

The *Catalepton*: Conception and Misconception
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The *Catalepton* as we have it is a subset of poems in the *Appendix Vergiliana*, the loose corpus of poems found in the manuscripts of Vergil that has historically been conceived of as his juvenilia. Scholarly activity devoted to the *Catalepton* has focused on issues of their authenticity, but this paper will argue that such approaches are unproductive. The traditional theories about composition and publication rest largely on conjecture and cannot be sustained. The poems can only be viewed from the point of their appearance in the manuscripts, a perspective that actually increases their scholarly value. They reveal the way Vergil's persona, or mythos, .

Prior to Servius 'Catalepton' was not the title of a work by Vergil. Instead κατὰ λεπτόν was an adverbial phrase used by Donatus to describe the style of various poems of Vergil's. Donatus had listed *catalecton et priapea et epigrammata* among Vergil's juvenilia, a phrase that should have been transmitted as κατὰ λεπτόν et *Priapea et Epigrammata*. Vergil wrote *Priapea* and epigrams κατὰ λεπτόν—the Greek phrase being used in Latin to mean both “in detail” and “in the Neoteric style.” It is due to this error in transcription that Servius, arguably knowing nothing of the *Appendix* firsthand, treated the phrase κατὰ λεπτόν/*catalepton* as a title. Thus the idea of a separate work, a *Catalepton*, was born. The work itself does not appear until the twelfth century.

Analysis can therefore illuminate the process by which poems coalesced under the rubric of the *Catalepton* sometime between Servius and the twelfth century. Each poem must have fit the conception of what Vergilian juvenilia would have looked like. As such the poems are windows into the perception of Vergil's persona and biography in the centuries after his death. *Catalepton* 16 will provide a test case for this approach.