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The Armour-Bearer in Abbo's *Passio sancti Eadmundi* and Anglo-Saxon England

Paul Cavill

There has been a good deal of interest expressed over recent decades in the historicity or otherwise of the martyrdom of Edmund of East Anglia. The early literary sources of the legend are from the end of the tenth century, Abbo of Fleury's *Passio sancti Eadmundi* of c. 987,¹ and Ælfric's abbreviated version of this in his Old English *Lives of Saints* sometime later but before the end of the century.² The story of the martyrdom tells how a Viking army led by Inguar demand Edmund's submission and tribute; Edmund refuses, is captured by the Vikings, beaten, tied to a tree and shot at, then finally beheaded. In the dedicatory epistle which precedes the *Passio* proper, Abbo claims he had been told the story by Archbishop Dunstan who had heard it as a young man at the court of King Æthelstan from the lips of a very old armour-bearer of Edmund who had actually been present and seen it all happen.

Dorothy Whitelock reviewed the sources and concluded that the account of the martyrdom of St Edmund was not entirely implausible.³ She argued on the one hand that neither the Anglo-Saxon chronicler nor Asser, both closer in time to the death of Edmund, were 'interested or well-informed about East Anglia';⁴ and on the other that '[i]t is possible for two memories [that is, of the armour-bearer and Dunstan] to cover some 116 years',⁵ Abbo's sources were impeccable, and this kind of behaviour by Vikings was paralleled in other sources, such as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle account of the martyrdom of St Ælfheah. Whitelock's overall conclusion was followed and somewhat developed by Susan Ridyard,⁶ who saw the armour-bearer of Abbo's account as a more reliable source than any others available. Ian McDougall examined the Scandinavian parallels for the atrocities committed by Inguar's men and agreed with Whitelock;⁷ and Thomas Head similarly saw both Ælfheah and Edmund as historical and distinctively English martyrs.⁸ On the other side of the debate, Antonia Gransden has argued that

Abbo '[a]lmost certainly [. . .] knew virtually nothing about St Edmund's death and early cult', and probably borrowed the distinctive motifs from hagiographical sources known to him.⁹ And I have argued that on closer examination, Scandinavian parallels for the shooting of arrows or similar missiles at a living victim are lacking, and that the story follows the conventional style of well-known Roman martyrdoms, especially that of St Sebastian.¹⁰

I would now like to return to one particular aspect of Whitelock's view of the reliability of Abbo's sources. She writes: 'Abbo could not drastically have altered what he claimed to have heard from Dunstan, to whom he sent this work. He could not have invented the armour-bearer. Nor is it likely that Dunstan should indulge in motiveless and flamboyant lying.'¹¹ This is an over-literal response to hagiography, a genre which the cynic might characterise as perhaps not motiveless, but certainly flamboyant, lying.¹² But the question I would like to ask here is, 'If he could not be invented, what in Anglo-Saxon England was an "armour-bearer", or "sword-bearer"?' The whole story of Edmund's martyrdom, despite the emphasis put on Dunstan's role as informant, depends on the eyewitness account of this man.

Abbo's account of the transmission of the story in the dedicatory epistle to the *Passio* runs as follows:

Audierant enim quod eam pluribus ignotam, a nemine scriptam, tua sanctitas ex antiquitatis memoria collectam historialiter me praesente retulisset domno Rofensis aeccliesiae episcopo et abbati monasterii quod dicitur Mealmesbyri ac aliis circum assistentibus, sicut tuus mos est, fratribus quos pabulo diuini uerbi Latina et patria lingua pascere non desinis. Quibus fatebaris, oculos suffusus lacrimis, quod eam iunior didicisses a quodam sene decrepito, qui eam simpliciter et plena fide referebat gloriosissimo regi Anglorum Aethelstano, iureiurando asserens quod eadem die fuisset armiger beati uiri qua pro Christo martyr occubuit.

Cuius assertioni quia in tantum fidem accommodasti ut promptuario memoriae uerba ex integro reconderes quae postmodum iunioribus mellito ore eructares, coeperunt fratres instantius meae pusillitati incumbere ut eorum feruenti desiderio satisfacerem ac pro uirium facultate

tantorum operum seriem perire non sinerem. (*Pref.*, 12–28)
[They [*sc.* the monks of Ramsey] had heard, indeed, that the story of this Passion, which is unknown to most people, and has been committed to writing by none, had been related by your Holiness, as collected from ancient tradition, in my presence, to the Lord Bishop of Rochester, and to the Abbot of the monastery which is called Malmesbury, and to other brethren then assembled in accordance with your practice, whom you cease not to nourish with the food of God's word, alike in the Latin and in the mother tongue. To them you averred, while the tears ran from your eyes, that you had in your youth learned the history from a broken-down veteran, who in relating it, simply and in good faith, to the most glorious English king, Athelstan, declared on his oath that, on the very day on which the martyr laid down his life for Christ's sake, he had been armour-bearer to the saintly hero. In view of the great reliance which you placed on the old man's assertions, and which led you to store up his words in their entirety in the receptacle of your memory, to be uttered at a later date with honeyed accents to a younger generation, the brethren insisted strongly, notwithstanding my diffidence, that I would satisfy their earnest desire, and to the best of my ability preserve from utter oblivion so important a series of events.] (*Corolla*, pp. 7–9)

Ælfric abbreviates this account as follows:

Þa wurdon hi æt spræce oþþæt Dunstan rehte be sancte Eadmunde, swa swa Eadmundes swurdbora hit rehte Æþelstane cynincege þa þa Dunstan iung man wæs, and se swurdbora wæs forealdod man. (4–7)

[Then they [*sc.* Abbo and the archbishop] spoke together until Dunstan recounted the story of St Edmund just as Edmund's sword-bearer had related it to King Æthelstan when Dunstan was a young man and the sword-bearer was a very old man.]

The two terms used for the informant in these accounts are Latin *armiger* and Old English *swurdbora*, and these terms are now to be investigated. It is worth noting, however, that those quoted above are the only uses of the terms in the *Passio* and Ælfric's *Life*; they do not occur again in these sources.

Swurdbora

In order to find an Anglo-Saxon context for the 'armour-bearer', it may be simplest to start with Ælfric. Ælfric translates Abbo's *armiger* as *swurdbora* 'sword-bearer'. The word *swurdbora* and its variants are used fairly often in Old English, some eleven times excluding Ælfric's version of Abbo.¹³ It appears in glosses to translate *spatarius* (twice),¹⁴ *gladiator*,¹⁵ and *pugil*,¹⁶ words meaning 'sword-fighter', 'fighter'. In the 'Alfredian' translation of Gregory's *Dialogues* and in Ælfric's version of the story from Gregory, it is used five times of a man, Riggo, in the bodyguard of King Totila, the Gothic king who ruled Italy 541–52, and translates *spatharius*.¹⁷ The story of how Totila schemed to test the powers of St Benedict is recorded in both principal manuscripts of the *Dialogues*, and again by Ælfric:

Ða wolde se wælhreowa fandian hwæðer benedictus witegunge gast hæfde. and asende his swurdboran RIGGO gehaten. gescrydne mid his cynelicum gyrelum. mid his ðegnum to ðam mynstre. swilce he hit sylf wære;¹⁸

[Then the bloodthirsty king wanted to test whether Benedict had a discerning spirit, and sent his sword-bearer, called Riggo, dressed in his royal garments, with his attendants, to the monastery as if he were the king himself.]

Of course, Benedict sees through the deception. Later in the Alfredian text it is used of an unnamed man in Totila's retinue, another *spatharius*, who is exorcised by the red-faced Bishop Cassius.¹⁹ And finally the word is also used of a Bulgarian *spatharius* of Narses, king of Italy in succession to Totila.²⁰ Clearly this range of usage is specific: *swurdbora* in Old English was used to refer to a sword-fighter and bodyguard or attendant for kings, and the extant texts indicate that the term denotes a special office. But the usage is also rather sharply restricted: *swurdbora* is found only as a

translation of a Latin word. Apart from in Ælfric's version of the St Edmund story, there is no native Anglo-Saxon *swurdbora* in extant Old English texts. There is, moreover, no other example than Ælfric's of the translation *armiger* = *swurdbora* in Old English.

Armiger

It is difficult to pin down precisely how familiar the *armiger* would have been as a role in Anglo-Saxon England. Ælfric uses *armiger* among the illustrations in his *Grammar* and translates it as *wæpnbora* 'bearer of weapons', a pattern which is also found in three separate glosses,²¹ alongside two other Anglo-Saxon notes in Latin, *Armiger armi portator* and *Colonom armiger*.²² The Old English word *wæpnbora* also glosses *pugil* (twice)²³ and *belliger*.²⁴ The focus in these glosses, either in the lemma or the gloss itself, is on the idea, explicit in the surface meaning of the words, of carrying arms. In Ælfric's *Grammar* the idea of 'bearing' something is a thread to the list, expressed in the second element of the Old English compound in each case: '*lucifer* leohtberend; *signifer* tacnberend; *frugifer* wæstmbære; *belliger* wigbora; *clauiger* cægbora; <*corniger*> hornbære; *armiger* wæpnbora; <*graniger*> cornbære'.²⁵ Similarly, one of the Corpus notes, *armi portator* 'bearer of weapons', suggests that the role involves the carrying of weapons. Once again, though, the Old English usage of *wæpnbora* is sharply restricted: it is found only as a translation of Latin words.

Perhaps the most important source for both Abbo and Ælfric, however, for the *armiger* would have been the Bible. Latin *armiger* is the word used of the armour-bearer in the Old Testament some twenty-three times.²⁶ The biblical context for the armour-bearer is that in most of the Old Testament stories, he is a young man chosen for his martial promise, who accompanies an important leader and serves him. It is twice noted that Jonathan, son of King Saul, has an *armiger* who is a young man: '*dixit autem Ionathan ad adulescentem armigerum suum*' [And Jonathan said to the young man that bore his armour] (I Samuel 14. 6, and see also 14. 1). And David, fresh from the fields, is made Saul's *armiger*: '*et venit David ad Saul et stetit coram eo at ille dilexit eum nimis et factus est eius armiger*' [And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him exceedingly, and made him his armourbearer] (I Samuel 16. 21). The biblical *armiger* differs, in

being young, from the experienced swordsmen, the *spatarius*, *gladiator* and *pugil* found in Latin texts translated into Old English. Bede in his commentary on I Samuel 14. 1 interprets the *armiger* as representing those 'discipulos oboedienter arma non carnalia sed Deo potentia gestantes quorum renouatur sicut aquilae iuuentus' [disciples willingly bearing weapons not of the flesh but by the power of God, whose youth is renewed as the eagle's], thus clearly reflecting the characteristic of youth and the military role of the armour-bearer.²⁷

A clustering of references to an *armiger* is to be found in the story of Saul's death in I Samuel 31, and told a second time, almost verbatim, in I Chronicles 10. Saul is fighting the Philistines, and losing the battle. He asks his *armiger* to run him through with his sword so that the Philistines do not abuse and torture him. The armour-bearer is too frightened, so Saul falls on his own sword. In due course, the Philistines cut off his head and hang up the body as a trophy until it is rescued by survivors of Saul's army. The similarities between this and Abbo's *Passio* are obvious, if not necessarily very significant. As biblical scholars, though, both Abbo and Ælfric might well have been pleased with the patterning of these ideas of an *armiger*, a beheading, faithful people caring for dead leaders and much more. The heinousness of the crime of decapitating 'the Lord's anointed' is made much of in the *Passio*, and the contemporary theology of royal anointing also derives largely from the biblical stories of Saul and his successor David.²⁸ Old Testament stories were widely understood to foreshadow events of the era of God's grace, the days of the saints.

Abbo, Ælfric and Anglo-Saxon England

Taken together, the evidence above strongly suggests that the role of *armiger* or *swurdbora* was not native to Anglo-Saxon England. While we cannot be sure we know all, or even most, of the roles that Anglo-Saxon society envisaged for people, there are many places where we would expect to find reference to 'sword-bearers' or 'armour-bearers' if they existed in English society or formed any part of Anglo-Saxon military institutions: in the laws, or the Chronicle, or charters, or the *Institutes of Polity*, or heroic verse, or the *Maxims* or other catalogue poems. Particularly telling is the fact that in his *Historia ecclesiastica* Bede uses none of the Latin words mentioned in this connection above, namely

armiger, spat(h)arius, gladiator or *pugil*,²⁹ when as we have seen he is evidently familiar with the role of *armiger* in his biblical commentaries.

The Anglo-Saxons were much concerned with status and roles. Anglo-Saxon kings generally carried their own arms and fought their own battles: Ælfric had to explain why Æthelred was too important to turn out on the battlefield, using the Old Testament example of David.³⁰ The status attaching to owning and using swords is too common a theme in Old English texts to need illustration. The only example of *sweordberend*, in the Old English *Genesis*, indicates that bearing a sword was what was typical of noblemen. When Cain built a city,

þæt wæs under wolcnum weallfæstenna
ærest ealra þara þe æðelingas,
sweordberende, settan hetton. (1058–60)³¹
[That was the first of all walled fortifications under the
clouds that princes, bearers of swords, ordered to be
established.]

King Alfred's laws make clear that anyone loaning a sword to another for the purpose of murder will have to bear legal responsibility and pay part of the compensation. But in the same section of the laws, we have mention of the man responsible for the appearance and quality of swords, the *sweordhwita* [sword-polisher]:

Gif sweordhwita oðres monnes wæpn to feormunge onfo, oððe
smið monnes andweorc, hie hit gesund begen agifan, swa hit
hwæðer hiora ær onfenge, buton hiora hwæðer ær þingode, þæt
he hit angylde healdan ne ðorfte. (Ælfred 19, 3)³²

Whitelock translates this as:

If a sword-polisher receives another man's weapon to polish it,
or a smith a man's tool, they both are to give it back unstained
[without it having been used to commit a crime], just as either
of them had received it; unless either of them had stipulated
that he need not be liable to compensation for it.³³

Both Liebermann and Whitelock apparently rely on the earlier stipulation about the owner of the sword sharing responsibility for any crime committed with it, as well as the Quadripartitus version of the law, for their interpretation of *gesund* = *quietus* = 'unstained [without it having been used to commit a crime]'. But *gesund* normally means 'complete, sound', and the law might be trying to ensure that craftsmen were not made liable for failing to repair irretrievably damaged weapons which might be destroyed in the attempt at repair. This is broadly the view adopted by Attenborough, who translates, '[. . .] the article shall be returned in as good condition as that in which it has been received, unless it has been stipulated that there shall be no liability on the part of the said furbisher for damage done to it'.³⁴ This accords rather better with the emphasis on the trade of the *sweordhwita*, and the ostensible purpose of the transfer of the weapon, *to feormunge* [for polishing]; but it takes away some of the heroic gloss that Whitelock and Liebermann attribute to the *sweordhwita*. The value of such a man's personal service to his lord, and incidentally the value of swords, is recognised in a will.³⁵ Possessing, being arrayed with, and disposing of rich arms was an aspect of power; but having a special officer to carry them into battle on behalf of their owners is not something that appears in Old English texts.

When translating Abbo's *armiger*, Ælfric could have chosen from dozens of Old English words for warrior, or young man, or servant, and almost as many for retainers with high rank or important roles.³⁶ Instead he used the word *swurdbora*, which only occurs elsewhere as a translation for other Latin words. *Swurdbora* itself would have been understood by his audience; but in his *Grammar*, as has been seen, he chose the gloss *wæpnbora* for *armiger*, in line with glosses found elsewhere. Neither *swurdbora* nor *wæpnbora*, from their distribution, would appear to have related to contemporary and familiar Anglo-Saxon roles; but *swurdbora* might have had the more resonance, as it had been used before to denote the particular functions of sword-fighter and personal bodyguard to historical continental Germanic kings.

Abbo was not much concerned about the *armiger*: Dunstan had heard the story of Edmund 'a quodam sene decrepito', in Hervey's translation 'from a broken-down veteran'. But this phrase could be slightly more idiomatically translated 'from some decrepit old man'. Ælfric might well have wondered what such a man might be doing in the presence of King Æthelstan and his bishops. By contrast with Abbo, Ælfric tells us 'se swurdbora wæs forealdod

man' (the sword-bearer was a very old man), raising his status from an undistinguished and superannuated man who was a royal servant once, to an ancient sword-bearer, and simply contrasting his age with that of Dunstan who was 'iung man' [a young man] at the time. This suggests that Ælfric was concerned about the status of the eyewitness, and using the word *swurdbora* was a way of placing an old man more securely in the royal circle since the sword-bearers of literature and history were important royal retainers. But they were not otherwise familiar, and by resolving the difficulty in this way, Ælfric detached the story of Edmund from the ordinary everyday world of his generation, and located it in a different world where things were done differently, where kings had sword-fighter bodyguards rather than retainers.³⁷

In a context other than his *Passio sancti Eadmundi*, Abbo uses *armiger* as a synonym for *spatharius*.³⁸ It is impossible to say whether the roles had merged in the Carolingian period or whether this was simply a linguistic convenience for Abbo, but in his theorising about ideal kingship and the military responsibilities it entailed, Abbo seems to be drawing on contemporary conditions in which the king might employ an *armiger*.³⁹ The *armiger* was a role that Abbo might conceivably have been familiar with as a Frank, either as an historical reality or a contemporary one. In the *Passio*, however, the biblical model of the *armiger* as a specifically young man would be particularly useful to him. It would help Abbo to solve the mathematical problem of a survivor from Edmund's reign lasting into Æthelstan's and then telling stories. As Whitelock outlines it,

Æthelstan came to the throne in 924, and was crowned on 4 September 925; Dunstan was born about 909, and was commended to Æthelstan soon after his coronation. This was some 55 years after Edmund's death, but, if the armour-bearer were young at the time (and men took up arm[s] early), he need not have been more than in his seventies. Dunstan would be about 76 when Abbo heard him recount the story.⁴⁰

The youth of the biblical type of armour-bearer might also go some way towards explaining why Edmund's armour-bearer did not do the honourable thing and defend or avenge his lord, and did not apparently suffer any serious repercussions for his dereliction of duty. Edmund's armour-bearer was not a

man like Riggo, who could pretend to be a powerful and bloodthirsty king; indeed, he was not even named by Abbo and had no role beyond observing and telling the story. But of course Abbo did not need to explain or confront this sort of practical, social or historical issue because he was writing hagiography: he could and did avoid the man having any responsibility by the simple expedient of keeping him concealed 'diuina prouidentia' [by God's providence] (11, 23; *Corolla*, p. 39).

From the analysis above, I suggest that Ælfric presents the source of the legend of Edmund as a literary character rather than as someone an Anglo-Saxon audience might have known from their own society or even from their national history. Abbo could have been drawing on his own knowledge of Frankish military organisation for the armour-bearer, but it is more likely that the biblical and hagiographical sources for the idea were of greater significance, since the man does nothing but observe. It is not going too far to suggest that, for both writers, the armour-bearer was a literary expedient, a topos, a way of giving the story some credibility.⁴¹

Conclusion

There is, then, no clear evidence beyond that of Abbo that a role which would be termed *armiger* in Latin or *swurdbora* in Old English was known in Anglo-Saxon military society. The Old English words used to translate *armiger*, namely *swurdbora* and *wæpnbora*, are only used to translate Latin words in the extant record. The Old English words would be transparent in their general meaning to an Anglo-Saxon audience, but it would not be quite so clear to them, perhaps, what such roles might have meant in practice.

It does not necessarily follow that because the office of *swurdbora* is otherwise unattested in Anglo-Saxon society, there was no such person to witness Edmund's martyrdom. Abbo might simply have been using his own familiar terminology for less familiar Anglo-Saxon roles. But if, as has been suggested, the substance of the *Passio* is a tissue of borrowings from hagiography and the bible, then the *armiger* would be in familiar literary company. The particular type of *armiger* that Abbo may have had in mind when he was writing the *Passio* was the literary biblical type, a young man. Abbo does not make the association that Ælfric makes, by means of his translation *swurdbora*, with an experienced leader and historical character

like Riggo; but he too is a literary type in Anglo-Saxon England. The suspicion that Abbo was writing literary fiction is somewhat strengthened by the parallels between the biblical story of Saul and Abbo's own story of Edmund. Abbo makes no direct reference to these parallels, but they plausibly show the kind of associations the idea of the armour-bearer had for him.

In short, there are a good many reasons to doubt the existence of the eyewitness to Edmund's martyrdom. The mathematics of age is not the problem. Rather it is the literariness of the main features of the story, and the difficulty we find in locating basic persons, practices and even words in historical Anglo-Saxon society, whether these derive from the Latin story of Abbo or the Old English version of Ælfric. At any rate, it cannot be asserted with confidence that Abbo 'could not have invented the armour-bearer': it is in fact perfectly possible that he did invent him, by analogy with continental military practice, historical or contemporary, or more likely by analogy with the Bible. Abbo was writing hagiography, not history, and the convenience of having a reliable witness for the story, with some reason to be present, could have outweighed (and in my view, did outweigh) any necessity for social or historical precision.

NOTES

¹ The various texts relating to St Edmund are gathered by Lord Francis Hervey, *Corolla Sancti Eadmundi: The Garland of Saint Edmund King and Martyr* (London: Murray, 1907). The *Passio sancti Eadmundi regis et martyris* by Abbo of Fleury is edited by Michael Winterbottom, *Three Lives of English Saints* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies, 1972). Further references are to the Latin from Winterbottom by chapter and line, and the translation from Hervey by page number.

² *Ælfric's Lives of Saints: Being a Set of Sermons on Saints' Days Formerly Observed by the English Church*, ed. by Walter W. Skeat, 2 vols, EETS o.s. 76, 82, 94 and 114 (London: Oxford University Press, 1881–1900; repr. 1966), II 314–35. References are to line-numbers of this edition; translations of Old English and Latin are my own unless otherwise attributed.

³ Dorothy Whitelock, 'Fact and Fiction in the Legend of St. Edmund', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology*, 31 (1967–9), 217–33, repr. in Whitelock, *From Bede to Alfred: Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Literature and History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1980).

⁴ 'Fact and Fiction', p. 218.

⁵ 'Fact and Fiction', p. 219.

⁶ Susan J. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon and East Anglian Cults* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁷ Ian McDougall, 'Serious Entertainments: An Examination of a Peculiar Type of Scandinavian Atrocity', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 22 (1993), 201–26.

⁸ Thomas Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 243.

⁹ Several important studies have recently come from the pen of Antonia Gransden: 'The Legends and Traditions Concerning the Origins of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds', *English Historical Review*, 394 (1985), 1–24 and 'Abbo of Fleury's "Passio Sancti Eadmundi"', *Revue Bénédictine*, 105 (1995), 20–78, are the ones most pertinent to the matter of this article. The quotation is from 'Legends and Traditions', pp. 7–8.

¹⁰ Paul Cavill, 'Analogy and Genre in the Legend of St Edmund', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 47 (2003), 21–45.

¹¹ 'Fact and Fiction', p. 221.

¹² See my article (n. 10 above), where I discuss the rationale for pious fiction of this type.

¹³ *The Dictionary of Old English Corpus in Electronic Form*, ed. by Angus

The Armour-Bearer in Abbo's Passio sancti Eadmundi

Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Sharon Butler, Antonette diPaolo Healey (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English, 1981). For the items not discussed in detail, I use the abbreviated reference of the Corpus.

¹⁴ Gl B1.9.2: *spatarius*, *swurdbora*; AntGl 4 (Kindschi) D1.4: *Spatarius*, *swyrdbora*.

¹⁵ Progl 1 (Först) C16.1: 'Gladiatorem se factum uiderit, dampnum fedum significat' (*swurdboran* hine gewordene gesihð hearm fullic getacnaþ).

¹⁶ CIGl 3 (Quinn) D8.3: *Pugiles*, *sweordboran*.

¹⁷ 2 (C) B9.5.4: *swurdboran*, *sweordbora*; GD 2 (H) B9.5.10.2: *swurdbora*, *swurdboran*; for the Ælfric reference, see next note. The Latin text of Gregory's *Dialogorum libri quatuor* is edited by J.-P. Migne, *PL* 66 and 77 (Paris: Garnier, 1896).

¹⁸ *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series Text*, ed. by Malcolm Godden, EETS s.s. 5 (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), at p. 99, ll. 237–40.

¹⁹ GDPref and 3 (C) B9.5.5: *swurdboran*.

²⁰ GDPref and 4 (C) B9.5.6: *swurdbora*.

²¹ ÆGl B1.9.2: *armiger*, *wæpnbora*; PrudGl 4 (Meritt) C94.4: *armigeris*, *wæpnbærum*; AntGl 4 (Kindschi) D1.4: *Armiger*, *wæpenbora*.

²² CorpGl 2 (Hessels) D4.2.

²³ AldV 1 (Goossens) C31.1: 'pugiles s. nos gladium portantes gladiatores' (we *wæpenboren* & *cempan*); AldV 13.1 (Nap) C31.13.1: *pugiles*, † *gladiators*, *wæpenboren*, *cempan*.

²⁴ HIGl (Oliphant) D16.1: *Belliger .i. miles bellator*, *wæpenbora*.

²⁵ *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar*, ed. by Julius Zupitza (Berlin: Weidmann, 1880), p. 27.

²⁶ All biblical quotations are from *Biblia sacra: iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. by Robertus Weber, 4th edn, rev. by B. Fischer et al. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), and the translation is from *The Holy Bible: Douay Version* (London, n.d.).

²⁷ *In primam partem Samvhelis libri IIII*, ed. by D. Hurst, *Corpus Christianorum series latina* 119 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962), p. 113.

²⁸ For example, 'caput sanctum, quod non impingauerat peccatoris oleum sed certi misterii sacramentum' [the sacred head, which had been anointed not with the oil of sinners, but with the sacramental chrism of mystery] (cap. 11, 14–15, *Corolla*, p. 37). See further Marco Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury: A Study of the Ideas about Society and Law of the Tenth-Century Monastic Reform Movement* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1987), pp. 150–4.

²⁹ See Putnam Fennell Jones, *A Concordance to the 'Historia Ecclesiastica' of Bede* (Cambridge, Mass: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1929).

³⁰ See *Wyrðwriteras us secgað in Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*,

ed. by John C. Pope, 2 vols, EETS o.s. 259 and 260 (London: Oxford University Press, 1967–8), at II 725–33.

³¹ Text from *Genesis* in *The Junius Manuscript*, ed. by George Philip Krapp, *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931).

³² *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. by F. Liebermann, 3 vols (Halle, 1898–1903), I 60.

³³ *English Historical Documents I: c.500–1042*, ed. and trans. by Dorothy Whitelock, 2nd edn (London: Eyre Methuen, 1979), pp. 376–7.

³⁴ *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, ed. and trans. by F. L. Attenborough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), p. 75.

³⁵ The will of Ætheling Æthelstan: 'ic geann Ælfnōðe minon sweordhwitan þæs sceardan malswurdes' [I grant to Ælfnōth my sword-polisher the notched(?) inlaid sword], in *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, ed. and trans. by Dorothy Whitelock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), p. 60. Ætheling Æthelstan disposes of several swords in his will, including one formerly belonging to King Offa, and one made by Wulfric which he gives to St Peter's. This indicates that it is the value of the swords that is important here rather than the use to which they might be put, though of course if the sword granted to Ælfnōth was 'notched' or damaged, he would be in a fair position to repair it. In other words, the sword-polisher was a useful servant who merited appropriate reward.

³⁶ See *A Thesaurus of Old English*, ed. by Jane Roberts, Christian Kay with Lynne Grundy, 2 vols (London: Kings College London Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1995), under items 12.01.01.06.08: 'A person of rank, elder, great man'; 12.01.01.07: 'A follower', 12.01.01.08.01: 'A servant, attendant'; 12.04.01: 'A fellow, companion, associate, comrade'; 13.02.10.01: 'A man, warrior'; 13.02.10.01.01: 'A commander, officer'; 13.02.10.01.02: 'An armed man' (among others). The range of vocabulary is extensive.

³⁷ In my article 'Analogy and Genre', pp. 27–34, I have shown that this archaizing or use of what can only be called a vocabulary of 'translationese' in Ælfric's *Life* of St Edmund is deliberate and extends to the methods and instruments used for the whole 'package' of torture.

³⁸ M. Mostert, *King Edmund of East Anglia († 869): Chapters in Historical Criticism* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 1983), p. 98, notes the use of *armiger* in Abbo's *Epitome de XCI romanorum pontificum vitis*, ed. by J.-P. Migne, *PL* 139 (Paris: Garnier, 1880), cap. 76, col. 558B. The context makes it clear that the *armiger* is a *spatharius*: 'mandaverat suo spathario [. . .] Nam prædictus armiger'. In his *Political Theology*, p. 183, n. 29, Mostert cites another example of *spatharius* in the same source, cap. 90, col. 570A, but I cannot find this: col. 570 is cap. 91, so there is perhaps some mistake.

The Armour-Bearer in Abbo's Passio sancti Eadmundi

³⁹ Mostert, *King Edmund*, p. 98: 'The king has to defend his country with weapons against foreign foes; if necessary he is to die for his country, under no circumstances should he fly or desert his own army. His army, which seems to include a personal bodyguard and knows several specialist functions, has to be paid. Desertion is a case of lèse majesté.'

⁴⁰ 'Fact and Fiction', p. 221.

⁴¹ The hagiographical convention of 'the authority of the reliable eyewitness' is concisely outlined by McDougall, p. 204.