

VIGILATE TIMENTES OR THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS IN JUVENCUS' EPIC EVANGELIORUM LIBRI QUATTUOR

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PRAEFATIO

The peace between Christianity and the Roman empire established during the reign of Constantine the Great (306–337) proved to be the starting point for the development of a new literary genre known today as the Biblical epic. Its founder, a Hispanian priest Gaius Vettius Aquilinus Juvenius, intended it to unite the best of the two worlds – the form of pagan epic poetry and the message of the Gospel (Praef. 15–18). Even though his work is not as known to the current readers as its distant relatives *Paradise Lost* by John Milton or *Der Messias* by Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock may be, still, if we wish to get to the roots of the (early) modern European literature, the name of the first biblical epic in the literary history, *Evangeliorum libri quattuor*, should not pass unnoticed.

Observing the considerable scholarly achievements made in the field of 'juvencology' during recent years on both sides of the Atlantic², we would like to contribute to the better understanding of the father of the Christian epic poetry by this detailed analysis of his versified version of the Parable of the Ten Virgins.

As it was Juvenius' aim to provide the biblical text with the ornamenta ... terrestria linguae (IV. 805), our aim will be to discover and to categorize those ornaments appearing in the lines of the aforementioned parable. Juvenius' versification will be closely compared to its Matthean source in search of any relevant modifications that Matthew's gospel underwent in the hands of our poet. This will, however, not result in a mere enumeration of the similarities and differences of the two texts, since our hope is to offer also some possible

² Including McGill, S. 2016. *Juvenius' Four Books of the Gospels. Evangeliorum libri quattuor*. London and New York: Routledge. Müller, W. 2017. *Tod und Auferstehung Jesu Christi bei Juvenius (IV 570-812): Untersuchungen zu Dichtkunst, Theologie und Zweck der "Evangeliorum Libri Quattuor."* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag. or De Gianni, D. 2020. *Juvenius: "Evangeliorum Liber Quartus": Introduzione, testo criticamente riveduto, traduzione e commento*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.

explanations for the reasons which might have incited Juvencus to paraphrase Matthew in the way he did it.

For the sake of clarity and closer contact with primary sources, both texts will be divided into six parts, the most relevant results being summarized and categorized at the end of the study where our attempt at a hexametric translation of the parable can also be found.

The Parable Analyzed

Vetus latina: Mt. 25, 1–2³

25 Tunc simile aestimabitur regnum caelorum decem virginibus : quæ acceperunt lampades suas et venerunt obviam sponso et sponsae. 2 Quinque autem ex eis erant fatuae, et quinque prudentes...

Evangeliorum libri quattuor: IV. 197–201⁴

Conferri possunt caelestia regna puellis

Bis quinis, pars est quarum sapientior una,

Altera praestupido pars est stolidissima corde.

Occurrere illae votis sponsalibus omnes

Ornatu accinctae taedarum flammicomantum.

Let us begin our analysis with pointing to the simplest kind of versificational change occurring in Juvencus' poetic adaptation of the gospel story which could be called a synonymical replacement. The relevant examples may be found in the first sentence as the words such as *aestimo*, *virgo* and *decem* which have been replaced by their synonymical equivalents *conferro*, *puella* and *bis quinis*. These slight modifications of the original may be justified in various ways. As is known, the parable does not compare the Kingdom of Heaven to the virgins themselves, but to the situation they find themselves in [30.] which is why Stephen Rollins argues that the verb *conferro* was used here in order to express the same idea and that Juvencus thus could have tried to redress one of the stylistic discrepancies of the Matthean original. [24.] As for the word *decem*, he might not have found it poetic enough and therefore decided to replace it by a rarer and

³ Given the fact that Juvencus was writing his work before Jerome's Vulgate came into being, we will be comparing his versification of the Gospel with the pre-hieronymian text of the Bible known as *Vetus latina* [3], which will be, however, punctuated in accordance with the modern edition of Vulgate. [1]

⁴ We are going to follow Iohannis Huemer's edition [2] supplemented, if needed, by the alternative reading of Carolus Marold. [4]

more unusual phrase *bis quinis*. The phrase was not unknown to his great predecessor and idol Virgil who had made the seer Calchas keep secret who should be sacrificed in order to reconcile the Achaeans with Gods for ‘two times five’ days in the second book of his *Aeneid* (II. 125) too. [32] The word *puella* with its semantic equivalents will occur also in the following lines wherefore we shall get back to it later. For now, it will suffice to say that the process of versification does not necessarily require any radical changes of the original biblical text and that its partial modification is possible also by means of the synonymical-replacement practice already described.

The second and the third verse of this excerpt will, however, prove that Juvenecus does not intend to restrict himself to such tiny interventions. Whereas the wisdom of the prudent virgins is intensified only slightly by the comparative of the adjective *sapiens* corresponding to the original *prudens*, the unwise ones are facing a harsh criticism denoted by the adjectives *praestupida* and *stolidissima* both of which occur in Juvenecus’ epic as a whole just once, and of which the first one is regarded as the coinage of his own. [15]⁵ The usage of the word *cors* reflects biblical language which usually does not locate the process of thinking as being in the head, as one might expect, but in the heart. [20] As a result of the unwise virgins’ extended depiction, however, a stylistic device typical of the biblical text known as a *parallelismus membrorum* is disrupted. While Matthew describes both groups just by one adjective, Juvenecus devotes a whole verse to the description of the latter. The biblical parallelism is replaced by the stylistic *inconcinnitas*, which also leads to the usage of the *enallage* figure separating the adjectives *praestupidum* and *stolidissima* from their nouns *cors* and *pars*. Even if Juvenecus’ versification sometimes leads to the disruption of the biblical stylistics’ devices, still it is clear that his aim is not to deprive the original of its stylistic ornaments in general, but to replace them with the figures of his own.

The thing he did relish, however, was the application of the genitive of identity, which can be seen in the last verse of this section: *ornatu accinctae taedarum flammicomantum*. Its poetic effect lies in the connection of the two nouns, the first being more general than the second. [24] What may seem pleonastic today was regarded as aesthetic in the late antique literature. [22] Donato De Gianni adds that these words might have been inspired by Origen’s commentary on Matthew (XI.148, 29-30), where it is written as *imposuerunt*

⁵ Moreover, he uses the adjectives starting with the prefix *prae-* so often that, in this field, he exceeds any of his predecessors and his lexical repertoire even includes ten new coinages compared to seven such words present in the works of Virgil. [29]

lampadibus suis ornatum. [7] The juveninian word *taedae* was preferred here to the original *lampades* probably because of its metonymic potential as it denotes not only the torches but also weddings in general. [23] Moreover, torches, not lamps, used to be lighted during the traditional Roman wedding ceremonies⁶ and so the replacement of the two words may be also considered an example of the Romanisation of the biblical material.⁷ Neither should the lengthy composite *flammicommas* escape our attention as it is another instance of Juvencus' word-building creativity. What serves as a simple epitheton ornans here is probably one of the first stages of the compound-forming process which will proceed further during the Middle Ages. [17]

Moving back to the preceding verse, we will find another kind of poetic modifications. The phrase *obviam venire*, first, takes the shortened form of *occurrere*, so we can speak here about some sort of an *abbreviatio synonymica*. The second half of the verse, the replacement of *sponso et sponsae* for *votis sponsalibus*, shows us another change of similar character. Instead of the repetitive figure of *polyptoton*, Juvencus gives preference to the synonymical paraphrase turning two into one in which the repetitive sound of the morpheme *spons* disappears. This verse also shows us what the difference between the *Vetus latina* and the *Vulgate* is – Jerome's translation of the Holy Scripture mentions no bride at all. [16] Juvencus was obviously working with the translations which tried to redress some apparent discrepancies in the biblical narrative on their own (mentioning a bride in this case). This might have been one of the reasons why he decided to take the same approach, as we shall see in the next sections of the parable.

This one, however, cannot be left without pointing to the fact that Juvencus has also changed the structure of the narrative, putting the description of the virgins before mentioning their role in the story, which might have been done in order to increase the fluency of the biblical narrative. All the relevant information about the protagonists is thus found in the first sentence and the story itself may begin in the second one.

VL: Mt. 25, 3–5

3 ... sed quinque fatuae, acceptis lampadibus suis, non sumpserunt oleum

⁶ Rollins describes such a torch in detail: it consisted of a wooden case filled with flax or rags soaked in oil and lit. [24]

⁷ This phenomenon occurs in the poem repeatedly. In I. 151, for instance, Joseph registers his family during the census in written form or in IV. 410 Jesus is lying instead of sitting at the table. [10]

secum : 4 prudentes vero acceperunt oleum in vasis suis cum lampadibus suis.
5 Moram autem sponso faciente, dormitaverunt omnes et dormierunt.

ELQ: IV. 202–206

Sed sapiens pars illa, sibi quo lumina flammae
Susciperet, portare simul curabat olivum.
Stultarum vero non est prudentia talis.
Cumque moraretur sponsus, tum membra sopore
Solvuntur cunctae per compita lata viarum.

We may continue where we left off since Juvenecus' exchange of the wise and unwise virgins in the narrative leads us to the same topic once again. In contrast to Matthew, Juvenecus starts the following lines of the gospel with the reference to the sapiens pars, devoting them two verses in comparison to one verse reserved for their unwise mates as if trying to counterbalance the fact that in the preceding lines the distribution of lines between the two groups was opposite. Now the narrative is focused upon the wise virgins, though two details from the original text are missing including the phrases *acceptis lampadibus* and *in vasis suis*. Michael Roberts claims that Juvenecus might have regarded the second one of little importance [22] and this interpretation would be, probably, adequate in the first case as well. The reason for this authorial intervention seems to be clear. Juvenecus wanted to direct the attention of his audience from the lamps and vases to the oil, the item which would light the torches up and which the whole parable is about, and also to the wise virgins who have not failed to bring it when it was needed. In fact, not only have they brought it (*sumpserunt*), but they have literally taken care to do this (*portare curabat*) which makes their action sound the more meritably. Neither is the future light of the torches described in ordinary words but by the application of the aforementioned genitive of identity *lumina flammae* which, as Paola Santorelli remarks, is reminiscent of the ovidian *clausula per superos oro, per avitae lumina flammae* in his *Epistulae* (XII. 191). [25]

When we, at last, come to the group of the unwise virgins appearing in the third line, we see little that would remind us of the original gospel text. Its repetitive structure mentioning lamps and oil has been omitted and replaced by the laconic statement informing the reader that the *pars stultarum* lacked the prudence of their companions. Though critical, this mention of the unwise is much closer to the original than the first one.

In the final verses of this section the two groups are united once again as all the virgins have fallen asleep while waiting for the belated bridegroom. The

original syntactical construction is paraphrased by the sentence with *cum ... tum*, the most poetic of which is the words *membra sopore solvuntur* and which, again, might have been inspired by Vergil's *Aeneid* (*Ast illi solvuntur frigore membra* in XII. 951). This, however, does not apply to the final words of the sentence *per compita lata viarum*, which are Juvenecus' own insertions. [15] Their meaning is disputable. On the one hand, we may speak about his attempt to supplement the Matthean narrative by some description of the place where the virgins are waiting in order to make it sound more realistic.⁸ On the other hand, he could have been trying to depict this scene more dramatically believing that the inclusion of the crossroads motif would make the readers more inclined to understand that this is the moment of truth which will decide the future of all the virgins.⁹ As we shall see further, the dramatisation of the gospel story is a literary technique not unknown to Juvenecus.

VL: Mt. 25, 6–7

6 Media autem nocte clamor factus est : ecce sponsus venit, surgite obviam ei. 7 Tunc surrexerunt omnes illae virgines, et acceperunt lampades suas.

ELQ: IV. 207–211

Iam noctis medio clamor crebrescere magnus
Exoritur, laetorque dehinc occurrere voto
Admonuit taedisque vias ornare coruscis.
Surgere virginibus properatum, et lumina taedis
Instruere et flammis pingui componere olivo.

At the beginnig of this section we cannot overlook that the simple Matthean phrase *clamor factus est* has been trasformed into the words *clamor crebrescere magnus exoritur* whereby Juvenecus not only amplifies the original but also decelerates its narrative. The clamour is gradually arising instead of suddenly breaking out. Proceeding to the second and the third verse we may notice that

⁸ Ilona Opelt mentions a few cases when he does the same: the Massacre of the Innocents in Betlehem (I. 126), Mary seeking young Jesus in the streets of Jerusalem (I. 289-291) or the description of the Caiphas' palace in IV. 403-405. Otherwise, however, does he put a much greater emphasis upon the message of the story than upon the description of its settings. [18]

⁹ Such a figurative meaning of the word *compitum* can be found, for instance, in *Persius* (V. 35) who writes as follows: *ut vitae nescius error diducit trepidas in ramosa in compita mentes*. [8]

the direct speech of the gospel starting with the word *ecce* is replaced by the indirect one headed by the words *clamor ... admonuit*. This tendency is very common in Juvenicus' epic; it is well known that he reserves 'the privilege' of the direct speech almost to Jesus of Nazareth alone. [22] The original word *sponsus* is substituted and broadened by the phrase *laetoque ... voto*, which could be translated as 'the rites' [15], 'the marriage' [7] [25] or, more freely, as 'the wedding procession.' Juvenicus thus further develops the phrase *votis sponsalibus* by which he denotes the bridal couple in verse 200. Mt. 25, 6 is, however, enriched by one more visible amplification. The sentence *taedisque vias ornare coruscis* supplements there what Juvenicus might have found missing in Matthew's narrative, i.e. the concrete description of the way the torches were meant to be used so as to enable the readers to imagine the scene as such.

The virgins (which are called here by this word for the first time) are prompted to wake up and prepare the torches. As we can see, they have to do it in a hurry (*properatum*) so from verse 210 on Juvenicus' narrative starts to accelerate while the tension of the whole situation is further increased by the enumeration of the concrete actions they all have to take in order to prepare the expected torchlight procession. In comparison with the simple Matthean *acceperunt lampades suas*, Juvenicus' depiction of the situation is much more detailed and realistic.

To sum up our analysis of this excerpt, we should also (re)mention numerous epithets which the poet has added to the biblical text: *clamor ... magnus*, *laetoque ... voto*, *taedisque ... coruscis* and *pingui ... olivo* thus trying to provide it with the poetic ornaments worthy of a true epic poem. Neither should the unusually frequent repetition of the infinitive verb forms in this passage (*occurrere*, *ornare*, *surgere*, *instruere*, *componere*) be missed as it proves that even though Juvenicus is inclined to diversify the biblical passages he finds too repetitive, he is still willing to use the same stylistic device when it serves his own purposes. Here, we may speak about the application of the enumeration technique, which appeared in late antique literature quite often. [23]

VL: Mt. 25, 8–9

8 *Fatuae autem sapientibus dixerunt : date nobis de oleo vestro, quia lampades nostrae extinguuntur.* 9 *Responderunt prudentes, dicentes: non, ne forte sufficiat nobis, et vobis, ite potius ad vendentes et emite vobis.*

ELQ: IV. 212–217

Tum stolidae rogitant olei sibi cedere partem,

Prudentes secum quod tunc gestare videbant.
Sed quoniam sapiens pavitat chorus, omnibus aequae
Ne desint clarae nutrimina pingua flammae,
Ex parvo aequalis si detur portio cunctis,
Tum pergunt stultae, liquidum mercentur olivum.

This passage as a whole may provide us with another good example of Juvenecus' treatment of direct speech. It is typical of biblical texts that they prefer a dialogue consisting of the short replicas to the long monologue of Greek and Roman poetry which has been traditionally explained as the attempt to prevent the repetition of the introductory words such as *dicit*, *loquitur*, *narrat* etc. from breaking the fluency and continuity of the epic narrative. Juvenecus 'indirectivisation' of the original direct speech has been, therefore, interpreted in the same way.¹⁰ This is, however, just one of the changes which Matthew's text has undergone in Juvenecus' hands. The subordinate clause of the original *quia lampades nostrae extinguuntur* has been replaced by the supplementary comment that the unwise virgins were asking for oil because they had seen the wise ones taking it before. Such an insertion may be regarded then as an attempt to fill the gap that Juvenecus found in the original narrative.¹¹ On the other hand, however, he might have wanted his readers to concentrate upon the merits of the wise virgins (bringing the oil) rather than focusing on the misery of their mates (the lamps dying out). The following sections will show us why he would have done so, but let us move now to the following three verses. It is possible to say that they represent the ancient technique of periphrasis in its purest form. In Juvenecus' versification there is no word, except for *ne*, coinciding with the Matthean original. Despite this fact the meaning of the two versions is the same. Nevertheless, there are certain differences of stylistic nature which should not pass unnoticed. At first, the oil which the unwise ask for in the original is poetically described as the *clarae nutrimina pingua flammae*. In this amplificatory phrase Juvenecus combines one metaphor with two epithets creating an unusual designation for a usual item in those times.¹² The embellishment of the one clause, however, may stand in contrast to the de-

¹⁰ The opposite situation can be found just once when Juvenecus wants to make Jesus speak about his crucifixion and resurrection on his own. [24]

¹¹ The question of how the unwise virgins knew that the wise men had brought some oil could be asked.

¹² He could have found some inspiration in the words of Ovid *alimentaque pingua flammae* (*Met.* 15. 352). [15]

embellishment of the other, as we can see upon the reduction of the paronomasia of Matthew's *nobis, et vobis* to the more general expression *cunctis* which was probably the forfeit Juvencus had to pay for metrical reasons. On the other hand, neither should the option that he changed the words just because the imperative of periphrastic theory required him to do so, be excluded since it could explain why he, usually, recasts even the passages which seem to possess some stylistic qualities on their own.¹³

The last verse of this section depicts the departure of the unwise virgins which takes place due to the anxiety of their colleagues who are afraid that the small amount of the oil they have (*ex parvo*) will not be enough for them all. What is missing here is their direct appeal to the unwise to go and buy some on their own expressed in the Matthean words *ite potius ad vendentes et emite vobis*.¹⁴ The Juvencian paraphrase of these verses, therefore, gives impression that they have made this decision themselves without having been rejected by the wise of the virgins beforehand. Jiří Mrázek mentions that the original parable contains some elements (lack of solidarity among the girls and final rejection of the groom) which may seem controversial or provocative from the ethical point of view. [16] Juvencus' modifications of this passage might be, therefore, interpreted as an attempt to depict the story in the way which would prevent any possible criticism of this kind from his educated pagan readers. The words *ex parvo* might have been inserted into the narrative for the same purpose, additionally emphasizing the insufficient amount of oil for both groups.

The verse number 217 is interesting also from the stylistic point of view as it presents us another epithet of the oil *liquidus*, which, however, could be regarded as a pleonasmus too depending upon its translation.¹⁵ The clauses of the final verse (*pergunt ... , ... mercentur*) contain no conjunction so we may speak also about the figure of asyndeton here.

Finishing the analysis of this excerpt we cannot leave out a short mention of the adjectives which were used for the characterisation of the ten virgins as we can see that the designation of both groups is literally changing from line to line,

¹³ Including the *paralelismus* of *fatue* and *prudentes* in Mt. 25, 2; *polyptoton* of *dormitaverunt* and *dormierunt* in Mt. 25, 5 or other similar examples which are still waiting for our analysis like *geminatio* of *domine, domine* in 25, 11 and *hendiadys* of *diem neque horam* of 25, 13.

¹⁴ Roberts regards it as another example of the omission of the unnecessary parts of the story. [22]

¹⁵ Scott McGill preferred to put no adjective into his translation, which is *the fools went to buy oil* [15.] the same as Santorelli. [25] De Gianni, on the contrary, preserves the adjective: *il liquido olio*. [7]

the unwise becoming *stolidae* and *stultae* whereas the wise ones are described as *prudentes* or *sapientes*.¹⁶ As we shall see, this process of lexical variation will continue also in the following verses of the parable.

VL: Mt. 25, 10–11

10 Dum eunt emere, venit sponsus : et quae paratae erant, intraverunt cum eo in nuptias, et clausa est ianua. 11 Nobissime veniunt relique virgines, dicentes : domine, domine, aperi nobis.

ELQ: IV. 218–223

Dum pergunt, laetae transcurrunt omnia pompae
Et sponso tantum comitatur factio prudens.
Adveniunt brutae sero post tempore segnes
Et sponsi pulsare fores et limina clausa
Nequiquam ingeminant precibusque ingrata frequentant,
Ut liceat miseris penetrare in limina laeta.

In order to prevent the repetition of the verb *emere* by which the preceding section ended Juvencus paraphrases the clause *dum eunt emere* as *dum pergunt*.¹⁷ The rest of the Mt. 25, 10 has, however, undergone more significant modifications. Whereas it is the groom arriving in Matthew, Juvencus, once again, translates this biblical synecdoche into more natural language describing the whole wedding procession (*laetae ... pompae*), which is not just coming on the scene like in the original but making its way through the streets (*transcurrunt omnia*)¹⁸ joined by the wise group of the virgins. Both the mention of the entering the groom's house and of the closed door (*clausa est ianua*) is relocated into the following verses which will be dealing with these motifs in relation to the belatedly arriving unwise girls. Thus the first sentence contains the positive motifs only reserving the negative ones for the lines incoming. The procession is described as happy (*laetae*) and the only virgins mentioned here are the wise ones (*factio prudens*). The use of the word *factio* for their designation is another example of the lexical variation so common in Juvencus' epic. Until now, the group of the prudent virgins has been described by the words *pars*, *chorus* and *factio* the last of which being the shortened version of the original subordinate

¹⁶ The similar differentiation appears in the pre-hieronymian biblical texts too. [3]

¹⁷ According to de Gianni, the beginning of verses 217 and 218 together make an anaphora *tum/dum*. [7]

¹⁸ Such is the translation of Rollins [24] whereas we would prefer to attribute the adjective *omnia* to the noun *compita* from verse 206.

clause et quae paratae erant. Both Matthew and Juvenecus are using various designations for the protagonists of the story, but the latter, being a poet, applies this technique much more often, though not even he avoids the application of the same word as the evangelist.¹⁹

The following four verses are undoubtedly the most dramatic and emotional part of the whole parable. The group of the unwise virgins which gets other uncomplimentary attributes here (*brutae* and *segnes*) is depicted as desperately trying to get into the bridegroom's house weeping and wailing but all in vain. It is here where the mention of the closed door has been transposed and it is also here where it is amplified by the figure of hendiadys (*fores et limina*) as if Juvenecus was attempting to double the obstacles the virgins have to face as the punishment for coming late.

Rollins argues that Juvenecus' depiction of this passage has much in common with the ancient Greek motif of *komos* (strongly associated with its 'relative' *paraclausithyron*) showing a lover lamenting in front of his mistress' door trying to get in. The poet might have recognized the common settings of this lyric motif and of this part of the parable using it as an inspiration for his own versification. According to this interpretation the role of *exclusus amator* was transferred from the man onto the women who are, however, not allowed to enter (which is also one of the possible endings of the *komos* motif as such). From Juvenecus' point of view the application of this romantic topos in his poem might have been sanctioned by the undisputed presence of the Song of Songs in the Holy Scripture, which used to be interpreted among the Christians as an allegory of the relationship between Christ and the Church since the times of Origen [24], and among the Jews as an allegory of the relationship between God and Israel. [21]

What we find more probable is that Juvenecus has simply recognized the dramatic potential of this part of the story²⁰ which led him to the idea to portray it in all details. The well-known popularity of *ekphrasis* in late antique literature in terms of a thorough description of a particular object, person, place or situation [23] seems to support this hypothesis.

Whatever the inspiration, it is clear that Juvenecus' aim was to dramatize the original narrative in order to prevent any (future) Christian from relying upon

¹⁹ The word *prudens*, for instance, they have in common.

²⁰ The activation of the Gospel's epic potential is, in fact, his common praxis [27] and as Antoni Paciorek remarks, there are many passages in this parable containing elements of drama even in their original form, including the delay of the groom, the sudden cry at midnight or the dialogue between the wise and the unwise virgins. [19]

God's mercy in case of his unpreparedness for the Lord's arrival. The humiliation and misery of the unprepared in the story should then serve as an deterrent example for those who do not take the biblical warning seriously enough. The omnipresent negativisation of the unwise virgins, which is evidently exceeding the frame set by the Matthean original might have helped to justify the poor state they found themselves in through the fault of their own foolishness, tardiness and laziness so as to prevent any empathy with their fate among the critically-thinking pagan or neophytic readers of the poem.

Some stylistic remarks should be made to accomplish the analysis of these lines. Looking upon the phrases *limina clausa* and *limina laeta* we may notice that the figure of contrast is applied here, though not just here as the same phenomenon may also be seen in the last verse between the adjectives *miseris* and *laeta*. [15] The original Matthean *geminatio* of the words *domine, domine* has, however, disappeared, probably for metrical reasons.²¹ On the other hand, its omission is compensated by the alliteration of the aforementioned phrase *limina laeta*. [22] Finally, we should point to the repetitive occurrence of the noun *sponsus* (four times throughout the verses 219–225), which is thus put into the centre of the epic narrative. [15]

VL: Mt. 25, 12–13

12 Ad ille respondens ait: Amen dico vobis, quod nescio vos. 13 Vigilate itaque, quia nescitis diem neque horam.

ELQ: IV. 224–226

Illas non comitum sponsi cognoscere quisquam
Non ipse sponsus voluit. Vigilate timentes,
Adventus vobis quia²² non est certior hora.

The final lines of the parable tell us about the bridegroom's reaction, i.e. about his negative answer which is even more resolute than the one of the original. Not only does the bridegroom not recognize the belated virgins, but he literally does not want to recognize them. Scholars generally agree to the opinion that the formulation is not just some late antique grammatical innovation, but rather the expression of the fact that the groom has prevented the rest of the

²¹ The word *dominus* in vocative does not appear in the poem at all. [31]

²² Marold [4] has *quod* for *quia* here which however, does not make any difference in the understanding of this passage. Otherwise, the reading of the parable is the same as in Heumer. [2]

virgins from entering his wedding feast intentionally. [24] The Matthean phrase *quod nescio vos* is, according to Joachim Jeremias, the translation of the ancient Aramaic formula by which a rabbi used to forbid his disciple to approach him for the time of seven days, so the rabbi applied those words even though he actually knew his pupil. [13] The same situation appears here except for the fact that, according to Rollins, Juvenecus managed to express the formula much better showing the audience that the groom had actually recognized his former bridesmaids though he did not let them in. Mrázek acknowledges the possibility of the second interpretation that the bridegroom really does not know the virgins in the sense that having brought no oil they have lost their status of the bridesmaids, [16] so it is possible that Juvenecus has decided to accentuate his refusal in order to prevent this very misinterpretation.

Surprisingly, we can see that it is not just the groom who 'refuses to recognize' the belated virgins. Juvenecus has supplemented here also the character of *comites*, which does not appear in the original text. On the one hand, it may be regarded as the logical continuation of the preceding lines 218–219, where the groom and the wise virgins are described as part of the wedding procession which would make it natural as he would not be the only person in the house whom the unwise would try to address. The other possible explanation, however, is that the groom's companions should appear at this stage of events in order to show that he is not the only person who is so tough that he does not let them enter and, as far as we can deduce from the word order, that he is not even the first one who has done so. We may, therefore, conclude that the character of the *comites* has been inserted here to dull the edge of the groom's resolute answer with the aim of making his reaction humanly and theologically more understandable.²³ What may seem less understandable from the modern point of view is the omission of the word *amen* without which the Christian liturgy is hardly imaginable. The reason for this exclusion was probably its foreign origin as it is a common phenomenon in Juvenecus' epic that he omits Hebrew words even though they were used among the Christians daily. [22]²⁴ He might have expected the believers to know what he was speaking about and thought that this was the best way to present his religion to the educated pagans in a linguistically more natural and non-violent form.

Lastly, in the final sentence of this parable we may notice other Juvenecus' interpolations such as the word *timentes* which is another indication of his attempt to dramatize the original biblical narrative and also the word *adventus*

²³ Another explanation would be that the *comites* represent the angels of Apocalypse. [15]

²⁴ The word *amen*, for instance, does not appear in his poem at all. [31]

highlighting the fact that it is the parousia which the gospel speaks here about. The theological meaning of such an insertion is obvious because, whereas Juvenius uses the verb *advenire* very freely, the noun *adventus* is used only in relation to the God's arrival. [31]. From the stylistic point of view, we should not overlook the disruption of the original Matthean figure of hendiadys expressed by the words *diem neque horam*, possibly as a result of the addition previously mentioned, or of the amplifying transformation of the word *nescitis* into the phrase *vobis ... non est certior...*²⁵ Whatever the explanation, once again, this sentence shows us that in terms of stylistic refinement the versification is not just a one-way road and that the figures of speech may in the hands of a versificator appear just or disappear equally, depending upon his own poetic intentions. In this case, as we may conclude, the author's attempt to emphasize the theme of parousia and to make his readers think about it with an adequate anxiety wins over the quest for stylistic embellishment showing that, for Juvenius, the duties of a priest were of a higher importance than those of a poet.

SUMMARY

In order to summarize the results of our analysis we have decided to present this categorization of Juvenius' versificational modifications believing, that it might (in outline, at least) offer some organizational help to the future researchers of the other parts of the *Evangeliorum libri*.

Basically, we recognize three kinds of such modifications:

A) The lexical variations

B) The changes of stylistic devices

C) The changes of narrative

A) By **lexical variations** we understand Juvenius' inclination towards recasting the wording of the original for mere periphrastic purposes. They may be further divided either I.) according to the number of words they apply to or II.) according to, whether the variation takes place in relation to the original text of the Gospel or within the poem itself.

I.) The first group contains the variations applying to:

a) Single words – *aestimabitur/conferri* (197), *virginibus/puellis* (197) or *stolidae/fatuae* (212)

b) Phrases – *venerunt obviam/occurrere* (200), *sponso et sponsae/ votis sponsalibus* (200) or *nobissime/sero post tempore* (220)

²⁵ The comparative of the adjective *certus* stands for the superlative here as was typical of Late Latin. [7] It could be thus translated in our context as 'it is not certain at all.'

c) Clauses – *moram sponso faciente/cumque moraretur* (205), *dum eunt emere/dum pergunt* (218) or the whole sentence in 214–216

II.) The second group contains lexical variations:

a) Between Matthean and Juvencian text – *quinque/pars* (198), *oleum/olivum* (203) or *lampades/taedarum* (201)

b) Within Juvencus' poem itself – *olivum* (203) / *oleum* (211) / *nutrimina flammae* (215), *pars* (198) / *chorus* (214) / *factio* (219) or *puellae* (197) / *virginibus* (210) / *omnes* (201) / *cunctae* (216)

B) By **changes of stylistic devices** will be understood the interaction between the stylistic figures of Matthew and Juvencus which may result in three different situations:

a) Absence of a biblical figure vs. presence of the epic one – the Juvencian *epithets coruscus, laetus* and *pinguis* (208–211) with no biblical counterpart

b) Presence of a biblical figure vs. absence of the epic one – the *hendiadys* of *diem neque horam* with no counterpart in Juvencus (226)

c) Presence of the biblical figure/s in both texts – *parallelismus membrorum* in Mt. 25, 2 vs. *inconcininitas* and *enallage* in 198–199; the *hyperbaton* of *clausa est ianua* in Mt. 25, 10 vs. the *hendiadys* of *fores et limina* (218), the *repetitio* of *sponsus* in 218–225 and the contrast of the *limina clausa* to the *limina laeta* in 218 and 220 or the *geminatio* of *domine, domine* vs. the double contrast of the *miseris* – *limina laeta* and the aforementioned *limina clausa*.

As we can see in group c) there are many passages where Juvencus literally doubles or even triples the amount of the stylistic devices used in the original. Nevertheless, the situation when Matthew offers one whereas Juvencus has none at hand is possible too. Of much greater importance, however, is the fact that the aim of Juvencus is obviously not to transfer the devices of the biblical stylistics into his poem but to replace them with the figures of his own. Though this tendency may be explained sometimes by metrical reasons (*domine, domine aperi nobis*), other figures are not so incompatible with the requirements of metric (*sponso et sponsae*, for instance, make two spondees). Literary taste, then, could be another reason for this figural reconstruction. In general, it is possible to say that New Testament authors tend to use the figures associated with the repetition of words, sounds or syntactical structures whereas Juvencus prefers those connected with differentiation, but even here we may find some exceptions such as the repetition of the word *sponsus* (219–225) or the alliteration of *limina laeta* (223). The last reason would be, then, the fact that Juvencus regards it as his authorial duty (or privilege) to change the form of every figure he encounters simply because this is the very thing which the technique of *periphrasis* expects him to do – to change the words while retaining their meaning. Even though it

is clear that it would be possible to find many more examples for all the aforementioned explanations, we believe that (considering the modification even of the figures metrically applicable and the inclusion of those which are 'unbiblically' repetitive in their nature) the third one is the most probable, which would confirm the proposition of Michael Roberts' that the biblical epic poets are to be regarded as paraphrasers of the Holy Scripture. [22]

C) 'The changes of narrative' is an umbrella term for all the modifications by which Juvenecus might have attempted to improve the quality of the Matthew's narrative on the level of content including:

I.) The changes of order – in the verses 197–201 Juvenecus defines the virgins before speaking about their role as a wedding procession while changing the order in which the unwise and wise virgins are mentioned in the original; the opposite interchange takes place in the following verses 202–204

II.) The replacements – instead of saying that the wise have brought some oil in vases, Juvenecus emphasizes the importance of the oil for the lighting of the ceremonial torches (202–204)²⁶

- in place of versifying the clause about the dying lamps of the unwise, he focuses the narrative upon the fact that the wise virgins have brought the oil they have missed (212–213)

- in order to make narrative more fluent and free of repetition, Juvenecus eliminates all the direct speech sentences of the original parable

III.) The supplements – may be further divided into those which:

- a) make the narrative more realistic – the description of the place where the girls are waiting for the groom as *per compita lata viarum* (206) or the process of waking up and lighting the torches (210–211)

- b) make it theologically more understandable and persuasive – the omnipresent negativisation of the unwise virgins, the dramatisation of their fate in 220–223, the addition of the words such as *comitum*, *adventus* and *timentes* (224–226) explained above

Although every word added to Matthew's text might be comfortably interpreted as a natural intensification of the tendencies already present in the evangelist's original text with no other than poetic intentions, we contend that, if anything, the harshly negative portrayal of the unwise virgins²⁷ should be

²⁶ Considering the fact that the seeming omissions like the one of the *in vasis suis* are replaced by other structures of a similar length, we prefer to speak here about replacements instead of omissions or abbreviations.

²⁷ Together with other modifications of the original gospel, such as those in verses 216 and 217.

taken as an apologetic attempt to advocate the wise virgins's and groom's dismissive behaviour towards their sinful companions, the purpose of which was to prevent possible invectives upon the apparent discrepancies of the Christian theology such as those (as mentioned by Štefan Pružinský), which were written throughout the Late antiquity by the pagan intellectuals like Celsus, Julian the Apostate or Porphyry and opposed by Origen, Eusebius and Cyril of Alexandria. [20] It is well-known that such attacks were of a sophisticated nature including not only criticism of biblical stylistics but also detailed analyses of its theology [14] and, as the behaviour of the wise virgins towards the unwise could be, in fact, also understood as the indirect cause of the latter's damnation, [16] Juvenecus might have made the aforementioned modifications of the Matthean text in order to prevent such a misinterpretation. His younger contemporaries Hillary and Jerome, after all, also found it necessary to emphasize that the prudent virgins had had, in fact, no other choice than to refuse their mates given that one's virtues (i.e. oil) cannot be transferred to someone else [11] in order to remove his vices. [26] 'Lightning strikes the peaks' says Horace and no one can doubt that the influence of early Christianity was rising during the reign of emperor Constantine as never before. The higher its renown, however, the higher the probability of the collision with its polytheistic counterparts. This could have made Juvenecus recast the parable of the ten virgins in the way which, while remaining faithful to the original, would have exposed it to lesser danger of criticism than Matthew's text itself.²⁸

If the summary should be summarized one could say that it is a bit surprising how many authorial changes may be found in the small portion of the work which is said to versify the Gospel almost word to word.²⁹ It may seem even more surprising that the work has managed to stay in touch with the text it obliged itself to follow to the extent that none of the contemporary Christian theologians ever ventured to disparage its merits.³⁰ Maybe this is the greatest of Juvenecus' achievements: the fact that he did not change the things he was modifying

²⁸ Even though it is not usual for Juvenecus to distract from the fluency of his epic narrative by lengthy reactions to particular pagan invectives there are some other clues to apologetic aims present in his poem which should not be overlooked: Robert Green, for instance, mentions Juvenecus' aim of disallowing suggestions that Jesus is using magic in I. 738 or III. 192 and also the few places where he prefers to call Jesus 'holy one' instead of a simple 'teacher' (II.13, 176 and 180). [9]

²⁹ The words of Jerome from his *De viris illustribus*. [9]

³⁰ This is even more striking considering the ambivalent attitudes of the early Christian intellectuals towards the art of poetry in general. [12]

entirely so those who had already known them could have recognized them as easily as before while those who had not known them at all were not given any reason to doubt their truthfulness.

Juvencus' Parable of the Ten Virgins in Hexameter³¹

One could compare the kingdom of heav'n to two pentads of girls from
whom the first half is more than sagacious in contrast to those whose
heads and hearts were taken by unbelievable folly.

All were running towards the groom and his wedding procession
being equipped and adorned with the torches whose fire was blazing.

The sagacious were careful enough to carry some oil to
keep the flames of their torches alive till the bridegroom's arrival
whereas the foolish half of the virgins was not so foresightful.

As the groom was delayed, all the girls, both the wise and the foolish
slowly succumbed to sleep where the roads were crossing each other.

All of a sudden, at midnight, they heard a great cry which admonished
them to rise up and hurry to meet the jubilant couple
beautifying the roads with the glittering lights of their torches.

All the virgins then had to get up at once to prepare the
torches for feeding whose flames, however, they needed some oil. The
stupid ones, therefore, started to ask the prudent for some of
theirs since the fact that they wisely had brought it did not pass unnoticed.

But the prudent were deeply afraid at the thought that their oil, the
nourishment for the flickering flames, would not be sufficient
if the little reserve they had was equally shared and
so th'imprudent departed to buy the oil from some traders.

After they left, however, the jubilant wedding procession
passed the crossroads so only the prudent virgins could follow.
It was too late when their silly and sluggish mates finally came and
banging upon the gates and doors of the house of the groom they
flooded its merciless threshold with desperate pleas and laments so

³¹ With this hexametric translation of the parable we wish to claim our allegiance to the long and time-proven tradition of Czechoslovak classical philology established and further developed by the great translators of ancient epic poetry such as Otmar Vaňorný, Rudolf Mertlík, Miloslav Okál and, currently, Jana Nechutová.

as to get the permission to enter his jubilant household.
 No one inside was willing to yield, to admit that they knew them,
 neither the guests nor the bridegroom himself, so be on alert as
 nobody knows the hour, the day of His advent for certain...

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VIGILATE TIMENTES OR THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS IN JUVENCUS' EPIC EVANGELIORUM LIBRI QUATTUOR

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Abstract

Until the reign of the Roman emperor Constantine the Great, Christian literature had not produced a poem qualitatively comparable to Homer's *Iliad* or Vergil's *Aeneid*. A Christian of Hispanian origin, Gaius Vettius Aquilinus Juvencus, had, however, decided to match the most famous of the pagan poets at their own genre which resulted in his versification of the *New Testament Gospels* known as *Evangeliorum libri quattuor*, the first biblical epic of ancient times. Our paper tries to show what the exact versificational procedures of the poet were, including his modifications to the biblical vocabulary, stylistics, narrative and theology. It shows Juvencus' aim was not only to paraphrase the original word-to-word but to transform it to such an extent that even Matthean stylistic figures were systematically replaced by their classical equivalents to accommodate the form of the Gospel story to the contemporary esthetic requirements of educated Romans. The most significant modification of the original is, however, the inconspicuous apologetic character of Juvencus' version of the parable through which the author might have tried to justify the (apparently cruel) actions of the wise virgins and the bridegroom in order to forestall its misrepresentation among his pagan or neophytic readers. At the end of the paper, our free translation of the parable tries to demonstrate the qualities of the juvencinian poetic style in English hexameter.

Keywords

Biblical epic, Juvencus, the Parable of the Ten Virgins, versification, dactylic hexameter