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Single Paper Abstract
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Who Gets to Write a Life? Gender, Disability, and the Materialisation of Story

This paper explores digital fabrication practices, primarily 3D printing, through a gendered lens, engaging with debates about women's authorship and self-fashioning across material and digital forms. It builds on previous fieldwork from "In the Making"—a UK Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project exploring digital fabrication and disability. While critical making studies have emphasised inclusive practices and the democratisation of design, this paper shifts focus to the feminist and auto/biographical potential of digital fabrication, proposing it as a mode of self-inscription that exceeds linguistic boundaries.

Drawing on digital fabrication workshops co-created with self-identified disabled participants, the paper foregrounds feminist facilitation and ethics as generative creative methodologies. Attention to care, emotional labour, and the management of vulnerability and failure enable forms of authorship that do not depend on proficiency, confidence, or the narrative coherence traditionally associated with legitimate creative authority. Central to this practice is collaboration among participants, facilitators, machines, and materials, challenging conventional models of authorship.

These practices align with long traditions of women's marginal and material writing, in which lives have been recorded, worn, handled, and shared beyond canonical literary forms. Through case studies including wearable texts, miniature narratives, and digitally fabricated avatars, I argue that digital fabrication can function as a feminist mode of life writing that occupies liminal spaces between text and object, the personal and the public, and the physical and the digital. Fragmentary and materially embodied, these works resist linear autobiography while asserting agency, desire, and presence through alternative narrative forms, challenging who is recognised as able to write a life (Couser; Titchkosky).

By proposing digital fabrication practices as a feminist intervention, this paper contributes to wider conversations about women's writing and power, communication and collaboration, technology and pleasure, and the expanding futures of women's self-fashioning.

Bio

Ursula Hurley is Professor of Life Writing at the University of Salford and a widely published, award-winning creative writer with an international profile in applied research and socially engaged practice. Her work explores feminist life writing, digital technologies, and inclusive auto/biographical expression, including collaborative projects that combine poetic practice and digital fabrication. She is the author of *In the Making: Digital Fabrication and Disability* (Vernon Press, 2020). She was the founding Director of the University's Doctoral School, and she currently serves as Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Co-lead for the School of Arts, Media and Creative Technology.