

Prospectus for the Latin Core Lectures on ‘The Consciousness of the Book and the Origins of the Poetry Book’.

These Latin Core lectures deal with the ‘consciousness of the book’ and with the concept of ‘poetry books’ in Latin poetry. The first lecture introduces the familiar distinction between the writing and editing functions of an author and examines how these roles are combined in the production of the poetry book. I consider how the institution of libraries like that of Alexandria in the 3rd century B.C. contributed to the ‘consciousness of the book’. Next I look at works by Callimachus, Posidippus, and Meleager as paradigms of the poetry book, and demonstrate the ways in which publication of a work in book form generated or challenged concepts of genre. Set positions in a book, i.e. the beginning, middle and end, tend to be explicitly signalled, and I argue that the middle position is evidently the position to which written texts are most sensitive and is the major distinguishing feature between orally performed and written texts. Finally, I consider how paratexts, for example, titles and the *coronis*, became part of the text itself. In the 2nd lecture I look at the literary work which most perfectly instantiates the ‘consciousness of the book’ and which is often considered the prime example of the poetry book, the *Eclogues*. In this work Vergil explores various myths and images of poetic composition, and offers the reader an imaginary construction of the ‘history’ of poetry from oral improvisation in song to composition in writing and ultimately to its most developed form in the poetry book; it is a version of literary history which does not have any particular validity but lends a coherence and intelligibility to the diversity of ideas about the nature of poetry and its relationship to the external world. In the 3rd lecture I am concerned with poetry books modelled on anthologies of Greek epigrams like Horace *Odes* book 3 (and to some extent all four books) and Propertius book 3. In these two lectures I also consider how reading a poem as part of a book rather than as an individual entity affects its interpretation and how this interpretation is continuously renegotiated when the poem is read in different sequences of poems or is seen to form part of a wider pattern. The third lecture looks at wider parameters when individual books become part of a collective edition, designed as such by Horace, but fashioned as if it were the final stage of a revised collective edition by Propertius. The fourth lecture examines the position individual books of narrative and their role in larger works in the light of what we know about earlier historical writing and the editing of Homeric epic. On the Roman side, Ennius’ influence is crucial.

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