

## REPRESENTATION OF VERISIMILITUDE IN ANALYSIS OF FLASH FICTION

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### Abstract

This article exposes matters of representations in the contexts of analysis of flash fiction. Flash fiction has never been into the spotlight due to its brevity compared to other canon literature. However, the simplicity of it emphasizes its complexities and specifications. Through qualitative method and explorative approach, this paper underlines that flash fiction is never limited by its short number of words. In analysis, first, the meanings involved in flash fiction are never limited by the number of words, but widened through experience and taste beyond the rigidity of definitions. Second, even many leading writers such as Ernest Hemingway and Gabriel Garcia Marquez also use this type of work as a form of simplification of their other works. Third, flash fiction relies on characters and plots by highlighting the tension between the fixed and the flexible, intention-interpretation, and even tone-mood. Fourth, flash fiction finds its uniqueness in the plot twists and extreme points of reality. Fifth, flash fiction handles representations by various cliches. Sixth, flash fiction approaches reality through explorative meanings in verisimilitude. In conclusion, flash fiction involves its verisimilitude not through transparent reality, but full of imagination starting from metaphors, representations, to subtext.

**Keywords** Flash Fiction; Representation; Verisimilitude

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### INTRODUCTION

The discussion surrounding the existence of flash fiction within the realm of literature has been relatively limited. Despite its rise in popularity during the 1990s, the comprehension of this particular form of literary work has primarily focused on its brevity (McCormack, 2021, Rahmeh, 2023). However, by examining the relationship between flash fiction and verisimilitude, one can uncover a fresh perspective on English literature. Additionally, digging into the patterns employed in the creation of flash fiction

can offer insights into the future trajectory of this genre. This research aims to explore various aspects of flash fiction, particularly in terms of its proximity to reality.

The foundation of this research lies in the expansion of language elements that serve as integral foundations for interpreting literary works alongside the accompanying imaginative aspects (Lucht, 2014; Rahmeh, 2023). Flash fiction has emerged as a vital component within the study of English literature. Rather than constructing a complete imaginative landscape, this genre prompts readers to interpret the text through the lens of their own imagination. As a result, flash fiction grants readers a greater degree of flexibility in interpreting the reality encapsulated within the narrative (Galef, 2016; Munavvarjono'gli, 2022). Furthermore, the brevity of flash fiction allows for a more expansive realm of possibilities within the confined space of the text. In this regard, readers play a pivotal role in comprehending and engaging with literary works.

The role of the writer within flash fiction is to provide readers with an unbounded canvas for their imaginative development, without imposing any restrictions on their freedom to interpret the text (Kechula, 2011; Kiosses, 2021). Thus, the authors of this research were motivated to elucidate how the limited number of words within flash fiction can effectively capture the essence of reality through the concept of verisimilitude. At this juncture, the text serves as a conduit for readers to cultivate their imagination pertaining to an uncertain and immeasurable reality, characterized by its malleability, openness, and embodiment of freedom (Galef, 2016; Kechula, 2011).

## **METHOD**

This particular research study utilizes the qualitative method, employing an explorative approach to dig deeper into the subject matter. The analysis is conducted through examinations of the reality depicted in flash fictions. The collection of data for this research is closely intertwined with the literary analysis, employing a content analysis approach. The data itself encompasses a range of multi-disciplinary ideas that pertain to the concept of verisimilitude within the realm of flash fiction. The technique employed for data collection involves note-taking. The subsequent analysis of the data entails a comprehensive reading of the stories, actively marking notable quotes, carefully examining relevant theories and concepts, comparing the research data with the

aforementioned theories, documenting the data, theories, and analysis, and synthesizing the main ideas that emerge from the comprehensive examination of the overall results.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Representations and Its Continuation in Verisimilitude**

The research at hand dives into the intricate theories of representation, verisimilitude, and flash fiction. According to Stuart Hall, representation entails the utilization of culturally embedded language to convey significant messages about the world to fellow individuals (Hall, 2013; Munavvarjono'gli, 2022). In this regard, language collaborates with meaning to shape culture. Therefore, representation serves as the mechanism through which cultural meaning is generated. Through the involvement of signs within language, meaning is produced, exchanged, and interpreted. Representation also encompasses the harmony between imagination and objects (Munavvarjono'gli, 2022; Yemets, 2019). The more contemplative the representation, the deeper the meaning it achieves and explores. This concept is also reflected in the meaning of representations that are constructed and subsequently conveyed through language itself (Hall, 2013). In this context, language is not perceived as detached from humanity, but rather moves within individuals as they comprehend the meaning of the world.

Moving on to flash fiction, it is crucial to acknowledge that the number of words in this genre profoundly impacts various intrinsic aspects of literary works. The brevity characteristic of flash fiction encourages a simpler form of storytelling, yet it possesses its own inherent complexity (Galef, 2016; Kechula, 2011). This particular genre often disregards the various definitions and explanations offered in other forms of literary works. Elements such as character names, settings, places, times, and even the final resolution are frequently omitted in flash fiction. Undoubtedly, this omission adds an intriguing dimension to the genre as it compels readers to engage in further consumption in order to fill the void left by these absent elements.

One of the advantages of flash fiction lies in its ability to empower readers to exercise their imagination. This stands in stark contrast to novels and short stories, where the entire imaginative framework is readily presented to the readers. In the case of flash fiction, readers are actively encouraged to emphasize deeper into the stories within this particular genre (Yemets, 2019). Consequently, it is not uncommon for readers of flash fiction to revisit the stories repeatedly, aiming to discover a resonance between their own imaginative constructs and the narrative within the genre. Thus, flash fiction offers readers a greater degree of freedom to fill in the narrative gaps that exist within the story. This phenomenon mirrors the concept of the "death of the author" (Galef, 2016; Yemets, 2019). This act of interpretation symbolizes the reader's

freedom, a concept that flash fiction actively highlights. This genre does not fixate on rigid definitions; instead, it operates by opening up a multitude of possible meanings that can be explored by the reader.

Verisimilitude, initially conceived as a perspective aimed at analyzing the degree to which artistic creations accurately mirror the reality that surrounds us, explores into the realm of fine art, scrutinizing sculptures and symbols in order to ascertain whether they align with the prevailing collective understanding. Moreover, verisimilitude encompasses a philosophical branch of epistemology that delineates the dichotomy between truth and fallacy, focusing on an assumption's compatibility with reality (Schehr, 2009). The matter lies in accentuating truth itself as the ultimate value, eclipsing all other entities that fail to measure up to its standard. In a post-modern and post-structuralist vein, verisimilitude is actually understood in a diametrically opposite manner, warranting a more rational perspective.

It is precisely at this juncture that the present research assumes its pioneering role. Flash fiction, with its concise yet impactful narrative form, possesses the ability to engender an intensified affinity with reality, commonly referred to as verisimilitude. This concept draws upon the intrinsic, extrinsic, and philosophical interpretations of literary works, vis-à-vis their relationship with the tangible world (Schehr, 2009; Zwart, 2001). In fact, the brevity of sentences within flash fiction serves as a catalyst, transporting readers into an infinite expanse—an imaginative space that can only be comprehended by each individual reader who immerses themselves in the work (Kiosses, 2021; Yemets, 2019). This space also intersects diverse linguistic nuances, catering to individual idiosyncrasies, preferences, and personal experiences.

### **Verisimilitude and Realities of Flash Fiction**

The existence of flash fiction in the realm of literary works is not widely recognized, with many considering this particular form of literature to be too simplistic to be compared to canonical works in the literary world (Galef, 2016; Yemets, 2019). Nevertheless, as time progresses, there has been an increasing demand for literature to condense itself and align with the current trend of modernization, thereby making flash fiction progressively more popular. In this study, there are six significant discoveries in the analysis of the reality of flash fiction.

Firstly, it is evident that the meaning encompassed within flash fiction is not constrained by word count limitations. This phenomenon, in fact, gives rise to a contemporary facet in literary criticism, which emphasizes experiences and preferences that extend beyond rigid definitions. The interpretation of literary works has become increasingly prominent in today's era, owing to

the demise of the author and the emergence of the reader as a significant force (Galef, 2016; Yemets, 2019). The crux of contemporary literature lies not solely in the author's intent, but rather in the ability of the work to resonate with the audience's experiences, intertwine with societal aspects, and even serve as a reflection of prevailing cultural disparities within society. Furthermore, this highlights the implicit and explicit nature of flash fiction in its capacity to intersect the realms of individuality and sociality concurrently (Galef, 2016; Zwart, 2001).

The aforementioned perception indicates that flash fiction not only symbolizes the new face of literature, but also represents the peripheral aspects of well-known literary works. It occupies such a peripheral position that it is never discussed in the same depth as canonical literature. However, in the realm of New Historicism, it is understood that contexts are inseparable from the texts themselves. This understanding also applies to flash fiction (McCormack, 2021, Rahmeh, 2023). It will never abandon the intrinsic elements of literature, but instead goes deeper into the networks of meaning within the broader discourses of comprehension, particularly those that are multidisciplinary in nature.

Consequently, flash fiction's position within the literary landscape is often underestimated, with its significance overshadowed by canonical works. Nonetheless, it has become increasingly apparent that flash fiction has its own unique role to play, serving as a symbol of the evolving nature of literature and as a peripheral aspect that complements traditional literary works (Batchelor & King, 2014; Setyowati, 2016). By transcending word count limitations, flash fiction opens up new avenues for interpretation and engages readers in a way that reflects the changing dynamics of contemporary society. Furthermore, its ability to intertwine individual and social aspects demonstrates its capacity to explore complex themes and cultural inequalities. Ultimately, flash fiction serves as a testament to the multifaceted nature of literature and its ability to adapt to the demands of modernization while retaining its intrinsic value (Batchelor & King, 2014; Setyowati, 2016).

Secondly, it is worth noting that within the realm of flash fiction itself, numerous esteemed writers employ this genre as a means of simplifying their other literary works. This fact is exemplified by the existence of the shortest flash fiction piece ever written, a mere six words, crafted by the renowned literary figure Ernest Hemingway (Lucht, 2014; Rahmeh, 2023). Furthermore, literary authors such as Franz Kafka, Guy de Maupassant, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez ventured into the realm of flash fiction, successfully conveying profound meaning within their concise narratives that are less than 1000 words.

Curiously, flash fiction emanating from writers of this esteemed literary canon is often overlooked in terms of scholarly analysis due to its perceived lack of complexity. Similarly,

contemporary flash fiction authors are able to adeptly explore profound intrinsic themes despite the limited word count imposed upon them (Aranberri, 2020; Blair, 2020). Noteworthy writers such as James Baldwin, Sofia Samatar, and Jack Douglas skillfully employ metaphors to convey clarity of definition, rather than relying solely on explicit language. What may be perceived as detrimental factors for flash fiction, namely brevity and conciseness, ultimately serve as its chief advantages. The essence of this genre lies not solely in the narrative itself, but rather in how it facilitates the stories, the readers, and the realm of imagination (Aranberri, 2020; Blair, 2020).

Thirdly, flash fiction heavily relies on intrinsic elements, particularly the development of characters and plot, as its primary focal points. This principle holds true in the creative process of literary works in general, where the setting often takes a backseat to the characters and plot. By placing an emphasis on character and plot, flash fiction authors are able to indicate a vast array of meanings, rather than being constrained by rigid definitions. In instances of flash fiction, the setting is intentionally nonexistent, as the focus shifts towards exploring conflicts and their implications (Lucht, 2014; Rahmeh, 2023). In this manner, flash fiction not only reflects the incompleteness of the literary domain, but also embraces it, recognizing that brevity is an inescapable reality and that the realm of imagination takes precedence.

Thus, the aspect of meaning that is accentuated within flash fiction prioritizes existence over a more fixed essence. Oftentimes, the implied meaning within flash fiction is more expansive and nuanced than the surface-level text itself. By broadening understanding of the various facets of meaning, flash fiction distinguishes itself as a contemporary form of literature, one that highlights the tension between rigidity and flexibility, intention and interpretation, and even tone and mood. These tensions serve as a means to challenge the established norms and strict rules of canonical literature, asserting that even a few words possess the capacity to convey profound meanings that are intertwined with the collective knowledge and experiences of society.

Fourthly, Flash fiction stands out in terms of its unique plot twists and extreme points of reality. Unlike canonical literary works, flash fiction embraces plot twists, which are often avoided in traditional literature due to concerns about consistency in intrinsic aspects (Kechula, 2011; Shehr, 2009). In canonical works, characters are encouraged to remain consistent, however, flash fiction employs brevity that encourages writers to surprise readers with unexpected endings, deviating from the traditional narrative structure. Flash fiction also explores extreme points of reality, a characteristic often found in literary works. Literary pieces often depict abnormal human conditions, which can evoke cathartic experiences for the audience, as seen in tragedies like *Othello* (Kechula, 2011; Shehr, 2009). Flash fiction takes this exploration to an even greater extent. The limited word count in flash fiction prompts writers to reflect into aspects of society

that are rarely understood, yet still comprehensible to their audience. In this regard, clichés, which are often dismissed in literature, become advantageous in the realm of flash fiction.

Fifthly, moreover, flash fiction excels in its ability to effectively handle representation issues. Despite the constraints imposed by the limited number of words, flash fiction manages to approach reality and represent it with great finesse (Hall, 2013; Kechula, 2011). Interestingly, flash fiction leverages the use of clichés, both from individual and societal perspectives. While clichés are typically considered ordinary and unremarkable, they find a perfect fit within the realm of flash fiction. By employing these clichés, flash fiction can convey meaning efficiently, allowing the audience to immediately comprehend the intended message without the need for extensive explanations from the author (Hall, 2013; Kechula, 2011).

For instance, the cliché of "blue skies" representing clear weather or "red lights" symbolizing danger or stopping on the highway is often found in canonical literary works. However, flash fiction takes a different approach. It no longer needs to explicitly describe clear skies because it can play with meaning and representation more freely. Flash fiction has the advantage of setting the stage with explicit representation from the beginning, unlike novels that provide detailed descriptions (Bae & Kim, 2023; Ashimova, et al., 2020). Rather than spoon-feeding the readers, flash fiction allows them to reflect on their own experiences and surroundings without any sense of guilt. In other words, flash fiction intertwines the silver threads of everyday life through imaginative and conflicting meanings within the literature.

Indeed, flash fiction sets itself apart through its utilization of plot twists and extreme points of reality. It deviates from canonical literary works by embracing plot twists, providing unexpected endings that challenge readers' expectations. Additionally, flash fiction explores the realm of extreme reality, shedding light on aspects of society that are often misunderstood (Bae & Kim, 2023; Ashimova, et al., 2020). Despite the limited word count, flash fiction effectively handles representation issues by leveraging clichés to convey meaning efficiently. By doing so, flash fiction allows the audience to engage with the literature and draw their own connections to their personal experiences. Overall, flash fiction offers a unique and captivating approach to storytelling within the realm of literature (Aldama, 2013; Tarrayo, 2019).

Sixthly, it is important to note that flash fiction, despite its concise and limited number of words, possesses the remarkable ability to approach reality in terms of its meaning and verisimilitude. This is achieved through the utilization of a vast and expansive imagination that is continuously constructed and interwoven between the reality portrayed within the work, the imaginative elements within the work itself, the audience's own imaginative processes, and the audience's perception of reality (Aldama, 2013; Tarrayo, 2019). It is crucial to acknowledge that

these four components are inherently interconnected and inseparable, as imagination can never be completely divorced from the real world, just as the reality we perceive is often imbued with imaginative elements such as metaphors, representations, and underlying subtexts.

Moreover, it is essential to recognize that flash fiction operates within intricate networks of meanings. It aligns with the notion that no meaning can truly be considered neutral, as all meanings are constructed and shaped through the lens of social understanding (Capettini, 2021; LeMaster & Johnson, 2021). Through this process of social construction, the meanings conveyed in flash fiction draw upon the strengths and insights offered by a multitude of disciplines within the realm of science. It can be argued that flash fiction extends beyond the confines of purely literary theories, as it has the potential to engage with diverse fields of study as long as it remains tethered to the realities of everyday life. In doing so, flash fiction exemplifies the richness and complexity of literature, where transparency is not the ultimate goal (Capettini, 2021; LeMaster & Johnson, 2021). Instead, it revels in its unique opaqueness and must be explored and understood through the lived experiences and intricacies of everyday life.

Taking into consideration the six aforementioned aspects, it becomes evident that flash fiction is by no means limited by its brevity and constrained word count. This form of literary expression relies heavily on the power of imagination, representation, and verisimilitude to captivate and resonate with its audience (Calvo-Revilla, 2020; Millington, 2020). It does not diminish or overshadow the existing canon of literature. It expands and enriches the literary landscape by offering a diverse array of experiences and narratives that can be appreciated by individuals from multitude social backgrounds (Calvo-Revilla, 2020; Millington, 2020)

## **CONCLUSION**

Flash fiction involves its verisimilitude not through transparent reality, but full of imagination starting from metaphors, representations, to subtext. It plays through the matter of being multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and even anti-disciplinary in the frames of cultural studies. Flash fiction is never limited by the number of words, but widened through experience and taste beyond the rigidity of definitions. By relying on characters and plots, it enables the story to underline the tension between the fixed and the flexible, intention-interpretation, and even tone-mood. Flash fiction also finds its uniqueness in the plot twists and extreme points of reality, in which it approaches reality through explorative meanings in verisimilitude.

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