



## Atlas: The Archaeology of an Imaginary City (Weatherhead Books on Asia)

By Kai-cheung Dung

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Kai-cheung Dung is an inventive and prolific author whose internationally-acclaimed, genre-bending work defies traditional acts of representation and narrative. This absorbing novel best exemplifies his versatility and experimentation, along with China's rapidly evolving literary culture, merging fiction, nonfiction, and poetry in a story of succeeding and failing to recapture the things we lose.

Set in the long-lost City of Victoria (a fictional world similar to modern-day Hong Kong), Atlas is written from the unified perspective of future archaeologists struggling to rebuild a thrilling metropolis. Divided into four sections—"theory," "the city," "streets," and "signs"—Dung's novel reimagines Victoria through maps and other historical documents and artifacts, much like Italo Calvino's, Jorge Luis Borges's, and Paul Auster's quasi-fictional adventures in map-reading and remapping. Mixing real-world scenarios with purely invented people and events, and incorporating anecdote and actual and fictional social commentary and critique, Dung's novel challenges the representation of place and history and the limits of technical and scientific media in reconstructing that history. Playing with a variety of styles and subjects, Dung creatively engages with the fate of Hong Kong since its British "handover" in 1997, which officially marked the end of colonial rule and the beginning of an uncharted future.

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**Editorial Review**

Review

Dung Kai-cheung's *Atlas: The Archeology of an Imaginary City* is a most unusual work in the history of modern Chinese literature: part fiction, part history, part theory?all in the service of the author's unique method of fictional 'archaeology,' an endeavor that has unearthed a wealth of materials?streets, buildings, personalities, names and signs, and marvels and legends?about this 'vanished' city, the traces of which constitute the sum total of Hong Kong's cultural memory. A cross between fact and fiction, history and mystery, Jorge Luis Borges and Italo Calvino, this work defies all generic categories and now stands as a contemporary classic.

(Leo Ou-fan Lee, author of *City Between Worlds: My Hong Kong*)

...seamless, yet eccentric...a playful yet poignant invitation to begin layering new symbols and projections over the city's landscape.

(*South China Morning Post*)

Readers pleased by cliff-hanging, nail-biting, page-turning adventure will not be satisfied with "Atlas." Devotees of writers as curious as Borges, Calvino and Eco, will love this map of maps of an imaginary city. *Japan Times*

(David Cozy *Japan Times*)

Well worth the experiment.

(Peter Gordon *Asian Review of Books*)

Review

For the past two decades, Dung Kai-cheung's voice has been the single most innovative on the Hong Kong literary scene, and *Atlas* stands as a bold and inventive attempt to reflect and fictionally reconstruct the former colony's past. The book is expertly translated and serves as a wonderful contribution to the limited body of contemporary Hong Kong literature available today in English translation.

(Michael Berry, author of *A History of Pain: Trauma in Modern Chinese Literature and Film* and *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers*)

About the Author

Dung Kai-cheung was born in Hong Kong in 1967 and received his B.A. and M. Phil. in comparative literature from the University of Hong Kong. He teaches part-time in several Hong Kong universities and writes novels and short stories in Chinese. His major fictional works include *The Age of Apprenticeship*; *Histories of Time*; *Works and Creations*; *Paixões Diagonais*; *P. E. Period*; *The Thousand and Second Night*;

*The Exercise Book; A Brief History of the Silverfish; The Writing Adventure of Bui Bui; The Catalog; Visible Cities; The Rose of the Name; The Double Body; Androgyny: Evolution of a Nonexistent Species; The Workbook; My Old School in Memory; and The Album.*

Anders Hansson is chief editor of publications at the Macau Ricci Institute and the author of *Chinese Outcasts: Discrimination and Emancipation in Late Imperial China*. He studied Chinese at the University of Stockholm and later in Hong Kong and holds an M.A. from the School of Oriental and African Studies in London and a Ph.D. in history and East Asian languages from Harvard University.

Bonnie S. McDougall is visiting professor of Chinese at the University of Sydney and professor emeritus at the University of Edinburgh. She has also taught at Harvard University, the University of Oslo, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the City University of Hong Kong. She has translated works by Bei Dao, Ah Cheng, Chen Kaige, Mao Zedong, and Leung Ping-kwan, among others. Her recent books include *Translation Zones in Modern China: Authoritarian Command Versus Gift Exchange* and *Fictional Authors, Imaginary Audiences: Modern Chinese Literature in the Twentieth Century*.

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**Tammie Torres:**

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