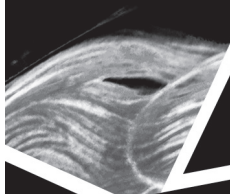


CECI N'EST PAS UNE FOTO

by
FIONA JARDINE





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1.

Fifties sweater girls, kitten-soft cashmere pulled tightly over the ballistics of their bras, set their lips to a laugh and confront the camera in starlet poses. Home-spun sex-pots, they strain at picket fence gender tethers, their conflicted sense of adventure up front, unavoidable, in-your-face.

Yet.

Primpit!

Where could it go? That bottled wanderlust?

The hardcore leathers of Varla in desert swelter?

The prom-y pastels of WASP-y Stepford?

2.

Air travel really took off in the Sixties, (pardon the pun). Charters opened up the Med to short-haul Brits and the genealogical beat – a blood drum – brought Great Whites to Europe, from whence they'd sprung. The pull to Celtic heartlands was strong.

In Scotland, Brigadoons were confected by quixotic Germans on the miasamas of Rob Roy and Waverley. Extra shortbread. Against a backdrop of sturm und drang crags, clouds, mountains, golden eagles... warriors clad in clan affiliate tartans sired a noble lineage. So the story goes. Seventh sons of seventh sons returned with dollars, cameras and an appetite for campy sentiment.

*Breathes there the man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned,
From wandering on a foreign strand!
There can be only one.*

(Chevy Chase)

¹ Admittedly not the last two.

Sir Walter Scott wrote those lines, ¹ (they are taken from a schoolboy favorite, 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel'). A pre-eminent Lowlander, Scott's role in the manufacture of the Hielans and its characters is well-marked. Less so, the extent to which compatriot emigrants were involved in generating that most enduring of American archetypes – the routin' toutin' cowboy, (let's not forget his counterpart, the busty saloon bar Moll). There is reason for saying the cowboy's machismo finds its roots in the stony ground of the Border Marches. Predating Clearances and Potato Famines, which conveyed the Gaeltacht to the Americas, significant migrations of Lowland Scots (Ulster Irish and North British) landed on the Eastern seaboard, taking with them an attitude born of lawless equestrian cultures inured for centuries to incessant fighting over land and livestock.

Two stereotypes here to define the male diaspora, then: the cowboy and the chieftan.

There is an irony in the fact that it was largely Border woolen mills that swathed the nation and returning Scotch in tartan. Kilts, yes, but plus fours and sports jackets too. Golfing attire. Scott might be styled an inadvertent apologist for absent aristocrats – imbued by the grandeur of the (empty) landscape, the noble savage is an easy sell – but also a catalyst for the Scottish textile industry, especially as it pays forward as heritage.





3.

Tartan has global immediacy. In the Sixties, boarding a Caledonian Airways flight in Ottawa or New York, passengers were met by stewardesses outfitted secretarially in corporate plaid. It was Scotland in the cabin. Swirling Drambuie in Edinburgh crystal cut to reflect its topaz brilliance, on Caledonian Airways, travellers opened gatefold cards emblazoned with the crests of clan chiefs, recognising, perhaps, their surname (...Mclean ...Murray ...Cameron ... Kerr ...), to peruse a menu of cocotte egg en gelee, grilled lamb cutlets and peach conde. No haggis, to be sure, but served, with a winning smile, by a bonnie lassie.

4.

*Eastern Girls are hip, I really dig the styles they wear
and American Girls with the way they talk, they knock
me out when I fly there
Latin Stewardesses really make you feel alright
and the German Girls really do their best to keep their
passengers warm at night
I've been all around this great big world
and I've flown with all kinds of girls
but I can't wait to get back to Gatwick
to the cutest girls in the world
I wish they all could be Caledonian
I wish they all could be Caledonian
I wish they all could be Caledonian Girls*

British Caledonian
(We never forget you have a choice).

In the Fifties, the Barrie Girl stood demurely by a slanting, calligraphic version of the company logo in photographs destined for look-books. Pragmatically seconded from the typing pool or finishing floor, cast in Tam Lin, she could be the milk-fed mortal to break the hex that holds a young knight captive in the court of the Faerie-Queen. I should say the Barrie in question is Barrie Knitwear, a firm established in Hawick, maybe the most frontier town in the Borders. Pumped up by the hand of pen and ink illustrators for line-drawn classifieds in *Vogue*, the Barrie Girl morphed with Marilyn. Perhaps she also morphed with her supernatural rival. Which makes the sweater girl part witch (as if that were not in our ken).

Romance is tradition ephemerally puffed. Where tartan is strident, cashmere is stealth. 'Haste and speed enter not into the scheme of things, for here the loveliest of cashmeres and lambswools are conjured into garments of lasting beauty. Soft as swansdown and a summer's cloud, infused with tints of nature's gentle palette, these contemporary classics are born only of skill and time-worn knowledge'. So runs the copy of an advert placed in *Punch* in 1955 by Barrie (& Kersel, as the firm was then known). Cashmere's is a tender magic. Beguiling. Blushing.

In the look-book archives, annotated with information concerning style, colour, shoulder shapes and yarn ply, the photographs hint at the provenance of place. Styles carry the names of solid, stone-built towns – Dunbar, Nairn, Brodick – and regional rivers – Ettrick, Esk, Slitrig. The colours are colloquial – Ling and Whin. Wormholes open to the memory of unheated morning rooms, patrolled by grizzly terriers, stacked with copies of the *Scots* magazine. Those are your wormholes as much as they are mine.





There's a lot channelling through names – tradition, ambition, instrumental association. Indeed, 'Braemar', the name of a long-established, well-kent firm that laid claim to originating the term 'knitwear', is a name that properly belongs on Royal Deeside not in Teviotdale. Huddersfield Street and Wakefield Mill, (in Galashiels), carry names borrowed from the locale of trading partners in Yorkshire.

A few years on, we might imagine the look-book annotations might refer to Cumbernauld, Livingston, Glenrothes and East Kilbride; to Patis, Cointreau and Grenadine. The collusion of spirit and place seems appropriate. Prestwick in Rinquin. Here, the Barrie Girl is effervescent, sportif, running through a barre of set pieces. She's on location (Park Circus?) and on a photographer's paper roll (it's hardly Blow Up) fully-fashioned, perfectly coiffed in her neat ski polo. She's nextdoor. Pleated for play. Mothproofed.

6.

We had names for her.

Lesley.

Joan.

Sandra.

Roseanne.

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Barrie Girls 26th — 28th July 2013

www.wearepanel.co.uk



The image features a minimalist, high-contrast design. A central black rectangular box is tilted at an angle, containing the text "CECI EST UNE FULLY FASHIONED FOTO" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font. This central element is surrounded by several other black geometric shapes: a triangle to the upper left, a large irregular shape to the upper right, and a large, complex shape to the lower right. The lower-right shape includes a small, curved, grayscale detail. The entire composition is set against a plain white background.

CECI EST UNE FULLY
FASHIONED FOTO

design by
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