Poetic Justice

: an outcome in which vice is punished and virtue rewarded, usually in a manner peculiarly or ironically appropriate

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featuring Klara Brydewall Sandquist

Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts and Design
Craft! / Ädellab
Master 2
Spring 2020

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Special thanks to:
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Abstract

An emergency is a speeded-up emergence, a state of change that accelerates beyond the control of the system in which it takes place and results in either death or necessary development, for an establishment of a new rhythm.

This work is an investigation on the limits and possibilities of contemporary corpus practices. My aim for it is to be reflective of my own ambivalence towards the field in which my silversmithing practice is situated, and to promote the urgency of collaborative craft, in traditional as well as contemporary contexts.

This investigation has resulted in the collaborative corpus project Poetic Justice, together with Klara Brydewall Sandquist, promoting two separate feminist agendas, in order to elevate them both and underline their entanglement. One being to manifest and justify women’s anger, and the other to oppose the cult of the individual genius and suggest alternate possibilities in relation to historical corpus in the contemporary field of craft. It is also a way for us to highlight the urgency of supporting, elevating and celebrating each other’s practices and purposes, through a closely intertwined way of working that investigates where objects begin and end, in space as well as in time.
Abstract ........................................................................................................... 3
Overview .................................................................................................... 1
  Background ................................................................................................. 1
  Purpose ....................................................................................................... 1
  Method ....................................................................................................... 2
On Corpus ........................................................................................................ 3
  Short introduction to corpus ...................................................................... 3
  The guild .................................................................................................. 3
  Modern Skandinaviskt Silver .................................................................. 4
  Contemporary corpus ................................................................................ 5
Poetic Justice ..................................................................................................... 8
  Background of the collaboration ............................................................... 8
  The practices entangle ............................................................................ 9
  Shared materials ....................................................................................... 9
On uncertainty and non-knowledge .............................................................. 11
  Phenomenology, truth and experience .................................................... 12
  Phenomena in agential realism ............................................................... 13
Raising questions .......................................................................................... 14
  Repetitive motions .................................................................................. 14
  ...................................................................................................................... 15
  Precious disposables .............................................................................. 16
Creation by means of loss ............................................................................ 17
  Materiality and sacrifice ......................................................................... 18
  Social context .......................................................................................... 19
Preservation and exclusion .......................................................................... 22
Bringing emergency into craft ..................................................................... 24
The ends ....................................................................................................... 26
  The sacral and the profane .................................................................... 26
  The sacrificial slaughter ......................................................................... 27
Annotated bibliography ................................................................................ 28
Images .......................................................................................................... 30
Appendix ....................................................................................................... i
  Troubles getting through ........................................................................ ii
  Getting through troubles ....................................................................... ii
Images in appendix ...................................................................................... ix
Overview

Poetic Justice is a collaborative project within the department of Ådellab. The participants in this project are Klara Brydewall Sandquist and me. My part of it will consist of a phenomenological approach to the making – and un-making – of sacrificial silver objects.

I will try to sort out how my practice and its results can be understood from a phenomenological perspective, and how combining our practices has influenced the outcome of our work.

Background
Throughout my ten years in metal craft, there has been a huge discrepancy between what I like and what I produce. I’ve been trying to explain it arguing that what I enjoy would be less interesting from a theoretical perspective. For the record I no longer believe that was ever the case.

About a year ago, within the context of our education, Klara Brydewall Sandquist and I sat down together and wrote a list of our fears that were somehow related to each of our practices. Not all of these were mutual, but their collective impact when we’ve reread them is that they are all different ways of expressing a fear of not being taken seriously and most of them about our work being framed as, and reduced to, femininity – or place us in one or other extremely narrow field of nerdery.

Simplicity, wolves, and strong statements may not seem like very rational fears at first glance, but they have something very real in common: as stated above, they put us at risk; they make us feel as though we do not belong in our own field unless we swear off the issues that concern us.

Purpose
The theoretical part of my research aims to explore my role as a craftsperson in today’s society as well as in relation to the history of silversmithing, as I believe the historical lack of female representation and a sense of not belonging plays a key role in the turn contemporary corpus has made away from its traditional material. With the choice of silver as my main medium and the traditional corpus technique raising, with a starting point in my professional identities as a silversmith and a welder, I attempt to explore how this gender bias can be disturbed.
My approach to my practice is phenomenological and its results will be put into context through hermeneutic interpretation. Phenomenology is a way of experiencing and hermeneutics puts these experiences in context and adds subjective meaning to them.

Method

My theoretical discussion will begin in existentialist phenomenology and take a turn toward Sarah Ahmed’s more recent expansions on feminist phenomenology as well as thoughts on agential realism as presented by post-humanist theorist Karen Barad. These are less anthropocentric and therefore more oriented towards materiality and material agency than objects and intentionality. Several essays by art critic and political activist Rebecca Solnit serve as catalysts for my reflections in this paper.

Corpus as a method provides me with a way of relating to the objects I produce. It also provides a starting point in traditional repetitive silversmithing techniques such as raising and suggests hollowware to be a possible outcome of my work. When it comes to eligible theory on the subject of corpus there is little to none to be found. Parallels will be drawn to other areas of the craft field and also to literature and political philosophy.

What brings Klara Brydewall Sandquist and me together is a mutual agreement on the importance of elevating and adding strength to each other’s causes. In this work, Brydewall Sandquist’s research serves as a source of knowledge for my own, and the ways I get access to this knowledge are through engaging in discussions, her sharing her independent writing with me, and me observing her practical work in relation to mine.
On Corpus
Chapter on the patriarchal roots of silversmithing, lack of representation as a result thereof, and the decline in use of silver in contemporary corpus

Short introduction to corpus
Traditionally, corpus is what separates a silversmith from a goldsmith: plastically or mechanically working sheet metal into volumes using different techniques, with the intention of containing something. Examples of shapes such volumes could take are pitchers, vases, bowls and candelabra. A historically important division within corpus is between sacred and profane, where the sacred is used for bringing forth the holy spirit and the body of Christ, whereas the profane refers to objects without religious meaning.

Through practices within contemporary craft, corpus has come to be an approach to objects, no longer necessarily made of metal but still associated with the traditional role of silversmithing: to manifest and present a – sometimes metaphysical – content in relation to human needs and behaviours.¹

The guild
The internationally established inherent worth of silver, tied to its relative rareness, is one of the qualities that has justified the amount of work, and demand for skilled makers, that goes in to shaping it. The scarcity of silver has also made it subject to a custom of renewal through reshaping in accordance with prevailing trends.²

Up until 1846 all silversmithing in Sweden was monopolized in a guild system, within a limited number of workshops and with strictly regulated education through apprenticeship. Women were not allowed to become apprentices. As a continuation of the reform in 1846, a trade decree (freedom of occupation) was introduced in 1864, further lessening the privileges of the guild.

¹ This text was translated from Swedish as it was originally an introduction to a corpus exhibition at Gustavsbergs Konsthall 2020. It was formulated by me, in discussion with my colleagues in Nutida Svenskt Silver, most prominently Elin Hedberg, who teaches silversmithing techniques at Oslo National Academy of the Arts.
Documentation suggests that the few women who became silversmiths during the early 20th century had a hard time finding employment within the field, no matter their skill and experience — by then essentially due to social norms rather than formal hindrance.  

In 1962 a work titled Silversmide [silversmithing] was released by the renowned Swedish publishing company Natur och Kultur. It was part of a series that at the time of its printing consisted of similar works on blacksmithing and glassblowing. According to the preface the purpose for the 435-page publication was to provide knowledge on both history and techniques of importance for the development of silversmithing.  

The chapter Yrket [the Profession] does not explicitly mention the fact that women were not allowed in the guild, but in the section regarding hallmarks Bengtsson states that a master’s widow had the legal right to run her late husband’s workshop, and notes that she “hardly” would have worked there herself. At least half a dozen specific cases of widows running silversmith workshops during the 18th century are brought up in this chapter (why the information is limited to this specific period remains unclear), mainly to explain why it can sometimes be impossible to know who made the objects under a specific hallmark after the passing of a master. Not one of these women are mentioned by name.  

The only capacity in which women are mentioned as manually working in silversmithing production, sometimes within the premises of the workshop but mostly at home, is as polishers (polishing was dirty, time-consuming, and not considered to be a man’s work).  

It has to be taken into consideration that women in Sweden were not granted full authority until 1921, and could only be legally emancipated under specific circumstances, for instance if their guardian (commonly husband or father) passed away.  

Modernt Skandinaviskt Silver  
Initiated by Stockholms Auktionsverk [Stockholm Auction House] an extensive exhibition took place in Stockholm in 1987, as an homage to modern silver. The catalogue lists 295 silver works, all from the 20th century, most from the 50’s and 60’s. In the preface (written by Helena Dahlbäck Lutteman, head of the craft department of the Swedish National Museum at the time) several influential women

3 Various internet sources that I don’t find too credible on their own cite a Nationalmuseum catalogue called Kvinnliga Pionjärer, svensk form under mellankrigstiden regarding this. It has proven hard to find and due to coronavirus restrictions I haven’t had the chance to check the reference copy in Konstbiblioteket.  
5 Ibid., p. 161
from this era are mentioned, such as Sylvia Stave, Torun Bülow Hübe and Theresia Hvorslev. None of them were featured in exhibition. Out of 295 items, 284 were attributed to men.⁶ The eleven works remaining were all by Märta af Ekenstam, internationally acclaimed silversmith and the first woman in Sweden to be granted journeyman’s papers as a silversmith (in 1909).⁷

Contemporary corpus
For the past few decades, contemporary corpus has largely stepped away from the use of silver as a main material, predominately in works that have been critical towards power structures both within and out of the field itself.

A circumstance I believe to have had a great influence over this turn towards alternative materials is the 2004 reformation of Konstfack’s metal department into its present form Ådellab, initiated by Dutch jewelry artist Ruudt Peters, head of department at the time.

Figure 1, Linda Ottosson: Holiness of Dart, 2018 (with permission)

A brilliant example of how the history of corpus can be used in extended ways is Linda Ottosson’s graduate work from 2018 (Konstfack, Craft! Ådellab), in which she addresses how exclusion based on gender identification reproduces within informal male coded groups.⁸

Based on her own experiences Ottosson stages what she calls “corpus situations”, in referral to spaces and situations where objects are granted an elevated position and are directed towards

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⁷ Ibid., p. 62
reinforcement and maintenance of certain hierarchies. In many of her works, the silver of the corpus tradition is substituted for a toxic alloy of aluminium and lead.
It has occurred to me that my voice does not carry if I use it gently. Before it reaches its destination, it has dissolved, and my calm is perceived as an indication that I am fine. It erases the agreement of a constructed language and I remain quiet.

It has occurred to me that my voice does not carry if I use it with force. The frequency of my words seems to hit louder than any other sound. This tremendous power hits fast and hard, creating a vacuum of time. Leaving me very loud. And quiet.
Poetic Justice

On how our purposes entangled through two fine silver stoats and turned into symbiotic dependency, and on the urge to administer poetic justice

Background of the collaboration

Poetic Justice is us. Klara Brydewall Sandquist and me, Beata Alfredsson Grahn. The possibility and desire for a collaborative practice was first voiced during the final year of our respective undergraduate studies, when we often spent time together on Skype – me at my jeweller’s bench in Konstfack, Brydewall Sandquist at hers in Oslo National Academy of the Arts. These Skype sessions were part of an investigation in my final project, on how solitary craft practices could be disturbed and altered with use of modern everyday technology. This resulted in us applying for a residency together, and we spent the month of August 2018 at Fish Factory in Stöðvarfjörður, east Iceland. During this time, we both worked with different aspects of magic, but we didn’t quite manage to bring our practices together in the way we had anticipated.

In the following month we began our master’s studies and based on our experiences from the residency we decided to keep close track of each other’s work, but not work together in practice unless we both could see an absolute necessity in doing so.

As I was raising vessels and pondering what impact the patriarchal history of corpus have on contemporary corpus and ultimately on the choices I make in my own artistic practice, Brydewall Sandquist was working to explicate how anger is turned into a personality trait in women – as opposed to being taken as a sound expression for the
experience of iniquity in men – and how we are conditioned to internalize negative emotions as to not be identified by them. It was not hard to find similarities between our topics already within the first year, and to see how these could both benefit from some form of joint delivery.

The practices entangle

The final merging of our practices happened in October 2019, initiated with the making of two electroformed fine silver stoats playing with a raised sterling silver cup. The choice of stoats was based on symbolic qualities attributed to the species historically – qualities that we find to be regarded as ideals for women – such as purity and moderation⁹.

The stoats were sculpted in wax, one by Brydewall Sandquist and one by me, but she added the finishing touch to them both, as we decided then and there that if the joint practice was to continue it should be about combining and elevating our respective strengths, and figurative sculpting thus clearly belongs to Brydewall Sandquist.

The nature of our collaboration has since become an exchange within which each of us keep working with our initial topics, but the context added by the other person’s practice is invaluable. All practical work is conducted in dialogue and often together. The objects it results in is to be regarded one body of work, where distinctions in expression is often obvious but the objects are inseparably tied together by intentions and material transactions.

Shared materials

The objects we produce are connected in different manners, and most of the items that has come into shape after the stoats include electroforming as a way of sharing a material.

Figure 3 Poetic Justice, enamelled silver bowl, 2020

Figure 4.1 Poetic Justice 2020

Figure 5.2 Poetic Justice 2020
“How will you go about finding that thing the nature of which is totally unknown to you?” (Plato)

(...) The things we want are transformative, and we don’t know or only think we know what is on the other side of that transformation. Love, wisdom, grace, inspiration– how do you go about finding these things that are in some ways about extending the boundaries of the self into unknown territory, about becoming someone else?  

Rebecca Solnit

On uncertainty and non-knowledge

This chapter aims to clarify that some things should not be clarified, and also to introduce phenomenology

My first encounter with the term negative capability was during my bachelor exam work, through Rebecca Solnit’s A Field Guide to Getting Lost. She explains her understanding of it with support from the words of Plato (as quoted above) and those of 19th century poet John Keats, who coined the term in a letter to his brother: “I mean Negative Capabilities, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainty, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason...”

The term negative capability has evolved from its origin in lyricism and philosophy into politics and criticism, but my emphasis is on the first two, as it is more informative to my attempted phenomenological approach to my practice.

I see a clear connection between the concept of negative capability and the intellectus practice as searching for truth, that Jonna Bornemark describes in her 2018 publication Det Omätbaras Renässans [The Renaissance of the Immeasurable]. Our sense is made up of two parts; ratio and intellectus, where the function of ratio is to categorize our experiences logically in accordance with previous knowledge, and the role of intellectus is to reflect on this knowledge and make connections where the ratio cannot, i.e. to non-knowledge.

As opposed to a lack of knowledge, non-knowledge can be described as being beyond knowledge. Bornemark refers to De Docta Ignorantia [On Scientific Ignorance], a work by the German 15th

11 Ibid, p. 10
12 Jonna Bornemark, Det Omätbaras Renässans, En uppgörelse med pedanternas världsherravälde, Stockholm: Volante, 2018, p. 184
13 Ibid, p. 43
century philosopher and theologist Nicolaus Cusanus [Nicholas of Cusa], who claims that the non-knowledge is a learned ignorance where opposites coincide. Among the concepts contained in this learned ignorance is that of God, as something ungraspable for the human sense and thus being beyond descriptive language.

Phenomenology, truth and experience

Seeing the outside of a silver bowl might suggest to your consciousness what its inside looks like. Our minds fill in the blanks of what we perceive, making assumptions about what we cannot perceive in order for us to experience our surroundings as a whole.

Phenomenology is a philosophical way of differentiating between an object’s essence and its apperancy (which we subjectively experience). Dermot Moran describes phenomenology as “a radical, anti-traditional style of philosophising, which emphasises the attempt to get to the truth of matters, to describe phenomena, in the broadest sense as whatever appears in the manner in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer.”

Similar to Plato’s division between idea and form, phenomenology differentiates between das Ding an sich [the thing in itself, a Kantian term that predates phenomenology], which is described in terms of essences, and das Ding für uns [the thing for us], which is in turn described as made up of phenomena, qualities that we experience and interpret based on our previous knowledge, and that are likely to vary according to the circumstances in which we encounter the object. Meaning emerges in the meeting between a subject (a consciousness) and an object (a thing) and is dependent of the intentionality of the subject.

In her work Queer Phenomenology Sarah Ahmed addresses how our orientation toward objects contributes to how we let them affect our movements and actions. She refers to what Husserl (a German philosopher to whom modern phenomenology is often attributed) calls twofold directedness, consisting of a physical directedness of the subject toward the object, and subsequently a subjective directedness as the subject becomes aware of the object and forms an opinion thereof. These are differentiated as the subject being directed toward and taking direction toward the object.

14 Ibid, p. 35
Phenomena in agential realism

Agential realism is a theoretical concept attributed to physicist and post-humanist philosopher Karen Barad, and is to be understood as a combination of an epistemology (the study of knowing), an ontology (the study of being) and an ethics, and is as such not a part of the discipline of phenomenology. I include it here as an alternative way of understanding my role as a maker of things, a connection that becomes all the more interesting in this specific project, as it contains circumstances where neither Brydewall Sandquist nor I can be said to be in control. Barad’s ideas are often referred to within the scope of new materialism, a feminist cultural discourse that critiques the Cartesian cut (the widely accepted notion of dualistic division, i.e. mind-body, subject-object, associated with René Descartes).

A central concept in agential realism is *intra-action* or *intra-activity*. Barad’s substitution of the prefix *inter-* in *interaction* for *intra-* basically means what is usually described as an event *between* agents can instead be understood as an event *within* an entanglement of agents (a phenomenon), demonstrating the inseparability of the agents and their mutual influence.
Raising questions

On repetitive making, the destructive nature of silversmithing, and how this connects with the contemporary extension on phenomenology known as agential realism

Repetitive motions

For the first year of my master studies, I went deep into the monotonous task of raising simple — archaic even — silver bowls. I have produced a number of these bowls, in their finished shape always less than half a sphere, in order to find something true about them, to put it simply.

Raising is a silversmithing technique where the flat material (sheet metal) is shaped from the outside in a way that simultaneously compresses (inward) and stretches (forward) it. The technique requires a lot of time and concentration and is closely associated with historical corpus.

This procedure begins with cutting the corners off of a square. This is done to reduce the physical resistance of the sheet metal as I cut along the periphery of the circle I need to start raising (provided the raising starts from sheet metal, there are other ways to initiate this process). The circular sheet is then creased with a peen hammer, from the periphery towards the centre. The number of creases varies with the size of the sheet, but in order to maintain balance in the piece, they need to be distributed evenly. You then work from the centre of the piece towards its periphery in a tight spiral, using the hardened surface appearing with each hammer stroke as a base for the next stroke. The effect of each strike is dependent on the previous one.

When the entire surface is covered with strikes, you anneal the work by heating it evenly with a torch until it reaches a red glow — that’s when the tensions are released and the silver regains its plasticity (what happens is basically that the silver molecules rearrange themselves into their natural state in the new places the hammer has forced them into). During the first year I often substituted the torch with the electrical circuit of a TIG-welding machine when annealing, in my search for alternate ways of integrating equipment from a different metal craft area of importance to my identity as a crafts-person. This procedure leaves traces of overheating on the silver, which is visible in figure 4 on the next page.
Figure 6 Beata Alfredsson Grahn 2018 (process)

Figure 7 Beata Alfredsson Grahn, 2019 (process)

Figure 8 Beata Alfredsson Grahn, 2018. Example of finished piece. The bowl is resting on a piece of pumice, a material traditionally used as an abrasive in metal craft. The bowl has been used to shape a dent in the pumice and thus gotten a visibly grinded surface.
Precious disposables
The refining of our material into precious shapes is often somewhat violent in its nature, we’re using fire, hammers, edge tools and corrosive acids. Our tools and methods are excessively destructive, all the while bearing the properties and promises of refinement.

Contemporary corpus artist Adi Toch has throughout her practice been very observant to how tools, aids and objects made are shaping each other. In her 2018 solo exhibition Echoes of Process at Contemporary Applied Arts Gallery in London, a wide range of items transformed by the shaping of her silver vessels were displayed. Among these were binding wires shaped by the outline of the objects they supported in their soldering process, disposable gloves adapting the material being handled with them and pieces of abrasive cloth so densely packed with silver dust they had started to harden and would scratch the metal surface instead of smoothing it. A smaller selection of work from this exhibition was showcased in LOD, Stockholm, later the same year. The elevation of the role of tools in a similar manner is relatively common within the field of contemporary craft, but the items on display in Toch’s exhibitions were no tools per se, they were disposable aids to her work.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{17}\) Open Lecture by Adi Toch, Konstfack S1, November 13\(^{\text{th}}\), 2018
Creation by means of loss

On sacrifice, poetry and towards a social contextualization of contemporary craft

Derived from the Latin words sacer (sacred; holy) and facere (to make), the etymological meaning of the word sacrifice has nothing to do with offerings, rather with production of sacred things, yet it appears, in order to reach this sacred state, something must be lost. Something of value needs to be given up in exchange for peace of mind. According to Georges Bataille poetry signifies creation by means of loss and is therefore synonymous with sacrifice.18

As I understand it, a sacrifice is an exchange, and the word loss could be substituted with investment or expenditure. The expenditure in the question of craft would be time, skill and material, but what you exchange it for is a physical representation of something ephemeral, and when removed from its context rendered practically useless.

I would go as far as to argue that contemporary craft, with its history of utility behind but ever in dialogue with traditional technique and expression, is on the verge of becoming a sacred act in itself; contemporary craft is to utility what poetry is to information.

Liksom all annan konst är lyrik ett arbete med form. Ibland är formen given av de yttre eller fasta rämarna, andra gånger skapar dikten sin egen form.

18 Alan Stoekl (ed), Georges Bataille, Visions of Excess, Selected Writings 1927-1939, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985, p. 120
The quote above is an excerpt from the preface of Lyrikens Liv. Intro- duktion till att läsa dikt by Janss, Melberg and Refsum, a publication for literature studies at bachelor level. Since there is no official English translation of this text available, here is my own: Like all other art, lyricism is a form process. Sometimes the form is dictated by external or fixed limitations, other times the lyric creates its own form. Lyricism always relates to a tradition, often more than one, but not always in order to fulfil them.

The western conception of poetry dates to archaic Greece and includes epic poetry as well as lyricism, although the Swedish word poesi as we know it today refers mainly to lyricism. Beginning with Sappho, classical lyricism is one of very few arts historically attributed to a woman as opposed to a man, nevertheless its representation up until present day has not favored women (other than in comparison with genres with even less female representation).

Figure 11 Beata Alfredsson Grahn 2020

Materiality and sacrifice
In my earlier exploration of the term negative capability (in the context of my undergraduate studies) I have had my own practice as a starting point and throughout my process it has become clear to me that my own experience limits me in certain ways, the expansion of territory was limited.

20 Bergsten, Staffan and Elleström, Lars, Litteraturhistoriens Grundbegrepp, 2:a uppl., Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2004, p. 120
A sacrificial act requires some form of a belief system, without one the destructive elements applied to my vessels would be equivalent with ultraviolence. This is where I see the most valuable transaction between Brydewall Sandquist’s practice and mine: my vessels are invested in the creation of her objects not only because I need them to disappear but because I strongly believe in her purpose. I believe in the right to be angry and in the urgency of getting to display it. Brydewall Sandquist describes her method of magic as a material activation of a wish. My vessels provide the prerequisite for the materialization of her wishes, and the vessels and I become accomplices in the physical manifestation of them. The time and care I already put into them elevates the purpose for which they are sacrificed.

The very physics of electroforming is important to the nature of our collaboration. The silver travels from one object to another at a pace so slow the shift is barely recognizable unless given sufficient time. Contrary to the very swift process of electroplating, which can be done within minutes and with the exact same equipment, the process of electroforming takes days.

The ephemeral phenomenon that gets physical representation through this act would be the emotion (anger and/or hatred) that Brydewall Sandquist works to manifest. When the material detaches from my work and re-manifests in hers, our intention is to establish a complex narrative on support, direction, authorship and ownership. Even as one object, the furious kitten for instance, could be perceived as being the result of Brydewall Sandquist’s individual work, it inherits its final physical state from a vessel of mine, which in turn changes the vessel’s appearance due to the partial loss of matter. Absence is now becoming part of what constitutes the vessel.

Social context
In Hannah Arendt’s description of the term vita activa, active life, she presents three fundamental types of agency, or ways of being active: animal laborans is the human who engages in labor, which is maintenance in order to uphold a system; homo faber is one that produces the tools to develop the system; zoon politicon is one that takes action in order to change the system.²¹

Although I do not understand these activities as mutually exclusive in the strictest sense, they are presented as differentiated phenomena, and are indicated to take place in different spaces. Within a contemporary craft practice on the other hand, I believe all three of these agencies (labor, work, action) are in play at once. Contemporary craft is equivalent with labor in the sense that it maintains and reproduces history (for instance the history of craft itself: craft is

reinvented and cross-fertilized rather than innovated, and one of the motives of contemporary craft can be understood to be keeping craft alive). The craft production (work of the hand) in a contemporary context produces representation of new aspects of said histories and has the power to upset the present and rewrite the past (action).

The intrinsic properties of silver (such as its plasticity and the possibility to “reset” it, through for instance melting or, when needed, refining) combined with the fact that resources are finite (at this point silver is mostly mined as a byproduct of other ores or minerals, and most of it goes into technology rather than production of silverware or jewelry), suggest that the notorious preservation of the past is extravagant at best. The way we nurture some aspects of our history may very well come to be seen as greedy and ignorant. In light of this it wouldn’t be a huge leap to argue that the representation of a contemporary craft process need not be physical to fulfil its purpose.
Figure 12 Klara Brydewall Sandquist, 2020. Painting symbolically depicting how three snakes come into being inside a bowl.
Preservation and exclusion
On photography as a means of documentation and as a part of a craft practice.

“All photographs are memento mori. To take a photograph is to participate in another person’s (or thing’s) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time’s relentless melt.”

Susan Sontag

To add to the narrative of the cycle of existence and transformation of our objects, we document and illustrate it in the form of drawings, paintings, photography and film. Drawings and paintings are done by Brydewall Sandquist, while photography is my area. We both work with film.

Photographic depiction with preservation as its motivation is often referred to as immortalizing, but if we apply Sontag’s reasoning from the quote above, the mere factor of time makes photography a strange mockery of all life. A photograph is forever tying an object to a very specific moment in time, through a swift and barely noticeable violation of its existence.

My photographic images in this body of work become not only documentary but thanatographical, they recount the existence of

23 Thanatography, from Greek Thánatos, “God of Death” + graphē, “a writing”. An account, usually written, of the death of a person.
something that will never be seen again and serve as evidence of objects that were destined to disappear. In that sense, they are a bit sensationalistic, but I believe they can only be perceived as such if presented along with the objects they depict.

During the fall of 2019, Fotografiska in Stockholm displayed the work of Norwegian photographer Christian Houge. The exhibition, titled Residence of Impermanence, was a photo and video documentation of the artist’s ritualistic burning of exotic taxidermy, attached to, or in front of, old handmade English wallpapers. The metal wire remains of some of the animals were also displayed.24

As these creatures are burning, they are unable to show agony, as they were long ago forced into a form where they are perceived as being in a state that we, their perpetrators, associate with their nature — most often proud or violent.

Houge’s intention was to, through his action of giving these creatures an honourable end to their ever-present death as trophies, criticize the European quest for enlightenment (gaining as well as imposing) that fuelled the colonization. What I recognize in Houges work that ties it to my own intentions is the attempt to highlight a historic logical error that is so drummed into our collective consciousness it seems unquestionable.

24 Personal visit to the exhibition Residence of Impermanence (Christian Houge): Fotografiska, Stockholm, October 30th, 2019
Bringing emergency into craft
On the need for emergency, and further reflections

In 1992 Rebecca Solnit was commissioned by the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle to write an essay on making in regard to an installation by Ann Hamilton, who in her practice deals, among other things, with simplistic repetitive patterns of making. The result was the essay Landscapes of Emergency, later to be published in As Eve Said to the Serpent, On Landscape, Gender, and Art (2003).

Hamilton, a sculptor who started out in the textile field, works with large scale installations, often with some form of performance or other live elements (such as birds) that brings constant and sometimes uncontrollable change to her work, often in a manner that appears as an effort having been done in vain (i.e. the unravelling of a woven piece).

Solnit describes the term *emergency* as a speeded-up emergence, a state of change that accelerates beyond the control of the system in which it takes place and results in either death or necessary development (establishment of a new rhythm). To me this description bears an undisputable resemblance to that of *peripeteia*, which is a word I’ve been carrying with me since my time as a literature

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student. It was first described in Aristotle’s Poetics as a turning point or sudden change of circumstances (in the context of a tragedy) before *hamartia* [integral part of a tragedy, consisting of an obvious mistake on part of the protagonist – the word *hamartia* means ‘missing the mark’] which could be for instance the ultimate moral collapse of the protagonist known as hubris.

My understanding of this term is a moment of (ecstatic) doubt and an (im-)possibility to turn back. The event in itself need not be tumultuous at all, but the reversal in circumstance will trigger a new side of the protagonist that leads up to the decision that creates his or her fall. As a reader or spectator, you always know where it’s headed when the tragedy stays true to form (which is to death and destruction), but that’s actually what makes this moment so effective. You know more than the protagonist and therefore it’s you who get to feel a fit of ambivalence – not necessarily the protagonist. The peripeteia is therefore very certain in its uncertainty. It’s an absurd balance between circumstance, logic, emotion and predestined destructive events waiting to unfold. What will happen is displayed against what could have happened.

The momentary coexistence of conflicting properties is part of what I’m striving for in my own work. From a phenomenological viewpoint, this is a collision of fulfilled and empty intentions: what my vessels are put through at the stage of (un-)making is a careful yet unscrupulous derailing of the expected course of a craft process. The expectation is instead preserved in the form of my photographs and/or in Brydewall Sandquist’s drawings. The remainder of the vessels themselves becomes ontological privations as they lack one or more properties that we anticipate based on our expectations of the term *silver bowl*. They can be defined not only by the presence of silver, but, as stated in the chapter *Creation by means of loss*, by its absence.

The merging of Brydewall Sandquist’s purpose and my own was the *peripeteia*, the reversal in circumstance, that made the destruction – or careful undoing – of my pieces necessary.
The ends

Thoughts on sacrifice, ritualistic murder and what collaboration has done to my practice in terms of courage and control

I have often described ambivalence as a driving force in my practice, and in doing so I have recognized the need for a clarification: ambivalence is not to be mistaken for uncertainty or doubt. I would rather explain it as a double certainty – being so certain of two or more contradicting things that they almost seem to cancel out one another and create a vacuum were the contradictions claim equal justification.

As you engage in the shaping of an object, you get to experience a drastic fluctuation between matter and thingness, and your direct-edness could be described as being beyond the object itself. One thing that I have found to be more important than anticipated is that the transmission of material that Brydewall Sandquist and I initiate through electroforming can only be monitored and controlled to a certain extent. Trust must be invested in the process of electro-forming itself, not only amongst us who initiated the process.

When parts of my bowls have transgressed the horizons of bowlness into a different body, are they reduced to materiality or does my intention prevail?

When it comes to the pieces as we present them, our intention is for them to express directedness amongst themselves, not only to the viewer, as being dependent of, and/or aware of and attentive to one another. Meaning emerges between them, regardless of the viewer, as a result of their intertwined existence.

The sacral and the profane

As mentioned in the first chapter, traditional corpus was divided into sacral and profane. Liturgical silver vessels (sacral corpus), as I understand them, are not utilities as much as they are a manifested negotiation with transcendence. They look and act similarly to utilities but must be separated from those by intention rather than appearance. Sacral corpus is thus directed beyond what can be known.

The word profane can mean secular or non-religious and does so in the case of traditional corpus. But profane can also mean desecration, ritual impurity or treating something sacred with disrespect.
Bringing magic and satanic feminism into the field of corpus means to intentionally desecrate an institution.

The sacrificial slaughter

Reduction, absence, simplicity and essences have long been central to my work and combined with the somewhat contradictory fact that minimalism is not something I often appreciate or strive for, they have proven problematic to my sense of professional identity over the years.

Brydewall Sandquist brings new aspects to my work, whether I want them or not. I think her use of symbolism is what allows me to make a dramatic ritualistic slaughter of the field of corpus out of a body of work that would on its own be limited to a somewhat dry ontological interpretation.
Annotated bibliography

**Ahmed, Sara:** Queer Phenomenology

Ahmed’s feminist reinterpretations of phenomenological orientation has been important to my understanding of how objects relate to space as well as to perceivers.

**Arendt, Hannah:** The Human Condition

Hannah Arendt is one of the most influential contributors to 20th century Marxist theory, and furthermore closely associated with phenomenology.

**Barad, Karen:** Meeting the Universe Halfway

Barad draws phenomenology into the field of quantum physics and describes the mutual change in matters and bodies influencing one another (intra-activity). She argues for the agency of matter in a manner that steps away from the anthropocentric aspect of analytic and positivistic science.

**Bataille, Georges:** Visions of Excess

Bataille’s thoughts on expenditure and sacrifice have been crucial to my argument that loss can be productive.

**Bornemark, Jonna:** Det Omätbaras Renässans

PhD Jonna Bornemark has lately been very influential when it comes to the Swedish contemporary craft discourse. In this work she argues against the tendency to base everything positivistic science that has prevailed for the past few centuries.

**Heidegger, Martin:** The Question Concerning Technologies

I read about Heidegger’s model of causality in order to understand how both artistic making and other production can be understood through technē.

**Bengtsson, Bengt and Munthe, Gustaf:** Silversmide

This work is representative for how the development of silversmithing is treated in Swedish history, and how it rarely recognizes women enough to even mention them by name. Explicitly aimed to be educational.

**Nilsson, Staffan:** Silversmide
Solnit, Rebecca: A Field Guide to Getting Lost

Solnit, Rebecca: As Eve Said to the Serpent

Collected essays mainly concerning land art.
Images


Fig. 1: Ottosson, Linda. *And slowly poisoning begins to sneak up on you. Now wash your hands.* Master’s thesis, Konstfack Craft!, 2018, p. 21 (image provided by the artist and included with permission).

Fig. 2: Poetic Justice, 2019. Fine silver stoats and sterling silver vessel. Photo: Beata Alfredsson Grahn.

Fig. 3: Poetic Justice, 2020. Silver bowl with industrial enamel. Photo: Beata Alfredsson Grahn.

Fig. 4: Poetic Justice 2020. Photo: Beata Alfredsson Grahn.

Fig. 5.1-2: Poetic Justice 2020. Photo: Beata Alfredsson Grahn.

Fig. 6: Beata Alfredsson Grahn, 2018, process image.

Fig. 7: Beata Alfredsson Grahn, 2019, process image.

Fig. 8: Beata Alfredsson Grahn, 2018. Silver bowl on pumice.

Fig. 9: Adi Toch: *Echoes of Process*, 2018. [https://www.londoncraft-week.com/news_blog/maker-focus-adi-toch#sthash.TFFhfnQS.dpbs](https://www.londoncraft-week.com/news_blog/maker-focus-adi-toch#sthash.TFFhfnQS.dpbs)

Fig. 10: Poetic Justice (process image), 2020. Photo: Beata Alfredsson Grahn.

Fig. 11: Beata Alfredsson Grahn, 2020.

Fig. 12: Klara Brydewall Sandquist, 2020. Painting of how three snakes were created in a bowl. Provided by the artist.

Fig. 13: Beata Alfredsson Grahn, 2020.

Fig. 14: Christian Houge, *Residence of Impermanence*, 2018. [http://christianhouge.no/Residence-of-Impermanence](http://christianhouge.no/Residence-of-Impermanence)

Fig. 15: Christian Houge, *Residence of Impermanence*, 2018. [http://christianhouge.no/Residence-of-Impermanence](http://christianhouge.no/Residence-of-Impermanence)

Fig. 16: Figure 16, Ann Hamilton, *Accountings*, 1992. [http://www.annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/accountings.html](http://www.annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/accountings.html)
Troubles getting through

One thing keeps coming up, and I cannot stress this enough, namely why I keep calling so many of the pieces in our project Klara’s, as opposed to ours. Poetic Justice is two different projects melded into one. The motive on Klara’s part is to find a channel to express anger, mine is to acknowledge, strengthen and justify that anger through an act of sacrifice. The act of sacrifice makes the loss of material in my objects constructive rather than destructive, as it goes directly into the manifestations of Klara’s anger.

I have reflected on my role in this project and tried out different ways of expressing myself in regard to it. Semantics has turned out to be important to how it is perceived, and I have been experimentally oscillating between terms such as destruction or ruin, and for instance a sacrifice, investment or simply undoing, in describing the destiny of my objects. It seems like the first have been easier for an audience to grasp or relate to, and the latter not so relatable. When the term sacrifice is used, it sometimes needs further clarification as it is often understood as very violent and/or destructively selfless - and it is not necessarily either of those.

The fact that Klara’s objects naturally take more space as well as attention in the display was of course anticipated but has also proven to take more of a toll on my sense of self than I thought it would. My objects, that are more toned down to begin with, are pulling a sort of disappearing act that began in the making and seems to continue in the display. They are easily overlooked in the presence of the figurines, but a trained eye would recognize the amount time and care put into them.

A great loss in the first translation into digital was of course the detail in the whole body of work. We had to learn the hard way as none of us had seen the footage presented to the opponents. In our case the video footage was overexposed to an extent that effectively killed off every sense of life and detail in our work. I am aware of and impressed by the amount of work put into covering everyone’s displays on such short notice, but to be honest I did not know if I should laugh or cry when I eventually saw ours. I ended up doing both.

Getting through troubles

In my 6 minutes presentation in January I asked for an emergency within the field of contemporary corpus. A state of uncertainty that uproots a system and results in either death or necessary development. And we did get emergency in abundance, just not the kind I asked for. The current situation has definitely thrown all of us. Klara and I have been forced apart at some crucial points in the process, but before that happened we made an important decision that turned out to matter greatly in the long run. Instead of putting our money towards a big heap of steel to build most parts of our display, we invested it in getting support outside of Konstfack, and the result was a display solely made out of wood, imagined by us and put together by cabinetmaker Robert Landström, and to be honest it turned out so good we can’t even remember what we had meant for it to look like before the crisis.

Due to illness only one of us was present for the setup in Vita Havet, which was stressful not only for the one that had to spend twice as much time setting up, but perhaps even more so for the one cut off from the situation. In any case, it turned out very well, besides the fact that our video pieces had to be left out due to technical issues.

The finished, but not final, stage (before the sacrificial act) most of my objects go through is perpetuated through photography – images that were present alongside Klara’s paintings in the display, as
the centrepiece of the altar cabinet and also as horizontal surfaces on the two side tables. This has proven a dilemma in the current situation, as the whole display was forced into that same medium, lessening the gap between the 2- and 3-dimensional.

For our project to make more sense in a digitalized form of presentation, I think we need to put more emphasis on the 2-dimensional portion that was already there, and perhaps more importantly the videos that we failed to include in the first display. These parts of our work can be shown without lack of detail and I think they can provide a flavour to the project that did not quite get through in the first round.

I think it is time for the silver objects to play the supporting role for once, they can handle it.
and justify that anger through an act of sacrifice. This act of sacrifice makes the loss of material in my objects constructive rather than destructive as it goes directly into the manifestation of Klara's anger.
Images in appendix

Cover image
Beata Alfredsson Grahn 2020

Collage
Poetic Justice 2020

Collage
Poetic Justice 2020

Collage
Poetic Justice 2020

Collage
Poetic Justice 2020

Collage
Poetic Justice 2020

End cover image
Beata Alfredsson Grahn 2020