

HOW DO YOU DO?

NICOLA WILSON LAMENTS THE LOST ART OF THE SIMPLE HANDSHAKE

A strange old riddle, peculiar to those of mischievous temperament, runs thus; "What do men do standing up, women do sitting down and dogs do on three legs?"

The answer is, of course, shake hands. Those of you who thought otherwise should congratulate yourselves on the cultural British double-entendre heritage you have absorbed into your subconscious. And perhaps lay off the Carry On films.

The humble handshake has been a bastion of greetings since the first ancient tribes showed each other that they carried no weapons, whilst simultaneously keeping the members of the other tribe safely at arm's length. The most effusive of Victorian greetings centered on a vigorous pumping up and down (steady on double-entendre readers) of your fellow man's hand as you warmly welcomed him with a cry of "Good Lord, Jenkins, my dear fellow!" The name might have been optional, but the handshake itself was a vital component.

Even today, in our sexually-enlightened, touchy-feely age, this simple gesture carries a considerable weight in certain circumstances. Upon entering a room for a formal interview, (otherwise known as 'descending to a

special level of hell'), one is advised to instantly shake hands with every interviewer before resigning oneself to the relentless agony of Appearing Clever Under Pressure.



A handshake solves all

Another example is that of our benevolent and all-knowing rulers on high (read: 'self-serving political money barons'), who utilise the handshake to portray international harmony. You may notice their simultaneous use of a smile of remarkably false sincerity. "See Ruler of Country X? See how we shake hands? See how we touch like Victorian gentlemen? This shows that we like Country X and wish to trade amiably with them, and that they have absolutely no oil reserves whatsoever. Country Y, however, with its vast oil fields and unfamiliar religion..."

For the contact-sensitive, the conservative and the unclean, the

handshake is a vital social tool. However, present a stranger with your hand today, complete with unthreatening smile and friendly greeting, and you might as well have offered them a mouldy haddock.

I am forced to admit that, yes, a handshake is a little old-fashioned, a little bit traditional. I would like to point out however, that we do not shun traditions such as being nice to old ladies or refusing to confront people who push into queues in front of us. Such things are bastions of our social conventions. They have made Britain great; or, at least, tolerable. In light of this, let us make a vow together.

Let us throw off the shackles of this era of endless embracing. Let us cast aside the need to greet a new acquaintance with nothing more than an awkward smile. Let us reject The Cuddle. Let us reclaim the handshake - a firm, honest and direct expression of our human love for one another, a love that does not require full body contact or unnecessary touching. Let us remember that eye contact is as valid as chest contact. Let us step forwards, hand-in-marginally-damp-hand, into a new and wonderful future.

Want to shake on it?

WHY I HATE TKMAXX

ANTON LAZARUS

Never trust a shop that values Recommended Retail Prices; question one that believes in perpetual promotion; but avoid like the plague any establishment that doesn't practice safe X.

The premise of TKMaxx, what they irritatingly refer to as their "concept", is to buy 'big label' clothing in bulk and sell it on from their bomb-site shops at: "Always up to 60% off!". 'Always up to'? That doesn't make sense. I object to limiting a sale price and then using it as a marketing device, but I suppose it doesn't surprise me that it works. Why? Because TKMaxx is a shop frequented exclusively by morons.

TKMaxx is the shopping destination of choice for stupid people. People that want "Big labels. Low prices." People who think that having "Quiksilver", "Adidas" or "Nike" plastered across their clothing somehow increases its, and their, worth. People who don't understand, or want to bypass, the already moronic concept of paying extra for a brand to be associated with its carefully and expensively crafted image.

To wear an obviously branded item of clothing is in invitation. An invitation to: 'look at me, look at my brand and associate me with a certain image.' This logic demonstrates a belief in the importance of being peer-reviewed. It's not "good dress sense" to wear brands, it's latching onto an image that has been created to make copious amounts of

money by giving boring people a uniform.

In twenty-first century Britain, identity is open to the free market. Buying clothing with a certain brand name is self-pigeon holing, at a cost, for boring people.

TKMaxx's "concept" allows people to buy themselves a cheap identity, in every sense of the word. Cheap because it's £20 off the RRP, and cheap because an identity based on big-business marketing should be worth nothing.

I hate TKMaxx because they make money by selling this worthless "identity" and then boast that it's good value. Or maybe I'm just bitter because they only had those Abercrombie and Fitch jogging-pants in XXL.