Water Creatures in Eustathius' Latin *Hexaemeron*. A Lexical Challenge*

Paola Francesca Moretti

ABSTRACT

The Latin translation of Basil of Caesarea's *Hexaemeron* ascribed to the relatively obscure Eustathius (written around 400) is notable if only for the remarkable vocabulary it employs. In contrast to Ambrose's *Hexameron*, Eustathius provides a literal 'service translation', in order to render Basil's text accessible to readers who do not know Greek. In this paper, a number of lexical innovations are investigated, the majority of which fall into the category of nominal compounds. The investigation demonstrates that Eustathius is exploring the unrealised potential of lexical innovation of the Latin language under the influence of the Greek text he is translating, and shows how far such creativity could be taken in 5th-century Latin by a bilingual, educated writer.

The Latin translation of Basil of Caesarea's *Hexaemeron* attributed to the little-known Eustathius, who wrote around 400[1], is notable if only for its vocabulary, as evidenced by the indexes of rare words (32) and

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[1] Because Eustathius is quoted by Augustine in his *De Genesi ad litteram*, which was begun in 401: cf. Altaner (1940). I quote Eustathius from Amand de Mendieta-Rudberg (1958). Eustathius' text is still absent from databases such as Brepolis and DigiLibLT (www.brepolis.net, https://digiliblt.uniupo.it/).

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hapax legomena (39)[2]. Unlike Ambrose's *Hexameron*, a literary translation of Basil's work dating from the '80s of the 4th century[3], Eustathius (*prol.* 2) provides a literal 'service translation'[4]: having been asked by the dedicatee, the *diaconissa Syncletica*, to incorporate Basil's work into the Latin tradition (*monumentis inserere linguae Latialis*), he reluctantly undertakes this task due to his own lack of eloquence (*contemplatus propriam infantiam*). Although his alleged addressee arguably knows Greek (at least, judging from her Greek name)[5], his main aim seems to be to make Basil's text available to a wider (Western) public that no longer knows Greek[6]. Consequently, due to its antiquity and literalness (in keeping with the principle *verbum de verbo*[7]), his translation is used to reconstruct Basil's Greek text[8].

This paper considers a few notable lexical items in the 7th homily, in which Basil describes the anatomy and physiology of fish when commenting on Genesis 1, 20 (*Eiciant aquae reptilia animarum vivarum*; LXX: ἐξαγαγέτω τὰ ὕδατα ἑρπετὰ ψυχῶν ζωσῶν). This selective investigation will demonstrate that Eustathius' text deserves attention in its own right. In fact, it seems that Eustathius explores some unrealised potential of the Latin language under the influence of the Greek text he is translating. Consequently, while he may not be useful for assessing a

[2] Cf. Amand de Mendieta-Rudberg (1958: 132).
[3] Ambrose's work is generally considered superior to that of Eustathius due to the quality of its prose: cf. Henke (2000; 2008). Interestingly, Ambrose never mentions Basil, thereby taking an independent stance in front of him, whereas Eustathius declares his source from the outset (*prol.* 1), thereby implicitly putting himself 'at the service' of Basil's text: Henke (2008: 104).
[4] See e.g. Marti (1974: 37); Henke (2008: 104).
[5] On (female) addressees of late Latin Christian, and even biblical, translations, see Marti (1974: 47-52).
[6] On the decline of Graeco-Latin bilingualism in the late ancient West, see at least Marti (1974: 20-25).
[7] On which I limit myself to quote Marti (1974: 64-81).
[8] Cf. Amand de Mendieta (1958: lx). See also the use made of Eustathius by DeMarco (2018). A brief overview of the main features of Eustathius' translation can be found in Amand de Mendieta-Rudberg (1958: xi-xvii).

standard, he can demonstrate how far lexical innovation could be taken in 5th-century Latin by a bilingual, educated writer.

1. Fish: amphibious or 'ambiguous'?

The *reptilia* mentioned in Gen 1, 20 include both fish and amphibians. The latter are labelled by Basil (*hex.* 7, 1, 5) as ἀμφίβια, an Aristotelian term[9], and by Eustathius (*hex.* 7, 1, 6) as ***ambigua***. Eustathius does not use the loanword, which is found in Ambrose (*exam.* 5, 7, 1, 4: *amphibia*). The word *amphibius* is rarely attested in Latin. Varro labelled this word as 'excessively' Greek[10]. Later, it appears in a list of types of *aquatilia* provided by Apuleius in the section of the *De magia* where he defends himself against the accusation of being interested in fish as a magician (30-41). Apuleius claims therein that his interest in fish is due to scientific and zoological curiosity, as well as a taste for the linguistic challenge of translating from Greek into Latin[11]. He boasts that in his book *de piscium genere* (36, 8), he had figured out *nomina etiam Romanis inusitata et in hodiernum quod sciam infecta* (38, 5). A passage from his Greek source, most probably Aristotle, is quoted[12] (38, 8):

> σελάχια, μαλάκια, μαλακόστρακα, χονδράκανθα, ὀστρακόδερμα, καρχαρόδοντα, **ἀμφίβια**, λεπιδωτά, φολιδωτά, δερμόπτερα, στεγανόποδα, μονήρη, συναγελαστικά[13].

[9] Not necessarily a post-Aristotelian one, as suggested by Naldini (1990: 378).
[10] Varro *rust*. III 10, 1: *avium illud genus ... quod vos p h i l o g r a e c i vocatis amphibium*. This adjective appears in Columella (VIII 13, 1), and in the Greek-speaking historian Ammianus (XXII 15, 14). See also *ThlL* I 1841, 50 – 1846, 49 (Bannier 1905).
[11] In addition, a third reason lies in the medical use of fish: Hunink (1997: vol. 2, 122).
[12] The text is commonly recognised as Arst. fr. 249 Rose, but the quotation's authorship is uncertain: see Hunink (1997: vol. 2, 118-119).
[13] As Hunink (1997: vol. 2, 119) remarks, three of the items do not refer to fish (φολιδωτά, δερμόπτερα, στεγανόποδα), whereas the last two refer to animals in general.

Unfortunately, Apuleius' Latin translation of the Greek list has not survived, so we cannot judge how he himself coped with translating ἀμφίβια.

There are various reasons why Eustathius might have rejected the loanword and favoured *ambigua*. These reasons are not mutually exclusive, but rather overlap: the similarity of sound, which is also rooted in the etymological relationship between Greek ἀμφί (adv./prep.) and Latin *amb-*[14]; the poetic overtone proper to *ambiguus*: see e.g. the description of Capricorn as an *ambiguum sidus terraeque marisque* in Manilius (IV 795[15]); perhaps even familiarity with 'standard' correspondences between Greek and Latin terms learned at school, such as, in the field of grammar, *amphibolia/ambiguitas* (cf. e.g. Don. *mai.* III 3) or ἀμφίβολος/*ambiguus* (cf. e.g. *CGL* III 333, 36).

2. Viviparous and oviparous fish

In Basil, Aristotelian exactness is evident in the distinction made between viviparous and oviparous fish[16] (*hex.* 7, 1, 6): τί οὐκ ἐμπεριείληπται τῷ προστάγματι τῆς δημιουργίας; Οὐ τὰ ζωοτοκοῦντα… οὐ τὰ ὠοτόκα; cf. also *hex.* 7.2.3: Ἄλλο γένος τὸ τῶν ὠοτοκούντων, καὶ ἄλλο τὸ τῶν ζωοτοκούντων. Ζωοτοκεῖ δὲ τὰ γαλεώδη καὶ οἱ κυνίσκοι, καὶ ἁπαξαπλῶς τὰ σελάχη λεγόμενα. Καὶ τῶν κητῶν τὰ πλεῖστα ζωοτόκα· δελφῖνες, καὶ φῶκαι, ἃ καὶ νεαροὺς ἔτι τοὺς σκύμνους, διαπτοηθέντας ὑπὸ αἰτίας τινὸς, λέγεται πάλιν τῇ γαστρὶ ὑποδεχόμενα περιστέλλειν. In Eustathius we read (*hex.* 7, 1, 7): *sive* ***illa*** [scil. *reptilium genera*] *dixeris* ***quae catulos pariunt*** *sive* ***ovifica*** *nominaveris*; cf.

[14] De Vaan (2008: 37), s.v. *ambi-*. Latin translations of Greek words are often aided by a formal resemblance between the Greek source and the target word. This can result in either a lexical calque (see e.g. Fruyt 2000: 40-41) or a semantic calque (as is the case here).

[15] Cf. Lindner (1996: 49).

[16] As remarked by Naldini (1990: 378-379). See at least Arst. *HA* 505b: ἰχθύων γένος, εἰσὶ δ' αὐτῶν οἱ μὲν ᾠοτόκοι οἱ δὲ ζῳοτόκοι, οἱ μὲν λεπιδωτοὶ πάντες ᾠοτόκοι, τὰ δὲ σελάχη πάντα ζῳοτόκα πλὴν βατράχου.

also Eust. *hex.* 7, 2, 4: *aliud… genus est* ***ovificorum*** *animalium et aliud* ***catuligenorum***, where he goes on: ***Facit*** *autem* ***catulos*** *mustela et asellus et omnia quae sine squamis sunt, quae salatia*[17] *Graeci nominant. Sed et beluarum pars maxima et delphini et phocae* ***catulos pariunt****, quae fetus suos recens editos, cum ex aliqua causa territi fuerint, denuo sublapsos in uterum protegere ac fovere narrantur.* Eustathius is remarkably inconsistent. In his translation, he shifts between periphrasis and lexical calque[18]. Periphrasis, however, is exclusively found in Ambrose (*exam.* V 7, 3, 7: *Alii ova generant … Alii vivos fetus edunt de suo corpore*; cf. also V 7, 3, 8: *alii ova generant, alii vivos pariunt atque formatos*).

Various compounds are found in Basil: the substantivised participles τὰ ᾠοτοκούντα/τὰ ζοωτοκούντα, derived from ᾠοτοκέω/ζωοτοκέω; and the related *nomina agentis*, ᾠοτόκος/ζωοτόκος. In the corresponding passages, Eustathius creates two notable compound nouns, the *nomina agentis ovificus* and *catuligenus*[19], by capitalising on the most common type of Latin nominal compound: those featuring a verbal second member[20]. Clearly, 'common' does not mean 'low register': indeed, *nomina agentis* of this kind are closely connected to high-register

[17] Perhaps *selacia* should be read here, based on Basil's σελάχια, a diminutive of σέλαχη (*LSJ*, s.v.), rather than σαλάκια (an unidentified type of sea fish), as suggests Henke (2008: 104). However, neither variant is mentioned in the apparatus of Amand de Mendieta-Rudberg (1997: 114).

[18] A similar inconsistency is also found in 5th century Latin translations of medical texts: see André (1963: 55-58).

[19] On lexical innovation in Latin, see Fruyt (2000; 2011a: 151-155; 2011b). On Latin nominal compounds *stricto sensu* – i.e. made up of two constituent stems («temi flessionali») –, cf. at least the overviews provided in recent years by Oniga (1988), Lindner (1996; 2002), Re (2020).

[20] Admittedly, the lexical category of nominal compounds is less productive in Latin than in other Indo-European languages. See among others Oniga (1988: 48-50); Oniga – Re (2017: 50-51; 2025: 123, 136). For nominal compounds formed with a verbal second member that act as *nomina agentis*, see Oniga (1988: 77-99).

poetry, especially those featuring a thematic suffix, *-a-* or *-o*/*a-* (e.g., adj. *-ficus*/*a*/*um*, or subst. *-gena*/adj. *-genus*, *-a*, *-um*), or a participial one (*-nt-*)[21].

Rather surprisingly, the terms *oviparus* and *viviparus* (cf. *pario*), which would later become standard in the modern scientific lexicon[22], are only found once before the time of Eustathius[23], in the aforementioned passage by Apuleius. While listing the topics he had dealt with in his Greek book on fish, including the distinction between oviparous and viviparous, Apuleius provides an example of his *in promptu* lexical creativity by coining 'on the spot' the terms *oviparus* and *viviparus* (*mag.* 38.1[24]): *quibus membris et causis discrerit natura viviparos eorum et oviparos – ita enim Latine appello quae Graeci* ζῳοτόκα *et* ᾠοτόκα –.

Eustathius consistently uses the *hapax ovificus* to translate τὰ ᾠοτοκούντα and ᾠοτόκος. This apparent lexical calque might go totally unnoticed, as nominal compounds ending in *-ficus* (< *facio*: *ovificus* = *animal quod ovum facit*) are inherited elements that are very frequent at any time[25].

[21] Whereas nominal compounds with a verbal second member and functioning as *nomina actionis* tend to belong to prose: see among others Fruyt (2002: 264-265; 2005: 42-43), Oniga – Re (2017: 53-54), Re (2024: 23-30), Oniga – Re (2025: 123-138).

[22] Compounds in *-parus* belong to biological «Fachterminologie»: Lindner (2002: 128-130); see also Lindner (1996: 134).

[23] Remarkably, Pliny himself had chosen to use circumlocution. See *nat.* IX 40, 78 (in the wake of Arst. *HA* 492a; see also above, n. 16): *cum ceteri pisces ova pariant, hoc genus solum* [scil. τὰ σελάχη, *cartilaginea*]*, ut ea quae cete appellant, animal parit, excepta quam ranam vocant.*

[24] Cf. Hunink (1997: vol. 2, 117-118). See also *ThlL* IX/2 1192, 1-6 (Plepelits 1980), s.v. *oviparus*.

[25] On *ovificus*, cf. *ThlL* IX/2 1189, 43-47 (Plepelits 1980); Ernout (1971: 29); Lindner (1996: 134). On inherited archaic words in *-fex*/*-ficus*, see Bader (1962: 183-185, §§ 212-214), Ernout (1971), Lindner (2002: 217, 223). In Latin, *-ficus* is the second most productive 'second member' after *-fer*, as remarked by Oniga (1988: 178, 208).

Conversely, Eustathius only uses *catuligenus* once[26], preferring periphrasis in most cases (*catulos facere*/*parere*). I would argue that this is because *catuligenus* sounds somewhat 'strange'. Regarding the first member, Eustathius may have preferred *catuli-* to *vivi-* to translate ζῳο-[27] because the translation of σκύμνος ('whelp, offspring') as *catulus* is found in school lore and, as such, in glossaries (cf. e.g. *CGL* II.434.23: σκύμνος = *catulus*)[28]. However, this compound is possibly made 'strange' by the adoption of a verbal second member (adj. *-genus*, *-a*, *-um*, overlapping with subst. *-gena*), which, although widespread, has an unusual transitive active meaning[29]. Furthermore, *catuligenus* seems to correspond exactly to Greek *σκυμνοτόκος, an (unattested) *nomen agentis* derived from σκυμνοτοκέω ("to be viviparous"), a *hapax legomenon* found in Aristotle (fr. 324 Rose), when discussing those cartilaginous fish (σελάχη, *selacia/salacia*) mentioned in both Basil and Eustathius. Interestingly, Augustine also seems to be aware of the question of what this word (i.e. ζοωγονοῦντα) means[30] when he encounters this word in the Septuagint. In his view, in the context of the dietary precepts of the Leviticus, the Greek substantivised participle is 'problematically' translated into Latin as *vivificantia*:

[26] Cf. *ThlL* III 621, 35-37 (Probst 1908).
[27] On *vivi-*, see Lindner (1996: 208-209).
[28] Cf. also *ThlL* III 621, 57 – 623, 16 (Probst 1908), esp. 621, 64.
[29] *-gena* is an inherited element (cf. the archaic *indigena*) and was originally endowed with an intransitive/passive diathesis, meaning "to be born of, to be engendered by": cf. Bader (1962: 68-69, § 69-70), Oniga (1988: 87 n. 31). Contact with Greek nominal compounds in -γενής reinforced the productivity of *-gena*, which was eventually perceived as a suffixoid: cf. also André (1973: 7-23). Only in a few late formations does this element have a 'factitive' (transitive) meaning, including Eustathius' *catuligenus*, as evidenced by Bader (1962: 188-189, § 218; 402-403, § 486), Oniga (1988: 103 n. 76), Lindner (2002: 101-106).
[30] See Bader (1962: 259, § 303).

> [Scil. *Ista est lex…*] *instruere filios Israel inter vivificantia quae manducantur, et inter vivificantia quae non manducantur* (Lev 11, 47[31]), quae Graecus habet ‘ζοωγονοῦντα’, nostri quidam ‘vivificantia’ interpretari maluerunt, quia utcumque hoc verbum noster usus recepit, quam facere novum insolitum, si dici posset ‘vivigignentia’. Non enim quae vivificant, id est vivere faciunt, sed quae vivos fetus gignunt, id est non ova, sed pullos, dicuntur ‘ζοωγονοῦντα’.

In the passage of the Septuagint, ζωογονοῦντα designates the animals (i.e., ‘living beings that engender living creatures’: cf. ζωογονέω) that are listed in chapter 11 as either clean or unclean. Augustine notes that the Latin translators opted for the common compound *vivificantia* (*quae… vivere faciunt*)[32] despite its inaccuracy. Technically, ζωογονοῦντα refers to viviparous creatures (*quae vivos fetus gignunt, id est non ova, sed pullos*), and would have been more accurately translated as *vivigignentia* (a nominal compound, with a verbal second member in *-nt-*). However, this term would have been *novum insolitum*. This passage demonstrates Augustine’s linguistic awareness and sensitivity: he correctly identifies the components of the compound *vivifico* and offers a negative evaluation of the ‘possible’, albeit not previously attempted, lexical innovation[33].

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[31] This Latin variant is attested only by Augustine. Cf. Lev 11.46-47 LXX: Οὗτος ὁ νόμος περὶ τῶν κτηνῶν καὶ τῶν πετεινῶν καὶ πάσης ψυχῆς τῆς κινουμένης ἐν τῷ ὕδατι καὶ πάσης ψυχῆς ἑρπούσης ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, διαστεῖλαι ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν ἀκαθάρτων καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν καθαρῶν καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν ζωογονούντων τὰ ἐσθιόμενα, καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν ζωογονούντων τὰ μὴ ἐσθιόμενα.

[32] On *vivificus*/*vivificare* Ernout (1971: 33). Both *vivifico* and *vivificatio* have been used since the time of Tertullian, following Paul (Cor 15, 22 Vulg.: *et sicut in Adam omnes moriuntur ita et in Christo omnes vivificabuntur*): see e.g. *adv. Marc.* V 9, where the *vivificatio* achieved *in Christo* is contrasted with the *mortificatio* achieved *in Adam*, in Pauline terms. Originally, *vivifico* and *vivificatio* meant ‘to restore to life’, in the context of spiritual and physical resurrection: cf. Blaise (1954: s.v.).

[33] Augustine’s interest in nominal compounds may also be evident in the invention of the title *Soliloquia*. In the opening words of the ‘dialogue’, *Ratio* herself remarks

3. Fish swimming in the depths

There follows a list categorising different species of fish (*hex.* 7, 1, 8): τὰ πελάγια, τὰ αἰγιαλώδη, τὰ βύθια, τὰ πετρώδη (based on where they live), τὰ ἀγελαῖα, τὰ σποραδικά (based on their habits), τὰ κήτη, τὰ ὑπέρογκα, τὰ λεπτότατα τῶν ἰχθύων (based on their size). Interestingly, as regards the places where fish live, Basil elaborates on a conventional list[34], adding τὰ βύθια. In this case, it seems that Eustathius is more impressed by the 'literary' allure of Basil's list rather than by scientific exactness, as he translates it as follows (*hex.* 7, 1, 9): *aequorei, litorei,* ***altivagi****, petrei* (places)*, gregales* (habits: he omits τὰ σποραδικά)*, beluini, immanes minutique pisces* (size).

High-register renderings were chosen for τὰ πελάγια, τὰ αἰγιαλώδη, and τὰ πετρώδη: *aequoreus*, *litoreus*, and *petreus*. The former two are poetic adjectives[35], while the latter is plausibly an extemporaneous innovation aided by a rhetorical accumulation effect[36]. The Latin adjectives sound 'strange', as the suffix *-eus* is mainly found in adjectives

on the harshness of the nominal compound that, however, is needed to convey the meaning: *Ridiculum est si te pudet, quasi non ob idipsum elegerimus huiusmodi sermocinationes: quae quoniam cum solis nobis loquimur, soliloquia vocari atque inscribi volo; novo quidem et fortasse duro nomine, sed ad rem demonstrandam satis idoneo*. Cf. Lindner (1996: 176; 2002: 199-200). There is no evidence of Greek model for *soliloquium*; *μονό-λογος as opposed to διά-λογος, is not attested up until Byzantine times.

[34] See e.g. Arst. *HA* 488b: Καὶ τῶν θαλαττίων τὰ μὲν πελάγια, τὰ δ' αἰγιαλώδη, τὰ δὲ πετραῖα (this is the most common designation for fish living next to rocks). Cf. Naldini (1990: 379). However, this classification is common, as it features also, e.g., in Galen.

[35] See *ThlL* I 1027, 56 – 1028, 32 (Vollmer 1902) and VII/2 1514, 13-36 (Plepelits 1976) respectively.

[36] Cf. *ThlL* X/1 1981, 42-50 (Breimeier 2001). The only other instance I could find is in Augustine's *serm.* 297, 2, 3, where *petreus* is the result of an *ex tempore* wordplay on saint Peter's name (*Aspera via mortis, spinis plena: sed istae spinae petra et Petro transeunte, p e t r e i s* [i.e., *Petri*] *pedibus tritae sunt*). On Augustine's wordplays on proper names, see Moretti (2025).

indicating substance or colour, but here it indicates the habitat of the fish.

The same 'poetic' allure accounts for *altivagi*, which translates τὰ βύθια. Remarkably, in this case a Latin compound corresponds to a Greek *simplex verbum*, contrary to what we might expect. According to a *communis opinio* that is also based on the ancients' views[37], noun composition was more prevalent in Greek than in Latin, and contact with the Greek tradition significantly reinforced the tendency towards nominal composition in Latin, in both literary (poetry) and technical contexts. Therefore, we would expect Latin nominal compounds to be shaped after Greek compounds, whereas we do not expect a Latin compound to be devised for translating a Greek simple noun[38]. In this respect, while a thorough investigation is yet to be conducted, of the approximately 30 Greek compounds in Basil's 7th homily, only one third are rendered with Latin compounds. I would argue that *altivagus* reflects the translator's attempt to emulate the perceived elevated style of the Greek original. In fact, βύθια is a rare word for 'water animals' – not just those living in the depths of the sea[39]. As far as I could ascertain, βυθ(ι)- (or βαθο-), meaning "the depths", is never used as the first element in Greek nominal compounds. Otherwise, one might conjecture

[37] Cf. the surveys of the views of ancient Roman writers and grammarians, from archaic Latin to the early Middle Ages, provided by Lindner (2002: 161-210) and Re (2020: 21-66). On the constraints on the formation of nominal compounds in Latin, see at least Fruyt (2002: 259-264; 2005: 29-40).

[38] For an overview of the influence of Greek nominal compounds resulting in Latin calques, hybrids and transcriptions (loanwords), refer to Bader (1962: 397-412, §§ 474-502) and Oniga (1988: 133-134). Calques and hybrids tend to assimilate to Latin structures, making them difficult to identify as such unless a Greek counterpart is preserved (as in the case of Basil and Eustathius) or can be reconstructed with certainty.

[39] Besides Basil, it only occurs in Plutarch (fr. 121, from his Κατ'ἰσχύος, when discussing human beings whose strength surpasses that of irrational animals and is demonstrated by fishing: τὰ βύθια δεδυκότα δικτύοις ἀνήγαγε) and in the *AP* (VI 182, 2), where the offering of fish caught in the depths (ἐκ βυθίων) to Pan is mentioned.

that *altivagus* reflects a Greek *βυθί-πλαγκτος or *βυθι-πλανής, modelled on the poetic ἁλί-πλαγκτος and ἁλι-πλανής[40]. Paradoxically, two very common elements come together in *altivagus* to create a semantic *hapax*. The first member, *alti-*[41], usually translates the Greek ὑψι- (e.g., ὑψι-πέτης, cf. πέτομαι: "high-flying" = Lat. *alti-volans*), but it corresponds here to βυθι-, in line with Latin *altus*, meaning both "high" and "deep". The second member, *-vagus*, corresponding to Greek -πλανής or -πλαγκτος, has been in use since archaic Latin and belongs to a poetic register[42]. The semantic peculiarity of *altivagus* suggests that it is an *ex tempore* innovation by Eustathius. In fact, it is found elsewhere in Latin, but always in reference to beings that "float/fly high in the air"[43]. Interestingly, one such occurrence is met with in the late 4th cent. commentary of Plato's *Timaeus* by Chalcidius[44], where fire is defined as a light and 'high floating' matter (Chalc. *comm.* I 76: *levem altivagam… materiam*). However, in Chalcidius' translation of Plato's dialogue, the (*genus*) *praepes aerivagum* (Chalc. *transl*. 39e-40a)[45], i.e. birds, is mentioned among the *genera animalium* inhabiting the newly created *mundus*. These words translate Plato's γένος… πτηνὸν καὶ ἀεροπόρον. Notably, both Eustathius and Chalcidius describe the creation of animals, fish and birds respectively. However, only *aerivagus* can be demonstrated to be a calque from the Greek in Chalcidius.

[40] See *LSJ*, s.vv.
[41] See at least Lindner (1996: 15-18).
[42] Lindner (2002: 154-155).
[43] Cf. *ThlL* I 1769, 59-64 (v. Mess 1902). Based on these occurrences, Lindner (1996: 18) translates *altivagus* as «hoch oben (herum-) schweifend».
[44] On the interesting and enigmatic figure of Chalcidius, see Magee (2016: vii-xxvi).
[45] *Aerivagus* is a *hapax*: cf. *ThlL* I 1061, 80-82 (v. Mess 1902); Lindner (1996: 12; 2002: 154).

The lexical items that have been investigated so far shed light on some of the overarching features of Eustathius' translation, which a broader and deeper study will hopefully confirm. The text has been considered from a strictly synchronic perspective: a late Latin 'service' translation for a Latin-speaking audience (who do not know Greek), which aims to replace the original Greek text.

The Greek source – which is an explanation of the Genesis, stuffed with scientific technicalities – is *per se* ambiguous, rather – why not? – 'amphibious' from a lexical viewpoint. Therefore, Eustathius seems to be torn between rendering technicalities with precision and his penchant for high-register translations that supposedly reflect his own – and Basil's – literary education. Interestingly, all the words I have examined are *hapax legomena*, either lexical (*ovificus*, *catuligenus*) or semantic (*ambiguus* meaning "amphibious", *altivagus* meaning "swimming in the depths"), and three of them belong to a sophisticated category of nominal compounds. Overall, they all fall into the 'amphibious' category of words that blur the boundary between «néologie dénotative» (a word coined to provide a technical definition) and «néologie connotative», as in all cases «il y a connotation à l'intérieur de la dénotation»[46]. To properly evaluate Eustathius' behaviour, I suggest we should take a step back in time and turn to the well-known passage by Varro (*LL* VIII 61-62), in which he highlights an 'anomalous' feature of language: there seem to be rules governing nominal composition (*vocabulorum genus… compositicium*) that sometimes are not implemented, so that some words are coined, whereas some others, despite complying with the rules, remain unattested (e.g., *tibicen*, but not **citharicen*; *auceps*, but non **pisciceps*)[47]. According to Varro, there seem to be (unex-

[46] Fruyt (2000: 29-31).

[47] A seminal passage, as shown by Oniga (1988: 11-17), Lindner (2002: 164-166), Oniga – Re (2017: 42-43), Re (2020: 38-40). An explanation of why these words were not created is found in De Melo (2019: 1982-1983).

plained and therefore 'anomalous') limits to 'possible words'. However, Basil seems to push Eustathius beyond these limits to demonstrate to which extent lexical innovation can be taken in 5th-century Latin.

Università degli Studi di Milano
Dipartimento di Studi letterari, filologici e linguistici
paola.moretti@unimi.it

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