

## BODY STORIES OF SKILLS AND SORROWS: SMALL STORIES, TRIGGERED BY MATERIAL ARTEFACTS, CARRIED BY EMOTIONS

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### **Abstrakt**

*Cieľom štúdie bol zámer preniknúť za životné osudy ľudí počúvajúc ich, keď predvádzajú ručne vyrobené predmety používané v domácnosti. Ako náhle sa na remeselné výrobky sústredila pozornosť, vnímanie sa otvorilo rozprávaniam zo života o kultúrnom dedičstve, rode, hodnotách života – „dejinám zdola“.*

*Predmety a telesné pocity sprevádzané emóciami spustili plánované alebo spontánne vzniknuté príbehy. Nádoby na potraviny vyvolali vyjadrenia nespokojnosti s triednymi rozdielmi tých mužov a žien, ktorí si pamätali na nedostatok jedla v 1. pol. 20. stor. Textilie z bielizníka podnietili rozprávania zo života – o smútku, úmrtiach, sobášoch, pôrodoch, a o zručnostiach pri zhotovovaní predmetov z textilu. Malé osobné príbehy motivované textíliami obsahovali existenčné skúsenosti zničených životov a nečakaných úmrtí. Tieto príbehy sú síce osobné, ale bytostne späté s kolektívnymi „veľkými“ naratívami o industrializácii, modernizácii, triednych rozdieloch, o živote a smrti.*

**Kľúčové slová:** *malé príbehy, malé naratívy, spontánne vyvolaný naratív, artefakty, telesné zmysly, emócie*

### **Abstract**

*In this article the aim is to reach beyond the script of life history, listening to people demonstrating handmade artefacts for use at home. Once the frame of materiality was set by the inventory of crafted artefacts, the mind was open to the scope of family stories of cultural heredity, gender, values of life – small stories, not life histories.*

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*Whether planned or spontaneously emerging, the stories were triggered by artefacts and bodily senses, carried by emotion. Vessels for food gave rise to protests against class diversity by men and women remembering food shortage in the first half of the 20th century. The textiles of the linen cupboard triggered narratives about life: sorrow, deaths, marriages, childbirths, and stories of the skills of textile production. Small personal stories triggered by textiles implied existential experiences of broken lives and unexpected deaths. The small stories are individual but open to the collective of the Grand Narratives of industrialization, of modernization, of class division – of life and death, ontologically.*

**Keywords:** *Small stories, little narratives, the igniting narrative spark, artefacts, body sense, emotion*

By means of the concept ‘small stories’ or ‘little narratives’ the aim of this article is to reach beyond the autobiographical script of life history, listening to people telling stories triggered by their artefacts, carried by emotion in order to convince me of the significance of a certain artefact, imbued by a value of life. The combination of material artefacts, made, used, sensed by bodies bear witness of lived experience, pronounced in narratives. It was my task to catch the spoken testimony, in order to promote a methodology of narrativity and materiality of the body senses (cf. Ljungström, 1993; 1997)

As the commission of the inventory fieldwork was ordered by the Arts & Crafts Society in 1979-80, the material artefacts were focused on without claim of life histories – leaving the minds of the participants open to the unguarded scope of family history. There were stories of cultural heredity, gender, emotions and values of life spontaneously appearing as small stories or little narratives of various subjects – without foreseeable testimonies. I knew from experience that they would appear but it was not in my instruction to collect them. In those days, Swedish ethnologists would not work with narratives, hardly with artefacts, and Swedish folklorists would not work with artefacts but certainly with narratives. Lotten Gustafsson Reinius finds that the combination was shadowed by a taboo (2013). As an approach of the early 21st century this combination of narratives, artefacts, body sense and emotion is now acknowledged to reward the research with knowledge of the tellers’ mind.

Little narratives or small stories or *petits récits* belong to a recent field of study among folklorists. Twenty-five years ago, I still had no distinct term but ‘life story’ for the matter, though I knew that I was on to something meaningful, catching the comments triggered by the artefacts (Ljungström, 1993; 1997). The stories were not necessarily about the very object but lead further on to matters unforeseen, not yet outlined by methodology. I worked as the assistant to the Arts

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& Crafts consultant, responsible for the inventory. The scene was the flat, rural landscape surrounding the international airport north of Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. We interviewed 68 female and 28 male owners of handmade artefacts, skillfully crafted, intended for use in the neighbouring houses. The objects were chosen accordingly to the criteria of the Arts & Crafts movement by the owners and the consultant. More than 1500 objects passed through our hands – with inspired narratives in some 30 cases. When the objects were measured, described and the catalogue form filled in, I still had an empty reverse page where I jotted down anything that the owner wished to add – sometimes prompted by my obvious interest (Ljungström, 1993; 1997, chapter 2).

In this contribution, I will start from Katharine Young's model of narrative analysis (1987) applied to a small story, exemplifying how the modern economy and global communication changed the livelihood of a family. Against this background I will give a short overview of the methodological approach of phenomenology and a very short note on the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur on time and narrative. This will be followed by a short overview of the concepts of Grand Narratives and Little Narratives, referring to the concepts of narrative and performance, classical since the 1970s. In blessed moments of my fieldwork, the 'igniting narrative spark' would highlight some performances of narratives. In the next part, the small stories will follow, triggered by food vessels and by the textile products of the linen cupboards. Lastly, the conclusion declares the testimonies of the methodology, where the methodology is the lasting evidence allowing for various possibilities of knowledge emanating from other kinds of fieldwork.

To focus storytelling I use 'story' and 'narrative' as synonyms (Bamberg, 2012, 208), using the model by Katharine Young to further the levels of analyzing by naming the telling situation, *the conversational world*, where the narrator tells the story of *the tale world*, sometimes referring what was told in the *story realm* of the past (1987).

Small stories are local, personal products of individual lives relating to the collective knowledge of time and place of society. An old fashioned chair in a modern bathroom opened for a story of female hard work. I asked about the handmade chair I had noticed in this conversational world of the interview. The family had been forced to leave their farm when the airport needed the land around 1970. The new house had modern plumbing, a hot water tap and a toilet inside the house – all modern convenience, new to the family. Our hostess sketched the tale world of some thirty years ago when grandmother got electricity into the old farmhouse, they had now left. Grandmother took her Majolica-lamp for paraffin-oil, carried it outside and smashed on a stone. The beautiful lamp had meant a daily demand of cleaning to make it work for a little light – not like the bright

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electric light at the flip of a switch. When my hostess moved house into the brand new one with a water toilet inside, she picked up her porcelain chamber-pot of porcelain, carried it outside and smashed it into the same stone – a gesture of solidarity with foremothers and of gratitude for modern conveniences. The story had been crafted in silence and was triggered by the chair – brought about by my question for once. She had not planned to tell the story until I noticed the chair.

Memories like these, remote in time and space, we recollect as sensory experience of voices, sights, smell, tactile sensations, without changing. Though sorted into closed provinces of memory, beyond manipulation by our senses, they still remain at work in our minds shaping our experience of the presence – deciding how to shape it (Berger, Luckman, 1966; Frykman, 2012). In this story sights, smells and tactile manipulations were activated, while the circumstances of economy, i.e. the demand of land for the airport, had made the family move to a new house, give up farming. In exchange, the airport authority might provide opportunities for future jobs in construction, or the loading and cleaning of the aircraft, sweeping the runway, etc.

The general approach is that of phenomenology. According to Michael Jackson, “phenomenology is the scientific study of experience” (1996, 2). He continues by quoting Paul Ricoeur who argues that it is “an investigation into the structures of experience which precede connected expression in language” (Jackson, 1996; Berglund, Lake, 2013). I understand phenomenology as how the human beings experience the world the way the phenomena appear to us by perceptions of our senses. These perceptions will be culturally interpreted and negotiated the way that is customary within our groups of belonging. Narration offers a way to interpret the perceptions moulding them into memories of events, emotions, values of life (Ricoeur, 1991, 99-116).

In his research of time, narrative and history the philosopher Paul Ricoeur analyses the minds of human beings and our relation to the past, meaning that narrativity and temporality are closely knit together. By narration the temporality is given the linguistic form. The narrative function is to allow the human being to find her place in time, in the ordinary time of everyday (1985, 1988). The ethnologist Jonas Frykman and the philosopher Nils Gilje capture the process how identifications occur in a context through the phenomenological saying of “who you are is where you are and the materiality that you surround you with” (Frykman, Gilje, 2003). To Ricoeur, objects can be so connected to people and experiences that they give rise to narratives about significant experiences (Ricoeur, 1988, 223f; Ljungström, 1997, 31).

As part of the linguistic turn in the Humanities in the 1980s – focusing the text, the storytelling – we learnt to deconstruct the discourses of preconceived opinions to realize that they were stories (Connerton, 1989, 1 and 101; Portelli,

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1991; Andrews, 2007). When Jean-Francois Lyotard deconstructed so called 'truths' of preconceived opinions, presenting them as Grand Narratives (also master narratives), on modernity, World War II, industrialization, our eyes opened as well to the little narratives, in relation to collective representations of the history of the outside world. The little narratives are individual but relate to the Grand Narratives of society. They are local and open to the personal experience of the temporal changes of the outer world, 'the things that people just know', and to the different world of yesterday (Lyotard, 1979/1984; Johansson, 2005, 57; Frykman, 2012, 33f).

The concept of small story is used by Michael Bamberg and Alexandra Georgakopoulou (2008) as part of narrative practice research (Bamberg, 2012; Andersson, 2014, 4-11). In this field various practices of communication are analyzed as parts of an identity constructed by narratives. The psychologists regard life history as a consistently internalized narrative that provides a meaning for the entire life span (McAdams, McLean, 2013, 233). Life history is a way to study narrative identity. When the issue is not so much personal identity but rather the study of the oral history of a community or cultural heritage, then the small stories offer ways to learn about people's livelihood, cultural heredity, gender, emotions and values of life. The narrative practices of small stories do not only refer to events in the past. They also relate to ongoing, future and hypothetic events (Bamberg et al, 2008).

Like stories, little narratives have a three-part plot, beginning, complication, result/resolve (Labov, 1972). The narrative concept also points to how the story is being told. There are traits by voice or gesture that signal that the teller is ready to enter the stage and take on responsibility for the performance (Arvidsson, 1998; Johansson, 2005). Some of the interviewees became eager to make me understand why an ordinary object of the household work would make them explain to me something really important.

In the interview, questions were usually answered by reports, but sometimes by three-part narratives with a beginning, a complication, and a solution. Following the model by William Labov we discern an *abstract, setting, complicating action, evaluation, result/resolution, coda*. The course of events is chronological. Some steps may be left out but the evaluation is needed to let us know the teller's mind about what happened (Labov, 1972). The moral evaluation – together with the concept performance honed out by Dell Hymes (1972) and other linguists and folklorists – signals that a speaker is ready to take on responsibility to tell a story, entering the stage to give a performance by inspiration. The igniting narrative spark is the concept that the ethnologist Katarzyna Wolanik Boström uses for the moment when the teller takes on the task of performance. Boström wishes to expand the range of framing signals, any traits by voice or gesture, in an even

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wider sense than Dell Hymes' concept of performance (Hymes, 1972; Boström, 2014, 13). By small stories I will explain the situations that lead to inspiration caused by an artefact.

## Food Stories

In the craft inventory there were plenty of handmade wooden vessels formerly having to do with food: preparing, serving, keeping and consuming food to serve the bodily needs. The cohorts I met around 1980 were old enough to have experienced the periods of shortage in the first half of the 20th century, when there was food in the countryside but not in town. They had bodily memories of being short of food, of mothers able to cook good food out of little. Inspired by food vessels both men and women talked of social diversity, class protests. The food group of narratives was fairly easy to discern. The theme of social protests proved to be overarching when I listed the food artefacts in an overview table (Table 1) of explicitly pronounced stories and implicit meanings, interpreted from the context.

Outside a farmhouse where the measuring and photographing took place in the yard, the farmer stopped when passing by. He was curious what the inventory was about. Whatever were 'the girls' doing? He recognized his grandmother's tray used at Christmas for twelve small bags of toffee for her grandchildren. This grandson, then in his sixties, burst out in praise telling us about a woman who could do anything, knew everything, helped everybody, could do butchering and even laid out and washed the deceased. This is how strong women of the countryside are usually depicted, as a happy story of a capable grandmother – in contrast to a grandfather who might have been depressed. I recognized the story, knowing that I had heard it many times before.

One housewife deliberately planned to tell the story of her father's labour as a protest against the conditions of the day-labourer farm hands. Right at the entrance of the cabin, for us to see in *the conversational world*, her father's provision bag was still hanging on its hook where it belonged since his days. The elegant design of the bag was like a ladies' shoulder bag of a saddle type, though the lid was wooden and the basket plaited by roots of spruce. Only the lock loop was made of leather. It was named the Hag. In the tale-world she quoted her father lifting the strap on to his shoulder uttering: "Off with the Hag", every workday of the story realm. He used to be a day-labourer – trapped in labour at the estate nearby. In *the conversation world*, the daughter swore never to go into farming. She valued a respectable life of equal conditions in the modern welfare state. To her, the beautiful provision bag was a monument to unfair conditions.

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Here the theme was not modernization but a protest against social diversity, i.e. against class division. The food stories were seldom told in the well-situated families; there would be no stories of class division, rather of skilled textile production.

## **Textile Stories**

Not surprisingly, homemade textiles formed the large group of artefacts in a craft inventory, and they were accompanied by many stories. I searched for a theme that was not obvious at first sight, but surely there would be intentions behind these various narratives, I thought? For an overview I listed them in a table over what was explicitly said and implicitly meant derived from the context (Table 2). Through the table I learnt how the stories were about life, existence, reproduction, survival, death – about sorrow.

At the well-to-do farmhouses we were introduced to the proud manifestation of the linen closet as the pride of the housewife, a token of her skill and of the wealth of the farm. The skills were expected and reported but in most cases there would not be a story to tell unless there was a great sorrow. There were sorrows: babies who died in their first year, a bride of twenty who died one month before her wedding, mothers in their forties who left little children whether it was decades ago or happened last year, teenagers who had been killed in accidents.

On taking my leave from a professional seamstress of 82, she brought from her pocket a tiny tool for looming a web. This was the gift from her grandmother, a bond between the two of them to certify their skill. “Mother could not have it. She could not even weave. Granny taught me. At 12 I made the best towels mother ever had” (seamstress, 82). I felt that the words held some aggression towards her mother. To make sure that I would not overdo the aggression, I asked the daughter of the old lady. It turned out I was right. The old woman never forgave her mother for taking her from the loving grandmother. The mother got married when the little girl was seven, and she was always made to know that she had arrived too early. Her textile skill was a triumph in revenge.

The story is an example of the common fate for farm maids without protection who had babies out of wedlock. Eventually, if they proved to be good workers they would be married to the soldier or the shoemaker or the crofter and have more children. The happy story of the girls’ upbringing in spinning and weaving was delivered in front of a spinning wheel. The mother of four daughters concluded every lesson: “So you will know when you go into service”, the foreseeable future for the crofters’ daughters in the tale world. In the conversational world

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around 1980, we met no young women. Finishing school, they left for work or study in the city.

Before the construction of the airport picked up pace in the 1960s onwards, farming used to be the exclusive way of life in this rural area, the breadwinning occupation of hundreds of farmhands up to World War II. It used to be important to have children to take over the farm, carrying on the care of the soil – as confirmation for the parents that their life and work was worthwhile, likely a truly international feeling. So the deepest form of sorrow was the one when no children were born, as testified in the following story.

In an inventory of handicraft objects it was certainly none of my business if there were no children to take over the farm, but I was told so, not once, but in at least five houses. The solution during the 1940s had been the Finnish ‘Children of War’. Some 70.000 children were evacuated from Finland during the World War II and thousands of them stayed on afterwards – or were made to stay, adopted to take over the farm. It seemed like the mothers felt they had to provide this information. In five small stories this private solution through adoption was more important than was the period of military preparedness for the wartime – considering that Sweden was spared the war.

The life sorrows are not bound by time, history or gender. Women could talk to other women about their grief. When an old father complained that a daughter had died, leaving her young children, he was silenced by a glance from his wife. The male widowers usually asked a female relative to show the textile production of their wives, knowing that it would be too hard on them on their own. One old man of eighty did anyway and burst into tears: “I miss her!” There have been suggestions of a certain female tradition of autobiography based in the private sphere – in comparison with the male autobiography originating from the public sphere (Johansson, 2005, 234), the outcome of cultural habits, I presume.

In another visited house, we expected a rich treasure of a skilled textile production. At the entrance of the modern house there was a huge cupboard for milk bowls with broad, shallow bowls for skimming the cream, used before refrigerators. The cupboard was impressive, a great conversation piece, but this was a well to do home, so we did not expect a food story, but stories of textiles, women’s dress and the linen cupboard. Also, we were nervous, knowing that the family had recently lost a daughter, in fact murdered a year ago.

We could not keep our eyes from the immense cupboard. Whether planned or not, the mother started the family history with grandmother’s milk cupboard, telling the story of the tale world: The grandmother of the prospering farm was widowed with twelve young children. She could not keep all of them at home. One girl was taken care of by the childless aunt and uncle. She had a good life, as proven by her bride’s photo where she wore a silk *ami*, a female necktie. In



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the conversational world, our hostess fetched the material tie – not crafted at home, yet important. The actual material tie, the photo of the bride wearing it, and the story of the tale world were brought together materially – so connecting the worlds. It turned out to be a food story of sorrow, reconciled by time.

Our hostess went on to describe the textile products and their care. There were ordinary beaters and a trestle, used for beating the wet clothes, very seldom preserved. At last she reached for the baby clothes made by her grandmother – especially the christening cap. All the twelve children of the grandmother had worn that cap, and so did her own babies when being baptized. All the time we knew about the daughter of seventeen, murdered in a crime of passion. She was present but not mentioned in the conversational world. The cap in her mother's hand materialized her sorrow to our eyes.

At first I noticed the three-part food narrative of the tale world with a beginning, a turning point, and a resolution: big family with twelve children, the father dies, the kids are sent to relatives and a young girl is raised by foster parents, gets married – and leads a good life, her silk tie is evidence in the coda of the narrative. Then the tale world was taken over by the material baby clothes of the conversational world, so materializing all the babies that were born to the family, all of them wearing the christening cap when baptized. The dead daughter on her mind and the christening cap in her hand, this mother related to the grand narrative of ontology, the cycle of life and death – without hope of grandchildren.

## **Conclusion**

The material artefacts gave rise to various subjects not foreseeable, among them food stories about class protests, textile stories about life's sorrows. Before the fieldwork I would not have known that arts and crafts would be about food or shortage of food, closely knit to anger at social injustice, though it seems obvious once the stories are told. And I would not have known that fabricating every metre of thread from flax or wool and weaving every cloth would be loaded with sorrow. The bodies knew. The monotonous bodily work must have been filled with thinking, happy and sad therapy, but telling the happy memories would demand more confidence than offered by the craft inventory.

Some small stories of class division inspired by food vessels were planned, but there were other outbursts of spontaneous anger, now that the hard days had been overcome in the welfare society. In the old days, the stories would have been too shameful to tell. Did the owners of the textiles know what they could expect, letting the inventory staff into their house? They did know that they were taking on work of washing and mangling, but I wonder if they considered the

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mental cost to themselves. They would just show artefacts, nothing else, not give life history interviews. The textile memories and sorrows were unguarded as the focus was on the artefacts. The life sorrows leaked out over the clothes fabricated by hand, worn next to the skin of the bodies, washed, ironed, carefully handled and stored away by persons in chests and cupboards, silently and invisibly. Some did know and would not take part, referring to that extra work.

Imagine what an immaterial treasure of opinions and memories there would be, had the collectors of artefacts for museums awaited and taken care of the comments on them by their owners. It is the combination of bodily made and used artefacts with small stories that enrich our experience of past time. The sensed feelings may be imagined, tried out by new bodies. The lived experience, sensed by bodies, carried by emotion into narratives allows us to imagine the feeling of being there, plausibly though not authentically.

The heaps of bed linen and tablecloths confirmed the prosperity of the farms but triggered personal narratives of existential experiences, explicitly told stories of broken lives, lives cut off too early by unexpected deaths of mothers, babies, or teenagers killed in accidents.

The contents of the linen cupboards were tightly knit to expectations of a happy future, but also to lost hopes, corresponding to the ideals of the Arts & Crafts movement regarding industrious workmanship and reproduction in the farming families. Disappointments confirm the hopes, showing the difficulties for people to make their dreams come true. Approaching the interviewees without the claim of the span of life history – according to a skeleton script to direct and demarcate its temporal content – opens for a communication where the participants are co-creators of the narrative construction of identity and opens for igniting inspiration. Also the interviewer takes on responsibility for the process of constructing narratives as well as local history in a conversation. The small story of personal experience is individual but opens the perspective on to the wide collective of the grand narrative of industrialization, of modernization, of the welfare society, of class division – even ontologically onto existence, life and death.

Small stories may be short, collected from ordinary lives of everyday character – small in relation to the grand narratives that are collective. It is possible to ask questions concerning cultural heritage, even gender and equality, expecting some kind of report in answer. A straight question of values of life is likely to render a report. Instead of asking I waited, hoping for the igniting spark of emotion that would create a narrative. I waited to feel the interviewees' urge to convince me of what it meant, what value the object was carrying. In this way I promoted a methodology of narrativity and materiality grounded in the bodily senses and emotion.

I recognized the moments of igniting sparks when narratives were triggered by artefacts while their owners wanted to convince me of some particular value, embodied in an object related to memories of the past, of persons and their doings (Ljungström, 1993; 1997). Together, the performance, the igniting spark and the narrative model point out stories, not merely reports, carried by inspiration, that evaluate life values, like skilled work, love and respect of family members, social equality and the modern convenience of the welfare state, the possibility to support a family, to keep up the traditional livelihood of farming – or to gain new means of breadwinning, the ability to cope with modernization and the impact of the world wide politics. When bodily senses and emotions come to the fore of research also the telling of narratives will also reward the researchers with knowledge of the tellers’ mind for further analysis and conclusion.

**Table 1.**  
**FOOD STORIES – PROTESTS OF SOCIAL DIVERSITY**

Conversational World	Story World	Tale World
Code Teller Object	Explicit expressions	Implicit meaning
05f Basket for picnic	Coffee set, wedding gift from young mates	Reproduction, entertainment
10f Basket of rolls	Grandmother’s life history, husband’s rescue	Life/death, reproduction, health/sickness
81f Closet for milk	Grandmother’s 12 children, fatherless	Life/death, reproduction, care
84f Frying pan	Grandmother	Life/death, reproduction, agency, enterprise
25f Grain barrel	Wedding gift	Chain of heritage, taking over the farm
25f Nose-bag for Horse	Horse goes to war	Care-giving
31f Basket of rusks	Grandmother in bed until 1920	Care of old people
34f Salt tub	Grandmother strong, could cook good food out of nothing	Reproduction, agency, care, socialization, shortage of food
39f Spur beater	Grandmother, slaughter, blood, child out o wedlock	Cooking, care, lack of agency of life, protest of social diversity
39f Grocery basket	Borrow hen on eggs. Foster child	Reproduction, protest of social diversity

41m Tray	Grandmother strong, Grandfather not capable	Reproduction, capacity, self identification
51f “The Hag”, provision basket	Father’s day work	Lack of agency of life, social diversity
79m Tub of lard	Child out of wed-lock	Care, socialisation
79m Rifle	Grandfather poached an elk in 1917, food all winter for the crofters	Poverty, protest of social diversity

**Table 2.**  
**TEXTILE STORIES – LIFE SORROWS**

Conversational world	Story World	Tale World
Code Teller Object	Explicit expression	Implicit meaning
17f Skein of flax	Spinster aunt, grandfather’s need	Reproduction, sorrow, capacity
86f Table cloth	Sister, mother	Skill, death, sorrow
86f Weaving Diplomas	One’s own, sisters’, father’s textile skills	Education in weaving, baby losses, deaths
86f Bed linen	Mother, father	Skill, sorrow
86f Broad pillow	Death of the bride	Life/death, father’s sorrow, love
86f Baby pillow	Made from part of her dress as a young girl	Childless, sorrow, life history of 92 years old
86f Table-cloth	Go surety for a wholesale dealer	Social diversity
28f Towel	Grandmother	Reproduction, skill, capacity, socialisation
28f Tiny tool, spoon to loom a web	Grandmother	Care, bond of skill, heritage, sorrow
28f Bed-quilt	Cartwright’s widow	Skill, protest of social diversity, heritage
62 m/f Table-cloth	“Housekeeper” of staff sergeant	Lack of agency, chain of heritage, history, class diversity
26f/f Spinning-wheel	Education to spin and weave	Mother and child, happiness

05f Shawl	Outdoor clothes in the past	Care, training of daughters' skills
05f Towel	Bee-keeping, market woman	Food, care for children, sorrow
05f Towels made of sugar sacks	Distribution of sugar to the country shop	Skill, thrift
09f Woven fabrics bought from peddler	Dislike of expense from mother-in-law, five unmarried siblings	skill, reproduction, family history, children out of wedlock, within
09f Horse-cloth	No spinning in the kitchen, non-hygienic	Hygiene, care, control of the new young wife
14f Tray-cloth	Love of school, mother died, childhood	Reproduction, deaths, sorrows, socialization
19f Linen closet	Long inherited farm	Skill, heritage, social levelling, equality
39f Free embroideries in cotton fabric strips	Grandmother, day-work, granddaughter as foster-child	Skill, capacity, deaths, sorrow, child out-of-wedlock at eighteen in 1900
48 m Table-cloth	Driving horse and sledge in a snow storm	Protest of a boy of 15 with no saying
53m Horse-cloths	Grandparents	To poor to buy wedding-rings, care
58m Man's apron of	Mentally disabled farmhand	Care, professional care
59f Underwear	Old servant maid	Capacity of labour, lack of agency
59f Boots	Left and right alike to be evenly worn	Loneliness, poverty, lack of agency, protest of social diversity
64f Mittens	Son out-of-wedlock	Reproduction, sorrow, stigmatized by name
67f Hand-loom	Mother, grandmother	Reproduction, care
81f Christening cap	Grandmother's 12 children and her own	The dead daughter, reproduction, sorrow

Ten stories of personal experience triggered by textile objects were told in the households of well-situated farms and seven from crofters' families. Sometimes one story followed another in a series creating a narrative wholeness of the interview.

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