

remains crucial to study such cases even for researchers of China's current urbanisation, as many of these local experiences have found their way into subsequent policy initiatives. Despite the current centralisation of urbanisation and urban-rural planning, the diversity of urban categories and processes has not completely vanished and continues to inform urban and rural change.



SUMMERS, Tim. 2021.

***China's Hong Kong:
The Politics of a Global City.*
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There has been a growing tendency to frame the discussion of developments in Hong Kong almost *by default* within a framework of “Beijing vis-à-vis Hong Kong” – or indeed of Beijing's unilateral tightening of its grip on the city. Such a simplification, as Tim Summers points out, is “a misleading or at least partial interpretation of what is going on in Hong Kong” (p. 97). From this perspective, therefore, in his timely and concise monograph, Summers suggests that the ways to approach, conduct research on, and write about past, present, and future developments in Hong Kong need a rethink. He begins by laying out the book's title – *China's Hong Kong: The Politics of a Global City* – which perfectly reflects his proposition that the Hong Kong story is a negotiation between the local, the national, and the global.

The book consists of a carefully presented introduction and seven main chapters. After setting out the overall argument of the book – that insightful analysis of Hong Kong from 1997 to mid-2020 should locate the development of the city's mutually involved politics and economics within the rapidly changing political and economic realm of China, which, in turn, has been “infused by the influence of global developments” (p. 6) – in the introductory chapter, Summers zeroes in on a historical reconstruction of pre-handover Hong Kong in Chapter One, where he makes a convincing point that Hong Kong's history has always been shaped by the complex confluence of global, Chinese, and local forces, each of which has changed dramatically across time in terms of nature and salience. Chapters Two and Three deal with the increasing interweaving of Hong Kong politics and economics, in which Summers presents Hong Kong's burgeoning

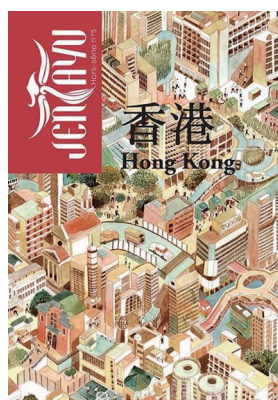
economic symbiosis with China as a double-edged sword. While it has somehow compensated for the city's vulnerability to “the vagaries of the global economy” (p. 74) and raised its competitiveness as an international financial centre, the concomitant massive flows of people and capital from mainland China have sharpened Hong Kong's latent socioeconomic disparities and have further brought to the surface the contradictions and ambiguities of the “one country, two systems” (OCTS) principle concerning the question of democracy. The result is an increasingly fragmented and polarised city that has created concern in Beijing over national territorial integrity, resulting in breaches of the promise of “Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong.” However, Summers argues, these should be seen as responses to rising political challenges in Hong Kong rather than as a change in the fundamental goals Beijing has for Hong Kong, which have consistently been in the order of sovereignty, stability, and prosperity.

Chapter Four details the Umbrella Movement, which, according to Summers, led to a grand-scale political awakening of Hongkongers, strengthened commitment to democracy, and gave rise to radical “localism” that further polarised the political parties and politicalised the wider society. Chapter Five then goes on to point out that global interest in Hong Kong's politics has been increasingly dominated by accusations of Beijing being the culprit behind Hong Kong's ills. One practical result of this is the exemption of Hong Kong actors themselves from contributing to the problems facing the city and the deepening of Beijing's paranoia in seeing Hong Kong as the pawn of “black hands” (p. 124) seeking to undermine China's national security and integrity. Summers therefore suggests that foreign forces should focus on “what might actually happen and what is possible” (p. 126) in Hong Kong, and that one possible starting point is to recognise the fact that OCTS might be the best possible option for the city today.

In the two final chapters, Summers answers the question of whether Hong Kong is doomed. He contends that the key lies in Hong Kong itself. The city should start by reducing the pernicious fragmentation and polarisation of its politics to make room for compromise, interaction, and tolerance between the populace and ruling authorities. This, however, requires “a realistic, nuanced and open-minded response” (p. 168) from Hongkongers toward the growing complexity and diversity of China. They need to accept the fact that Hong Kong is now – on every level – part of China, and that the city's future is closely intertwined with that of China, whose trajectory is even more unpredictable and shaped by global developments. Certainly, Hong Kong is expected to increasingly extend its engagement with China on all fronts, and this should not simply be translated into the assumption that Hong Kong will become “just another Chinese city” (p. 170). As Summers himself firmly believes, Hong Kong is more than that, with its own distinctive features – “history, institutional strengths, global linkages and the dynamism of its people” (p. 145) – on which a bright future can be built.

As can be seen, the book convincingly spells out the situation in Hong Kong from the handover to mid-2020. One limitation of the book is a deficiency in novel theoretical and empirical data development. Indeed, the proposal of interpreting developments in Hong Kong as a complicated interplay between localism, nationalism, and globalism is also nothing new. But recently this has been played down by an increasing fascination with framing almost

any discussion of Hong Kong exclusively in terms of a hardening China. The result is publications that consist of little more than efforts to cater to the “China threat” narrative instead of providing fair and comprehensive accounts of what is going on in Hong Kong. Thus, the real substance of Summers’s volume revolves around its academic neutrality – the attempt to go beyond the dominant “Beijing vis-à-vis Hong Kong” framework in Hong Kong studies at a point in time when Hong Kong has been generally treated as a “bridgehead” for accusing China of threatening democracy, freedom, and world peace. Of course, Summers is not the first icebreaker, but he again sounds the alarm that only such neutrality will allow for a rational tackling of important political, moral, and intellectual issues concerning Hong Kong. In the book, Summers does leave some stones unturned, and it would be excellent to see him push further on some universal issues – in particular, what is perhaps the key issue in Hong Kong and even in the world today, identity, and how this works at the local, national, and global levels. For this reason, *China’s Hong Kong* will serve as inspiration for future scholars while remaining a comprehensive guide for those interested in a changing Hong Kong and the wider set of political and economic developments in China and the rest of the world.



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Jentayu is a biannual journal dedicated to Asian literature. Founded in 2014, the journal has published ten thematic and five special issues, of which No. 5, published on 15 September 2022, featured the literature of Hong Kong. With a mission it defines as “militant,” issue No. 5 is devoted to demonstrating the “richness and diversity of the voices and languages” of Hong Kong today (p. 13) and to addressing “the still flagrant lack of translations into French” (back cover).

It contains nine short stories and prose texts together with 13 poems, by 15 authors from different generations. The translated texts introduce the reader to a literature that is dynamic, rich in themes, of surprising inventiveness, and sharing a contemporaneity linked to the city of Hong Kong.

The first text, *Montagne (Mountain, 山)* by Ng Hui-bin 吳煦斌, is a piece of nature writing that concerns the relationship between Man and Nature. In the context of the Hong Kong of the 1970s, when mountains were moved in favour of urban construction, the narrative questions the way in which nature is reclaimed in the light of ecological ideas. The same theme can also be found in Xi Xi’s 西西 poem on the climate change brought about by the industrialisation of desalination, *Arrêt de nuages (Motionless Clouds, 停雲)*, and Louise Law’s 羅樂敏 poems on Peng Chau Island.

Hong Kong society after 1997 is at the heart of this issue. The sociopolitical dimension is a strongly felt presence. Regarding the month of June 2019, several texts tackle the repression of Hong Kong demonstrations against an amendment to the extradition law. Although certain texts denounce the events directly, including *Pièces vides (Empty Rooms, 空室)*, *Verités 2.0 (Truths 2.0)*, and *Soleils noirs (Darkness under the Sun, 黑日)*, others take the form of ghost stories, including *De sombres choses (Dark Things, 暗黑體物)* and *Le bibliotarium de l’Île-Distante (The bibliotarium of the distant isle, 離島上的一座圖書館療養院)*. The Umbrella Movement (2014) and the protests against the Express Rail Link (2009-2010) are also evoked in the context of Hong Kong’s autonomy from the Chinese government. Lastly, Tammy Ho Lai-ming 何麗明, observing the imposition of “Beijing” Time on that “immense country of 9.6 million square kilometres” (p. 137), raises the question of the danger of sacrifice in the name of national unity. At the same time, the life of the people of Hong Kong after the reversion to Chinese sovereignty is revealed in all its instability: the feeling of insecurity among the population and its choice of immigration, for example in *Cette époque (That Era, 那個時代)*, *La mariée traversant l’océan (Overseas Bride, 過埠新娘)*, and *Zoologie postcoloniale (Postcolonial Zoology)*. The same can be said for the dark world behind the screen and criminal acts via the Internet in *Traque sur fond bleu (Stalking against a blue background, 窺伺藍色的藍)*.

Through these texts, the reader recognises a part of the city of Hong Kong familiar to all through its spatial markers (street and neighbourhood names) and cultural specificities (local cuisine, religious ritual, linguistic diversity, immigration), while also seeing a cosmopolitan city in a new light. Tammy Ho Lai-ming shines a spotlight on female workers from Southeast Asia, who despite their uncertain situation, display their optimism for life in Hong Kong in *Silhouettes dansantes (Dancing Silhouettes)*. Dung Kai-cheung 董啟章, through a program of “rewriting history,” seeks to recreate the “cultural identity” of Hong Kong through fiction in *Atlas: un florilège (Atlas: The Archaeology of an Imaginary City, 地圖集)*. Leung Ping-kwan 梁秉鈞, through the poetry of food, gives us a reflection of cultural identity through the tastes of dishes that link diaspora communities, historical memory, and geopolitics.

From the literary point of view, the selected texts are notable for their search for stylistic inventiveness and stand out through their own contribution to the literature of Hong Kong. Amongst their