STYLE

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

EXCLUSIVE
SEX, PUNK AND SURVIVING MALCOLM:
VIVIENNE WESTWOOD'S EXPLOSIVE NEW MEMOIR

WHITE

Although white is thought to be immovably holy for its role in weddings, it has been ostracised as an everyday colour for its reputation as unflattering. In doing this, we forget what white does better than any other colour: lace, the sleekest kinds of leather, pristine Seinfeld sneakers. If one must avoid wearing white on one's body – despite the potential to feel like an ice queen – I strongly advise exploring it when it comes to accessories and embellishments. If you are a clumsy eater, remember Vivienne Westwood: "Stains are decorations. If you just detest the association with purity, dig up a few kinderwhore references.

RED

Red is infallible when it comes to power dressing. It is categorised as a warm colour, but it is not soft. In fact, red translates femininity into power, according to a thing I once watched about how red lipstick makes people think of vaginas, and that's why it's thought of as sexy and inappropriate to wear to the office. One master of turning the feminine into a source of power is Taylor Swift, whose music uses girly emotions to assert ownership over the unfortunate history of a romantic relationship. This talent is best showcased on Swift's 2012 album, Red.

BLUE

The conceptual opposite of red, blue is categorised as a cool colour, but it is not hard. It is the sky, the water and Joni Mitchell. It is a little hippie-dippy. It is hard to read as a word without hearing Beyoncé crooning the name of her baby in that video where they are on the beach. Baby blue is great for a poodle skirt or a Margot Tenenbaum-esque Lacoste jumper. Regular blue is the shade favoured by sports teams and Mrs Peacock. Navy blue was outed in Mindy Kaling's 2011 memoir as a crutch for stylists trying to slim down their clients without going for the obvious choice of black. (In navy blue's defence, it is the best colour for a peacoat.) All in all, blue is OK, but it never lasts as anyone's favourite colour past the age of nine.

GREEN

Type "yellow-green" into Google and the first three suggestions are "mucus", "urine" and "vaginal discharge". With dark green you get "stool", "diarrhoea" and "vegetables". Emerald, however, is a universally perfect shade, and Tippi-Hedren-in-The-Birds mint is possibly the best colour visible to the human eye. If green were a film character, the actor would be Oscar-nominated for tackling such a multifaceted role.

YELLOW

While green may be cursed with an association with bodily functions, yellow gets away pretty easily. It's bold yet sweet and the colour of one of the best-known plaid looks from the 1995 film Clueless.

PURPLE

The 2000s failed purple. After American Apparel V-necks tainted it with faux differentness, Justin Bieber took a stand in restoring it to innocence and even gender neutrality, but he dropped the ball once he felt the need to defend his manliness with reported steroid use and subsequent shiftlessness. What purple needs to do is take a page from Walden and go and live in the woods, where it can be judged free of any cultural associations.

ORANGE

While many avoid orange in a solid-coloured garment for fear of looking like an actual orange, it can do a lot for a print. See 1960s–1970s Pucci, the video for Solange's Losing You and any space-dye worthy of an appearance on Freaks and Geeks.

GOLD

Gold has been rightfully monopolised by disco, Dynasty and the Illuminati. Gold can be legitimately glamorous, but is most fun in windcheater form.

BLACK

Black is often seen as negative space, something you wear when you want people to focus on a more interesting article of clothing, or on your character. On the contrary, black should be considered a complete look on its own. It is the uniform of New Yorkers and goths alike, confusing sophisticated intellectuals with disaffected teenagers. Silver can be legitimately classy, can be seen on the red carpet as either sultry (Angelina Jolie at the 2012 Oscars) or not giving a f*** (Lorde at everything). Though I imagine Stevie Nicks's actual favourite colour is something like purple, she sports all black on stage, presumably for its witch-like mystery and ability to command an audience. Black is, in the words of a very Wikipedia editor, "the colour most commonly associated with mourning, the end, secrets, magic, power, violence, evil and elegance".

SILVER

Silver has been rightfully monopolised by New Year's Eve, Zenon: The Zequel and Beyoncé's "robot" hand from Single Ladies. Silver can be legitimately classy, but is most fun in sequin form.

GREY

Grey was made for nice sweaters and gross sweatpants, thus covering both ends of the Sunday-spent-at-home spectrum: productive lazy (tea, reading) and plain lazy (junk food, TV).

PINK

Pink is thought to be the most non-threatening colour, which may explain its assignment to the female gender. It's frilly and inconsequential and best known for its appearances on princesses, dolls and blushing faces. Sometimes I wear lots of pink to show that girliness and intelligence are not mutually exclusive. Sometimes I never wear pink to show that some girls don't identify with the idea of girliness. Pink is fraught with politics, and I haven't even got to Pretty in Pink, the 1986 John Hughes film; Pink, the Victoria's Secret juniors line; or P!nk, the pop vocalist.

I CAN WEAR A
RAINBOW

IS GREY THE LAZIEST COLOUR? IS RED APPROPRIATE FOR THE OFFICE? IN OUR SECOND EXTRACT FROM THE BOOK WOMEN IN CLOTHES, THE WRITER AND VOICE OF GENERATION Y TAVI GEVINSON DECODES COLOUR