THESE GRAY HAIRS REALLY SCREAM OUT AT ME: THE CONFESSIONAL I AND AUTOFICTION AS FEMINIST WRITING IN GRAY HAIRS

TERHI MARTTILA

Interactive Technologies Institute/LARSyS
eGames Lab,
IST-ID - Associação do Instituto
Superior Técnico para a Investigação e
Desenvolvimento
terhi.marttila@iki.fi

ABSTRACT

This article is a practitioner reflection on confessional writing as feminist writing in my transmedia artwork *Gray hairs*. *Gray hairs* is a web-based linear narrative which unfolds through my voice (and text transcript) when readers pluck graying hairs on screen. This article gives an overview of confessional writing, autofiction and digital writing as feminist writing, and reflects on these theoretical discourses through a practitioner perspective on how these theories are and are not implicated in *Gray hairs*. The article concludes with a practitioner reflection that speculates on how born-digital confessional writing can and could be more aligned with feminist ideas of multiple perspectives and polyphonic voices while keeping in line with the early roots of the feminist movement through the idea that the personal is political.

Keywords: Confessional writing; Autofiction; Digital writing; Feminist writing; Practice-based research.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article gives an overview of confessional writing, autofiction and digital writing as feminist writing, and reflects on how the confessional I is employed from a practitioner perspective in *Gray hairs*. *Gray hairs* is a digital transmedia artwork for the browser and is centered around a linear narrative (in voice and text) about dyeing one's hair. To date, the artwork has been published in *The New River*, exhibited and performed on stage at the annual conference of the Electronic Literature Organisation in Coimbra in July of 2023 (*ELO 2023*), performed at *Videojogos 2023* in Aveiro in November and performed at *Greta Livraria Feminista* in Lisbon in December of 2023. Yet this work has not been welcome in all the places where it tried to go, indeed, a negative review rejected the work on the grounds that it is too voyeuristic and confessional. The rejection forced a reflection on why I chose to write the way I did. This article gives an overview of some of the discourse around confessional and autofictional modes of writing as well as digital writing, reflecting on how these modes and forms of writing relate to feminist theory.

Gray hairs is a predominantly a digital literary work, yet it has a significant visual component that includes performative elements through the role designed for the user. The work has significant conceptual elements through the way that the visual, computational and interactive processes are orchestrated together with the literary aspects. *Gray hairs* escapes straightforward media-specific categorisation as it picks and chooses, applies and conjures whatever best suits it's artistic purposes. As such, it is best understood as a playful transmedia artwork (Gouveia, 2020). Gray hairs could be discussed and contextualised within the realm of transmedia art, where it would be in good company within a lineage of feminist transmedia art (see for example the cyberfeminism index gathered by Siu), yet for the sake of this discussion I will focus on it's literary aspects.

The literary aspect of the work is entirely linear - a narrative that unfolds with every click we perform. Once the narrative ends, it begins again. As such, the text itself is not "computational": it is not co-authored with the computer, the user cannot branch their reading, and so on. That is, it is *not* a cognitive assemblage (Hayles, 2019). The work includes a button which allows users to toggle between a linear and non-linear reading of the text. The non-linear mode allows users to read by selecting random fragments of the text, however, this functionality was added in hindsight and as an artistic experiment. What is important to consider is that *Gray hairs* is a "born linear" text, an authorial linear narrative that is imposed on readers as such. What readers *can* choose is whether to read or whether to continue reading. The text itself *could* have been authored with branching in mind, and indeed this idea was explored at one stage. A discussion on the implications of linear vs. non-linear writing is beyond the scope of this article, although the question of linearity has some implications for considering whether *Gray hairs* is feminist writing or not. Despite this linear structure, I argue that *Gray hairs* should be considered

born-digital writing because it does not translate to the page due to the important computational affordances that exist in it, albeit outside the text itself.

I will also not dwell on questions of how the computational and process-based elements of the work create meaning, as these will be addressed in a subsequent academic contribution. Suffice it to say that while the text itself is not computational, what is computational about the work is the visual process of black dots turning to gray. The only user affordance in the work is choosing which graying dot to click, or in fact, in choosing whether or not to click at all. Once the user clicks the graying dot, it turns back to black and we hear and see a new fragment of the narrative. As such the reader of *Gray hairs* is complicit in the performative aspects of the work: to click or not to click? To dye or not to dye? Yet, the reader *must* click in order to advance reading the work. As Gonsalves and Hodes write in their editorial text in the spring issue of *The New River*, "clicking the grey hairs isn't *optional* if the user wants to participate" (Gonsalves, & Hodes, 2023). If the user elects not to participate, all that is left to do is to observe as the black dots fade to white - to invisibility. This is also a possible way of engaging with the work.

Gray hairs is written in the confessional I, which might make it appear a confession by the author, yet the text is crafted as autofiction. While the impetus for writing the work is a real world event, the writing itself unfolds as a blend of fact and fiction as I craft the narrative to be as compelling as possible. As confessional poet Anne Sexton says (quoted in Jo Gill): "one writes of oneself … in order to invite in" and "to find the way, out through experience" (Gill, 2004, p. 68). Writing *Gray hairs* has contributed to an evolution in my thinking about gray hairs, not least through the conversations that the work has inspired. In this article I discuss *Gray hairs* from the perspective of digital writing, with an emphasis on thinking about how it emerged as a mix between confessional writing and autofiction, asking how it sits and does not sit in with notions of feminist writing.

The purpose of writing this article is to develop my own practice through a creative practitioner reflection (Candy, 2019). Candy writes: "practitioner research, with its focus on personal practice, involves reflecting on and documenting one's own creative process and interpreting any questions and insights arising from it" (Candy 2019, p. 237). This reflection through research in creative practice, according to Candy, "is a strategy for interrogating existing practice and through that process, generating new knowledge" (Candy, 2019, p. 237). As such, my purpose is to understand, contextualise and situate my own artistic practice and process. I want to understand why I wrote the way I did, what kind of artistic impact this form of writing has and how this approach to writing is situated with respect to the writing of other female writers.

This article is structured as call and response and is my attempt at shrugging off academic writing conventions that don't align with how my critical thinking flows - and as such, this writing is a feminist proposition in itself (Haraway, 1991). My creative practice led to insights and questions,

which in turn motivated me to search for the thoughts and insights of others. I read articles and found answers to these questions, or at least new perspectives to think about as I continue my practice. I reflect on what I think about the ideas I found, and reflect critically on my own creative process and choices. The three central questions I ask are, in this order:

1. What is confessional writing and autofiction and what do they have to do with feminism?
2. What has been said about digital literature and feminist writing and what is the place of the human voice in digital writing?
3. Finally: is *Gray hairs* feminist writing and why or why not?

The contribution of this article is in providing a practitioner perspective on the use of confessional writing and autofiction. I also speculate on the peculiar characteristics that the confessional tone brings to writing that is conveyed through a human voice in transmedia art and (digital) writing through critically thinking about my own work and about the work of other artists and writers. Before answering the three central questions outlined above, in the next two sections I will elaborate on the background and context of *Gray hairs*. First, I will discuss the process of creating *Gray hairs* and then I will contextualise its main thematic concern, women's gray hair, as a feminist concern.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT: THE PROCESS OF CREATING *GRAY HAIRS*

On the 10th of November 2022, I sat on the bus and noticed, for the first time in my life, that the vast majority of women dye their hair. Not just the women getting on and off the bus, but also the ones I saw bustling about on the streets on that busy weekday morning.

I write the following in my notebook: "To dye or not to dye? That is the question. How will I feel when it comes time for me to dye, or not to dye? Will it matter what others think? Will I care? To dye, is to care? By not dyeing, would I be not caring? By dyeing, will I be repairing? By not dyeing, will I be not repairing? If I start dyeing, will I need to dye until the end? Why do only women dye? To dye, is to control, to manage, to master, to dye is to defy age, to dye is to deny age. To dye, is to care for myself? Or is dyeing caring for others? To dye is to care about what others may think?" (see Figure 1).
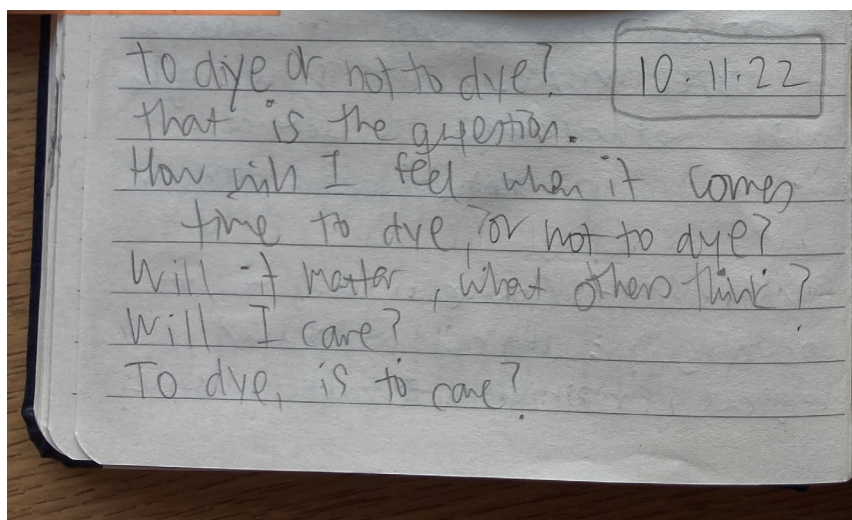
Figure 1. Notes on my observations in the bus © Terhi Marttila

This stream of thoughts about the meaning of dyeing one's hair is followed by some observations about the hair of the women and men I see around me on the bus and out on the street. My final notes on that November morning end with: "now that I begin to look around me, I realise that almost all women dye their hair. Perhaps one in twenty does not!!! I HAD NOT REALISED". And so I became conscious of the fact that much of the hair around me was dyed. As I began to see dyed hair for the first time in my life, I also observed that a steep gender divide exists with respect to dyeing one's hair. Looking at the hair around me made me realise that women are *expected* to dye their hair past "a certain age", that is, when grays begin to appear. I was very struck by this gender-specific imposition on hair. This was the impulse that motivated me to make a work about my observations.

I come up with an interface idea in early December (see Figure 2, left). Underneath my sketch, I write: "*black dots appear, slowly turn gray. If we click/tap we hear audio and the dot turns black (plucking a gray hair).*" Somewhere during those weeks between the initial observation (November 10th and early December), I have decided to make this into a digital text that is read by tapping/plucking gray hairs. On the 13th of December I implement a first version of *Gray hairs*, where large black dots slowly fade to gray and, when clicked, display text (see Figure 2, right).
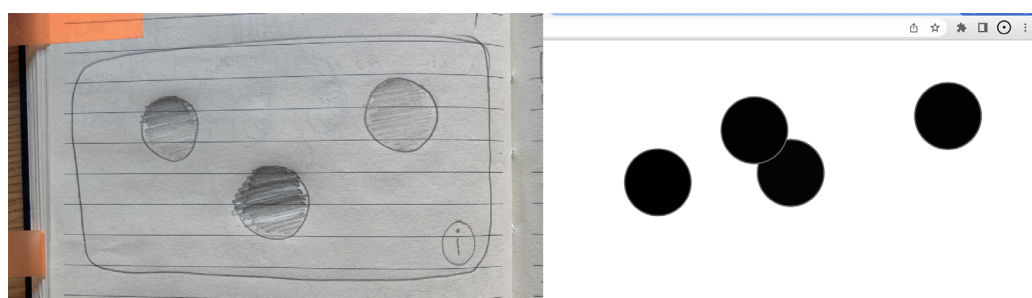

Figure 2. Left: the first sketch of the interface. Right: the first version of the interface © Terhi Marttila

The visual idea evolves from large black circles spread randomly on screen to small black circles set in a mesh. I then experiment with reducing the size of the circles, until finally arriving at the final size (20px x 20px). I experiment with different ways of drawing the small circles: with white stroke, with black background, with a vertical space in between (see Figure 3).
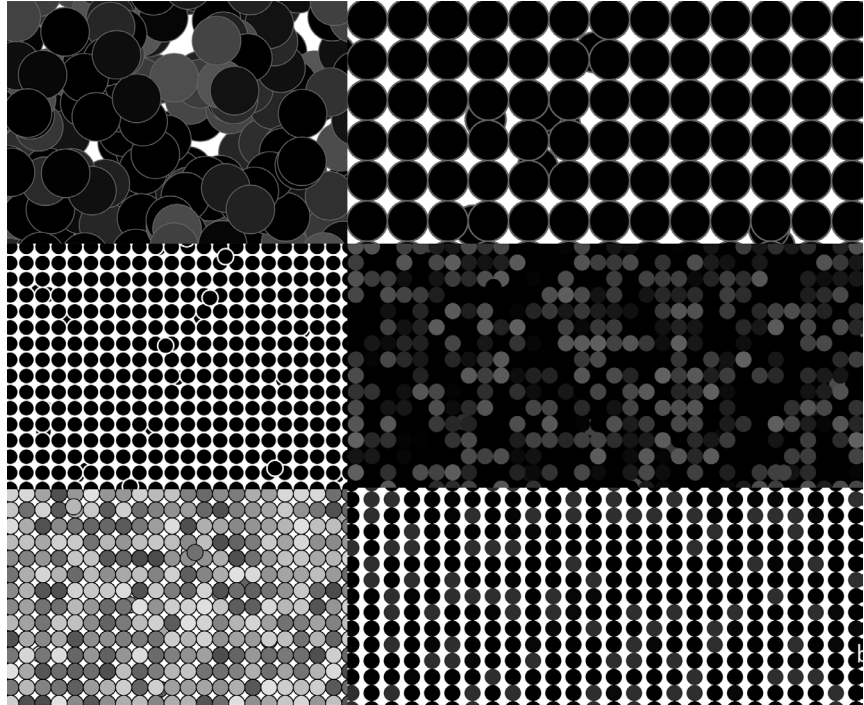

Figure 3. Experimenting with different visual ideas for the circles © Terhi Marttila

I continue working on the interface in time to submit a first working version of the work for the Electronic Literature Organisation (ELO) conference exhibition and performance on January 17th, 2023. I settle on the 20px x 20px small black circles with no stroke and with a white background, mesmerised by the visual effect of watching the screen come abuzz with life as the evenly spaced black circles create an op-art like effect as they begin to fade to gray at varying rates (see Figure 4).

After tweaking the work to look like this, I stare at the screen for long periods of time, watching the circles fade to gray. The screen is so beautiful, this palette of dynamically changing grays. I thought: maybe a woman's gray hair is beautiful too, with it's palette of multiple shades of gray? This led me to look at and see women's grey hair, so next time I sat on the bus, I only focused on finding gray hair on the head of a women and focused on looking at it. I also modified the text of *Gray hairs* so that it begins with a call to action to look at and to notice women's grey hair.
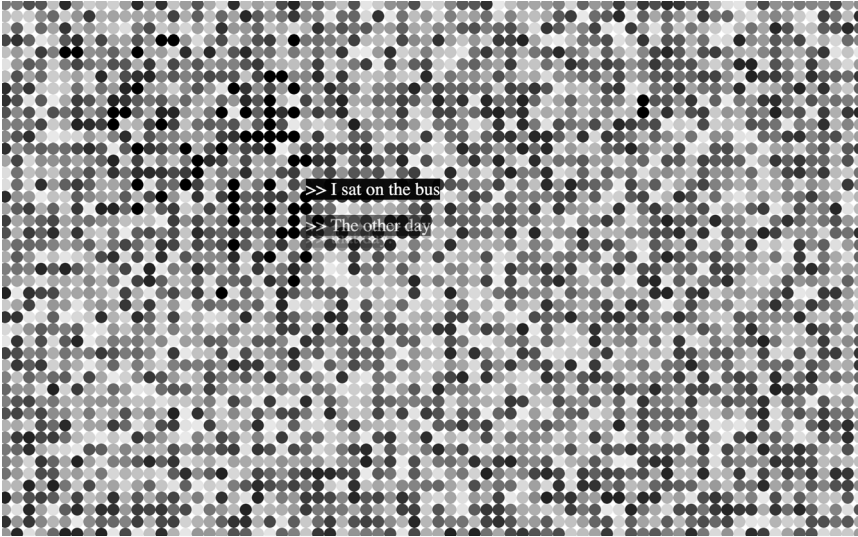
Figure 4. Mesh of grey hairs fading to invisibility, an early version of *Gray hairs* © Terhi Marttila

Following the submission of the first draft of *Gray hairs* to *ELO 2023*, I continue working on *Gray hairs*, recording myself speaking the text and adding a menubar with several functions. Following the feedback from the ELO reviewers, I settle on the more web-friendly font *OpenSans*, and I simplify the transcript, removing the initial ">>" that appeared before the text (as seen in the screenshot of the early version in Figure 4). I add buttons that allow for toggling the text transcript and audio on and off. I add an autoplay button that allows users to just sit back and listen to or read the work (without having to click). In response to a reject review, I also add the possibility to read the text in a non-linear way as an artistic experiment with non-linear reading. I conclude that in order to be meaningful as a non-linear text, a text has to be written from the outset as non-linear because a born-linear text doesn't necessarily translate well into a non-linear text. In April I submit *Gray hairs* to The New River.
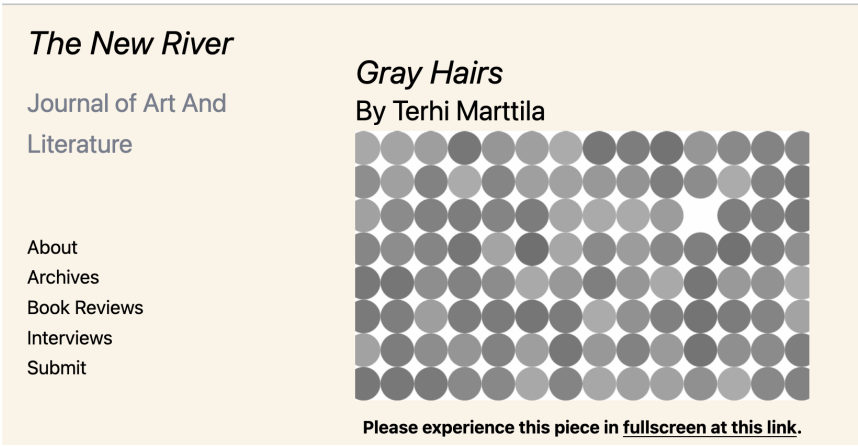

Figure 5. *Gray hairs* in The New River Journal © Terhi Marttila

Gray hairs is published in may in *The New River* (see Figure 5). It is then exhibited in July in Coimbra at the exhibition of the *ELO 2023* conference and performed on stage, also at *ELO 2023* (see Figures 6 and 7). Gray

hairs is performed once again at *Videojogos 2023* In Aveiro in November, and at *Greta livraria feminista* in Lisbon in December.

Figure 6. *Gray hairs* at ELO'23 © Nuno Pessoa

Figure 7. *Gray hairs* performed at ELO'23 © Gabriela Valente

Gray hairs is programmed for the browser in HTML, CSS and Javascript. I also use the p5.js library. The audio was recorded with a Shure SM58 and the MOTU M4 audio interface. The audio was cut in Ableton and exported as mono MP3 at a sample rate of 44,1 kHz after testing various sample rates to arrive at an acceptable quality while optimising for the smallest possible filesize. The audiofiles are labelled in incrementing numbers: fragment001.mp3, etc. The audio and corresponding text transcript are organised in a .json file, from which the algorithm selects the audio to play

and the text transcript to display. In fact, the .json file can be read as a print-based poem as is evident in the screenshot in figure 8.

```
"path": "assets/audio/",
"title" : "Gray hairs (2023)",
"fragments": [
        {"filename": "fragment001.mp3", "text": "I still remember the moment I found my first gray hair"}
        {"filename": "fragment002.mp3", "text": "I was in my late twenties"},
        {"filename": "fragment003.mp3", "text": "and there it was"},
        {"filename": "fragment004.mp3", "text": "very white"},
        {"filename": "fragment005.mp3", "text": "amongst my dark"},
        {"filename": "fragment006.mp3", "text": "brown hair"},
        {"filename": "fragment007.mp3", "text": "I must've plucked it"},
        {"filename": "fragment008.mp3", "text": "I thought,"},
        {"filename": "fragment009.mp3", "text": "this is it,"},
        {"filename": "fragment010.mp3", "text": "the beginning"},
        {"filename": "fragment011.mp3", "text": "of the end."},
```

Figure 8. The text of *Gray hairs* as a print-based experience © Terhi Marttila

The algorithm gradually changes the color of the black circles to white and if the user clicks on a circle, the next line of the poem is displayed and heard. As a default setting, the work displays the text transcript and plays the audio, but these settings can be changed in the menubar in the bottom of the screen (see figure 9). The user can also toggle between the linear text and a non-linear text. In the non-linear mode, the algorithm selects the fragment assigned to the circle that was clicked, and as such will play back an entirely random fragment of the text. The menubar also allows the user to make all the circles black again by clicking on the paint bucket tool (for dyeing one's hair). The user can also reload the work by clicking on the reload. button. The 'i'-button is an info button that displays the instructions "click on the circles to read the poem" and explains what the buttons in the menubar mean. I created the image icons for the menubar myself in Photoshop.
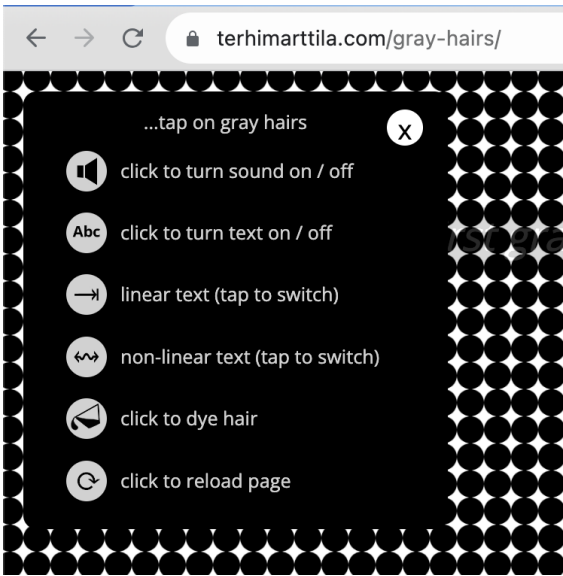

Figure 9. Clicking the "i" -info button reveals instructions for the work and the menu

The project consists of the main files called index.html (41 lines), gray-hairs.css (157 lines), gray-hairs.js (325 lines, including a 34-line artist statement as comments) and observations.json (306 lines, a list of the fragments and the associated transcripts) as well as the p5.js and jquery libraries and other assets like fonts and the image files for the icons in the menubar. The audio files take up a total of 8MB and there are approximately 304 audio fragments.

In the next section I will contextualise the thematic concern of the work, namely ageing and gray hairs. After this, I will go on to discuss confessional writing, autofiction and digital writing in the context of feminist writing.

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT: TO DYE OR NOT TO DYE - A FEMINIST BATTLE AT THE INTERSECTION OF AGISM AND SEXISM

As Gerike writes:

> the graying of hair is interesting primarily for sociological, not biological reasons. For of course millions of women, and increasing numbers of men, color their hair because of the negative myths and stereotypes about aging which form the basis of ageism in our society. (Gerike, 1990, p. 37)

Cecil et al. point out that humanity has artificially altered the colour of hair for millennia, citing evidence that henna has been found on the hair of Egyptian mummies. Yet, home hair dye kits became available in the 1950s and as a result, dyeing became more common and more socially acceptable (Cecil et al., 2018). That is, while adornment through hair colouring may be an ancient practice, it would seem that dyeing as a form of succumbing to ageism has become prevalent over the past century.

Gerike further elaborates that "old" is generally associated with things like lethargy, misery, incompetence, poor health, unattractiveness and asexuality, whereas "young" is associated with the opposites: competence, happiness, vitality, attractiveness, sexuality, and good health (Gerike, 1990, p. 37). Woodward analyses the representation - or lack thereof - of the older female body in academic feminism and arts through analysing examples of the representation of aged female bodies in films, photography and performance art. Woodward claims: "aging - for ourselves individually and for all of us, no matter our age - is a feminist issue" (Woodward, 2006, p. 181). Woodward coins the term *the youthful structure of the look*, "which exhorts us to pass for younger once we are a 'certain' age" (Woodward, 2006, p. 163). Gerike echoes this sentiment in writing:

> "such hair dyeing, in our youth-oriented culture, represents the attempt of aging people to "pass" as members of a group with greater power, privilege, and prestige than the group to which they in truth belong. (Gerike, 1990, p. 37)

Yet as Gerike observes:

> "the world is full of gray- and white- haired women who are living testimony to the advantages of age for women, but the power of their testimony is greatly muted by their dyed hair" (Gerike, 1990, p. 43)

leading Gerike to conclude that if older women were more visible in the workforce through showing their gray hair, other older women might find it easier to be hired as well. This also applies in situations where younger women look to the example set by senior women in whatever area of life. Robinson makes yet another provocation, saying:

> ageing has become a diversion that normalises all women looking young, which in turn renders mature, grey-haired women invisible and socially excluded, their authority silenced in forms of representation … Keeping women looking immature normalises the control of traditional social institutions by men who look mature (Robinson, 2016, p. 168).

Moreover, Cecil et al. observe that, among other efforts towards enhancing one's looks in the context of the workplace, this dyeing of hair can be though of as *aesthetic labor*, "an enduring, unrecognised and unrewarded obligation on employees, which is exploited by corporations for profit" (Cecil et al., 2018, p. 128). Cecil et al. observe that it is predominantly women who spend significant portions of their income in tending to their physical appearance for the corporate benefit of their employer. As such, besides the emotional effort spent in worrying about gray hairs, dyeing one's hair accrues costs for women in comparison to men.

Gerike asserts that "the coloring of gray hair by women is an endorsement of both ageism and sexism" which "serves to perpetuate both those forms of discrimination" (Gerike, 1990, p. 43). Gerike later on notes, however, that while gray hairs are an obvious site of battle against ageism and sexism, women may be expending most of their energy in other battles. Indeed, Cecil et al. observe that women, feeling the pressure of needing to look young in general, elect to dye their hair because it is a relatively accessible, cost-effective and noninvasive way to do so by comparison to surgery (Cecil et al., 2018, 127).

Unfortunately, this gendered beauty standard appears to have been unfailingly adopted and accepted by both men and women alike, suggesting that it is a societal gendered beauty standard. As such, it is yet another form of patriarchal control over women's appearance and bodies. The imperative to hide one's gray hairs is yet another form of the oppression of women. Robinson claims:

> keeping women thinking they have to have the same hair colour as their teenage selves only renders mature women invisible, a factor that unquestionably contributes to the inequalities that still exist

between men and women in the twenty-first century. This makes grey hair a feminist issue (Robinson, 2016, p. 159).

Robinson echoes my sentiments:

> For men grey hair is normalised, for women it is not. And so the question must be: Why? Why is grey hair not considered normal on women? (Robinson, 2016, p. 167).

Robinson observes that for hundreds of years, gray powdered wigs have been worn by members of the (predominantly male) judiciary (Robinson, 2016, p. 168) as a way to communicate wisdom and seniority, of being the elder of the community. Robinson's wig example reveals that, in a positive sense, gray hair could be associated with wisdom, authority and maturity of judgment.

These collective actions of hiding one's grays in response to the oppressive structures that engulf women serves to marginalise women who resist this oppression. Women who dye their hair will look younger or "better" than the women who do not dye. The women who do not dye will, by comparison, look older than the ones who dye. Hence the woman who breaks societal expectations and norms by not dyeing will be making a statement and will risk being judged and becoming disadvantaged and marginalised. Yet it is exactly this margin from where the battle is to be fought, that glitch of visible gray caused by the virus of a woman who does not dye. Legacy Russell proposes the concept of the virus as part of her concept of glitch feminism: "inevitably, the presence of a virus shakes us into an awareness of our bodies and being. The presence of a virus prompts an awakening" (Russell, 2020, p. 112). The woman who does not dye is like a virus in the system. And the gray hair, albeit a naturally occurring event, is a glitch in a societal system, an error, undesired noise, a breaking down of order imposed by capitalist demands of youth that seeks to make gray hairs (and age) invisible and negate their existence. "Glitch feminism asks: Can a break be a form of building something new?" (Russell, 2020, p. 113).

In this sense, I began to orient my writing in *Gray hairs* towards celebrating the beauty of gray hair both through the text and the visual elements of the work, literally forcing the user to *look* at gray. In the text, I articulate an acceptance of dying and aging through ending my narrative by placing the gaze of the I on gray haired, invisible, people:

> The other day I sat on the bus looking at all the gray hair looking out the window, observing all the others going about their lives. And the other day I sat on the bus and I thought about all the invisible people and I thought I saw them looking at the end.

As I wrote *Gray hairs*, I began to realise that my work was not so much about gray hairs and beauty standards, but rather about ageing. Through

observing the hair around me, I realised that women's age was being obfuscated: I observed countless aged couples walk hand in hand, the man with a head full of gray, the woman's hair looking ten or twenty years younger than his. I began to think about ageing and about my own ageing. I thought about how the graying of our hair makes visible the slow process, over decades, in which we exit this world. I volunteer with the elderly (taking them out on a cargo bike) and through my passengers I am faced with ageing in its many forms on a regular basis. Besides this, my own grandmother passed away shortly before I wrote *Gray hairs*, which inevitably made me think about the human lifespan and about my own aging.

In the next section, I will focus my discussion of *Gray hairs* on questions of form: on confessional writing and autofiction, asking how are these forms of writing contextualised as feminist writing. I will first introduce these concepts and then look at how questions of feminist writing have been addressed in scholarships about digital writing in particular. Finally, I will reflect on whether *Gray hairs* is feminist writing.

4. WHAT IS CONFESSIONAL WRITING AND AUTOFICTION AND WHAT DO THEY HAVE TO DO WITH FEMINISM?

I found myself intuitively adopting a confessional tone in *Gray hairs*, a work that is ultimately about the female body because it is about hair, about ageing and about women's beauty standards. Furthermore, a work in progress, *My body, the moon*, interrogates women's experience of their reproductive cycle, again through a confessional tone. When reflecting on my creative practice, I began to wonder whether I employ the confessional mode of writing to address feminist issues about the female body because there is some central affordance of the writing style that allows me to best communicate my artistic intentions. This led me to search for perspectives on these modes of writing by scholars, in order to understand more deeply where my practice is rooted.

The origin of confessional writing is often attributed to American poets such as Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Robert Lowell and others who began writing confessional poetry in the 1950s onwards (Gill, 2006). However, Gould Axelrod has shown recently that several black American writers, notably Gwendolyn Brooks, a contemporary of Lowell and Sexton, but also Phillis Wheatley as early as 1773 have embraced the confessional mode, decentering the hitherto white narrative of the genre in the context of American literature studies (Gould Axelrod, 2023). Tunç notes that confessional female writers often tend to address questions of the body in particular (Tunç, 2009). Shelley Budgeon has argued that the post-truth era holds its own implications for making feminist claims based on personal experience, albeit feminism has always balanced with the status of women's experiential claims to knowledge (Budgeon, 2021, pp. 250-251).

Another recurring theme in the literature on confessional poetry is narcissism: authors are deemed as self-focused and self-indulgent as

they share detailed accounts of their private lives with their readers. Jo Gill, one of the central authors on the confessional writing genre, has upended many of these preconceptions in her discussion of narcissism in the confessional poetry of Anne Sexton, arguing that "the self-disclosure in her work is made always with a view to its reader; while ostensibly focusing inward, it also looks outward and turns away from the self" (Gill, 2004, p. 66). That is, while the writer may begin with the self, the writing is targeted outwards with the reader in mind.

To this end, Gill argues that even though the author's intention is for the writing to feel confessional, the writing itself is nevertheless quite mediated and narrated with the intention of capturing the audience, meaning that any fears of voyerism or intrusion are hardly grounded:

> we are not furtively intruding into someone else's 'naked suffering.' We are reading a textualization, a mediation, a narrative of an experience, and our attention is solicited in strategic and self-conscious ways. Thus, the reader's fear of intrusion is shown to be ungrounded. (Gill, 2001, p. 83)

Gill distils the essence of the question to this: "…where the gaze is invited, there is neither privacy nor invasion. Our presence is, in every sense of the word, authorized." (Gill, 2001, p. 83). Much in this way, when I write in the confessional I about the internal turmoil caused by the societal imperative to hide visible signs of my aging through dyeing my hair, I do this because I want to expose my reader or listener to these ideas. I want us to think together about these ideas and to think about what they mean for us and how we feel about them.

In describing the work of American female confessional poets of the mid twentieth century, Tunç asserts that the first-person pronoun "I" relocated the confessing from the objective realm of the male literary tradition to a subjective realm of an emerging feminist canon, meaning that the poets "transformed themselves, their bodies, and their environments into active subjects and objects, exposing their personal and political identities and deconstructing the binary of male/culture and female/nature" (Tunç, 2013, p. 120). This meant that finally, the female was not written *about*, rather, the female became the subject of experience.

In a similar vein, Felski describes the shift away from autobiographical writing as a form of bourgeois individualism that presents "as the record of an unusual but exemplary life" that, through the uniqueness "claims a universal significance" (Felski, 1989, p. 94). Felski describes how feminist confession departs from this unique individuality in favor of depicting specific problems and experiences that bind women together:

> feminist confession, by contrast, is less concerned with unique individuality or notions of essential humanity than with delineating the specific problems and experiences which bind women together.

It thus tends to emphasize the ordinary events of a protagonist's life, their typicality in relation to a notion of communal identity. (Felski, 1989, p. 94)

This echoes the early confessional writing of Phillis Wheatley from 1773 quoted in Gould Axelrod, in which she describes the suffering of the African parents whose child is snatched for slavery, to contextualise the writing as writing where "traumatic personal memory has political resonance" (Gould Axelrod, 2023, p. 165). Much in line with what Felski argues, Wheatley's description is one shared among a community of people who suffered as a consequence of the slave trade, making the confession resolutely political.

To return here to the peer review that excluded my work: the reviewer felt that *Gray hairs* came too close for comfort through the confessional writing, labelling the work as "voyeristic" even. Gill characterises this particular impact of confessional writing as follows, when analyzing the response of critic James Dickey to Anne Sexton's "confessional" poetry:

the sense of shame, the fear of being thought voyeuristic, the anxiety about taboo, the nervousness about being contaminated by the object of the gaze, and the uncertainty about how, exactly, to read (how to bring one's 'literary opinions' to bear). (Gill, 2001, p. 81)

I find this idea of the "nervousness about being contaminated by the object of the gaze" particularly intriguing and feel that this specific power of the confessional is what was felt by the reviewer that the work on these very grounds. This contamination by the object of the gaze forces the reader to consider the positionality of the I, and in bringing this position close, the reader may be forced to endure a sliver of that same discomfort that the I endures.

These questions of voyerism are further complicated and conflated in digital writing, where, as Ensslin et al. point out, the "medium-specific affordances allow e-lit artists to hold the voyeur unaccountable for objectifying the target they are manipulating rather than simply observing" (Ensslin et al., 2020) because digital reading often does not advance without input, gestures, clicks etc. made by the reader. As such, I can ask: if the reader feels uncomfortable, why do they continue clicking on my hairs, why do they continue to literally probe at *me* if the exposure to *my* internal life continues to leave them so uncomfortable? Surely, given the choice between clicking and not clicking, the reader can choose not to click?

As Gill observes in her analysis of confessional writing in the case of memoirs, while authors may use their own lives as a starting point in the genre of confessional writing, they are nevertheless crafting a *narrative* with the intention of capturing their audiences:

> It is important to establish that such memoirs are not the unmediated outpouring of 'naked emotion' but rather are supremely crafted with the reader's pleasure - and thus continued reading - in mind. (Gill, 2001, p. 82)

This observation echoes my own creative writing process, as I too want to tell a good story and want my work to have an impact on the reader. For this reason I sculpt the text so that it gains a certain air of drama, suspense, tension and intrigue. Here is where confessional writing bleeds into autofiction. The true outcomes of the moment on my personal life which the text of *Gray hairs* is based on remains something that only I have access to, and most of the elements of what that moment led to in my personal life have not been included in the text. In that sense, the writing may have began with a confessional tone, but ultimately, it is a work of autofiction.

Autofiction, as a term to describe a literary genre, first emerged in France when the French author Serge Doubrovsky used the term in 1977 to describe his own literary work (Effe & Lawlor, 2022). Autofiction is said to have been in particular adopted by female writers and other transmedia creators in France (Jordan, 2012). Indeed, Jordan writes:

> where traditional autobiography was seen by feminist critics as uncongenial to women, autofiction has proved singularly propitious. Women have played a significant role in shaping its evolution across media, but its fertility for feminine subjects remains under-theorized. (Jordan, 2012, p. 84)

Er analyses the implications of autofictional writing for postfeminist discourse by discussing the writings of Sheila Heti and Jenny Offill, arguing that

> the modes of autofictional writing invoked by Heti and Offill unexpectedly reanimate the classic feminist adage of 'the personal is political', which can be traced to the strategic practice of confession as a historical form of feminist organizing. (Er, 2018, p. 5).

Conscious of the dismissal of the work of earlier female confessional authors on the grounds that their writings were essentially "self-indulgent and over-emotional accounts of their personal lives" (Er, 2018, p. 5), Er argues that Heti and Offill strategically employ autofiction instead of confessional writing as "a self-reflexive gesture that first anticipates, and therefore attempts to evade, the historical critique that has overshadowed women's confessional writing" (Er, 2018, p. 12). Er's overall conclusion, after analysing the writing of the two authors, is that both counteract postfeminist complacency through reviving, yet reinventing, the early feminist practice of confession through autofiction, making the personal political once again.

Intriguingly, in the editorial text for *Gray hairs*, Gonsalves and Hodes also indirectly allude to this historical tendency of dismissing confessional writing through their use of the word *although*, while at the same time interpreting the I as representative of a shared pressure among women: "although confessional and told in the first person, the exigence behind *Gray hairs* surpasses the individual. When Marttila speaks, her 'I' represents a common pressure and prevalent obsession that disproportionately impacts women to not only dye and pluck their silvers, but to hide other signs of aging" (Gonsalves & Hodes, 2023, n.p.)*. Besides writing in the autofictional "she", what if confessional writing subverted the critique of narcissism through writing in the "you"? Gould Axelrod analyses the work of African American writer Claudia Rankine, observing that

> Rankine brilliantly reshapes the post-confessional poem as a fundamentally African American, communitarian text, one that uses paragraphs more than lines, discursivity more than condensation, and 'you' instead o 'I'" (Gould Axelrod, 2023, p. 172)

According to Gould Axelrod, it is precisely African American authors have reshaped the post-confessional poem to be a communitarian text in which multiple perspectives can be contained and where the *I* is displaced in favour of the *you*. It would be intriguing to see what the impact of writing in "you" for *Gray hairs* would be - you are a woman - how will you feel when it comes time for you to dye? What will you think?

5. WHAT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT DIGITAL LITERATURE AND FEMINIST WRITING AND WHAT IS THE PLACE OF THE HUMAN VOICE IN DIGITAL WRITING?

As early as 1999, Laura Sullivan theorised about the potential of hypertext for feminist writing in her article *Wired women writing: towards a feminist theorisation of hypertext*. Sullivan analyses her own experiences of teaching hypertext authoring to her students, arguing that feminist theory particularly points towards employing the hypertext as a means to create works that produce both personal and social transformation through what she conceives of as autobiographical and activist hypertexts. With respect to transcending binary ways of thinking, Sullivan writes:

> hypertext, with its linked form, provides us with a unique textual form through which to realise this transcendence … hypertext's multilinearity allows contradictions in the text to be foregrounded, instead of smoothed out and eliminated as is often the case within a paradigm that carves the world up into simple oppositions of male and female, black and white". (Sullivan, 1999, p. 33)

Paniagua echoes Sullivan, advocating the benefits of teaching cyberfeminist literature because feminist hypertext offers a multilinearity through links and lexias that is not possible in linear texts (Paniagua,

2012, p. 259) and a "layering of different voices and perspectives within one text" (Paniagua, 2012, p. 260). Paniagua also asserts that collaborative authorship is more characteristic to hypertexts and that "it benefits authors specially when a subject needs to be reinforced by multiple points of view to accomplish credibility" (Paniagua, 2012, p. 260). Multi-perspective writing and the layering of multiple voices is also possible in print-based writing, as is evident in works such as Hernan Diaz's novel *Trust* (Diaz, 2022) in which four different voices tell their version of the same story in four distinct books within the book. Yet the digital medium, with it's links, buttons, multidirectional navigation, possibility to layer audio, among others affordances, allows natively for this layering as a part of its form. This is evident in much of digital writing and as early as writer and academic Caitlin Fisher's critically acclaimed *These waves of girls* (Fisher, 2001), where multiple stories and perspectives on girlhood and lesbian identity emerge in varying sequence depending on how the reader chooses to navigate the work.

In 2007, Fisher observed that much of the hypertext writing emerging at the turn of the millennium created by women invoked second wave feminist ideas. According to Fisher, the works did this through the use of core imagery (bodies, seashells, the ocean, vagina, naked women) as well as through situating the writing in the "women's spaces" of kitchens and bedrooms (Fisher, 2007). Moreover, Fisher observes that "online, a flirtation with essentialism in discussions about technology is easy to find" (Fisher, 2007, p. 146), quoting practitioners referring to hypertext as "natural", "designed to work associatively, as the human brain does" (Guyer quoted in Fisher , 2007, p. 146) or assertions such as that "hypernarratives imitate the associative, contingent flow of human thought and the unpredictable progression of our lives" (Malloy quoted in Fisher, 2007, p. 146). Fisher is clearly wary of this tendency to think of hypertext as somehow inherently feminine, and well aware of how contemporary feminist theory has pointed out the pitfalls of essentialism[1] as ultimately detracting from the feminist cause.

Additionally to these, Fisher identifies other elements of early feminism present in hypertext: consciousness-raising, lost stories and domestic themes and tools (Fisher, 2007, p. 154). Having observed these echoes of early feminisms, Fisher asks:

> did the appearance of these texts point to a calculated rejection of contemporary feminist theoretical preoccupations? To ignorance of key issues in Western feminism?" (Fisher, 2007, p. 148)

However, Fisher concludes her analysis by observing that much of this work is made by young women who may not be aware of the legacy of feminism, and observing that

1 "Essentialism, a term that is rarely defined or explained explicitly in feminist contexts, but which has a long and illustrious history within the development of Western philosophy, refers here to the attribution of a fixed essence to women. Women's essence is assumed to be given and universal and is usually, though not necessarily, identified with women's biology and 'natural' characteristics. Essentialism usually entails biologism and naturalism, but there are cases in which women's essence is seen to reside not in nature or biology but in certain given psychological characteristics — nurturance, empathy, support, non-competitiveness, and the like." (Grosz, 1995, p. 47)

by revisiting the 1970s feminist preoccupations in hypermedia a new kind of critical space may be opened up with fresh answers as to where we might go from here" (Fisher, 2007, p. 156)

Pressman has called for studying and thinking about the field of electronic literature through feminist, queer and materialist perspectives, pointing out that "early formations of the field of electronic literature are inseparable from second-wave feminism and feminist post-structuralist theorists of the 1970s and 80s (Pressman, 2020). Pressman cites *The Progressive Dinner Party* (2000) (a reference to Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (1974-1979)), which is a web-based exhibition that brought together works by women which was curated by Carolyn Guertin and Marjorie C. Lusebrink, as one example of these relational, feminist practices that marked the early days of electronic literature (Pressman, 2019a). Pressman also shows how Caitlin Fisher's AR /VR narrative *Circle* (2012) "challenges the gendered associations of games and virtual reality (VR) by using this very technology for new modes of feminist storytelling" (Pressman, 2019b, p. 177). *Circle* is a collection of narratives about four generations of women that is told literally *through* objects (by picking objects up to listen to the story that is associated with them) that are in relation to each of the women of the narrative. Pressman argues that Fisher's work affirms the feminist new materialist notion that materiality cannot be considered without relationality and situatedness (Pressman, 2019b).

Ensslin and Skains also highlight the adoption of Twine[2] (a free and low-entry hypertext authoring platform) by women and other minorities: "by side-stepping the barriers to entry formed by academic gatekeepers and pricey software platforms, Twine games have democratised the hypertext form to a new audience of gamers and game-developers who feel their voices are not being heard in their chosen communities: women, LGBTQ, and racial and religious minorities who play and create games" (Ensslin & Skains, 2017). What is notable about the twine game community is that those who engage in it play *and* create games due to the accessibility of the tool.

Besides the accessibility that twine has afforded since it's release in 2009, the affordances of the hypertext for feminist writing did not go unnoticed nor unused by pre-twine hypertext authors. Laccetti observes that several authors, of which she focuses her analysis on the notable work of Deena Larsen, employ the hypertext as a way of embracing Braidotti's notion of the nomadic subject (Braidotti, 2011) to create elaborate, multidimensional and multi representational spaces. As Laccetti says, these works make use of concept of multi-mimesis:

> to authorise/show/tell their translations of their own complex and subversive stories with the full knowledge that, in feminist techie-speak, what you see is not necessarily what you get. (Laccetti, 2006, n.p.)

In a similar feminist vein, the recent research project *Writing new body worlds* led by Dr. Astrid Ensslin aimed to develop methods of applied digital literature as bibliotherapy, in this case to tackle questions of the body image of young women. *Writing new body worlds* (also known as *Writing new bodies* at initial stages of the project) addressed the question of body image of women through *bibliotherapy*, a form of healing through reading and other forms of digital interaction (Ensslin et al., 2016; Ensslin, 2020). The authors identify that body image dissatisfaction is particularly predominant amongst young girls and women, and the purpose of their research is to explore the use of writing interactive fiction to improve body image. Ensslin et al. observe that interactive fiction is particularly suited to this end because thinking about body image issues entails

> a desire to explore different life choices available to them, whether small scale or large, and [expressive writing] through hypertext affords them the opportunity to pursue these choices – as many as they like – to their narrative conclusions. The activity of designing, writing, testing and reading these texts encourages cognitive processing of negative events which is theorised to be the therapeutic mechanism of [expressive writing]. (Ensslin et al., 2016, p. 188)

In other words, the approach adopted by Ensslin et al. entailed working not just through creative writing and cognitive processing of negative events, but working specifically through the *form* of the hypertext. As such, imagining and exploring multiple options and branching narratives, writing out different outcomes and narratives of cause-consequence through creative writing encouraged young girls and women to think of their body image through a multiplicity of perspectives.

Another particular affordance of digital writing is the ability to employ voice. Writer and academic Caitlin Fisher is notable for her use of voice recordings as one of the artistic approaches in her digital writing, going as far back as *These waves of girls* (2001) mentioned earlier. Fisher also employs her own voice in the aforementioned *Circle* (2012), in which each of the layered narratives of the four women is told in Fisher's own voice and spoken in the confessional I. Another intriguing use of the confessional I in spoken voice in a feminist work, albeit embodied and on stage, is the play *The vagina monologues* (Ensler, 1996). The work is based on interviews with 200 diverse women, bringing the intimate stories of women and their vaginas on stage through a confessional tone.

Yet another example of what could be thought of as confessional writing in the digital and in voice is *Cacophonic choir* (Kıratlı, Wolfe & Bundy, 2020), an interactive art installation in which sexual assault survivor stories emanate from lighted sculptures. When no-one is near, the sculptures emit a cacophony of words (generated by large language models) based on true stories of sexual assault. When the user is within 50cm of the sculpture, a true story is heard. The stories are told in synthetic voice by the "I". What I find intriguing about *cacophonic choir*,

based on exploring the work through video documentation, is it's use of the synthetic voice. The synthetic voice brings the narratives alive through the unmistakably human touch of the voice. Yet, this same synthetic voice affords the listening, or the reading, of this work, the very particular uncanniness that the synthetic voice entails. This uncanniness is in particular due to the glitches in prosody by comparison to a natural spoken voice.

Importantly, the synthetic voice brings a feel of the human while granting the sexual assault survivors full anonymity. *Cacophonic choir* employs the confessional mode for it's impact and effect, forcing the listener/reader into the uncomfortable voyeuristic position to face another person's suffering in sexual assault. The work is genial in it's use of the confessional mode through the eerie yet human synthetic voice. I can only speculate on the aspects of the installation experience as I have not had the opportunity to experience this work live, yet I imagine the cacophony and the affordances that the leaning in to lighted sculptures entails, including the impact of the experience of the space as a whole when shared with the other visitors.

Gray hairs also appropriates the human voice as it's central medium. The work exists not just as a text (transcript), but as a narrative that can be listened to in my voice. This approach is familiar to me because I used my own voice as well as the confessional I in a prior work, *Transplanted*. I am intrigued by the use of the voice in general, and of my own voice in particular, because it brings the confessional even closer to the reader 's or listener's skin through exposure to a real human voice. When a human voice speaks in the I, two layers of meaning - the confessional I in the text itself and the tangible humanness of the voice - conspire to create a doubly underscored illusion of the personal. When the *I speaks*, how can we possibly think that the *I* isn't *that body* from which the voice emanates? I am intrigued by the impact of the speaking *I*, and curious about how a speaking *I*, delivered in my voice, could work when combined with a polyphonic and multi-perspective text in which the ideas of various women converge onto a single speaking *I*.

6. IS *GREY HAIRS* FEMINIST WRITING AND WHY OR WHY NOT?

One of the problematic aspects of *Gray hairs*, from the point of view of feminist writing, is the stance that it takes on dyeing. The "I" in the work confesses to plucking the emerging grays instead of dyeing them. Yet as we saw in the first part of this article, many, if not most, women choose to dye their gray hairs. As Gerike observes in her analysis of women dyeing, while gray hairs are an obvious site of battle against ageism and sexism, women may be expending most of their energy in other battles (Gerike, 1990, p. 44). This creates a certain ethical discomfort when I consider my writing in *Gray hairs*: why are the voices of the women who do dye their hair not heard in the thoughts of the "I"? When I wrote *Gray hairs,* the text emerged in various stages and what was essential were the many

conversations I had with men and women about gray hair. Each exchange I had made their way into the text in some form or another.

Yet, overall, I choose to make prominent my own stance and perspective: look! Gray hair is beautiful! And a pledge to stop plucking mine, along with a shaky resolve that I don't believe I will dye my hair when the time comes. Yet, in my conversations, women shared wonderful perspectives about why they dye and about how it feels to dye, having to go regularly to the hairdresser to dye, sitting in the chair for a long time, forking out lots of money to pay for the treatment, having their children tell them to hide their grays, or reminding me that it doesn't matter whether I dye, because the grays are there in any case and so on. Why are these perspectives not present in the work? Surely, many women will feel alienated when reading *Gray hairs*, because their perspective and their experience is not included, is not present.

In the process of writing, making and thinking towards the current iteration of the work, I began with an initial panic about gray hairs which then shifted into feelings of defeat at understanding that I, as a woman, am expected to dye my gray hairs and make them invisible in order to counteract my own invisibility. The process continued and I began to really train myself to see, to notice and to look *at* women's gray hair, challenging myself to see these women that are supposedly so invisible. I began to feel some sorrow at how women were hiding this part of themselves, and anger at such a prevalent, societally accepted beauty standard that oppresses women. For this reason, I ultimately chose to focus on accentuating the beauty of gray hair (both visually and in the early parts of the text), and on focusing on themes of ageing and dyeing as processes that are an inevitable part of human life. As such, my work can be read as ultimately taking apart ageism at the intersection with gender, rather than focusing on beauty and hair only from the perspective of highlighting women's struggle of coping with these gendered beauty standards. My work strives to underscore the discrepancy between expectations set on women and men. At it's core, my work strives to dismantle oppression through making it visible and creating space for reflecting on and speaking about it.

Another ethically tricky aspect of *Gray hairs* is that while I fold the select women's perspectives that I include under the confessional "I", I refer in two instances to men, "he", to what they think and how they behave. I had to ask myself why I chose to do this? Upon reflection, I realise that I use these two male perspectives to reveal an ageism that goes beyond gender, and to reveal how gendered the standard on gray hairs is through showing how oblivious one man is to the link between gray hairs and age.

I tell the story of a posthumanist, male, who dyes his hair and I speculate that he does so because he wants to overcome death through life prolongation. I mention a man who panics when I point out that his gray hair means that he is beyond the peak of his youth and reproductive years. The connection between gray hair and being *perceived* as old appears to come as a surprise to this man with a graying head. I am quite

certain that the connection between gray hair and age has not escaped the (self) consciousness of any woman.

Having said all of this, as always, work leads to new work, and perspectives lead to new perspectives. In my next work, again written in the confessional and autofictional I, called *My body, the moon*, I am taking as the starting point the idea of writing in a polyphonic I with the purpose of including multiple perspectives in the work, gathered again in conversation with the women around me. And to return to *Gray hairs*, it even crosses my mind to rework the fragments of the dialogues that I had with other women into a new or parallel work, or an additional and parallel reading *within* the work, something that could be called *Our gray hairs*.

Another interesting outcome of this process of reflection through theory is to find my way, through the concepts of feminist writing and confessional writing, to the concept of feminist confessional ecopoetry discussed by Tunç (2013). I foresee myself embracing these concepts as I continue my work on *My body, the moon*. It has also become clear to me that another important step in consolidating my thinking around being a woman in my practice will be to submerse in Mearleau-Ponty's concept of embodiment, and to further explore the thinking of Haraway and Braidotti and to better understand ecofeminism. It is intriguing to see that my creative practice has, yet again, led me to ask theoretical questions that both inform my critical thinking, in this case through concepts like feminist writing and diverse feminisms, as well formal aspects of my practice, in this case through notions of confessional writing, autofiction and feminist writing.

7. CONCLUSION

This article sought to reflect, through a practitioner perspective, on the use of confessional writing and autofiction to address the issue of ageing, gray hair and female beauty standards. The article situates the use of confessional writing, autofiction and digital writing as part of a broader historical continuum of feminist writing and speculates, through the author's practitioner perspective and specifically with regards to the digital poem *Gray hairs*, on the particular affordances that confessional writing and autofiction bring to the artistic impact of the work through the perceived intimacy of the confessional I. This creative practitioner reflection does not necessarily arrive at any generalisable conclusions, but rather seeks to document one specific artistic process and to verbally articulate my reflection for the sake of my development as a practitioner, as well as for the wider community working with feminist issues and writing as one component of their creative transmedia practice.

REFERENCES

Beck, U., Giddens, A, & Lash, S. (1994). *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order,* Polity Press.

Bolter, J. D. (2019). *The Digital Plenitude: The Decline of Elite Culture and the Rise of New Media*. Cambridge, MIT Press.

Braidotti, R. (2011). *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. Columbia University Press.

Budgeon, S. (2021). Making Feminist Claims in The Post-truth Era: The Authority of Personal Experience. *Feminist Theory*, *22*(2), 248–267. *https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700120988638*

Candy, L. (2019). *The Creative Reflective Practitioner - Research Through Making and Practice*. Routledge. *https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315208060*

Cecil, V., Pendry, L.F., Salvatore, J. & Kurz, T. (2018). Women's Grey Hair as an Abomination of The Body - Conceal And Passs, or Reveal And Subvert. In Barak-Brandes, S. & Kama, A. (Eds.). *Feminist Interrogations of Women's Head Hair: Crown of Glory and Shame* (pp. 124–140). Routledge.

Diaz, H. (2022). *Trust*. Riverhead Books.

Dix, H. (2018). Introduction: Autofiction in English: The Story so Far. In Hywel Dix (Ed.) *Autofiction in English* (pp. 1-23). Palgrave Macmillan. *https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-89902-2*

Effe, A. & Lawlor, H. (2022). Introduction: From Autofiction to the Autofictional. In Effe, A., & Lawlor, H. (Eds.). *The Autofictional - Approaches, Afforandces, Forms* (pp. 1-18). Palgrave Macmillan. *https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-78440-9*

Ensler, E. (1996). *The Vagina Monologues*. Villard.

Ensslin, A. Skains, L, Riley, S., Haran, J., Mackiewicz, A., & Halliwell, E. (2016). Exploring Digital Fiction as a Tool For Teenage Body Image Bibliotherapy. *Digital Creativity*, *27*(3), 177–195. *https://doi.org/10.1080/14626268.2016.1210646*

Ensslin, A., & Skains, R. (2017). Hypertext: Storyspace to Twine. In *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Electronic Literature* (pp. 293-307). Bloomsbury.

Ensslin, A., & Rice, C., Riley, S., Wilks, C., Perram, M., Fowlie, H., Munro, L., & Bailey, K.A. (2020). "These Waves …:" Writing New Bodies

for Applied Eliterature Studies. *Electronic Book Review*.
https://doi.org/10.7273/c26p-0t17

Er, Y. (2018). Contemporary Women's Autofiction as Critique of Postfeminist Discourse. *Australian Feminist Studies*, *33*(97), 316–330. https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2018.1536442

Felski, R. (1989). *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*. Harvard University Press.

Fisher, C. (2001). *These Waves of Girls*. Afterflash. https://the-next.eliterature.org/exhibition/afterflash/fisher-these.html

Fisher, C. (2007). Feminist Digital Aesthetics: The Everyday and Yesterday. In Marchessault, J. & Lord, S. (Eds.). *Fluid Screens, Expanded Cinema* (pp. 145–159). University of Toronto Press.

Fisher, C. (2012). *Circle*.
https://caitlinfisher.ca/circle-3/

Gerike, A.E. (1990). On Gray Hair and Oppressed Brains. *Journal of Women & Aging*, *2*(2), 35–46.
https://doi.org/10.1300/J074v02n02_05

Gill, J. (2001). Someone Else's Misfortune: The Vicarious Pleasures of The Confessional Text. *Journal of Popular Culture*, *35*(1), 81–93. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.2001.3501_81.x

Gill, J. (2004). Textual Confessions: Narcissism in Anne Sexton's Early Poetry. *Twentieth Century Literature*, *50*(1), 59–87. https://doi.org/10.2307/4149253

Gill, J. (2006). Introduction. In Gill, J. (Ed.). *Modern Confessional Writing - New critical essays* (pp. 1-10). Routledge.

Gonsalves, F. & Hodes, A. (2023). Spring 2023 Editors' Note. *The New River - Journal of Art and Literature*.
https://thenewriver.us/s23note/

Gouveia, P. (2020). The New Media vs. Old Media Trap: How Contemporary Arts Became Playful Transmedia Environments. In Soares, C. & Simão, E. (Eds.), *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on New Media Art* (pp. 25-46). IGI Global.

Grosz, E. (1995). *Space, Time and Perversion - Essays on The Politics of Bodies*. Routledge.

Haraway, D. (1991). *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of*

Nature. Routledge.

Hayles, N.K. (2019). Literary Texts as Cognitive Assemblages: The Case of Electronic Literature. *Interface Critique, Nr. 2,* 173–195.
https://doi.org/10.11588/ic.2019.2.66991

Jordan, S. (2012). ÉTAT PRÉSENT: Autofiction in The Feminine. *French Studies, 67*(1), 76–84.
https://doi.org/10.1093/fs/kns235

Kıratlı, Ş., Wolfe, H. & Bundy, A. (2020). Cacophonic Choir: An Interactive Art Installation Embodying the Voices of Sexual Assault Survivors. *Leonardo, 53*(4), 446–450.
https://doi.org/10.1162/leon_a_01935

Laccetti, J.M. (2006). Towards a Loosening of Categories: Multi-Mimesis, Feminism, and Hypertext. *Electronic Book Review.*
https://electronicbookreview.com/essay/towards-a-loosening-of-categories-multi-mimesis-feminism-and-hypertext/

Pressman, J. (2019a). Contexts of Digital Literature Criticism: Feminist, Queer, Materialist. *Hyperrhiz: New Media Cultures* (20).
https://doi.org/10.20415/hyp/020.ex01

Pressman, J. (2019b). Circling back. In Oren, T. & Press, A. (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Feminism* (pp. 177-189). Routledge.

Robinson, C. (2016). Greying is a Feminist Issue. In Legat, N. (Ed.), *The Journal of Urgent Writing 2016* (pp. 154-169). Massey University Press.

Siu, M. (2023). *Cyberfeminism Index*. Commissioned by Rhizome
https://cyberfeminismindex.com/

Sullivan, L. (1999). Wired Women Writing: Towards a Feminist Theorisation of Hypertext. *Computers and Composition, 16*(1), 25–54
https://doi.org/10.1016/S8755-4615(99)80004-8

Tunc, T. E. (2013). Rivers of The Body: Fluidity as a Reproductive Metaphor in American Feminist (Post)confessional Ecopoetry. *Women's Studies, 42*(2), pp. 113–139.
https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.2013.747378

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS