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3. *Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*, pt. 1, in *Anchoritic Spirituality*, ed. Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 49.
4. *Ibid.*, pt. 2, 88, 91–92.
5. Ann K. Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 7.
6. Arnold van Gennep, *Les rites de passage* (Paris: Émile Nourry, 1909).
7. See Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969), 101.
8. *Ibid.*, 94–96.
9. Jerome wrote: “While a woman serves for birth and children, she is different from man as body is from soul. But when she wants to serve Christ more than the world, then she shall cease to be called a woman and shall be called man.” See *Commentary on Ephesians*, III chap. 5.
10. Turner, *Ritual Process*, 44.
11. This is based on 1 Peter 2:5, wherein the faithful are likened to living stone. See also Michelle M. Sauer, “Architecture of Desire: Mediating the Female Gaze in the Medieval English Anchorhold,” *Gender and History* 25, no. 3 (2013): 541–60, esp. 546–47.
12. Sarah Salih, “Julian in Norwich: Heritage and Iconography,” in *Julian of Norwich’s Legacy: Medieval Mysticism and Post-medieval Reception*, ed. Sarah Salih and Denise N. Baker (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 153–72, at 158. See also Elizabeth Cox, Liz Herbert McAvoy, and Roberta Magnani, eds., *Reconsidering Gender, Time, and Memory in Medieval Culture* (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell and Brewer, 2015).
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19. See <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/tyntesfield>.

GUTHLAC BETWIXT AND BETWEEN: LITERACY, CROSS-TEMPORAL AFFILIATION, AND AN ANGLO-SAXON ANCHORITE

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ABSTRACT

Guthlac’s saintly “career” saw his transformation from aristocratic warrior to monastic visionary. It saw him move physically from a warrior’s secular hall to a monastic community and then to an anchorite’s cell. Beyond this, however, even the ways later generations came to know—and perhaps be stimulated to emulate—Guthlac move betwixt and between. That is, they involve repeated translations, movements between languages, between genres, between reading contexts. Felix’s original Anglo-Latin *vita* must itself be triangulated among a variety of previous textual models. That Latin text was variously re-created as it was translated from Latin into multiple Old English texts. The Old English prose translations, *vita* and sermon, situate and invoke a significantly different Guthlac from that readable in the two (or perhaps three) extant devotional poems. Multiply liminal, Guthlac—the man and the textual memory—offers his readers an exemplar through whom they engage in the reconstruction of monastic identity and literary subjectivity.

KEYWORDS: Guthlac, Anglo-Saxon, Felix of Crowland, Crowland, anchorite

The life of the Anglo-Saxon hermit saint Guthlac has long been interpreted as one of boundaries crossed, of movements physical, emotional, and spiritual. The historical Guthlac was born sometime around 670 c.e. After a youthful career as a warrior, he became a monk at Repton, a Benedictine abbey in Derbyshire, but then, two years later, took up the life of a hermit at Crowland in the South Lincolnshire fens. The legendary Guthlac—the saint whose life would be told and retold for centuries after his death in 714 and whose hermitage would become a rich and powerful monastery after 971—is even more markedly a figure of liminality. He is, to begin with, a Mercian saint, and even the name of that Anglo-Saxon kingdom, Mierce, signifies those who inhabit a frontier, specifically that between the

Anglo-Saxons to the east and the British to the west.¹ His father, moreover, seems to have been a magnate of the Middle Angles, a confederation of peoples buffering Mercia from East Anglia. Since the territory of the Middle Angles is precisely in the area in which both Guthlac and his sister Pega established themselves as hermits, Crowland represents a return of sorts to an ancestral home. Nevertheless, Guthlac's hermitage enjoys the kind of symbolic liminality that characterizes a hermit's significance to his community. Established on a prehistoric burial mound predating the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in Britain, it occupies a space physically between solid land and water; spiritually between life and death, this world and the next; and historically between a pagan past and a Christian future.² It is a place both uninhabited by men and overpopulated by demons. In this place of exile destined to be transformed into a blessed home—both for Guthlac and, ultimately, for the new monastic community that would be founded there generations after his death—Guthlac undergoes a variety of trials: in visionary encounters with spirits he is thrown into the fen, taken up into the heavens, and given a glimpse of hell. Through these experiences he gains the authority to advise others—and thus through liminality a paradoxical centrality to his community.

But the subject of this article is not the kind of liminality that consists of a movement from one place or state of being to another so much as the textual betwixt- and betweenness, the constant becoming, of Guthlac as a literary figure. Its subject is the superimposition of texts and temporalities as Guthlac moves between as well as within the texts that transform him for and in relation to later reading communities in Anglo-Saxon England—as he moves, that is, between languages and between genres with the repeated rewriting of his original Anglo-Latin *vita* into Old English prose and poetry.

From the earliest inscription of Guthlac on, the writing and rewriting of the saint's life invokes hagiographic tropes and lexical borrowings that situate the texts, their saintly subject, and their writers and readers within networks of literary influence and cultural affinity. Such writing and rewriting, reading and rereading, create textual communities extending not only horizontally in time (as it were), linking readers contemporary with each other, but also vertically, across temporal moments and generations, hagiographical *Lives*, and human lives and bodies.³ For reading always occurs in a transtemporal present, and reading practices such as reading aloud or even subvocalization while reading silently engage an underlying transcorporeality: the words of one are uttered by and through the mouth of another. Guthlac—the text(s) as well as the man—therefore

provides a complex exemplar for a specifically Anglo-Saxon eremiticism and the (re)construction of Anglo-Saxon community produced through practices of literacy that establish lines of affiliation, of what may be termed textual kinship. Rather than offering either source study per se, then, or a genealogy of Guthlacian texts—both of which suggest a narrative of linear time—this article will ask some different questions about the literary influence and borrowing that repeatedly transform the meaning of Guthlac and his eremiticism.⁴ What does it mean when the life of a solitary hermit is exchanged within and between communities, is, indeed, exchanged in order to create communities? What does it mean for one hagiographer to appropriate the very words of another and yet make them his own? What happens when words move betwixt and between authors, when temporalities overlap?

Sometime before 749, within a generation of Guthlac's death, an otherwise anonymous monk named Felix wrote his mid-eighth-century *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*. Even this is a deceptively simple statement. Nine manuscripts from the late eighth through the late eleventh century contain copies (fragmentary, partial, or complete) of the text: the late eighth- or early ninth-century British Library (BL) Royal 4 A xiv; the ninth-century Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 307; the tenth-century Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 389; the late tenth-century BL Royal 13 A xv; the late tenth-/early eleventh-century Arras MS 812; Boulogne Public Library 637, from around the year 1000; the mid-eleventh-century BL Harley 3097 and BL Cotton Nero E I; and the late eleventh-century Dublin Trinity College B.4.3.⁵ Felix's *vita* thus "belongs" both to its "original" mid-eighth century (even if no extant manuscript dates from so early a date) and to the times of its reception and (re)transmission.

Felix's dedication to King Ælfwald of East Anglia and even his name (if he was named after Felix the Burgundian, whose missionary efforts achieved that kingdom's conversion) may suggest that the hagiographer himself was an East Anglian. And thus appears the first instance of betwixt- and betweenness in Guthlac's textual construction: the inscription of a Mercian saint by (or at least for) an East Anglian reading community. Ælfwald's patronage and thus Guthlac's initial inscription may well have had as much to do with complicated political affiliations with the Mercian king Æthelbald as with veneration of the saint. Æthelbald was (at the time of Felix's writing) Ælfwald's ally and perhaps even overlord. Previously, however, Ælfwald, or perhaps his father, Ealdwulf, may well have sheltered Æthelbald during the years of his exile from a Mercia under the reign of his rival Colored,

the period in which he was advised and consoled by Guthlac. Moreover, Ælfwald's sister Ecgburga, who (according to Felix) sent Guthlac the leaden coffin and the linen shroud in which he would eventually be buried, may well have had her own stake in promoting the cult of a visionary hermit. Another contemporary Mercian abbess, Milburga of Much Wenlock, was certainly interested in circulating the visions of an anonymous monk in her charge.⁶ The two narratives (and visionaries) share a religio-political context: Guthlac predicts Æthelbald's ultimate inheritance of the Mercian throne, even as the anonymous monk denounces his rival Coelred as among the damned suffering in hell.⁷ Either Ecgburga or Ælfwald, then, or both, would have had good reasons to remind the Mercian king of past obligations. It is, therefore, distinctly possible that Felix was a monk in Ecgburga's charge and his Guthlac was a means of promoting institutional influence.

As Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe has observed, Guthlac's hermitage as Felix writes it is not merely geographically but also historically liminal: at Crowland his personal *psychomachia* (especially his encounter with "British" demons) implicitly restages the Mercian past of national formation in opposition to its British neighbors. Guthlac's Crowland is also "a space of narrative action where the folding together of different, even conflicting, discourses" from earlier hagiographic texts creates an insular hermit saint within an insular desert.⁸

Felix's debts to earlier hagiographers are many—and long recognized.⁹ His most prominent sources include Evagrius's Latin translation of Athanasius's Greek *Life of Anthony* and Bede's prose *Life of Cuthbert*, a text itself indebted to Evagrius for the construction of an Anglo-Saxon hermit monk in the Antonine tradition. Felix's narration, that is, and hence his legendary/textual Guthlac, is shaped and formed by his imitation and even appropriation of previous hagiographers' models, themselves translations and transformations of earlier texts. This is true even though Felix claims to have written his account, especially of Guthlac's life at Crowland, "quae a frequentoribus eius Wilfrido et Cissan audiui" [as I heard it from his frequent visitors, Wilfrid and Cissa]—witnesses who themselves would have carried to and from their visits concepts of sanctity derived from earlier exemplars.¹⁰

Felix fills the prologue of his *vita* especially with extensive borrowings from a number of previous texts. He opens with a punning invocation of God and his royal patron, "in Domino dominorum domino meo" [in (the name of) the Lord of Lords, to my lord (Ælfwald)], plucked from the preface of Bede's metrical *Life of Cuthbert*.¹¹ But Felix's appropriation of

earlier texts does more than align Guthlac with the earlier Northumbrian hermit, even as his borrowings extend beyond Bede to other shared texts in the Anglo-Latin literary tradition. Felix introduces himself as "catholicae congregationis vernaculus" [servant of the Catholic Community], just as Aldhelm introduces himself at the beginning of his *Epistola ad Acircium*. Elsewhere Felix borrows from Aldhelm's *De Metris* and *De Pedum Regulis* (both commonly appended to the *Epistola*) and from both the prose and verse *De Virginitate*. The invocation of both Bede and Aldhelm, the two great Anglo-Saxon schoolmasters and models of Latin grammar and literary traditions in Felix's England, makes a strong statement about Felix's own literary connections, his textual affiliations. In this prologue he thus goes on to echo the preface to Sulpicius Severus's *Vita Sancti Martini*, as well as the prologues of his two major hagiographical models, the *Vitae* of Anthony and Cuthbert. He also cites (with attribution) Gregory the Great's *Expositio in Job*, Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and Psalm 57. Allusion, citation, and glossing—textual practices rooted in monastic pedagogies of *imitatio* and *emulatio*—facilitate what in this instance approaches textual bricolage, an extremely dense intertextuality through which Felix establishes his bona fides, his discipleship, and his belonging to a literate community.¹²

The borrowings extend beyond the prologue, of course. The swarm of demonic beasts that plague Guthlac—a raging lion, a roaring bull, a menacing bear, a grunting boar, a howling wolf, a whinnying horse, a bleating stag, a hissing serpent, a bellowing ox, and a croaking crow—are taken verbatim from Evagrius's narrative.¹³ Guthlac's cohabitation with sometimes mischievous ravens and swallows relives the travails of Cuthbert at Lindisfarne.¹⁴ Felix borrows much of Guthlac's death scene, and something of the translation of his incorrupt body, from Bede's *Life of Cuthbert* as well. Guthlac's visions and spirit journeys recall in their narratives and descriptions the literary tradition of vision narratives going back to Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*. Most explicitly, however, they echo those detailed in the *vita* of the Irish visionary and missionary Fursey, also active in East Anglia.

Such borrowings sometimes consist of entire sentences, even paragraphs; at other times they occur in more subtle echoes of a formulaic concatenation or an evocative phrase or in an idiosyncratic word choice borrowed from an earlier text. Felix's prolix style and his predilection for rare words and coinages link him especially with Aldhelm—and like Aldhelm, Felix shows a fondness for Virgilian formulas. He borrows, for example, the phrase *mortalibus aegris* (used by Virgil in *Georgics* 1.238 as well as *Aeneid* 2.268, 10.274, and 12.850) and deploys it in conjunction with an echo of

Prudentius's *Psychomachia*, in *caligine noctis* (1.483) and uses a further Virgilian phrase, *matutini volucres* (*Aeneid* 8.456), to craft his own "ergo exutis umbrosae noctis caliginibus, cum sol mortalibus aegris igneum demoverat ortum, et matutini volucres avino forcipes pipant" [so when the mists of the dark night had been dispersed and the sun had risen in fire over hapless mortals, while the winged tribe chirped their morning songs from the beaks that birds possess].¹⁵ Elsewhere Felix combines *mortalibus aegris* with another Virgilian formula, *crastina lux* (*Aeneid* 10.244), to create a self-echoing "interea mortalibus aegris lux crastina demoverat ortum" [meanwhile the light of the next day had risen over hapless mortals].¹⁶

This kind of thick intertextuality, witness to Felix's participation in a nascent Anglo-Saxon literary community, is not without attendant anxieties. Felix demurs that there are others "ingeniositatis fluentia inter flores rethoricae per virecta litteraturae pure, liquid lucideque rivantur, qui melius luculentiusque componere valierunt" [who, making the waters of genius flowing in pure and lucid streams among the flowers of rhetoric and amid the green meadows of literature, could compose in a better and more splendid style].¹⁷ And this is an anxiety that also implicates Felix's readers, whom he admonishes "ut aliena non reprehendas, ne ab aliis quasi alienus reprehendaris" [not to blame a stranger's work lest you be blamed by others as yourself a stranger].¹⁸ Both Felix and his readers, that is, must prove themselves not foreigners but, rather, members of a shared literary community, the one by echoing, even respeaking, the words of his predecessors and the other by recognizing, acknowledging, and appreciating—and perhaps in turn replicating—those echoes and allusions.¹⁹

In a similar manner, Felix's Guthlac constantly negotiates models of past community and behavior both secular and monastic—and "literary" traditions both oral and written. The son of Penwalh, Guthlac takes his name from his kin group, the Guthlacingas, and traces his noble lineage back "per nobilissima inlustrium regum nomina antiquam ab origine Icles" [through the most noble names of famous kings back to Icel], the progenitor of Mercian kings.²⁰ As a young man Guthlac bases his identity in these ties, in his duties to his kin group and king, and in his response to traditional models of heroism: "Valida pristinorum heroum facta reminiscens" [Remembering the valiant deeds of heroes of old], the young Guthlac gathers a war band around him.²¹ Presumably these "valiant deeds" were the stuff of a vernacular oral tradition; Guthlac's subsequent conversion entails his assumption of the Latin literacy to which Felix's text witnesses

and through which the saint's own valiant deeds (as relayed, ostensibly, in the oral testimony of Wilfred and Cissa) would be conveyed. As Guthlac rejects secular prestige, kin, and companions, he acquires new kinsmen and friends—and new behavioral and cultural models.²²

Between and between orality and literacy, Guthlac's education in monastic community explicitly entails his joining a literary community: "Cum enim litteris edoctus psalmorum canticum discere maluisset, tunc frugifera supra memorati viri praecordia roscidis roris caelestis imbris divina gratia ubertim rigabat. Summis autem providentibus magistris et auxiliante gratia supernae pietatis, sacris litteris et monasticis disciplinis erudiebatur" [When indeed, after having been taught his letters, he set his mind to learn the chanting of the psalms, then the divine grace sprinkled this same man's heart copiously with the moist showers of heavenly dew. Cared for moreover by the best teachers and aided by the heavenly grace, he was instructed in the Holy Scriptures and in the monastic discipline].²³ Guthlac's immersion in literacy is paralleled in Felix's appropriations of his own predecessors: the "moist showers of heavenly dew" are borrowed from Aldhelm, and the "best teachers" and "heavenly grace," from the *vita* of Saint Fursey.²⁴

Absorbing the community's liturgies and ceremonies, Guthlac takes *imitatio* into *emulatio* as he learns from his fellow monks, imitating their examples of monastic life but eventually surpassing them in both behavior and knowledge of scripture:

Igitur cantici, psalmis, hymnis, orationibus moribusque ecclesiasticis per biennium inbutus proprias singuorum secum cohabitantium virtutes imitari studebat. Illius enim oboedientiam, istius humilitatem, ipsius patientiam, alterius longanimitatem, illorum abstinentiam, utriusque sinceritatem; omnium temperantiam, cunctorum suavitatem; et ut brevis dicam, omnium in omnibus imitabatur virtutes.

[So for two years he was initiated in canticles, psalms, hymns, prayers, and church routine, and at the same time he sought to imitate the individual virtues of each one of those who dwelt with him: the obedience of one, the humility of another, the patience of this one, the long-suffering of that one, the abstinence of some, the sincerity of others, and the temperance and agreeableness of all and sundry; to put it briefly, he imitated the virtues of all of them in all things.]²⁵

In this passage Guthlac's appropriation of his brothers' virtues is echoed by Felix's appropriation of the words of others within his own literary community of hagiographers, specifically the *Life of Saint Anthony* once again. Conversely, it is Guthlac's reading of texts that could well have included that *Life* that especially prompts his decision to seek a wilderness place: "Cum enim priscorum monarchorum solitariam vitam legebat, tum inluminato cordis gremio avida cupidine heremum quaerere fervebat" [For when he read about the solitary life of monks of former days, then his heart was enlightened and burned with an eager desire to make his way to the desert].²⁶

Felix's Guthlac's new literacy, his mastery of scripture and liturgical practice superimposed upon and transforming his mastery of (oral) warrior identity, appears first and foremost in his use of psalms in battle against the demons who haunt his hermitage. Significantly, the attacks coincide with his performance of daily liturgy: His first temptation happens "cum quodam die adsueta consuetudine psalmis canticisque incumberet" [when he was engaged one day upon his usual task of singing psalms and hymns]; a second attack occurs while Guthlac ponders "de conversationis suae cotidiano moderamine" [the day to day ordering of his life], that is, his living out of monastic rule and eremitic models; the third—his visionary travels through hell—begins while he is at prayer, "cum vir beatae memoriae Guthlac adsueto more vigil in intermissis orationibus cuiusdam noctis intempesto tempore perstaret" [when Guthlac the man of blessed memory in his usual way was once more keeping vigil at the dead of night in uninterrupted prayer]; and the last happens once again at matins, "quodam nocte, gallicinali tempore, quo more solito vir beatae memoriae Guthlac orationum vigilis incumberet" [on a certain night about the time of cockcrow, when Guthlac of blessed memory was as usual engaged in vigils and prayers].²⁷

In the first attack Guthlac suffers days of despair about his ability to make amends for his past. On the third evening "velut prophetico spiritu psallere coepit: In tribulation invocari Dominum, et reliqua" [as though through the spirit of prophecy he began to sing: "In my distress I called upon the Lord," (Psalm 17) et cetera]. And in response Saint Bartholomew appears "in matutinis vigiliis" [in the morning watches]—at matins. Comforted and heartened, Guthlac completes his prayers, vanquishing the devil with a triumphant singing of Psalm 117: "Dominus mihi adiutor est, et ego videbo inimicos, et reliqua" ["The Lord is my helper and I shall see my enemies," et cetera].²⁸

In the second, the demons offer spurious education specifically in the following of monastic rule and eremitic model Guthlac has been meditating on. They tempt him toward an extreme asceticism (specifically immoderate fasting) by offering him (ironically) exactly the kinds of texts and scriptures that had led him into the wilderness, "antiquorum heremitiarum conversationis" [the lives of ancient prophets], the examples of Moses, Elijah, and the desert fathers.²⁹ Guthlac repels them by singing Psalm 55, "Convertantur inimici mei retrosum, et reliqua" ["Let mine enemies be turned back," et cetera].³⁰

When the devils attack a third time, adopting multiple frightening shapes, shrieking, dragging him through brambles, and plunging him into the fens, Guthlac vanquishes them by means of Psalm 15, "Domino a dextris est mihi ne commovear" [The Lord is at my right hand, lest I should be moved]. When they beat and whip him and then draw him up into the skies and down into hell, he defies them in the words of Job 30:19, "Vae vobis, filii tenebrarum, semen Cain, favilla cineris" [Woe unto you, you sons of darkness, seed of Cain, you are but dust and ashes]. His liturgical heroism is rewarded by the appearance once again by Saint Bartholomew, who commands the evil spirits to return the hermit safely to his home. The devils subsequently "velut fumus a facie eius evanuerunt" [vanished like smoke from his presence]: Felix's narration draws from Psalm 67:2, the psalm verse sung by Saint Anthony in a similar situation.³¹

It is that same Psalm 67 that Guthlac uses to exorcize the demons once and for all. Suddenly overcome by sleep, but seemingly roused by shouts, he recognizes (from his years as an exile among them) voices speaking British, even as he sees his hermitage set afire and feels himself raised up on spear points. Recognizing at last the delusion, Guthlac "velut prophetico ore sexagesimi septimi psalmi primum versum psallebat: Exsurgat Deus, et reliqua" [sang the first verse of the sixty-seventh psalm as if prophetically, "Let God arise," et cetera]. The vision-cum-exorcism constitutes a specifically telling moment of Guthlac's betwixt- and betweenness. Felix notes that this vision occurs "in diebus Coenredi Merciorum regis cum Brittones, infesti hostes Saxonici generis, bellis, praedis, publicisque vastationibus Anglorum gentem deturbarent" [in the days of Coenred king of the Mercians while the Britons, the implacable enemy of the Saxon race, were troubling the English with their attacks, their pillaging, and their devastations of the people].³² Guthlac's *psychomachia* parallels, even enacts, in imagery drawn from his own warrior past, a current military crisis; his "prophetic" prayer predicts the future Mercian victory.³³ Then, too, in this final encounter with the demons, Guthlac's literacy—and Felix's, since it is

Felix who first deploys the psalm, completing the verse proleptically in his narration—enables his full and for the most part unchallenged occupation of Crowland. But even as he takes up solitary residence there, far from Repton, the contingency of his visions and temptations with liturgical hours and practices continues to link him with and within monastic community—and vice versa: if the Guthlac who conquers demons via the recitation of psalms is situated between secular and spiritual identities, so, too, the Felix who writes him and Felix's readers, all who might also recite the same psalms during a vigil, become similarly betwixt and between the past of their model and their present in eternally recurrent battle.

Eventually Guthlac's acquired literacy provides him (and/or Felix through him) an ability to collage biblical texts into his consolation of the exiled Æthelbald. The Lord, he promises him,

"cervices inimicorum tuorum subtus cacaneum tuum rediget, et possessiones eorum possidebis, et fugient a facie tua qui te oderunt [Numbers 10:35] et terga eorum videbis, et gladius tuus vincet adversarios tuos. Et ideo confortare, quia Dominus adiutor [Psalm 27:7] tuus est; patiens esto, ne declines in consilium quod non potest stabliri [Psalms 26:9, 20:12]. Non in praeda nec in rapina regnum tibi dabitur, sed de manu Domini obtinebis; expecta eum, cuius dies defecerunt [Psalm 89:9], quia manus Domini opprimit illum, cuius spes in maligna posita est, et dies illius velut umbra [John 5:19] pertransibunt." Haec et his similia illo dicente, ex illo tempore Æthelbald spem suam in Domino posui [Psalm 143:4], nec vana spes illum fefillit [Psalm 72:28].

["will bow down the necks of your enemies beneath your heel and you shall own their possessions; those who hate you shall flee from your face and you shall see their backs; and your sword shall overcome your foes. And so be strong, for the Lord is your helper; be patient lest you turn to a purpose that you cannot perform. Not as booty nor as spoil shall the kingdoms be granted you, but you shall obtain it from the hand of God; wait for him whose life has been shortened, because the hand of the Lord oppresses him whose hope lies in wickedness, and whose days shall pass away like a shadow." After Guthlac had spoken such words as these to him, from that time Æthelbald placed his hope in the Lord. Nor did an idle hope deceive him.]³⁴

Whether or not these are the historical Guthlac's actual words does not matter. They are the right words for the occasion, drawn from the right source texts. By speaking them, the legendary Guthlac fulfills one of his roles as hermit: removed from and yet still connected to worldly and temporal community, he is uniquely able to mediate divine reassurance. The composition and delivery of these consoling words situate the textual Guthlac between the historical hermit and his hagiographer. Felix's Guthlac, still "speaking" these past words in multiple textual presents, can continue to remind Æthelbald—and all subsequent kings—of the divine patronage facilitated by saint and monastic community.

Although it may seem paradoxical in the life of a hermit, the creation and maintenance of community threads through this *vita* of a solitary Guthlac who is, in fact, rarely alone. As his reputation for visions, prophecy, and miraculous healing spreads, Guthlac, like Cuthbert, attracts visitors "non solum de proximis Merciorum finibus verum etiam de remotis Britanniae partibus" [not only from the neighboring land of the Mercians, but also from the remote parts of Britain].³⁵ One frequent visitor—one who also links the saint with his hagiographer—is Wilfrid, "iamdudum viro Dei Guthlaco spiritualis amicitiae foedere copulatus" [long bound to the man of God Guthlac by the bonds of spiritual friendship].³⁶ In fact, community, established through shared liturgy and literacy, is most explicitly displayed in specific networks of *amicitia*, spiritual friendship and patronage, within the text. In Guthlac's darkest hour Saint Bartholomew, significantly described as "fidelissimi amici sui" [his most faithful friend], offers much-needed spiritual support as well as an apostolic model of spiritual warfare.³⁷ Guthlac's net of friendship later extends to include the younger Beccel, the servant/student who will eventually fulfill a retainer's role in carrying Guthlac's last words to his sister Pega. Beccel has himself enjoyed a transformation (paralleled by characters in the *Lives* of both Anthony and Cuthbert) from would-be assassin to loyal retainer, exemplifying and reenacting the change in the Repton community toward the saint and perhaps Guthlac's own transformation from false to true identity as defined in community. Since Beccel is particularly tempted by the devil with the promise that if he slays Guthlac, he will be able to inherit the hermitage and (just as importantly) "regum principumque venerantii" [the veneration of kings and princes], he may also embody the temptation to fame to which readers and would-be imitators of Guthlac might be prone.³⁸ In the event, it is Cissa—not Beccel—who inherits the hermitage, while Beccel evidently

returns to the world outside Crowland. But, then, perhaps it is precisely because he is not himself a hermit that Beccel can stand in so well for the noneremitic reader, even a hagiographer such as Felix, in his relations with Guthlac.

The three friends, Bartholomew, Guthlac, and Beccel, implicitly play out an exemplary monastic ideological reproduction through imitation: Beccel the disciple of Guthlac the disciple of Bartholomew the disciple of Christ. Guthlac's anchorhold, the place of this reproduction, constitutes an exclusively male homosocial space. Those women who appear in the *vita* do so to frame this period of Guthlac's life, facilitating his career and his postmortem memory, underwriting and supporting the visionary and his cult: Abbess Ælfthryth oversees his first induction into monasticism at Repton; Abbess Ecgburga sends Guthlac his shroud and coffin (and perhaps commissions Felix's *vita*); and Guthlac's sister Pega arranges his funeral and, a year later, the translation of his body into a new marble tomb. A similar homosociality characterizes Felix's literary kinship with Aldhelm and Bede and, through them and like them, with earlier hagiographers and authors. Felix's identity is shaped by his imitation and outright appropriation of Evagrius, Bede, and Aldhelm, even as Guthlac effectively emulates Anthony, Cuthbert, and other early saints.

Establishing and localizing both Guthlac's sanctity and Felix's literary authority, such borrowings keep in play the constant (re)negotiation of pasts still active in the present. What is at issue, that is, in the presents of both saint and hagiographer is their position betwixt and between the past of the models they imitate and the future of those who may imitate them. What is at stake is essentially a kinship line and the reproduction of community and ideology—which in a monastic as opposed to a secular community is at least predominantly homo- rather than heterosocial. It is a community, moreover, bound by an ethos of *amicitia* voiced and enacted textually through a shared verbal style. Guthlac's behavioral and Felix's (and Bede's, before him) textual imitation of noninsular models creates an insular model of sanctity and hagiography. Situating both the saint and his hagiographer within contemporary Anglo-Latin culture and the wider world of early Christianity, imitation—in literary or in saintly life—creates networks of affiliation. It establishes similarities and differences that create a transtemporal and perhaps transcorporeal community. Felix's text situates Guthlac betwixt and between literary and cultural antecedents and between past and future readers who will similarly situate themselves vis-à-vis the textual remains of both Guthlac and Felix.

The interplay of present text with past source continues as Felix's present becomes, in turn, his readers' past, albeit a past still present in the repeated copying of the *vita*. Guthlac's hermitage, inherited by Cissa and after him likely other hermits, may well have seen some veneration as a saint's shrine by the ninth century; whatever community may have formed there earlier was replaced, in 971, by a more formal monastic foundation under its first abbot, Thurkytel, during the Benedictine Revival.³⁹ As his cult spread, Guthlac began to appear in calendars and liturgies throughout southern England.⁴⁰ And Guthlac, still available in Felix's "source text" version, was further reconceived and rewritten—significantly not in Latin but in Old English—in the light of the needs of new readers and venerators. Rather than supplanting the older *vita*, these newer *Lives* supplement it, and "Guthlac" becomes all the more a construction betwixt and between the texts—and languages—in which he appears, providing a complex exemplar for his readers and hagiographers not least in the way that various transformations of human life into text engage with issues of literary affiliation. Each of these texts represents an appropriation of prior texts and an affiliation with earlier hagiographers and authors that shape both Guthlac and his erstwhile hagiographers.

In all these texts, Guthlac's social bonds—those that link him with his heroic ancestors, his youthful warrior companions, his fellow monks of Repton, his supernatural patron Bartholomew, his companion and disciple Beccel, the exiled King Æthelbald he counsels, and Felix's original primary informants Wilfrid and Cissa—model varieties of friendship, especially monastic *amicitia*, among both blood and volitional kin sometimes separated in space (even the spaces of earth and heaven) but linked within one temporal moment, the span of Guthlac's life. More, in all of Guthlac's many (textual) *Lives* as in Felix's original, expositions of exemplary friendships, the thematization of *amicitia* and community, offer paradigms for readers' and writers' own affiliations with the saint, cross-temporal spiritual friendships with his earlier hagiographers, and relations with fellow reader/writer-venerators past, present, and future.

Sometime "not late in the tenth century" Felix's *Vita S. Guthlaci* seems to have been translated into Old English, probably in a (West?) Mercian dialect.⁴¹ Though it is no longer extant, the characteristics of this translation may nevertheless be deduced from the two later translations that do survive: the eleventh-century West Saxon version of the *Life* included among Ælfrician texts in Cotton Vespasian D xxi and a transformation of one section into a homily collected in the tenth-century Vercelli Book.

Both prose translations (and their lost source) participate in what Robert Stanton has called “a culture of translation.” From its beginning, Stanton argues, Anglo-Saxon literary culture was defined by its engagement with translation, as nonnative Latin speakers and writers (including Aldhelm and Bede) developed pedagogical and literary modes of reception, specifically the glossing of Latin texts. By the late ninth century this glossing became translation in our common sense of the term: the widespread rewriting of Latin into Old English.⁴²

Although “faithful” translations, these texts are not replacements for Felix’s Latin. The fuller Vespasian *Life* especially (and presumably the original Mercian *Life*) constitutes, rather, a simulacrum (in Emily Thornbury’s usage), a text that represents (and to some extent stands in for) its original but without obscuring—indeed, in some ways exactly by emphasizing—the differences between the two.⁴³ The eleventh-century scribe of the Vespasian *Life* engages, in fact, with a double translation, the initial rendering of Felix’s eighth-century Latin into the tenth-century Mercian exemplar and then, perhaps through a second intermediary, into the extant West Saxon *Life*.⁴⁴ Roberts notes that despite some lexical and morphological evidence of the underlying Mercian original, the *Life* reveals how “an old-fashioned text was subjected to thoughtful revision, to bring it more into line with the norms of late eleventh-century West Saxon.”⁴⁵

This translation nevertheless creates what E. G. Whatley calls “the illusion of reading the Latin.”⁴⁶ The dedication is still to Ælfwald *Estenengla kyning*, even though by the time of the manuscript, at least, there was neither a king nor an independent kingdom of East Anglia: the creation of a West Saxon text reflects the rise of Wessex, its absorption of other earlier kingdoms, and their transformation into a single England. Likewise the Vespasian *Life* still claims to be based on direct testimony from Felix’s (now long-dead) informant Wilfrid: “*Pas þing, þe ic her onwrite, ic leornode fram gesegenenum þæs arwyrðan abbodes Wilfridis*” [These things, which I write here, I learned from the testimony of the worthy abbot Wilfrid].⁴⁷ The “I” of the Old English text remains (ostensibly) Felix: every *ego* and *meum* is rendered *ic* and *minum*. An introduction of the first-person plural unites hagiographer(s) and reader(s) past and present in the opening invocation of a “we” who share “Felix’s” faith in “*urum wealdende rihtgelyfendum*” [right belief in our ruling God].⁴⁸ The whole text ends with an echoic prayer, “*Sy urum drihtne lof an wuldor and wurðmynt, and þam eadigan were sce Guthlace, on ealre worulda woruld aa buton ende on ecenysse Amen*” [To our Lord be praise and glory and honor, and to blessed Saint Guthlac, world

without end forever in eternity Amen].⁴⁹ The Old English *ic*, appropriating Felix’s voice, acts as an intermediary between Guthlac’s past—and perhaps Felix’s own as a reader/student of the *vita*—and the reader’s present.

A more major change appears in the combination and reorganization of chapters, as Felix’s prologue and fifty-three chapters are rendered into a prologue and twenty-two sections, arranged in four numbered chapters: Felix’s chapters 1 through 8, on Guthlac’s background and birth, become the Vespasian chapter 1; Felix’s chapter 9 until partway through chapter 24, covering Guthlac’s life from his baptism through his decision to become a hermit, become the Old English chapter 2; the second part of the Latin chapters 24 through 27, the founding of the hermitage on St. Bartholomew’s day, becomes chapter 3; and all the remaining chapters of Felix’s *Life* become numbered chapter 4, with sections within this large division annotated with descriptive headings. Under these headings the Old English redactor combines Felix’s chapters 28 and 29, 30 through 34, 37 and 38, 44 and 45, 46 and 47, 50 and 51, and 52 and 53. While the Old English *Life* follows Felix’s *Vita* closely in plot, this reorganization does involve numerous cuts and compressions. The Old English *Life* excises, for example, the exchange between the dead Guthlac and Æthelbald. While the king still visits the saint’s tomb and enjoys a nocturnal vision, in the *Life* he no longer requests (and receives) miraculous confirmation of the saint’s repeated prophecy of future success. Whatley argues that the redactor thus downplays the king’s doubt and emphasizes his trust in God and the saint, constructing a less problematic relationship.⁵⁰ Less detailed, too, are the miracles involving the thieving ravens and the nesting sparrows in Felix’s chapters 37 through 40. Robin Waugh argues that the downplaying of these animal miracles is associated with a preference for the more sensational (and mystical) rather than the more realistic miracles.⁵¹

The most significant plot change, however, occurs in the episode of the miraculous hand that marks Guthlac’s birth. In Felix’s *Vita*, the hand reaches out toward a cross that stands in front of the house in which the future saint is born. The cross—an earthly one—may designate Guthlac’s parents as Christians, perhaps among the first Christians in Penda’s Mercia, a significant distinction in a period of ongoing evangelization. In the Vespasian *Life*, however, the hand reaches out holding a heavenly golden cross, a change likely drawing on earlier texts reflective of a cult developing within a more completely Christian England.⁵² Guthlac’s mention in the Old English *Martyrology* singles out the “heavenly hand” episode at his birth, as well as the patronage of Bartholomew, identified as an “angel

of God" as well as an apostle, an identification common to the later Old English texts. The golden cross in a heavenly hand is a detail shared with a late eleventh-century Worcester office: the Vespasian *Life's* emendation therefore likely reflects contemporary liturgical celebration.⁵³

Nowhere, however, is the illusion of reading through the Old English to the Latin revealed more completely as illusion than in the translation—or rather, nontranslation—of Felix's ornate Latin style. The Old English prose is markedly less complex in its syntax and style and omits especially those flourishes that most celebrate Felix's literary kinship with Anglo-Latin texts and authors such as Aldhelm. This simplified prose, in which Latin periods are broken down into simpler, shorter sentences, loses much if not all of the intertextuality creative of community between Felix and readers equally familiar with his borrowings from Evagrius, Bede, and Aldhelm. Equally, the rendering of psalm verses in the Old English is fuller and more specific. Replacing the Latin *et reliqua* with additional lines of the psalms requires less specific memory and liturgical participation on the part of its readers. Psalms and liturgy they still share with Guthlac, certainly, but they experience them in Old English rather than being expected to fill in the *et reliqua* lacunae with familiar Latin verses.

But if the readers of the Old English no longer participate in the same Latinate literary community as Felix, this does not mean that they do not share their own distinct bonds with the Old English "Felix" and through him a more contemporary Guthlac. This is true even if changes to Felix's text, responsive to changes in Anglo-Saxon England and its community of readers, are disguised, if not implicitly denied, by the invocation of a narrating "I" identical with Felix. And this is true, too, even if the Vespasian *Life* also expresses inherent anxieties about reading and translation as acts fraught with hazard and danger beyond and belied by their ostensible transparency. In the prologue, Felix warns his readers that disparaging his text (and/or disrespecting the text's allusions and borrowings) may really reveal their shortcomings, marking them as strangers outside the text's literary community. This becomes a curse in the Old English: readers who mock the *Life*, its author declares, may be struck blind, a fate that literalizes what for Felix is a metaphor of intellectual and spiritual light and darkness, knowledge and ignorance. Waugh ties this change to an inherent expectation of tension between author and reader: always initially *fremdan* (strangers), readers need to learn to understand the text. The prologue thus reveals anxieties about the dangers of (mis)interpretation, (mis)reading, and (mis) translation—anxieties, Waugh argues, also apparent in episodes such

as the devil's use of previous texts to tempt Guthlac toward immoderate fasting.⁵⁴

A community of readers is also a matter of concern in the other extant prose *Life* (or partial *Life*) of the saint in the Vercelli Book. Its prose is even simpler and less Latinate than in the Vespasian *Life*, and, as Roberts notes, it seems "a popularization of the central events of the legend" and even—as befits a homily—"has the feel almost of a performance text."⁵⁵ Equivalent to chapters 28 through 32 of Felix's Latin text—and therefore to the first few sections of chapter 4 of the Vespasian *Life*—the Vercelli homily appears in the manuscript immediately after (and in a distinct booklet with) Cynewulf's hagiographic poem *Elene*. For readers this conjunction may well create new patterns of intertextuality. Like the other contents of the manuscript—prose homilies and poems such as *Elene* and *The Dream of the Rood*—the Vercelli *Life* seems to offer itself especially for devotional study, weaving Guthlac's temptations, his life as hermit, and his visions of devils into a meditation on holy living. As Roberts notes, Guthlac's conflict with his devils could well be read in parallel to that of Cynewulf's Judas/Cyriacus.⁵⁶ And, significantly, the homily opens abruptly: "Wæs þær in þam [fore]sprecanan iglande sum micel hlæw of eorþan geworht" [There was in the aforementioned island a great barrow made of earth].⁵⁷ The invocation of something "aforementioned" may suggest familiarity: the reader, that is, may be expected to recognize this as the beginning of a *Life* of Guthlac.

Yet, although that reader may be thus prompted to engage with and within reading and devotional communities, the Vercelli *Life* also pares away textual references to community. It includes only the episodes that present Guthlac as a hermit visionary. This is, then, a Guthlac who resembles Fursey but less so Cuthbert and Anthony. And this Guthlac is very much alone within the text—without visitors, without models either in life or in text—with the exception of Saint Bartholomew, whose intervention is even more extravagantly heroic. The homily adds a description of the devils fleeing from Saint Bartholomew's brightness, a detail literalizing (albeit deleting) Felix's invocation of Psalm 67. Most significantly, this *Life* ends with Guthlac being taken into heaven. This change effectively eliminates the rest of Felix's (and the Vespasian *Life's*) narrative: the majority of the miracles (or nonmiracles) of eremitic life and Guthlac's consolation of the exiled Æthelbald disappear, as do his tutelage of Beccel and the less sensational, if more realistic, narrative of his death. Stripping the narrative of these characters and episodes concentrates the experience of reading Guthlac into a more intimate engagement between the reader and the saint.

The poems known as *Guthlac A* and *B*—originally quite separate works conjoined in the late tenth-century Exeter Book—show a similar intimacy of reading. Neither presents itself as at all a simulacrum of Felix's text. Rather, each transforms Guthlac's life (and *Life*) in offering its readers other devotional and/or literary uses of Guthlac's model. Each poem, too, as a distinct entity and as linked in the manuscript, reveals complex intertextualities of its own, finding echoes within the Exeter Book and within the larger corpus of Old English poetry, as well as with Felix's *vita* (their ultimate source) and potentially in earlier Old English texts.

Like the Vercelli *Life*, *Guthlac A* focuses on the saint as mystic and on the mystic as a warrior against demonic forces. In fact, it invokes the saint as a *miles Christi* even more directly than the Latin *Vita* or either Old English prose *Life*, and it does so through and against traditional Old English diction. In *Guthlac A* hermits especially are "gecostan ceman" [tried warriors] of God (91a) suspended betwixt and between earthly past and heavenly future.⁵⁸ The poem—or perhaps both poems as conjoined in the manuscript—begins, in fact, with a prologue in which an angel summons the soul of an anonymous and generic good man to heaven. Within the poem's introductory lines, the soul is a "tidfara" [traveler] who must "feran þider þu fundadest longe and gelome" [journey to the place you have sought so long and so often] (6–7a).⁵⁹ As Manish Sharma points out, Guthlac exemplifies the good man's—especially the exemplary hermit's—position on "the extreme boundaries" of human life as the poem describes him continually moving across thresholds, specifically the gates of heaven mentioned at the beginning and end of the poem (1–29 and 781–818) and those of hell (557–683).⁶⁰ God's warriors, anchorites, enjoy the highest spiritual status, having renounced this world and undertaken on earth a proleptic reflex of the soul's journey. Accordingly,

sume þa wuniadð on westennum
secað and gesittað sylfra willum
hamas on heolstrum, hy þæs heofoncundan
boldes bidað (81–84a)

[Some dwell in deserts; they seek and inhabit, by their own will,
homes in dark places, where they await a heavenly home.]

Such "anbuendra" [lone dwellers] (88a) suffer the persecutions of devils—but equally, "englas stondað gearwe mid gæsta wæpnum" [angels stand

ready with the weapons of the spirit] (88b–89a) to defend them. And among anchorites, as "us neah gewearð þurh haligne had gecyþed" [lately has been made known by holy men] (93b–94), Guthlac is particularly exemplary. As a hermit-warrior he is continually aided by an *engel*, a comforting and defending angel, ultimately revealed as Bartholomew (in line 723), who, as in the Vercelli homily, finally guides Guthlac's soul to heaven. The apostle's companionship and comfort and the poet's reliance on the testimony of "holy men" are both rare invocations of community in this narrative of solitary soul-combat.

In his hermitage one of the sharpest temptations Guthlac undergoes is his longing for the kinship, friends, and human love he has left behind on his journey into the wilderness. These are, however, contexts implied by elegiac language familiar from poems such as *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* as much as or rather than (as in Felix) explicitly detailed. Guthlac is tempted through the devils' invocation of the grief his death will cause the kinsmen and friends he has left behind. Yet, paradoxically, the damned spirits who inhabit the wilderness—not the saint so far from his monastic brothers—turn out to be the true exiles. And the solitary Guthlac is not as friendless as the crowd of spirits: his victory against devils is signaled and affected by the appearance of Bartholomew, who brings his friendship and support and (by extension) the friendship and support of Christ. Guthlac's victory over the demons is thus also a triumph of new friendship and patronage bonds, new spiritual kinship with the earlier saint, and a new spiritual community in which he can serve as a loyal retainer of God the king. Grounding and firmly establishing Guthlac's saintly identity, this new sense of belonging also renews and sanctifies the landscape. Before its consecration Guthlac's island in the fen is a place of dispossession and exile. And the emptiness of the hermitage in *Guthlac A* is the emptiness of exile and alienation in the absence of viable kinship relations. It is a "dygle stow" [secret place], "idel and æman" [empty and desolate], and, most significantly, "epelriehte feor bad bisæce betran hyrdes" [far from the hereditary control of a legitimate dynasty, awaiting a better claimant] to its title (215b–217).

Place therefore takes on particular importance in the poem, even though the poet is less interested in topographical detail than Felix, stressing, rather, a symbolic and allegorical reading of the landscape. The specificity of the unnamed fenland site in *Guthlac A* is less important than the fact that Guthlac has made his home in a *beorg* (140, 175, 192, and 209), a "hill" and/or "grave mound." Potentially a good place, Crowland needs to be reclaimed. In this the landscape is—very much like the saint himself

or, indeed, like the poet or the readers of *Guthlac A* or Felix's Beccel or Cissa, neither of whom appears in this poem—awaiting transformation from sin to salvation, wilderness into paradise. As Hugh Magennis notes, the landscape embodies both the bliss (including membership in the community of saints) the hermit will eventually enjoy in heaven and the alienation he endures on earth.⁶¹

With Guthlac's victory in *Guthlac A*, the horror of the devil-plagued wilderness is restored to beauty and tranquility: "Smolt wæs se sigewong ond sele niwe, fæger fugal reord, folde geblowan; geacas gear budon" [Peaceful was the field of victory and his dwelling, beautiful the voice of the birds, the fields blossoming and the cuckoos announced the summer] (742–744a). And eventually two communities form around Guthlac: the communion of saints, "engla fæðmum" [embrace of angels] (782a), which receives him after death, and the congregation of other spiritual warriors, including the poem's readers, who will themselves eventually follow him from earth to heaven. (At the time of the Exeter Book's copying, if not necessarily during the original writing of the poem, this lineage could be understood as numbering especially the monks of the recently founded Crowland abbey.) Although this new lineage of "cempan gecorene" [chosen warriors] (797a) does not have to fight literal demons, they still merit their inheritance through diligent battle against the "firenlustas" [wicked desires] (803b) that assail them daily.

Guthlac B, similarly concerned with the theme of community even as with the circumstances of a good death, begins with an invocation of Eden before the Fall and of a primal Adam—not yet completely separated into Adam and Eve, here figuratively "leomu lic somud ond lifes gæst" [limbs of flesh and spirit of life together] (838), the human body and soul united in one identity in prelapsarian purity. Seemingly tangential to a narrative of a holy death, this fifty-nine-line passage likely comes from a brief mention of Adam and the inescapability of death in chapter 50 of Felix's *vita*: "Nam sicut mors in Adam data est, ita et in omnes dominabitur. Quisquis enim huius vitae saporem gustaverit, amaritudinem mortis evitare nequit" [Just as death was prescribed in Adam, so it is to have dominion over all. And whoever has tasted the sweet things of this life cannot avoid the bitterness of death].⁶² According to the poem, the original unity of body and soul fails as Adam and Eve consume "pone bitran drync" [the bitter drink] (868b) of death and exile.⁶³ Yet "us secgað bec" [books tell us] (878b) about saints such as Guthlac who obey God's will and thereby effectively reverse the exile of the Fall and make the journey to heaven—and who through

their example passed down in books can teach other, later Christians to do the same. The poem praises Guthlac for his miracles and his struggle as "godes cempan" [soldier of God] (889b) against troops of warlike spirits.

Mostly, however, *Guthlac B* focuses on the warrior-saint's sometimes anxious relationships with his spiritual and biological kin. Although neither Guthlac's disciple Beccel nor his sister Pega is named in the poem, their characters are nevertheless very much present, especially during the saint's last days, before and after his holy death. The poem becomes a series of conversations between Guthlac and his (here anonymous) disciple, a deathbed colloquy of sorts that figures Guthlac alternately going into battle and setting forth on his journey to his heavenly home.⁶⁴ Most significant in this colloquy, however, as Z. P. Thundy argues, is the poem's exploration of spiritual friendship and the way it both is and is not like secular friendship and kinship. For Thundy the poem's invocation of traditional warrior language is less prominent than its translation of Latinate monastic *amicitia* into Old English poetic diction.⁶⁵ Thus Guthlac and Beccel speak as "leof mon leofum" [one loved man to another] (1164). To Beccel Guthlac is "winedryhten min, fæder, freonda hleo" [my beloved lord, father, refuge of friends] (1011b–1012) and "freodryhten" [noble lord] (1021). To Guthlac Beccel is a "leofe bearn" [dear son] (1076b) and "swæse bearn" [beloved son] (1166b). Using the intimate first-person dual *wit*, the saint urges his "leofest manna" [dearest of men] to pass on their "winescype, word þa wit spræcon" [fellowship and the words we two have spoken] (1171b–1173a); Beccel promises never to let the "lufan sibbe" [kinship of love] (1173b) between them grow sluggish.

Their friendship thus deploys the traditional vocabulary of secular friendship and kinship to characterize their spiritual friendship, the *amicitia* that binds them. Yet there remains a tension in the poem's emotional language. For Robin Norris this tension exemplifies the poem's engagement with Augustinian teachings about using the good things of this world—including especially friendship—as a way to God rather than enjoying them for their own sake.⁶⁶ This Guthlac has therefore appropriately distanced himself from his beloved sister, denying himself her presence in this world so that they may be the more perfectly (re)united in the next. Figuratively the unity and division of brother and sister in *Guthlac B* echoes that of Adam and Eve and body and soul as "sinhiwan tu" [two spouses] (968b), united before and separated after the Fall. Frederick Biggs explores the way the poem deploys the theme of soul/body unity in Eden and in heaven and their division at the point of earthly death.⁶⁷

The poem, he argues, downplays the physical details of death and burial in order to play up the allegorical: Beccel enacts the temporary state of the body after the departure of the soul, while Guthlac's verbal reunion with Pega foreshadows the reunion of body and soul in heaven. Guthlac tells Pega, through Beccel,

Þæt wit unc eft in þam ecan sefan
on sweglwuldre geseon mostun
fore onsyne eces deman
leahltrease: þær sceal uncer lufu
wærfæst wunian, þær wit wela a
in þære beorhtan byrig brucan motun
eades mid englum. (1186–1192a)

[That we two will see each other again, in eternal joy, in the glory of heaven, before the face of the Eternal Judge; there our love will remain truth-fast, there where we two will enjoy forever desire in that bright city, happiness among angels.]

The use of the first-person dual here (*wit*, *unc*, *uncer*) more fully unites brother and sister, as it does earlier the saint and his disciple. But whereas in Felix's *vita* Pega is instrumental in the preparation of Guthlac's shrine and the creation of his cult, *Guthlac B* suggests that the presence of his (here anonymous) sister might have brought with it the memory of secular affiliation, a secular emotional treasure that could tempt him from his saintly resolve.

Similar concerns hedge Guthlac's strange canniness about his conversations with his patron, Bartholomew. In this case, Beccel's apparent jealousy prompts Guthlac's revelation of his secretive, nightly conversations. As in Guthlac's reluctance to interact with his sister, so even with the Apostle secrecy and privacy characterize the dangers attendant on friendship when it is too particular. If the possible excess of Guthlac's affection for his sister hints (however obliquely) of incest, Guthlac's intimacy with Bartholomew signals the possibility of an excessive or illicit affection between men—although in this case the text denies the suspicions before they are even raised.⁶⁸

Nor is the particularity of Beccel's discipleship without its problematic aspect. In *Guthlac B* Beccel announces Guthlac's death to his sister in an elegy that eloquently expresses the grief of a retainer (secular or spiritual) for a departed lord: "Ellen biþ selast þam þe oftost sceal dreogan dryhtenbealu,

deope behyrgan þroht þeodengedal. . . . Þæt wat se þe sceal aswæsmā sarigferð, wat his sincgiefan holdne biheledne" [Courage is best for one who must often endure the death of his lord and ponder deeply the agony of separation from his master. . . . With a sad spirit must he wander, who knows that his treasure-giver lies buried] (1348–1353b). In the last analysis, however, Beccel's grief—the grief of a strategically anonymous disciple, who could be any reader as much as Beccel in particular—constructs a space, still unrenewed and unresolved, between past personal affiliation now sundered by death and future community that is yet to be. Low Soon Ai argues that Beccel's deployment of the elegiac mode reveals his failure to learn all that he should from Guthlac. The saint is able to transcend the pain of death through wisdom; Beccel cannot. The more elegiac his language becomes, that is, the less cultivated he reveals his understanding to be.⁶⁹ For Norris, likewise, this reveals the young man's failure to understand his older teacher's lessons about using and enjoying friendship appropriately.⁷⁰ The poem concludes, then, as both Biggs and Stephen Powell suggest, with Beccel embodying the body's separation from the soul, while Pega's acceptance of Guthlac's parting words presages the reunion of the body and soul in heaven.⁷¹

If *Guthlac B* deploys the hermit saint so as to critique the elegiac poetic tradition it draws upon and to problematize the *amicitia* it defines, and if *Guthlac A*, like the Vercelli homily, uses Guthlac to dramatize spiritual struggle as essentially solitary, both poems do so while simultaneously embracing literary tradition. If the *Vespasian Life* updates and translates—not unproblematically—the earlier Mercian saint for late Anglo-Saxon England, and if the earliest Latin *vita* writes that saint as a bricolage of earlier saints and texts, in doing so these texts facilitate their hagiographers' (and their readers') admission into larger literary communities. Ultimately the Guthlac(s) exchanged and appropriated between writers and readers, between languages, and between times proves exemplary—and exceptional—exactly by so constantly becoming something else, so betwixt and between texts.

NOTES

1. On Mercia's origins as a border kingdom, see Barbara Yorke, "The Origins of Mercia," in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, ed. Michelle P. Brown and Carol A. Farr (London: Leicester University Press, 2001), 13–22, especially 19–20.

2. Liminality, as originally defined and developed by Victor Turner in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969), characterizes the middle stage in a ritual, when one stands metaphorically at a threshold (in Latin, *limen*) between one's original identity, reality, and/or community and a new one. The term has been applied more widely, especially to describe places in which such experiences occur. On the physical liminality of sites such as Guthlac's Crowland, see, for example, K. M. Wickham-Crowley, "Living on the Ecg: The Mutable Boundaries of Land and Water in Anglo-Saxon Contexts," in *A Place to Believe in: Locating Medieval Landscapes* ed. C. A. Lees and G. Overing (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 85–110. On the significance of Guthlac's building his home on a burial mound, often used as a boundary marker, see Sarah Semple, "A Fear of the Past: The Place of the Prehistoric Burial Mound in the Ideology of Middle and Later Anglo-Saxon England," *World Archaeology* 30 (1998): 109–26.

3. On textual communities, see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), especially section 2, ch. 1; and Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: "Grammatica" and Literary Theory 350–1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), especially chapters 7 and 9 on Anglo-Saxon England.

4. For a comprehensive accounting of texts and artifacts associated with Guthlac, see Jane Roberts, "An Inventory of Early Guthlac Materials," *Mediaeval Studies* 32 (1970): 193–233.

5. Bertram Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 26–32; Roberts, "Inventory of Early Guthlac Materials," 194–200. The earliest extant "manuscript" (Royal 4 A xiv) consists only of leaves cut and reused in a tenth-century commentary on the Psalms. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 307 and 389 are more complete, the former perhaps associated with the development of Guthlac's cult at Crowland (see below) and the latter uniting the *vita* with Jerome's *Vita S. Pauli Primi Eremitae* (Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina 6596). Colgrave based his edition primarily on the relatively complete Royal 13 A xv.

6. Jane Roberts identifies Ecgburga as the abbess of Repton after Ælfthryth: "Hagiography and Literature: The Case of Guthlac of Crowland," in Brown and Farr, eds., *Mercia*, 69–86, at 70.

7. On the importance of the visionary in eighth-century England, see especially A. J. Kabir, *Paradise, Death, and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). The Much Wenlock vision appears in a letter written circa 716 from Boniface, who claims to have interviewed and vetted the monk's vision after hearing of it from Abbess Hildelith of Barking: Michael Tangl, *Die Briefe des Heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1955), no. 10. At a later date, circa 746–47, very much during the period of Felix's writing of Guthlac, Boniface wrote to Æthelbald reminding him of his old rival's fate and cautioning him to reform his behavior toward monasteries in his realm: no. 73.

8. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Guthlac's Crossings," *Quaestio* 2 (2001): 1–26, at 1.

9. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, 15–19; R. C. Love, "The Sources of Felix's *Vita S. Guthlaci* (L.E.2.1)," 1997, *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*, <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk>.

10. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, prol., 92. Even Felix's characterization of Wilfrid, for example, as a "vir venerabilis, nomine Wilfrith, iam dudum viro Dei Guthlaco spiritualis amicitiae foedere copulate" [a venerable man . . . who had long been bound to the man of God Guthlac by the bonds of spiritual friendship] derives from Bede's description of Cuthbert's friend Hereberht (122–23). Compare Bede's "presbiter vitae venerabilis nomine Herebertus iam dudum viro Dei Cuthberto spiritualis amicitiae foedere copulatus," [priest of venerable life . . . who had long been bound to the man of God Cuthbert by the bonds of spiritual friendship]. Bertram Colgrave, *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 248.

11. Given the historical rivalry (and frequent warfare) between Bede's (and Cuthbert's) Northumbria and both Mercia and East Anglia, Felix's appropriation may, at least in part, constitute Guthlac appropriating for the Mercia of Æthelbald and/or the East Anglia of Ælfwald something of Northumbrian cultural and sacral hegemony.

12. See Irvine's *Making of Textual Culture*. This kind of bricolage is not restricted to Felix's practice. For the influence of Aldhelm and Bede on other Anglo-Saxon writers, see, for example, Carin Ruff, "The Place of Metrics in Anglo-Saxon Latin Education: Aldhelm and Bede," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 104 (2005): 149–70; Michael Lapidge, "Aldhelm's Latin Poetry and Old English Verse," *Comparative Literature* 31 (1979): 209–31; Andy Orchard, "Old Sources, New Resources: Finding the Right Formula for Boniface,"

Anglo-Saxon England 30 (2001): 15–38; and Emily Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), especially 135–59.

13. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, 114–15. Interestingly, many of these same creatures and their vocalizations occur in a list in Aldhelm's *De Pedum Regulis*, in *Aldhelmi Opera* (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores antiquissimi* XV), ed. Rudolf Ehwald (Berlin: Weidmann, 1919), 179–80.

14. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, 116–23. Compare Colgrave, *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert*, 220–25.

15. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, 82.

16. *Ibid.*, 90.

17. *Ibid.*, 62.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Drawing upon social network theory in her study of Anglo-Saxon poets and poetics, Thornbury points to the judgment of the community, the *sensus communis* that underwrites both the reception of text or behavior and the self-policing that shapes a poet or prospective community member, as a key formative element in the process of becoming a literate subject in Anglo-Saxon England. Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet in Anglo-Saxon England*, esp. 97–100; see also 135–59 on Aldhelm and his documented community of readers.

20. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, 74.

21. *Ibid.*, 80.

22. Guthlac's conversion to monasticism is not without contemporary precedent: he was born in the reign of Æthelred of Mercia—one of the so-called kings who opted out in order to perfect their conversion to Christianity by conversion to monastic life. Clare Stancliffe, "Kings Who Opted Out," in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill*, ed. Patrick Wormald, with Donald Bullough and Roger Collins (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 154–76. That this kind of crisis may have been recurrent in Guthlac's Mercia is also suggested by the contemporary example of an anonymous Mercian soldier who on his deathbed receives a vision of hell, proleptic of Guthlac's own mystical experience, which serves to convert others (although not the terrified but despairing soldier himself) to a more Christian life. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), V. 13.

23. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, 84.

24. "Roscidis sacrorum dogmatum umbribus ubertim perfudit" (Aldhelm, *De Metris*, in *Aldhelmi Opera* [*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores antiquissimi* XV], ed. Rudolf Ehwald [Berlin: Weidmann, 1919], 66.16–17); "summis etiam sacerdotibus per divinum gratiam providentibus sacris litteris et monasticis erudiebatur disciplinis" (*Vita et virtutes Fursey abbatis* [*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum* IV], ed. Bruno Krusch [Berlin: Weidmann, 1902], 1.5.7).

25. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, 86–87.

26. *Ibid.*, 87.

27. *Ibid.*, 96, 98, 100, 108.

28. *Ibid.*, 96.

29. On patristic concerns with this temptation as echoed in the text, see Sarah Downey, "Too Much of Too Little: Guthlac and the Temptation of Excessive Fasting," *Traditio* 63 (2008): 89–127.

30. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, 100.

31. *Ibid.*, 102–4.

32. *Ibid.*, 108. Coenred was the successor of the king-turned-monk Æthelred and predecessor of Æthelbald's rival Coelred.

33. The psalm verse—"exsurgat deus et dissipentur inimici eius et fugiant qui oderunt eum a facie eius" [rise up O lord, and may your enemies be dispersed and those who hate thee be driven from thy face]—is also very close in phrasing to the verse from Numbers 10:35 (the prayer of Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness) with which Guthlac later consoles the exiled Æthelbald.

34. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, 148–50.

35. *Ibid.*, 138.

36. *Ibid.*, 122.

37. *Ibid.*, 96. Although no obvious textual echo links his *vita* with Bartholomew's (at least not in the same way as he is linked with Cuthbert and Fursey), Guthlac first occupies his island hermitage and begins to forge his new eremitical identity on the apostle's feast day.

38. Ibid., 112.
39. Roberts follows Colgrave in reading the twelve-line acrostic (reading BEATUS GUDLAC down the left and BARTHOLOMEUS up the right) appended to the *vita* in the ninth-century Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 307 as evidence of any early shrine. Roberts, "Hagiography and Literature," 71; Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, 27.
40. Roberts, "Inventory of Early Guthlac Materials," 215–17; Roberts, "Hagiography and Literature," 76–77.
41. Jane Roberts, "The Old English Prose Translation of Felix's *Vita sancti Guthlaci*," in *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 363–79, at 369.
42. Robert Stanton, *The Culture of Translation in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002).
43. Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet in Anglo-Saxon England*, 224. In Old English poetry, Thornbury argues, a "southern mode" of poetry shows a similar concern for turning texts such as the Psalter into Old English verse. See also M. J. Toswell, "Awended in Englisum Gereorde: Translation and the Old English Metrical Psalter," *Translation and Literature* 5, no. 2 (1996): 167–82.
44. Roberts argues for an intermediary text on the basis of verbal differences between the two Old English prose lives: "Old English Prose Translation of Felix's *Vita sancti Guthlaci*," 366.
45. Jane Roberts, "Two Readings in the Guthlac Homily," in *Early Medieval English Texts and Interpretations: Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg*, ed. Elaine Treharne and Susan Rosser (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002), 201–10, at 202.
46. E. G. Whatley, "Lost in Translation: Omission of Episodes in Some Old English Prose Saints' Legends," *Anglo-Saxon England* 26 (1997): 187–208, at 193.
47. Paul Gonser, *Das angelsächsische Prosa-Leben des hl. Guthlac* (*Anglistische Forschungen*, 27) (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1909), 100, 103. Although Cissa has disappeared from this initial attestation, he reappears later in this *Life* as a source and as Guthlac's successor at Crowland.
48. Ibid., 100.
49. Ibid., 173.
50. Whatley, "Lost in Translation," 197.
51. Robin Waugh, "The Blindness Curse and Nonmiracles in the Old English Prose *Life of Saint Guthlac*," *Modern Philology* 106 (2009): 399–426, at 406.
52. Jane Roberts, "The Case of the Miraculous Hand in the Old English Prose *Life of Guthlac*," *ANQ* 15, no. 2 (2002): 17–21.
53. Roberts, "Hagiography and Literature," 77–79.
54. Waugh, "Blindness Curse and Nonmiracles in the Old English Prose *Life of Saint Guthlac*," 415–17.
55. Roberts, "Two Readings in the Guthlac Homily," 202.
56. Roberts, "Old English Prose Translation of Felix's *Vita sancti Guthlaci*," 375.
57. D. G. Scragg, ed., *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 381–94, at 383.
58. Jane Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).
59. Manish Sharma, "A Reconsideration of the Structure of 'Guthlac A': The Extremes of Saintliness," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 101, no. 2 (2002): 185–200, at 186. Also L. K. Shook, "The Prologue of the Old English Guthlac A," *Mediaeval Studies* 23 (1961): 294–304; Roberts, *Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book*, 24.
60. Sharma, "Reconsideration of the Structure of 'Guthlac A.'" T. D. Hill also comments on movement and on Guthlac's middle position between glory and despair: "The Middle Way: *idel-wuldor* and *egesa* in the Old English Guthlac A," *RES* 30 (1979): 182–87.
61. Hugh Magennis, *Images of Community in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), esp. 178–88.
62. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, 150–53; Roberts, *Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book*, 36–37.
63. The "bitter drink" here draws on the *poculum mortis* motif found elsewhere: C. Brown, "Poculum Mortis in Old English," *Speculum* 15 (1940): 389–99. This portion of *Guthlac B* may well echo as it translates a hymn, *Rex aeternae domine*, often appearing in contemporary Anglo-Saxon Psalters: Roberts, *Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book*, 38–39.
64. On the use of direct discourse, and Guthlac and Beccel as teacher and student, see R. Bjork, *The Old English Verse Saints' Lives: A Study in Direct Discourse and the Iconography of Style* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), esp. 90–109.

65. Z. P. Thundy, "St. Guthlac and Spiritual Friendship," *American Benedictine Review* 36 (1985): 143–58.
66. Robin Norris, "The Augustinian Theory of Use and Enjoyment in *Guthlac A* and *B*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 104 (2003): 159–78.
67. Frederick M. Biggs, "Unities in the Old English 'Guthlac B,'" *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 89, no. 2 (1990): 155–65.
68. D. Clark, *Between Medieval Men: Male Friendship and Desire in Early Medieval English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
69. Low Soon Ai, "Mental Cultivation in *Guthlac B*," *Neophilologus* 81 (1997): 625–36.
70. Norris, "Augustinian Theory of Use and Enjoyment in *Guthlac A* and *B*," especially 169–70, 177.
71. Biggs, "Unities in the Old English 'Guthlac B'"; and Stephen D. Powell, "The Journey Forth: Elegiac Consolation in *Guthlac B*," *English Studies* 6 (1998): 489–500.