

THE TWEED RUN MEETS HARRIS TWEED: STORIES OF A FASHIONABLE CYCLING EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between the cloth Harris Tweed and the cycling event, the Tweed Run. It focuses on extrapolating stories as lived and told of those participating in the event, to examine how material objects can lend agency to a fashionable cycling experience. Narrative inquiry methodology is used to explore how a subject emotionally connects with their personal possessions as revealed through storytelling. The aim is to create a new sense of meaning and significance within the research topic, rather than focusing on establishing a grand narrative. It brings specific understandings to how objects can be related to and used by individuals to become symbolic and aesthetic 'thirds'. This study posits that it is the participatory collective nature and transformative space of events such as the Tweed Run that provide an opportunity for individuals to interact with their material objects, in a manner that supports their transformation to symbolic or aesthetic thirds and initiates satisfactory (life) stories that can advance living action.

Keywords

Tweed Run
Harris Tweed
storytelling
story
narrative inquiry
fashion
aesthetic third
symbolic third

Introduction

Stories are the foundation of word-of-mouth communication and a significant dimension of brands (Fill 2013). When people have a deep connection to a brand, it creates brand loyalty and, in turn, builds a relationship between the individual and the brand, which can be energized through storytelling. This research examines the relationship between the fashionable cycling event, the Tweed Run, and the cloth Harris Tweed, exploring how – through the oral storytelling of the event – participants use material objects to create transformative personal stories. The specific context of this study is sociocultural, looking at how the event brings together a visually rich, sartorially driven tribe of cyclists actively involved in an annual cultural event and to chart how they relate to their material possessions (clothing and bikes) in the public space. I am particularly interested in the participants' oral and textual stories, through which the relationship between personal experience and fashion can be mapped. Accordingly, this study brings in the psychoanalytic object relations concept of a 'third position', from which the relation between a subject and an object can be viewed and studied (Britton 1998), and applies it to participants' stories of their fashionable experience. Here, I suggest that the third position within the fashion storytelling helps to consider the vital links between a subject's relationship with fashionable material objects and their subjective experience, lending meaning and agency. I am investigating through storytelling the third space found between the subject (individual) and object (Harris Tweed, Tweed Run experience, bike), to examine how they impact and inform each other, so that the objects themselves become transformational 'aesthetic and symbolic thirds' (Dudley 2010:

12; Froggett et al. 2011a, 2011b). From a methodological perspective, this study uses narrative inquiry, which foregrounds and explores 'stories lived and told' by individuals (Clandinin and Connelly 2000: 20). Narrative inquiry uses stories as 'a way of understanding experience' (Clandinin and Connelly 2000: 20) and also accepts that 'people compose stories to understand their lives' (Wertz et al. 2011: 63), seeing 'individuals as living storied lives on storied landscapes' (Clandinin and Connelly 2000: 24). The task of a narrative inquirer is then to offer 'an account of behaviour and objectives as they would be conceptualized narratively' (Clandinin and Connelly 2000: 24), with the focus being the person in context. The individuals at the Tweed Run are sartorially distinctive in their choice of fashionable cyclewear and their bicycles, and the event offers a rich social locus for multifaceted exploration, ranging from the productive context to the cyclists themselves.

As a narrative inquiry researcher taking part in the Tweed Run event, it is crucial to be located 'in the midst' (Clandinin and Connelly 2000: 20) of the field of inquiry, available to directly understand and interpret the holistic lived experience as it happens in real time. Interpretative research such as this focuses on how meaning can become attached to experience (Spender and Grant 1996), and so my critical positioning as a narrative inquiry researcher at the Tweed Run 2018 event aimed to provide me with natural interaction and access to the collective experience, time to observe other participants and a subjective perspective to view fashion and cycling praxis. Being an event 'insider' also provided me with an opportunistic sample of subjects to interview from a common peer perspective, and through taking part in the event itself, I cycled with, identified and approached three individuals, without prior arrangement, to ask them about their personal experiences on the day. This is in alignment with narrative inquiry practice, which prioritizes the reflexive instinct of the participant researcher to search out rich stories of lived experience. I used my own tacit criteria to judge the applicability of interviewees, such as if they sported visually arresting, idiosyncratic fashionable cycling style and exhibited a dynamic personal engagement with the collective social occasion.

The field interviews and photographs subsequently gathered were looked at using an analysis of narrative (Polkinghorne 1988) to identify key story themes. This strategy focused on thematic analysis, and this initial analysis stage sought to 'uncover "concrete practices" in the text through focusing on what is said' (Alleyne 2015: 70), with direct references of 'fashion', 'cycling', 'bike' and 'sustainability' seeming to hold common potency for all subjects interviewed. The interview transcripts were then analysed using a narrative analysis (Polkinghorne 1988) perspective to view how each individual portrayed a connection with material objects. The objects were used as an etic concept, that is, as a comparison across cases (Alleyne 2015: 47). Extracted storied excerpts are shared here as direct quotations or 'story vignettes' to convey the natural storytelling of the individuals and the manner in which the material objects were imbued with meaning. The final stage in the research process was to examine the intersubjective and conceptual relationships between subject, object and the third space, to understand how subjects relate to and use material objects, and to better suggest the transformational values involved in these complex connections.

This study has implications for critical fashion studies as it provides insight into negotiated relationships between fashionable objects and their adaptation (Harris Tweed and the Tweed Run), and how meaningful evocative connections can be driven for individuals

through storytelling processes and a storied experience, where objects become deployed as aesthetic and symbolic thirds.

Harris Tweed

To explore connections between Harris Tweed and the Tweed Run through the lens of stories of fashionable cycling, considering them separately before charting where their stories cross over proves useful. For Harris Tweed, it is its provenance, as a cloth of people, place and fashion, that is the heart of its story. Originating in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland, Harris Tweed qualifies its pedigree in a number of ways: that it is the world's only commercially produced handwoven tweed, that the Harris Tweed Orb Mark is the UK's oldest continuously registered certification mark and that it is uniquely protected by its own act, the 'Harris Tweed Act 1993'. The act gives the following definition: 'Harris Tweed means a tweed which [...] has been handwoven by the islanders at their homes in the Outer Hebrides, finished in the Outer Hebrides, and made from pure virgin wool dyed and spun in the Outer Hebrides' (Crown Copyright 1993). In this declaration, Harris Tweed's material authenticity is connected to its provenance, and its credibility stems from the reliance on sustainable production and location. Its beginnings as a heritage material trace back to the patronage of Catherine Herbert, Countess of Dunmore, whose husband Alexander, the sixth Earl of Dunmore, inherited the Isle of Harris in 1834. In 1846, the countess had jackets made for her estate staff out of Harris Tweed, and she influenced her high-society peers to adopt tweed outfits when enjoying country pursuits, its functional properties making it ideal for sporting and hunting endeavours (Platman 2014). Harris Tweed has maintained its usage through the centuries as a cloth of fashion with high-society connections; for example, it acts as a staple suit fabric amongst Savile Row tailors in London. On the Harris Tweed website, the brand guidelines give some context of the material's distinction within the fashion industry, explaining that: 'From remote crofts to couture catwalks Harris Tweed® is the choice of fashion and interior designers who value its provenance, classic style and its ability to improve with age' (2018). Indeed, the resurgence of interest is in alignment with 'the market's increasing appetite for authenticity, transparency and traditional quality crafts' (Glover 2019: 56). It has recently appeared in collections by brands such as Nike, Rag & Bone, Theory, Dr Martens and Chanel. Its popularity has resulted in more demand for the handiwork of the weavers and work at the Harris Tweed mills (Fraser 2013). The contemporary reinvigoration of interest in Harris Tweed suggests that although its heritage, provenance and durability are valued, it also may be the versatility of Harris Tweed that sustains its place as a fabric of fashion. The colours of Harris Tweed are also renowned for being influenced by the landscape it originates from, resulting in an emotive connection and sense of place. In Kelsey Erin McClellan's article 'The British National Costume: Of Tweed and Tension' she remarks,

For a cloth so seemingly inextricable from association with pristine gentility, tweed inspires passion amongst those who wrought it, weave, and wear it. [...] Somewhere amidst this passion-infused dialectic, tweed has something to say: about place, about people, and about the tensions that enmesh them.

(McClellan 2016: 88)

The principle links to the following sentiment by fashion and sustainability academics Kate Fletcher and Lynda Grose who said: '[o]urs is a material world, and materials are essential to sustainability ideas; materials are the tangible synthesis of resource flows, energy use and labour'. They continued: '[b]esides being essential to sustainability, materials are critical to fashion: they make fashion's symbolic production real and provide us with the physical means with which to form identity and to act as social beings and as individuals' (2012: 13). It is pertinent to see tweed then as a cloth capable of engineering and reengineering a sustainable relationship with its subjects over time. Ulrich Lehmann added to this in his *Fashion and Materialism* book saying, '[i]t is important to understand fashion essentially as object' (2018: 11, original emphasis) and he believed that: '[f]ashion is embodied materialism: it creates an outer shell, a second skin for the body that becomes marked by socio-cultural structures' (2018: 15). Here then, in this study, I am viewing fashion as a material object, and my focus varies from micro – the cloth itself – to macro – the environmental considerations within which fashion is used in experiential sociocultural contexts, such as the Tweed Run.

The Tweed Run

The Tweed Run event was established in 2009 by Canadian–Britain Ted Young-Un, who was working at the time as a tailor in Savile Row. Around 300 cyclists took part in the inaugural event, setting off from their starting point in Savile Row and cycling through the historic streets of London. When Young-Un was interviewed five years later at a fashion conference in 2014, he gave insight into his original vision, explaining his thinking behind its original association with Savile Row: '[i]f you are going to have an event that is centred around tweeds and suiting, I thought it made sense to start it there' (2014).

Starting the Tweed Run in a street globally renowned as the geographical epicentre of British traditional suiting and custom-made elegance reveals Young-Un's strategic marketing instincts: to create a romantic origin story featuring high-end country tweed with high-end urban tailoring. Since the beginning, the Tweed Run's captivating aesthetic and symbolic story has resonated with cultural tastemakers on many levels, such as the legendary street style photographer Bill Cunningham, who was quoted as saying that the Tweed Run was 'reinventing the catwalk' (Grafton-Green 2018). When fashion blogger Suzie Lau of @stylebubble joined the ride, she subsequently posted her observation:

There's a 'peacock' element to Tweed Run, that meant swarms of men (I have to say that the men's outfits did trump the women's on the day [...]) and women dressed in their tweedy finest, fully accessorised with hats, caps, handkerchiefs and all the historically-right apparatus felt like a congregation of a secret society that you rarely encounter on a day to day basis in London.

(Bubble 2011: n.pag.)

Particularly notable in Bubble's words is the inference of covert and historic tribal aspects, materialized through vintage sartorial fashions. There seems to be a significant sense of sustained values over time.

Young-Un was keen in 2014 to emphasize the original principles of the event saying in an interview for *The Telegraph* newspaper:

We want to promote the idea that things can have a longevity. Just because something is from the past doesn't mean you should dismiss it. Doing things well is better than the flashy plastic throwaway culture.

(Cooper 2014, n.pag.)

His words implicate the current dialogue on sustainability within fashion discourse; viewed as a core message that can be read into Young-Un's remarks is his rationale for the selection of tweed as the material embedded in the Tweed Run's identity. That is, tweed symbolizes a longevity of taste and function. Young-Un maintained, however, that the fashion lexicon of the Tweed Run was not closely predefined, saying:

We never specify that you have to wear any particular clothing, it is just the nature of the event is so self-selecting that it's so difficult to be part of, and once you get the place on it, you really do feel like you have to make an effort, so everybody really does kind of go overboard.

(Young-Un 2014: n.pag.)

His statement may suggest that the motivation to dress in particular fashion comes primarily from the participants, yet clear sartorial clues undoubtedly derive from the name 'Tweed Run'. Moreover, the official sponsor is the gentleman's outfitters Cordings of Piccadilly, which proudly advertise their establishment in 1839. This surely gives critical clarity to participants-to-be of the expected fashionable dress and encourages creative scope – as long as it riffs on elite heritage tweed. Young-Un's vision of a highly curated fashionable cycling event still echoes on the Tweed Run official website in 2018, now owned by the prestigious event planning company Bourne & Hollingsworth, who also hold the event copyright. The webcopy reads:

Since then, we have watched our baby grow from that small guerrilla event, to an event that has captured the imagination of the fashion world and cycling enthusiasts around the globe. Today, we host Tweed Runs around the globe, but our flagship event will always be the London Tweed Run.

(Tweed Run 2018a)

In only a few words, this text emphasizes the story of an aesthetic spectacle rooted in place and origin. The statement makes the point that the Tweed Run enjoys success around the world, indicating that it has exportable cultural value all the while clearly declaring its soul as belonging in London. This paragraph, if viewed as a short promotional story vignette, concisely communicates an elite aspirational experience. The carefully crafted words include the intriguing use of 'small guerrilla event', which chimes with fashion marketing trends in the last decade to put on transitory pop-up events (Ryu 2011) aimed at raising spontaneous grassroots interest with a given local audience. I am interpreting 'grassroots action' here in the context of promotional activity, as it:

occurs when influencers are involved, pushing the public relations campaign forward through their active participation; such a method is also commonly referred to as

'creating a buzz' or 'viral public relations'. [...] People create the buzz, then it becomes viral and spreads through word of mouth (WOM).

(Sherman and Perlman 2010: 132)

The aim for the Tweed Run organizers is to achieve impact in the community – in this case, passers-by on the streets and for the participants, who generate positive exposure and promotion to friends through their own networks. That this local action in the streets of London then generates a global reaction is as much due to participants' recording and sharing their personal experiences through social media platforms, as it is to the official promotional activities of the event organizer. A positive experience on the Tweed Run stimulates organic word of mouth, which occurs 'naturally when people become advocates because they are happy with a product and have a natural desire to share their support and enthusiasm' (Warren n.d.).

To continue the granular analysis of the Tweed Run's textual communication, the 'Agenda' page contains further promotional brand storytelling. A paragraph pitching the event in nostalgic fashionable heritage language reads:

The Tweed Run is the most coveted and highly anticipated annual cycle ride in the UK. A one of a kind event where participants don their finest tweeds and brogues and cycle through London, stopping along the way to take tea, have a picnic and ending with an old fashioned knees-up in the afternoon.

(Tweed Run 2018b)

It suggests a Victorian sense of Britishness, taking key fashion signifiers of 'finest tweeds' and 'brogues', and matching them with period reference points of leisure, such as 'stopping along the way to take tea' and 'have a picnic'. The concept of a 'cycle ride through London' reveals the spatial journeying aspect of the event. The phrases 'don their finest tweeds' and 'old-fashioned knees-up' indicate the event's prestige and social class. The adjective 'coveted' implies a high level of implicit value and scarcity, only available for the chosen few to access. Tapping into signifiers spanning over a century, including the Tweed Run's embodied connection with a timeless cloth, and situating it in a very contemporary London, indicates the root of the Tweed Run's popularity and an appetite among those who want an experiential 'jolly'.

Alongside these particular sociolinguistic signifiers, there are also environmental macro factors that likely have contributed to the success of a fashionable urban cycling event such as this. Within the United Kingdom, notable national schemes that have prompted a social increase in cycling for pleasure have included the expansion of a 16,000+ mile National Cycle Network, spearheaded by cycling charity Sustrans (2018). On a local level, the independent membership charity London Cycling Campaign continues to lobby for the safety of cyclists on cycling routes to make the capital a 'world-class cycling city' (2018). A few years before, the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games delivered a significant and ambitious development of resources, facilities and behavioural change. In their winning bid, the London 2012 Active Travel programme committed to deliver a sustainable Games, including pledges such as: '100% of spectators to venues by walking, cycling and using public transport and to inspire people of all ages to change the way they travel' (London Organising Committee of

the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games 2007–2012 2012). The 'Olympic Cycling Effect' report, prepared for British Cycling and Sky, stated that 52 per cent of people surveyed agreed they were motivated to cycle as a result of the event and claimed that cycling had become a 'mainstream activity in the UK' (Grous 2012). Significant increases in social, communal, regular, commuting, tourist and holiday cycling were recorded, with miles of safe routes and cultural positivity translating into a boom in community participation and consumer purchases. British Cycling claimed that it had reached the 125,000 members milestone in 2016 and quoted Britain's most successful Olympian, Sir Chris Hoy: '[t]he fact that 75,000 people have joined British Cycling since 2012 shows that cycling is truly booming' (British Cycling 2016).

A particular brand of bicycle that benefitted from this increased interest in cycling was the Brompton, a compact fold-up bike with a collapsible frame that was invented in 1975 and manufactured in Britain. The Financial Times newspaper (online) reported in January 2018: '[c]ommuters switching public transport for pedals helped power Brompton Bicycle to a 15 per cent jump in annual turnover – to £32.7m', with main drivers for growth being the home market and policies to encourage cycling in London such as the cycle superhighways (Pooler 2018). Brompton's success was not just domestic, it was also international. Will Butler-Adams, managing director of Brompton commented, '[d]emand is so great in Asia that we can't supply enough bikes'. He gave a reason for their popularity as

Asians now have more free time so they want to cycle for recreation. Because many live in small apartments in big cities, they want a folding bike they can store away and bring out at the weekend. They also want something cool, British and a bit different.
(Butler-Adams cited in Harper 2013: n.pag.)

The high export value hints at the symbolism of a British Brompton, similar perhaps as to why the Tweed Run enjoys such success abroad. Indeed, the Tweed Run has been packaged with export in mind; it markets itself as a licensed event to which interested parties can apply to host in their own location. The website states in an inviting tone of voice:

Hello! Glad to hear you're interested in hosting a Tweed Run of your own! While we want to encourage people to host cycling events, we need to make sure that any event bearing the Tweed Run name lives up to our high expectations. Bourne & Hollingsworth Productions Ltd owns the trademark to the name 'The Tweed Run' and the copyright to the ride format. To enquire about licensing our name and ride format to host a Tweed Run in your city, please fill out the following form.
(2020: n.pag.)

The licensing of the Tweed Run shows careful brand management and cultural and financial sense-making. It indicates that the event holds a symbolic value, a concept that can be understood as 'the semantic and cultural universe linked' to it, allowing 'consumers to express their identity and social membership' (Bonazzi 2015: Abstract). Of course, for the Tweed Run to have an exportable symbolic value, it shows that its currency is fluid and can translate into other environments. It is interesting that it gets any interest abroad, as there are many other countries far more established in their cycling heritage than Britain, such as Holland, Denmark,

France and Spain, whose cultures are deeply invested in movement on two wheels and the mythology of cycling legends and spectacle (Barthes [1957] 2013). However, the authentic heritage of the objects themselves, rooted as they are in a sense of place and people, may well account for the exportable currency of the Tweed Run.

This leads us to examine the intersubjective and conceptual relations between subjects and material objects in order to establish emotive connections that generate a subjective experience and transformational value that then manifests itself as an aesthetic and symbolic third. Froggett and Trustram explained how – in object relations theory – individuals build stores of internalized objects and relations to objects. They said:

It is through living in a world of objects that we constantly test and modify that we gain a sense of our relationship to reality. By internalising a relation to these objects, we become subjects with distinctive capacities for relatedness in which we can accept a world of other people and things outside of ourselves.

(Froggett and Trustram 2014: 488)

Therefore, when externalizing these choices, decisions such as wearing Harris Tweed to a social experiential event such as the Tweed Run is a decisive, subjective and agential act. The Tweed Run must somehow provide a hospitable context in which individuals can display their own selection of evocative objects and relate better to themselves and to others, with the result of meaning-making in a third space. Perhaps, this notion is what Green and Kaiser (2011) theorized as a 'transformative space', where first-hand experience in an ephemeral, alternative community can enable individuals to rethink fashion in more plural or open-ended terms. To understand personal relationships between subjects and their objects and to better explore the transformation of aesthetic and symbolic thirds, here are three stories from participants on the Tweed Run in London, May 2018.

1. A story of fashionable cycling – Kat



Figure 1: Kat Jungnickel, marshal and cyclist at the Tweed Run, 2018. London, United Kingdom. © author.

There were hundreds of cyclists participating in the Tweed Run; the sun was shining, and the atmosphere was jubilant. As the ride started and we progressed slowly from the Imperial War Museum, over the Thames and up through the North London streets, one cyclist was conspicuous amongst the crowd. She seemed to encapsulate all the qualities of fashionable cycling in her outfit, demeanour and bike. I watched this female figure mount and dismount her vertiginous ordinary bicycle (commonly known as a 'Penny Farthing') with brisk competence around potholes, wandering pedestrians and traffic lights. Indeed, the Penny Farthing was leading the charge, sitting in the front guide group's pole position, with regular bicycles wafting around the giant black frame like protective petty officers. Later, I approached the cyclist and discovered that Kat Jungnickel is a veteran Tweed Run cyclist and an official marshal who each year commissions and wears a different outfit (see Figure 1). This year, she explained, her outfit was particularly sociopolitical:

I didn't expect it to be quite this bright! Last year I was in black pinstripe, and the year before I was in a dashing tweed suit that actually glowed when the light dropped and so [...] every year I try something different. And this is a Harris Tweed suit [...]. I deliberately went for a very Suffrage purple. I went for something kind of bright, and a really feminist colour [...] because of the anniversary of Women's Suffrage, right!

To unpack this explanation, Kat indicates her social tendencies through her sartorial, material selection. Her suit is made from Harris Tweed, in keeping with the theme of the Tweed Run, and is purple – one of the colours of the suffrage movement in the United Kingdom. It is an apposite choice, from a temporal, social perspective, as 2018 is the centenary anniversary of the 1918 Representation of the People Act, when women gained the right to vote in the United Kingdom. Kat is also wearing trousers, which is the garment traditionally worn by men on Victorian velocipedes and certainly most 'Penny' riders. This connection with her fashion shows both how she is relating to her objects (purple signifying female emancipation) and using her objects (wearing a purple tweed suit connotes her own personal, politicized identity as an empowered female). Kat seems fully aware that her story is materially situated around her fashion choice, plus how riding her Penny in her outfit sets her off further, even now, as a woman challenging the status quo. Kat's experimental nature is embodied materially through the modifications of her tweed suit so that it works with the idiosyncrasies of her 'Penny'. She describes here:

Well, clothing is a technology that enables and constrains mobility, right, so at the moment I feel both enabled and constrained. This is an 1895 tailored bloomer pattern that I have kind of 'Vivienne Westwooded', in order to make it work on the Penny Farthing. I have very little loose material on the inner leg, because you can't have it anywhere near the moving spokes. I have done some twisting out to the sides, and caught quite a lot of material above the cuff, so it still means that I have got an awful lot of material – probably as much as you [Kat gestures to my Plus 4s] – but I have got

it all out of the way, and they are still 'bloomery'. And then there is the waistcoat. [...] You know, if I had not been on a bicycle I would probably have worn it with a tie. The blouse is tailored but not too tight, because I need quite a lot of flexibility to reach forward. [...] And I am wearing small heels. I don't normally ride a Penny in heels!

Kat's position as a material storyteller epitomizes narrative coherence between herself (as subject) and her fashion (as object). Her agency and purpose as expressed through a tweed suit shows evidence of her authentic and confident transformation of material objects into aesthetic and symbolic thirds. These objects of deep meaning connote social messages to herself personally and to a culturally engaged community. Her fashionable cyclewear is then 'living action' materialized, particular threads woven into vivid tweed fabric, cut and constructed into an outfit that fits her ideology. Kat's fashion reveals her own 'life story' (Habermas and Bluck 2000) – a story that holds real-world significance and advances action (McAdams 2006; Rosenwald 1992: 284). Kat's fashion acts as what Carol Tulloch (2016) calls a 'style narrative'; material objects hold sustainable diachronic agency that signifies her passion for the cause of women's rights, inviting further conversation.

Kat has also made dynamic use of the street as a dialogic space, again a social third, enabling her to actively stand out in the street through her invigorating dynamism while wearing her fashionable outfit. Kat's attire is not just a personal expression of her own identity but a professional one, as she mentions during the interview that she is an author and a sociologist. I learn that she wrote *Bikes and Bloomers: Victorian Women Inventors and Their Extraordinary Cycle Wear* (2018), in which Kat stated:

Clothing is both a barometer and catalyst of social change. It is political, cultural (and still in many ways stubbornly) gendered. It is made and shaped in particular places and it also places people. You only have to wear the wrong thing to feel its exclusionary power and vice versa.

(Jungnickel 2018: 25)

Kat is the epitome of the sustainability of fashion when embodied in the 'mobile technologies' (Jungnickel 2018) of both her body and her style, and exemplifies this at a community-focused and inclusive level because she is in the 'tribe'. As Céline Semann said in a feature entitled 'Sustainable fashion only works when it's inclusive':

When we use fashion as a medium for social and environmental change, we become social justice workers. Fashion is culture and we ought to create it together, weaved tightly with all of our different perspectives to inspire and move our civilization forward.

(Semaan 2018: n.pag.)

Bound up therefore in the materialized storytelling at the Tweed Run is a multi-perspectival, sartorial expression of individuals, but collectively, it functions as an inclusive community in action. Every revolution of a wheel dynamically celebrates the social sustainability of fashionable cycling, epitomizing the activation of objects and space as aesthetic and symbolic thirds to those involved and likely, given the public space, to watching bystanders. Kat's

objects have, I would suggest, a certain level of 'thing-power'; for a centenary on from the women's right to vote being made legal, her objects provide 'physical evidence that you can make things happen through patience, skill, discipline and commitment' (Corbett 2017: 87).

2. A story of fashionable cycling – Joe

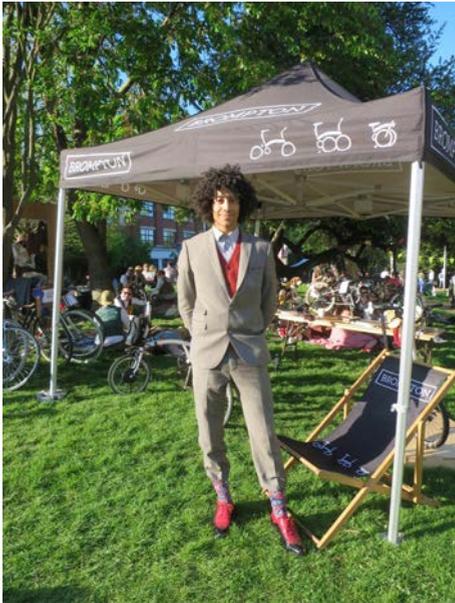


Figure 2: Joe Brown, sales account manager on the Brompton stand at the Cycle Revolution Festival, 2018. London, United Kingdom. © author.

The cycling company Brompton had a branded display stand at the Tweed Run's finishing point – a standalone event called the Cycle Revolution Festival. It was held in a grassy square in Clerkenwell, East London, and the Brompton display included various bicycles and accoutrements. The sales account manager, Joe Brown (see Figure 2), gave his perspective on the increasing interest in fashionable cycling, as epitomized by Brompton bicycles:

I work for Brompton, so I am here representing the brand, trying to get people to learn about and talk about Bromptons, maybe even get on a bike. You see a lot of Bromptons on the Tweed Run. They are a great bike, as it's a piece of design that is attractive, but also very functional. Despite being a young design, it still works in a classic environment as it has found its place as the archetypal folding bike, allowing it to be accepted within a scene intended for much older classics and vintage bikes of the past. It is a ubiquitous bike. [...] Professionally aside, personally I like talking to people about the bikes. I like looking at bikes. I am a cyclist myself, I race, I ride, I fix, and I have been for a long time, and I like getting dressed up. So, this event for me is a combination of all of those things.

Interpreting Joe's words, he seems naturally and critically invested in presenting cycling as a positive phenomenon, and Brompton as an aspirational object. Given his employment by the

company, his presence at the Tweed Run is clearly strategic: to build connections with the community in action and to encourage 'buy in' with Brompton through positive emotional associations between branded bicycle and experiential event. Joe is, in effect, an embodied and deployed tactic of brand building. However, in his stated beliefs, there seems to be a genuine sense of object relating (the admiration of a material object's [a bike's] qualities and form) and object usage (where his bike provides access to a selective lifestyle, community and passion), a distinction identified by the psychologist Winnicott ([1971] 2005). Joe speaks from his position as a socially invested onlooker, interacting with passers-by from the perspective of his own personal, experiential understanding of cycling, on a number of levels. This leads to the idea that for Joe, that day, the bicycle acts first as a material object – a passive aesthetic third – but has the potential (through engaging in dialogue with passers-by) to act as a cultural conduit and become an active symbolic third, symbolizing transformative aspects for its owner, such as personal identity change and longitudinal lifestyle adjustments. Also of note is Joe's claim that Brompton is a 'ubiquitous bike' and positions it beside bicycles from a century ago, indicating a belief that great design in the form of engineered velocipedes – whether carbon framed and collapsible, or a Penny Farthing – encourages a sustained emotive investment in innovative cycling.

3. A story of fashionable cycling – Riot



Figure 3: Riot Rogers, cyclist participating at the Tweed Run, 2018. London, United Kingdom. © author.

Another participant at the Tweed Run who was notable for her outfit was Riot Rogers (see Figure 3). I approached Riot during a sustenance break; cyclists had spread themselves on the grass and pavements, many with straw picnic hampers, blankets and homemade lunches. Riot was standing by her bike observing the scene.

She seemed keen to speak about her garments, explaining that her interaction with fashion was a 'hands-on' construction process of her own garments:

I did a year of tailoring at London College of Fashion but I have been making costumes for a long time. [...] So I found some vintage patterns online that someone had graded up and made so you could print them at home, so it's a 1800s women's cycling [...] no, women's sports blouse. [...] From what I could tell, it had an increased range of movement and even then I had to adjust in the arms, especially with the leg-o-lamb sleeve, which I love. [...] It still came with a collar, for a tie and everything. [...] I had to resize it a little because it was designed to be worn over a corset, and then the trousers as well I found, same era, women's cycling trousers, so they are also voluminous in the back. [...] Both of these are vintage patterns but with modern materials, because I didn't have the time. So there's some things that aren't accurate, like there's press studs but [...] all the buttons on these [trousers] are real so there's 42 buttons in the outfit. [...] For the trousers I knew that we were going to be cycling in the sun, so was like, well I am not going to wear Tweed [laughs] so there's going to be a lot of weight, so I went for a light wool.

Riot's words are reflective, and sharing her critical making process reveals her interactive relationship with material objects, and their transformation into symbolic and aesthetic thirds. Riot's personal experience shows her psychosocial immersion in a positive cultural experience. She does not seem overly attached to or bound by historical patterns, and instead is satisfied with a personal interpretation that has evolved through her making process, whether happily exchanging Harris Tweed for generic light wool or using press studs where needed. At one point, she sums herself up with the words, 'I look dapper as hell!', which indicates her own self-regard as a cultural woman of aesthetic style and power. The crossover between her professional interest in costuming and creating her own outfit for the Tweed Run is intriguing, with Riot valuing the creation of an original aesthetic object (her fashionable outfit) as a pleasurable mechanism to provide sartorial entry into the Tweed Run tribe. She has literally sewn her way into the ride.

She comments generously on external aspects of the sociocultural experience making observations about others' clothing, bikes and atmosphere:

There are people who are like, 'oh yeah, this bike is from this time period' and 'I've got the matching tyres', and everyone knows each other's bikes. [...] I'd say it's quite immersive in a way, because I mean, you are going around the cars and everything, but everyone is so invested in their accuracy, or at least [...]. everyone is going at everything with panache. [...] I'd summarize it as sort of, like [...] a bit gay, a bit jolly, it's like everyone is having a nice light time, everyone's joking, you're making friends with just the people who are cycling with you, it's not competitive. I mean everyone is sitting nice and relaxed and upright and having a good giggle. [...] They [fashion, cycling] are both equally a part, you know if you took one out, either one, it wouldn't work as well.

Her appreciation of others and, in turn, their own relationships with material objects is acute. Riot's own story is the story of her becoming a fashionable cyclist. Her overt appreciation for others' storied journeys – to appear aesthetically and symbolically appropriate – shows her personal investment in the process. The evocative value she places in the pre-planning and participation of the Tweed Run is transparent, and her commitment to the symbiotic relationship between fashion and cycling is clear. She represents an example of a Tweed Run cyclist fully engaged in the fashionable cycling experience and collective occasion. Riot indicates why there may be a rise in fashionable cycling and, in the case of the Tweed Run, why a sartorially loaded event, located around a chosen material object (Harris Tweed) and held in a rich sociocultural space, can provide meaningful agency for individual 'life stories' to be played out through transformational aesthetic and symbolic thirds.

Conclusion

Throughout this article, I have examined the relational storytelling between the fashionable cycling event, the Tweed Run, and the cloth Harris Tweed, exploring disconnects and connections between the two. Using a narrative inquiry approach to the Tweed Run, the participant researcher becomes embedded in the narrative and storytelling, which is then drawn out as field data and leads to the selection of certain individuals as subjects of interest. This research process evaluates participants' oral stories to map the relationship between personal experience and fashion. This storytelling holds clues as to the manner in which subjects emotionally interact with their internal object stores and enact through their external choice of objects (bicycle, clothing, sociocultural space) transformational processes. Applying object relations theory to the fashionable cycling experience and space to further illuminate how a third space has been created through the negotiated storied process with material objects and subjective experiences is at the heart of this study. This understanding draws from the psychoanalytic object relations concept of a third position, from which the relation between a subject and an object can be viewed and studied (Britton 1998). I posit that it lends a dimension to better understand how an individual's relationship with their fashionable material objects can act as a vital link with their subjective experience, lending further meaning and agency so that the objects themselves become transformational 'aesthetic and symbolic thirds' (Dudley 2010: 12; Froggett et al. 2011a, 2011b). The Tweed Run started as a fashionable cycling event that originated at the heart of London's exclusive Savile Row and took a heritage fashion cloth as its symbol. Over a decade on from its launch, it sustains its prestige as a desirable fashionable cycling event by providing a tight sartorial brief centred around a cloth that has its own history and story, along with a transformational space for individuals to act out their own life-stories through material objects. The story of the Tweed Run and Harris Tweed and the material relationship around 'Tweed' suggest thematic coherence (Habermas and Bluck 2000) and community building; it is important to reflect on the fact, however, that Tweed Run participants may have little knowledge or interest in the lack of authentic connection and ambivalent relationship between Harris Tweed and the Tweed Run. Rather, the significance of the event lies in fashionable cycling as a powerful combination of active and material experience; when individuals have a social space to express themselves through agential, material objects, they can transform their objects into aesthetic and symbolic thirds that represent their personal stories.

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