



The Englishness of English Dress

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Is there a peculiarly English 'look' and if so how does one define it?

From the 'traditional' dress of the Victorian rural working class through to the contemporary collections of Vivienne Westwood and a younger generation of London-based designers, notions of Englishness, either real or imagined, have always been at play in considerations of English fashion and clothing. This provocative book explores how far these fraught ideals can be applied to the dress of the past and present. English expressions of taste and creativity have had a profound influence on style over the last three centuries, and the pursuit and subversion of an English 'look' have shaped conceptions of fashionability from the pastoralism of the eighteenth-century through to the eras of Twiggy, Punk and beyond. But are these simply stereotypical characterizations that relate to an imagined 'Englishness', or is there some concrete basis for them? If the former, what has led to their development? If the latter, what definitions can be employed to unravel such complicated conceptions of national identity? What role has social decorum played in developing an 'English' style, and is this preoccupation with etiquette in fact unique to England ?

With chapters authored by leading scholars in the fields of costume history, social history and cultural studies, this is the first book to examine the ways in which fashion and dress might be considered in the context of national identities as they apply in England. Presenting an overview of how particular designers and consumer groups have striven to present or contest versions of Englishness through clothing from the 18th through to the 21st centuries, it will fascinate anyone interested in dress history, national and ethnic identity or English cultural history.

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