



Silence in Catullus (Wisconsin Studies in Classics)

By Benjamin Eldon Stevens

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Both passionate and artful, learned and bawdy, Catullus is one of the best-known and critically significant poets from classical antiquity. An intriguing aspect of his poetry that has been neglected by scholars is his interest in silence, from the pauses that shape everyday conversation to linguistic taboos and cultural suppressions and the absolute silence of death.

In *Silence in Catullus*, Benjamin Eldon Stevens offers fresh readings of this Roman poet's most important works, focusing on his purposeful evocations of silence. This deep and varied "poetics of silence" takes on many forms in Catullus's poetic corpus: underscoring the lyricism of his poetry; highlighting themes of desire, immortality-in-culture, and decay; accenting its structures and rhythms; and, Stevens suggests, even articulating underlying philosophies. Combining classical philological methods, contemporary approaches to silence in modern literature, and the most recent Catullan scholarship, this imaginative examination of Catullus offers a new interpretation of one of the ancient world's most influential and inimitable voices.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Accords much needed and long overdue attention to the many and arresting references in the Catullan poetic corpus to oral activity: from the lips and teeth to the throat and larynx, both with and without sound."—Judith P. Hallett, University of Maryland, College Park

"Stevens's multifaceted approach allows for us to begin to appreciate this understudied side of Catullus and to gain a deeper understanding of his poetics. To borrow an old dictum from the musical realm: music is not simply made by the sounds that are made; it is made by the interplay between the sounds and their intervening silences. Stevens has showed us how to hear the silences in Catullus's melody; it's up to us to listen for them."—*Bryn Mawr Classical Review*

"A valuable addition to scholarship on Catullus and Latin poetry. By calling attention to what is not, should not, or simply cannot be said in poetic speech, it reveals paradoxical but intimate relationships between the words we say and the silences surrounding them that give them meaning."—*Classical Review*

About the Author

Benjamin Eldon Stevens is a visiting assistant professor of classics at Trinity University in San Antonio.

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Joseph Felder:

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