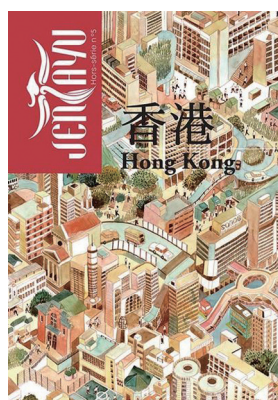


any discussion of Hong Kong exclusively in terms of a hardening China. The result is publications that consist of little more than efforts to cater to the “China threat” narrative instead of providing fair and comprehensive accounts of what is going on in Hong Kong. Thus, the real substance of Summers’s 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.



Jentayu. 2022.
Special Issue No. 5:
Hong Kong.
 Andert-et-Condon: Jentayu.

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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

various experiments, hybridisation might be said to be a common point: at the junction between fiction and cartography (Dung Kai-cheung), narration accompanied by music (Chan Ho-kei 陳浩基), and a story placed alongside a painting (*La mariée traversant l'océan* with the painting *The Soap Bubbles* and *De sombres choses* with *The Legend of the Baker of Eeklo*). We also notice a desire to bring attention to the literary heritage of Hong Kong, particularly in the work of Leung Lee-chi 梁莉姿 and Wong Yi 黃怡, who pay homage to the great master Liu Yichang 劉以鬯 (1918-2018). The former has created *Pièces vides* in the manner of *Troubles* 動亂 (1968), evoking the 1967 riots; the latter, in *Cette époque*, references the novel *Tête-bêche* (*Intersection*, 對倒, 1972) and its adaptation for the cinema, *In the Mood for Love*, directed by Wong Kar-wai 王家衛. Literary heritage can also be seen at the global level, with the mention or quoting of foreign writers, many of them French – Roland Barthes, Charles Baudelaire, Albert Camus, Marguerite Duras, Jean-Paul Sartre, J.M.G. Le Clézio, Françoise Sagan, Antoine Volodine, Patrick Modiano, etc.

The issue succeeds in offering a panorama of contemporary literature thanks to two editors, Gwennaël Gaffric and Coraline Jortay, themselves literary translators and university researchers, not to mention the translators who display ingenuity in the face of diglossia. How do they translate dialect, internet words, and the local hybrid language? What choices do they make between the experience of the foreign (Berman 1992) and the adoption of the dominant global language (Casanova 2015)? In this respect, the most notable text is the poem *Golden* by Nicholas Wong 黃裕邦, where the detailed translator's notes provide a real reflection on the poetics of translation.

This richly illustrated special issue ends with notes on the authors and translators together with publication references for all of the texts in their original language (in Chinese or English). It offers a valuable addition to the first anthology of Hong Kong literature translated into French and published in 2006 (*L'horloge et le dragon* – *The clock and the dragon*). In this issue, new contemporary questions such as ecology, democracy, and political autonomy contribute to renewing the fields of reflection on the literature of "resistance" (p. 6), which has become an important component of the literature of the Chinese-speaking world, a fact confirmed by *A New Literary History of Modern China* (Wang 2017).

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MA, Xiao. 2022.

Localized Bargaining: The Political Economy of China's High-speed Railway Program.

Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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The Chinese government has invested over 800 billion RMB (129.2 billion USD) every year since 2013 and built more than 35,000 kilometres of high-speed railways, which is twice as much as any other country in the world. Xiao Ma's *Localized Bargaining: The Political Economy of China's High-speed Railway Program* is a pioneering study focusing on this state-directed infrastructure program. By unpacking China's Party-state hierarchies and the interaction between local governments and their superiors, the author demonstrates how institutions mediate public resource distribution.

Investment distribution remains a vital problem in public infrastructure programs, as government intervention often undermines economic principles. Conventional wisdom identifies the models of "loyalty purchasing" and "technocratic solutions" in distributive politics. Ma, however, notes that these models with a top-down perspective neglect the problems of information asymmetry and incredible commitment within the state apparatus. Moreover, prior scholarly work also takes it as a given that China's administrative system is centralised, and most scholars overlooked local governments' constant bargaining actions and respective strategies.

According to Ma, Chinese localities (including municipalities and counties) play a more significant role than conventional wisdom acknowledges in the decision of many public issues, such as the allocation of high-speed railways and stations. His study refers to this as "localised bargaining," in which localities use strategic actions to shape their superiors' decision-making and extract more benefit for themselves. Furthermore, the author suggests that cities have different bargaining strategies based on their corresponding bargaining power (Chapter Two).

To reduce the bias of experience, Ma uses qualitative analyses, based on information from news reports and interviews, to make assumptions and judgments, and the quantitative data collected from questionnaires and files further verify his conclusion. Specifically, the interviews with central bureaucrats show that there are many veto points in the cumbersome approval process of building high-speed railways. The fragmentation of authority in the central government provides bargaining opportunities for local authorities. The survey