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Based on Brevity: Fiction in 140 Characters or Less

Abstract

This paper examines how short-short stories published on social media platforms such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* experiment with brevity. It examines the use of devices such as planned spaces between words, colors, and enjambments, a genre called twitter fiction, to deliver the literary after-taste of 'byte-sized' fiction. What are the ramifications, requirements, and results of this form of brevity? Since the works are written and published on/for the digital media, what other aids supplement the reading process, if any? What forms of innovation does this conciseness allow? Two platforms of reading and writing short-short stories (of 140 characters or less) will be used to examine these questions: *Terribly Tiny Tales* on *Facebook* and *Very Short Story* (@veryshortstory) on *Twitter*.

Keywords: digital humanities, twitter fiction, brevity, short story, technology, social media

"For sale: Baby shoes. Never worn."

-Ernest Hemingway

The six-word story by Ernest Hemingway, written in the 1920s, can be seen as an exemplary precursor to the recent burgeoning of short-short stories on *Twitter* and *Facebook*. To clearly define the term in the context of length is a complicated process as not only do short-short stories have different names, there is no fixity in terms of how short they must be or which style or form they deal with – ranging from myths and fables to serialized novels. However, works that are strictly 140 characters or less come under the subset of short-short stories and are popularly known as