Document A

D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 1928
London: Penguin Classics (M. Squires ed.), 2006

She saw a secret little clearing, and a secret little hut made of rustic poles. And she had never been here before! She realized it was the quiet place where the growing pheasants were reared. The keeper, in his shirt-sleeves, was kneeling hammering. The dog trotted forward with a short sharp bark. The keeper lifted his face suddenly, and saw her. He had a startled look in his eyes.

He straightened himself and saluted, watching her in silence as she came forward with weakening limbs. He resented the intrusion: he cherished his solitude as his only and last freedom in life.

'I wondered what the hammering was,' she said, feeling weak and breathless, and a little afraid of him, as he looked so straight at her.

'Ah'm gettin' th' coops ready for th' young bods,' he said, in broad vernacular.

She did not know what to say, and she felt weak.

'I should like to sit down a bit,' she said.

'Come and sit 'ere i' th' ut,' he said, going in front of her to the hut, pushing aside some timber and stuff, and drawing out a rustic chair made of hazel sticks.

'Am Ah ter light y' a little fire?' he asked, with the curious naïveté of the dialect.

'Oh, don't bother!' she said.

But he looked at her hands: they were rather blue. So he quickly took some larch-twigs to the little brick fire-place in the corner, and in a moment the yellow flame was running up the chimney. He made a place by the brick hearth.

'Sit 'ere a bit, an' warm yer,' he said.

She obeyed him. He had that curious kind of protective authority she obeyed at once. So she sat and warmed her hands at the blaze, and dropped little logs on the fire, while outside he was hammering again. She did not really want to sit poked in a corner by the fire. She would rather have watched from the door. But she was being looked after, so she had to submit.

The hut was quite cosy, panelled with unvarnished deal, having a little rustic table and a stool, besides her chair, and a carpenter's bench, then a big box, tools, new boards, nails, and many things hung from pegs: axe, hatchet, traps, leather things, things in sacks, his coat. It had no window, the light came in through the open door. It was a jumble. But also it was a sort of little sanctuary.

She listened to the tapping of the man's hammer. It was not so happy. He was oppressed. Here was a trespass on his privacy, and a dangerous one! A woman! He had reached the point where all he wanted on earth was to be alone. And yet he was powerless to preserve his privacy. He was a hired man, and these people were his masters.

Especially he did not want to come into contact with a woman again. He feared it: and he had a big wound from old contacts. He felt, if he could not be alone, and if he could not be left alone, he would die. His recoil away from the outer world was complete. His last refuge was this wood. To hide himself there!

Connie grew warm by the fire, which she had made too big: then she grew hot. She went and sat on the stool in the doorway, watching the man at work. He seemed not to notice her: but he knew. Yet he worked on, as if absorbedly, and his brown dog sat on her tail near him, and surveyed the untrustworthy world.

Slender, quiet and quick, the man finished the coop he was making, turned it over, tried the sliding door, then set it aside. Then he rose, went for an old coop, and took it to the chopping log where he was working. Crouching, he tried the bars. Some broke in his hands. He began to draw the nails. Then he turned the coop over, and deliberated. And he gave absolutely no sign of awareness of the woman's presence.

So Connie watched him fixedly. And the same solitary aloneness she had seen in him naked, she now saw in him clothed: solitary, and intent, like an animal that works alone, but also brooding, like a soul that recoils away, away from all human contact. Silently, patiently, he was recoiling away from her even now. It was the stillness, and the timeless sort of patience, in a man impatient and passionate, that touched Connie's womb. She saw it in his bent head, the quick, quiet hands, the crouching of his slender, sensitive loins: something patient and withdrawn. She felt his experience had been deeper, and wider than her own: much deeper and wider, and perhaps more deadly. And this relieved her of herself. She felt almost irresponsible.

So she sat in the doorway of the hut in a dream, utterly unaware of time and of particular circumstances. She was so drifted away that he glanced up at her quickly, and saw the utterly still, waiting look on her face. To him it was a look of waiting. And a little, thin tongue of fire suddenly flickered in his loins, at the root of his back, and he groaned in spirit. He dreaded with a repulsion almost of death, any further close human contact. He wished above all things she would go away and leave him to his own privacy. He dreaded her will, her female will, and her modern, female insistency. And above all, he dreaded her cool, upper-class impudence of having her own way. For after all he was only a hired man. He hated her presence there.

Connie came to herself with sudden uneasiness. She rose. The afternoon was passing to evening. Yet she could not go away. She went over to the man. He stood up at attention, his worn face stiff and blank, his eyes watching her.

Document B

Kate Fox, *Watching the English, The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour*, 2004
London: Hodder & Stoughton

GROOMING-TALK

I described weather-speak in the previous chapter as a form of 'grooming-talk'. Most of the much-vaunted human capacity for complex language is in fact devoted to such talk – the verbal equivalent of picking fleas off each other or mutual back-scratching.

THE RULES OF INTRODUCTION

Grooming-talk starts with greeting-talk. Weather-speak is needed in this context partly because greetings and introductions are such an awkward business for the English. The problem has become particularly acute since the decline of 'How do you do?' as the standard, all-purpose greeting. The 'How do you do?' greeting – where the correct response is not to answer the question, but to repeat it back, 'How do you do?', like an echo or a well-trained parrot – is still in use in upper-class and upper-middle circles, but the rest are left floundering, never knowing quite what to say. Instead of sneering at the old-fashioned stuffiness of the 'How do you do?' ritual, we would do better to mount a campaign for its revival: it would solve so many problems.

Awkwardness Rules

As it is, our introductions and greetings tend to be uncomfortable, clumsy and inelegant. Among established friends, there is less awkwardness, although we are often still not quite sure what to do with our hands, or whether to hug or kiss. The French custom of a kiss on each cheek has become popular among the chattering classes and some other middle- and upper-middle-class groups, but is regarded as silly and pretentious by many other sections of society, particularly when it takes the form of the 'air-kiss'. Women who use this variant (and it is only women; men do not air-kiss, unless they are very camp gays, and even then it is done 'ironically') are disparagingly referred to as 'Mwah-Mwahs'. Even in the social circles where cheek-kissing is acceptable, one can still never be entirely sure whether one kiss or two is required, resulting in much awkward hesitation and bumping as the parties try to second-guess each other.

Handshakes are now the norm in business introductions – or rather, they are the norm when people in business are introduced to each other for the first time. Ironically, the first introduction, where a degree of formality is expected, is the easiest. (Note, though, that the English handshake is always somewhat awkward, very brief, performed 'at arm's length', and without any of the spare-hand involvement – clasping, forearm patting, etc. – found in less inhibited cultures.)

At subsequent meetings, particularly as business contacts get to know each other better, a handshake greeting often starts to seem too formal, but cheek-kisses would be too informal (or too pretentious, depending on the social circle), and in any case not allowed between males, so we revert to the usual embarrassed confusion, with no-one being quite sure what to do. Hands are half-extended and then withdrawn or turned into a sort of

vague wave; there may be awkward, hesitant moves towards a cheek-kiss or some other form of physical contact such as an arm-touch – as no contact at all feels a bit unfriendly – but these are also often aborted half-way. This is excruciatingly English: over-formality is embarrassing, but so is an inappropriate degree of informality (that problem with extremes again).

The No-name Rule

In purely social situations, the difficulties are even more acute. There is no universal prescription of handshakes on initial introduction – indeed, they may be regarded as too 'businesslike' – and the normal business practice of giving one's name at this point is also regarded as inappropriate. You do not go up to someone at a party (or in any other social setting where conversation with strangers is permitted, such as a pub bar counter) and say 'Hello, I'm John Smith,' or even 'Hello, I'm John.' In fact, the only correct way to introduce yourself in such settings is not to introduce yourself at all, but to find some other way of initiating a conversation – such as a remark about the weather.

The 'brash American' approach: 'Hi, I'm Bill from Iowa,' particularly if accompanied by an outstretched hand and beaming smile, makes the English wince and cringe. The American tourists and visitors I spoke to during my research had been both baffled and hurt by this reaction. 'I just don't get it,' said one woman. 'You say your name and they sort of wrinkle their noses, like you've told them something a bit too personal and embarrassing.' 'That's right,' her husband added. 'And then they give you this tight little smile and say "Hello" – kind of pointedly not giving their name, to let you know you've made this big social booboo. What the hell is so private about a person's name, for God's sake?'

I ended up explaining, as kindly as I could, that the English do not want to know your name, or tell you theirs, until a much greater degree of intimacy has been established – like maybe when you marry their daughter. Rather than giving your name, I suggested, you should strike up a conversation by making a vaguely interrogative comment about the weather (or the party or pub or wherever you happen to be). This must not be done too loudly, and the tone should be light and informal, not earnest or intense. The object is to 'drift' casually into conversation, as though by accident. Even if the other person seems happy enough to chat, it is still customary to curb any urges to introduce yourself.

Eventually, there may be an opportunity to exchange names, providing this can be achieved in a casual, unforced manner, although it is always best to wait for the other person to take the initiative. Should you reach the end of a long, friendly evening without having introduced yourself, you may say, on parting, 'Goodbye, nice to meet you, er, oh – I didn't catch your name?' as though you have only just noticed the omission. Your new acquaintance should then divulge his or her name, and you may now, at last, introduce yourself – but in an offhand way, as though it is not a matter of any importance: 'I'm Bill, by the way.'

One perceptive Dutch tourist, after listening attentively to my explanation of this procedure, commented: 'Oh, I see. It is like *Alice Through the Looking Glass*: you do everything the wrong way round.' I had not thought of recommending *Alice* as a guide to English etiquette, but on reflection it seems like quite a good idea.

Document C
Jim Jarmusch, still from the sequence "Jack Shows Meg his Tesla Coil"
in *Coffee & Cigarettes*, 2003