- “You have changed the course of my artistic life and I shall be forever grateful.” – L.W. Illsley

The names of the semi-finalists for 2012 were announced by Dr Verner Bickley.

To give a flavour of the entered works, short passages from them were read.

Readers included members of the English Writers' Circle of Andorra and were (in order of reading): Brenda Ross, Val Rylatt, Clare Allcard, Valerie Rymarenko and Verner Bickley. As the readings took place, a photo of each writer, with some biographical details was displayed on the screen.

PATRICIA LAVERNE GLINTON-MEICHOLAS was born in The Bahamas and educated at the University of the West Indies, and at the University of Miami, the USA. She is a writer, editor, cultural critic and lifelong academic. Patricia has published six books (poetry collections, short stories, histories) and other works and is the recipient of awards, including for her contributions to Bahamian Literature.

LAWRENCE GRAY was born and educated in the UK. He organised the London Screenwriters' Workshop and is founding president of the HK Writers' Circle. He has

received several awards. He has written 1) comic books; 2) TV shows for the UK and for Singapore.

BIRGIT LINDER was born in Germany and educated in Germany and the USA. She has also lived in Taiwan, Mainland China, and Hong Kong. She has master's degrees / joint degrees in Sinology, Dutch Literature and Political Science; Chinese Literature. PhD in Chinese and German Literature and is currently a University professor. Her poetry and photography has appeared in various journals. This is her first entry to a poetry competition.

SOPHRONIA LIU was born in Hong Kong, the ninth child in a large Chinese family. She was educated in Hong Kong, and the USA. She has been active in theatre and community projects and has received writing and other awards. Her Proverse Prize entry was originally prepared as a Creative Dissertation for her yet-incomplete doctoral degree in English.

LAURA SOLOMON was born in New Zealand and has lived in London. She has an honours degree in English Literature (Victoria University, 1997) and a Master's degree in Computer Science (London University, 2003). She was an inaugural joint-winner of The Proverse Prize. One of her Proverse Prize entries in 2010 has also been published. Her work has appeared in many magazines and she has several book publications.

PENELOPE TREMAYNE is part English, part Cornish. She is the daughter of a Royal Air Force pilot and was educated by Governesses. She has lived in the UK, Italy, Greece, Singapore, Cyprus, Sri Lanka, and Oman. She has 5 published books, 2 being poetry collections (1 for children). Her poems have appeared in Magazines, e.g. the *New Scientist*, the *American*, the *Atlantic Monthly*. This is her first entry for a writing prize. She entered for the Proverse Prize, believing her late husband would have liked her to do so. Of her marriage and children, she says these have brought her "real and enduring happiness and an overwhelming sense of gratitude which has never dimmed".

Both Dr Verner Bickley and his wife Gillian separately congratulated these writers and also all entrants, observing that it is a considerable effort to complete a book-length work, perfect it and submit it for an international competition.

Gillian Bickley urged all present to consider their own stories and perhaps go home and start writing their own entry for the 2013 Proverse Prize. Perhaps they might write a little every day or every week; by the end of several months they could have enough material for a full-length work. The point was emphasised that, although entries should be submitted in English, translations into English are warmly encouraged.

PATRICIA GREY: Next, Gillian welcomed Patricia W. Grey, a Proverse Prize Finalist in 2010. Patricia's well-reviewed and very readable book, "Death has a thousand doors", is set in Andorra.

Early praise for Patricia's book came from one of the winners of the inaugural international PROVERSE PRIZE, Rebecca Tomasis: She wrote:

Patricia Grey's *Death Has A Thousand Doors* is a stunningly suspenseful novel set in the little-known principality of Andorra. It keeps the reader constantly curious, as we are led on an intriguing hunt for a missing photographer. The novel travels not only through the mountains, villages and history of Andorra but also through the histories and stories of its characters as a family comes together to search for its missing sister and daughter. Grey obviously knows Andorra well and is not afraid to explore its national history. When it comes to families and the secrets they nurture there is nothing which is not possible. She keeps her readers engrossed throughout with her cunning use of plot and story-telling. Each newly introduced character quickly becomes a suspect. The ends do become tied up as the novel draws to a close, although it was not quite the ending I believed I saw coming. – Grey had me there!

From Andorra itself, prize-winning Andorran writer, Albert Villaró, put the book into the context of other works about Andorra by English writers.

He wrote: "The works of English speakers who came to visit Andorra in the last two centuries are an essential part of our literary heritage. With precise prose, and a sharp sense of observation, pioneers like Frederick Harold Deverell, Hepburn Ballantine, Bayard Taylor and many others, have offered us a very personal vision of our country. Patricia Grey's book is a step forward, a new milestone. From the premises of contemporary fiction she offers us a new perspective of our little world, so close, so complex, so unknown."

More recently, the book has received several excellent reviews on amazon and elsewhere.

IN CONCLUSION, Gillian thanked all those who had helped with organising and promoting the event and those who had attended.

Patricia W. Grey kindly signed her book and gave interviews to several members of the press who were present.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

PRIZE: Publication by Proverse Hong Kong of the winning entry or entries. The cash prize of HKD10,000 (approx. US\$1,280) may be shared by at most two joint-winners. Supplementary Prizes may be awarded consisting of publication by Proverse Hong Kong.

WHY ORDINO? WHY ANDORRA? The Founders have been visiting Andorra for the past twenty-three years and have stayed at the Hotel Coma regularly during that time. They know that Andorra is a good place to read, to write, and – therefore – to judge a writing competition. More generally, they know that famous writers of the past walked in the mountains of Europe carrying their book-bags for summer-reading, combining exercise with study. Andorra itself is interested in literary achievements. Many excellent writers live in Andorra and Andorra has been written about in many books in different languages.

THE FUTURE: The Proverse Prize Administrators will announce the Short-list (finalists) for 2012 on 20 November.

The Winner or Joint-Winners will be announced in the Spring of 2013, in Hong Kong, where the Founders, who are English, live.

The winning entry or entries and – if at all possible – other excellent entries will be published by Proverse, the independent press also founded by the founders of the Proverse Prize, which operates from Hong Kong.

The entry form, guidance to entrants and terms and conditions for The Proverse Prize (2012) will be uploaded in due course onto the Proverse website (<http://www.proversepublishing.com>). The annual closing dates remain 31 May (entry forms and fees) and 30 June (submitted work). Entry forms are submitted to the United Kingdom or Hong Kong. The entered work itself is submitted to Andorra, via the Hotel Coma, Ordino. Please visit the website (<http://www.proversepublishing.com>) for full information.

If you would like to be kept informed of the next stages of this competition, please email <info@proversepublishing.com>, requesting to join the E-Newsletter mailing list. If you would like to speak to Gillian Bickley by telephone, please email her, requesting her telephone number and leaving your own.

PRESS ENQUIRIES TO Gillian Bickley at g.bickley@proversepublishing.com: please make sure that you state, "Proverse Prize", in the subject line.

Enquires may also be addressed to: Snra Montse Figols at 736-100, email: hotelcoma@hotelcoma.com

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE EVENT AND THE LONGLISTED WRITERS are on the Proverse website, as a sub-page of "Proverse Prize events"

~~~ ENDS~~~