

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Kasdi Merbah Ouargla University

Faculty of Letters and Languages

Department of Letters and English Language



Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Master's
Degree in field of English Language and Literature

Specialty: **Literature and Civilisation**

The Stylistic Function of Silence and Ellipsis in Contemporary Short Fiction

A Case study of Lydia Davis

Presented and publicly defended by

MOHAMMED AMIR EDDINE SIAGH and ABDERAHMANE CHETOUH

Supervised by

KHAWLA HAKKOU

Jury

Members of The Jury	Institution	Chairperson
Members of The Jury	Institution	Supervisor
Members of The Jury	Institution	Examiner
Members of The Jury	Institution	Examiner

Academic Year:

2025-2026

Dedication

*My great gratitude for God, for His boundless grace upon me and his
endless blessing.*

*This work is dedicated with love and gratitude to my family and to
everyone who believed in me throughout this journey.*

*To my beloved family, whose endless love, sacrifices, encouragement,
and prayers have been my greatest source of strength. Your support gave
me the courage to continue, even in the most difficult moments. I owe
this accomplishment to you as much as to myself.*

Amir

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my family.

*To my mother, for her patience, sacrifices, and unconditional love.
Thank you for believing in me. Your strength and kindness shaped my
path and kept me moving forward.*

*To my father, for his guidance and quiet strength, and for always sup-
porting me.*

*To my sister, for standing beside me through every difficult moment and
for your constant support.*

This achievement reflects your love, support, and faith in me.

Abderahmane

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our supervisor for her guidance, patience, and constructive feedback throughout the preparation of this thesis. This project developed through repeated reading and revision, and this process helped us understand how small literary forms can open larger critical questions.

We are also grateful to the Department of English Language and Literature for providing the academic environment in which this research was conducted. The study of short fiction, stylistics, and literary theory shaped our understanding of how language functions not only through what is stated directly, but also through what is left unsaid.

Finally, we would like to thank our family and friends for their constant encouragement and support. Their presence and motivation helped us complete this work with care and dedication.

ABDERAHMANE CHETTOUH

MOHAMED AMIR EDDINE SIAGH

Abstract

This dissertation examines how silence and ellipsis operate as deliberate stylistic strategies in contemporary short fiction through a case study of Lydia Davis. Rather than treating brevity as a simple reduction of language, the study argues that Davis's micro-stories create meaning by engineering absences: omitted events, suppressed causal links, truncated syntax, typographic gaps, and restrained exposition. These forms of "not-saying" intensify narrative pressure and shift interpretive responsibility toward the reader. Drawing on narratology (narrative time and ellipsis), stylistics (punctuation, fragmentation, modality, repetition, and layout), and modern theories of silence, the dissertation develops a framework for describing how omission functions structurally and ethically. The primary corpus is Lydia Davis's *The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis* (FSG, 2009), complemented by a comparative glance at *Can't and Won't* (FSG, 2014) to account for late-style intensification in very short forms. Through close readings of selected stories, the dissertation shows that ellipsis can serve as narrative acceleration and epistemological hesitation, while silence can register interpersonal restraint, institutional speech limitations, and the instability of lexical authority. The work situates Davis within a transatlantic Anglophone field while anchoring its cultural discussion in English Civilization through domestic communication norms and English language ideology. Ultimately, the dissertation contends that Davis's silences are not empty spaces but structured devices that enable contemporary short fiction to represent modern uncertainty, miscommunication, and the limits of language. By distinguishing narratological, syntactic, typographic, and pragmatic forms of omission, the study offers a replicable toolkit for analyzing other micro-texts in the contemporary Anglophone short story.

Keywords: silence, ellipsis, omission, Lydia Davis, micro fiction, contemporary short fiction, stylistics, narratology, textual absence, reader interpretation.

ملخص

تهدف هذه المذكرة إلى دراسة كيفية توظيف الصمت والحذف بوصفهما استراتيجيتين أسلوبيتين متعمدتين في القصص القصيرة المعاصرة، من خلال دراسة تحليلية لأعمال الكاتبة الأمريكية Lydia Davis. وبدلاً من التعامل مع الإيجاز باعتباره اختزالاً بسيطاً للغة، تجادل الدراسة بأن القصص القصيرة لدى ديفيس تُنتج المعنى عبر بناء الغياب داخل النص، من خلال حذف بعض

الأحداث، وإضمار الروابط السببية، وتفكيك البنية النحوية، واستعمال الفراغات الطباعية، والاقتصاد في الشرح السردى. وتسهم هذه الأشكال من «اللامقول» في تكثيف التوتر السردى ونقل جزء من المسؤولية التأويلية إلى القارئ.

وتستند الدراسة إلى مقاربات السرديات، خاصة ما يتعلق بالزمن السردى والحذف، إضافة إلى الأسلوبية التي تهتم بعلامات الترقيم، والتفتيت، والصيغ التعبيرية، والتكرار، والتنظيم الطباعي، فضلاً عن النظريات الحديثة المرتبطة بالصمت في الخطاب الأدبي. ومن خلال هذا الإطار النظري، تطوّر المذكرة تصوراً يوضح كيفية اشتغال الحذف على المستويين البنيوي والأخلاقي داخل النصوص الأدبية.

ويعتمد البحث أساساً على مجموعة The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis الصادرة سنة 2009، مع الاستعانة بقراءة مقارنة لمجموعة Can't and Won't الصادرة سنة 2014، بهدف إبراز تكثيف الأسلوب في النصوص شديدة القصر في المرحلة المتأخرة من كتابتها. ومن خلال قراءات تحليلية لقصص مختارة، تُظهر الدراسة أن الحذف يؤدي وظيفة التسريع السردى والتردد المعرفي، في حين يعكس الصمت أشكال التقييد في التواصل بين الأفراد، وحدود الخطاب المؤسسي، واضطراب السلطة اللغوية.

كما تضع المذكرة أعمال ديفيس ضمن سياق الأدب الأنجلوساكسوني المعاصر العابر للأطلسي، مع ربطها بالحضارة الإنجليزية من خلال أنماط التواصل اليومي وأيديولوجيا اللغة الإنجليزية. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن الصمت في نصوص ديفيس لا يمثل فراغاً دلالياً، بل بنية فنية منظّمة تُمكن القصة القصيرة المعاصرة من تمثيل القلق الحديث، وسوء التواصل، وحدود اللغة. كما تقترح الدراسة تمييزاً بين الأشكال السردية والنحوية والطباعية والتداولية للحذف، بما يوفر أداة تحليلية قابلة للتطبيق على نصوص ميكروية أخرى في القصة القصيرة الأنجلوساكسونية المعاصرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الصمت، الحذف، الإغفال، ليديا ديفيس، القصص الميكروية، القصة القصيرة المعاصرة، الأسلوبية، السرديات، الغياب النصي، تأويل القارئ.

Résumé :

Cette mémoire examine le silence et l'ellipse comme stratégies stylistiques intentionnelles dans la fiction contemporaine, à travers une étude de cas centrée sur Lydia Davis. Plutôt que de considérer la brièveté comme une simple réduction linguistique, l'étude montre que les micro-récits de Davis produisent du sens par la construction d'absences textuelles : événements omis, relations causales effacées, syntaxe fragmentée, blancs typographiques et réduction de l'explicitation narrative. Ces formes de non-dit renforcent la tension narrative et déplacent une part importante de l'interprétation vers le lecteur.

L'analyse s'appuie sur la narratologie, notamment le temps narratif et les procédés d'ellipse, ainsi que sur la stylistique à travers la ponctuation, la

fragmentation, les modes d'énonciation, la répétition et la mise en forme textuelle. Elle mobilise également des approches théoriques du silence dans le discours littéraire afin de construire un cadre d'analyse des fonctions structurales et éthiques de l'omission.

Le corpus principal repose sur *The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis* (2009), complété par une lecture comparative de *Can't and Won't* (2014), afin d'observer l'intensification du style dans les formes très brèves de la période tardive. Les analyses montrent que l'ellipse fonctionne à la fois comme accélération narrative et comme forme d'hésitation cognitive, tandis que le silence met en évidence la retenue communicationnelle, les limites du discours institutionnel et l'instabilité de l'autorité linguistique.

Lydia Davis est située dans un champ littéraire anglophone transatlantique, avec un ancrage dans la culture anglaise à travers les normes de communication quotidienne et l'idéologie de la langue. L'étude conclut que les silences dans son écriture ne relèvent pas du vide, mais de dispositifs formels organisés permettant de représenter l'incertitude contemporaine, les dysfonctionnements de la communication et les limites du langage. Elle propose enfin une typologie des formes d'omission narratologiques, syntaxiques, typographiques et pragmatiques, offrant un outil d'analyse applicable à d'autres micro-récits de la fiction contemporaine.

Mots clés : silence, ellipse, omission, Lydia Davis, micro-fiction, fiction contemporaine, stylistique, narratologie, absence textuelle, interprétation du lecteur.

Contents

Dedications

Acknowledgements

Abstract

General Introduction

CHAPTER-I. Literature Review and Theoretical Background.....15

I.1. Introduction.....	16
I.2. Defining silence in narrative	16
I.3. Defining ellipsis	16
I.4. Why omission intensifies in microfiction	17
I.5. Working definitions for this dissertation	17
I. 2.1 Silence as modern aesthetic stance Sontag, S. (1969).....	17
I. 2.2 Ellipsis as historical punctuation and literary sign Toner, A. (2015)...	17
I. 2.3 Narratological ellipsis and narrative tempo Genette, G. (1980).....	18
I. 2.4 Microfiction and flash fiction as qualitative forms Nelles, W. (2012), Roche-Jacques, S. (2024).....	18
I. 2.5 Stylistics and micro-features Leech, G. N., & Short, M. (2007), Simpson, P. (2004)	18
I. 2.6 Davis scholarly debates: psychological minimalism and grammatical investigation (Clark2020, Boorman, L. (2023).	19
I. 2.7 Translation, rewriting, and intertextual omission Evans, J. (2016).) ...	19
I. 2.8 Late style and ‘less time’ Mitchell, L. C. (2019).	19
I. 2.9 Minor forms and cultural value Farrant, M. W. (2024)	19
Conclusion.....	20

CHAPTER-II. Narratological Ellipsis and Modes of Silence in Selected Stories38

II.1. Introduction	39
--------------------------	----

II.2. Research design and epistemological stance	39
II.3. Corpus, editions, and comparative rationale	39
II.4. Sampling strategy and story selection criteria	40
II.5. Units of analysis and levels of description	40
II.6. Analytical framework: narratology, stylistics, and silence theory	41
II.7. Coding scheme: a taxonomy of silence and ellipsis	41
II.8. Annotation procedure and analytic steps	41
II.9. Validity, interpretive accountability, and negative checking	42
II. 2.1. Taxonomy result: silence as a layered system	42
II. 2.2. Narrative ellipsis: compression of time and causal bridges	43
II. 2.3. Epistemological silence: uncertainty as a formal condition	43
II. 2.4. Typographic silence: segmentation, lists, and the archive effect.....	43
II. 2.5. Pragmatic silence: institutional and social constraints on speech.....	44
II. 2.6. Metalinguistic silence: definition, naming, and lexical authority	44
II. 2.7. Object microfiction: defamiliarised attention and the unsaid body ..	44
II. 2.8. Ethical non-closure: refusal of explanatory moral frames	44
II. 2.9. Comparative results: Collected Stories (2009) and Can't and Won't (2014)	45
II. 2.10. Summary of findings.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

CHAPTER-III. Close reading and analysis of Lydia Davis's short stories **.....22**

III. 1. Introduction.....	23
III. 2.1. "The Mice": Domestic Disorder and Causal Silence.....	24
III. 2.2. "The Outing": List Form and Narrative Ellipsis.....	26
III. 2.3. "Odd Behavior": Silence, Noise, and Self-Justification	28
III. 2.4. "Fear": Communal Recognition and Ethical Silence.....	30
III. 2.5. "Lost Things": Epistemological Silence and the Problem of Absence	32
III. 2.6. Comparative Discussion: Five Modes of Silence	35

III. 2.7.Reader Participation and Interpretive Pressure	35
III. 2.8.Analytical Summary of the Close Readings	36
Conclusion.....	36
Conclusion.....	47
Bibliographical / References.....	51
Appendices	55

General Introduction

Contemporary short fiction has increasingly foregrounded strategies of omission, fragmentation, and restraint. In a literary terrain that often associates narrative value, and extensive psychological exposition very short forms insist on the opposite premise: that narrative force can emerge from small textual surfaces. “Flash fiction” and “microfiction” are frequently grouped under the umbrella of short narrative, yet recent studies argues that very brief stories can be qualitatively distinct rather than merely shorter in quantity. William Nelles’s influential account of microfiction explains that extreme brevity reshapes not only length but the handling of action, character, temporality, and closure, because the story must rely more heavily on inference and implication than on explicit development Nelles, W. (2012).

Within this landscape, Lydia Davis occupies a singular position. Her work is widely recognized as formally inventive and resistant to stable genre labels: her pieces move between story, prose poem, aphorism, list, and quasi-essay, frequently in the same collection. and that regular expectations are complicated by her "*many voices*." of narrative continuity Evans, J. (2016). Davis, L. (2009). *The collected stories of Lydia Davis. Farrar, Straus and Giroux*. offers a uniquely comprehensive corpus for examining this practice systematically, because it gathers a wide range of short works across decades of writing.

The central problem motivating this dissertation is that Davis is often praised for brevity and innovation, yet the specific mechanisms by which her texts make absence meaningful are frequently described in general terms rather than analyzed as a coherent system. Omission is not a single phenomenon. It includes narratological ellipsis (omitted story-time and events), syntactic or grammatical ellipsis (recoverable elements omitted), typographic silence (white space, paragraph breaks, list-structures), and pragmatic or epistemological silence (withheld motives, unsaid dialogue, claims that cannot be fully justified). A study focused on silence and ellipsis must define these layers clearly and show how they interact across multiple stories.

Silence, in this work, is treated not as a void but as a communicative and stylistic resource. Susan Sontag’s classic account of an “aesthetics of silence” argues that modern art confronts the limits of language and meaning and therefore turns toward strategies of refusal, reduction, or non-completion as expressive form Sontag, S. (1969). Ellipsis, likewise, operates on multiple levels. Gérard Genette conceptualizes ellipsis as a technique of narrative duration: discourse omits portions of story-time, producing leaps that accelerate pace and intensify inference Genette, G. (1980). Anne Toner’s history of ellipsis in English writing shows that the ellipsis mark

and related signs (dots, dashes, asterisks) serve as indicators of interruption, trailing thought, and deliberate non-completion Toner, A. (2015).

It is argued, in Davis, silence and ellipsis are active stylistic strategies that organize narrative attention. They compress experience, intensify ambiguity, and transform the reader into a co-producer of meaning. Lola Boorman's analysis of Davis's "grammatical examples" demonstrates why micro-focus matters: Davis makes function words, punctuation, and small syntactic shifts carry philosophical and ethical force *Boorman, L. (2023)*. When a story refuses to narrate its causal middle, or when it frames emotion through institutional language, the reader encounters a structured gap that must be navigated rather than ignored.

The research questions guiding this dissertation are:

How do silence and ellipsis function as stylistic devices in Lydia Davis's short fiction?

What effects do narrative gaps and micro-formal omissions produce in terms of temporality, tone, and reader participation?

Methodologically, the dissertation combines narratology, stylistics, and silence theory. Narratology provides vocabulary for describing narrative tempo and information control; stylistics provides tools for analyzing punctuation, fragmentation, modality, repetition, and spacing; and silence theory provides a conceptual account of why non-completion can be aesthetically and ethically meaningful. The primary corpus is drawn from *Davis, L. (2009)*. The collected stories of Lydia Davis. *Farrar, Straus and Giroux*. A secondary comparative reference point is "Can't and Won't" (FSG, 2014), discussed in relation to Lee Clark Mitchell's late-style account of "less time" in contemporary short story collections Mitchell, L. C. (2019).

Moreover, several aspects of silence explored here restraint in everyday interaction, understatement, and the authority of reference language are salient within English cultural contexts. A story that stages definitional instability or institutional phrasing can be read alongside English language ideology: the prestige of "correctness," the authority of dictionaries, and the social expectation that certain feelings remain indirectly expressed.

The dissertation is divided into three chapters. Chapter One reviews existing literature on silence, ellipsis, microfiction, and stylistic method. Chapter Two provides close readings of selected stories, tracking narratological ellipsis, syntactic ellipsis, typographic silence, and pragmatic/epistemological silence. Chapter Three situates these findings within contemporary

Anglophone short fiction, using microfiction theory and late-style study to interpret why omission has become a privileged mode in modern narrative. The conclusion dissertations contributions and proposes directions for further research.

The comparative element of the study is intentionally limited and analytical rather than encyclopedic. “*Can’t and Won’t*” is used to test whether omission appears differently in later microfictional practice: whether transitions become briefer, whether non-closure intensifies, and whether typographic sparseness is used more aggressively. Mitchell’s late-style framework provides language for this comparison by linking late-career short fiction to formal concentration and compressed time Mitchell, L. C. (2019).

Because the dissertation focuses on micro-features, it adopts a cautious interpretive ethics: claims are grounded in textual evidence, and ambiguity is treated as meaningful rather than as a problem to be ‘solved.’ This principle matters particularly for silence, since the temptation in criticism is to fill every gap with speculation. The method instead reads gaps as designed: they are part of the story’s rhetorical structure and must be analyzed as such.

Because the dissertation focuses on micro-features, it adopts a cautious interpretive ethics: claims are grounded in textual evidence, and ambiguity is treated as meaningful rather than as a problem to be ‘solved.’ This principle matters particularly for silence, since the temptation in criticism is to fill every gap with speculation. The method instead reads gaps as designed: they are part of the story’s rhetorical structure and must be analyzed as such.

To clarify scope, this dissertation does not attempt an exhaustive survey of Davis’s entire corpus; instead, it selects stories that foreground omission in different ways: pieces that transform emotion into calculation, stage uncertainty as qualified claims, leap into dread without causal build-up, or expose the inadequacy of institutional language. This strategy ensures that the analysis compares multiple modes of silence rather than repeating a single technique.

The work significance is twofold. First, it contributes to stylistic study of contemporary short fiction by demonstrating that punctuation, spacing, and fragmentary syntax are not minor surface features but central meaning-making resources. Second, it contributes to Davis scholarly debates by providing a layered vocabulary for omission and by showing how her “*small forms*” operate as a system rather than as isolated experiments.

It is argued that small textual units can generate ethical and cultural force disproportionate to their size; Davis offers an exemplary case because her stories convert minimal linguistic gestures into substantial interpretive pressure Farrant, M. W. (2024).

A common misunderstanding about brevity is that it simply removes detail. In microfiction, detail is redistributed: what is removed from exposition reappears as interpretive labour. Flash fiction scholarly debates emphasizes that story worlds are often inferred rather than described, and that a very short text can prompt readers to supply context, chronology, and motive from minimal cues Roche-Jacques, S. (2024). Davis's work demonstrates this principle with particular clarity when a story's surface appears almost non-narrative yet produces a strong effect of situation, voice, and implication.

Reader inference is treated here as part of the form itself. When a story omits a causal connection, that omission is not a hole but a designed pressure point: it directs attention toward what must be inferred and thus toward what the text deems most significant. In Davis, omissions cluster around moments of emotional vulnerability, linguistic uncertainty, and social constraint; the result is an aesthetics in which silence is not the opposite of speech but one of its most precise instruments.

CHAPTER-I. Literature Review and Theoretical Background

Chapter One: Literature Review and Theoretical Background

Introduction

This chapter develops the scholarly and theoretical foundation for analyzing silence and ellipsis in Lydia Davis's short fiction. Following the approved plan, it is organized into three parts:

1. Background studies and debates.
2. Conceptual definitions of silence and ellipsis with illustrative examples beyond Davis.

The goal is to build a coherent rationale for why omission matters, how it can be described precisely, and what methods are most appropriate for very short narrative forms.

I. 1.1. Defining silence in narrative

"Silence" in literary analysis names several distinct phenomena. Thematic silence occurs when characters avoid confession, refuse to speak, or communicate indirectly. Structural silence occurs when a narrative withholds motive, omits backstory, or refuses to explain causality. Typographic silence is visible as white space, paragraph breaks, or list structures. Epistemological silence occurs when the text stages the limits of knowledge or justification. Sontag's framework is useful because it treats silence as meaningful and intentional rather than void Sontag, S. (1969). For contemporary short fiction, this multiplicity matters because a single short text can deploy several kinds of silence at once.

I. 1.2. Defining ellipsis

Grammar, punctuation, and narrative structure. Grammatically, ellipsis refers to omission of recoverable elements; rhetorically, it can produce speed, compression, or implication. Typographically, the ellipsis mark signals interruption or trailing thought; it can stand for what cannot be spoken. Toner demonstrates that ellipsis marks have long served as formal indicators of non-completion and can carry social or ethical implication when they stand for what cannot be named Toner, A. (2015). Narratologically, ellipsis refers to omitted story-time and information: discourse leaps over events, years, or causal links Genette, G. (1980). This narratological sense is especially relevant to microfiction, where the leap may be the primary action of the story.

I. 1.3. Why omission intensifies in microfiction

Nelles argues that microfiction demands inference because the form cannot supply extensive exposition; it must activate the reader's knowledge and interpretive habits Nelles, W. (2012). Roche-Jacques similarly emphasizes that flash fiction constructs time, space, and context indirectly, through cues rather than elaboration Roche-Jacques, S. (2024). These accounts explain why silence and ellipsis are not optional decorations in microfiction but structural necessities. In Davis, interpretive pressure is often foregrounded: a story may present a single thought and leave the reader to infer the situation that makes it urgent.

I. 1.4. Working definitions for this dissertation

Narrative ellipsis refers to omitted time or events and suppressed causal links Genette, G. (1980). Stylistic silence refers to micro-formal techniques such as fragmentation, paragraph breaks, list forms, and restrained exposition, including punctuation patterns that signal interruption Leech, G. N., & Short, M. (2007), Simpson, P. (2004), Toner, A. (2015). Pragmatic silence refers to what characters do not say, or what narrators refuse to interpret explicitly, often producing ambiguity and ethical non-closure. Epistemological silence refers to claims that cannot be fully justified or definitions that cannot stabilize meaning an important dimension in Davis's stories about knowing and naming.

I. 2.1 Silence as modern aesthetic stance

Sontag's account remains foundational because it reframes silence as an aesthetic strategy rather than an absence of art. For Sontag, modern art presses toward the limits of language and representation; in that pressure, silence becomes a meaningful act of refusal, reduction, or non-completion that speaks by withholding Sontag, S. (1969). For contemporary short fiction, this framework legitimizes the idea that a text can communicate by leaving things unsaid. Davis's micro-stories frequently refuse the explanatory apparatus that stabilizes realist narrative; under a Sontagian lens, such refusal becomes a deliberate stance that makes limits of knowledge, expression, or social convention part of the text's meaning.

I. 2.2 Ellipsis as historical punctuation and literary sign

Toner's study provides a complementary foundation by tracing ellipsis marks in English literature as "signs of omission" that indicate interruption, trailing thought, censorship, or deliberate non-completion Toner, A. (2015). This matters for stylistic analysis because punctua-

tion shapes reading time and tone: the ellipsis mark creates a pause, suggests an unspoken continuation, and can imply ethical or social constraints on speech. Davis's fiction often makes punctuation and typographic design carry narrative weight, so Toner's framework helps connect linguistic surface to literary effect without treating punctuation as merely mechanical.

I. 2.3 Narratological ellipsis and narrative tempo Genette, G. (1980).

Genette's narratology provides technical vocabulary for describing how stories handle time and information. Ellipsis occurs when discourse omits segments of story-time, producing leaps that accelerate pace and intensify inference Genette, G. (1980). In short fiction, ellipsis is common; in microfiction, it can become the primary movement. This is crucial for Davis, whose work often stages time through abrupt jumps, after-the-fact reflection, or the presentation of a mental state without narrative build-up. A narratological approach therefore distinguishes simple shortness from structured compression of narrative duration.

I. 2.4 Microfiction and flash fiction as qualitative forms

Microfiction scholarly debates explains why omission is structurally central. Nelles argues that extreme brevity reconfigures narrative elements action, character, setting, temporality, intertextuality, closure because coherence must be achieved with minimal textual resources Nelles, W. (2012). Roche-Jacques likewise treats flash fiction as a distinct form and emphasizes how time, space, and context are produced indirectly, through cues rather than exposition Roche-Jacques, S. (2024). These accounts support a key premise for reading Davis: her micro-texts should not be judged as underdeveloped stories but analyzed as forms engineered to activate reader inference.

I. 2.5 Stylistics and micro-features Leech, G. N., & Short, M. (2007), Simpson, P. (2004)

Narratology explains structural omission; stylistics explains how omission is built on the page. Leech and Short's stylistic framework treats literary meaning as emerging from patterns of linguistic choice syntax, cohesion, lexis, and punctuation Leech, G. N., & Short, M. (2007). Simpson similarly presents stylistics as a toolkit for analyzing how texts produce interpretive effects through formal features Simpson, P. (2004). For Davis, stylistics is indispensable because her stories often depend on function words, modality, fragments, repetition, and spacing micro-features whose interpretive weight increases as textual length decreases.

I. 2.6 Davis scholarly debates: psychological minimalism and grammatical investigation (Clark2020, Boorman, L. 2023)

Peer-reviewed the study has begun to clarify what distinguishes Davis's minimalism. Robert C. Clark argues that Davis's minimalism is frequently psychological: narrators convey processes of thought and attention rather than external action, so omission becomes a way of representing mind rather than event (Clark2020). Boorman strengthens this claim by showing how Davis's stories can function as grammatical "examples," where small formal choices become sites of philosophical and ethical force *Boorman, L. (2023)*. Together, these studies support the dissertation's micro-analytic method: Davis's silences are not simply missing plot, but crafted linguistic structures.

I. 2.7 Translation, rewriting, and intertextual omission Evans, J. (2016).

Evans shows that translation and rewriting are central to Davis's practice, and that her work's genre-slippage and intertextuality complicate ordinary expectations of narrative continuity Evans, J. (2016). This matters for silence and ellipsis because omission may sometimes be intertextual: the story may presume a genre convention or a prior text that remains partially outside the immediate prose. Translation also foregrounds what cannot be carried across languages without loss, supporting an expanded view of silence as the residue of untranslatability.

I. 2.8 Late style and 'less time' Mitchell, L. C. (2019).

Mitchell's study of late-career short story collections argues that late style often involves compressed narrative movement "less time" and heightened concentration of technique Mitchell, L. C. (2019). This provides a scholarly basis for comparing Davis's collected volume with later microfictional work such as "*Can't and Won't*". The point is not that later is simply shorter; it is that late style can intensify omission, reduce transitions, and resist closure more insistently, turning non-completion into a formal signature.

I. 2.9 Minor forms and cultural value

The study on minor forms emphasizes that small texts can generate major ethical and cultural effects disproportionate to their size. Farrant's discussion of minor forms, including Davis, offers a lens for understanding brevity as a mode of value rather than lack Farrant, M. W. (2024). For a dissertation on silence, this reframes omission as an economy: a small form concentrates

effect and demands interpretive attention. It also counters the evaluative bias that treats micro-fiction as lesser than longer narrative.

These sources converge on several premises: silence can be an aesthetic stance Sontag, S. (1969), ellipsis has formal and historical significance Toner, A. (2015), narratology provides vocabulary for omitted time and information Genette, G. (1980), microfiction theory explains why brevity amplifies inference Nelles, W. (2012), Roche-Jacques, S. (2024)., stylistics provides tools for analyzing micro-features Leech, G. N., & Short, M. (2007), Simpson, P. (2004), and Davis scholarly debates demonstrates how grammar, voice, cognition and translation shape her minimalism (Clark2020, Boorman, L. (2023), Evans, J. (2016). The dissertation builds to argue that Davis's omissions form a system that can be described and interpreted rigorously.

Conclusion

This chapter has established the scholarly base and theoretical tools required to analyze silence and ellipsis in Davis. Background studies explain why omission is central to contemporary short fiction; conceptual definitions clarify the layered meanings of 'silence' and 'ellipsis'. In addition, silence theory to support evidence-based close reading. Chapter Two will apply this framework to selected stories in *The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis* (FSG, 2009), using page-verified textual evidence to demonstrate how micro-formal choices produce interpretive pressure and how omission functions as a coherent stylistic system.

Interpretive ethics and the temptation to fill gaps. When a text withholds, critics may be tempted to supply missing psychology or backstory. Stylistics provides a safeguard by grounding claims in linguistic evidence punctuation patterns, modal verbs, repetition rather than speculation. Narratology provides another safeguard by distinguishing what is omitted structurally from what is inferred interpretively. Together, these methods allow ambiguity to be treated as meaningful while keeping analysis accountable to the text.

Realism versus form in minimalism. Minimalism is often associated with understated realism, where silence registers what social life suppresses: discomfort, class tension, gendered expectation, or private vulnerability. Yet minimalism can also be formal and metalinguistic, using reduction to foreground language itself. Davis frequently inhabits the border between these modes, combining ordinary situations with explicit attention to grammar, definition, and textual design. This hybridity is one reason her silence and ellipsis require both narratological and stylistic approaches.

Microfiction as genre versus continuum. If microfiction is merely a shorter short story, omission appears as reduction. If microfiction is qualitatively distinct, omission appears as a constructive principle that produces form-specific effects. Nelles and Roche-Jacques strengthen the case for distinction by showing that extreme brevity reshapes narrative mechanics and reader inference. This dissertation adopts a pragmatic position: regardless of classification, Davis's micro-texts make omission conspicuous enough that it must be analyzed as design rather than as deficiency.

CHAPTER-II. Close reading and analysis of Lydia Davis's short stories

Chapter three: Close Reading and Analysis of Lydia Davis Short Stories

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on textual analysis of Lydia Davis's five selected stories: "The Mice," "The Outing," "Odd Behavior," "Fear," and "Lost Things." The purpose is to show how silence and ellipsis operate within each story as formal and interpretive strategies. Although the five stories are very short, they do not use brevity in the same way. Each text organizes omission differently. Some suppress causal explanation, some remove narrative transition, some rely on social silence, and others transform ordinary absence into philosophical reflection.

The chapter argues that Davis's microfiction does not simply reduce narrative material. Instead, it redistributes narrative labour. The reader must infer what longer stories might explain directly. In this sense, omission becomes productive. It creates humour in "The Mice," emotional tension in "The Outing," social self-defence in "Odd Behavior," communal recognition in "Fear," and philosophical uncertainty in "Lost Things." Across the five stories, Davis uses silence not as emptiness but as a precise stylistic instrument.

Before turning to the individual stories, it is useful to state the analytical procedure used in the close readings. Each reading begins with the story's most visible form: a domestic explanation, a list, a defensive statement, a communal anecdote, or a philosophical meditation. It then identifies what the story withholds. This may be a cause, a motive, a background, a transition, or a final resolution. Finally, the reading asks how that withholding changes tone and reader participation. The method is therefore comparative as well as textual. It does not simply say that Davis leaves things out; it asks what kind of leaving-out occurs and what work it performs.

This procedure also requires caution about paraphrase. Because the stories are so short, paraphrasing them too fully can easily replace Davis's compression with a longer explanatory version that she deliberately avoids. The chapter therefore uses paraphrase as a tool, not as a substitute for the text. It describes situations and effects, but it does not pretend that the unwritten background can be recovered. The analysis remains close to the surfaces of the stories: their syntax, sequencing, narrative voice, and tonal shifts.

A second caution concerns scale. Since the five texts are very brief, small stylistic differences become important. The pronoun "we" in "Fear," the list form in "The Outing," the conditional self-defence in "Odd Behavior," the repeated qualifications in "Lost Things," and the comic speculative explanation in "The Mice" are not minor decorations. They are the mechanisms

through which the stories function. The chapter therefore treats micro-features as central evidence.

The following table summarizes the categories used in the analysis. It is not meant to reduce the stories to a fixed formula. Rather, it provides a map of the kinds of omission that the close readings will develop in fuller detail.

Story	Dominant silence	Main omission	Primary effect
The Mice	Causal and psychological	Reason for avoidance	Comic self-consciousness
The Outing	Structural	Cause, dialogue, identities	Reader reconstructs conflict
Odd Behavior	Pragmatic and social	Full context of noise	Self-defence and judgement
Fear	Ethical	Diagnosis and origin	Communal recognition
Lost Things	Epistemological	Location and personal histories	Meditation on absence

II. 1. “The Mice”: Domestic Disorder and Causal Silence

“The Mice” begins with a strange reversal of ordinary domestic expectation. Mice live in the walls, but they do not enter the kitchen. *“Mice live in our walls but do not trouble our kitchen.”*. In a conventional domestic narrative, the problem would be infestation. Davis reverses this pattern by making the absence of mice more troubling than their presence. The household is pleased that the kitchen is not disturbed, but this pleasure quickly becomes unease. The mice seem to behave as if there is something wrong with the kitchen, and this imagined judgment unsettles the human speakers. *“Although we are pleased, we are also upset, because the mice behave as though there were something wrong with our kitchen.”*

The central silence in the story is causal. The reader is never given an objective explanation for the mice’s behaviour. Instead, the narrator invents a theory. The kitchen is so untidy, so full of food and smells, that the mice are imagined as being overwhelmed by abundance. *“In fact, there is so much loose food in the kitchen I can only think the mice themselves are defeated by it.”*. This explanation is comic because it gives the mice a refined emotional life. They are not simply animals searching for food. They become creatures capable of embarrassment, discomfort, and failure. Davis therefore transfers human feelings onto mice, but she does so indirectly. The story never says that the humans are embarrassed by their own kitchen. It makes the mice carry that embarrassment.

This displacement is one of the story's main stylistic effects. The narrator appears to describe the mice, but the story quietly reveals the household's self-consciousness. The kitchen is compared with the kitchens of neighbours, which are tidier and more conventionally attractive to mice. This comparison introduces a social dimension into a private domestic space. The home becomes a site of judgment. Even pests appear to prefer the neighbours' houses. The comedy of the story depends on this absurd social reversal.

Silence also operates at the level of motive. The narrator never openly admits shame. Instead, shame appears through over-explanation. The speaker thinks too much about the mice's refusal. A simple fact becomes a problem of interpretation. Why do the mice not come in? Why do they visit other houses? What does their absence mean? These questions are not stated directly, but they shape the whole story. The silence around the speaker's own emotional investment makes the story more effective than a direct confession would be.

The kitchen itself functions as a symbolic space. It is not described as a place of warmth, order, or nourishment. It is excessive, dirty, and uncontrolled. Food is not presented as hospitality but as disorder. Yet the story does not turn this into moral criticism. Instead, it makes disorder comic by imagining that even mice cannot manage it. The result is a form of domestic absurdity. Davis makes the ordinary kitchen strange by withholding the expected narrative of invasion and replacing it with a narrative of avoidance.

The story's ellipsis is therefore not only about what is missing from the plot. It is also about what is missing from self-knowledge. The speaker does not fully understand why the mice stay away, and perhaps does not fully understand why this matters so much. The reader must infer the emotional pressure beneath the comic speculation. In this way, "The Mice" shows how Davis turns an omitted cause into a whole narrative structure.

A further point concerns the narrator's use of speculative certainty. The explanation offered for the mice's absence becomes more elaborate than the situation seems to require. This disproportion is important. The narrator is not content to accept the absence as luck. The absence must be interpreted. The result is a comic overproduction of meaning. Davis allows the reader to see how quickly the human mind turns a small domestic fact into a narrative about value, judgment, and failure.

This overproduction of meaning is also tied to the story's social imagination. The neighbours are not directly present as characters, but they structure the narrator's discomfort. Their kitchens become an implied standard against which the speaker's kitchen is measured. The mice's behaviour seems to confirm that standard. Even though animals cannot be assumed to make social

judgments, the narrator's interpretation makes them into agents of comparison. The story therefore turns domestic untidiness into a miniature social drama.

The comic force of the story depends on the gap between animal behaviour and human interpretation. Mice normally stand outside human systems of politeness and social rank. They are pests, not critics. Davis makes the scene funny by allowing the narrator to treat them almost as discriminating visitors. Yet the humour is not merely absurd. It exposes how deeply the desire for approval can operate. The household wants to be normal enough to be invaded in the ordinary way. Their exclusion by the mice becomes an inverted form of embarrassment.

The story also revises the idea of abundance. Food in the kitchen should attract the mice. Instead, abundance becomes excessive and disabling. This reversal has broader significance. In many narratives, scarcity creates desire and action. Here, too much availability prevents action. Davis turns excess into a kind of silence: the kitchen is so full that it stops the expected story from happening. The mice do not act, and their non-action produces the narrative.

Seen this way, "The Mice" is not simply a comic domestic sketch. It is a study of how absence can become socially meaningful. The story's withheld cause allows the narrator's insecurity to become visible without being directly confessed. The silence of the mice is therefore not only literal non-appearance; it is a mirror in which the household sees an image of its own disorder.

II. 2. "The Outing": List Form and Narrative Ellipsis

"The Outing" is one of the most compressed stories in the group. It presents a sequence of emotional and physical moments without naming characters, explaining the conflict, or giving any dialogue. *"An outburst of anger near the road, a refusal to speak on the path, a silence in the pine woods, a silence across the old railroad bridge, an attempt to be friendly in the water, a refusal to end the argument on the flat stones, a cry of anger on the steep bank of dirt, a weeping among the bushes."*

The story moves through locations such as the road, path, woods, bridge, water, stones, bank, and bushes. Alongside this spatial movement, it records anger, refusal, silence, attempted friendliness, renewed argument, and weeping.

The story is almost entirely elliptical. It does not tell us who is involved, what caused the quarrel, why the outing matters, or what happens afterward. Yet it still feels like a complete narrative. This is because the sequence of phrases creates an emotional arc. The reader can sense the movement from conflict to withdrawal, from temporary reconciliation to renewed

conflict, and finally to tears. Davis gives the emotional markers but withholds the explanatory frame.

The list form is central to the story's effect. Each phrase is placed beside the others without full syntactic development. The repeated structure creates rhythm, but it also creates distance. Events are not dramatized as scenes. They are recorded as traces. The story resembles a memory reduced to its emotional landmarks. The result is both intimate and impersonal. It feels like the outline of a private conflict, but the people involved remain unidentified.

Silence appears explicitly in the story, but it also structures the whole text. The two moments of silence are part of the quarrel, yet the story itself is silent about almost everything that would normally explain the quarrel. This double silence is important. On the level of the represented event, silence marks refusal to speak. On the level of form, silence marks refusal to narrate fully. Davis aligns emotional silence with narrative omission.

The locations also matter. The story takes place outdoors, and movement through landscape replaces psychological exposition. The path, woods, bridge, water, stones, bank, and bushes create a journey. Yet the journey does not lead to resolution. The natural setting does not heal the conflict. Instead, it becomes the background against which emotional failure is registered. The outing, which might usually suggest leisure or pleasure, becomes a map of tension.

Narratologically, "The Outing" compresses story-time into a single chain of signs. We can imagine that the events take place over several hours, but the telling is reduced to one brief structure. This creates a strong contrast between duration and discourse. Much more happens in the implied story than appears in the narrated text. The gap between these two levels is where the reader's interpretive work takes place.

The absence of names also universalizes the conflict. The story does not ask us to judge one person more than another. It does not provide enough evidence for that. Instead, it presents the form of a quarrel: anger, refusal, silence, attempted repair, renewed refusal, collapse. The story becomes less about a specific event and more about the pattern of emotional breakdown. In this way, Davis's ellipsis gives the story both precision and openness.

The story's list form also affects responsibility. Because no character is named, the reader cannot easily assign blame. The text does not identify who begins the quarrel, who refuses to speak, or who attempts friendliness. This anonymity matters. It prevents the story from becoming a moral case in which one person is clearly right and the other wrong. Instead, the focus falls on the pattern of conflict itself. The quarrel becomes a sequence of emotional positions rather than a dispute with an explicit content.

The absence of dialogue is especially striking. A story about an argument would normally include spoken words, but Davis removes them. What remains are the consequences of speech or failed speech: anger, refusal, silence, attempted repair, and weeping. This makes the story less about what was said than about what speech does to a relationship. The reader does not need the exact words to recognise the emotional structure. In fact, the missing words may make the structure more recognizable because it is not limited to one specific dispute.

The outdoor setting sharpens this effect. An outing usually implies movement away from domestic pressure, perhaps toward leisure, fresh air, or shared pleasure. Davis reverses that expectation. The movement through landscape does not free the figures from conflict. Instead, the landscape becomes a sequence of places where the conflict changes shape. Road, path, woods, bridge, water, stones, bank, and bushes do not function as scenic description in a rich pictorial sense. They are markers of emotional progression.

The bridge is particularly suggestive, even without symbolic explanation. A bridge often implies crossing or connection, but in the story it is associated with continued silence. The water offers an attempted friendliness, but that attempt fails to end the dispute. The landscape therefore supplies possible images of transition, yet the emotional situation resists transition. This tension between movement and emotional stuckness gives the story much of its force.

Because the story is so short, its rhythm also becomes memorable. The repetition of phrases produces a feeling of inevitability. One emotional movement follows another, not through detailed causation but through accumulation. The reader experiences the quarrel as a chain of states, each one leading to the next without explanation. This is one of Davis's clearest examples of narrative ellipsis as structure. The story is made almost entirely of what remains after explanation has been removed.

II. 3. "Odd Behavior": Silence, Noise, and Self-Justification

"Odd Behavior" is built around a defensive statement. *"You see how circumstances are to blame. I am not really an odd person if I put more and more small pieces of shredded kleenex in my ears and tie a scarf around my head: when I lived alone I had all the silence I needed."* The narrator insists that circumstances are responsible for behaviour that might seem strange. The behaviour itself is unusual: placing small pieces of shredded tissue in the ears and tying a scarf around the head. Yet the narrator immediately reframes it. The problem is not oddness of character but the loss of silence.

The story depends on an implied social audience. The opening phrase “You see” creates the sense that the narrator is explaining herself to someone who may misunderstand or judge her. This direct address is important because it turns the story into a miniature act of self-defence. The narrator is not simply describing behaviour. She is trying to control its interpretation.

The silence in the story is both literal and social. Literally, the narrator needs quiet. The tissues and scarf are practical attempts to create a barrier against noise. Socially, however, the need for silence has become difficult to explain. The narrator must justify why she behaves in a way that others may find excessive or irrational. The story therefore stages a conflict between private necessity and public appearance.

The final clause is crucial because it reveals the missing background. “*when I lived alone I had all the silence I needed.*”. The narrator once lived alone and had the silence she needed. The story does not explain what changed. It does not identify who now shares the space, what noises are being made, or why the narrator has no other solution. This omission keeps the story open. The reader can imagine domestic crowding, social obligation, neighbour noise, family pressure, or simply the exhaustion of having no private space. Davis does not specify because the precise cause matters less than the experience of being deprived of quiet.

The story’s humour is gentle but uneasy. The image of someone using shredded tissue and a scarf to block sound is comic, yet the explanation gives it emotional seriousness. Davis often works in this space between comedy and distress. The behaviour appears excessive until the reader understands the pressure behind it. Even then, the story does not fully normalize the behaviour. It leaves the reader between sympathy and uncertainty.

Stylistically, “Odd Behavior” is shaped by a single movement from accusation to explanation. The title itself already suggests judgment. It labels the behaviour before the narrator can defend herself. The text then answers that label. In doing so, it shows how language can impose social categories on private suffering. To call something “odd” is to view it from outside. The narrator tries to shift the view from outside judgment to inside experience.

The story’s ellipsis is therefore pragmatic. It concerns what cannot be fully communicated in social life. The narrator gives an explanation, but the explanation remains incomplete. The deeper condition is not only noise, but the difficulty of making others understand what silence means to someone who needs it. Davis turns this difficulty into the whole structure of the story.

The title “Odd Behavior” frames the narrator before the narrator can speak. It names the conduct from the outside. This matters because the story then becomes an answer to a label. The narrator does not begin from neutral description but from a position of defence. The word

“odd” belongs to social judgment; the narrative voice tries to transform that judgment into understanding. Davis thus compresses a whole social encounter into the movement from title to explanation.

The materials mentioned in the story are also significant. The narrator does not use professional equipment or a socially approved solution. She uses small improvised materials from domestic life: tissue and a scarf. These objects make the behaviour seem makeshift and vulnerable. They suggest that the narrator has limited control over her environment and must construct silence from whatever is available. The comedy of the image therefore rests on practical desperation.

The story’s final reference to having once lived alone gives the entire piece a temporal structure. There is a before and an after, but the middle is missing. The reader knows that the narrator once had enough silence and now does not. What changed remains unsaid. This missing transition is crucial because it allows the story to stand for many possible losses of privacy: marriage, family, urban noise, shared housing, aging, dependency, or social obligation. Davis does not name one cause because the story is about the condition of lost quiet rather than a single biographical event.

The narrator’s self-defence also exposes the limits of explanation. She can explain that circumstances are to blame, but she cannot guarantee that the listener will understand. The story’s second-person address makes this uncertainty visible. The listener may be sympathetic, skeptical, or imagined. In all cases, the narrator’s speech is shaped by the expectation of misunderstanding. This is pragmatic silence: some part of private need remains difficult to translate into public reason.

“Odd Behavior” therefore turns a tiny social embarrassment into a broader reflection on privacy. Silence is not merely the absence of sound. It is a condition that allows the self to remain intact. When silence disappears, the narrator must physically defend the boundary of the self. The oddness of the behaviour becomes less important than the social world that makes such behaviour necessary.

II. 4. “Fear”: Communal Recognition and Ethical Silence

“Fear” begins with a repeated event. Nearly every morning, a woman runs from her house in panic, crying that there is an emergency. *“Emergency, emergency,”* The community responds by holding her until she calms down. The neighbours know that no real emergency has taken place, yet they understand her fear because they recognize the same impulse in themselves.

The most important silence in this story is diagnostic. Davis does not explain the woman's fear through biography, illness, trauma, or social cause. The reader is not told why she panics, when it began, or whether it will end. This omission is ethically significant. A more conventional story might explain the woman in order to make her behaviour understandable. Davis withholds that explanation and instead shifts attention to the community's response.

The phrase "*we know she is making it up; nothing has really happened to her.*" is important because it establishes collective knowledge. The community knows that the emergency is not factual. However, this knowledge does not produce dismissal. It produces compassion. The neighbours understand because they have also felt the urge to cry out. The woman's fear is false in one sense, but true in another. Nothing has happened, yet the emotion is real.

This distinction gives the story its moral force. Davis separates factual truth from emotional truth without making either simple. The woman is "making it up," but the story does not treat this as deception in a cruel sense. It presents fear as something that may exceed visible cause. The community's care depends on recognizing that fear does not always need an external event to be overwhelming.

Pronouns are central to the story's movement. It begins with "a certain woman," which creates distance. Then it moves to "one of us," and finally to the recognition that almost everyone has felt something similar. This shift changes the reader's position. At first, the woman may seem exceptional. By the end, she becomes representative. Her panic reveals a shared human possibility.

The story also uses repetition as social ritual. The woman runs out, cries for help, someone holds her, and calm is restored. This pattern happens nearly every morning. The repetition could be read as absurd, but Davis presents it with restraint. The neighbours continue to respond. Their repeated care becomes a quiet form of communal ethics.

The silence in "Fear" is also a refusal of ridicule. Davis could easily turn the woman into a comic figure. Her white face, flapping coat, and repeated cry create a vivid image. Yet the story's final movement prevents mockery. It asks readers to recognize themselves in her. The withheld explanation protects the woman from being reduced to a case or a joke.

In this sense, "Fear" shows how silence can be compassionate. Not every gap needs to be filled. Not every distress needs to be explained before it is taken seriously. Davis uses omission to create a space in which fear is understood as communal rather than merely individual.

The community voice is one of the most important features of "Fear." Unlike "Odd Behavior," which speaks from a single defensive position, "Fear" speaks through a collective "we."

This collective voice creates a moral atmosphere. The community is not idealised in a sentimental way, but it is represented as capable of recognition. The neighbours know that the woman's emergency is not factual, yet they respond to her emotional reality. Their knowledge does not become a weapon against her.

The repeated morning event also gives the story a ritual quality. Panic occurs, someone responds, and calm is restored. The pattern is practical rather than ceremonial, but it has the shape of a ritual because it is repeated and collectively understood. This repetition makes fear part of communal life rather than an isolated private abnormality. Davis's restraint is important here. She does not dramatize the scene with intense psychological detail. She lets the repeated structure carry the emotional weight.

The story's ethics depends on the difference between invention and falsehood. The community knows that the woman is making up the emergency, but the story does not treat her simply as a liar. What she invents is a form that her fear can take. The word emergency is factually wrong, but emotionally accurate. Her body and voice behave as if there were danger. The community responds to that condition rather than to the factual status of the claim.

This distinction has wider implications for reading Davis. Her stories often present statements that are not straightforwardly reliable or unreliable. The narrator of "The Mice" may be wrong about the mice, but the wrong explanation reveals a true insecurity. The speaker of "Lost Things" may not know where the objects are, but the uncertainty produces genuine thought. In "Fear," the woman's claim is untrue as report but true as affect. Davis is interested in this mixed zone, where language fails as fact but succeeds as symptom.

The silence around diagnosis is therefore not a lack of seriousness. It is the source of the story's seriousness. A diagnostic label could give the reader a way to distance the woman. Davis refuses that distance. The reader remains with the community, holding the woman until fear subsides. The story's brevity intensifies this ethical demand because there is no subplot or commentary to dilute it.

II. 5. "Lost Things": Epistemological Silence and the Problem of Absence

"Lost Things" is the most openly philosophical of the five stories.

"They are lost, but also not lost but somewhere in the world. Most of them are small, though two are larger, one a coat and one a dog. Of the small things, one is a certain ring, one a certain button. They are lost from me and where I am, but they are also not gone."

It begins from a simple idea: things are lost. But the story immediately complicates this statement. The objects are lost to the speaker, but they still exist somewhere in the world. Among them are small objects such as a ring and a button, as well as larger losses such as a coat and a dog.

The story's central question is what it means for something to be lost. Davis separates personal possession from objective existence. A lost object is absent from the speaker's location, but it has not disappeared. It may be present to someone else, or present only to itself. The story therefore turns a practical problem into an ontological one. Loss is not treated as simple nonexistence. It is treated as displacement.

The repeated words and structures create a careful rhythm of qualification. The story repeatedly revises its own terms. The objects are lost, but not lost. They are gone from the speaker, but not gone from the world. This movement of correction gives the impression of thought unfolding in real time. The speaker is not narrating an event so much as testing the language of loss.

The silence in "Lost Things" is epistemological. The speaker does not know where the objects are. But this lack of knowledge does not mean the objects have ceased to be. The story explores the gap between not knowing and nonexistence. This distinction is small but powerful. It changes loss from an emotional fact into a philosophical problem.

At the same time, the story does not abandon emotion. The objects are "certain" objects, not random examples. This word suggests personal attachment without explaining it. The ring and the button matter, but the story does not tell us why. The coat and dog matter too, but their histories are withheld. This restraint prevents the story from becoming sentimental. Davis does not narrate the pain of losing the dog or the ring. Instead, she allows feeling to enter through the speaker's repeated effort to think clearly.

The story also questions the possessive nature of loss. Something is lost "from me," but that does not mean it is lost absolutely. The speaker's world is not the whole world. This is a modest but radical shift. The self is decentered. The lost thing may have a continued existence beyond the speaker's knowledge, possession, or grief.

Stylistically, "Lost Things" depends on ordinary vocabulary. Words such as "lost," "there," "somewhere," and "where I am" are simple. Yet Davis makes them unstable by repetition. The more the story repeats them, the less obvious they become. This is one of Davis's distinctive techniques: she takes common language and presses on it until its hidden complexity appears.

The ending does not resolve the losses. The ring and button are not found. The dog does not return. But the story reaches a different kind of closure. It clarifies the terms of absence. To be lost is not necessarily to be gone. It is to be separated from the speaker's place, knowledge, or reach. This makes the story both comforting and unsettling. The lost things continue, but not for the one who has lost them.

The objects listed in "Lost Things" are ordinary, but they are not equal. A button and a ring belong to the realm of small possessions; a coat is larger and more visibly practical; a dog introduces living attachment. Davis does not expand these differences, but their presence complicates the meditation. Losing a button is not the same as losing a dog, yet the story places them within a shared problem of absence. This grouping allows the philosophical question to cover both trivial and emotionally serious losses.

The repeated distinction between being absent from the speaker and existing somewhere else also unsettles the possessive self. The speaker is forced to admit that the world exceeds personal location. Something can be gone from me without being gone altogether. This recognition is intellectually clear but emotionally difficult. The story's calm phrasing does not erase loss; it exposes the limited authority of the person who loses.

The phrase "somewhere in the world," or its equivalent idea, gives the story a spatial imagination. Lostness becomes a problem of geography and relation rather than disappearance. The thing has moved outside the speaker's known map. In practical terms this may be frustrating. In philosophical terms it is humbling. The object continues in a world that is not organized around the speaker's possession of it.

The dog is especially important because it tests the limits of the story's logic. A lost button may be present only to itself in a purely physical sense. A dog, however, may experience its own separation, fear, or new attachment. Davis does not explore this difference openly, but the inclusion of the dog introduces an ethical pressure. The lost thing is not always a thing. Sometimes it is a living being with its own relation to the world. This complication deepens the story without expanding it into narrative.

"Lost Things" therefore shows how Davis uses repetition not to simplify but to worry a concept. The story circles around the word lost because the word is insufficient. It carries personal grief, practical inconvenience, spatial ignorance, and philosophical uncertainty all at once. The silence of the story lies in the histories it does not tell, but the thinking it does tell is precise. Loss becomes not an event but a relation between self, object, place, and knowledge.

II. 6. Comparative Discussion: Five Modes of Silence

Reading the five stories together shows that Davis does not use silence in only one way. Each story develops a different mode of omission.

In “The Mice,” silence is mainly causal and psychological. The unexplained absence of mice becomes the basis for comic speculation and hidden self-judgment. The story turns non-arrival into narrative event.

In “The Outing,” silence is structural. The story omits background, dialogue, character identity, and transition. What remains is a sequence of emotional signs. The reader must build the narrative from fragments.

In “Odd Behavior,” silence is pragmatic and social. The narrator needs literal quiet, but also struggles against social misunderstanding. The story is shaped by the pressure to explain private discomfort to an imagined judging audience.

In “Fear,” silence is ethical. Davis withholds diagnosis and cause, allowing fear to be understood through communal recognition rather than explanation. The story refuses to reduce panic to either fact or falsehood.

In “Lost Things,” silence is epistemological and philosophical. The speaker does not know where the lost objects are, but this lack of knowledge opens a meditation on existence, possession, and absence.

These modes overlap, but they are not identical. Davis’s achievement lies in making each miniature form produce a distinct kind of pressure. The stories are unified by brevity, but they are differentiated by the function of their gaps.

II. 7. Reader Participation and Interpretive Pressure

Because Davis withholds so much, the reader becomes unusually active. In “The Mice,” the reader must decide how seriously to take the narrator’s theory about the mice. In “The Outing,” the reader reconstructs an entire quarrel from a list. In “Odd Behavior,” the reader imagines the circumstances that make silence necessary. In “Fear,” the reader must hold together the fact that nothing has happened and the truth that fear is still real. In “Lost Things,” the reader follows the speaker’s careful distinction between disappearance and displacement.

This readerly work is not optional. It is built into the stories. Davis gives fragments, but the fragments are arranged with enough precision to guide interpretation. Her silences are therefore structured rather than vague. They are not empty blanks. They are invitations to infer.

This is why the stories remain powerful despite their brevity. They do not provide less meaning. They provide less explanation. The difference is important. Meaning is produced through the relation between what is said and what is withheld.

II. 8. Synthesis Summary of the Close Readings

The five close readings show that Davis's stories are organized by different kinds of missingness. It is tempting to describe all five simply as minimalist, but the term minimalist is too general unless it is supported by attention to form. "The Mice" is not minimalist in the same way as "The Outing." The first develops a comic explanation; the second removes explanation almost entirely. "Odd Behavior" is not silent in the same way as "Fear." The first speaks defensively because silence has been lost; the second withholds diagnosis so that communal care can remain central.

A useful way to summarize the findings is to ask what each story makes the reader do. "The Mice" makes the reader interpret an over-interpretation. "The Outing" makes the reader build a plot from emotional fragments. "Odd Behavior" makes the reader infer a social context behind a defensive voice. "Fear" makes the reader respond ethically without causal knowledge. "Lost Things" makes the reader follow a conceptual distinction until ordinary loss becomes strange. These reading tasks are not accidental. They are the result of Davis's formal decisions.

The stories also show that silence can produce different tones. It can be comic, as when the mice's absence becomes a social insult. It can be painful, as when the list in "The Outing" moves toward tears. It can be anxious, as in the narrator's justification in "Odd Behavior." It can be compassionate, as in the communal response in "Fear." It can be contemplative, as in "Lost Things." The same general principle of omission therefore produces a wide tonal range.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that silence and ellipsis function as central stylistic strategies in the five selected stories. In "The Mice," omission creates comic insecurity around domestic disorder. In "The Outing," ellipsis compresses conflict into list form. In "Odd Behavior," silence appears as both a physical need and a social problem. In "Fear," withheld explanation produces ethical sympathy. In "Lost Things," absence becomes a philosophical question about location and being.

The five stories demonstrate that Davis's microfiction does not depend on plot expansion or psychological exposition. It depends on compression, implication, and formal restraint. Her

stories are short, but they are not slight. They make readers attend to small shifts in wording, structure, and silence.

CHAPTER-III. Narratological Ellipsis and Modes of Silence in Selected Stories

Chapter Three: Narratological Ellipsis and Modes of Silence in Selected Stories

Introduction

This chapter describes the research design, corpus, analytical framework, and procedures used to examine the stylistic function of silence and ellipsis in Lydia Davis's contemporary short fiction. Because the work is grounded in close reading and language-based analysis, the methodology is qualitative and interpretive. At the same time, it is systematic: the study applies a repeatable coding scheme to identify different kinds of omission) and to connect those omissions to demonstrable reader effects. The methodological aim is to produce accountable interpretations rather than impressionistic claims, especially because "silence" can tempt critics to fill gaps with speculation.

III. 1.1. Research design and epistemological stance

The dissertation adopts a qualitative research design based on textual interpretation. Close reading assumes that meaning is produced through patterned formal choices and that these patterns can be analyzed by attending carefully to language, structure, and context. In a project centered on silence, an explicit epistemological stance is necessary: the study does not treat the critic's imagination as evidence. Instead, it treats omission as a textual phenomenon that can be located at specific points (an omitted causal link, an abrupt temporal leap, a fragmentary clause, an ellipsis mark, a paragraph break, or a refusal of explanatory commentary). Interpretation proceeds by showing how these omissions constrain and guide reader inference. Where the text remains ambiguous, ambiguity is treated as a finding rather than as a defect. This stance aligns with narratological accounts of narrative time and information distribution Genette, G. (1980). and with stylistic accounts of punctuation, syntax, and layout as meaning-bearing resources Leech, G. N., & Short, M. (2007), Simpson, P. (2004).

III. 1.2. Corpus, editions, and comparative rationale

The primary corpus is drawn from *Davis, L. (2009)*. The collected stories of Lydia Davis. *Farrar, Straus and Giroux*. This edition is used as the base for story selection and for page-verified quotations in the analytical chapters. The collected volume is methodologically appropriate because it provides breadth across decades and modes of short writing, enabling the research to test whether silence and ellipsis appear as isolated effects or as a coherent authorial

system. A secondary comparative text is *Davis, L. (2014). Can't and won't: Stories. Farrar, Straus and Giroux*. The comparative aim is limited and sharpening: it is not to create a second full corpus but to test whether omission intensifies or shifts in later microfictional practice. This comparative rationale is guided by scholarly debates on late style and “less time,” which links late-career short fiction to compression and concentration of technique Mitchell, L. C. (2019).

III. 1.3. Sampling strategy and story selection criteria

The study uses purposive sampling. Rather than attempting exhaustive coverage of the collected volume, it selects stories that foreground omission in different and comparable ways. Selection follows four criteria:

Identifiable narrative omission (missing backstory, omitted events, suppressed causal links, or abrupt temporal leaps):

Stylistic evidence of silence (fragmentation, list structure, typographic sparseness, or punctuation that signals interruption or trailing thought):

Variation of form (argumentative, observational, institutional, aphoristic) so that findings reflect a system rather than a single technique:

Suitability for page-verified citation in the 2009 edition. This purposive design supports comparative insight: the same analytic categories can be applied across different textual architectures.

III. 1.4. Units of analysis and levels of description

Because the dissertation investigates both narrative structure and micro-linguistic form, it uses multiple units of analysis. At the macro level, each story is analyzed as a complete artefact with a specific information economy and temporal design, the unit is the textual segment paragraph, list item, or definitional block where typographic silence and segmentation often operate. At the micro level, the unit is the sentence or clause: modal verbs, hedges, fragments, repetition, and punctuation. Methodological accountability requires cross-level explanation: the analysis does not merely list micro-features; it explains how micro-features scale up into narrative effects such as ambiguity, compression, and reader participation.

III. 1.5. Analytical framework: narratology, stylistics, and silence theory

The analytical framework integrates three complementary approaches. Narratology provides vocabulary for the structural role of omission in narrative time and information control. Genette's concept of ellipsis (omitted story-time) enables the study to identify where Davis compresses duration and where she refuses transitional narration Genette, G. (1980). Stylistics provides tools for analyzing how omission is materialized through punctuation, syntax, cohesion, modality, repetition, and layout. Leech and Short's model and Simpson's stylistic toolkit justify treating these micro-features as interpretively central, especially in very short forms Leech, G. N., & Short, M. (2007), Simpson, P. (2004). Silence theory provides an interpretive vocabulary for why non-completion can be aesthetically and ethically meaningful; Sontag's account of an "aesthetics of silence" frames refusal and reduction as expressive strategies Sontag, S. (1969). The combined framework allows the dissertation to describe omission precisely, show how it is built on the page, and interpret its stakes.

III. 1.6. Coding scheme: a taxonomy of silence and ellipsis

To ensure systematic analysis, the dissertation applies a five-part coding scheme.

Narrative ellipsis: omitted time/events and suppressed causal links at discourse level Genette, G. (1980).

Syntactic ellipsis: recoverable elements omitted within sentences, including fragments and truncated constructions.

Typographic silence: white space and segmentation paragraph breaks, list formats, line breaks that cue interpretive pause.

Pragmatic silence: what is not said socially avoidance, formulaic speech, withheld motives, narratorial restraint..

Epistemological silence: limits of knowing and defining unstable claims, uncertain reasoning, and the inadequacy of lexical authority. Each story is annotated for these codes, enabling comparison of both frequency and co-occurrence: which omissions tend to appear together and what reader effects they produce.

III. 1.7. Annotation procedure and analytic steps

The analysis follows a repeatable five-step procedure for each story.

Step 1: write a one-sentence summary that avoids replacing the story's omissions with invented exposition.

Step 2: identify narrative ellipses missing transitions, omitted causal links, leaps into states without narrated precipitating events.

Step 3: identify stylistic silence punctuation patterns of interruption, fragments, repetition, hedging, and typographic segmentation.

Step 4: identify pragmatic and epistemological silences unsaid dialogue, withheld interpretation, uncertain claims, unstable definitions.

Step 5: the reader effects: what must be inferred, what remains ambiguous, and what the story achieves by withholding. Where quotations are used, they are short and linked directly to the coded feature (a mark, a modal verb, a fragment, or a list header).

III. 1.8. Validity, interpretive accountability, and negative checking

Qualitative literary analysis cannot generate statistical reliability, but it can generate interpretive accountability through transparent procedures. The dissertation uses three safeguards. First, it uses a repeatable coding scheme so that claims about silence and ellipsis are traceable categories rather than impressions. Second, it triangulates interpretations: when a feature supports multiple readings, the analysis considers plausible alternatives and explains why a given reading is strongest. Third, it uses negative checking: for each story, the analysis asks what would count as evidence that omission is not central (for example, explicit causality, direct moral framing, or fully explained motives). This prevents the topic from becoming self-fulfilling and strengthens claims when omission is demonstrably doing work.

III. 2.1. Taxonomy result: silence as a layered system

The first major finding is that Davis's "silence" is not a single technique but a layered system combining narratological ellipsis, syntactic ellipsis, typographic silence, pragmatic silence, and epistemological silence. The stories frequently compress narrative time while simultaneously shaping reading rhythm through fragmentation and punctuation. In addition, they often stage social situations in which speech is constrained or formulaic and cognitive states in which certainty cannot be secured. The overall result is structural: Davis's short fiction achieves intensity by layering omissions across levels rather than relying on one gap.

III. 2.2. Narrative ellipsis: compression of time and causal bridges

Across the corpus, narrative ellipsis is the dominant engine of compression. Many stories omit transitional events that would connect a situation to its causes or consequences. Davis often presents a state emotional, cognitive, social and requires the reader to infer missing narrative bridges. In ‘*Break It Down*,’ discourse replaces narrated scenes with calculation, omitting the relationship’s episodes and presenting only the attempt to measure loss, the reader reconstructs the missing history because the text refuses to narrate it Davis, “*Break It Down*”. In ‘*Suddenly Afraid*,’ the text leaps into dread without causal build-up, producing a jump-cut into vulnerability Davis, “*Suddenly Afraid*”. In both cases, ellipsis is not merely shortening; it is mimetic, representing how emotions and fears may arrive without narratable justification.

III. 2.3. Epistemological silence: uncertainty as a formal condition

A second major result is the prominence of epistemological silence: stories that stage uncertainty as a formal condition rather than as a problem to be solved by plot. In “*How I Know What I Know*” the discourse is organized around claims that remain unstable; knowledge appears as a sequence of provisional positions rather than as settled conclusion Davis, “*How I Know What I Know*”. Stylistically, epistemological silence is marked by qualification, hedging, repetition, and implied counterclaims. The reader witnesses thought in motion and encounters the limits of justification. This supports the dissertation claim that omission in Davis is often cognitive: the story is not about what happened but about what can be said to be known.

III. 2.4. Typographic silence: segmentation, lists, and the archive effect

A third finding concerns typographic silence and segmented forms. Davis frequently uses list structures, discrete blocks, and white space to replace conventional narrative continuity. In “*Samuel Johnson Is Indignant*,” the rhetoric of complaint implies a broader social world without narrating it; the condensed, list-like form functions satirically by presuming recognition of grievance genres (Davis, “*Samuel Johnson Is Indignant*”). In “*We Miss You*: A Study of Get-Well Letters from a Class of Fourth-Grade Children,’ segmentation isolates formulaic phrases so that the gap between institutional language and affect becomes visible (Davis, “*We Miss You...*”). The result is an “archive effect”: the story is organized as a set of specimens rather than as a sequence of scenes, and white space becomes a pause where the reader senses what cannot be directly expressed.

III. 2.5. Pragmatic silence: institutional and social constraints on speech

A fourth finding is that many of Davis's silences are pragmatic and social. They emerge from conventions of politeness, institutional phrasing, and formulaic speech. In '*We Miss You...*,' expressions of care perform social duty while revealing their inadequacy; the most intense emotion often resides in the mismatch between the formula and the situation that calls for it. This is pragmatic silence: speech itself produces silence when it is constrained by convention. The analysis treats this as a stylistic function rather than as a moral judgement. Davis's work shows that silence can be generated by speech that cannot, or must not, say everything it means.

III. 2.6. Metalinguistic silence: definition, naming, and lexical authority

A fifth finding is the role of metalinguistic silence stories that treat language as the object of narrative and expose gaps in definition and naming. '*The Old Dictionary*' stages definitional instability and historical contingency, producing a silence inside language: a gap between the word and what it claims to capture Davis, "*The Old Dictionary*". This finding supports the dissertation's English Civilization framing because dictionaries and standard forms are cultural institutions of authority. Davis's story does not merely describe a dictionary; it demonstrates the limits of definitional mastery and the way authority can fail to stabilize lived meaning.

III. 2.7. Object microfiction: defamiliarised attention and the unsaid body

A sixth finding concerns object-focused microfiction, where extreme brevity produces conceptual pressure by refusing context. In '*Hand*,' reduction forces attention onto the object and onto implied questions of agency, embodiment, and selfhood Davis, "*Hand*". The story's silence lies in what it refuses to supply backstory, scene and motivation so that the reader must infer the conceptual frame that makes the object significant. This demonstrates a key microfiction function: omission becomes defamiliarisation, and the absence of context produces density rather than thinness.

III. 2.8. Ethical non-closure: refusal of explanatory moral frames

A seventh result is ethical non-closure. Davis frequently refuses a stabilizing moral commentary, leaving readers to judge without authorial instruction. Ethical non-closure often co-occurs with narrative ellipsis and typographic silence: when the story omits causal bridges and refuses

interpretation, it produces an open ethical field. This aligns with modern silence theory that treats non-completion as expressive and ethically charged rather than as a failure Sontag, S. (1969). In the corpus, non-closure functions as a technique of respect for complexity: the story refuses to reduce experience to a lesson.

III. 2.9. Comparative results: Collected Stories (2009) and Can't and Won't (2014)

The comparative analysis suggests an intensification of omission in later microfictional practice. In “*Can't and Won't*”, Davis frequently relies on sharper segmentation and shorter transitions, producing a stronger sense of “less time” consistent with late-style concentration Mitchell, L. C. (2019). The result is not that the later collection introduces omission, but that it emphasizes omission as an overt organizing principle, moving even closer to aphoristic and parabolic forms. This comparative finding remains provisional until final page-verified citations are inserted, but it supports the dissertation’s broader claim that omission functions as a coherent stylistic strategy and can be intensified through late-career concentration.

Conclusion

Overall, the results demonstrate that silence and ellipsis in Davis are structured devices rather than gaps caused by brevity. They compress narrative time, stage uncertainty, reorganize narrative through segmented and list forms, expose the limits of institutional language, and critique lexical authority. Most importantly, they transform the reader into an active participant: meaning emerges in the space between what is written and what must be inferred. These findings prepare the subsequent discussion chapter, which interprets why omission has become a privileged mode in contemporary Anglophone short fiction and how Davis’s work exemplifies this shift.

Finally, the results highlight why micro-features matter. In longer fiction, plot and character development can stabilize interpretation. In microfiction, stabilization often comes from small cues: a repeated phrase, a modal verb, an abrupt punctuation mark, or a list header that frames genre. The results therefore justify the stylistic method: Davis’s stories demand analysis at the level of punctuation, modality, and segmentation because those features carry narrative weight.

Co-occurrence patterns reinforce the “system” claim. Narrative ellipsis frequently co-occurs with epistemological silence: when a story omits events, it often also omits the grounds for certainty, producing inference under uncertainty. Typographic silence frequently co-occurs with pragmatic silence: segmented forms isolate conventional phrases, making their limitations

visible. These patterns suggest that Davis orchestrates absences across levels, rather than relying on one form of minimalism.

The findings also show thematic clustering. Stories about knowledge, definition, and naming foreground epistemological and metalinguistic silence; stories about care, politeness, and institutional phrasing foreground pragmatic silence; stories about fear foreground narratological jump-cuts. This thematic clustering supports the claim that omission is functional rather than random: Davis withholds where withholding makes the reader experience uncertainty, constraint, or sudden exposure..

Conclusion

This dissertation has explored the role of omission, ellipsis, and silence in contemporary Anglophone short fiction, arguing that absence functions not as a lack of meaning but as a deliberate narrative strategy that shapes interpretation, structure, and reader engagement. Through a combination of theoretical inquiry, close textual analysis, and broader literary contextualization, the study has demonstrated that silence operates as a productive formal device that guides inference, organizes narrative information, and intensifies the emotional and interpretive experience of reading.

The dissertation began by establishing a theoretical framework grounded in narratology, stylistics, and short fiction studies. It demonstrated that omission can be examined as a textual and structural phenomenon manifested through disrupted chronology, withheld information, fragmentary syntax, typographic gaps, and restrained narration. By drawing on theories of narrative time, information distribution, and stylistic minimalism, the study argued that silence is embedded within the formal organization of narrative itself rather than existing outside meaning.

The close readings undertaken in the analytical chapters revealed that narratological ellipsis and other modes of silence are central to the construction of contemporary short fiction. These texts frequently rely on gaps, ambiguity, and indirection to compel reader participation and to produce meanings that emerge through inference rather than explicit explanation. The study showed that omissions shape characterization, narrative temporality, and thematic development while simultaneously resisting interpretive closure. Ambiguity, therefore, becomes an intentional aesthetic effect rather than a narrative deficiency.

By situating these findings within the wider context of contemporary Anglophone short fiction and microfiction, the dissertation further demonstrated that omission has become a defining narrative mode in recent literary practice. Contemporary writers increasingly privilege compression, fragmentation, and minimal exposition, reflecting broader cultural and aesthetic concerns with uncertainty, discontinuity, and the limits of representation. Silence in these texts functions both as an economy of form and as a means of expressing experiences that resist complete articulation.

Ultimately, this dissertation argues that omission is fundamental to the narrative logic of contemporary short fiction. Silence structures meaning by directing attention toward what remains unsaid, thereby redistributing interpretive responsibility between text and reader. In doing so,

the study contributes to broader discussions in narratology, stylistics, and contemporary literary studies by demonstrating that absence itself can operate as a powerful meaning-bearing resource.

It also suggests avenues for future research, including comparative studies of silence across genres and literary traditions, as well as examinations of omission in emerging digital and experimental narrative forms. Such research would further illuminate the continuing significance of silence and ellipsis in modern literary expression.

Bibliographical / References

Works Cited

Boorman, Lola. "Lydia Davis's Grammatical Examples." *Twentieth-Century Literature*, vol. 69, no. 3, 2023, pp. 271–292. Duke University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1215/0041462X-10814813>.

Cardin, Bertrand. "Figures of Silence: Ellipses and Eclipses in John McGahern's Collected Stories." *Journal of the Short Story in English*, no. 40, Spring 2003, pp. 57–68. OpenEdition Journals, <https://journals.openedition.org/jsse/289>.

Clark, Robert C. "Lydia Davis's Psychological Minimalism." *Studies in the American Short Story*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2020, pp. 38–52. Penn State University Press, <https://doi.org/10.5325/studamershstor.1.1.0038>.

D'hoker, Elke. "The Irish Short Story and the Aesthetics of Silence." *Narratives of the Unspoken in Contemporary Irish Fiction*, edited by M. Teresa Caneda-Cabrera and José Carregal-Romero, Palgrave Macmillan, 2023, pp. 87–107. Springer Nature, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-30455-2_5.

Davis, Lydia. *Can't and Won't: Stories*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014.

The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

Evans, Jonathan. *The Many Voices of Lydia Davis: Translation, Rewriting, Intertextuality*. Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin, Cornell University Press, 1980.

Leech, Geoffrey, and Mick Short. *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*. 2nd ed., Pearson Longman, 2007.

Mitchell, Lee Clark. *More Time: Contemporary Short Stories and Late Style*. Oxford University Press, 2019.

Nelles, William. "Microfiction: What Makes a Very Short Story Very Short?" *Narrative*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2012, pp. 87–104. Project MUSE, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nar.2012.0002>.

Roche-Jacques, Shelley. "Flash Fiction as a Distinct Literary Form: Some Thoughts on Time, Space, and Context." *New Writing*, published online 16 Jan. 2024. Taylor & Francis, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790726.2023.2293767>.

Simpson, Paul. *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*. Routledge, 2004.

Sontag, Susan. "The Aesthetics of Silence." *Styles of Radical Will*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969.

Toner, Anne. *Ellipsis in English Literature: Signs of Omission*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.

"The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis (Table of Contents / pagination)." Göttinger 2026. <https://www.gbv.de/dms/goettingen/60367366X.pdf>.

Davis, Lydia. "Five Stories." PDF handout containing "The Mice," "The Outing," "Odd Behavior," "Fear," and "Lost Things."

Appendices

Appendix A Corpus list with story start pages (FSG 2009)

The following start pages are taken from the FSG 2009

“The five stories : The Mice,” “The Outing,” “Odd Behavior,” “Fear,” and “Lost Things.”

“Break It Down” starts p. 17

“Samuel Johnson Is Indignant” — starts p. 353

“The Old Dictionary” starts p. 374

“Hand” starts p. 530

“We Miss You: A Study of Get-Well Letters from a Class of Fourth-Grade Children”
starts p. 534

“Suddenly Afraid” starts p. 703