A CURA DI
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WHEN I USE A WORD, IT MEANS JUST WHAT I CHOOSE IT TO MEAN - NEITHER MORE NOR LESS

STUDIES IN HONOUR OF STEFANIA NUCCORINI

Roma TrE-Press
2023

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Dora Faraci[*]

The Section Nomina arborum *in Ælfric's* Glossary

ABSTRACT:

The present essay analyses some aspects of the chapter *Nomina arborum* of the bilingual Latin- Old English glossary of Ælfric of Eynsham, one of the most prolific authors in Anglo-Saxon England. The choice of this section of the glossary, so far not fully investigated, is based on an attempt to explain Ælfric's rationale behind the compilation of this chapter, particularly: a) the inclusion of terms belonging to different semantic fields in an entry that suggests only a list of tree species; b) the strategy of listing the various terms following an associative line; c) the interpretation of an unusual gloss indicating the absence of a vernacular term for 'cypress'. The typology of the entries chosen, widely used in literature in their literal or metaphorical value, and the way they are arranged reveal Ælfric's pedagogical intent and his ability in harmonising knowledge.

KEYWORDS: Ælfric's glossary, Impossibility of glossing, Latin-Old English, Tree-names

 In the late 10th century one of the most learned and prolific authors of Anglo-Saxon England, Ælfric, abbot of Eynsham[1], produced a grammatical triad for the instruction of young learners in Latin[2]: a Latin grammar written in Old English, which is the first Latin grammar in a vernacular in Europe, a Latin-Old English glossary appended to it[3] and a Colloquy in the form of a Latin conversation between a teacher and his pupils[4].

 The number of the surviving manuscripts, the time span they cover and the re-use of these materials reflect the important part this pedagogical unit has played in medieval England. Considering the relevance of Ælfric's innovative programme it is no surprise that it has received

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[1] The literature on Ælfric is extensive. For his life and works see H. MAGENNIS, M. SWAN (eds.), 2009. For Ælfric's instructional programme, see Chapter 7, *Ælfric as Pedagogue*, by T.N. HALL, 2009, pp. 193-216.

[2] On Ælfric's didactic works see H. GNEUSS, 2002, J. HILL, 2007, pp. 285-307; P. LENDINARA, 2012, pp. 83-124.

[3] All the quoations from Ælfric's Grammar and Glossary (from now on indicated as *Gr*. and *Gl*.) are taken from J. ZUPITZA (ed.), 1880 [2003].

[4] Ms. London, BL, Cotton Tiberius A III contains a continuous interlinear Old English gloss to Ælfric's Colloquy; see G.N. GARMONSWAY (ed.), 1939.

considerable attention from the critics, mainly in the last decades.

In this paper I will look closely at Ælfric's Latin-Old English *Glossary*[5] and particularly at the section titled *Nomina arborum* in order to advance some hypotheses about the strategy governing the compilation of this specific chapter where words are placed within a broad context that stretches beyond the boundaries of the plant world and which reflects Ælfric's distinctive method of classification and selection.

Written around 993-998[6], Ælfric's *Glossary* is a class glossary[7], e.g. a glossary organized by subjects and not alphabetically and is considered the first example of a Latin-Old English bilingual dictionary. Its relationship with other texts is difficult to assess: like the 11th century Antwerp-London Glossary[8], which has a sibling relationship to Ælfric's *Glossary*, one of its main sources is Isidore's *Etymologiae*[9], or an epitomized class glossary derived from it, as many of the words, some of their definitions and the headings of the individual batches of entries show. Being a bilingual glossary, the importance of Ælfric's work lies not only in the field of English, but also in that of Latin, since it testifies to the early use of some Medieval Latin words[10].

Thanks to its didactic efficacy, it enjoyed a considerable widespread use that is proved by the number of extant manuscripts (seven, all of them from the 11th century), by later translations[11] and transcripts from it[12], and by its use for the compilation of other glossaries[13].

Moreover, one of the manuscripts that transmits Ælfric's *Glossary*, Ms BL, Cotton Faustina A.X (11th cent., with later annotations), for the multilingual (Latin, Anglo-Norman, Old and Middle English) interlinear or marginal glosses it contains, offers good evidence for language

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[5] Aspects of the work have been dealt with by L. Lazzari, 2003.

[6] For the dates of composition of Ælfric's works, cf. A.J. Kleist, 2019.

[7] See P. Lendinara, 2009.

[8] On this topic, see the essays by D.W. Porter, 1999, 2010, 2011, 2014.

[9] For Isidore's text, see the edition by W. M. Lindsay, 1911.

[10] Concerning the chapter on trees, R.L. Thomson, 1981 notes (p. 159) that R.E. Latham, 1965, p. 414 records *sabina* "savin" for the 14th cent. in the form *sabina*, for the 12th cent. in the form *savina*, ignoring Ælfric's occurrence which predates both. Thomson also notes (p. 157) that in the Latin word pair *provincia vel paga* (glossing Old English *scyr*, *Gl.* 313.1), instead of classical *pagus* (a masculine noun), the feminine *paga* is used, which indicates a Celtic Latin form

[11] I refer to the *Vocabularium Cornicum*. See O. Padel, 2014.

[12] For the 16th century transcript by John Leland, which is an early witness to the interest on Anglo-Saxon studies after the dissolution of the monasteries, see. E Buckalew, 1978.

[13] See the recent paper by D.W. Porter, 2022.

contacts in post-conquest England trilingual society[14].

Ælfric's *Glossary* consists of the following sections where words are grouped according to different semantic fields: NOMINA; NOMINA MEMBRORUM, NOMINA AVIUM; NOMINA PISCIUM; NOMINA FERARUM; NOMINA HERBARUM; NOMINA ARBORUM; NOMINA DOMORUM[15].

The titles of some of these sections are misleading, because sometimes their content does not match the headings exactly[16]. Whereas other parts of the *Glossary*, such as *Nomina membrorum* and *Nomina domorum*, which also include items that the title does not encompass, have been analysed and divided into detailed sub-groups, the section *Nomina arborum* has so far received little critical attention and the different semantic fields it encompasses have not been interrelated[17]. In an attempt to explain the criteria behind the composition of this chapter, which is apparently a random mixture of words, what I wish to discuss here is its overall structure, the likely reason of the inclusion of terms which usually do not appear in glossary sections on trees, the order followed by Ælfric in assembling the items and the rather unusual statement accompanying the unglossed lemma *cypressus*. The way Ælfric lists the terms within this section and the relationship he seems to establish among them are significant in order to understand the kind of texts he meant to elucidate in his teaching activity and the vocabulary he regarded as essential for his students to learn.

The following are the items[18] in the chapter *Nomina arborum* (with the English translation of the Old English terms added in brackets)[19]:

Arbor treow (tree). *flos* blostm (flower). *cortex* rind (bark). *folium* leaf (leaf). *buxus* box (box). *fraxinus* æsc (ash). *quercus uel ilex* ac

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[14] See H. Pagan, A. Seiler, 2019.

[15] For the uncommon arrangement of the items (the *Glossary* begins with *Deus Omnipotens*), see D.T. Starnes, G.E. Noyes, G. Stein, 1991, pp. 198-199.

[16] See R.T. Meyer, 1956, R.G. Gillingham, 1981, L. Lazzari, 2003 and W. Hüllen, 1999 pp. 62-66.

[17] A list of the items is in R.G Gillingham, 1981, p. 7 and L. Lazzari, 2003, p. 163 («parti di albero, alberi, arbusti, alberi tagliati, termini geografici»).

[18] The *Glossary* has generally a lemma with its Old English gloss, sometimes two lemmata and one interpretamentum and in some cases a lemma and two interpretamenta.

[19] The exact translation of the items is problematic since some plants are difficult to be identified. See H. Sauer, 1999.

(oak). *taxus* iw (yew). *corilus* hæsel (hazel). *fagus* boctreow[20] (beech tree). *alnus* alr (alder). *laurus* lawerbeam (laurel). *malus* apeldre (apple tree). *pinus* pintreow (pine). *fructus* wæstm (fruit). *baculus* stæf (staff). *uirga* gyrd (rod). *uirgultum* telgra (twig, shoot). *ramus* boh (bough). *glans* æceren (acorn). *granum* cyrnel (kernel, grain). *radix* wyrtruma (root). *pirus* pyrige (pear tree). *prunus* plumtreow (plum tree). *ficus* fictreow (fig tree). *ulcia*[21] holen (holly). *populus* byrch (birch). *palma* palmtwiga[22] (palm). *sabina* sauene (savin). *genesta* brom (broom). *cedrus* cederbeam (cedar). *cypressus* næfð nænne engliscne naman (it has no English name). *sentes*[23] þornas (briers). *frutex* þyfel (bush). *ramnus* fyrs (furze, thornbush). *spina* þorn (thorn). *uepres* bremelas (brambles). *abies* æps (aspen tree or fir tree)[24]. *olea uel oliua* elebeam (olive tree). *morus* morbeam (mulberry tree). *uitis* wintreow (vine). *salix* wiðig (withy or willow). *silua* wudu (wood). *lignum* aheawen treow (hewn tree). *ligna* drige wudu (dry wood). *truncus* stoc (stock, trunk). *stirps* styb (stump). *nemus uel saltus* holt (forest). *desertum uel heremus* westen (desert). *uia* weg (way). *semita* pæð (path). *inuium* butan wege (without a way). *iter* siðfæt (journey). *patria* eþel (homeland). *prouincia uel paga* scyr (province). *mons* dun (mountain). *collis* hyll oððe beorh (hill). *uallis* dene (valley), *foenum* hig oððe gærs. (hay or grass) *ager* æcer (field). *seges* asawen æcer[25] (cultivated land). *campus* feld (plain).

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[20] For the combination of the names of trees with the word *beam* or *treow*, a kind of formation mainly used with tree names borrowed from Latin, see H. Sauer, 2008, at pp. 454-455, 463 and references.

[21] According to the *Dictionary of Old English: A to I online*, A. Cameron *et al.* (eds.), 2018, s.v. "holen", *ulcia* might be a corruption of Lat. *uicia*, vetch (for *uicium*, glossed as *fugles bene*, cf. J.R. Stracke, 1974, p. 66; see also J.H. Hessel, 1890, p. 120 and J. D. Pheifer, 1974, p. 57), a form attested in Isidore, *Etym.* X, 210. *Ulcia* might be a misreading of Lat. *uicia*, due to the confusion between i and l or a scribal error in the transcription of a rare Latin word. The same dictionary also indicates "holly" as a translation of *holen*. In other glossaries *holen* translates Lat. *ruscus* (holly) and *acrifolus*. See D.W. Porter, 1999, p. 171 and the *Dictionary of Old English Plant Names*, ed. by P. Bierbaumer, H. Sauer *et al.*, 2007-2009, http://oldenglish-plantnames.org, s.v. *holen*. For *vicia* in the Bible, see Isaiah 28, 25 and Ezekiel 4, 9.

[22] Lat. *palma* is also translated in Old English as *palm* or *palmtreow*. *Palmtwiga*, which also denotes palm branches, as well as a token of victory, is attested in several glosses of Psalms 79,12 and 91,13. See the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, A. di Paolo Healey *et al.* (eds.), 2009, s.v. *palmtwiga*.

[23] In his *Grammar* (p. 84), Ælfric mentions *sentes* and *uepres* among those nouns that have only the plural form.

[24] For the interpretation of this gloss see C.P. Biggam, 2003.

[25] Cf. Isidore, *Etym.* XV, xiii, 8: *seges ager est in quo seritur*.

pascua læsa (pasture). *pons* bryge (bridge). *uadum* ford (ford), *pratum* mæd (meadow). *aqua* wæter (water). *gutta uel stilla* dropa (drop). *stagnum* mere (pond). *amnis* ea (river). *flumen uel fluuius* flod (river or flowing water). *ripa* stæþ (bank). *litus* sæstrand (seashore). *alueus* stream (stream). *torrens* burna (torrent). *riuus* rið (brook). *fons* wyll (spring). *arena* sandceosol (sand). *gurges* wæl[26] (whirlpool). *uiuarium* fiscpol[27] (fishpond). *puteus* pytt (pit). *lacus* seað (reservoir). *latex* burna oððe broc[28] (stream or brook).

From the variety of items of the section, one may infer that the heading is a misnomer for the author does not exclusively deal with tree names. Indeed, many are the interpolations of non-botanical words in this apparently chaotic list which gathers groups of entries belonging to different semantic fields and where common and rare nouns are mingled together. The words, that are listed in no specific order, can be approximately divided into the following main sub-groups: parts of a tree, kinds of trees, plant products, shrubs, brambles, nature of the soil, and terms related to flowing or standing water. Interspersed among them there are a few entries which is difficult to relate to the others, since they do not strictly belong to any of these sub-groups, such as *patria* and *prouincia*. Most of the items (except for four names: *corilus*, *ulcia*, *sabina* and *genesta*) are found in separate sections of Isidore's *Etymologiae*: beside lib. XVII, vi *De arboribus* and XVII, vii *De propriis nominibus arborum*, we should also consider lib. XIII, xx and xxi *De fluminibus*, XIV, viii *De montibus ceterisque terrae vocabulis,* XV, xiii *De agris,* XV, xvi *De itineribus*, and to a lesser extent, only for a pair of terms, VII, xiii, 4 *De Monachis* and XIV, v *De Libya*; many appear in Ælfric's *Grammar*[29] and a few in the Colloquy[30]. Some of them are not recorded in the "sib-

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[26] See the expansion in *Gr*., p. 52: «*hic gurges* <þis> wæl**,** þæt is, deop wæter».

[27] The Corpus Glossary reads: *bifarius*, piscina; cf W.M. Lindsay (ed.), 1921, p. 26. For *vivaria* see Plinius, *Hist. Nat*. 9, 168. In the *Lindisfrarne Gospels*, *fiscpol* translates *piscina probatica* (John, 5, 2-7). See W.W. Skeat (ed.), 1878, p. 45.

[28] D.W. Porter, 2011, p.158, takes «*latex* burna oððe broc» as an example of Ælfriic's strategy of combining entries from Isidore.

[29] Glosses do not always coincide in the *Grammar* and *Glossary*; compare for instance *Gr*., p. 69: «*ilex* æcerspranca oððe ac», with *Gl*., p. 312 «*quercus uel ilex* ac». Just one example among many showing that entries may contain a lemma and two interpretamenta or two lemmata and one interpretamentum. See P. Lendinara, 1983.

[30] Since the Colloquy describes a conversation between master and pupils, who speak about their different occupations, only a few terms of the section *Nomina arborum* appear in it. Among them: *ager*, *campus*, *silua*, *ea*, *pascua*, *uirga*. Different is the case of Ælfric Bata's

ling" Antwerp-London Glossary (such as *folium*, *fructus*, *baculus*, *virga, sabina*, *cypressus*, *ligna, foenum*) or appear dislocated or in different batches of entries and in a different order.

Once ascertained the heterogeneity of the semantic fields extant in the unit, it remains to be seen whether it is possible to find a *fil rouge* which connects the different items and justifies the presence of terms which have been collectively referred to as geographical nouns in a chapter entitled *Nomina arborum*. As a matter of fact, behind the apparent lack of order, a certain coherence may be observed. The two major groups of terms consist of words properly referring to trees or plants and words related to their natural environment, that is mountains, hills, fields and watercourses. Consistency lies in the fact that different plants require different habitats to grow. Therefore, the chapter cannot be regarded as a random collection of words: Ælfric's arrangement gives evidence of the connection he establishes between words, individually or in clusters, and context. This is why items that in Isidore or in other class glossaries appear in separate sections, in Ælfric are combined, occasionally along lines of association, to form a coherent whole, that reflects a specific teaching strategy and displays literary or scriptural influences.

Although the relationship between plants and environment, in realistic or figurative descriptions, may seem fairly obvious, it has been overlooked by scholars previously engaged in the analysis of Ælfric's *Glossary*. Such a link is well attested in the Bible, patristic exegesis and in texts from the Classical, Late Antique and medieval traditions known in Anglo-Saxon England and likely used in an educational setting.

Beside the description of Eden in the book of Genesis 2, 8-14[31], with all kinds of beautiful trees and a river to water the garden, numerous are the biblical examples that speak of plants and environments, very often metaphorically, as for instance Psalm 1, 3 ('Et erit tamquam lignum, quod plantatum est secus decursus aquarum, quod fructum suum dabit in tempore suo: Et folium ejus non defluet: et omnia qaecumque faciet, prosperabuntur'), or Isaiah 41, 18-20 where, in the account of a sort of new Eden created in the desert, we find many of the terms that Ælfric has embedded in the chapter *Nomina arborum*: "Aperiam in supinis collibus

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Colloquy where a variety of names of trees and plants, drawn from Ælfric's *Glossary*, are mentioned. See P. Lendinara, 2005, p. 110.

[31] The Vulgate is quoted according to *Biblia sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*, R. Weber (ed.), 5th ed., 2007.

flumina, et in medio camporum fontes ponam desertum in stigma aquarum et terram inviam in rivos aquarum. **¹⁹** Dabo in solitudine cedrum et spinam et myrtum, et lignum olivae ponam in deserto abietem ulmum et buxum simul**²⁰** ut videant et sciant, et recogitent et intellegant pariter quia manus Domini fecit hoc et Sanctus Israhel creavit illud".

Virgil (*Eclogues*, 7, 65-6) places some tree species (all of them named in Ælfric's *Glossary*) in different areas according to their nature: «Fraxinus in silvis pulcherrima, pinus in hortis, populus in fluviis, abies in montibus altis» (In the forests the ash is most beautiful, the pine in the gardens, the poplar by rivers, the fir on high mountains). Isidore (*Etym*. XIII, xxi), in explaining the etymology of *amnis*, river, (glossed *ea* by Ælfric), links the noun to the type of vegetation that grows close by: «Amnis fluvius est nemore ac frondibus redimitus, et ex ipsa amoenitate amnis vocatus» (*Amnis* is a river surrounded by groves or leafy branches and because of its pleasantness (*amoenitas*) it is said *amnis*)[32]. Combinations of environmental features are also used to exemplify philosophical concepts, as the following passage from Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae,* which deals with the natural tendency of living beings, plants and inanimate things for self-preservation, shows:

> «Atqui non est quod de hoc quoque possis ambigere, cum herbas atque arbores intuearis primum sibi convenientibus innasci locis, ubi, quantum earum natura queat, cito exarescere atque interire non possint. Nam aliae quidem campis aliae montibus oriuntur, alias ferunt paludes, aliae saxis haerent, aliarum fecundae sunt steriles harenae, quas si in alia quispiam loca transferre conetur, arescant. Sed dat cuique natura, quod convenit, et ne, dum manere possunt, intereant, elaborat» (III, xi)[33].

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[32] In the Antwerp-London Glossary we read: «Amnis, ea mid treowum ymbset» (a river surrounded by trees).

[33] C. MOHRMANN, O. DALLERA, (ed.) 1977, p. 244 The following is the Old English translation of the passage, where some of the terms, or their synonyms, used by Ælfric appear: «Ne þearft þu no be þæm gesceaftum tweogan þon ma þe be ðæm oðrum. Hu ne meaht þu gesion þæt ælc wyrt and ælc wudu wile weaxan on þæm lande selest þe him betst gerist and him gecynde bið and gewunlic, and þær þær hit gefret þæt hit hraðost weaxan mæg and latost wealowian? Sumra wyrta oðða sumes wuda eard bið on dunum, sumra on merscum, sumra on morum, sumra on cludum, sumra on barum sondum. Nim ðonne swa wudu swa wyrt swa hwæðer swa þu wille of þære stowe þe his eard and æþelo bið on to wexanne, and sete on ungecynde stowe him; þonne ne gegrewð hit þær nauht ac forsearað. Forðæm ælces landes gecynd is þæt him gelica wyrta and gelicne wudu tydre and hit swa deð; friðað and fyrðrað swiðe georne swa lange swa hiora gecynd bið þæt hi growen moton» (You don't need to be doubtful at all about those creatures any more than about the others. Can you not see that

That Ælfric's intention was not to provide a lexical resource for daily monastic communication in Latin[34], nor for describing the English landscape, is made evident by his choice to include tree names and items that occur most frequently in literature. The vocabulary of the stock images of the ideal landscape[35] (with groves, meadows, springs of water) comes to mind, as well as that of the mixed forest represented in the tree-catalogues which, with variations, have found their way from Antiquity into the Middle Ages and beyond. Moreover, on account of the symbolism associated with it, the natural world was widely used as an aid in explaining spiritual concepts[36]. And Ælfric himself, reworking his source material, in some passages of his homiletic texts resorts to the plant world analogically[37].

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that literary descriptions of environments which are presented as realistic, and whose meaning is to be sought in the rhetoric tradition and the allegorical sphere instead, are not uncommon. A meaningful example is offered by Bede. In the opening passages of Book I of his *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, Bede describes Britannia and says that the island is "rich in grain and trees"

every plant and tree wants most to grow on the land that best suits it and is natural and customary for it, and where it feels that it can grow most quickly and fade most slowly? Some plants and trees have their home on hills, some in marshes, some on moors, some on rocks, some on bare sand. Then take the tree or plant, whichever you will, from the place in which its home and origin for growing are and place it in a habitat that is unnatural to it; then it will not grow there at all, but wither. It is the nature of every kind of land that it nurtures similar plants and trees, and it does so; it protects and advances them very keenly for as long as it is their nature that they may grow). See M. Godden, S. Irvine (eds.), 2012, pp. 244-245.

[34] Whereas the vocabulary of other sections of Ælfric's *Glossary* may have been used for everyday life in the monastery (cf. diPaolo Healey, A. 2012, p. 4) the one of this chapter is rather learned and uncommon.

[35] The reference is to E.R. Curtius, 2013, pp. 183-202. For the motif of the *locus amoenus* in Old English literature, see the poems *Phoenix*, based upon Lactantius's *Carmen de ave phoenice*, and *Judgment Day II*, a translation from Bede's *De die iudicii*. On the subject see C.A.M. Clarke, 2006.

[36] Suffice here to mention Rabanus Maurus' *De Universo*, XIX, v-vi (*PL* 111, cols. 505-552).

[37] Ælfric employs some of the words we find in the first lines of the chapter *Nomina arborum* in his homily *The first Sunday after Easter*. The passage, which is derived from Gregorius' *Hom. In Ev*. 26 (PL 76, col.1204), explains the mystery of the creation of Adam out of clay as follows: «Men geseoð oft þæt of anum lytlum cyrnele. cymð micel treow: ac we næ magon geseon on þam cyrnele: naðor ne wyrtruman: ne rinde: ne bogas: ne leaf» (Men often see that of one little kernel comes a great tree, but in the kernel we can see neither root, nor rind nor boughs, nor leaves); cf. P. Clemoes (ed.), 1997, p. 311and M. Godden (ed.), 2000, pp. 132-133. For the history of trees in a cultural and environmental perspective see D. Hooke, 2010.

(«Opima frugibus atque arboribus»), but, immediately afterwards, he only mentions the vine adding that it grows in various places («uineas etiam quibusdam in locis germinans»), a statement that is at odds with Tacit's more realistic description of the plants growing in that country[38]. It is evident that Bede's intent is to portray England as a sort of Eden[39] and to underline, consequently, that the English were to be numbered among God's chosen people.

Evidence of the Anglo-Saxons' unfamiliarity with some of the trees listed in the section is given by an excursus in one of Ælfric's sermons where, in expanding his sources, he outlines the features of the olive tree (commenting also on different eating habits of northern and southern populations). His detailed explanation is clearly intended to convey information about a plant never seen by his audience: «Ele wyxt on treowum, eall swa win deð; ac elebeamas beoð maran on wæstme, and þa berian grytran, and hy man gaderað and wringð, and man et þone ele, swa swa we etað buteran, on manegum estmettum, and he is metta fyrmest»[40] (Oil is produced by trees, just like wine is, but olive-trees bear larger fruits and the berries are bigger. One gathers and presses them, and then one eats the oil, as we eat butter, in many delicacies, and it is an excellent food).

Thus, the general framework shows that at least this section of the *Glossary* gathers terms necessary for the understanding of literary works and not for everyday conversation.

Let us now consider the way individual words have been arranged in the chapter. Having in mind the heading, we would expect to encounter a list of specific trees after *arbor*, like the short sequences we find in his *Grammar*. In the *Praefatio de partibus orationis*, where Ælfric explains the difference between *Generalia* and *Specialia*, after the hyperonym tree (*Gr.*, p. 14: «*arbor* ælces cynnes treow», *arbor*, a tree of any kind),

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[38] Tacit numbers the olive and the vine among the trees which, for being accustomed to grow in warmer regions, are not cultivated in England; cf. *Agricola* XII, 5 (E. KOESTERMANN (ed.),1970): «Solum praeter oleam vitemque et cetera calidioribus terris oriri sueta patiens frugum pecudumque fecundum […]».

[39] J.M. WALLACE-HADRILL, 1988, p. 6. In the Old English prose dialogue *Solomon and Saturn*, in a passage derived from 4Ezra 5, 23, the grapevine is said to be the best of all trees: «Saga me hwilc treow ys ealra treowa bests. Ic þe secge, þæt is wintreow» (Tell me which tree is the best of all trees. I tell you it is the vine), in J.E. CROSS, T.D. HILL (eds.), 1982, p. 31 and pp. 94-95. See also E. ANDERSON, 2003, p. 378.

[40] *Dominica X Post Pentecosten*, in J.C. POPE (ed.), 1967, II, p. 552. For this and other references see A. GAUTIER, 2013, p. 394 and. ID., 2018, pp. 426-427.

he lists six hyponyms: *Gr.*, p. 14: «gemænelice *arbor* treow» (general noun: tree); «synderlice *uitis* wintreow, *laurus* lawerbeam, *corilus* hæsel, *abies* æps, *quercus* ac, *malus* apuldre» (specific nouns: vine, laurel, hazel, aspen tree, oak, apple tree)[41]. If we compare this passage with the corresponding one of its main sources, i.e Priscianus, we notice that Ælfric expands his model's list of names where, among *Specialia*, only *vitis* and *laurus* are mentioned[42], providing clear evidence of his concern with words even in his *Grammar*, where the interest on morphology and syntax is combined with an interest on vocabulary, as testified by the high number of Latin or English synonyms he supplies[43].

Interestingly, Ælfric's list of tree names is arranged in a different order from that we find in Isidore or in the Antwerp-London Glossary. In the chapter *De propriis nomina arborum* (*Etym.* XVII, vii), Isidore begins with *palma*, followed by *laurus*, *malum*, *persicum* and so on; while in the Antwerp-London Glossary at the top of the list we find *quercus et quernus vel ilex*, followed by *robur*, *quernum*, *corilus* and other tree species.

Once the expectation of an orderly sequence of trees has been abandoned, we are inclined to think that the author meant to first list the different parts of the tree, just like Isidore's *De arboribus* (Etym. XVII, vi). Instead, even this short list (only flower, rind and leaf are mentioned) is interrupted by ten names of specific varieties of trees. The catalogue continues in no strict order with a blend of terms referring to tree parts, tree species, shrubs, cut trees and brambles and then shifts to words belonging to different semantic fields, as already said.

The minor and major digressions and semantic leaps of the section may at first glance suggest that some entries are unrelated not only to the main subject, e.g. the names of the trees, but also to the previous or next items. The example proposed below may shed a light on Ælfric's way of compiling his glossary and may help us discern some coherence in it.

As we have seen, the terms belonging to the wide botanic semantic field end with *nemus vel saltus*, holt. The list then switches to *desertum vel heremus*, westen. The contiguity of the terms forest and desert, rather than marking an abrupt transition, reveals a consistent link based either on an antonymic relationship, that is luxuriant versus barren places, or on a specific shared feature, namely that both forests and deserts are uncultivated areas. This latter association may have been suggested

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[41] See also *Gr.*, pp. 29-30.
[42] D.W. Porter (ed.), 2002, p. 66 and H. Keil (ed.), 1855, II, p. 62.
[43] On this and other aspects of Ælfric's Grammar, see V. Law, 1987 (1997).

to Ælfric by a passage from Isidore who in the chapter *De montibus ceterisque terrae vocabulis* (*Etym*. XIV, viii, 31-32) mentions jointly wildernesses, forests and mountains as places that are not suitable for cultivation: «Deserta vocata quia non seruntur et ideo quasi deseruntur; ut sunt loca silvarum et montium, contraria uberrimarum terrarum, quae sunt uberrimae glebae» (Wildernesses are so called because they are not sown, and therefore, they are abandoned, as are wood and mountain areas, places that are the opposite of fertile lands that have the richest soil). Were this Isidorian echo acknowledged, the inclusion of *desertum* at this very point of the chapter might represent a kind of gradual transition to the group of entries belonging to the nature of the soil and to the agricultural sphere, such as shown by the item «*seges*, asawen æcer» (cultivated land, an explanation derived from Isid. *Etym*. XV, xiii, 8: *seges ager est in quo seritur*) that is mentioned later in the chapter. Alternatively, a further reason for the proximity of forest and desert may be suggested. If we consider that *eremus* and *deserta* appear in Isidore, *Etym*. VII, xiii, in the section *De Monachis*, the shift from wood to desert may indeed be a way of connecting two different places both appropriate for the solitary confinement of the ascetic life: in the western tradition the solitude and wilderness of forests replaced the desolate and arid landscape of the eastern hermits[44]. Transforming the desert into a forest was not unfamiliar to the Germanic world, as shown for instance by the Old Saxon poem *Heliand*[45]. Being woods a sort of metaphorical desert, presumably, no conceptual discontinuity between the two areas was perceived. Whatever conclusion we may draw from these different hypotheses, we can argue that Ælfric compiled his glossary following an associative process.

His strategy is made explicit by further details. The chapter includes some words that are not mentioned in Isidore nor in other related class glossaries and it is interesting to try to find out why Ælfric incorporates them into this specific section and how he blends tree names with extra botanical terms. A significant example is given by the lemma *baculus*, apparently a dissonant term (being a product and not a part of the plant)

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[44] See the chapter *Le désert-forêt dans l'Occident médiéval*, in J. Le Goff, 1985, pp. 59-75.
[45] The reference is to *Heliand*, lines 1121-1125, in the passage concerning the temptation of Christ in the desert (Mark 1,13), where the desert is transformed into a forest. See O. Behaghel, W. Mitzka (eds.), 1958, p. 39. For this and other examples in Old High German (as the occurrences in the *Rule of Benedict* and in Otfrid von Weissenburg), see M.J. Swisher, 1988, particularly at pp. 30-33.

if taken individually in this context, but well integrated in it if seen in conjunction with the contiguous word *uirga*, with which it forms a pair. Whereas *uirga* gyrd can refer to a twig[46], and is therefore a term that fits in well with this chapter, or to a stick, that is an implement made of wood[47] or iron, *baculus* stæf means exclusively a stiff, a stack, an emblem of kingship or a crosier. One wonders whether *baculus* has been added to this part of the *Glossary* simply because of a semantic affinity with *uirga* or whether it echoes specific scriptural verses. As a matter of fact, the inclusion of this item can be accounted for by considering that *baculus* et *uirga* occur frequently conjoined in the Bible. Beside Isaiah 10, 5 and 15 and Jeremias 48, 17, the couple appears in Psalm 22, 4. A glance at the Old English Psalm glosses reveals that the pair *uirga* and *baculus* is mostly translated with *gyrd* and *stæf*, the same terms as in the *Glossary*, with only a few exceptions[48]. The following, for example, is the Old English version of Ps 22, 4 ('Virga tua, et baculus tuus, ipsa me consolata sunt') according to the *Prose Psalter* attributed to King Alfred: (Ps 22, 5) «Þin gyrd and þin stæf me afrefredon[49]». Consequently, the word pair would have sounded rather familiar to the ears of Anglo-Saxons, especially in monastic communities.

It is known that the Psalter was a reference point in the intellectual life of the Middle Ages and one of the most studied texts[50]. Due to its fundamental importance in liturgy (the Benedictine rule prescribed

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[46] Cf. Isidore, *Etym.*, XVII, vi, 18: «Virga [autem a vi] vel a virtute dicitur, quod vim in se multam habeat, vel a viriditate, vel quia pacis indicium est, quod vim regat». See also Ælfric's homily "On the Assumption of St John the Apostle", in B. Thorpe (ed.), 1844, I, pp. 62-65: «"[…] gað nu forði to wuda, and heawað incre byrðene gyrda, and gebringað to me". Hí dydon be his hæse, and hé on Godes naman ða grenan gyrda gebletsode, and hí wurdon to readum golde awende» ("[…] go now therefore to the wood, and hew a burthen of rods, and bring them to me". They did as he had commanded, and he in God's name blessed the green rods, and they were turned to red gold). See also Numbers 17, 8 for Aaron's rod miraculously sprouting.

[47] With this meaning, specifically as an instrument of corporeal punishment, Ælfric mentions *uirga* gyrd in his *Grammar* (p.169). *Baculus* is there unattested.

[48] For further examples, see P. PULSIANO (ed.), 2001, p. 287 In some occurrences (as for instance in the *Vespasian Psalter*), the word *cryc*, staff, has been used to gloss *baculus* instead.

[49] P.P. O'NEILL (ed.), 2001, p. 125. See also a passage of Alfred's translation of the *Pastoral Care*, ch. XVII, where the Psalm is quoted: «Be thiosum illcan cwæð Dauid to Gode: Ðin gierd & ðin stæf me afrefredon. Mid gierde mon bið geswungen, & mid stæfe he bið awreðed» (Of this same David spoke to God: Thy rod and staff have comforted me. We are beaten with rods and supported by staves); cf. H. SWEET (ed.), 1871, pp. 124-127.

[50] For a study on the glossed Psalter in the western tradition, see A.H. BLOM, 2017.

that it should be recited weekly in its entirety) and private devotion, it was used as a reading instructional text for Latin language learners. Even though at an early stage the Psalter might have been memorized and sung without knowing its vocabulary exactly[51], after acquiring the rudiments of Latin grammar, students were to be trained in the Psalms and the Bible in order to understand the Latin they recited: words, expressions and grammatical constructions of the biblical and liturgical language were to be interpreted and learned correctly by clerics and laymen. It is not unusual to find passages from the Psalms and other Biblical books in the grammars: on the tracks of other medieval grammarians, Ælfric followed the practice of christianising Latin grammars by replacing classical names and quotations with biblical ones and including in his text examples taken from the Scriptures to illustrate both vocabulary and grammatical forms[52]. Many are the passages which point out Ælfric's engagement in explaining features of the biblical language[53]. Therefore, we can argue that Ælfric placed *baculus* in this chapter because the botanical term *uirga* might have drawn the other automatically to mind, owing to the frequent occurrence of the pair in the Bible. Moreover, since Psalm 22 shares other terms with the section considered here, such as *pascua*, *aqua*, *semita*, Ælfric's intent to use his *Glossary* as an educational tool for a correct interpretation of the Bible

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[51] On the impact of the Psalter in Anglo-Saxon England, see G H. BROWN, 1999.

[52] Ælfric often cites from the Bible to explain Latin expressions. A quotation from the Psalms is in *Gr.*, p. 205, where he speaks of some verbs which have the same form in the present and in the past tense. As an example, he uses the verb *odi* and adds the Latin expression *odio habere*, quoting Ps 118, 113 (*iniquos odio habui*, I hate double-minded people): «Sume word habbað gelîce PRAESENS, þæt is andweard, and PRAETERITVM: *odi* ic hatige and *odi* ic hatede, ac wê cweðað hwîlon *odio habeo* ic hæbbe on hatunge, swâswâ stent on ðâm sealme *iniquos odio habui* þâ unrihtwîsan ic hæfde on hatunge». T.N. HALL, 2009, p. 199, mentions a reference to Ps. 40, 11 (*Gr.*, p. 261).

[53] A few passages in his *Grammar* express his concern to distinguish what his grammatical authorities say from what is written in the Bible. The following statement - which is taken from the chapter devoted to adverbs, and particularly to the use of the compound adverbs *de intus*, *de foris* that Donatus has forbidden whereas Ælfric approves – is a meaningful example of the debate between classical and biblical Latin: «*de intus* wiðinnan *de foris* wiðutan, forbead DONATUS to cweðenne, ac hi standað swa þeah on halgum bocum» (Donatus forbade to say *de intus* within, *de foris* without, but they are found in the holy books), *Gr.*, p. 242. See also *Gr.*, p. 83 in relation to the plural form of Lat. *sanguis*. This is how Smaragdus (9th cent.) rejects the grammarians' rules in favour of the authority of the Scripture: «Donatum non sequimur, quia fortiorem in divinis Scripturis auctoritatem tenemus» (I disagree with Donatus, because I hold the authority of Holy Scriptures to be greater). Cf. Ch. THUROT, 1869, p. 81.

is conceivable.

The proximity and order of occurrence of other terms appear to be good indicators of Ælfric's distinctive way of selecting and combining entries. *Cedrus* and *cypressus* are paired in Virgil, *Georgics* II, 443, in the Bible in Ecclesiasticus 24,17 ('Quasi cedrus exaltata sum in Libano, et quasi cypressus in monte Sion'), and in the Song of Songs 1, 16. *Ramnus* and *spina* are contiguous in Psalm 57, 10: 'Priusquam intelligerent spinae vestrae rhamnum, sicut viventes sic in ira absorbet eos'[54]. The couple *spinae* and *uepres* occurs in various passages of the Old Testament[55]. It will suffice to quote the following verses from Isaiah where thorns and briars are mentioned in conjunction three times: (Is 7, 23-25) 'Et erit in die illa: omnis locus ubi fuerint mille vites, mille argenteis, in spinas et in vepres erunt. **24** Cum sagittis et arcu ingredientur illuc: vepres enim et spinae erunt in universa terra. **25** Et omnes montes qui in sarculo sarrientur, non veniet illuc terror spinarum et veprium: et erit in pascua bovis, et in conculcationem pecoris'. *Mons*, *collis* and *vallis* appear in a row in Isaiah 40, 4, Ezekiel 6, 3 and Luke 3, 5[56].

One may compare the words that Ælfric lists after *desertum* with Isaiah 40, 3-6: 'Vox clamantis in deserto: Parate viam Domini, rectas facite in solitudine semitas Dei nostri. **4** Omnis vallis exaltabitur, et omnis mons et collis humiliabitur, et erunt prava in directa, et aspera in vias planas:**5** et revelabitur gloria Domini, et videbit omnis caro pariter quod os Domini locutum est.**6** Vox dicentis: Clama. Et dixi: Quid clamabo? Omnis caro foenum, et omnis gloria ejus quasi flos agri'[57]. *Inuium* (impassable place) appears in conjunction with desert, among many, in Jeremiah 2, 6, Sophonias 2, 13, Psalm 62,3. Particularly significant is the example offered by the Old English translation of Psalm 106 in the

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[54] In the vernacular interlinear version of the Gallican Psalter of Lambeth Palace (11th cent.), Psalm 57, 10 is glossed as follows: «ær þan undergæton eowre þornas fyrs swaswa libbende swaswa on yrre he forswelhþ hig» (Before your thorns could know the brier, he swallows them up, as alive, in his wrath). See U. Lindelöf, 1909, p. 92.

[55] The highest concentration is in the Book of Isaiah, where the two terms appear in the plural or in the singular form (Is 5,6; 9, 18; 13, 17; 9, 18; 27, 4). In his *Grammar* Ælfric places *uepres* and *sentes* among those nouns that have only the plural form. See also the Antwerp-London Glossary and for *sentes*, Lindsay, 1921, p. 161. Isidore's entry (*Etym.* XVII, vii, 60) is *sentix*. In Latin poetry both words occur usually in the plural. For *sentes*, cf. Job 30, 7 and Vergil, *Aeneid* 9, 382.

[56] Isidore in *Etym.* XIV, viii, 1-22 (*De montibus ceterisque terrae vocabulis*) mentions *mons*, *collis* and *vallis* one after the other.

[57] See in the *Glossary* the sequence *desertum, uia, semita* (interrupted by *iter, patria* et *prouincia*), *mons, collis, vallis, foenum, ager*. C. Mk 1, 1-3, Mt 3, 3, Lk 3, 4, Jo 1, 22-23.

Lambeth Psalter, in the verse referring to Israel as a pilgrim in the desert (Ps 106, 40: 'Effusa est contentio super principes; et errare fecit eos in inuio et non in uia' , where *inuium*[58] is glossed by two terms, one of which is *butan wege*, the same gloss used by Ælfric in his *Glossary*: (Ps 106, 40) «Agoten is geflit vel forsewennys ofer ealderas and dwelian he dyde hig on weglæste vel butan wege and na on wege»[59] (He pours contention and contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes, without a way and not along a way).

Moreover, even in the selection of synonyms, Ælfric seems to show a strong dependence on the Old English Biblical glosses[60]. If we consider the word *foenum*, we see that, while in the Glossary it is glossed *hig oððe gærs*, in his *Grammar* it is translated *gærs oððe streow* (*Gr.*, p. 8), simply *strew* (*Gr.*, p. 83) or *gærs* (*Gr.*, p. 292), and in the *Colloquy* (p.33) *hig*[61]. It is interesting to notice that in the glosses to the Psalms *foenum* is never translated with *stre(o)w* but only with *hig* or *gærs*[62] and that sometimes the two *interpretamenta* occur together as in *Lambeth Psalter*, where Ps 104, 35 ('Et comedit omne foenum in terra eorum') is glossed as follows: «& he fræt uel he æt eall hyg uel gærs on eorðan uel lande heora»[63]; or in the *Lindisfarne Gospels* where the rendering of *foenum* (John 6,10) is *gærs vel heig*[64]. Ælfric may have decided to discard *stre(o)w* in favour of *hig* in order to follow the tradition of the Biblical glosses. An attempt to rationalize the entire sequence is, however, not possible.

There is another detail that invites notice and highlights the difficult task of rendering Greek or Latin plant or tree names in Anglo-Saxon. I refer to the remark concerning the word cypress, «*cypressus*, næfð nænne engliscne naman» (*cypressus*. it has no English name) that has

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[58] *Invium* is generally glossed *wegleas* or *wegleast* (want of road) and *ungefere* (impassable).
[59] U. Lindelöf, (ed.) 1909, p. 176.
[60] This procedure cannot be regarded as a rule. *Salix,* for instance, is glossed *wiðig* (withy or willow) by Ælfric, while in the Old English glosses to the Psalms it is often translated *sealh* or *welig*. See Ps 136.2 (In salicibus in medio eius suspendimus organa nostra) from the *Vespasian Psalter*: «In salum in midle hire we hengun organan ure», in S.M. Kuhn, (ed.), 1965, p. 135 ; see also U. Lindelöf, (ed.), 1909, p. 216. *on saligum*. For *in salicibus*, on welgum, attested in the *Blickling Psalter* glosses, cf. P. Pulsiano, 2001, p. xxxviii.
[61] P. Lendinara, 1983, pp. 199-200.
[62] See P. Pulsiano, 2001, p. 493 and P. Bierbaumer, H. Sauer *et al.*, (eds.), 2007-2009 , s.v. *gærs* and *heg*.
[63] U. Lindelöf, (ed.) 1909, p. 168.
[64] The same terms (*heg uel gers*) appear in the *Rushworth Gospels*. Cf. W.W. Skeat, 1878, p. 55.

been considered as Ælfric's "disarming acknowledgment of glossarial failure"[65] or as a sign of his modesty[66]. Here, as it happens occasionally in other contexts and with other words, he leaves the word *cypressus* untranslated as if to underline the foreign origin of the tree[67]. His remark contrasts with the glossing strategy he generally adopts. As a matter of fact, Ælfric does not follow a uniform method in compiling his *Glossary*. Instead of a word-to-word translation, now and then he gives detailed explanations, sometimes even encyclopaedic in character. Therefore, the question arises as to the reason behind Ælfric's choice of including a lemma, even more so in a bilingual glossary, being aware that no current vernacular translation was available. The author is here confronted with the difficulty of rendering a word which has no correspondent in Old English[68]. Elsewhere, if no equivalent English translation was available or if he was not satisfied with existing glosses or explanations, Ælfric had offered an original solution, as in the case of *testudo*, tortoise: «se þe hæfð hus» (*testudo*, he who has a house)[69]. Indeed, the noun *cypressus* seems to have been a puzzle for glossators who have tried to solve the problem of explaining it in various ways, either simply indicating its Greek origin[70] or giving a general definition also used for other unfamiliar trees. Unlike some other instances of rare terms where instead of a translation Ælfric borrows a definition from Isidore, as he does for instance with *griffes* (*Gl.*, p. 309. 4)[71], concerning *cypressus* he

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[65] A. DIPAOLO HEALEY, 2012, p. 4.

[66] J. CONSADINE, 2014, p. 31.

[67] In the Vita S. Martini in his *Lives of Saints* Ælfric leaves the name of the plant *elleborus* in its Latin form and mentions its property «ættrig wyrt» (poisonous plant). See A. HALL, 2013, pp. 71-72.

[68] In a passage of his *Grammar* (p. 252) Ælfric states that there is no English equivalent for the future participle of Lat. *queo*: « *quiturus*, ac we ne cunnon nan englisc þær to» (*quiturus*, but we know no English word for it). On the difficulty of rendering Latin words or concepts in English, see R. DEROLEZ, 1989, p. 473.

[69] *Gl.*, p. 310. See P. LENDINARA, 2015. Ælfric used to provide elaborate explanations of rare terms in his *Grammar* too. With regard to the *fenix* (*Gr.*, p. 70), after saying that phoenix is an Arabic name and that the bird after living for five hundred years dies and then rises again, Ælfric adds an allegorical explanation of its rebirth in a Christian perspective.

[70] In the *Harley Glossary* (11th cent.) we read: «Ciparissus *cipres*sus. Graece». See R.T. OLIPHANT (ed.), 1966, p. 80. For a similar entry, cf. the continental *Abstrusa Glossary* (7th cent.): «Cyparissus; cypressus; Graecum est. (Verg.?)»; in W.M. LINDSAY, H. J. THOMSON (eds.), 1926, III, p. 21.

[71] *Gl.* p. 309: «*griffes*, fiðerfote fugel leone gelic on wæstme and earne gelic on heafde and on fiðerum: se is swa micel, þæt he gewylt hors and men» (griffin, a four-footed bird like a lion in shape and like an eagle in its head and its wings and it is so big that he

behaves differently. In the case in point, Isidore, after underlining the Greek origin of the name, provides a description of the tree: (*Etym.*, XVII, vii, 34) «Cyparissus Graece dicitur quod caput eius a rotunditate in acumen erigitur» (The cypress is so called in Greek because its head rises from a spherical shape into a point). If we move on to other glossarial material, we notice that in the Antwerp-London Glossary the word is missing from the list of trees[72]; in the *Corpus Glossary* the name *cupressus* is followed by a generic definition which is also used with respect to other tree species: «Cupressus, genus ligni»[73]. In Ælfric Bata's Colloquy, in a passage dealing with trees growing in an orchard, which is described as a mixed forest with a long catalogue of trees and plants taken from Ælfric's *Glossary*, *cypressus* is left out. The pupils' answer to the teacher's question («Quales arbores crescent in uestro pomerio?» What kinds of trees grow in your orchard?) brings to light the difficulty of rendering some plant names in the vernacular: «Multorum generum, sed nescimus tibi omnia anglice interpretare» (Many kinds, but we can't translate them all into English for you)[74]. While in a sample of fictitious conversations untranslatable names can be easily left out from a list, in a text-oriented tool, designed for elucidating rare terms, the impossibility of finding a gloss needs to be underlined. Ælfric 's choice to abandon any possible alternative of glossing *cypressus* and to signal instead the lack of an English term for it invites us to consider the function and use of glossaries. Although we can only speculate on the intentions of medieval glossators[75], we may assume that Ælfric's *Glossary* was a book meant not for reference use, but to be employed for teaching purposes, as an aid to assist the pupils with scriptural or literary studies,

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[72] In the Antwerp-London Glossary, in ms. London, British Library, Add. Ms 32246, f 10r, an example shows how troublesome it was to find a translation of the name of some tree species. As far as the lemma *iuniperus* is concerned, no *interpretamentum* is given and in the codex the line underneath has been left blank. It is hard to establish whether the glossator meant to fill in the space after having found a fitting word or whether he interrupted the list at that point and then, in resuming it, he accidentally forgot to translate the *lemma*.

overcomes horses and men), to be compared to Isidore, Etym. XII, ii, 17; cf. H. Sauer, 2008, pp. 458-459.

[73] W.M. Lindsay (ed.), 1921, p. 50. Ælfric himself adopts a similar explanation, mainly with reference to animals. See *Gr*. p. 48: «*hic uultur* anes cynnes fugel» (vulture, a kind of bird) or *Gr*. p. 74: «*hoc allec* anes cynnes fisc» (herring, a kind of fish). For the different ways of glossing the word *animal* in his *Glossary*, see L.Lazzari, 2003, pp. 168, 175 and 177.

[74] S. Gwara, D.W. Porter (eds.), 1997, pp. 156-157.

[75] See, for instance, H. Gneuss, 1990, p. 21.

and as such it was in the hands of the teacher and not of the students[76]. Considering that no standardized vernacular form of *cypressus* was available, he might have provided an oral explanation to illustrate the issue of foreign words that have been incorporated into English with no adaptation and *cypressus* (a Greek word absorbed into Latin) was one of them: a non-integrated loan-word. As the name cypress was recurring in the Bible and classical texts and could not be overlooked, Ælfric added a remark - although this kind of annotation is expected to be written on scraps and not on parchment -, as a sort of reminder: he would have presumably explained the origin of the name orally to his pupils and maybe even given a description of the main features of the tree[77]. If in his homilies, as we have seen regarding the olive tree, he deemed appropriate to illustrate unfamiliar terms to his audience, even more so should we conceive of his effort to make uncommon words comprehensible in a didactic context.

Many questions remain open. We are not able to identify the sources of his *Glossary* with precision or to state whether Ælfric is the original compiler, or whether the scribes modified his text in the process of transmission[78]. I am inclined to think that at least the arrangement of the items is original with him: he might have added new threads to the fabric of earlier glossaries and combined the entries according to the context or the contiguity with which they appear in the texts he meant to explain to his pupils. We cannot determine the specific use of this *Glossary* nor Ælfric's purposes for its compilation. Nor can we fully understand the knowledge that Ælfric meant to convey to his pupils. Nevertheless, regarding the chapter *Nomina arborum* and considering the extensive use of the natural world in religious or secular literature, one might imagine how often Ælfric's pupils would have worked on texts where this selected list of terms occurred and how often Ælfric (and others after him) has been engaged in explaining the specific meaning of each

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[76] G.R. Wieland, 1983, p. 192.

[77] The following passage offers a glimpse into the likely ways in which Latin was taught in the Middle Ages: «The lessons were given by word of mouth, as boys could not in those times be accommodated with books; but they had slates, or roughly made tablets (*tabulæ*), on which they wrote down the lesson in grammar, or the portion of vocabulary, from the lips of the master, and, after committing it to memory, erased the writing, to make place for another. The teacher had necessarily his own written exemplar of an elementary Latin grammar, as well as his own written vocabulary of words, from which he read, interpreted, and explained», in T. Wright, R.P. Wülcker, (eds.),1884, pp. v-vi.

[78] See R.T. Meyer, 1956, p. 404.

word in its context. A complex web of influences where lexical and literary knowledge coalesce may be discerned in his *Glossary*. I like to imagine that, for instance, he might have employed words such as *oliua*, *ficus*, *vitis* and *ramnus*, the speaking trees of Judges 9, 8-15, to explain the rhetorical device of prosopopoeia, on the tracks of Aldhelm's *De metris*[79]. Or that in mentioning *uiuarium,* a word rarely found in glossaries[80], he might have referred to the sphere of everyday life[81] but also to the monastery of Cassiodore at Squillace named Vivarium for the fishponds he had created there[82], hinting likely to their symbolic value[83].

But these are simply speculations, and I am probably reading too much into a list of words.

I should like to conclude with one last observation that I think underlines the literary feature of Ælfric's chapter. If one compares the selection of trees enumerated by Ælfric with the tree catalogues embedded in Classical and Medieval texts, one can notice that, with deviations, omissions and additions, according to the original choice of individual authors, the core of the lists barely changes: the kinds of trees appearing in poetry almost match those mentioned by Ælfric. The conventionality and stability of the transmission of this rhetorical device across time is shown by the later examples some passages of Chaucer's works offer[84]. I quote from the episode of the building of Arcite's funeral pyre in the *Knight's Tale*[85]:

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[79] Aldhelm, *De Metris* 7, in R. Ehwald, (ed.), 1919, pp. 76-77.

[80] See note 27 above.

[81] Old English *fiscpol* can refer to natural or artificial fish-holding bodies of water. According to K.C. Currie, 1990, p. 23, the construction of fishponds, initially promoted by secular institutions, is attested in England between 1066 and 1200 and only after that date monasteries began to build them to provide food.

[82] The fishponds at Vivarium are beautifully represented in an illumination of the codex of Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Patr. 61, fol. 29v (8th cent.) of Cassiodorus' *Institutiones*. Cassiodore's works circulated in Anglo-Saxon England. Suffice here to mention the *Durham Cassiodorus*, a Northumbrian manuscript of the 8th cent. containing the *Expositio Psalmorum*. On the library of Vivarium and on his books in England, cf. M. Lapidge, 2006.

[83] See F. Cardini, 2009, p. 143: "Il monastero era la Vera Piscina, i monaci fedeli e ubbidienti i Veri Pesci accomunati dall'ideale della *sequela Christi*, il Divino *Ichtys*".

[84] See R.L. Hoffman, 1966, 99-100 and P. Boitani, 1976. For an eco-critical view on the subject, see B.D. Schildgen, 2013 and references cited therein. Ælfric might have been familiar with some of the sources that Chaucer, some centuries later, employed in his descriptions of the mixed forests.

[85] All quotations from Chaucer's works are taken from the third edition of the Riverside Chaucer, edited by Benson 1987. In the *Parliament of Fowls*, ll.176-182, *cipresse*, *olyve*,

> But how the fyr was maked upon highte,
> Ne eek the names that the trees highte,
> As ook, firre, birch, aspe, alder, holm, popler,
> Wylugh, elm, plane, assh, box, chasteyn, lynde, laurer,
> Mapul, thorn, bech, hasel, ew, whippletree -
> How they weren feld shal nat be toold for me (*Knight's Tale*, ll. 2919–24).

Alongside the Biblical trees, the rhetorical tradition of the literary grove might also have been known to Ælfric, as the attentive and reasoned selection of items of his scholarly glossary seems to show.

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vyne and *palm* are also included in the list.

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