

..... **Professor Pai Hsien-yung**

Doctor of Literature *honoris causa*

Citation

Pai Hsien-yung is a glittering name in the realm of Chinese literature world-wide. Professor Pai started his writing career at the tender age of twenty. During his time in Taiwan, he published a series of works of fiction such as *Yueh-meng (Moon Dreams)*, *Yue-ching-sou (Jade Love)* and *Pi-yeh (Graduation)*. After he went to study in the United States, he published a number of collections of short stories, including *Chi-mo te shih-ch'i-sui (Lonely Seventeen)*, *Taipei jen (Taipei People)* and *Nieh-yo-k'e (New York Guest)*, a collection of essays entitled *Mo-jen-hui-shou (Sudden Recollection)* and the novel *Nieh-tsu (Crystal Boys)*. This year Professor Pai received the Literature Category of Taiwan's Seventh National Artistic Award for his towering achievement in creative writing and distinguished contribution to culture. Currently, Professor Pai is at work on a biography of his father, the late General Pai Ch'ung-hsi.

Professor Pai Hsien-yung, though born into a distinguished general's family, did not follow in his father's footsteps to join the military. When at university, he made the resolute decision to give up his study in hydraulic engineering and turned to literature instead. The tumultuous upheavals experienced in his early years and the death of his mother after he entered adulthood put him through much tribulation. This personal experience has enabled Professor Pai to observe life's vicissitudes with a unique perception. He has transformed his personal pains and sorrows into the intensified compassion for fellow human beings who are deeply mired in drastic historical changes, thereby "converting the indescribable pains of human souls into words". His writing unfolding the impenetrable nature of the rapidly changing history is striking, nuanced, insightful and meticulous. While lamenting the disorder and unpredictability of our capricious life, Pai invites the reader to share his delicate invocation of life's great poignancy. His works are suffused with his ultimate concern with the sufferings of people and present an in-depth analysis of the complexity of human nature. With a combination of artistic sensibilities and novel perspectives, he observes the world with a cool detachment, and has created artistic works that radiate a compelling and captivating quality. According to George Kao, a renowned translator, Professor Pai is like a solitary star in the sky, firmly fixing his diamond-hard gaze on the world below, with one bizarre scene after another... However, the writing of Professor Pai is sincere and passionate, injecting genuine feelings into many of his fictitious characters. Just as he puts it, "(...) literature has a very significant function – to teach us how to be compassionate." While reading the works of Professor Pai, we are touched by the sensibility of his soul, astute literary understanding and great sympathy for his fellow-men.

Professor Pai is well-versed in both Chinese and Western literatures. What he has assimilated from Western literature is not merely techniques of expression but more importantly, modern literary concepts, which he applies to narrating the mayhem of history and changes of fortune. He is adept at capturing and making use of a particular episode during a given historical stage so as to project dexterously his thinking and perspicacity on life in general. He never claims achieving salvation, but his brilliant allusive language and elegant felicity of expression prompt his readers to contemplate and reflect. Whether he is describing the rootlessness of the fallen aristocrats in exile or encapsulating the unflinching choice of homosexuals being on the 'wrong side' of society, his themes are always closely linked to the tempo of life. His probing

and subtle writing is inspirational and strongly characterized by a reflective conception of our existence and human nature. It integrates the solemnity of the East and the affability of the West into a poetic sensibility and an intellectual dynamism. Snatches of life - tragic, desolate or rueful, but rarely happy - are powerfully evoked. His considerable and intense experience of life parallels and reinforces his unique sensitivity to life, exhibiting a great richness and profundity of historical changes, since his works are a reflection of reality, which in turn triggers his comments on life. Professor Pai, with his characteristic style and flair, stands above history to observe things and people in a changing environment and to unfold the charm of youth, the allure of life and the beauty of human nature so as to bring to the reader both enlightenment and aesthetic pleasure.

Professor Pai's modern conscience is also manifest in a rethinking and unearthing of the legacy of traditional Chinese culture. From a modern perspective, he has rediscovered the everlasting and lustrous elements in our cultural heritage. Professor Pai has the habit of reading *The Dream of the Red Chamber* before going to sleep, bringing his spiritual dialogues with the classic into his dream-land and into his literary creativity. Professor Pai's writing, which exudes an intoxicating cultural nostalgia, is suggestive of a rich aura of traditional cultural heritage. His unremitting pursuit of, and infinite passion for, our traditional culture are demonstrated in his active advocacy of traditional *Kunqu*. He speaks of himself as "an unpaid worker for *Kunqu*". During his many years teaching in the United States, Professor Pai has been very active in promoting Chinese culture. He was also personally involved in the translation of *Taipei People* into English to ensure that the original authentic flavour is carried across in the translated work. He was willing to spend time undertaking the thankless task of translation in order to allow the Western reader to appreciate the artistic essence of Chinese culture. Therefore, we can also speak of Professor Pai as an unpaid worker for promoting not just *Kunqu* but also Chinese culture as a whole.

Professor Pai's bond with Hong Kong and Lingnan University dates back to 1950 when he came to Hong Kong for schooling and stayed until 1952 when he left for Taipei. Up to now his affinity with Hong Kong starting at that time has lasted for over half a century. Professor Pai has visited Hong Kong numerous times to give lectures and is a visiting professor at Lingnan University. Students at Lingnan and readers of literature in Hong Kong can meet their much admired icon on such occasions when they can ask questions and learn how to appreciate the essence of literature and to draw lessons from life.

Mr. Chairman, Professor Pai Hsien-yung is an outstanding example in taking life in full stride and has demonstrated his concern and compassion for the suffering of humanity and our nation. For decades he has dedicated himself to writing fiction, and in addition, as an energetic educator and scholar, he is deeply committed to popularizing creative writing. He has made a distinguished contribution to the promotion of cultural exchange between the East and the West, and his unwavering efforts are evidenced in his remarkable achievements. I hereby present Professor Pai Hsien-yung to you for the award of the degree of Doctor of Literature *honoris causa*.

白先勇教授 榮譽文學博士 贊辭

白先勇，在世界華文文學界是一個閃亮的名字。白教授二十歲開始寫作，在臺灣期間發表了《月夢》、《玉卿嫂》、《畢業》等小說。赴美國留學之後，出版了短篇小說集《寂寞的十七歲》、《臺北人》、《紐約客》，散文集《驀然回首》，長篇小說《孽子》等。白教授本年榮膺台灣第七屆國家文藝獎文學類得主，其文學創作及對文化的貢獻再一次獲得廣泛推崇。現在正為其父白崇禧將軍寫傳記。

白先勇教授雖出身于將門，但沒有投身行伍；讀大學時，又毅然棄水利專業而轉文學。早年的顛沛生活，使他初嘗人世的艱辛。成年時期，又歷經喪母之痛等人生的大起大落。白教授從個人的生命體驗來觀照人世滄桑，將自身心靈的傷痛，轉化為對歷史劇變中人們的同情，實現了「把人類心靈中無言的痛楚轉換成文字。」他的寫作展現了歷史的厚重感和滄桑感，既高屋建瓴又通觀微至，讀者在感歎世事的變幻無常、人生的起伏跌宕之餘，又能品味到細微的人生體驗。他的作品有對我們這個苦難民族的終極關懷，也有對複雜人性的深刻剖析。他以婉約飄逸之姿，並以其獨特的視角，深刻冷靜地觀察世界，因此他作品的藝術魅力令人折服。據翻譯家喬治高的觀察，白教授就像天際的一顆孤星，以堅冷如鑽石的目光注視著下界光怪陸離的人世萬象。但白教授的筆觸又是誠摯的，對他的許多小說人物注入了情感，正如他自己所說，「…文字有個很重要的價值，就是教育我們如何同情。」讀白教授的作品，我們可以充分感受到他敏感的心靈、敏銳的文學感悟力以及博大的同情心。

白教授中西文學修養兼具。他從西方文學中吸收的，不僅是一些表現手法，更重要的是現代意識，並以這種現代意識去抒寫歷史的興亡、生命的滄桑。他的創作，善於捕捉和擷取某個特定歷史時期的片斷，巧妙地折射出對人生的思考和感悟。他從不自命拯救世界之道，但如行雲流水般的文筆，汪洋恣肆，發人深省。無論是描寫先前貴族無根的漂流狀態，還是涉及

「同志」不斷「錯位」的倔強選擇，無不與時代的脈絡息息相關。其細微之處閃爍著思辨的靈光，充滿了對生命和人性的思考，融會了東方的凝重和西方的灑脫，飄逸著靈氣和活力。一段又一段人生，悲傷的，蒼涼的，惋惜的，卻鮮有幸福的。作家波瀾起伏的不尋常經歷和細微獨特的生命體悟，交相輝映，相得益彰，賦予作品以內容多變的豐富性和歷史變遷的深刻性。文映現實，有感而發，作家以其特有的風格和氣派，站在歷史高度，觀照歷史變動中的人和事，展現出青春之美、生命之美、人性之美，給讀者帶來人生的啟迪和審美的享受。

白教授的現代意識，還表現在對傳統文化的反思和發掘。他從現代的角度，發掘了傳統文化中歷久彌新、閃光晶亮的成分。他入睡前有閱讀《紅樓夢》的習慣，將與其內在的精神對話帶入自己的夢境，帶入自己的藝術創作。白教授的作品，積澱了如夢如醉的文化鄉愁，潛含著濃厚的傳統文化意蘊。白先勇教授對傳統文化的迷戀和厚愛，更可以從他不遺餘力地推廣昆曲看出。他說「我是昆曲的義工。」白教授在美執教多年，身體力行地傳播發展中國文化。此外，他還參與了《臺北人》的英譯，盡顯原作神韻。白教授願意去做費力不討好的翻譯工作，正是為了讓西方人能從作品中領略中國文化的精美和厚重。據此，我們可以說，白教授不僅是「昆曲的義工」，更是傳播中國傳統文化的「義工」。

白教授與香港以及嶺南大學有深厚的淵源。他於1950年到香港就學，一直到1952年離港赴臺北。從那時開始的香港淵源，持續到半個世紀後的今天。白教授曾多次來港講學，並擔任了嶺南大學的客席教授。嶺南的學子與香港的文學愛好者可以與傾慕已久的白教授當面問學請教，領略文學精髓，感悟人生真諦。

主席先生，白先勇教授勇於直面人生，對人類和民族的苦難傾注了關愛和同情，傾心從事文學創作幾十年，同時又是誨人不倦之師，普及創作知識，不遺餘力，推動中西文化交流，兢兢業業，成績斐然，貢獻突出。恭請主席先生頒授予白先勇教授榮譽文學博士學位。