



Article

Intergenerational Hope: Detaching Embroidery from the "Tradwife" Phenomenon

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Abstract

*This research seeks to propose a framework for reclaiming domestic crafts within Design Futures. We argue that through the slow, intentional, and intimate act of embroidering, we can invite a different kind of inquiry, one centred on care as a futures-oriented practice, which offers a radical alternative to capitalistic and patriarchal narratives that seek to confine women to the household. By understanding ancestral practices like the *corredo*, through an annotated portfolio, we see how non-linear temporalities are challenged, and how futures can be "stitched forward". We highlight that the risks of cultural revival entangled with patriarchy, as seen in the "tradwife" movement, are best countered by celebrating the profound, often hidden, value of these traditions as a source of female lineage and intergenerational hope, thereby empowering women to embroider more equitable and inclusive futures.*

Keywords

Embroidery, Bridal Trousseau, Tradwife, Intergenerational Hope, Feminist Futures

Introduction

Tradwives and the gendered risk

In recent years, the so-called tradwife movement has risen in popularity particularly on image-focused social media platforms, most notably TikTok and Instagram (Proctor, 2022; Sykes & Hopner, 2024). This phenomenon involves women romanticizing and promoting a return to supposedly 'traditional' gender roles and values, suggesting that a woman reaches her fullest potential and happiness through family life (Proctor, 2022), where men serve as providers and women are expected to take on domestic responsibilities such as child-rearing, cooking, housekeeping, and ultimately submitting to their husbands. This polarization on labour division according to gender has reinforced the unequal and patriarchal (Lerner, 1986) status-quo that has devoted women to work in their homes, describing women and their subservient activities "relegated to the private sphere of the non-monetized 'love economy'" while men are "in charge of higher socially desired positions, entrusted with decision making and with ruling the monetized, professional public sphere." (Milojević, 2012: 60). Particularly, "[p]atriarchy has traditionally been understood as the structuring of society on the basis of family units, where fathers have primary responsibility for the welfare of, and authority over, their families." (Milojević, 2012: 56). Overall and in present context, work seen traditionally as female is "still largely considered unproductive" (i.e. unpaid work in the household) or of lesser value (i.e. feminization of labour or devaluing of traditional 'female' jobs) [...] within patriarchal societies, other areas traditionally considered 'feminine', such as nonviolent conflict resolution or care of people and nature, also have lower status assigned." (Milojević, 2012: 55)

Although the expression 'tradwife' has appeared sporadically over the years, it gained widespread attention after 2020, driven in part by the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing use of social media, along with the influence of

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its online users (Proctor, 2022). Yet, this trend goes beyond longing for a rather fictional past; it functions as a layered cultural display that carries considerable risks for women and quietly spreads traditionalist, anti-feminist messages through content designed to be emotionally and visually appealing (Sykes & Hopner, 2024; Travers, 2024). The ‘tradwife’ values and choice of a life defined by a gendered role as homemaker “may be presented as entirely personal. However, they are inseparable from the profound crisis of both work and care under neoliberal capitalism” (Rottenberg & Orgad, 2020). Paradoxically, tradwife influencers promote illusory domestic fulfilment; while monetizing that very image within the capitalist structures they claim to resist (Allen, 2024).

However, this idealized portrayal is highly selective, often rooted in a white, upper-middle-class nostalgia (Parker, 2010) that obscures the historical realities of labour for most women, particularly working-class women and Black women (hooks, 1982). Throughout history, women’s labour outside the home has more often been a matter of survival than of choice (hooks, 1982; Davis, 1981; Proctor, 2022). This pattern continued to shape the labour experiences of Black women and white proletarian women, who were not regarded as too “feminine” to perform physically demanding jobs such as coal mining, iron foundry work, or serving as lumberjacks and ditch diggers (Davis, 1981). Enslaved Black women, for instance, were forced into labour both in agriculture and in heavy industries, including mining, lumbering, and the construction of canals and railroads (Davis, 1981). Likewise, proletarian white English women were at times employed in place of horses or machinery, primarily for reasons of convenience linked to overpopulation (Marx, 1867). After the abolition of slavery, even with the rise of industrialization, the idea of labour as a voluntary choice remained largely a privilege that most Black women could not afford (Davis, 1981). With limited opportunities available, many were compelled into domestic service for upper-class white families, positions that often-resembled slavery under another guise (Davis, 1981). The invention of a single-income home led by a male provider promoted by the tradwife movement ignores and undermines women past sacrifices and contributions to the workforce and society at large (Proctor, 2022).

Another key gendered risk of the tradwife phenomenon lies in its reliance on the rhetoric of “choice feminism” (Ferguson, 2010), which frames a woman’s decision to embrace the role of a submissive homemaker as inherently feminist (Proctor, 2023). By aestheticizing submission and rebranding it as an empowered lifestyle, tradwives make political patriarchal norms seem desirable and personally rewarding instead of oppressive (Travers, 2024).

Embroidery as domestic phenomenon

The ‘tradwife’ movement romanticizes domestic duties and crafts (Pérez, 2012) and associates embroidery with one of the few legitimate outlets for a woman's creativity, framing it as a duty that reinforces patriarchal norms and may lead to ‘pressured motivation’ rather than autonomous expression (Parker, 2010). In this manuscript, we explore the complex heritage of gendered craft through the example of the *corredo matrimoniale* [bridal trousseau], an Italian tradition once expected of every girl coming of age (Forlani, 1978). The *corredo* consisted of an extensive collection of sewn and embroidered linens, often prepared over years and enriched by the hands of women across multiple generations, sometimes tracing a lineage beyond great-grandmothers (Forlani, 1978). While deeply embedded in a historical context that confined women to domestic roles, the *corredo* challenges linear notions of time, transforming craft into a material expression of care, resilience, and a forward-looking vision, stitched for descendants whom the makers might never meet. The *corredo* stands as a rare, tangible anchor to the female line, imbued with time, labour, and love; whose material permanence carries memory through thread.

The historical marginalization of women’s textile work rests on a hierarchical split between “fine art” and “craft.” When women paint, their work may be labelled “feminine” yet still counts as art; when they embroider, the practice is read as femininity itself and classed as craft (Parker, 2010). Framing embroidery as the expression of femininity reinforces the masculine narrative of men being outsiders to the practice, reproducing gendered boundaries of who is seen to belong to making.

“The fine arts [...] are considered the proper sphere of the privileged classes while craft or the applied arts are associated with the working class. [...] the development of an ideology of femininity coincided historically with the emergence of a clearly defined separation of art and craft. This division emerged in the renaissance at the time when embroidery was increasingly becoming the province of women amateurs, working for the home without pay.” (Parker, 2010: 4)

While the post-1970s cross-pollination self-described “craftists,” has intensified, the art/craft divide continues to function as a mechanism of devaluation. Parker also notes a recurrent pattern: periods of financial recession (as in 1984 and again around 2010) correlate with a revived enthusiasm for “homecraft”; the call for homemade and hand-made work. This revival relocates embroidery within a moral economy of domestic thrift and care, reinscribing its association with women’s unpaid or undervalued labour in the private sphere. Yet the longstanding political association with embroidery, collectivity, and protest resurfaces in contemporary Craftivism, a term introduced in 2003 by Betsy Greer to describe the intersection of craft and activism (Parker, 2010). Meanwhile, the handwork devoted to the creation of a *corredo* functions as expression of genuine design practice, embodying the woman’s personal creativity, technical imprint, and aesthetic sense, which she applies to the thoughtful selection, arrangement, and manual crafting of individualized ornamental motifs that refine the overall appearance of the finished textile pieces (Forlani, 1978).

This research argues that the act of embroidery offers an embodied approach which privileges corporeality, recognizing that all effects of depth and interiority are generated purely through the inscriptions and transformations of the subject’s corporeal surface (Grosz, 1994). The slow, intentional labour of stitching is a practice of repetitions that generates difference and produces subjectivity by shaping the body’s habit, acting to imagine and produce different ways of thinking, of seeing, of producing realities and worlds (Marenko, 2001). We propose a critical and feminist re-evaluation of textile arts as narrative, drawing on the analysis of affective economies (Ahmed, 2014), where objects of emotion circulate and become sticky, saturated with affect, functioning as sites of personal and social tension. These “sticky signs” provide the means for transmitting intergenerational knowledge and nurturing communal memory by showing how feelings do not reside in subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation (Ahmed, 2014).

This approach utilizes worldbuilding to construct a plausible world, furnishing a vision that includes the psychological, cultural, moral, social, and environmental dimensions of marginalized voices that bring alternative perspectives to diversify the value systems depicted (Zaidi, 2019). This process is critical because it utilizes actual and situated design artifacts in the everyday as a site of critical inquiry (Wakkary et al., 2015), re-evaluating textile art as a design narrative (Celi & Rizzo, 2016), and as a speculative tool (Dunne & Raby, 2013) that challenges the ideas, values, and beliefs of our society embodied in material culture, acting as a discursive object that allows people to explore the boundaries between what is and what might be (Wakkary et al., 2015). This narrative function is vital, as stories are the main device through which people can re-frame realities (Celi et al., 2023), allowing us to design new, emotionally resonant visions of futures (Zaidi, 2019).

In doing so, we draw from the convergence of Design and Futures Studies (FS) into Design Futures (DF). This interdisciplinary foundation is necessary because “Design, FS, and their intersections around and through Anticipation [...] have to do with knowing, investigating, understanding, and creating images and alternatives of the already unknown and the unknown but not yet ready.” (Celi and Morrison, 2017: 9). DF is predicated on the idea that design and FS share anticipatory agency; design is inherently projective, shaping artifacts, systems, and imaginaries (Yelavich & Adams, 2014). This is understood as future making (Morrison & Chisin, 2017), where the material and experiential dimension of design grounds foresight in practice (Yelavich & Adams, 2014; Candy & Kornet, 2019; Candy & Potter, 2019). Through DF, the research aims to address issues beyond simple prediction, as it explores ways of engaging with complexity, challenging normative trajectories, and prototyping alternatives (Miller et al., 2013; Morrison & Chisin, 2017; Celi et al., 2023). DF utilizes speculative inquiry (Morrison & Chisin, 2017) and speculative prototypes to generate possibilities serving to explore the borders of the possible (Celi et al., 2023) and offering an alternative scenario and strategic explorations typical of FS inquiry that are often predicative and not putative in status (Morrison & Chisin, 2017). The aim of this speculative prototyping is thus not to predict futures but to address preferable ones with a critical perspective (Celi et al., 2023).

Structure of the article

The manuscript explores how women’s craft design can reimagine foresight narratives and counter patriarchal entanglements, examining how embroidery practices sustain, transmit, or challenge cultural visions of the future. To explore these topics, our approach combines empirical inquiry with reflexive and interpretive tools, in line with feminist methodologies (hooks, 1984; Crenshaw, 1989).

The research is located between diverse disciplinary perspectives, particularly the intersections between FS, DF, and Feminist Theory. FS is still male-centred, requiring the explicit inclusion of women's voices, needs, experiences, and aspirations (Hurley et al., 2008; Gunnarsson-Östling, 2011). Thus, we situate our contribution at the confluence of speculative practices and critical feminist inquiry. We leverage this critical inquiry to examine how power shapes the very surface of bodies, as well as worlds, and to reorient our bodily relation to social norms (Ahmed, 2014), thereby resisting the assimilation into controlled and controllable forms of change (Marenko, 2011).

A dedicated methodology section details the epistemological stance, grounded in feminist approaches, and justifying the use of a hybrid format that integrates text, images, and annotations. Central to this is the annotated portfolio (Bowers, 2012; Gaver & Bowers, 2012), which functions both as an analytical device and as a metaphor for embroidery within the manuscript itself. It entails visual research on the *corredo matrimoniale* pieces through an autoethnographic approach (Ellis et al., 2011). The discussion then interprets these findings in a conclusion that synthesizes these insights by reframing embroidery as a feminist futures practice and issuing a call for intergenerational worldbuilding through textile practices, envisioned as threads of hope resistant to the normative biases of tradwife ideologies.

Methodology

This research begins from the premise that knowledge can be produced through the act of making. Against positivist claims of neutrality and universality, we align with situated knowledges: an objectivity rooted in limited location, embodiment, and accountability, where objective visions come from partial perspectives and where we become answerable for what we learn how to see (Haraway, 1988). Embroidery, therefore, is an apparatus of bodily production in which materials and gestures act; the textile is a material-semiotic actor, its boundaries and meanings emerge through mapping practices rather than pre-exist as givens (Haraway, 1988). Situating making from the margins is a futures practice that challenges power/knowledge relations (Milojević, 2024) and provides alternative readings of reality, positioning embroidery as a legitimate site for knowledge production.

Within this framework, to study embroidery is not to treat it only as cultural artifact, but as a form of thinking-through-making, a tactile epistemology in which meaning is generated through touch, repetition, and time. The slow temporality of embroidery, its looping gestures and accumulative pace, mirrors the way this research unfolds. Rather than seeking closure or theoretical certainty, it privileges attention, intimacy, and the iterative return to material traces. In this sense, the methodology is itself performative: each image, annotation, and fragment of the *corredo* becomes data and method.

Thinking-through-making is described as a dynamic conversation between hand and mind, a continual alternation of intuition and reflection. Thinking, in this sense, extends beyond writing or analysis; it includes collecting, mapping, reflecting, and synthesising, all of which can be articulated through what we make. As designer Hella Jongerius notes, to think with one's hands is to "ping-pong between hands and mind," allowing ideas to evolve through touch. Making becomes a method for discovery (Design Academy Eindhoven, n.d.). Jungnickel's (2018) concept of "making things to make sense of things" further situates this practice within a broader discourse of material inquiry. Her work demonstrates how making, whether sewing, assembling, or tinkering, can surface forms of understanding that text alone cannot access. Making becomes a mode of reasoning, "rendering public the visible and tangible mess, mistakes, and tangential happenings" that accompany knowledge production (Jungnickel, 2018: 495). Embroidery, in this light, is both method and metaphor for inquiry.

To articulate this embodied inquiry in a form that remains faithful to its material origins, we adopt the annotated portfolio (Gaver & Bowers, 2012; Bowers, 2012) which originates within design research and Human-Computer Interaction at Goldsmiths, University of London. Within design research and Research Through Design (Frayling, 1993; Stappers & Giaccardi, 2014), the annotated portfolio offers a way of communicating knowledge that builds meaning through a constellation of artifacts, reflections, and visual-textual correspondences, "annotated portfolios provide a way to present the fruits of design that simultaneously respect the particularity and multidimensionality of design work while meeting many of the demands of generalizable theory." (Gaver & Bowers, 2012: 43). Rather than treating the images of the *corredo* as illustrations of a sociocultural argument, the annotated portfolio allows them to speak with text. These annotations thus serve as bridges between the materiality of the *corredo* and broader

questions of gender, memory, and futures. Crucially, this methodology seeks to cultivate what Bowers (2012: 76) calls a limited rationality: a situated logic that is “descriptive (of past occurrences) and intended to be generative-inspirational (of future possibility).” This method recognizes that neither artifacts nor written accounts can ever be complete: “written accounts can at best be partial views onto the design as a whole, so artifacts and their descriptions are mutually reliant to produce meaning.” (2012: 43). This perspectivism is an ethical stance; it resists the objectification of women’s labour and insists on the relationality of meaning.

The annotated portfolio developed for this research consists of a curated set of images drawn from one of the author’s family archives and from the material traces of her grandmother’s *corredo matrimoniale*. The portfolio is structured around three intertwined temporal layers:

1. Archival photographs of the women who made and transmitted the *corredo*, providing a visual genealogy and domestic environment
2. Detailed photographs of the *corredo* pieces themselves: embroidered linens, tablecloths, and bed sets, tracing technique, aesthetics, and motif
3. Images documenting how the *corredo* is used and displayed within the family today, showing how these artifacts continue to hold and circulate memory in contemporary domestic life

The annotations weave in fragments from interviews, notes, and reflections gathered during the research process, inviting movement and allowing readers to dwell, return, and make their own connections. In this sense, it embodies the spiral temporality of textile work itself: each annotation loops back to another, each image carries traces of the previous one.

Annotated portfolio, the *corredo*

The visual compositions presented in this annotated portfolio unfolds across four generations of women along the maternal line, beginning with the great-grandmother of one of the authors (Figure 1), tracing how domestic needlework both sustains and subverts the patriarchal legacies embedded in the tradition of the *corredo*. Housewives whose households faced social or economic ambiguity, which made ornamental embroidery a marker of respectability, played a central role in the proliferation of domestic needlework and consequently “[e]very conceivable surface became a site for embroidery” (Parker, 2010: 69).

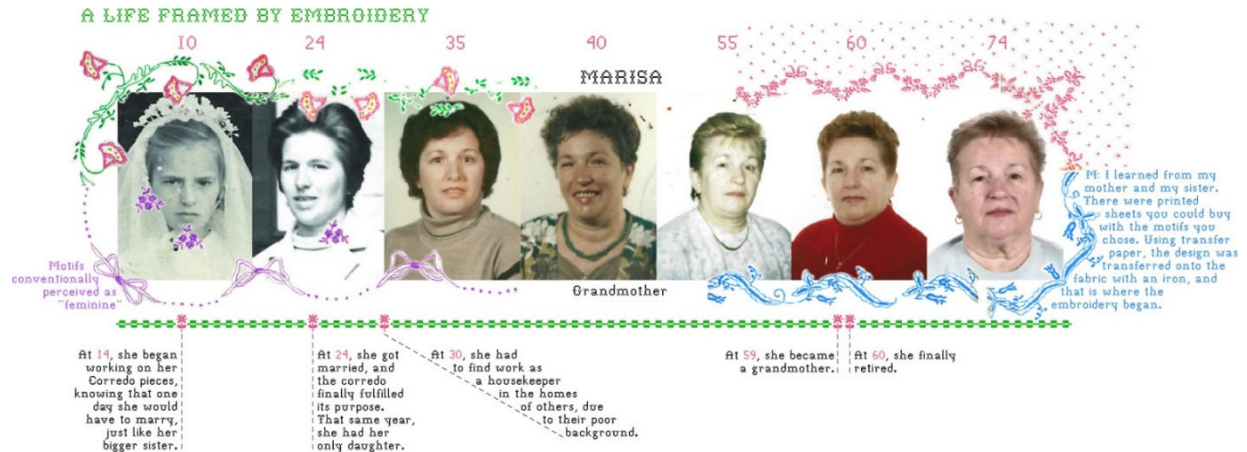


Fig. 2: Second page of the annotated portfolio about the grandmother

In Figure 2, a chronological timeline of the second generation is presented, the grandmother following the great-grandmother. It was common practice to begin learning textile crafts around the ages of eight or nine (Arrigoni, 1986) and to start working on the *corredo* during early adolescence, around twelve or thirteen (Forlani, 1978; Arrigoni, 1986). Marisa recalls that embroidering was a relaxing pastime where she could express her creativity, which provided a form of escape from more demanding labour in the fields or as a caregiver.

Within the female lineage, the loss of the maternal surname through marriage marks the symbolic erasure of women’s genealogical identity, as each generation takes on the name of the male line. Sometimes, not only was the surname lost, but only male offspring were considered for the inheritance of the family’s economic and real estate properties (Forlani, 1978). In contrast, along the maternal line, a different form of inheritance persists, one that is not transmitted through names or properties but through material culture. The true legacy of women is embodied in the *corredo* and in the transmission of embroidery skills and techniques. On one side is a nominal and economical inheritance tied to the male line, on the other a material and manual heritage rooted in practice, craft, and the continuity of feminine knowledge.



Fig. 3: Third page of the annotated portfolio about the grandmother’s marriage and the composition of her *corredo*, which from that moment on became jointly owned

The bridal trousseau (Figure 3), intended to endure well beyond a lifetime, was more than a symbol of prestige or a marital requirement; it served as a marker of social identity. What we see today is a troubling evolution of this longstanding tradwife model, reshaped under a different guise and spread widely through the omnipresent reach of social media. It masterfully exploits social media platforms to construct a highly refined, aggressively aestheticized simulacrum of domestic life, rebranding a fundamentally limiting social role as an enticing, legitimate lifestyle choice. This pervasive aesthetic is disseminated by digital influencers, who consciously position themselves as the poster children of traditional femininity. This relentless flow of perfectly staged media functions to normalize and elevate a gendered division of labour, subtly yet powerfully asserting this pathway as the innate and superior route to female ‘personal’ realization (Sykes & Hopner, 2024).



Fig. 4: Fourth page of the annotated portfolio showing an example of the contemporary use of some *corredo* pieces by the grandmother and her husband

The domestic mise-en-scène, seen in Figure 4, of an aging Marisa and her husband sharing an ordinary dinner stands in stark contrast to the curated tradwife tableaux that systematically display immaculate, idealized visions of household perfection. Modern digital tradwives’ rhetoric makes it urgent to nurture women’s embroidery of domestic textiles when it emerges independently of socially imposed, patriarchal gender norms. When textile art is approached with creative autonomy, women embrace the foundational ideal that the stitch is a means of profound personal reflection and expression.

Marisa’s emancipation from the traditional tradwife customs of her generation is also reflected in a simple yet radical gesture: she never imposed on her only daughter the obligation to prepare a bridal trousseau. Instead, she offered her the freedom to learn embroidery for pleasure, to embellish her own textiles, to create beauty on her own terms. Her daughter chose to learn nonetheless, mastering even more techniques than her mother had known. In doing so, she transformed embroidery from a patriarchal duty into a creative act of self-expression and personalization, reclaiming what had once been a symbol of domestic submission and turning it into a language of agency, care, and aesthetic autonomy. Embroidery was reappropriated as an act of creativity that stitched together memory, identity, and domestic space on new, self-determined terms.



Fig. 5: Fifth page of the annotated portfolio showing design details of selected pieces from the *corredo*



Fig. 6: Sixth and last page of the annotated portfolio showing the women's generational line after the grandmother and the transmission of the intergenerational heritage embodied in the *corredo's* cultural value

The *corredo* is both a tangible cultural heritage and an intangible one. Its value resides in the physical object itself as well as in the rich body of knowledge and skill conveyed through it, sustaining a vital sense of identity and historical continuity (Figure 6). For the *corredo matrimoniale italiano*, the creation embodies both traditional

domestic culture and women popular arts and crafts.

The *corredo* embodies an intergenerational ethic of unrecognized care by representing a foresight practice centred on the creation of useful and aesthetically pleasing textile domestic products for the family lineage: the woman herself, her future partner, her direct offspring, and descendants she will never meet. This transmission of care, stored in tangible textile artifacts, establishes a non-sequential link between distant pasts and futures. We argue that this is a profound act of care, one that is viscerally felt when sleeping on bedsheets transformed by the slow, intentional needlework of a predecessor; heard in the soft rustle as one lays their head on inherited and cherished pillowcases; sensed while warmly drying off with the *corredo*'s towels after a shower; and ultimately rekindled in the desire to take up the needle and continue the living thread of this lineage. This tangible archive of care elevates domestic labour to a practice of embodied futures-making.

Embroidering Futures

The repetitive care embedded in embroidering, often dismissed as part of women's undervalued household craftworks, represents a potent method of generating and transmitting both knowledge and hope (Parker, 2010). By re-examining embroidery through this lens, we can begin to detach it from patriarchal frameworks and reclaim it as a strategic tool for envisioning and stitching feminist futures. The *corredo* represents the passage of time but also the labour, care, and creative knowledge of the women who came before, functioning as a collective public inheritance. This analysis demonstrates how ancestral practices can disrupt linear notions of time, transmitting memory and care to descendants. The deliberate, intimate act of stitching is a meditative process that can infuse hope into the artifact and its recipient.

Across centuries, embroidery has both disciplined women into obedient femininity and served as a vehicle for self-definition, mutual support, and quiet resistance (Parker, 2010). Framing our findings within futures methods makes this duality actionable by connecting three complementary methodologies: the Futures Triangle to map pulls, pushes, and weights around gendered craft; narrative foresight (via Causal Layered Analysis) to surface and re-write deep stories; and Design Futures (through Critical and Speculative Design) to materialize alternative scripts in and through artifacts.

What are Feminist Futures about?

Drawing on Gunnarsson-Östling's (2011, as cited in Mazé, 2019) meta-study, Feminist Futures should be plural, situated, and explicitly normative, naming what is preferable and for whom, while resisting universalism and acknowledging multiple genders (Gunnarsson-Östling, 2011). "Common insights of feminist research, for example that knowledge is 'situated' or positions are differently 'privileged', could radically change the dynamics of the field of futures studies" (Bergman et al., 2014: 66). Doing so requires questioning Western linear models of development, power relations, and dominant notions of legitimate knowledge and rationality that sustain a seemingly gender-neutral status quo (Bergman et al., 2014).

If "dominant modes of knowledge (causal, statistical) are incapable of envisioning the absolutely new," then "other modes of knowing, other forms of thinking, need to be proposed" (Grosz, 1999: 21; 2001: 12, as cited in Mazé, 2019: 36). Embroidery, as thinking-through-making, offers precisely such an epistemic alternative. It renders futures experientially (Candy & Kornet, 2019), not just propositionally: through patterned repetition that can also bend the script, annotated material traces that carry memory forward, and participatory acts of re-assembly that prefigure non-patriarchal inheritance.

The *corredo*'s stitches, motifs, and protocols of making are the micro-acts through which this enactment of femininity has been rehearsed and naturalized. But because performativity relies on repetition, it is also the hinge for change. For different futures to materialize, capacities long coded as "feminine", care, reciprocity, tenderness, nonviolence, require explicit revaluation as public goods, not private duties (Milojević, 2012). The *corredo* operationalizes this revaluation; it carries forward techniques and values through embodied transmission, placing care, kinship, and maintenance at the centre of futures-making, insisting that "feminine" values are public goods.

Futures Triangle and Narrative Foresight

To locate the *corredo* within dynamics of social change, we turn to the Futures Triangle (Inayatullah, 2008; Milojević, 2023, 2024). This method “maps today’s views of the future through three dimensions”: the image of the future that pulls us forward; the pushes of the present; drivers and trends; and the weights; barriers from history and structure that resist movement. Strategies gain traction when they ride supportive pushes, clarify the vision, and actively minimize weights. “Any image of a future that is different from the present situation will be in opposition to the weights of the past.” (Milojević, 2024: 34). The Futures Triangle becomes the graphical enaction of the connection between past, present, and futures of the *corredo* and the practice of embroidery.

Narrative is among our oldest shared cultural resources for sense-making; it is a technique for communicating and perceiving future scenarios and for “conceptualiz[ing] pathways and processes for addressing the not-yet-built, situationally and dramaturgically, not only in terms of planning and strategy.” Narratives, crucially reflect the world; “the narratives we are born into [...] help shape our identities” and “constitute reality,” drawing the boundaries of what is taken as plausible and desirable (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015: 5). Futures thinking has, from its beginnings, worked with narrative to investigate patterns of change, reframing dominant stories and composing alternatives.

Narrative foresight “focuses not on the veracity of the future -is a future true or false- but on discovering and creating new stories that better meet needs and desires,” with the explicit purpose of facilitating preferred or wished-for futures (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015: 4). The *corredo matrimoniale* functions as an heirloom narrative, a storied assemblage that inducts daughters and granddaughters into a lineage of care, skill, and value. As a portable plot, it carries motifs (thread, dowry, hope, keeping), dramaturgies (who makes, who gifts, who uses), and tacit scripts about womanhood and futurity. The exercise of reframing the *corredo* as a living repository of intergenerational care and agency, opens alternative futures; practices of craft as solidarity, memory, and world-making.

Narrative foresight develops from the application of Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) (Inayatullah, 1998, 2019). CLA distinguishes four levels: litany (surface issues and trends), social causes (structural drivers, e.g., STEEPLE), worldview/discourse (assumptions about time, space, power), and myth/metaphor (deep stories and archetypes). Our research presents the same layering: at the litany we inventory the *corredo* items and uses; at social causes we surface gendered divisions of labour and the devaluation of unpaid work; at worldview we contrast domestic femininity with feminist ethics of care; at myth/metaphor we deliberately shift from ‘tradwife’ to portable lineage and threads of hope. In doing so, narrative foresight “links personal and cultural, individual and archetypal, psychological and social, inner and outer,” bringing story “from the background to the foreground” so that story and strategy iteratively co-evolve into informed action toward preferred futures (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015: 21).

Design Futures

Design is a “socially, technically, and culturally framed activity that occurs in contexts of creativity and communication,” where making and knowing coevolve through emergence, generativity, iteration, and usability. The very act of marking what counts as present “reality,” and what is negotiable or preferable in the future, constitutes political judgment, whether designers name it as such (Mazé, 2016, 2019). In the context of DF, Celi and Morrison (2017: 18) build on Dunne and Raby (2013) and state that Critical and Speculative Design mobilize artifacts to challenge political orthodoxies, first by elevating the conceptual imagination (Critical Design), then by staging “tentative, exploratory, and putative” propositions whose future locations remain open to contestation (Speculative Design). Our research proved embroidery as acritical probe that exposes how domestic craft has been enlisted to naturalize submission, and as speculative prompts that prototype different arrangements of intimacy, labour, and lineage.

FS’ foundational insights are revived in design inquiry; Polak (1973) explains that societies act on the futures they can picture; the capacity to imagine multiple futures and project them outward underwrites choice itself, with inquiry tasked to bridge past patterns into actionable images ahead (Celi & Morrison, 2017). In the case of embroiderers, they work on pieces that exist in their head and outside in the world, mirroring how embroidering and the embroidered piece affirm “the self as a being with agency, acceptability and potency” (Parker, 2010: xx), reflected by how herself and others perceive and receive the work. In this way, “embroidery promotes and reflects

a richer, more meaningful internal world, which is in turn substantiated by the reception of the work in the outside world.” (Parker, 2010: xx).

Conclusion

The *corredo* is more than a collection of domestic linens; it is a powerful intergenerational infrastructure, a medium for deep communication, material temporal layering, and an enduring act of radical care. "In stitchery, embroidery, and quilting women's artistic creativity expressed an alternate vision" (Lerner, 1986: 226). This vision, hidden within the domestic realm, reclaims textile arts as a “Subversive Stitch” (Parker, 2010) for feminist futures. Making becomes a way of thinking when hand, material, and memory intertwine, revealing that knowledge can be both tactile and embodied in a *corredo*. Rather than distancing the maker from the object, this approach affirms connection, care, and lived experience as integral forms of understanding. The *corredo*, stands as a tangible manifesto that repositions care as a profound strategy for worldbuilding, rendering images of futures experientially and in public, narrating and re-narrating storied assemblages of motifs, gifting, and use.

We propose DF as the disciplined joining of theory and practice through the accountable partiality and the agency of objects, grounding our epistemic claims in situated, artifact-based inquiry (Haraway, 1988), and the affective economies (objects as carriers of feeling), and hope as a designable orientation that ties present actions to non-patriarchal futures (Ahmed, 2014). In this research, embroidery is a design operation that links concepts to materials, methods to gestures. Read through situated knowledges, we work with textiles as actors that co-produce meaning rather than passively reflect it (Haraway, 1988). This design stance makes our annotated portfolio a material-semiotic apparatus; a way to reason publicly with artifacts where objectivity is a limited, accountable location rather than a view from nowhere (Haraway, 1988).

Emotions do not sit in subjects or objects; what circulates are the objects of emotion, which become sticky with histories of attachment, sites of personal and social tension that move us and hold us in place (Ahmed, 2014). In our portfolio, the *corredo* operates as a sticky object: it gathers grief, care, and pride; it organizes proximities and distances in the present. Crucially, for Ahmed hope is political and present-tense: the pressure of the “not-yet” upon the now that compels action, not deferral. As designers, this is a mandate to curate circulation of motifs, displays, and rites of use that re-attach communities away from nostalgic subordination and toward equity and care (Ahmed, 2014). Where tradwife media aestheticizes submission and markets a privatized, racialized nostalgia as “choice,” our approach reorients the same domestic media toward public, shared purposes, intergenerational learning, collective memory, and feminist agency. The point is not to romanticize craft, but to retune its effects and social scripts.

Notes

The authors used AI language tools solely to assist with language-related aspects of this manuscript, specifically to enhance readability, style, vocabulary, and grammar in English. As English is not the authors’ native language but their second language, these tools were employed only for linguistic refinement. The AI tools were not used to generate, analyse, or interpret research data, nor to develop or substantively contribute to the study’s conceptual or theoretical content. All insights, arguments, and conclusions presented are entirely those of the authors, who have thoroughly reviewed and approved the final manuscript in its entirety.

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