Archiving Labour Reconceptualisations: 'Scaling Up' with Technological Means

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ABSTRACT

The smart home acts as an iteration of a recurrent socio-technical imaginary that is a fully controllable household, operatable from a distance. Problematic as it may be, the smart home does address feminist concerns with questions about automating households and the reconceptualisation of work. This elaboration is guided by the research question of how one can imagine the automation of the household with a concept of labour covering domestic, affective, precarious, and research work, and even non-work. Revisiting the archival turn in feminism, this article selects an archive of its own while following Kathi Weeks' (2021) invitation to establish a counter-archive and 'scale up'. With the selection of three texts, namely Serres' 'Thumbelina' (2015), Haraway's 'Cyborg Manifesto' (2016/1985) and Federici's 'Wages Against Housework' (1975), the goal of the archive is to (1) challenge canonical theoretical reproduction in feminist theory; (2) create an opportunity for possible re-imaginings of different feminist perspectives; and, finally, (3) scale up using technological means. Conclusively, the juxtaposition of texts generates friction which is complemented by incorporating hyperstitious dynamics of overcoming labour's drudgeries and finding new hosts within both existing and non-existent IoT and smart home technologies.

Keywords: the archival turn, social reproduction labour, smart home, hyperstition, anti-work imaginary

INTRODUCTION

'Social reproduction labour' is a broad category that can be studied from various theoretical perspectives. In simplest terms, social reproduction labour is 'the work which nurtures future workers, regenerates the current work-force and maintains those who cannot work, while also reproducing and sustaining societies' (Hester and Srnicek, 2023: 9). However, we can describe the Marxist feminist core of this idea as placing an emphasis on investigating 'how work that produces the work-force has made possible a new understanding of the mechanisms by which capitalist society has been reproduced' (Federici, 2019: 55). Despite the significant entry of Western women into wage relations, household labour has historically been – and continues to be – performed predominantly by women (Illich, 1981: 100; Komlosy, 2018; Huws, 2019: 21). Moreover, the average woman's workload only increased during the COVID-19 pandemic (Salzinger, 2021; Massacese, 2023).

Certain second-wave feminists, such as Angela Davis (1983: 222–224) and Lotta Feminista[1] (Gabrielli, 2025: 9–10), shared the view that merely desexualising domestic labour (such as by sharing household chores with men) or enabling women to (illusorily) escape the household by entering the workforce, leads only to the displacement of social reproduction work – not its reduction, let alone the abolition of domestic servitude. On the other hand, Davis and the tradition of Autonomists Feminism, derived from Lotta Feminista, diverge on the question of technology. While Davis (1983: 229) sees technological advancements as having the potential to reduce the burden of social reproduction work, Autonomist feminist authors such as Selma James, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Silvia Federici, and Maria Mies reject technology – particularly computer technology – as either harmful to the feminist concept of labour (Mies, 2014: 218; Federici, 2021: 68) or inherently inadequate for dismantling the structural foundations of domestic work (Dalla Costa and James, 2005: 11–12).

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[1] Lotta Femminista was an Italian separatist collective founded by Mariarosa Dalla Costa in the early 1970s. Influenced by the political philosophy of *operaismo*, an Italian Marxist framework, the group sought to further develop its ideas (Gabrielli, 2025: 1–2).

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Do current smart home and Internet of Things [IoT] technologies offer anything that might challenge second wave feminism's calls for repurposing or abolition of technology? The time-saving benefits have been a recurrent theme of automated home imaginaries since the mid twentieth century and are tied to visions of house inventory or furniture being fully controllable and operatable at distance. Present in popular media (in shows like The Jetsons, Star Trek), eccentric house-engineering (the Push-Button Manor), or even as a joint effort by MIT and Disney (the Monsanto House of the Future), the IoT smart home[2] can be seen as a continuation of these visions although with a significant aesthetic, aspiring to free up householders' time for various forms of 'domestic bliss' or 'pleasance' (Strengers and Nicholls, 2017: 2). Smoothly surfaced and futuristically white gadgets, usually equipped with a Bluetooth connection enable women 'to multitask their domestic and professional lives' according to some keen female entrepreneurs (such as Jackson, 2016; Wadowsky, 2022). Ironically, the IoT household technologies, or even ChatGPT, just like their predecessors promise more free time and yet interpellate consumers with multitasking and being super-productive (Strengers and Nicholls, 2017; Spiegel in Sadowski et al., 2021; Hester and Srnicek, 2023). Mainstream critiques of the smart home IoT (see Woods, 2018; Doty, 2020; Sadowski et al., 2021) highlight how corporate control over user data drives commodification and concentrate on the loss of privacy. Focusing on the loss of privacy might entail a specific class character of IoT products that aim to reach a specific segment of wealthier women with access to adequate communication networks. Within liberalism, and as Mackenzie Wark (2019) remarks, one might think of privacy as a bourgeois concept. The question of automating the household is historically tied to feminist questions of reconceptualising labour. Subsequently, the question of automating households leads to anti-work Marxist feminist theory, to its nuances lying somewhere in between the rejection of social reproduction work and its counterpart, normalised domesticity (Graziano and Trogal, 2021).

Contemporary societies are complex, and the digitisation of the home adds further layers. While smart devices promise convenience, they often require new skills, investment, time, or external labour to operate and maintain. When people lack the expertise or time, they must hire professionals or domestic workers, reinforcing a feedback loop of dependency on waged and precarious labour. As work hours stretch beyond the standard work-day, and child-rearing demands rise alongside shrinking welfare, households increasingly rely on subsistence labour, platform services, or domestic workers for essential tasks (Huws, 2019: 19). These dynamics reposition the households and housework as a nodal point of conflicting processes, fuelling the recommodification of unpaid care work (e.g., informal economies, immigrant labour force) and demanding more financial resources (Huws, 2019; Hester and Srnicek, 2023). Any time saved by smart technologies, convenient services or products is often offset by various forms of consumption and shadow work.

Alas, the smart home technologies and current computational advancements prompt an exercise in future thinking, aiming to re-engineer the de- and re-commodification flows of unpaid social reproduction work. Hence, this article is guided by the research objective of how one can imagine the automation of the household in a way that drastically shifts the concept of labour – covering domestic, affective, precarious, research work, and even non-work. Rather than progressing in an exhaustive and traditional analytical manner, the article turns to the extended metaphor of the archive in order to evoke an answer.

METHODOLOGY

The central methodological orientation of this article is found in the archive, which is employed as an extended metaphor and as a theoretical tool for exploring feminist historiography. This analytical practice is known under the theme of 'the archival turn' in the humanities and social sciences, which does not necessarily engage with proper archiving as represented by the activities of libraries and information sciences. In particular, it uses archivist terminology more freely and arbitrarily whilst being attentive to underlying patterns of narrating history, thereby not treating it as a disinterested act (Cifor and Wood, 2017).

The feminist turn to archives can be attributed to a series of reasons, varying from transgressing generational differences and challenging the linear historical narratives of its past (see Hemmings, 2011; Eichhorn, 2013) to overcoming disciplinary tensions and boundaries that ossify through the reproduction of academic discourse (see especially Weeks, 2021). The common gesture of these archival turns suggests an elaboration of dominant

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[2] Although the initial sociotechnical imaginaries of the 'smart home' are – amongst others – rooted in popular culture and science fiction ideas of fully automated homes capable of functioning autonomously – even after their residents perish in a nuclear attack (see Ray Bradbury's short story 'There Will Come Soft Rains') – their corporate envisioning and implementations have unfolded in several waves across the 20th and 21st centuries. For the sake of clarity, this article focuses on smart home appliances and objects from the 2010's onwards. These devices rely on high-speed wireless internet connections, favour integration with smart speakers (such as Amazon Echo or Apple's Siri) and are being sold either as standalone devices (e.g., robot cleaners, lighting systems, coffee makers, cooking robots, etc.) or as a network of interconnected devices controlled by a central home automation hub or controller.

narratives, in conjunction with the affects they mobilise. When considering the technologies underpinning the latest iterations of the 'smart home' imaginaries, prevalent approaches range from addressing gender diversity or representation issues to feminist reframing of the digital divide (see Strengers and Nicholls, 2017; Chambers, 2020; Strengers and Kennedy, 2020; Aagaard and Madsen, 2022; Pink et al., 2022). Such critiques often stem from a social constructivist perspective, which tends to cultivate a general scepticism towards technology, sometimes starting or ending the discussion by characterising it as (inherently) masculine[3]. Overall, and when combined with critiques from mainstream social sciences, it could be argued that the prevailing affective response to technology remains, to a greater or lesser extent, cautionary and reserved[4], sometimes carrying a flavour of technological phobia.

Following the orientation of the feminist archival turn, and more specifically Kathi Weeks' invitation to 'scale up', this article proposes the formation of a counter-archive aimed at 'stretching the socio-political imagination, demonstrating how we might broaden our critical diagnosis and lengthen our temporalities of change' (Weeks, 2021: 859) in relation to feminist technoimaginaries of the smart home and social reproduction labour. The archive I suggest here consists of three texts: Michel Serres' 'Thumbelina' (2015), Donna Haraway's 'Cyborg Manifesto' (2016) and Silvia Federici's 'Wages against Housework' (1975). The first text examines the utopian promise of the early Internet and the democratisation of knowledge, personified by a millennial girl equipped with a smart phone and enjoying her time immersed in the 'immanent virtual'. The second, often categorised as an example of cyberfeminism or postmodernist thought, celebrates the dissolution of certain 'original unity' dualisms through the transformative power of science and technology (Wajcman, 2006), with its cyborg monstrosity indicating the possibility for a genderless utopia. The third, written in the 1970s as a political demand to transform housework into paid labour, emerged alongside the second-wave feminist movement (Toupin, 2018). Its utopian ambition lies in its call to end the separation between productive and reproductive labour, and the corresponding divide between paid and unpaid work. This demand re-emerged in the 1990s, particularly in some Central European countries (Komlosy, 2018).

The experiment consists of putting these texts in a relation to each other so the reader can perform a comparative reading and compose a reading synthesis. In addition to following the orientation of the feminist archival turn, the goal of juxtaposing these texts is to match 'a hyperstitional process'[5], by which seemingly un-actualisable ideas bring about the conditions necessary for their own reality (Carstens, 2009; Wilson, 2015). Hyperstitions foreground the mechanisms through which imagery of the future becomes entangled with processes of social change[6]. Significantly, the 'hyperstitional process' is marked by feedback loops, wherein hyperstitious ideas actualise themselves through their dispersion and the engagement of 'cultural hosts' – whether human or non-human – who act in anticipation, thereby simultaneously amplifying the reality of the initial (fictional) idea and fuelling the hype (O'Sullivan, 2017). Consequently, any form of academic revision or critique that promotes a singular solution or privileges one confined body of knowledge as a hyperstitious idea is likely to fail or fade away, if it lacks positivity or is oblivious towards desire-production.

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[3] In respect to the Autonomists' visions of the social origins of the sexual division of labour – or Mies, more specifically – tools are essentialised as a feature of 'male bodily productivity', with their use being restricted to the figure of the 'Man-the-Hunter/Warrior' (Mies, 2014: 56–58). This is historically inaccurate, to say the least. Prehistoric or Paleolithic females from various parts of the world most likely produced stone tools, carried weapons, and had an advantage over men in terms of endurance, whereas prehistoric males also engaged in gathering activities.

[4] A spontaneous observation in this regard is that researchers – particularly design anthropologists or ethnographers – focusing on actual technology use tend to adopt a more neutral stance towards it, although a systematic investigation of this tendency lies beyond the scope of this article.

[5] The term 'hyperstition' was first coined and used in the context of accelerationist ideas on fiction, particularly in the writings of the Cybernetic culture research unit (Ccru). In contrast to superstitions, hyperstitions are described as functioning 'by mobilising a positive un-belief, designed to de-programme ideology and potentiate mutations' (Wilson, 2015: 40). At this stage, the concept remains too loosely defined to be operationalised into a methodological approach; however, it serves as a compelling heuristic tool for exploring certain parts of the history of religion, technology and feminism as coincidental, intense, aleatory and unpredictable. To further articulate the topics of social reproduction work and IoT automation, it is worth noting two categorical reasons for employing hyperstitious heuristics: (1) technology continues to occupy a central position in imaginaries of the future, acting as an engine for accelerated change, mutations, or subversion; and (2) on the affective level, 'positive un-belief' is characterised by ambivalence. If we are to engage in 'hyperstitious theory-fiction', it appears that 'positive un-belief' can scarcely begin to unfold, constrained within a set of theoretically rigorous anti-consumerist and anti-technological reasonings.

[6] For example, the concept of weapons of mass destruction circulated widely in science fiction before the hydrogen bomb was actually developed. Similarly, ideas like cyberspace and its supposed material precondition, Moore's Law, initially functioned as fictional constructs or speculative predictions that later materialised through substantial investments. This raises the question of whether the current hype around AI automation might evolve into a comparable hyperstitional mechanism – one in which business owners and executives commit to large-scale investments in order to stay ahead in the competitive race toward automation.

Likewise, the Autonomist feminist utopia proposed by Mies' starts with the centrality of transcending the patriarchal sexual division of labour but locates this transformation within an alternative economy – namely, smaller, self-sufficient production units situated outside the nation-state (Mies, 2014: 219–220). This version of feminist utopia rejects both Marxist and capitalist notions of 'economics of time' and instead serves as a foundation for reconceptualising labour through vitalist and somewhat metaphysical concept of life. All work, in this view, should be connected to the 'production of life' and embedded in a totality of 'decentralized', 'non-exploitative', 'non-hierarchical and reciprocal' relations (Mies, 2014: 217). This tactic of economic separatism[7] currently acts as a barrier to dispersion and, thus, limits its potential to serve as an agent of social change. It is not scalable – at least not under the current existential conditions of society.

Yet we are tempted to interpret Dalla Costa's and Jones' (2005: 6) analysis of women's unpaid work and the sexual division of labour as a hyperstitious account of capitalism's birth – one that required the reorganisation of society through the ghettoised compartments of the family, school, and factory. Capitalism's subversion of the (previously) unfree patriarch into the formally free wage labourer resulted in becoming an instrument of the exploitation of women, secured through cultural investments of the myth of the female incapacity (Dalla Costa and James, 2005). Their ambition is to transcend this structure through heightened feminist subversiveness in the struggle: by diminishing the efficiency and productivity of domestic labour, women seek to claim their place as protagonists of the struggle (Dalla Costa and James, 2005: 20). They infused Marxist theories and interpretations with feminist hyperstition, amplified through the *Lotta feminista* collective and extended across different geographies (e.g., USA, Trinidad, England). Above all, the preferred host of this feminist subversion is the figure of the housewife.

The archival curation of this article continues their hyperstitious efforts by subverting the dominant smart home techno-imaginary and its untenable promise of enhancing domestic productivity and liberating users from the drudgery of labour through automation – supposedly resulting in more free time. However, both past and more contemporary attempts to industrialise domestic labour have led primarily to its displacement, not its reduction. In the case of smart home IoT appliances, time savings remain minimal due to their limited micro-scale operations, its position in isolated dwelling units (i.e., individual apartments, family homes), and their inability to actually meet consumer demands – especially the desire to eliminate cleaning tasks. These devices largely serve as IoT extensions of the dominant platform economy, automating only minor tasks (e.g., adjusting the light, monitoring temperature, or locking doors), which are not especially time-consuming to begin with (Strengers and Nicholls, 2017: 5; Hester and Srnicek, 2023: 38).

Finally, the friction produced in the archive can shed some light on which IoT hybrid innovations could become entangled in topics and perspectives of feminist anti-workerist politics.

THE ARCHIVAL TURN

Foucault, Feminism, and the Archival Turn

The archival turn we are referring to here departs from the practice of library professionals and draws instead on broader conceptualisations of knowledge transmission and their mutations – particularly Michel Foucault's notion of the archive in the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002). This conception is often recognised as the basis for the feminist appropriation of the archival turn (Cifor and Wood, 2017; Freeland and Hodenberg, 2023). For Foucault, the smallest unit of knowledge is the 'statement', which cannot exist autonomously but only within systems that govern its emergence as either an 'event' or 'thing'. These systems – archives – define the conditions under which statements become enunciable (Foucault, 2002: 145–146). To explain more plainly, enunciability can encompass descriptions of the statements' sites of appearance, the various means of their observation, their transmission through teaching, and the perceptions associated with the archived statements (Mackenzie, 2017: 220).

Within the feminist appropriation of the archival turn, enunciability is primarily concerned with the affective dimensions of archives statements and their grouping, treating statements as 'things' and revealing the prevailing order of knowledge. Several feminist theorists have built on this approach. Clare Hemmings, for instance, examines feminist historiography through academic journal articles, identifying three dominant narratives: progress, loss, and return – arguing for the return that links past and present to an open-ended future (Hemmings, 2011). Building on Hemmings' work, Kate Eichhorn curates feminist activist materials, focusing on how they circulated and were used by younger generations. For Eichhorn, the archive becomes a space not of nostalgic return to a feminist past, but of longing for a feminist future that has yet to arrive. Kathi Weeks' work can be seen in proximity to Hemmings

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[7] This is not to say it will be doomed to fail in the future: imaginaries of performing subsistence work in isolation from nation-states, urban centres, and its corresponding capitalist maladies of precarious jobs may resonate across the academic (e.g., in the writings of Ivan Illich, Maria Mies, Silvia Federici) and political spectrum (e.g., TradWest neo-Christian groups, libertarians, degrowth advocates, new age spiritualists, etc.). History is not fixed – and neither is the future.

and Eichhorn, albeit with a certain twist. She analyses practices of academic writing and citations' circulation, highlighting enunciability modes such as canonical reproduction, oeuvres, intellectual traditions and the like. To transgress the tensions of various feminist disciplines, Weeks constructs a counter-archive and articulates two systems of statements, captured in the idiom of 'scaling down/up'.

Scaling Up and 'Folk Politics'

Weeks derives her political demand for 'scaling up' from her own chosen archive. Her archive is represented by 'a mere idiosyncratic collection of three texts' (Weeks, 2021: 859), all belonging to different theoretical traditions or even competing strands of feminist thought: Firestone's 'The Dialectic of Sex' (1970), Haraway's 'Cyborg Manifesto' (1985), and the Laboria Cuboniks collective's 'Xenofeminism' (2015).

With the act of archivist curation of three different feminist manifestos that obviously aim at transforming different social modes (such as the nuclear family, capitalist production relations, the welfare state, and technological infrastructure) and their systemic institutional settings, she counterposes the reproduction of the established order in feminist theory and its affectionate attitudes that come with its modes of enunciability. Weeks' 'counter-archive' is intended to foster 'the unapologetic utopian imagination' rather than being nostalgic or melancholic toward the seminal works of feminist theory (Weeks, 2021: 865). Arguably, the confidence and unapologetic attitude of the curated manifestos may serve as a more generative affect for feminist hyperstitions.

Part of the prevalent order of feminist theoretical production that, to some extent, Weeks sees as symptomatic, is oriented toward 'pluralizing and specifying', 'shifting from regularities to singularities' and/or engaging in 'locating differences rather than commonalities', and is accompanied by her account of the recent[8] unease of feminism with more totalising visions of speculative politics on a grander scale (Weeks, 2021: 860, 863). Often grouped under the label of the 'ethical turn', such strands of post-1990s theoretical production emphasise 'the local, small-scale, biographically centred and, finely textured studies of the meaningfulness of the subjective and intersubjective experience' (Weeks, 2021: 863). Similar critiques appear in Srnicek and Williams' concept of 'folk politics', which targets the contemporary left's reliance on immediacy, spontaneity, and the cultivated nostalgia for the familiar, namely for postwar Keynesian capitalism, the welfare state leftovers and the romanticisation of impulsive uprisings. Alongside this, 'folk psychology' privileges the authentic and natural over long-term strategic thinking, trying to establish a universalist, technologically mediated politics grounded in structural analysis (Srnicek and Williams, 2016: 10). The 'ethical turn', 'folk politics', and 'folk psychology' are treated as forms of depoliticisation that resist ambitious reform or anti-capitalist change. All fall under Weeks' concept of 'scaling down', contrasted with 'scaling up' – two modes of knowledge production in feminist theory and social sciences.

Both critiques do not dismiss the 'scaled down' variations as wrong. They can serve as valid starting points of political action. However, they are insufficient as a programme of social change, especially under the current conditions of global capitalism, which is increasingly 'complex', 'nonlinear', and 'abstract' (Weeks, 2021: 860; Srnicek and Williams, 2016: 12). In response, the left should 'expand its human capacities' with technology (Srnicek and Williams, 2016: 16), while feminism should advance with 'unprecedented cunning, scale, and vision' (Labora Cuboniks in Weeks, 2021: 860). In what way could a multitude of smart home sensors and Bluetooth-enabled gadgets ever prove helpful in this context?

SCALING UP WITH TECHNOLOGICAL MEANS

In this article, I propose a small archive consisting of three texts: Serres's 'Thumbelina' (2015), Haraway's 'Cyborg Manifesto' (2016/1985) and Federici's 'Wages against Housework' (1975). Its aim is threefold: to challenge the canonical theoretical reproduction within feminist theory, to create opportunities for re-imagining different or even competing feminist perspectives, and to scale up these ideas with technological means. Additionally, it can serve as a counter-archive on the account of the disregard for private sphere's privacy and by finding technology exciting or stimulating, rather than approaching it with precautionary tales, scepticism, or fear.

This archive can be seen as a 'creative re-creation' of Weeks' version of a counter-archive, as well as an acceptance of her invitation to 'scale up'. Her aim is to challenge or at least neutralise 'some of the reading habits that have been encouraged by the competing concepts of canon, family, opus and tradition' (Weeks, 2021: 858). In this respect, this archive goes one step further and includes a text that does not belong to a feminist theoretician

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[8] It is unclear what exactly Weeks is referring to here. In another work of hers, *Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics and Postwork Imaginaries* (2011), she described the anti-utopian tendency as characteristic of poststructuralist feminist traditions from the 1980s and 1990s. According to Weeks, poststructuralism functioned as an 'epistemological barrier' to utopian feminist thinking. Feminists of this era and tradition, she argues, avoided constructing modernist visions of progress or better futures out of concern that such projects might 'exclude, marginalize, or render invisible those who would nourish different dreams and pursue alternative programs' (Weeks, 2011: 184).

let alone to a feminist canon. The French philosopher of technology, Michel Serres, wrote a short story exploring how networked technologies can reshape human cognition, emphasising what is possible and emergent rather than simply critiquing their influence. The text's main figure, Thumbelina, is a fictional character; a younger girl that can be accused of acting disinterested, individualised, apolitical, bored and unable to think in historical terms. As such, both she and Haraway's cyborg figure remain oblivious to and immune from imposed (religious, political, scientific) unities. A tempting academic approach would be to follow the sovereignty of the canon and simply interpret Thumbelina as merely an embodiment of Haraway's cyborg figure, one that challenges some of the core principles in Federici's text. This could suggest structuring the juxtaposition by starting with 'Cyborg Manifesto', continuing with 'Thumbelina', and concluding with 'Wages Against Housework'.

Another possible variation of standard academic writing would be to begin with the oldest text – Federici's manifesto, as a representative of second-wave feminism – and proceed chronologically, in a linear fashion. This approach could incorporate Haraway's (2016: 22–23) reflections on how Marxist or socialist feminisms both naturalise and reject unities in categories such as gender or labour. Such a revisionist reading might culminate in the actualisation of Serres' 'Thumbelina', which could ultimately be subsumed under the dominance of either canonised text, or in analysis of why the household and housework are conspicuously absent from his work. However, these are merely two of the more obvious examples of common academic reading and writing practices, which by no means exhaust the conventional repertoire of interpretative possibilities. While both approaches engage with the themes of technology, they fall short of advancing the project of 'scaling up with technological means'. Instead, they remain preoccupied with canonising and reiterating elements of the already extensively interpreted manifestos.

The Archive's 'Eventfulness'

Ironically, this archive seeks to challenge canonical theoretical reproduction and the concept of tradition (with its organic linearity) in academic writing by including two canonical feminist texts. Its strength lies in its lack of a fixed directional structure, as the juxtaposed texts 'might be read forward or backwards' and 'its sequence and composition are not predetermined' (Weeks, 2011: 857). By archiving a set of statements primarily as events, the diachronic trajectory of the selected texts is flattened to 'preserve their singularity [and] untimeliness' (Weeks, 2011: 855), enabling multidirectional readings unbound by historical order or the binary dilemma between privileging the past or favouring the present. However, different (yet limited) combinatorial variations and permutations are possible if we are to focus on the 'eventfulness' of the selected texts: namely, the conditions under which the experience of enjoyment arises when immersed in connected networks; secondly, the visions of a genderless utopia indicated by technoscientific advancements; and lastly, the demand to line up social reproduction work as a form of waged labour.

Thumbelina is fascinated by the 'cacophony of clamouring voices – private, public, permanent, real or virtual' that she encounters on the internet, as the non-hierarchical structure of the networked space inspires her with a chance to 'control her own activity in real time' (Serres, 2016: 48, 54). In this regard, she shares a kinship with her electronic gadgets as with the cyborg's affinity for a 'network ideological image', which highlights 'the profusion of spaces and identities and the permeability of boundaries in both the personal body and the body politic' (Haraway, 2016: 45–46). 'Networking' does not reside in some authentic non-capitalist outside; it has a dual nature – it is both an activity engineered, performed, and channelled by Big Tech multinational corporations, yet this does not preclude it from simultaneously functioning as a feminist practice (Haraway, 2016: 46). However, controlling one's own activities in real time is just one facet of Federici's proposed escape from unholy alliances with other forms of tools (such as sponges and brooms – electrified or not) confined to the household. In essence, she envisions women 'regaining some control over our lives' (Federici, 1975: 7).

The cyborg is suspicious of the categories of 'gender, race, or class consciousness', as they came into existence through the contradictory processes of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism (Haraway, 2016: 16–17). The division of labour, split between the company and the household, has fragmented and reshuffled genderised existence, creating a fictional separation between the personal/political realm. Federici's contribution was to 'show how both terms of these dichotomies construct each other in practice and in theory' (Haraway, 2016: 45). In her own words, 'housework had to be transformed into a natural attribute rather than be recognized as a social contract because, from the beginning of capital's scheme for women, this work was destined to be unwaged' (Federici, 1975: 2). The artificiality of past categories, such as the nation, church, class, or family, strikes Thumbelina as 'abstract virtualities', creating 'collectivities on the massacres of others' (Serres, 2016: 56, 58). These networks are filled with a multitude of these abstract virtualities, complicating the process of identifying with any one of them without excluding others.

The demand to recognise all social reproduction work as waged labour might be as untimely as the prospect of a fully genderless world. By demystifying social reproduction and affirming it as labour, it can be seen as a site of skill and competence, rather than a gracious and spontaneous act of 'female instinct' or something similarly

disgusting. It is one of the many forms of work that capital exploits for free, accelerating its race on this planet in thousands of directions, by dismantling and reassembling feminised labour. 'Exploited as a reserve labour force; seen less as workers than as servants; subjected to time arrangements on and off the paid job that make a mockery of a limited workday' (Haraway, 2016: 38), this labour gets ever more precarious. Something is profoundly wrong with work – whether it is in factories, companies, households, or online – regardless of whether it has always been so.

Counter-Archive

What, then, makes this a counter-archive? The counter-archive of the three selected texts was curated with a virtual consistency, demonstrating a disregard for concerns over the loss of privacy in the private sphere that might accompany a reworking of the household and the social reproduction sphere by technological means. Federici's manifesto (1975: 8) provocatively characterises all housewives as 'prostitutes,' 'enslaved,' and 'gay,' rejecting the romanticisation of domestic roles. Haraway's cyborg, in turn, 'does not dream of community on the mode of organic family' (Haraway, 2016: 9), signalling a break from traditional familial structures. Similarly, Serres' Thumbelina is indifferent to privacy in the private sphere, viewing the social relations of this domain as virtual and obsolete, with the old ties of belonging, including family, either fading away or undergoing reorganisation (Serres, 2016: 56). The virtual consistency can be sustained despite the fact that the selected texts emerge from distinct feminist (or even non-feminist) traditions.

What is notable is the differing attitudes towards technology: while the texts by Serres and Haraway can be described as 'techno-optimistic', Federici's manifesto lacks any explicit engagement with technology[9]. However, this absence need not be viewed negatively; it may offer a generative space for reimagining or reconfiguring existing technological infrastructures and social relations in hybrid forms. What if, instead of awaiting the consolidation of 'revolutionary subjects' located in privileged sites of anti-capitalist struggle – such as the kitchen, urban gardens, or fields of the Global South, as seen in later Autonomist thought – we begin to conceive of housewives as prolific engines of change? In any case, the interplay between this absence and the other two texts avoids replicating impotent academic critiques marked by phobic affectations or cautionary tales that frame past and current technologies as inherently masculine, patriarchal, or capitalist, entangled in a Gordian knot of oppressive, hierarchical, racialised and exploitative totality of social relations that must be cut through altogether.

Furthermore, the issue does not lie in the content of the findings about technology's character but rather in 'a debilitating disjuncture between the thing we seek to dispose and the strategies we advance to depose it' (Weeks, 2011: 860). Merely focusing on exposing the masculine or patriarchal nature of technology will do little to alter its character. Similarly, declaring the socially constructed nature of technological objects will not make them more useful or better suited to automating housework, especially if no viable alternatives are proposed, and if such alternatives are not (hyperstitiously) dispersed across other relevant institutional frameworks and settings. Ultimately, critiquing technological artefacts and their use from a detached, innocent, or ostensibly pristine 'outside' position – or reducing them to commodities or to capitalist relations of exploitation – must either be transcended or complemented by other lines of reasoning and action.

As a contested curation, this counter-archive inherently lacks interpretative depth and extensive proof, yet its 'eventfulness' carries its own significance. At the same time, it is constructed as a 'thing', building on the archival proximity of past feminist appropriations of the archivist turn. Hence, on the one hand, it can stand on its own; on the other, it reproduces some of the positions and conclusions articulated by Hemmings, Eichhorn, and Weeks. The selected texts were not curated for their theoretical alignment with hyperstitial tinkering – had that been the case, more fitting examples from xenofeminist authors would have been chosen. Additionally, the curation does not aim for a balanced representation of various feminist theories of women's experiences.

Needless to say, the archive does not merely produce commonalities but also generates frictions. The narrative of the three archived texts unfolds as an encounter between Thumbelina and two distinct feminist manifestos, producing friction around the theoretical assumptions that underpin two contrasting feminist utopian non-spaces. This friction is further complemented by incorporating elements of hyperstitious ideas about overcoming the drudgery of labour via technological means – particularly unpaid social reproduction labour – and exploring the possibility for these ideas to find new hosts within both existing and non-existent IoT and smart home technologies and institutions.

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[9] We are not claiming Federici has a neutral stance towards technology or that she does not discuss the topic in her other writings. In *Patriarchy of the Wage: Notes on Marx, Gender, and Feminism* (2021), Federici ends up advocating for a similarly 'scaled down' political paradigm (i.e., the 'principle of the commons') as Mies, although without an obvious appeal for the vitalist metaphysics and ahistorical essentialisation of the reproduction sphere and subsistence activities. While the archived Autonomist manifesto contains certain elements that may lend themselves to such interpretations, emphasising its role as a 'counter-archive' shifts the interpretative focus: the two juxtaposed texts are now influencing its outset of enunciability.

Reconceptualising Labour Through Non-Space and IoT

Do all the archived texts occupy the same utopian non-space? Perhaps they do, especially if we think Federici's housewife as a machinic individuation or a cyborg figure. Conversely, Federici's attempt to dissolve the divide between productive and reproductive labour need not be discarded. Achieving this requires examining the frictions generated within the archive, which will be experienced through Thumbelina's perspective.

Thumbelina cringes when reading Federici's 'Wages against Housework', which states that 'not only is wages for housework a revolutionary perspective, but *it is the only revolutionary perspective from a feminist viewpoint and ultimately for the entire working class*' (Federici, 1975: 2) [emphasis mine]. 'Working class' and 'totalizing feminist viewpoint' are again empty abstractions that she can only struggle with, because they have been 'techno-digested', along with other past dualisms between mind/body, organism/machine, nature/culture, public/private, men/women, and primitive/civilised (Haraway, 2016: 32). On the ground of denying the pre-determined role of capitalism, Federici's housewife can transcend the nature/culture boundary by aspiring to dismantle the public/private binary. By demanding wages for housework, housewives aim to disrupt capitalist subversion and its prescribed feminine nature, ultimately seeking to 'refuse some of it [unpaid social reproduction labour] and eventually all of it' (Federici, 1975: 6). However, re-engineering social reproduction work based on the model of production work (i.e., being waged) has its limitations. While it did 'expand the category of labour to accommodate what some women did,' this extension relied on 'the authority of analogy to the Marxian concept of labour' (Haraway, 2016: 22–23).

With the help of electronic devices and an internet connection, Thumbelina lives 'in a distributed space of immediate neighbourhoods', where she can communicate with others from her home or almost anywhere (Serres, 2016: 12). If working virtually, that means she can work from her home or almost anywhere else. The household is now not only a site of social reproduction, because it doubles as a working space – hence work is distributed across time and space, hindering the division between work and non-work. Corporate activities and business presence are also moved to the globalised network of connectiveness, and the virtual labour that comes with it 'involves generating affect, a sensibility, or a feeling' (Gregg, 2018: 104). In cases of occupying physical labour spaces, the usual demands are to offer 'service with a smile' as 'the ultimate form of supressing one's own well-being to please others' (Gregg, 2018: 104). Similar to Federici's unpaid housewife, is it impossible 'to see where the work begins and ends' or 'where the work ends and our desires begin' (Federici, 1975: 6). However, this 'feminization of the labour' does not indicate a dissolution of the boundary between production and reproduction. Under neoliberalism, it instead takes the form of the 'externalization' of reproductive labour beyond the domestic sphere, circumventing public provision by the capitalist state in order to be privatised and commodified for profit (Varela, 2021).

Productive work and labour relations are already dispersed across virtual and physical spaces, encroaching upon domains already saturated with endless household chores, ghost or consumption work and the labour-intensive tasks of child-rearing. Virtual neighbourhoods are extensively distributed, and feminised work follows a similar pattern. Would it not be sensible, then, to liberate social reproduction work from the confines of the households and commodified services? Why not redistribute social reproduction work across other institutions and contracted relations? Perhaps, instead of reshaping social reproduction work to mirror production work, we might instead seek to infuse or integrate the latter with the former.

Alas, Thumbelina sought to dissolve the division between the spheres of production and reproduction by extending patterns of behaviour and social reproduction activities into working time and space. After all, her boss insists she should think her company and its environment more as a family, hence as her home. On the other side, the smart home commercials picture the networked home as something stress-free or as 'a means to reduce stress of managing everyday tasks' (Richardson in Strengers and Nicholls, 2017: 5). Could we then extend the ambitions of the smart home from 'reducing minor frictions in everyday life' (Hester and Srnicek, 2023: 38) to alleviating more crucial frictions from capitalist life, yet embedding the ambition at the heart of the working routine amidst the already established waged labour relations? After all, corporations often claim to care about employee well-being, personal development, and even promote their commitment to environmental responsibility.

The globalised network of connectiveness' functioning and reproduction also require various forms of shadow work, all forced and unpaid: endless filing out of registration forms, re-skilling or learning to operate new tools and software features, labelling data for its machine learning models, always clicking 'I agree' or 'I disagree' when asked to accept cookies, etc. In some cases, the machinic reproduction of globalised network depends on precariously employed third world labour or 'ghost work' (Gray and Suri, 2019), which does the job (such as proofreading, moderating content, etc.) every time machines are not up to the task. The online content Thumbelina produces and the digital footprints that she leaves behind by moving and navigating new virtualities are claimed by the new corporate elite of vectorialist capitalists (Wark, 2019) who own the new technological means of production. The vectorialist class essentially controls the globalised network, which depends on a material infrastructure of servers and data centres. This control allows vectorialists to aggregate data on a portion of the cumulative resources that individuals and households expend in performing various forms of unpaid work.

While Federici (1975: 5) reminds us 'that money is capital, i.e., it is the power to command labour', this might not be its sole source of power: 'work depends on sources of energy whose exploitation depletes their reserves and pollutes' (Serres, 2016: 51). Contrary to the interpretations of some Marxists (such as Rey, 2020), who eschatologically see revolutionary potential exclusively in waged labour – particularly for women employed as care workers – and believe that only this form of alienated labour can lead to empowerment (e.g., 'seeing common class interest', 'becoming a member of a trade union', 'understanding the need for a political struggle', etc.), housewives, due to their structural position, are implied being unable to achieve an understanding of internal capitalist mechanisms and the nature of class society. In opposition to such views, we are currently neither unable nor unwilling to define labour as power. Unfortunately, labour-power[10], on the other hand, does not dissolve into abstract virtuality but remains a real abstraction. Defining work in terms of pollution, Thumbelina dreams of a new kind of work and starts making a list of actions aiming to prevent a double pollution of humans and the environment (Serres, 2016: 51):

1. Appropriate military service into care work and recruit all the citizens into compulsory care duties for a defined period.
2. Make the working week shorter.
3. Extend maternity leave benefits up to two non-household members, irrespective of familial or biological ties to the child.
4. Establish a genderless formal category of a 'housewife' that doubles the formal contracts of precarious employment and feminised professions. Legally recognised housewives are amenable to monopolise forms of social reproduction labour and organise it via local and regional digital platforms that match service providers with household needs.
5. Gather a global virtual collective that does not show up at work the next day.
6. Develop a robust framework for calculating the ecological debt and carbon debt of both nation-states and individual households using IoT sensors and biophysical accounting. Introduce population size and growth as modifiable human variables and prioritise fertility reduction policies in developed nation-states.
7. Establish a commensurability between ecological debts and hours of social reproduction labour.
8. Enforce a 'dictature of stress relief' by mandating that at least 25% of contracted working hours be allocated to stress-relieving activities, such as cooking, dining, gardening, exercising, and communal gaming in dedicated work environments, also functioning as public spaces.
9. Introduce biometric monitoring devices to track stress and pain during working hours, including remote work. Devices would alert workers once thresholds are exceeded or temporarily disable digital workstations.
10. Regulate salaries based on the physical and mental toll to carbon-based anatomies.

CONCLUSION

Thumbelina's list is arbitrary, West- or Euro-centric, and far from exhaustive, as it was a product of daydreaming during her work time, typed in haste, much like many activities in contemporary capitalism. As such, it reflects the contested and idiosyncratic nature of the archive it represents. The archive can barely stand on its own; its purpose lies in offering a 'creative re-creation' of Weeks' counter-archive. It replicates Weeks' version with a modality of statements as 'things', although it claims to be directed towards preserving the statements' 'eventfulness'. The archive aims to challenge canonical academic reproduction in feminist theory, yet its inclusion of two widely cited feminist manifestos and the canonisation of Foucault's works complicates this goal. It is critical of the replication of perspectives that uniformly criticise technology from an ostensibly authentic anti-capitalist 'outside', which resolution is imagined only through technological abstinence or its total abolition. However, one could argue that some form of socialist revolution has likely already occurred if the suggestions on the list were realised. In consequence, the proposals risk falling back into the very same mistakes they aim to criticise. As such, the current state of the archive and the list represent an invitation to other fellow feminists to critique, expand, revise, and experiment further with 'scaling up' and the heuristics of archiving and hyperstition.

Thumbelina's list represents, albeit incomplete and insufficient, an exercise in future thinking that aims to re-engineer the re-commodification flows by reconceptualising work in accordance with hyperstitious ideas about overcoming the drudgery of work with automation. The foundation of this ecological definition of work lies in advancing the already established standards of employee wellbeing, but with an anti-workerist twist: perhaps the existing imperatives of personal and career growth within the workplace can instead be reframed as a site for the dictatorship of stress-relief, incorporating leisure time into the workday. Though controversial or even horrifying, this perspective still points to a possible direction for the hyperstitious process of the smart home's evolution. If

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[10] This alludes to Marx's concept of labour-power – an abstraction referring to the human capacity for labour that can be exchanged for money.

IoT devices and sensors are to alleviate the drudgery of work through a reconceptualisation of labour, they should be installed elsewhere other than home – partially as wearables, but mostly monitoring activities performed in the workplace and supply chains. However, this raises several important questions: who and how would determine the stress benchmarks, and according to which norms? Which social groups or institutions would store, control, and analyse this data? Can the demand for stress relief coexist with appropriating military service into care work? The legal doubling of the feminised and precarious workers – female and male – would be tied to a threshold census that excludes wealthier individuals and politicians. Within the housewives' collective, members could establish an alternative time-banking economy and reciprocally exchange labour time units, encouraging others to join as 'external members'. The housewives' divisions would operate monopolised social reproduction services as platform mediators at local and regional levels and develop a system of class-related dynamic pricing for services provided to households and institutions. The pricing would take into account not only their wealth but also consumption patterns and their carbon legacy. Generally, housewives would need to operate within capitalist relations of production, albeit with a pre-defined upper limit on capital accumulation.

Another consequence of this 'negative reconceptualisation of labour' – that is, treating any type of work as pollution – is the abandonment of a more vitalist feminist concept of labour as 'placing life at the centre' (Federici, 2019: 57), or even as the 'direct production of life' (Mies, 2014: 217). This Autonomist perspective hinges on dissolving the distinction between production and reproduction, idealising subsistence work within the sphere of social reproduction. In this view, all exchange value would eventually disappear, and all labour would produce only use value, with the claim that 'a working-day and even a lifetime full of work will not be felt as a curse but as a source of human fulfilment and happiness' (Mies, 2014: 217). If this is indeed a matter of perception – linked to the feeling of producing 'useful things' – then it seems equally plausible that certain groups of women may already perceive their work-filled lives as meaningful in these very terms. Conversely, it is questionable whether the current subsistence labourers perceive their working days as fulfilling. However, we argue the opposite: a lifetime of labour-intensive subsistence activities, on a societal scale, has historically polluted both humans and the environment. Even during the Middle Ages, societies grappled with deforestation, as well as air and water pollution.

This type of a 'scaled down' feminist utopia leaves no room for technological infrastructure – especially computation – which is portrayed as detrimental to human productive capacities and to a genuine understanding of nature. Technology, Mies argues, inhibits 'direct and sensual interaction with nature, with organic matter and living organisms' (Mies, 2014: 218). Although Mies (2014: 211–212) echoes Haraway's calls to reject binary 'original unity' dualisms (or 'colonizing divisions,' in her own terms), her approach to feminist historiography ultimately reproduces or preserves them nonetheless. If anything, treating work as pollution relies on IoT sensors and computational models of various carbon and geospatial flow technologies (El-Magd et al., 2023) that ultimately enhance our understanding of those very phenomena. Consequently, nature exists primarily as an artificial construct, inseparable from scientific and technological mediations. Another consequence of our negative reconceptualisation of labour is the abandonment of the vitalist dimension: human procreation or 'producing life' can not be exempt from the global material flows and currents and of the globalised capitalist complexity and treated as a 'natural phenomenon'. Modern population engineering carries a dark and colonial history, making it a highly sensitive undertaking. Any such efforts should therefore begin with reducing fertility in the developed counties, since wealth is a reliable determinant for household emissions, waste, and overall carbon legacy (Hickey et al., 2016: 868). A progressive system of taxation – offering incentives for relatively poor households and disincentives for wealthier ones – could accelerate this trend, an, in turn, contribute to curbing production-driven emissions in other parts of the world.

However, the 'scaled up' proposals presented here are not revolutionary; they do not result in a perfectly desexualised division of labour, nor do they abolish the feminisation and exploitation of Third World labour or nullify contradictions between the spheres of production and reproduction. The infusion of one sphere with elements of the other can only ever be partial; a more profound dissolution remains unattainable – at least within the scope of this archivist experiment. As such, Thumbelina's proposals remain tied to the Marxist notion of the 'economy of time' or 'abstract labour'. From the perspective of social reproduction theory, this represents a departure from the Autonomist position, as it approaches the relationship between the spheres of production and reproduction as 'separated and differentiated, yet at the same time in-dissociable' (Varela, 2021).

The majority of the proposed ideas rely too heavily on the assumption of a functioning welfare state, which is not the norm in many countries worldwide. However, the suggestions put forward do not fall into the realm of reactionary or single-issue politics focused solely on defending the remnants of the social welfare state. Instead, they seek to extend existing welfare programmes or propose new legal forms, architectural standards for corporate or factory buildings, designed in such a way that they can facilitate leisure time. It is important to note, however, that this suggestion is in no way intended to advocate for the prolongation of the standard 8-hour work shift. Similarly, the redesigned technologies should not, under any circumstances, serve to extend corporations' control over employees.

Some of the proposed hyperstitious ideas can represent an independent goal or a goal in itself, such as gathering a global collective to abstain from work for a day and reduce the working week. To prevent such a global strike from devolving into 'folk politics', it should be equipped with a demand to 'register a profile' or 'upload content' to a vectorialist social media platform simultaneously at a predetermined time, without ad-clicks and merely posting spam content. When several tens of millions of users perform activities that generate additional load, disruptions in the infrastructure could occur in the form of server crashes, overwhelmed databases, and stock declines. Such an action could strengthen the bargaining position of the global collective and pave the way for certain utopian drawn from – or extending beyond – Thumbelina's list. After all, human beings are 'like any other components or subsystems, localized in a system architecture' (Haraway, 2016: 32), which, in this case, is embedded in the complex socio-technical system of data assemblage.

Although not without its shortcomings, the reconceptualisation of work is, on the whole, guided by a 'scaled up' format of technology, that exceeds the individual, since it treats human beings as machinic organisms, 'only slightly more complicated than the machines they work on' (Serres, 2016: 48). This experimental reconceptualisation, however, should be mindful to liberating free time with mindless automation that does not address environmental sustainability (Baker, 2018: 542). The feminist anti-work challenge lies in finding out the extent of the mechanisation and digitisation of social reproduction labour, preferably coupled with Marxist feminist participatory design in smart home and IoT technologies. Although 'participatory design' may represent a modest 'scaled down' approach focused on ethics and democratic user inclusion (Baker, 2018: 544), it should not be deemed unimportant. The trick lies in pairing different trajectories and steering them towards grander-scale utopian ambitions, such as the reconceptualising and the revalorisation of labour in order to abolish its capitalist subversions.

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