



王德威教授  
Professor David Der-Wei WANG

榮譽大學院士  
Honorary Fellow of HKUST

Anyone fluent in the Chinese language and its etymological roots is likely to be familiar with the character 文 (*wén*) and its many layered meanings. From its original definition denoting decorative patterns in nature, it has evolved over the centuries to encompass writing, culture, and literature.

For Prof David Der-Wei Wang, *wén* represents a lifelong inquiry into how language shapes our understanding of the world, a journey that has established him as one of the world's leading scholars of Chinese literature.

Born in Taipei to parents who relocated to Taiwan after 1949, Prof Wang was raised in a family steeped in education and civic engagement. His father, a former college president, and his mother, an educator, instilled in him a deep respect for education, literature and the strong belief in the power of stories to our understanding of the world.

Though initially aspiring to become a historian or a journalist, he ultimately found his calling in literature, which felt like a “natural path” to him. After completing high school, he went on to obtain a Bachelor of Arts in literature and foreign languages from National Taiwan University. Then, like many of his generation, he decided to broaden his horizons and went to the United States to pursue his Master of Arts and PhD in comparative literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

For a young scholar from a small island, the move was both “liberating and transformative”, as it was in Wisconsin's libraries where he first discovered the vast trove of modern Chinese literature—works that had been largely unavailable in Taiwan at that time.

After receiving his PhD, Prof Wang returned to Taiwan and taught at National Taiwan University, his alma mater, for four years. The lure of going back to the United States, however, proved irresistible when he received the opportunity to join Harvard University as a professor of modern Chinese literature. This personal journey to the West marked a turning point in his academic career.

Yet the elite atmosphere at Harvard back then did not sit well with him, and East Asian studies remained a marginal, non-canonical discipline. After four years, he accepted an invitation from Prof C. T. Hsia, the legendary Chinese literary critic, to join Columbia University, where he embarked on his path to becoming a leading scholar of modern Chinese literature, known for his interdisciplinary approach and theoretical innovation. He flourished for 15 years there, eventually chairing the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures.

凡熟諳中文語義者，對「文」字及其多重涵義當不陌生。「文」的本義為自然紋理，隨時代演進，現已涵蓋文字、文化與文學，意涵深遠。

對王德威教授而言，「文」不僅是語言之載體，更是探索世界、理解人性之門徑，為他開啟畢生志業，成為現代中國文學研究最著名的學者之一。

王教授生於台北，父母是1949年後遷居台灣的知識分子，家學淵源，書香盈門。其父曾任中學校長，其母亦從事教育工作，自幼耳濡目染，使他對教育與文學懷有深厚敬意，堅信故事的力量能啟人心志、開入眼界。

王教授少時志在史學與新聞學，最終卻在文學世界中找到歸屬。高中畢業後，他入讀國立台灣大學（台大）修讀文學及外文，取得文學士學位。與同代年輕人一樣渴望拓展視野，他後來負笈美國威斯康辛大學麥迪遜分校，攻讀比較文學碩士及博士學位。

對一位出身小島的青年來說，遠赴重洋之舉既是解放，也是蛻變。正是在威斯康辛大學的圖書館中，他得以初探現代中國文學的浩瀚寶藏，這些作品在當時的台灣幾乎無法接觸。

博士畢業後，王教授返回母校台大執教四年。後來，他獲美國哈佛大學邀請擔任現代中國文學教授，機會難逢，此趟「西遊記」遂成為了他學術生涯的轉捩點。

然而，當時哈佛仍傾向精英主義，東亞研究尚屬非主流學科。四年後，他應中國文學評論泰斗夏志清先生之邀，轉赴哥倫比亞大學，開啟了他成為現代中國文學領域領軍學者之路，以其跨學科視野與理論創新著稱於世。他於哥大任教十五載，並出任東亞語言文化系系主任，成就斐然。

In a full-circle moment, he returned to Harvard in 2004 as the Edward C. Henderson Professor of Chinese Literature, finding a transformed environment that was more cosmopolitan and more embracing. He has remained at Harvard ever since. Over the years, he has received numerous accolades, including election as an Academician of Academia Sinica (2004), the Changjiang Scholar Award (2008), and membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2020). He has been a Senior Visiting Fellow at the HKUST Jockey Club Institute for Advanced Study since 2019 and has been an International Fellow in the British Academy since 2023.

At Harvard, Prof Wang's research interests span modern and contemporary Chinese literature, late Qing fiction and drama, comparative literary theory, colonial and modern Taiwanese fiction, the literature of the Chinese diaspora, and Sinophone studies. His prolific publications include books on Taiwan during the Japanese colonial era and the globalization of Chinese literature, and the edited volume *A New Literary History of Modern China*.

His latest monograph, *Why Fiction Matters in Contemporary China*, explores how fiction mirrors societal changes and provides a space for critiquing contemporary issues. In his lectures, Prof Wang examines what makes a story "good", and who gets to decide, highlighting the dialogic and layered nature of stories that resist simplistic interpretations.

Prof Wang is also intrigued by literature's evolution beyond the printed page. Even though he has not fully immersed himself in the world of internet literature and digital storytelling, he believes this is a vibrant era for literature, in both digital and print terms. "Language remains powerful," he asserts, it is a kind of upbringing and culture, a manifestation of civilization, and the key to understanding both the world and human nature.

Having first visited Hong Kong in 1988, Prof Wang has developed a special affinity for the city and its literary voices. He feels honored to have been selected for an Honorary Fellowship by HKUST and will use it as a reminder that he should do more to cover Chinese literature in Hong Kong in his future work.

In honoring Prof David Wang Der-Wei, HKUST is celebrating not just a distinguished scholar but also a devoted seeker to trace the patterns of *wén* across the Sinophone world, cultures and generations. His journey illustrates that literature, in all its forms, remains a vital force for understanding and shaping a meaningful world through language, relationships, and imagination.

歲月流轉，王教授於2004年重返哈佛，擔任愛德華·亨德森中國文學教授。此時的哈佛已經變得更國際化和開放，王教授亦自此長留至今。多年來，其所獲榮銜多不勝數，包括中央研究院院士（2004）、長江學者獎（2008）、美國藝術與科學學院院士（2020）。自2019年起，他亦擔任香港科技大學（科大）賽馬會高等研究院資深訪問學人，並於2023年獲選為英國國家學術院國際院士。

王教授的研究領域廣泛，涵蓋現代與當代文學研究、晚清小說與戲劇、比較文學理論、殖民與現代台灣小說、中國離散文學及華語語系研究。其著作等身，涉獵日治時期台灣文學、中國文學的世界化等議題，並主編《哈佛新編中國現代文學史》等重要作品，廣受學界推崇。

其最新專著《當代中國需要小說》探討小說如何映照社會變遷，並提供批判當代議題的空間。王教授強調敘事的對話性與多層次意涵，拒絕簡化詮釋，呈現文學之深邃與包容。

同時，王教授關注文學的演化，雖然未深涉網絡文學和數碼敘事的世界，但他認為現在正值文學蓬勃的時代，無論印刷或數碼領域的作品皆蔚然可觀。他堅信「語言仍然充滿力量」，是教養之根、文化之母、文明之象，也是理解世界與人性的鑰匙。

自1988年初訪香港以來，王教授對這座城市及其文學聲音情有獨鍾。此次獲科大頒授榮譽院士，他深感榮幸，並視之為鞭策，期望在未來能更深入研究香港文學的發展。

科大謹此表揚王德威教授，向這位傑出學者和孜孜不倦的文學求道者致敬。王教授以「文」為索，跨越華語世界、文化疆界與不同世代，證明無論文學的形態如何演變，仍是人們洞察世界的不竭泉源，通過語言、關係與想像力，為世界添畫意義。