

Public Abstract

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Graduation Term:SP 2008

Department:Classical Studies

Degree:MA

Title:Nam mihi carmen erit Christi vitalia gesta: The Evangeliorum libri IV of Juvencus and the Evolution of Latin Epic in Late Antiquity

This thesis presents the text of Book One of the Evangeliorum libri IV of Juvencus with a facing English translation. This fourth-century poem of 3,200 hexameters and four books is one of the least studied Latin epics and the first example of so-called biblical epic from Late Antiquity. It presents a harmony of the Gospel story, beginning with the birth of John the Baptist and ending with the resurrection of Jesus, and frames it between an epic proem and epilogue. The introduction to the translation examines important details of the life of the poet and the style and context of the poem, and also synthesizes previous scholarship on Juvencus. Throughout it emphasizes the importance of classical epic in the poem and employs the epic tradition as a key to interpretation. Also included are an appendix on the manuscript tradition of the Evangeliorum libri IV and extensive notes to the translation that detail allusions to classical authors. As the first English translation of this poem, this thesis can serve as an introduction to this emerging field of scholarship on poetry in Late Antiquity, and also highlights several important larger problems, such as the relationship between Christianity and the classical world in poetry and the challenge of defining genre in a period when classical standards are changing and evolving.