

The naming of Guthlac Paul Cavill

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Abstract

This study discusses the passages in Felix's *Vita Sancti Guthlaci* which refer to the naming of the saint. It suggests that Felix's ideas as to the source and meaning of the name are problematic in that they do not obviously reflect vernacular naming patterns and they were not passed on by Old English writers. It is argued that this might be because Felix's obscure Latin has been mistaken, and that he might have wanted to refer to Guthlac's 'land' and 'tribe' not as the source of his name, but as being named after him. It is pointed out that Felix's vocabulary in the naming passages bears striking resemblance to that in a passage of Jerome's translation of the *Regula Pachomii* which relates it to desert monasticism, the dominant paradigm for Felix's hagiography.

Introduction

Two passages in Felix's *Vita sancti Guthlaci* refer to the saint's name: the list of contents in the Prologue, and chapter X in the *Life*. In Colgrave's edition these read and are translated as follows:¹

Prologue

X. De baptisate illius et vocabulo sibi ex appellatione patriae indicto.

(Concerning his baptism and his name derived from the name of his country.)

Chapter X

Igitur decursis bis quaternis dierum voluminibus, cum ad salutaris lavacri sacratas undulas propinquasset, ex appellatione illius tribus, quam dicunt Guthlacingas, proprietatis vocabulum velut ex caelesti consilio Guthlac percepit, quia ex qualitatis compositione adsequentibus meritis conveniebat. Nam ut illius gentis gnari perhibent, Anglorum lingua hoc nomen duobus integris constare videtur, hoc est 'Guth' et 'lac', quod Romani sermonis nitore personat 'belli munus', quia ille cum vitiis bellando munera aeternae beatitudinis cum triumphali infula perennis vitae percepisset, secundum apostolum dicentem: *Beatus vir qui suffert temptationem, quoniam cum probatus fuerit, accipiet coronam vitae, quam repromisit Deus diligentibus se.*

(And so after eight days had run their course, and he was brought to the sacred waters of the life-giving font, he received the personal name of Guthlac from the name of the tribe known as the Guthlacingas; it being as though by divine plan, because by virtue of its formation, it fitted and matched his qualities. For, as those who are familiar with that race relate, the name in the tongue of the English is shown to consist of two individual words, namely 'Guth' and 'lac', which in the elegant Latin tongue is 'belli munus' (the reward of war), because by warring against vices he was to receive the reward of eternal bliss, together with the victor's diadem of everlasting life, as the

¹ Text and translation (except where indicated) are from *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), referred to by the abbreviation *VSG* and Colgrave's chapter divisions. Translations are Colgrave's except where stated. References to 'Colgrave' are to his notes and discussion.

apostle says: ‘Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him’.) These passages throw up several problems relating to Guthlac’s name. There are immediately apparent contradictions in the source of the name: which of these, if any, is likely to be a recognisably vernacular Anglo-Saxon naming practice? And if none of them is (as I shall in fact suggest), then how can Felix’s account be explained? What is he ultimately trying to do in these passages, and has he been misunderstood? And what help might the Old English sources relating to Guthlac give us in interpreting his account?

This article aims to give some sort of answer to these questions. It will first examine the naming passages to discern what Felix says and how other writers on Guthlac responded to it. This will resolve some difficulties, but it will leave unanswered questions about why Felix wrote what he did. The second part of the article will propose that the underlying interpretative scheme to which Felix was working suggests a new construction of the naming passages, and finally it points towards a possible source for the vocabulary employed by the writer.

The naming passages

In the two passages quoted above, Felix invokes three essentially different patterns for the naming of the future saint: that Guthlac was named from his homeland (*patria*), that he was named from his tribe (the *Guthlacingas*), and that his name was miraculously given from its appropriateness to his future virtues, interpreted through Latin (*belli munus*). None of these patterns is usual for Anglo-Saxon vernacular personal naming at this time (though there are some faint parallels that will be mentioned below). Indeed, Nick Higham has somewhat enigmatically suggested that Felix might not have been of English extraction because his treatment of the name *Guthlacingas* shows that ‘his perceptions were in some sense external’.²

1.1 Homeland and tribe

Sir Frank Stenton outlined normal Anglo-Saxon aristocratic naming patterns thus:

In royal, and doubtless in many noble, families, it was customary for a son to receive a name which would alliterate with that of his father, so that the names of father and son might be handed down together in commemorative verse. The intrinsic meaning of names given under these conditions was obviously a secondary consideration. Another custom, of which there is good evidence in both the earliest and the latest phases of Early English history, must have worked more effectively to the same result. According to this custom, parents who bore compound names themselves would give to their child a name consisting of one element derived from the father’s name and one from that of the mother.³

² Nicholas J. Higham, ‘Guthlac’s *Vita*, Mercia and East Anglia in the First Half of the Eighth Century’, in *Æthelbald and Offa: Two Eighth-Century Kings of Mercia*, ed. by David Hill and Margaret Worthington (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2005), pp. 85–90, at p. 85.

³ Frank M. Stenton, ‘Personal Names in Place-Names’, in *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England: The Collected Papers of Frank Merry Stenton*, ed. by Doris Mary Stenton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 84–105, at p. 87. Cecily Clark, ‘Onomastics’, in *The Cambridge History of the English Language, Volume 1: The Beginnings to 1066*, ed. by Richard Hogg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 452–89, is slightly more cautious: ‘[R]ules and incidence remain in general unclear. Often, but not necessarily, a man’s name shared an element with his father’s [...] Less often (as far as extant records show) a man’s name [...] incorporated an element from his mother’s, possibly at the same time from his maternal grandfather’s’, p. 458.

Felix gives Guthlac's parents' names as Penwalh (or Penwald in the Old English translation⁴) and Tette. And while Felix was concerned to promote the divine providence and appropriateness of Guthlac's name, there were limits as to how much he could divert from the historical facts with regard to the names of his parents.⁵ Penwalh's name carries the alliterative theme of the Mercian royal house, which included Pybba (great-grandson of Icel, the forebear of Guthlac mentioned in chapter II), his son Penda, and *his* son Peada: these names are recorded in the Mercian genealogy in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (ASC 626, A, B, C).⁶ It is difficult to know whether Tette, the name of Guthlac's mother, is a hypocoristic form of a compound name, but in view of the fact that King Ine's sister bore it as an apparently monothematic name, it seems unlikely.⁷ The parents' names seem wholly appropriate to noble or royal families in Mercia. But here the striking thing is that Guthlac's name reflects neither of the customary vernacular patterns, of alliteration with his father's name, or the combination of name-elements from his parents, outlined by Stenton. As H. B. Woolf put it, '*Guthlac* alone stands out as a name not in any way bound to those of its bearer's family'.⁸

Felix's focus on the origins of Guthlac and his name is rather marked, and contrasts significantly with Bede's *Life* of St Cuthbert, one of his most important models; neither the anonymous hagiographer of Cuthbert nor Bede shows any interest in the saint's origins. Little attention, beyond the status of parents, is given to the origin of saints Antony, Paul, Martin or Benedict in the classic hagiographies of Athanasius (via Evagrius), Jerome, Sulpicius Severus and Gregory the Great, all known to Felix;⁹ names of parents are not given.¹⁰ Felix might not have known the normal processes of naming in early eighth-century England, as Higham

4 *Das angelsächsische Prosa-Leben des heiligen Guthlac*, ed. by Paul Gosser, Anglistische Forschungen 27 (Heidelberg, 1909), hereafter referred to as 'the Old English translation' and abbreviated *OET*. Translation of Old English texts are my own unless otherwise stated.

5 It is wise, however, to acknowledge the possibility that we are dealing with fiction. Audrey Meaney, 'Felix's *Life of Guthlac*: History or Hagiography?' in Hill and Worthington, *Æthelbald and Offa*, pp. 75–84, writes, 'One would hope that the bare bones of events — parentage, life as the leader of a warrior gang, conversion, two years of monastic life at Repton, followed by fifteen at Crowland living as an ascetic hermit, and his ordination by Bishop Headda — are to be trusted, though there is no good early supporting evidence for Guthlac's existence', p. 82. See also note 25 below.

6 *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, ed. by Charles Plummer, rev. edn with a bibliographical note by Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), *sub anno*.

7 Mats Redin, *Studies on Uncompounded Personal Names in Old English*, Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift, Filosofi, Språkvetenskap och Historiska Vetenskaper. 2 (Uppsala: A.-B. Akademiska Bokhandeln, 1919), pp. 54–55, records the related (male) name Tata from various sources, and discusses the by-name Tatae for King Æthelberht's wife Æthelburh in Bede's *Historia* II.9. It is of course possible for a by-name to be a given name.

8 H. B. Woolf, *The Old Germanic Principles of Name-Giving* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1939), p. 51, quoted from W. F. Bolton, 'The Background and Meaning of *Guthlac*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 61 (1962), 595–603, at p. 596.

9 Colgrave, pp. 16–17. *Two Lives of St Cuthbert* ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940); all the other texts mentioned, plus Jerome's *Lives* of Hilarion and Malchus, are in *Early Christian Lives*, trans. by Carolinne White (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1998).

10 The possibility might be entertained that Felix was protesting too much about how thoroughly proper the marriage and behaviour of Penwalh and Tette was in *VSG* chapters III and IV. And then the reference to Guthlac's 'cleansing himself from the sins of his parents' (*abluit parentum delicta*, chapter XI), might be more than the usual spiritual humility: at any rate, scribes in three manuscripts of Felix replaced *delicta* with *originale peccatum* (original sin), Colgrave p. 78, fn. 14. And the Old English translation focuses on Penwalh's wealth and standing rather than his or Tette's moral probity, and simply talks of Guthlac being baptized. This suspicion might be added to the list of theories given by, e.g., Ian Thompson, *Felix, St Guthlac, and the Early History of Crowland*, pp. 11–12, as to why Bede (or Ælfric for that matter, though he has more restricted sources) makes no mention of Guthlac.

seems to suggest above, but in his work he apparently wishes to offer some natural or rational as well as supernatural explanation of Guthlac's name and origins.

In the Prologue, Felix summarizes the matter of chapter X thus: *De baptisate illius et vocabulo sibi ex appellatione patriae indicto* (Concerning his baptism and his name derived from the name of his country). This is rather different from the actual content of chapter X, which apparently outlines the derivation of the personal name from a tribe.¹¹ Together, the two passages might (almost) be taken to indicate a confused knowledge of the process by which a folk-name might become a place-name. The name of a totemic characteristic, topographical feature or personage might become a folk-name by the addition of the *-ingas* element to denote local settlers or family or followers; and that people or group-name might then be transferred to the land or a settlement they occupied. Stenton discusses examples such as Barking, Yeading, Reading and Hastings, where folk-names have given rise to place-names still extant.¹²

Stenton also observes that '[t]here is a small group of rare names which must once have denoted their bearers' national origin', and instances Swæf from whom Swavesey, Cambridgeshire, is named, and who was presumably a Swabian, one of the *Swæfe*.¹³ While this appears to offer a way of arriving at a personal name Guthlac from a region called **Guthlacingas*, in turn derived from a tribe called the *Guthlacingas*, it seems a fundamentally implausible and roundabout process. For a place-name and a folk-name of this type, there would have been an original Guthlac whose name could have been preserved and passed on through the customary processes mentioned above, or, as Colgrave proposes, whose name was that of a 'hero incidentally mentioned in the *Gesta Herewardi*' and transmitted through 'the songs of the ancients'.¹⁴ It would then be unnecessary to suppose that the name Guthlac came through these rare intermediate processes of derivation from a tribe or a place, as Felix says, because Guthlac would be named after an ancestor or hero, who might also have had a tribe and a place named after him.

For all that, the tribe-name *Guthlacingas* in Felix's chapter X has every appearance of authenticity, matching precisely the folk-names already mentioned and many more found in compound place-names (Nottingham, from the **Snotingas + ham*, etc.). Orderic Vitalis, summarizing Felix's *Life*, repeats the core idea.¹⁵ He mentions the heavenly sign at Guthlac's birth and goes on:

Post octo dies infans baptizatur; et Guthlacus id est belli munus a tribu quam Guthlacingas dicunt appellatur.

(Eight days later the child was baptized and called Guthlac, meaning 'gift of war', from the tribe which are called Guthlacingas.)

Orderic omits the exposition of the name (for which see further below), but he keeps the mention of the folk-name from Felix. It is not otherwise known apart from these two Latin writers, though Colgrave's speculation as to its origin from a legendary hero has been

11 It should perhaps be observed that the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, ed. by David R. Howlett and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, in progress, hereafter abbreviated *DML*), under *patria*, sense 4, gives a late transferred sense of 'people (of a country or region)'. This sense, if it were operative, might go some way towards resolving the apparent contradiction, but Felix is much earlier than the quotations given (999 and then from the 14th century).

12 Stenton, 'Personal Names', pp. 80–81.

13 Stenton, 'Personal Names', p. 86.

14 Colgrave, p. 3.

15 *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. by Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), II, pp. 324–25. The *punctus elevatus* of Chibnall's edition has been rendered here with a semi-colon.

mentioned. The Mercian *Old English Martyrology* does not mention it,¹⁶ neither of the Exeter Book *Guthlac* poems refers to this tribe,¹⁷ nor the Vercelli homilist in his version of later chapters of the *Life*,¹⁸ nor, more remarkably, the translator of Felix's *Life* into Old English, which aims to follow its original fairly closely.¹⁹ The last writer had no problem with the folk-name type, because he records one, not otherwise known, the *Iclingas* for the descendants of Icel, the royal ancestor of Guthlac:²⁰

On þam dagum æþelredes, þæs mæran kyninges Myrcna, wæs sum æþela man on þære hehþeode Myrcnarice; se wæs haten Penwald. He wæs þæs yldestan and þæs æþelstan cynnes, þe Iclingas wæron genemmede.

(In the days of Æthelred, the famed king of the Mercians, there was a certain honourable man among the nobility of Mercia; he was called Penwald. He was of the oldest and most honourable family, who are called the Iclings.)

For this last sentence, Felix's Latin is *Huius etiam viri progenies per nobilissima inlustrium regum nomina antiqua ab origine Icles digesto ordine cucurrit* (Moreover the descent of this man was traced in set order through the most noble names of famous kings, back to Icel in whom it began in days of old, VSG chapter II).

On closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that the translator of Felix's work into Old English does not omit the passage about the naming of Guthlac altogether, but struggles, apparently with difficulty, in rendering it.

Ða þæs ymbe eahta niht, þæs þe mon þæt cild brohte to þam halgan þweale fulwihtbæþes, ða wæs him nama sceapen of þæs cynnes gereorde and of þære þeode Guþlac, swa hit wære of godcundlicre stihtunge gedon, þæt he swa genemmed wære. Forþon swa þa wisan leorneras secgað on Angelcynne, þæt se nama standeð on feawum gewritum.

(After eight days when the child was afterwards brought to the holy washing of the baptismal font, the name Guthlac was made for him in the speech and in the language of that family (*or* in the language of the family and from the region/tribe), as if it were by divine providence that he was named in this fashion, because the wise teachers in England say that the name exists in few documents.)

The writer goes on to expound the significance of Guthlac's name in Latin, *Guðlac se nama ys on romanisc belli munus* (The name Guthlac in Latin is *belli munus*). But while we might expect him to omit the analysis of Guthlac's name into its constituent parts as being obvious to an Anglo-Saxon audience, we might not expect him to omit both the supposed origin of the

16 *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation and Commentary*, ed. and trans. by Christine Rauer, Anglo-Saxon Texts 10 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013), 11 April, pp. 80–81.

17 *The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book*, ed. by Jane Roberts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

18 *The Vercelli Homilies*, ed. by Donald G. Scragg, Early English Text Society o.s. 300 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), homily XXIII.

19 Gonser, *Das Prosa-Leben*. Jane Roberts, 'The Old English Prose Translation of Felix's *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*', in *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose: Sixteen Original Contributions*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp. 363–79, argues that the Vercelli Homily and the vernacular prose *Life* were copied and edited from a late ninth- or early tenth-century original written probably in the Mercian dialect, pp. 363, 366, 369. A corollary might be that the writers knew that Felix was confused at this point.

20 Charles Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, A and C genealogies, under the years 626 and 755, gives *Cnebbia Iceling* (Cnebbia son of Icel) — not the folk-name; and Ickleton, Cambridgeshire, which was thought by Ekwall, *Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 4th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), to be *Iclingas* name, shows no clear sign in the earliest forms (*Icelingtune*, etc.) of containing the genitive plural inflexion, and is considered by toponymists to reflect the 'connective *-ing*' where the name means 'estate associated with a man called Icel'.

name from the *Guthlacingas*, and the radical reinterpretation of the miraculous nature of the name.

There is some ambiguity about the meaning of the translator here. The phrase *of þæs cynnes gereorde and of þære þeode* apparently renders *ex appellatione illius tribus, quam dicunt Guthlacingas*. But the writer completely omits the reference to the *Guthlacingas* which makes sense of the phrase in the Latin. The Old English can then be read as an awkward apposition ‘in the language of the family and from the [?name of the] region/tribe’; and possibly this might be seen as a way of including the chapter-summary from the *VSG* Prologue, which refers to the land or region as a source of Guthlac’s name. Alternatively, *þeod* may have its late Old English sense ‘language’, and the apposition would then be much less awkward and simply mean ‘in the speech and in the language of that family’.²¹ This would make better sense of the notion following, that the name was made up because it was otherwise rare or (if we take *feawum* as meiosis) unknown in the records. In addition, this gives the ‘wise teachers’ of the English a role in knowing the written records rather than making up etymologies of the elements of Guthlac.

In relation to the ‘etymology’ of the name, an attempt to assimilate the Old English to Felix’s text was made by the early editor Goodwin, who read **on twam gewritum* for the MS *on feawum gewritum* and translated ‘For thus the wise teachers in England say, that the name consists of two terms’, in line with Felix’s *Anglorum lingua hoc nomen duobus integris constare videtur*.²² But this does not really work, when **on twam wordum* would be perfectly obvious and acceptable as a translation; and it is not clear that *gewrit* would normally be understood as ‘word’ as against ‘writing, document’.²³ The Old English writer seems to be saying that Guthlac’s name was divinely inspired not because it was the name of a tribe or place, but for precisely the opposite reason: that it was otherwise rare or unknown. And as we have seen, this fits better with the evidence of Anglo-Saxon naming that we have: the saint’s name does not alliterate with his father’s name, nor does it have elements taken from either of his parents’ names; and indeed, apart from a contemporary, presumably Mercian, charter signatory,²⁴ the name is not attested before the saint in Anglo-Saxon sources, and only rarely after.²⁵

21 This would not be an eccentric reading of the 11th-century text, and might imaginably be one of the adjustments made in the revision(s) of *OET* (see Roberts, ‘The Old English Prose Translation’), but the text generally uses *þeod* in the ‘tribe, region’ sense.

22 *The Anglo-Saxon Version of the Life of St. Guthlac*, ed. and trans. by Charles Wycliffe Goodwin (London: John Russell Smith, 1848), pp. 10–11 and note 3.

23 *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. by Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller (London: Oxford University Press, 1898; repr. 1973), *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Supplement*, ed. by T. Northcote Toller, with rev. and enlarged addenda by Alistair Campbell (London: Oxford University Press, 1972; rpt 1980), under the headword *gewrit*, give no obvious example of the term meaning ‘word’; the vast majority of instances refer to books, letters, Scripture, writings of various kinds.

24, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ed. by Walter de Gray Birch, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1885–93), nos. 75, 76 (apparently genuine, dated 691x699).

25 The Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England website, <http://www.pase.ac.uk> (accessed August 2013), records Guthlac 1 as the charter signatory, Guthlac 2 as the saint, Guthlac 3 as the man named on the boundary stone (below), and one Guthlac (Guthlac 4) named in Domesday Book. Jane Roberts, ‘An Inventory of Early Guthlac Materials’ *Mediaeval Studies* 32 (1970), 193–233, at p. 210, is rightly cautious about identifying the charter signatory with the saint: ‘These charters are probably genuine, but there is no certainty that the Guthlac mentioned in them is the saint, although at this time he, like the signatory, would have been a non-religious.’ Given the relative rarity of the name, and the status of Guthlac in the line of the Mercian royal family (and thus potentially his presence at the king’s council as part of his entourage), though, it might be at least moderately likely that the signatory was the future saint. It could reasonably be seen as corroboration of Felix’s general story of Guthlac’s origins.

As far as the naturalistic aspects of Guthlac's naming are concerned then, we have different explanations. Felix derives his name from a land, or a tribe called the *Guthlacingas*, sources of given names not widely known or common in Anglo-Saxon England. This, and Felix's uncertainty about which of the sources he mentions contributed to the name, might plausibly be interpreted as indicating his unfamiliarity with Old English naming traditions. Felix's translator, on the other hand, who might plausibly be interpreted as understanding something about Old English naming traditions, seems to abandon Felix's ideas for the sources of Guthlac's name altogether, substituting the idea that the name did not come from any known and obvious source beyond the language of his family, but was given by divine providence because of its suitability to Guthlac's destiny as a spiritual warrior who would receive God's gift of eternal life in accordance with the Latin interpretation of the name.

1.2. *The exegetical interpretation*

This brings us to the third process of naming invoked by Felix: that Guthlac was so named because in Latin the word can be interpreted *belli munus*. The particular pious method of interpreting the name Guthlac in Felix derives from Jerome and his *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*, though in Felix of course the principle is applied to a name in the vernacular using the interpretative medium of Latin. It is not, in this sense, a vernacular naming tradition, though as Fred Robinson shows, it was embraced with some enthusiasm in Anglo-Latin and Old English vernacular works.²⁶ This is an extreme form of what Alastair Fowler usefully terms the Cratylic style of naming, in which the name or its elements are interpreted as meaningful in relation to the character of the person named.²⁷ Robinson shows how the Old English *Guthlac* poems, which do not directly refer to the Latin interpretation of the name, nevertheless insistently play with the notion of 'Guthlac's receiving the reward of eternal life for his struggles against evil'.²⁸

Bolton goes to some lengths (as does Robinson) to justify what he refers to as 'Felix's primary meaning for *munus*, that of eternal reward'.²⁹ That this enterprise is a curious red herring based largely or solely on Colgrave's translation might be argued on three particular grounds. The first is that *munus* does not obviously occur in the sense 'reward' in classical Latin, and rarely so in later Latin,³⁰ as Bolton admits: '[t]he meaning does not seem to have been a common one in hagiographical literature [...] and *praemium* was the more usual term for denoting heavenly reward'.³¹ The consistent sense of the word in the Vulgate Bible is 'gift, offering', as typically in Matthew 5. 23–24:

si ergo offeres munus tuum ad altare et ibi recordatus fueris quia frater tuus habet
aliquid adversum te

26 Fred C. Robinson, 'The Significance of Names in Old English Literature', *Anglia*, 86 (1968), 14–58; rpt in *The Tomb of Beowulf and Other Essays on Old English* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 185–218, and quoted from this edition.

27 Alastair Fowler, *Literary Names: Personal Names in English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 1–3.

28 Robinson, 'The Significance of Names in Old English Literature', p. 208.

29 Bolton, 'Background', p. 601, Robinson, 'The Significance of Names in Old English Literature', especially pp. 207–11.

30 Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879, rpt. 1975), s.v. *munus*, where the closest meaning is 'C. a present, gift'; *DML*, under the headword *munus*, has a small number of entries under '2 reward, payment', but many more under '3 present, gift, endowment'. In patristic Latin, a fairly common collocation is *diuinum munus* (divine gift, gift of God). I thank the anonymous reviewer of this article for helpful suggestions in this area; I have been unable to adopt them all.

31 Bolton, 'Background', p. 602.

relinque ibi munus tuum ante altare et vade prius reconciliare fratri tuo et tunc veniens
offers munus tuum

(If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother
hath any thing against thee;

Leave there thy offering before the altar and go first to be reconciled to thy brother;
and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift.)³²

There is in fact no specific warrant for Felix's *munus* to be translated 'reward'.³³ While it is suggested here that Felix did not understand English naming practices in detail, it seems unlikely that he would have intended something other than the normal equivalence of *munus* and Old English *lac*, which commonly means 'an offering, sacrifice, oblation' or 'a gift, present, grace, favour, service'.³⁴ Ælfric gives the two words as equivalents without further commentary.³⁵ In his translation of Felix's chapter L, the Old English translator uses *lac* in the normal fashion:

Ða þæs ymbe feower niht com se forma easterdæg; he þa se eadiga wer Guðlac on
þære his mettrumnyse gode lac onsægde and mæssan sang, and sybþan he þa
deorwyrþan lac offrode Cristes bloddes, þa ongan he þam foresprecenan breþer
godspellian

(When after four nights the first Easter-day arrived, the blessed man Guthlac in his
sickness performed service to God, and sang mass, and after that he offered up the
precious sacrifice of Christ's blood, he began to preach the gospel to the aforesaid
brother [Goodwin's translation].)

Felix writes *hoc nomen [...] personat 'belli munus', quia ille cum vitiis bellando munera
aeternae beatitudinis cum triumphali infula perennis vitae percepisset*, and this might
perfectly plausibly and accurately be translated, 'the name [...] is "belli munus" (gift/offering
of war), because by warring against vices he was to receive the gifts of eternal blessings,
together with the victor's diadem of everlasting life'.

Under this scheme, the playing on the name that Robinson observes still operates.
Robinson notes the following significant lines in *Guthlac A* among others:

he him dæda lean
georne gieldeð þam þe his giefe willað
þicgan to þonce 7 him þas woruld
uttor lætan þonne þæt ece lif (lines 123b–26)

(He [God] will give the reward of their deeds to those who intend to receive his gift
with thanks and to abandon this world with more absolute conviction than eternal
life.)

and

let his ben cuman in þa beorhtan gesceaft,
þoncade þeodne þæs þe he in þrowingum
bidan moste hwonne him betre lif
þurh godes willan agyfen wurde. (lines 777–80)

32 *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, 4th edn, ed. by Robertus Weber and others (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994); translation from *Holy Bible: Douay Version Translated from the Latin Vulgate* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1963).

33 There may even be a subliminal theological interpretative scheme behind this: a 'Catholic' theological reading would see heaven as a reward for virtue, as against a more 'Protestant' one which would see heaven as the gift of God.

34 Bosworth-Toller, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, under *lac*.

35 Ælfrics *Grammatik und Glossar*, ed. by Julius Zuptiza (Berlin: Weidmann, 1880), p. 59.

(He [Guthlac] had his prayers ascend into that bright world, thanked the Lord that he might be permitted to remain in sufferings until a better life should be granted to him by God's will.)

While the notion of reward pertains here (and elsewhere: *lean* occurs nine times in the *Guthlac* poems),³⁶ the notion of God's gift or grace or giving (*gieldedð, giefte, agyfen*) of eternal life is at least as prominent.

The second reason that Colgrave's translation may be mistaken is that it fails to acknowledge that the interpretation of the name underlies one of the more peculiar stories of the *Life*. In chapters XVI and XVII, Felix relates that Guthlac and his warband devastated towns and houses and gathered booty from war, and he then returned some of it: *tunc velut ex divino consilio edoctus tertiam partem adgregate gazae possidentibus remittebat* (then as if instructed by divine counsel, he would return to the owners a third part of the treasure collected). We notice the echo (here *velut ex divino consilio*) of chapter X, where Felix notes the match between Guthlac's name and his qualities *velut ex caelesti consilio* (as if by divine plan); and we observe the rather bizarre and implausible practice of Guthlac giving a third of the booty back to those he had conquered. This is a 'gift of war' to justify the name and its interpretation as given 'by divine providence'.

This view is confirmed by Orderic's treatment of Felix: he puts these two elements together — the actual naming and the illustration of how the name became Guthlac's practice as a warrior — and omits Felix's lengthy positive character description of the saint in his youth, which takes up *VSG* chapters XI–XV:

Post octo dies infans baptizatur; et Guthlacus id est belli munus a tribu quam Guthlacingas dicunt appellatur. Post mitem puericiam dum adolescentiae calorem sensisset, et heroum fortia gesta considerasset; aggregatis satellitum turmis ad arma se conuertit, sibique aduersantium, uillas et munitiones igne ferroque deuastat et disperdit; immensisque praedis direptis terciam partem sponte his quibus ablatum est pro amore Dei remittit.

Eight days later the child was baptized and called Guthlac, meaning 'gift of war', from the tribe which are called Guthlacingas. After a gentle childhood he felt the passions of youth, and fired by the brave deeds of heroes he gathered together bands of followers and gave himself to the pursuit of arms, wasting and destroying towns and villages of his foes by fire and sword, and winning great booty; but he always freely gave back a third part of it for the love of God.³⁷

The translation 'reward of war' for *belli munus* makes nonsense of this particular episode in Felix, and despite Orderic's use of Felix's expression *belli munus*, Chibnall sensibly avoids it. So also does Peter of Blois, who gives the Latin of the name as *belli donum* 'gift of war' or *bonum donum* 'good gift'.³⁸

And the last reason for believing that Colgrave's translation is mistaken is the rendering of the passage in the Old English version of Felix:

Guðlac se nama ys on romanisc *belli munus*. Forþon þeah he mid woruldlicre geswince menige earfoðnysse adreah, and þeah mid gecyrrednysse þa gife þære ecan eadignysse mid sige eces lifes onfengc.

36 See the glossary in Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book*.

37 Chibnall, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, II, pp. 324–25.

38 *Nova Legenda Anglie*, ed. by Carl Horstmann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), 'De Sancto Guthlaco Confessore', and W. F. Bolton, 'The Latin Revisions of Felix's "Vita Sancti Guthlaci"', *Mediaeval Studies*, 21 (1959), 37–52, at p. 45.

The name Guthlac in Latin is *belli munus*, because he endured many sufferings through worldly toil, and through conversion received the gift(s) of eternal blessing with the victory of eternal life.

The Old English is clear enough in translating *munera* as *gife* ‘gift(s)’, here.

As Fred Robinson has noted, the name Guthlac and its Latin etymology are features that became standard in the legends of Guthlac: in the *Old English Martyrology*, the writer records ‘his nama is on læden *belli munus*’ (his name in Latin is “belli munus”), referring to Felix,³⁹ and John of Wallingford also records *Baptizatus autem uocatus est Guthlac, quod nomen sonat belli munus* (He was baptized and called Guthlac, a name which means “gift of war”).⁴⁰ The records show an awareness that the process of etymologizing is a learned one, with the English sources making reference to the etymology by using the Latin. This alerts us to the likelihood that, as Robinson argues, the point of the etymology and the discussion here in Felix’s work is not to focus on the finer points of accurate English onomastics and semantics but to highlight the spiritual meaning of the name.

In terms of the three processes of naming outlined at the beginning of this article, then, the natural ones, deriving the name from Guthlac’s country or tribe, while purporting to be customary may in fact be mere guesswork or confusion, and are certainly not normal practice in Anglo-Saxon England; and the supernatural one relies on an imposed latinate etymologizing. All of Felix’s treatment of the name thus may be regarded as problematic from one point of view or another, and that the naturalistic processes were felt to be so from the point of view of the Old English translator has already been demonstrated.

2. Felix’s purpose

Is there any way of resolving these difficulties with the naming of Guthlac in the sources? The analysis so far has suggested that Felix did not know Anglo-Saxon naming practices in detail, but that he did have some information, concerning a tribe called the *Guthlacingas*, that shows signs of authenticity. That Felix garbled this information is further suggested by the fact that none of the vernacular sources repeat it, and the Old English translator of Felix goes to some trouble to avoid it. Below I offer a speculative solution to the aforementioned difficulties, focusing on three main points. The first relates to Felix’s overall purpose in the naming passages, the second relates to his style, and the third suggests a source that could perhaps have given rise to Felix’s notions in the passages.

2.1 Local politics

There is a clear and not entirely unexpected transition in the early chapters of the *Life* from Guthlac’s parentage and royal ancestry in chapters I–III, to the sign in the heavens that portends Guthlac’s greatness in chapters IV–IX, to the baptism and naming of the child in chapter X. It has already been noted that the early focus on the parents is greater than in any of the obvious hagiographical models known to Felix, and this has been interpreted as ‘dynastic positioning’, a way perhaps of mediating between the East Anglian interests of King Ælfwald who commissioned the *Life*, and the Mercian interests of King Æthelbald, the friend of Guthlac and the king who enriched and developed Crowland as a cult-centre.⁴¹ There can be little doubt that both kings and kingdoms were manoeuvring around the cult, and Felix probably wished to ensure the satisfaction and benevolence of both.

39 Rauer, *The Old English Martyrology*, p. 80.

40 ‘The Chronicle Attributed to John of Wallingford’, ed. by Richard Vaughan, *Camden Miscellany* vol. 21 (Camden 3rd series 90, 1958), 1–74, at pp. 4–5. Translation mine.

41 Higham, ‘Guthlac’s *Vita*, Mercia and East Anglia’, pp. 85–87.

Felix quite likely had the interests of the cult principally at heart, and so gave credit to both East Anglian and Mercian kings in his writing. But he moves on to the important issues of Guthlac's naming and character, shifting the focus from the human descent of Guthlac, and the associated naturalistic processes of origin, parentage and birth, to the theme of spiritual naming and what it portends in chapter X. This perhaps motivates the Latin etymologizing of the name. Felix moves from the natural to the spiritual, from the vernacular to the sacred language, from the past to the spiritual present and future. There may be some sense that in interpreting Guthlac's name according to biblical and exegetical principles, Felix is asserting a spiritual authority for Guthlac and his cult that overrides the dynastic and earthly. We might note a similar purpose in Felix's emphasis on the 'desert' nature of Guthlac's Crowland, which de-emphasizes the actual locality in Mercian territory (with all the sensitivities that that might entail for the East Anglian king) in order to stress the spiritual nature of Guthlac's hermitage, using the classical topoi of the *Lives* of the Desert Fathers.⁴² Essentially I suggest that Felix intended to detach Guthlac from potential debates about parentage and territory, and make him a universal and powerful saint.

2.2. *Style and translation*

For my second point here, I would like to note the difficulty of Felix's style, and suggest a different understanding of the naming passages. Orderic Vitalis notes the obscurity of Felix's writing *prolixo et aliquantulum obscuro dictatu; quae pro posse meo breuiter dilucidauit* (in a lengthy book somewhat obscure in style, which to the best of my ability I abbreviated and clarified);⁴³ Colgrave points this out, and notes Felix's liking for obscure words from Aldhelm, for alliteration, for invented words and for Græcisms.⁴⁴ Kurtz also refers to Felix's 'tumid and frigid style'.⁴⁵ Might there, then, be some oddity in Felix's expression that could have misled his readers?

The two naming passages, in the Prologue and in chapter X, use the phrase *ex appellatione*. Colgrave translates it both times, perfectly rationally, as indicating the source of Guthlac's name, 'from the name of his country' and 'from the name of the tribe known as the *Guthlacingas*'. But while many place-names and region-names derive from folk-names of the *-ingas* type, no place-name or region is known deriving from the *Guthlacingas*, just as the family is unknown otherwise to history or toponymy. By contrast, what *is* known to history and toponymy is that Guthlac was much venerated and commemorated in the East Midland parts of the country and more widely, and that churches and monasteries were established with him as their patron.⁴⁶ It may then follow that Guthlac's *patria* and the *Guthlacingas* 'tribe' might have been named after *him*, and that either Felix or his interpreters might have put the cart before the horse.

This idea follows logically from the notion that Felix was promoting the cult of St Guthlac, but it rather depends on there being some linguistic justification for re-interpreting Felix's statements about Guthlac's naming; and then on the possibility of an *-ingas* name being attributed to a group of people who acknowledged a saint as their authority, and for this group to have had a definable identity and territory by the time of Felix's writing the *Life*, perhaps between fifteen and twenty-five years after the saint's death in 714.

42 Meaney, 'Felix's *Life of Guthlac*', p. 78; Benjamin Kurtz, 'From St. Antony to St. Guthlac: A Study in Biography', *University of California Publications in Modern Philology*, 12 (1926), 103–46.

43 Chibnall, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, II, pp. 322–24.

44 Colgrave, pp. 17–18.

45 Kurtz, 'From St. Antony to St. Guthlac', p. 104.

46 Roberts, 'An Inventory of Early Guthlac Materials', p. 220.

It is not perhaps safe to generalize too freely about Felix's stylistic or indeed syntactic preferences, but it is noticeable that in chapter X he uses the preposition *ex* in an instrumental sense 'with, by means of',⁴⁷ 'to indicate the cause or reason of anything, *from, through, by, by reason of, on account of*'.⁴⁸ *ex caelesti consilio* is translated by Colgrave as 'by divine plan', and *ex qualitatis compositione* 'by virtue of its formation'. This might make it plausible that *ex appellatione* could mean 'by the name' rather than 'from the name'. So the Prologue's *De baptisate illius et vocabulo sibi ex appellatione patriae indicto* could be translated 'Concerning his baptism, and his designation shown by the name of [his] country'. And the passage in chapter X, *ex appellatione illius tribus, quam dicunt Guthlacingas, proprietatis vocabulum velut ex caelesti consilio Guthlac percepit, quia ex qualitatis compositione adsequentibus meritis conveniebat* could be translated thus: 'he received the personal name Guthlac as if by divine plan, for by virtue of its formation it was bringing together the merits achieved by the name of that tribe which they call the *Guthlacingas*'.

This would then make sense of the following passage which recounts the etymology of the name Guthlac. It would naturally be the followers of Guthlac who pointed to the spiritual significance of the name, and who preserved the explanation. Thus, for *Nam ut illius gentis gnari perhibent, Anglorum lingua hoc nomen duobus integris constare videtur, hoc est [...] belli munus, quia ille cum vitiis bellando munera aeternae beatitudinis cum triumphali infula perennis vitae percepisset*, we might read, 'as those who know that race assert, this name [Guthlac] in the language of the English is seen to consist of two separate words, that is [...] "gift of war", because that man, by warring against vices, has received the gift of eternal bliss'.

There is potential ambiguity here. It might be that Felix was writing with an eye for a wider European market for his work, and that this underlies his expression *Nam ut illius gentis gnari perhibent* 'as those who know that race assert', where the *gens* refers to the English and Felix is explaining to the world the curiosities of English onomastics. This would be an awkward expression, however, in a work commissioned by an English king, who must have been well aware of the constituents and meaning of Guthlac's name. But in this new reading *gens* might refer to the *Guthlacingas*, and to knowledge of their particular interpretation of the name as *belli munus*: 'as those who know the *Guthlacingas* assert, the English elements of the name relate to *belli munus* and anyone who fights against vices like Guthlac will gain the gift of eternal bliss'. In other words, Felix seems to be talking about how some people understood the name and then generalizing about what its significance might be for any person who adopted it as their guide to life. Felix's focus is on the significance of Guthlac's name in the spiritual world.

It has to be admitted that the reading of *ex appellatione* proposed above is not absolutely secure, though my last point may raise some interest in its favour. But can a name like *Guthlacingas* have been applied to Guthlac's nascent community at Crowland? Was there, in fact, a nascent community at Crowland by Felix's time? There is some discussion about this. Jane Roberts notes,

[T]here is no convincing documentary or archaeological evidence for any large monastic settlement at Crowland before the Benedictine revival of the latter part of the tenth century. Felix makes no reference to any such monastery, but presents a Guthlac who, like other western followers of the desert fathers, imposed austerities on himself and chose the life of a separate cell rather than the membership of a large

47 *DML* under *ex*, sense 11; also *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1900–), vol. 5, cols 1111–13.
48 Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, under *ex*.

brotherhood. [...] There was the oratory, enriched by containing the saint's body, and around it as like as not a few scattered cells that prefigured the later monastery.⁴⁹

By contrast, Kelly Kilpatrick cites and develops the evidence brought forward by Thompson to suggest that 'Guthlac's cult at Crowland was probably strong at an early date, and was endowed with royal support'.⁵⁰ There need not be significant polarisation in this debate: it is agreed that there were buildings, mentioned by Felix; the saint's body in a sanctuary; and some sort of community, however small, under the titular control of Cissa to guard it. Felix was concerned to interpret Guthlac through the eremitical model as Roberts indicates, which involved his ignoring the presence of other monastic settlements in the region and quite possibly his underemphasizing the following at Crowland so as to retain the 'desert' aspect of his and Cissa's hermitage;⁵¹ and as has already been suggested, the commissioning of the *Life* and the royal interest in Guthlac more generally indicates that Crowland and the cult were of more than religious significance at the time since two kingdoms were laying some sort of claim to them. There is evidence, then, of the growing importance of the site and the cult.

There is no direct evidence that the followers of Guthlac were known as the *Guthlacingas*, and the avoidance of the term by vernacular writers suggests that they found it odd or unnecessary. As Ekwall describes it, however, there is some convergence between the establishment of a community at Crowland and the establishment of an *-ingas* name:

[A]t the time of the Anglo-Saxon invasion and perhaps for some time afterwards it was usual to designate the people of a village or a district by a collective name, often formed with the suffix *-ingas*, which frequently became the name of the village or district or entered into its name. These folk-names are sometimes derived from a locality, sometimes, and most frequently, from a personal name[...] [S]ome of the places with names in *-ingas* were probably of small or moderate size, hamlets or the like. A name in *-ingas* could of course be given to a settlement of two or three households.⁵²

At first sight, Felix's apparent confusion as to whether Guthlac's name related to a region or a tribe might be resolved by this scheme of naming: if the naming were proleptic, in the sense of looking to Guthlac as founder and authority of the small community, then both region and tribe might be named from the saint, and be claiming independence and the rights of a new settlement. Felix's language relating to the succession of Cissa is proprietorial: *illius loci heredem [...] Cissa qui nunc nostris temporibus sedem Guthlaci viri Dei possidet* (his [hereditary] place [...] Cissa who now in our times possesses the seat of Guthlac the man of God, *VSG* chapter XLVIII).

Though its date is undetermined, and 'probably post-Conquest', the stone at Crowland bearing the inscription *Hanc petra[m] Guthlacus h[abet] sibi metam* 'Guthlacus has this stone as a boundary for himself', shows a remarkable consciousness of the saint as founder and owner of the site.⁵³ From a similarly late date (1109x14), the (place-)name *Haliwerfolk*

49 Jane Roberts, 'Hagiography and Literature: The Case of Guthlac of Crowland', in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, ed. by Michelle P. Brown and Carol A. Farr (London: Leicester University Press, 2001), pp. 69–88, at pp. 70–71.

50 Kelly A. Kilpatrick, 'The Place-Names in Felix's *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 58 (2014), 1–56, at pp. 25–27; Ian Thompson, 'Felix, St Guthlac and the Early History of Crowland', pp. 12–14.

51 Meaney, 'Felix's *Life of Guthlac*', p. 79.

52 Eilert Ekwall, *English Place-Names in -ing*, 2nd ed., Acta Reg. Societatis Humaniorum Literarum Lundensis Skrifter utgivna av Kungl. Humanistiska Vetenskapssamfundet i Lund, vol. 4 (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1962), pp. 113–14.

53 Elisabeth Okasha, *A Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 62–63.

‘the saints’ people’ or ‘the saint’s people, St Cuthbert’s people’ in Durham, attests to a saint’s proprietary rights and protection of his land and folk, whose responsibilities were later said to be ‘to keepe and defend the corps of S. *Cuthbert* their great adored Saint’.⁵⁴ It has already been noted that Felix was probably not entirely *au fait* with English naming practices, and it may be that the *-ingas* element was borrowed by Felix from secular tradition and was felt by the vernacular writers to be inappropriate in reference to the saint’s community, and hence not preserved beyond Felix and Orderic Vitalis.

2.3 A source for Felix’s vocabulary?

My last point proposes that Felix might have used specialized vocabulary in his passages on the naming of Guthlac. Evidence in the *Life* that there was an early cult and community of St Guthlac has been discussed above. Felix was interested in these matters, and was, in addition, well-read in the classics of hagiography and monasticism, including Jerome’s *Vita Pauli*, as has also been widely noted. An allusion that Colgrave might possibly have missed in the *Life* here is discernible through Felix’s use of the word *tribus*. In classical Latin it means ‘tribe, a hereditary division of the people’, much as Colgrave translates it. But in Jerome’s version of another classic of early monasticism, the *Regula Pachomii*, the word refers to a small subsection of a monastic community, thus:

Vocatur autem una tribus, habens tres vel quatuor domos, pro numero et frequentia monasterii: quas nos familias, vel populos unius gentis possimus appellare.

(That is called a ‘tribe’ when it has three or four houses according to the number and multitude of the monastery: we might call it a family or a people of a single race.)⁵⁵

In Pachomian monasticism, loose communities gathered around the desert fathers. Each monk had his own cell, and ‘[t]he cells were arranged into “houses,” with twenty monks or more to a house. [...] Much of a monk’s religious life revolved around his house, and its superior, the [...] *praepositus*, was probably the most important man in his life.’⁵⁶

Within limits, this Pachomian model seems to fit Crowland: a small community of hermits presided over by Cissa with a few communal buildings. It is perhaps not unusual for monastic buildings to be called *domus*,⁵⁷ but, as noted by Thompson and Kilpatrick, Guthlac dreams of all his buildings or houses, *omnes domus suas*, being burnt down by British-speaking demons (VSG chapter XXIV). More striking is the way that the key concepts of the Pachomian taxonomy recur in Felix’s naming passages: there is the ‘tribe known as the Guthlacingas’ (*tribus*), who might be seen as part of the ‘race’ (*gens*) of monks, having their own way of understanding the name Guthlac, known to be a monastic fashion of interpreting names. Thus the passage interpreted through the Pachomian lens might read:

he received the personal name Guthlac as if by divine plan, for by virtue of its formation it was bringing together the merits achieved by the name of that tribe [monastic community or communities] which they call the *Guthlacingas*. As those

54 Victor Watts, *The Place-names of County Durham Part 1: Stockton Ward*, English Place-Name Survey 82 (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 2007), pp. 2–3; the Early Modern quotation is from John Speed 1627.

55 Dom Amand Boon, ed., *Pachomiana Latina: Règle et épîtres de S. Pachôme [...] Texte latin de S. Jérôme* (Louvain: Bureaux de la Revue, 1932), p. 17, my translation.

56 Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 79.

57 See *DML* under *domus*, senses 6–8, ‘church(building or institution)’, ‘(mon.) house of religion’, ‘(mon.) building, room or office’.

who know that race [the monks/hermits] assert, this name [Guthlac] in the language of the English is seen to consist of two separate words.

This arguably makes better sense of Felix's passage than Colgrave's reading, which appears to suggest that Felix's readers might not have known that Guthlac was an English name with two elements. And, since Jerome's translation of the *Regula Pachomii* is apparently first found in a manuscript in England in London, British Library MS Add. 30055, a collection of monastic texts from the tenth century,⁵⁸ it is possible or even likely that the text, though known to Felix, was not widely known to his various early audiences, and thus the reference was missed.

Felix's purposes in writing were doubtless multiple, but two particular themes emerge clearly. First, he wished to promote the cult of Guthlac, at a time when royal interests were beginning to compete for patronage, as independent: it was worthy of royal respect and enrichment, but not to be subject to undue royal control. Felix shows Guthlac as a king-maker (at least by prophecy, chapter XLIX), not a subject (in the same chapter addressing the future King Æthelbald as *mi puer* 'my child'). His parentage, the naming of his tribe (the *Guthlacingas*) and the mention of his land (*patria*), indicate Felix's vision of the substance and significance of the saint and his cult. And secondly, Felix interprets Guthlac consistently as a hermit according to the desert model of Antony, and this may have influenced his choice of vocabulary in describing the substance and significance of the cult.

Conclusion

This article has argued that Felix's account of the naming of Guthlac is at first sight problematic, and that Felix's translator and other vernacular writers found it so, as shown by adjustments to those passages dealing with the naming. Even modern editors might make mistakes about Felix's Latin in relation to Guthlac's name, it has further been suggested. A way of resolving the difficulties is to see Felix's language as proleptic, seeing the future importance of Guthlac and his cult as being 'read into' in the naming. If this may be entertained as a possibility, then the naming can be interpreted through Felix's emphasis on the eremitical nature of the saint and his community at Crowland and may possibly refer to one of the classic sources of the eremitical ascetic ideal, the *Regula Pachomii*, in the choice of vocabulary.

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58 The Monastic Manuscript Project, www.earlymedievalmonasticism.org, accessed August 2014; details at <<http://www.earlymedievalmonasticism.org/manuscripts/LondonBL-Add-30055.html>> and <<http://www.earlymedievalmonasticism.org/texts/Pachomius-Regula.html>>

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