

《A Tribute to an Exemplar, a Scholar and a Moralist》



Dear friends,

A friend has passed away, along with an era. James stands for all of us a symbol as well as an exemplar; a scholar and a moralist. Till the end of his days, he spoke what he believed in. Never flinching, always honest, whether in politics, in private affairs or in scholarship. For me, he was one whose views I value whether in public broils or private embarrassment. We kept in touch over decades. Whenever I renewed our friendship after a lapse of years, he would never hesitate to rekindle and refresh. He was a scholar par excellence, a historian, a moralist and a true patriot. We are luck to share our lives with him.

Wilson Lee

[WYK1965] FW: 在维记饮咖啡的日子

June 23,2020

Wilson.

Your piece should be included in the contemporary edition of 今文观止, alongside 余光中's 莎诞夜 and 朱生豪's translation of Shakespearean Sonnets, even when 余光中 mocked Lin 's 语法 as 单调 and 生硬. That maybe too much to expect. 林语堂 was indeed tone insensitive, or he could be 赵元任。

A good review is second creation — Margot Fonteyn dancing the Dying Swan,

Pavarotti performing Ole Mio, Olivier reciting Hamlet. It may even be better than the Original — Wang Yuja playing Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No. 2, Third Movement, Wilhelm transposing Bach's Air on G String. The historic Helen of Troy cannot be More alluring than Marlow's description of her face. After reading your piece, I dread reading 苏东坡传 and 京华烟云。 I swear I would never go to 岳阳楼, which would be a disappointment when compared to 范仲淹's prose. After all, 文正公 had never set foot on

洞庭 or 君山。

I must confess that I lack that imagination to be prescient. 66 years ago, we were sipping coffee in

维记 as you were lauding Chaplain's film Modern Times, scribbling on the napkin your memorable phrases, and they appeared in print the following Wednesday in The 中国学生周报。

But I have an excuse. Even you could not have foreseen your own reincarnation, from a high school film critic to an eminent public attorney, and at another blow Of breath of 孙悟空, has morphed into a literati cum intellectual historian, reinventing And memorializing the lives of 林语堂 and 胡适 that other eulogists have missed.

I hope you had kept that 维记 napkin。 The original draft of 苏东坡传 and 围城 In 林语堂 and 钱锺书's hand is priceless. As the second best, send me your draft of "A Bilingual Polymath". I cannot miss my second chance of owning A piece of greatness.

And to return a brick for your pearl, I attach two pieces I wrote that might be of Interest to you and a few of our classmates. Like your two pieces, one was In Chinese, and the other English.

James

From: Wilson Lee, June 23, 2020

Learned friends,

How are you all ?

I just completed an article in English on Lin Yutang 林語堂 which you may find somewhat interesting. The article has been forwarded to his granddaughter for review. She is the daughter of 林太乙 who was once the Chinese editor of the Readers' Digest, headquartered in H.K. Residing at New York, Ms. Lai is a friend of my cousin Sharon, a practising lawyer in HK.

I had wanted to write this article for sometimes, to celebrate the life of a bilingual polymath. These broods of talents do not come along often and when it does, history would crackle, bursting with life and delight. He is one of few writers who had got onto the literary scene of the US, winning a place at the Best Sellers' list year in and year out. With the possible exception of the author of Crazy Rich Asians, few Chinese writers in the US could rival him in popularity or sales.

By the way, my Chinese article on Hu Shih will be published in a few months time at 傳記文學.

Best,
Wilson

Please click on the [Xiebook.Preface](#) written in Chinese by James.