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Curious Western Customs

華中理工大學出版社





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前 言

我们编译的这本小书收集了 100 多条西方风俗,从人们的言谈举止,到生活习惯,从饮食起居,到服饰仪表,从恋爱婚姻,到消遣娱乐,内容相当广泛。我们衷心希望,她会帮助中国读者从中发现这些风俗的历史演变,进一步了解西方文化。

篇幅短小,内容有趣,这是本书的主要特点。然而,本书还有一个更为难能可贵的特点:作者在介绍每一项西方风俗时,并未停留在陈述“内容”上,而是旁征博引,追根溯源,探索了各项风俗的历史渊源,从而使全书具有一定的学术价值,将给喜欢寻根刨底的读者带来更大的满足。同时,对照原文学习英语,对比中西文化背景,可以得到中西贯通的文化熏陶。

总之,这是一本集“知识性、趣味性、科学性”于一身的好书,我们向广大读者推荐这本书,同时也诚挚希望大家对我们的编译工作提出批评、建议。

编 者

1999 年 10 月





1. Etiquette

GREETINGS

Many greetings focus either on the general trend of events (the German *Wie geht's?* The French *Comment ça va?* The Mexican *Que pasa?* The American *How's it going?* and *What's happening?*) or, even more directly, on the ontological status of the greeter (The Spanish *Como está?* And the English *How are you?*). Anglo-Americans have added an economic formula to this repertoire. The common query "How do you do?" is very likely a variant of "What do you do?"—the latter widely used by strangers who are sizing up each other's potential as business associates. In whatever form we meet it, the question suggests the pragmatic nature of American society and the distance our social classes have placed between their etiquette and that of the Old World.

What a European means, or at least used to mean, by the greeting "How are you?" was not so much "How?" as "Who?" In other words, "Who are your father and mother? What is your breeding line?" In America such questions are rarely asked. One asks initially "What do you do?" or "How do you do?" because it is generally understood that, with few exceptions, you will not prosper here without labor.

"EXCUSE ME" AND "PARDON ME"

The two commonest apologies in our culture harken back to medieval prototypes. Although they are often used assertively — as when someone





1. 礼仪

问 候 语

许多问候语要么注重事情的总体情况(德语的 Wie geht's? 法语的 Comment ça va? 墨西哥语的 Que pasa? 美国英语的 How's it going? 和 What's happening?), 要么就更直接地询问被问候者本人的情况(西班牙语的 Como esta? 英语的 How are you?). 英国人和美国人为这套问候语添加了一种简洁的表达法。人们常用的问候语“How do you do?”很可能是从“What do you do?”演变而来的——后者在陌生人中广泛使用,他们一边问,一边暗自揣度对方能否成为生意的伙伴。无论我们遇到哪种形式,问话都表明美国社会的实用主义本质,以及我们这个社会各阶层的礼仪和旧大陆的礼仪的差别。

欧洲人使用问候语“How are you?”时,与其说在问“How?”不如说在问“Who?”,至少在过去是如此。也就是说,“你的父母是谁?你家世如何?”在美国,人们很少问这些问题。人们只问“What do you do?”或者“How do you do?”。因为,大家都明白:如果没有事做,几乎可以肯定你在这儿是不会发达的。

“对不起”和“请原谅”

我们的文化中最常用的两句道歉语,其源头可以追溯到中世纪。虽然这两句话经常用来宣称自己要干什么——比如,有人要



elbows his way through a crowd muttering, “Excuse me, I’m just going back to my seat”—linguistically both are clearly passive: They are announcements that one has transgressed a boundary and must beg forgiveness. The original transgressed boundaries were legal ones, and the formulas were the creation of canon and feudal law.

In the thirteenth century to “excuse” oneself meant to ask a magistrate literally to “remove the cause,” that is, to absolve the person of responsibility in a legal proceeding. To beg for “pardon” meant much the same thing, with an added ecclesiastical weight: To be pardoned by the church meant that one’s celestial as well as mundane dues had been lightened. In the fourteenth century, a pardoner was a wandering papal envoy licensed to sell pardons, or “indulgences”.

FAREWELLS

The story of English farewells is one of increasing secularization. In the Middle Ages, people parted by saying “God be with you”, a characteristically pious comment that had its parallels in the Spanish *adios* and the French *adieu*. However, the English form lost its blatant godliness, and as early as Shakespeare’s time was coming out as “God bye”. “Good bye” is a distortion of the early nineteenth century. That century also gave us the alternate “So long,” that chummier leavetaking that has been linked to the Arabic *salaam* and the Hebrew *shalom*, but that is more likely derived from the German *solange*, “until that time” that we meet again. In its anticipation of a reunion, then, “so long” suggests both the more formal German *Aufwiedersehen* and its French equivalent *au revoir*, both of which mean “until we see each other again”. The final step in the degeneration of partings took place in acid-blasted California, where





从人群中挤过去,就会低声说:“对不起,我想回到我的座位上。”从语言学的角度分析,这两句道歉语都明显表示被动:表明某人越过了界限,必须请求原谅。早先那些被逾越的界限是法律界限,由此产生了教规和封建律令。

13世纪时,请求自己得到“原谅”就是请求法官“撤销案子”,即赦免诉讼案中的责任人。请求“宽恕”的意思和这个差不多,只是多了一层宗教的意味:得到了教会的宽恕表明我们对上天和世俗的义务已经得到了减轻。14世纪时,宽恕者是云游各地的天主教会的特使,他们获准推销宽恕或“赦罪符”。

道 别 语

在英语道别语的发展过程中,世俗化的倾向越来越明显。中世纪的人们在分别时说“上帝与你同在”,这种极其虔诚的说法相当于西班牙语的 *adios*, 法语的 *adieu*。然而,英语里的说法失去了鲜明的宗教意味。早在莎士比亚时期,已经出现了“God bye”。“Good bye”是19世纪早期产生的讹误。19世纪还给我们留下了另一种道别语“so long”。这种比较亲密的告别语同阿拉伯语的 *salaam* 和希伯来语的 *shalom* 有些关联,不过更有可能是从德语中的 *solange* 演变而来,意思是“到那时”我们再相见。“so long”有期待重聚的意思,它使人们想起德语里一种比较正式的说法 *Aufwiedersehen*, 和法语的对等语 *au revoir*, 两者都表示“到我们再见时”。道别语世俗化的最后一步发生在愤世嫉俗的加利福尼亚州。



late-1960s young people, too hip to believe in God and too now-oriented to even consider tomorrow, came up with the antiseptic “Have a nice day”. That this vapid prayer became endemic may say as much about the hedonism and anomie of the 1970s as about the contagiousness of slang. One anxiously awaits the compression of this parting into “Handy¹”.

LADIES FIRST

The forms of deference to the “weaker sex” that social custom enshrines are variants of a metaform that one might call the “pedestal ploy”. The apparent function of the pedestal ploy is to proclaim the moral superiority of women by giving them benefits once reserved for royalty: giving up one’s seat, opening doors, pulling out chairs, and rising when a woman enters the room. The ploy’s hidden agenda is quite different. Over the centuries such pleasantries have infantilized women, kept them in their “higher” place, and maintained the convenient (for men) social fiction that females cannot perform real labor, and so need not be paid adequately for the labor they do perform. If the “little woman” can’t open a door for herself, it’s certainly not necessary to make her salary more than 60 percent of a man’s.

This effect of the pedestal ploy was not, of course, always obvious. In the days when the ploy was used most widely, the females to whom these social courtesies were extended did not, in fact, know how to work: As the daughters of wealth, their function was to manage the conspicuous fortunes their husbands earned. Women who worked were by definition members of the “lower” orders, and being lower carried moral as well as social connotations. It is not an accident that the expression “working girl,” which today means a professional prostitute, recently meant any woman with a





20世纪60年代末,年轻人玩世不恭,不信仰上帝,只顾眼前,不思将来。他们发明了不带个人感情的“Have a nice day”(祝你愉快、再见之意)。这句平淡无奇的祝愿语广为流传,既体现了70年代的享乐主义和颓废沉沦,又表明了俚语传播的迅速。现在,人们正热切地期待着这句道别语能压缩成“Handy”。

女士优先

社会习俗推崇对“柔弱的女性”表示尊敬,其各种表现形式是从所谓的“抬高手法”的一种变体演变而来的。“抬高手法”显而易见的作用是通过给予女性过去只有皇室才享有的优待,展示她们心理上的优越:让座,开门,拉出椅子,女士进屋时要起立。可是,这种手法隐含的意义却与此大相径庭。几个世纪以来,这些殷勤之举把女人当作孩子,把她们捧得“高高的”,并助长了社会上流传着的一种(对男人)有利的谎言:女人干不了什么真正的活计,因此对她们的工也工作也不必给予足够的报酬。要是“小妇人”连为自己开门都干不了,当然不必让她的工资超过男人的60%。

当然,“抬高手法”的这种作用并不总是明显的。过去这种手法应用得很普遍,接受社会礼遇的女性实际上不知道怎么工作。作为享受财富的人,她们只需管理丈夫赚回的大笔财产。有工作的女人理应属于“下等”阶层,“下等”不仅指社会地位低,而且有道德败坏的含义。“working girl”(劳动女子)这个表达法,不久以前还指任何有工作的妇女,如今却是职业妓女的代称,这种转变不是偶



job.

BOWING

The bow, like the curtsy, is out of fashion today since so few of us ever meet royalty. Most of us witness true bowing—rather than the curt head nod, its democratic descendant—only in theaters and night clubs. There is a subtle logic to this, for the bow that one gave a prince in former days and the bow that a performer gives today are at root the same gesture. Both reflect the ancient (indeed, biological) movement of lowering the head before a superior to signify respect, service, or obedience. The message of the bow is “You are greater than I am; please treat me well.” Since rock stars, from “King” Elvis to today’s Prince, make real princes look impoverished, it may seem inappropriate for performers to bend at the waist to royal viewers—or to the modern equivalent, their Majesties, the Mob. But the custom developed in simpler times, when a performer had considerably less social standing. Tradition has sustained the performer’s bow even though that standing has risen dramatically. Strictly from the point of view of status, though, Michael Jackson probably should be receiving, not giving, the bows.

TIPPING ONE’S HAT

Few Americans tip their hats today, partly because etiquette has loosened and partly because they don’t wear hats. Until the 1950s, however, men commonly tipped their hats to women, and removed them entirely in elevators. In doing so, they were carrying on a tradition that has its roots in Roman times. In ancient Rome a head covering was an emblem





然的。

鞠 躬

现在,鞠躬像屈膝礼一样过时了,因为有机会遇见王室成员的人已经寥寥无几了。我们大多数人只能在戏院和夜总会见到真正意义上的鞠躬——而不是简单地地点一下头,这种由鞠躬演变而来的大众化礼仪。其中的原因很微妙,过去给王子鞠躬同现在演员表演时鞠躬,动作本质上是一模一样的。两者都反映了一项由来已久(实际上也属人体生理功能)的动作:在尊者面前低下头,表示尊敬、效劳或顺从。鞠躬所传达的信息是:“您比我了不起,请善待我。”既然摇滚明星们,从“猫王”艾尔维斯到今天的“王子”,其风采令真正的王子相形见绌,让他们对王室观众弯腰鞠躬是不合适的——对现代社会中像王室一样有影响力的普通观众鞠躬也不合适。

然而这种习俗是在过去发展起来的。那时演员的地位比现在低得多。即使现在他们的地位极大地提高了,依照传统,演员仍需要鞠躬。尽管严格从身份来看,迈克尔·杰克逊也许应该是接受别人的鞠躬,而不是给别人鞠躬。

用手触帽檐致意

现在,美国人很少用手触帽檐致意了,部分原因在于礼节规范放松了,部分在于他们不戴帽子了。然而,直到20世纪50年代,男人仍旧通常用手触帽檐向女士致意,在电梯里则把帽子摘下。他们的这些举动承袭了一项源于古罗马时代的传统。在古罗马时





of social or political superiority. Sabine Baring-Gould observed that Julius Caesar was murdered because he had accepted “the merest shred of symbol,” a royal headband, implying “that all save he were vassals and serfs.” The sign of a freed slave, Baring-Gould also noted, was the so-called Phrygian cap, a floppy Near Eastern import that well into the nineteenth century still symbolized freedom.

Just as covering the head symbolized dominance, so uncovering it symbolized submission. Ever since the early Middle Ages, to remove one’s hat—be it made of cloth or metal—has signified subservience to a superior. As an animal bares its throat or belly to a dominant rival, the feudal vassal bared his head to his lord, saying, in effect, “I am at your service; do with me as you will.” This original sense of the ritual is mirrored in the expressions “with hat in hand” and “I take my hat off to him”.

BUSINESS CARDS

Today business cards are distributed with abandon by working people of all social classes, illustrating not only the ubiquity of commercial interests but also the fluidity of the world of trade. Whether one is buttonholing potential clients for a carpentry service, announcing one’s latest academic appointment, or “networking” with fellow executives, it is permissible to advertise one’s talents and availability by an outstretched hand and the statement “Here’s my card.” As Robert Louis Stevenson once observed, everybody makes his living by selling *something*. Business cards facilitate this endeavor.

It has not always been this way. The cards that we use today for commercial purposes are a vulgarization of the nineteenth-century social





代,头上戴帽子是显赫的社会或政治地位的标志。萨宾人巴林-古德认为裘力斯·凯撒之所以被谋杀,是因为他同意把“这种标志限制到最小”,代之以一条高贵的发带,暗示“除了他,别人都是仆人和奴隶”。巴林-古德还说,获得自由的奴隶的标志就是所谓的弗里吉亚软帽,这种从近东传来的软帽直到19世纪后期仍是自由的象征。

正如戴帽子象征统治一样,脱帽则象征臣服。自中世纪早期起,摘下帽子——无论是布做的,还是金属制的——一直都表示对尊者的顺服。就像动物遇见了强大的对手要袒露喉部和腹部,封建时代的奴仆见到主人也要脱帽致敬。实际上他等于在说“为您效劳;一切听从您吩咐。”这种礼节的初始含义,在“with hat in hand”(谦虚地)和“I take my hat off to him”(我向他脱帽致意)的说法中都有所体现。

商业名片

现今,社会各阶层中有职业的人随意递名片,这不仅表明了商业利益无所不在,也揭示了贸易世界的流动性。无论是你正竭力说服一名潜在的顾客,要为他做木工活,还是宣布最近荣膺的学术职务,还是和同行“商讨”意见,你都可以伸出手,说句“这是我的名片”,来宣传自己的才能和表示乐意效劳。正如罗伯特·路易丝·斯蒂文森曾说过,每个人都靠销售某种东西谋生,商业名片方便了这种行为。

然而,以前名片的用途和现在不同。我们现在用于商业目的的名片是19世纪社交名片的通俗化产物,那时名片的用途和现在





calling card, an artifact with a quite different purpose. In the Gilded Age², possessing a calling card indicated not that you were interested in forming business relationships, but that your money was so old (or so you wanted people to think) that you had no need to make a living. For the calling-card class, life was a continual round of social visits, and the protocol governing these visits was inextricably linked to the proper use of cards. Pick up any etiquette manual predating World War I, and you will find whole chapters devoted to such questions as whether a single gentleman may leave a card for a lady; when a lady must, and must not, turn down the edges of a card; and whether an unmarried girl of between fourteen and seventeen may carry more than six or less than thirteen cards in her purse in months beginning with a “J”. The calling card system was especially cherished by those who made no distinction between manners and mere form, and its preciousness was well defined by Mrs. John Sherwood. Her 1887 manual called the card “the field mark and device” of civilization.

The business version of the calling card came in around the turn of the century, when the formerly well defined borders between the commercial and the personal realms were beginning to blur. In the decades when both types of cards still were used widely, society mavens considered it unforgivable to fuse the two realms. Emily Post’s contemporary Lillian Eichler called it very poor taste to use business cards for social purposes, and as late as 1967 Amy Vanderbilt counseled that the merchant’s marker “may never double for social purposes”.

ELEVATOR BEHAVIOR

What’s the worst thing that can happen to you in an elevator? Mugging? Falling twenty floors to your death? Terrifying possibilities, but



迥然不同。在镀金时代,拥有名片不仅表明你乐于建立商业关系,还表明你家资祖传(或者你希望别人这么认为),不必辛苦谋生。对持有名片的阶层,生活是一轮无穷无尽的社交拜访,拜访的礼节和正确使用名片密不可分。拿起任何一本一战前的礼仪手册,你会发现整章整章的篇幅被用来介绍这类问题:单身男士能否给女士送名片,女士何时可以折下名片的边沿,什么时候不能;14至17岁的未婚女子能否在字母“J”打头的月份里,在钱包里放多于6张或少于13张的名片。名片制度尤其为那些认为风度教养和外在形式不可分离的人所珍视,而约翰·舍伍德夫人对其珍贵的作用做了很好概括。1887年,她在一个小册子里称名片为文明的“标志和手段”。

本世纪初,商业领域和个人领域之间那些泾渭分明的界限开始模糊不清,商业名片问世了。此后几十年里,两种名片都得到广泛使用。社会学专家认为混淆两种名片的用途是不可取的。与艾米丽·鲍斯特同时代的丽莲·艾奇勒认为,把商业名片用作社交名片是缺乏品味的表现。1967年,艾米·凡德比尔特还建议,表明商人身份的名片“也许不应当扩展到社交用途”。

电梯里的规范

在电梯里,你可能遇到的最糟糕的事是什么?遭人背后袭击打劫?坠落20层摔死?然而我认为每位电梯乘客心里都恐惧被



pale in comparison with what I believe to be every elevator rider's secret phobia; being stuck between floors, perhaps forever. Because of this fear, we have evolved precise, if unwritten, rules for behaving in an elevator. You must not speak to other passengers (except for quickly mumbled hellos), you must not establish eye contact, and you must face the door. This establishes an extreme impersonality, even a kind of invisibility, and this is precisely the attitude to have in a situation from which you cannot wait to be rescued. Establishing a relationship in an elevator would be tantamount to admitting that the fearful vehicle in which you are suspended is not a temporary aberration but perhaps a temporary home. Structurally an elevator car resembles both a jail cell and a burial vault; in order to deny these resemblances, we make ourselves deaf dumb, and blind.

