Voices of Flanders: Orality and Constructed Orality in the Chronicle of Galbert of Bruges*

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On 2 March 1127 Charles "the Good", count of Flanders, was murdered while at prayer in the church of St Donatian in Bruges. The murder and its aftermath, and the ensuing struggle over the succession to the county of Flanders have long been recognised as key events in the political, social and constitutional history of the Low Countries. That this should be so is due in no small measure to the unique testimony of Galbert of Bruges, whose narrative history provides a detailed and at times day-by-day commentary through the conspiracy of the powerful Erembald family, the murder of the count, the pursuit and punishment of the traitors, and the continuing period of conflict between rival claimants up to the final victory of Thierry of Alsace as count of Flanders in the summer of 1128. Galbert's work has also been rightly valued for the insights it provides into the growth of urban democracy and solidarity, the processes of law, and the historiography and *mentalités* of the twelfth century.[1]

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1 *Histoire du meurtre de Charles le Bon comte de Flandre (1127-1128) par Galbert de Bruges,* ed. Henri Pirenne, Collection de textes pour servir à l'étude et à l'enseignement de l'histoire, 10 (Paris, 1891). English translations quoted in this essay are taken from *Galbert of Bruges: The Murder of Charles the Good,* trans. James Bruce Ross, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching, 12 (Toronto, 1982). As the same chapter divisions are maintained by Pirenne and Ross throughout, references to Galbert in the following notes relate to chapters rather than pages. A new edition of Galbert's work has just appeared: Galbertus notarius Brugensis, *De multro, traditione, et occisione gloriosi Karoli comitis Flandriarum*, ed. Jeff Rider, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, 131 (Turnhout, 1994), which also contains detailed discussion of the manuscript tradition. Excellent introductions to the text, along with other valuable material, are given in the two latest translations into Dutch and French respectively: Galbert van Brugge, *De moord op Karel de Goede. Dagboek van de gebeurtenissen in de jaren 1127-28,* trans. A. Demyttenaere, ed. R.C. Van Caenegem (Antwerpen, 1978), and Galbert de Bruges, secrétaire comtal, *Le Meurtre de Charles le Bon,* trans. J. Gengoux, ed. R.C. Van Caenegem (Anvers, 1978). Extensive commentaries on

Galbert are given in Heinrich Sproemberg, *Mittelalter und demokratische Geschichtsschreibung,* ed. Manfred Unger, Forschungen zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte, 18 (Berlin, 1971). For the political context of Galbert's account, see: James Bruce Ross, "Rise and Fall of a Twelfth-Century Clan: The Erembalds and the Murder of Count Charles of Flanders, 1127-28", *Speculum* 34 (1959), 367-90; François-Louis Ganshof, "Le roi de France en Flandre en 1127 et 1128", *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* 27 (1949), 204-28; E. Warlop, *The Flemish Nobility Before 1300,* 4 vols (Kortrijk, 1975), 1, 183-208; Thérèse de Hemptinne and Michel Parisse, "Thierry d'Alsace, comte de Flandre: Biographie et actes", *Annales de l'Est* 43 (1991), 83-113; R.C. Van Caenegem, *Law, History, the Low Countries and Europe* (London, 1994); Karen S. Nicholas, "When Feudal Ideals Failed: Conflicts Between Lords and Vassals in the Low Countries, 1127-1296", in *The Rusted Hauberk: Feudal Ideals of Order and their Decline,* ed. Liam O. Purdon and Cindy L. Vitto (Gainesville, 1994), pp. 201-26. On constitutional developments and Galbert's relevance to these, see: François-Louis Ganshof, "Les origines du concept de souveraineté nationale en Flandre", *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis* 18 (1950), 529-60; Henri Pirenne, *Early Democracies in the Low Countries: Urban Society and Political Conflict in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (New York, 1963); Jan Dhondt, "Les `solidarités' médiévales. Une société en transition: La Flandre en 1127-1128", *Annales ESC* 12 (1957), 529-60 [English version as "Medieval `Solidarities': Flemish Society in Transition, 1127-28, in F.L. Cheyette, *Lordship and Community in Medieval Europe* (New York, 1968), pp. 268-96]; Stephanie Coué, "Der Mord an Karl dem Guten (1127) und die Werke Galberts von Brügge und Walters von Thérouanne", in *Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit im Mittelalter: Erscheinungsformen und Entwicklungsstufen,* ed. Hagen Keller, Klaus Grubmüller and Nikolaus Staubach, Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften, 65 (München, 1992), pp. 108-29. On various other aspects of Galbert's historiography, theology and *mentalité,* see: Jan Dhondt, "Une mentalité du douzième siècle: Galbert de Bruges", *Revue du Nord* 39 (1957), 101-9; Walter Mohr, "Geschichtstheologische Aspekte im Werk Galberts von Brügge", in *Pascua Mediaevalia: Studies voor Prof. Dr. J.M. De Smet,* ed. R. Lievens, E. Van Mingroot and W. Verbeke, Mediaevalia Lovaniensia, Series 1, Studia 10 (Leuven, 1983) and Renée Doehaerd, "*Flandrenses* dans le *Passio Karoli* de Galbert de Bruges", *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire/Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis* 71 (1993), 841-49. For Galbert and the law, see R. C. Van Caenegem, *Galbert van Brugge en het Recht,* Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, 40/1 (1978); Van Caenegem, "Galbert of Bruges on Serfdom, Prosecution of Crime, and Constitutionalism (1127-28)", in *Law, Custom, and the Social Fabric in Medieval Europe: Essays in Honor of Bryce Lyon,* ed. Bernard S. Bachrach and David Nicholas, Studies in Medieval Culture, 28 (Kalamazoo, 1990), pp. 89-112. The candidature of Charles of Flanders as *rex Romanorum* is analysed in Heinrich Sproemberg, "Eine rheinische Königskandidatur im Jahre 1125", in *Aus Geschichte und Landeskunde: Forschungen und Darstellungen. Franz Steinbach zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet,* ed. Max Braubach et al. (Bonn, 1960),

As a notary belonging to the comital administration at Bruges, Galbert was well placed to observe many of the events unfolding before him, and was also, we must assume, trained in appropriate methods of recording them. It is Galbert who provides the sole evidence for documents issued by Louis VI of France and Count William Clito in 1127, the originals being presumed lost.[2] It is therefore hardly surprising that historians have paid considerable attention to Galbert's use of *written* records.[3] By contrast, as far as I am aware, no-one has yet examined his use of *oral* discourse, and it is the various examples of this, reproduced by Galbert in the form of direct speech, which will form the subject of this essay.[4]

The use of direct speech at key points is undoubtedly one of the ways in which Galbert heightens the dramatic qualities of his narrative. However, this is more than a simple rhetorical device, in that the use of direct speech is probably a genuine reflection of the public political processes described by Galbert, many of which, such as oaths, the settlement of disputes and acts of feudal defiance, revolved around the spoken, rather than the written word. The centrality of the spoken word is underscored by Galbert's information on symbolic actions or gestures which were often vital adjuncts to, or components of public speech acts.[5] Yet there are certain problems in the interpretation of Galbert's representation of the spoken word. Firstly, there is the question of selectivity; not all examples of oral discourse are actually reproduced in

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pp, 50-70, while the offer to him of the crown of Jerusalem is discussed in Alan V. Murray, "Baldwin II and his Nobles: Baronial Factionalism and Dissent in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1118-1134", *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 38 (1994), 60-85.

2 Jean Dufour, *Recueil des actes de Louis VI, roi de France (1108-1137)*, Chartes et diplômes relatifs à l'histoire de France publiés par les soins de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 3 vols (Paris 1992-), 1, nos. 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 259; Fernand Vercauteren, *Actes des comtes de Flandre 1071-1128*, Actes des princes belges (Bruxelles, 1938), nos. 125, 126.

3 Pirenne, in *Histoire du meurtre*, pp. vi-xix; Sproemberg, "Galbert von Brügge -- Stellung und Bedeutung. Die Anfänge demokratischer Geschichtsschreibung im Mittelalter", in *Mittelalter und demokratische Geschichtsschreibung*, pp. 319-24; Coué, "Der Mord an Karl dem Guten", pp. 108-24; François-Louis Ganshof, "Trois mandements perdus du roi de France Louis VI intéressant la Flandre", *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis gesticht onder de Benaming "Société d'emulation" te Brugge* 87 (1950), 117-33.

4 See Appendix below.

5 The ceremony of *exfestucatio*, in which the casting away of rods (*festucae*) to symbolise the rejection of vassalage or loyalty, is described by Galbert in connection with two of the speeches (ch. 38, 95).

the form of direct speech. This applies to some crucial events. Galbert reports the swearing of the *lex obsidionis*, the pact which regulated the barons' pursuit of the murderers of Count Charles, but only in indirect speech; the same applies to the reading of the charter granted by the new count William Clito to the town of Bruges. Since both events took place in or near the town it is likely that Galbert must have been able to provide an approximate rendering of what was said, but chose not to do so.[6]

Secondly, there is the question of constructed orality. It was common for medieval writers to compose notes and rough drafts on wax tablets, employing parchment only for fair copies.[7] From Galbert's own words we know that he made use of tablets; however, it is clear that, as a consequence of the turmoil in Bruges in the aftermath of the murder of the count, this method of recording information was a matter of necessity rather than choice:

> And it should be known that I, Galbert, a notary, though I had no suitable place for writing, set down on tablets a summary of events ... I had to wait for moments of peace during the night or day to set in order the present account of events as they happened, and in this way, though in great straits, I transcribed for the faithful what you see and read.[8]

It is likely that Galbert was able to record key points and phrases spoken at public events on his tablets, and later built his speeches around these when he had the facilities to transcribe his notes. I would accept that in these cases Galbert was, like numerous medieval chroniclers, attempting to convey the general sense of what had been said rather than to reproduce exactly the *ipsissima verba* of the speaker or speakers concerned. Yet I hope to show that on occasion Galbert constructed ostensibly verbatim reports of other discourse which he could not possibly have heard. These apparent contradictions raise the question of the purpose and effect of orality, both recorded and constructed. In this essay I would like to survey this material, focusing on some key passages, and

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6 Galbert, ch. 31, 55.

7 Michael T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1993), pp. 118-25; *Les Tablettes à écrire de l'Antiquité à l'époque moderne*, ed. Elisabeth Lalou, Bibliologia, 12 (Turnhout, 1992).

8 Galbert, ch. 35: "Et notandum ... cum locum scribendi ego Galbertus notarius non haberem, summam rerum in tabulis notavi, donec, aliquando noctis vel diei expectata pace, ordinarem secundum rerum eventum descriptionem presentem, et sic, secundum quod videtis et legitis, in arcto positus fidelibus transcripsi".

suggest some conclusions about the general significance of the representation of oral discourse in Galbert's record.

The account of the death of Charles and its consequences contains some forty instances of direct speech, which are set out in tabular form in the Appendix. Each example is identified by the number of the chapter in which it occurs, with letters to distinguish multiple occurrences within the same chapter. The table also attempts to establish a rough classification, as well as giving the length of each section of direct speech according to the number of words in the Latin text, and identifying the speaker and the context.

The classification chosen here is merely one possible way of dividing up the body of material, and is primarily meant to provide a rough overview of form, function and content of the various examples of spoken discourse. Two categories can be regarded as quite distinct. Firstly, there are two instances of oaths and homages, signalled by the words *jurare, conjurare.* Thus Galbert reproduces the oath of association sworn by the leading citizens of the castellany of Bruges on 27 March 1127.[9] The other instance of an oath occurs in a passage explaining how in 1071 the county of Flanders was usurped from Arnulf III (son of Count Baldwin VI of Flanders and Richilda of Hainaut), by Baldwin VI's younger brother, Robert I "the Frisian". Galbert relates how fearing such treachery, Baldwin VI had previously required Robert to swear fealty to Arnulf and his brother Baldwin (later count of Hainaut as Baldwin III). It is noteworthy that Galbert does not reproduce the actual words of the oath sworn by Robert, although presumably these would have been formulaic, and therefore memorable; only the preliminaries to the oath, spoken by Baldwin VI, are represented as direct speech. Considering that these events occurred over fifty-five years before Galbert was writing, it is difficult to believe that this speech can be anything other than a construction of his part.[10]

The second distinct category of direct speech comprises the oral delivery of letters and messages.[11] In most cases the presence of the term *litterae* indicates the existence of a written document which was read aloud, and often the oral and public character of the presentation is made explicit, as in the case of a letter sent from the citizens of Aardenburg to Count William Clito: "there was produced in the hearing of all the following letter from the leading men of Aardenburg" (*delatae sunt in omnium audientia litterae*).[12] However, the actual mechanics of

9 Galbert, ch. 51.
10 Galbert, ch. 69.
11 Galbert, ch. 47a, 47b, 52a, 55, 66, 95c, 99, 106a.
12 Galbert, ch. 55.

how messages were transmitted may have been more complicated than this. Galbert reports how, on 30 March 1127, the barons of Flanders returned from a meeting with King Louis VI at Arras and announced the designation and election of William Clito, son of Duke Robert of Normandy, as successor to Charles the Good. This decision was conveyed to the Flemish urban communities by means of a letter sent by the king at the hands of one of the peers of Flanders, Walter *Butelgir*, lord of Eine and Vladslo, which was read out aloud at a public gathering in Bruges.[13] The actual portion of the royal *mandement* which is cited is restricted to a greeting and statement of circumstances which had given rise to the action reported in the letter. Yet nothing of the substance of the royal decision is related in this text; the quotation ends with the instruction that the Flemings "should obey and carry out whatever you hear in what follows the text of this letter". What follows in Galbert's account is not the remainder of the letter, but a summary and commentary on its contents spoken by Walter of Eine. This becomes clear when, in the latter section, King Louis is referred to in the third person. One can assume a reasonable possibility that Galbert had access to the text of the royal letter in the comital archives; why then does he not quote from it in full? Ross's only suggestion is that the omission is intended to avoid a repetition of material treated in Walter's exegesis.[14] Yet why should Galbert prefer the oral commentary to the remainder of the written text?

A possible explanation is that the comments attributed to Walter of Eine constitute a feasible representation of how the contents of a letter written in Latin may have been communicated to a predominantly monoglot Flemish-speaking audience, and that Galbert thought it more important to record the actual moment and method of transmission. Yet it is questionable whether at this period in Flemish history a nobleman such as Walter would have been able to read Latin, even if the task of translation was carried out by someone other than the Walter himself. Another solution would be that the royal letter consisted of nothing or little more than that portion of the text quoted by Galbert, and that the *mandatum* was intended primarily to establish the credentials of its bearer, who was then meant to deliver the matters of substance *viva voce*. Certainly it is much easier to envisage the possibility that Walter, like other members of the peerage, was bilingual in French and Flemish,

13 Galbert, ch. 52a, 52b.

14 Ross, *Murder of Charles the Good*, p. 195.

and thus quite capable of conveying the essence of an oral communication from the king and his advisers.[15]

The great majority of the instances of oral discourse are monologues and dialogues. These vary both in character and extent, from exclamations or exchanges of only a few words at the one extreme to extensive political debates, harangues and parleys at the other. In some instances different types of discourse are combined: as we have just seen, a letter may be read out, and then commented on by its bearer, while the public reading of a letter may also occasion a speech or debate in reply.[16] Many of the shorter monologues are little more than exclamations (of despair, anger, penitence, cries for mercy etc.). Examples include the despair of Charles' chamberlain, Gervase of Praat, at his inability to avenge his lord, and the remorse of one of the traitors, Isaac the chamberlain, at his execution.[17] This is also the character of some of the dialogues, for example the exchange preceding the murder of Walter of Loker, one of Count Charles' inner circle of advisors:

> Walter, now captive and sure of death, went along crying, "Have pity on me, oh Lord!" They [the traitors] answered him, saying: "We must repay you with the kind of pity you have deserved from us!"[18]

The accuracy of the different categories of discourse probably varies considerably. Letters, as opposed to messages which were given and delivered orally, were presumably given a faithful rendition, in that Galbert, as a notary, had access to the comital archives. We should also expect a relatively accurate representation of oaths, in view of their formulaic and public character. It may, therefore, be the other categories, where Galbert had greater opportunity, and possibly, necessity for his own elaboration, which reveal most about his purpose and interpretation of events. In particular, Galbert seems to make a distinction between spontaneous, mostly short exclamations and those longer monologues which he terms *orationes*, which tend to be statements of considered political opinion. Some half-dozen of these speeches, to which we can add one important dialogue or *colloquium*, stand out from all the other examples by their length; these, I would suggest, constitute the most

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15 For this type of credential or certificate of introduction, see Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record,* pp. 260-63.

16 Galbert, ch. 52a/52b, 95d/95e, 106a/106b.

17 Galbert, ch. 54, 84a, 84b.

18 Galbert, ch. 17: "At ille captivus et mortis securus ibat clamitans: `miserere mei Deus'. Cui illi responderunt: `Talem tibi rependere debemus misericordiam, qualem erga nos promeruisti'". See also ch. 18.

important reflexes of orality in Galbert's work, and it is to these that I wish to give most consideration in the rest of this essay.

I would like to proceed by way of a discussion of the different categories of speakers and the relative frequency with which they appear.[19] The reading of letters presents a problem for this kind of classification. As it is impossible to ascertain who read out written messages in every case, these have been assigned to their issuers for the purpose of analysis. Individual peers and barons figure as speakers on some eleven occasions, while various counts of Flanders figure in five cases. These figures are hardly surprising, since barons and counts were the principal players in the political crisis which followed the murder of Count Charles, and continued until the death of Willaim Clito at the siege of Aalst at the end of July 1128, and the consequent universal acceptance of Thierry of Alsace as count. Strangely, Charles the Good himself is never quoted, although this would undoubtedly have added colour and depth to several important passages, notably Charles' judicial action against the Erembald family and the murder itself. By contrast, Walter of Thérouanne, who also describes many of the events in the crisis of 1127, includes two speeches by Charles.[20]

The traitors, in all cases members of the Erembald clan, figure in twelve occurrences of direct speech. The Erembalds constituted a major historiographical problem for Galbert in view of his clear affinity with the townspeople of Bruges. This family originated in Veurne, but by the time of the crisis its principal interests had shifted to Bruges. The provost Bertulf had headed the comital administration since 1091, while four successive members of the family had held the office of castellan of

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19 The breakdown of speakers/issuers by category gives the following figures:

King of France	3 (47a, 52a, 106a)
Counts of Flanders*	5 (47b, 57b, 69, 95b, 99)
Conspirators**	11 (8, 11, 17, 18, 19, 38, 44, 57b, 82, 84a, 84b)
Barons of Flanders	11 (17, 43, 52b, 54, 59, 95a, 95c, 95d, 100, 101, 104)
Clerics**	3 (18, 19, 22b)
Townspeople	9 (22a, 51, 55, 56, 57a, 66, 95e, 101, 106b)
Knights	2 (25, 38)
Others***	1 (119)

* Includes the claimant William of Ypres.

** Bertulf, although a cleric (provost of St Donatian), is included among the conspirators.

*** Godfrey, count of Louvain.

20 *Vita Karoli comitis auctore Waltero archiacono Tervanensi,* ed. R. Koepke, in MGH Scriptores, 12, ch. 27.

Bruges.[21] Important members of the clan owned town houses, while others possessed estates and fortified dwellings in the surrounding countryside.[22] This pre-eminent local power is reflected in Galbert's description of the family as "lords" of the people of Bruges.[23] Even after the townspeople had agreed with the barons to besiege the traitors in the count's castle many remained sympathetic towards them, and these long-established loyalties even threatened to disrupt the conduct of the siege when fighting broke out within the besieging forces between the townspeople and the lords of Straten, traditional enemies of the Erembalds.[24] Speeches placed by Galbert into the mouths of the Erembalds give evidence of their overweening pride, their lack of compassion when asked for mercy, the implication of each other in their crimes, and admissions of guilt and remorse.[25] Thus in most of these instances of direct speech the traitors are made to condemn themselves, or each other, out of their own mouths. These episodes serve to distance the people of Bruges from the Erembalds, on whom the blame for the murder is firmly fixed.

A complicating factor in Galbert's treatment of the Erembalds was the sympathy of the people of Bruges for the conspirator *Robertus Puer*, a nephew of the provost Bertulf. Robert was a man in whose complicity few in Bruges could bring themselves to believe despite the evident guilt of most of his kinsmen. Even after the execution of the majority of the traitors many of the townspeople were still prepared to intercede with the king of France on his behalf.[26] This obstinate public devotion to a conspirator was a problem solved by Galbert in an ingenious way. He describes how the conspiracy against Count Charles was sworn at a gathering at the provost Bertulf's town house in Bruges, in an inner chamber whose door was guarded by the provost himself. In this scene

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21 Erembald of Veurne, Robert (son of Erembald), Walter (son of Robert) and Desiderius Hacket (son of Erembald) (Galbert, ch. 71).

22 Galbert gives evidence of the country house of Borsiard, the actual slayer of Count Charles (ch. 10), of Robert *Puer's* stronghold at Raverschoot (ch. 26, 27), and of the house of Wulfric Cnop near Bruges (ch. 27). The provost Bertulf, Isaac the chamberlain, Isaac's brother Desiderius and Borsiard all seem to have had town houses in Bruges (ch. 11, 28).

23 "dominos suos ... potentiores et nobiliores in comitatu" (Galbert, ch. 45); "dominos suos" (ch. 75).

24 Galbert, ch. 45; Jerome Noterdaeme, "De Ridders van Straten", *Het Brugs Ommeland* 1 (1961), 23-30.

25 Galbert, ch. 8 (pride), 17, 18 (lack of compassion), 44, 57b (mutual implication), 84a, 84b (guilt and remorse).

26 Galbert, ch. 11, 44, 82.

Robert swears to take part in a deed, the nature of which has not been revealed to him. Only *after* swearing is he informed that he has just agreed to betray his lord Count Charles. Galbert then gives the purported verbatim response of the horrified reluctant conspirator:

> They said: "We have now sworn to betray that Count Charles who is working for our ruin in every way and is hastening to claim us as his serfs, and you must carry out this treachery with us, both in word and in deed".
>
> Then the young man, struck with terror and dissolved in tears, cried out: "God forbid that we should betray one who is our lord and the count of the fatherland. Believe me, if you do not give this up, I shall go and openly reveal your treachery to the count and to everyone and, God willing, I shall never lend aid and counsel to this pact!"[27]

This scene shows Robert in a conflict of loyalties akin to those later beloved by writers of vernacular chivalric romance. For Galbert there is no question that Robert's loyalty to his lord outweighs his loyalty to his kin, something which would have involved considerable sacrifice if it had been put to the test. If Robert had actually gone ahead and warned the count of the conspiracy before it could be put into effect, it is inconceivable that the destruction of the family's power base could have been averted. In the event, as the tale unfolds, such a selfless act is not required; Galbert asks his readers to believe that Robert's kinsmen reassure him that the apparent treachery was merely a joke; while the other conspirators, led by his cousin Borsiard, go off to prepare the murder of the count, Robert retires to bed with a clear conscience. Given the alleged circumstances of this incident, the conspiratorial dialogue can only be a fabrication, or a construction deriving from a later account given by Robert himself. Its main purpose seems to be to exonerate Robert from any part in the murder, and thus indirectly to excuse the public sympathy for him shown by the people of Bruges right up to his execution at Cassel on the orders of Louis VI.

By contrast to this construction of orality in a closed context, most representations of discourse are used to describe and to highlight moments of public crisis, mostly conflicts and their resolution: violent

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27 Galbert, ch. 11: "At illi: `Comes iste Karolus laborat omnibus modis ad destructionem nostram, et ut in servos sibi nos vindicet festinat, cujus traditionem jam conjuravimus, et debes amodo nobiscum eandem traditionem tam consilio quam opere peragere'. Igitur territus puer et totus in lacrimas fusus ait: 'Absit a nobis, ut dominum nostrum tradamus et patriae consulem. Imo revera, si non desistitis, ego vadam et aperte traditionem vestram comiti et universis eloquar, nec super hoc pacto consilium vel auxilium, volente Deo, umquam prestabo'".

confrontations,[28] the settlement of disputes,[29] rejection of the conspirators,[30] and extended political debates.[31] Several of these functions are exemplified in the longest dialogic discourse recorded by Galbert: this is a parley, designated by him as a *colloquium* or *collocatio*, between the traitors and their accomplices in the castle of Bruges, and representatives of the forces besieging them, which took place on 17 March 1127. The first element of this parley consists of a speech (*oratio*), made by Desiderius Hacket, the castellan of Bruges, in which the Erembalds request a settlement on the basis that the guilty among them will undergo punishment (exile), while others will give lawful proof of their innocence. This offer, which seems to show the traitors at their most reasonable, is nevertheless rejected by a spokesman for the besiegers, who consisted of the armed retinues of the barons and the urban militias of Bruges and Gent. Here Galbert again shows the people of Flanders distancing themslves unequivocably from the traitors. Interestingly, although Hacket's offer is clearly directed to the "barons of the land" (*principes terrae hujus*), the answer which rejects it is placed by Galbert not into the mouth of any of the barons, but of a simple knight of the siege, identified only as "a certain Walter" (*quidam militum obsidionis nomine Walterus*).[32]

The fact that such an important speech is recorded as having been made by one of the more lowly members of Flemish society mirrors the increasing importance of the commonality during the crisis of 1127-28. The political weight of the urban communities was recognised after his accession by Count William Clito who granted charters to the towns of Bruges, Aardenburg and Saint-Omer in March and April 1127, while the second phase of the crisis was ushered in by revolts against the oppressive rule of William and his castellans in Lille (August 1127), and Saint-Omer and Gent (February 1128).

The growing political role of the urban communities is reflected in two major speeches reproduced by Galbert. The first of these was made by Iwein, lord of Aalst, acting as spokesman (*prolocutor civium)* for the townspeople of Gent in their challenge to Count William in February 1128.[33] After setting out the grievances of the community, Iwein expounds a theory of government based on a contract between ruler and people, under which the ruler is subject to the constraints of law. It

28 Galbert, ch. 17, 18, 22a, 57a, 57b.
29 Galbert, ch. 43, 59.
30 Galbert, ch. 38, 55.
31 Galbert, ch. 95a, 95b, 95e, 106b.
32 Galbert, ch. 38.
33 Galbert, ch. 95a.

claims a right of the people to depose a count who fails to abide by the terms of this contract. Iwein's speech has rightly been called "one of the most important political speeches in the history of the Low Countries".[34] I would argue that there is one other speech in Galbert's record which is equally important. Despite its ideas of contractual government the *oratio* of Iwein of Aalst still recognises the role of the king of France as overlord of Flanders, as well as the possibility that the oppressive count might still redeem himself. Yet in reality the king's influence in Flanders was slipping away, as was William's support. In April 1128 Louis VI made a last attempt to achieve a reconciliation, asking the people of Bruges (and by implication the other towns) to send representatives to seek a peaceful settlement with William Clito. This letter engendered a reply from the citizens which rehearses the earlier arguments concerning the obligations of a ruler.[35] This second speech also goes considerably further, in appealing to reason and to divine law to assert the right of the citizens not to be deprived of a livelihood. Most importantly, it advances the idea of *national,* as well as popular, sovereignty. Whereas Iwein of Aalst stressed the role of the barons as mediators between the king of France and the count, the people now claim that:

> the king of France has nothing to do with choosing or setting up a count of Flanders, whether the previous count has died with or without heirs...[36]

The revolutionary nature of this speech has been commented on by modern scholars, but one significant fact which I believe to have been overlooked relates not to its content, but to the way in which it is portrayed by Galbert. The previous political harangue is made by the baron Iwein of Aalst. Iwein had succeeded his brother Baldwin III as lord of Aalst, Waas and Drongen on the latter's death in October 1127. The lords of Aalst belonged to the peerage of the county; they were important landholders around Gent and in imperial Flanders, and were also hereditary advocates of St Peter's Abbey, the principal monastic

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34 Van Caenegem, "Galbert of Bruges on Serfdom", pp. 104-5; Van Caenegem, *Law, History, the Low Countries and Europe,* pp. 107-12; Van Caenegem, "De Gentse februari-opstand van het jaar 1128", *Spiegel Historiael* 13 (1978), 478-83.

35 Galbert, ch. 106b.

36 Galbert, ch. 106b: "quod nihil pertinet ad regem Franciae de electione vel positione comitis Flandriae si sine herede aut cum herede obiisset". Heinrich Sproemberg, "Das Erwachen des Staatsgefühls in den Niederlanden. Galbert von Brügge", in *L'Organisation corporative du Moyen Age à la fin de l'Ancien Régime. Etudes présentées à la Commission Internationale pour l'histoire des Assemblées d'Etats,* 3 (Louvain, 1939), pp. 31-89.

foundation in the town. Iwein was thus the obvious spokesman to represent the people of Gent. By contrast, the reply to the king, given at Bruges in April 1128, the longest single monologue in Galbert's record, is attributed by him not to any high-ranking individual such as Iwein, but is framed as a speech made by a plural subject, "the citizens" (*Statim cives super remittendis litteris rationis et consilii studium inierunt, dicentes...*).[37] Given that Galbert stresses the context of *discussion*, it is unlikely that the monologues should be understood as the verbatim report of a single speech. It could of course be meant as a representation of a speech delivered by one of the citizens acting as the mouthpiece of the entire body, although in this case one wonders why Galbert chose a plural subject. Another possibility is that it is a construction intended to represent the consensus reached after a political debate, or at least discussion of the issues, by the citizens as a group.

Such debate may not have been a unique occurrence. Galbert describes a similar process which occurred after the designation of William Clito as count was announced by the peer Walter of Eine at a public gathering at Bruges on 30 March 1127:

> When the citizens had heard the letter and the speech of its bearer, they put off deciding whether they would agree to accept and elect the new count until they could summon those Flemings with whom they had taken an oath concerning the election and could take joint action with them in approving or opposing the content of the royal message.[38]

Evidently considerable discussion took place before the meeting broke up; Galbert relates that the citizens had used up the day with tedious talking (*tenuerant diem sermonum longis protractibus*) and put off coming to a final decision. The place where these deliberations occurred is referred to as the *locus oratorius: reversi sunt cives a loco oratorio.* One could argue that this term is simply used to denote the location of the speech (or speeches) described in this chapter. However, in that case one would have expected a formulation such as locus orationis or *locus orationum.* The phrase *locus oratorius* suggests something rather more permanent and institutionalised, that is "the place where speeches are (regularly) made", or literally, "place of oratory". Most commentators have identified this site with the area on the west side of the town at the approach of the road from Ypres, known as "Het Zand" (*apud Harenas*),

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37 Galbert, ch. 106b.

38 Galbert, ch. 52: "Auditis ergo litteris et voce litterarum latoris, cives procrastinaverunt responsum de receptione seu electione novi consulis concedenda sibi, ut, accitis Flandrensibus, cum quibus eligendi sacramenta constituerant, simul aut concessionem facerent aut legationis regiae litteras refutarent...".

which figures elsewhere in Galbert's account as the principal assembly place of the populace, although the evidence for this is inconclusive. However, irrespective of its precise location, it is clear that the *locus oratorius* was the accustomed gathering place for mass meetings of the citizenry of Bruges.[39]

Such evidence also suggests that political debate was becoming part of the urban culture of Flanders, encouraged by the need for communal solidarity and decision-making in a period of crisis. In fact, we find that the commonality (townspeople and ordinary knights) figure in eleven cases of oral discourse, roughly the same number as that attributed to the barons and to the traitors, which can be interpreted as testimony to the growing role of the towns of Flanders as players in the political process. These common voices are illustrated in great diversity: the harangue of the poor people of Bruges determined to prevent the removal from the town of the precious relic, the body of the martyred Count Charles;[40] the "sensible men" determined to mediate in the dispute between the urban militias of Bruges and Gent, which threatened the success of the action

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39 Galbert, ch. 16, 51, 52, 55, 102; Luc Devliegher, "Galbert et la topographie de Bruges", in Galbert de Bruges, secrétaire comital, *Le Meurtre de Charles le Bon,* pp. 254-64; Adriaan Verhulst, "Les origines et l'histoire ancienne de la ville de Bruges (Xe-XIIe siècle), *Le Moyen Age* 66 (1960), 37-63. A possible objection to my interpretation might be that the word *oratorius* refers to a place of worship, and that the phrase *locus oratorius* means a church or chapel. The *Novum Glossarium Mediae Latinitatis,* fasc. O, ed. Franz Blatt and Yves Lefèvre (København, 1983) glosses the adjective *oratorius* with the two principal overall meanings "relatif à l'éloquence" and "relatif à la prière"; in fact this very passage from Galbert is cited as an example of the first meaning, with the specific definition "où l'on parle, consacré au discours" (p. 667). An examination of the context also points clearly in the direction of the first meaning. Galbert relates that the citizens' discussion followed a speech made by Walter of Eine (ch. 52). He tells us that before the speech the citizens had "poured into the [aforesaid] field to hear the king's mandate": "confluxerunt simul in agrum predictum ad auscultandum regis mandatum". This *ager predictus* refers back to the field mentioned in the previous chapter: "convenerunt burgenses nostri in agrum quod suburbio adjacet intra septa villae" (ch. 51), and thus is the same *locus oratorius* mentioned later in chapter 52. Later, another meeting of the Flemings with Louis VI and Count William was held at the "usual field" *(in agrum consuetum)* (ch. 55). The precise location of the site is problematic. Galbert normally refers to Het Zand by name, and one might ask why he should have avoided the name on the occasions discussed above if they had indeed taken place at the Sands.

40 Galbert, ch. 22a.

against the traitors;[41] the citizens of Bruges swearing an oath to elect as count one who "will tread the narrow path of rectitude, and who will be willing and able to serve the common interests of the land".[42] The importance of these "common interests" can be seen in the case of the charter granted by William Clito to the town of Aardenburg on 6 April 1127. This document was given a public reading, but is not actually quoted by Galbert. By contrast, the letter from the leading men of Aardenburg to the count, which occasioned the charter, and was also read aloud, is given verbatim.[43] This letter contains the conditions demanded by the people of Aardenburg in return for their agreement to the election of William. These include the abolition of oppressive exactions by the nobleman Lambert of Aardenburg, and an extension of urban liberties. The recording of the public reading of this letter exemplifies the way in which key passages involving oral discourse tend to record not the privileges granted to the towns by the counts of Flanders, but rather the *expectations* by the people of their rulers.[44]

Galbert's reproduction of such demands is all the more significant in that at times he was himself evidently ill at ease with them. For example, the *orationes* of Iwein of Aalst and the anonymous townsmen of Bruges assert the right of the people to depose a ruler who fails to honour agreements. Galbert seems uneasy with this doctrine, often quoting biblical texts which stress that earthly rulers are instituted by God. In the prologue to his work he identifies the betrayal of divinely-constituted authority as the cause of the great evil which had befallen Flanders; in support of this interpretation he cites an evidently biblical text: *Omnis anima omni potestati subjecta sit, sive regi tamquam precellenti sive ducibus tamquam a Deo missis.*[45] This may derive from a non-Vulgate version of I Peter 2:13-14 (Vulgate: *subiecte estote omni humanae creaturae propter Dominum sive regi quasi praecellenti sive ducibus tamquam ab eo missis*), but also appears to have been influenced by, or conflated with another famous passage on authority, Romans 13:1 (Vulgate: *omnis anima potestatibus sublimioribus subdita sit non est enim potestas nisi a Deo*). Galbert again returns to this text on two later occasions,[46] and also cites John 19.11 (*non haberes in me potestatem nisi tibi*

41 Galbert, ch. 43.

42 Galbert, ch. 51.

43 Galbert, ch. 55.

44 Galbert, ch. 95a, 95e, 106b. On the identity of Lambert, see Penelope Adair, "Lambert Nappin and Lambert of Aardenburg: One Fleming or Two?" *Medieval Prosopography* 11 (1990), 17-31.

45 Galbert, prologue.

46 Galbert, ch. 116, 118.

datum fuisset desuper a patre meo)[47] and Luke 20.25 (*quae sunt Dei Deo reddite et quae sunt Cesaris Cesari*).[48]

In his essay on Galbert's *mentalité*, Dhondt analyses the conflict between "le Galbert superstitieux et le Galbert rationaliste", torn between the sometimes irreconcilable demands of faith and reason.[49] The fact that the speeches of Iwein of Aalst and the anonymous citizens of Bruges are faithfully recorded despite Galbert's unease at the political doctrines advanced in them can be seen as evidence of a further internal dichotomy, between the God-fearing comital servant and the member of an urban community which was dedicated to maintaining and extending its liberties. This becomes especially clear in the prologue, where Galbert sets out his purpose in writing his record of events. In evident anticipation of possible criticism, he states:

> Now about this work of mine which I so carefully set down for you and all the faithful to hear, despite the straits in which I was placed; if anyone tries to criticize and disparage it, I do not care very much. It reassures me to know that I speak the truth as it is known to all who suffered the same dangers with me, and I commit it to the memory of our posterity.[50]

In this passage Galbert of Bruges depicts historical truth as the reflection of shared collective experience, and it would seem that this experience was one he was prepared to record even despite his better personal judgement. The representation of spoken discourse was an eloquent means of expressing the interests of the Flemish urban communities in the political crisis of 1127-28, and I would argue that the portrayal of the anonymous but collective voices of Flanders forms one of the most significant and striking features of Galbert's use of orality.

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47 Galbert, ch. 118. Vulgate: *non haberes potestatem adversum me ullam nisi tibi esset datum desuper propterea qui tradidit me tibi maius peccatum habet.*

48 Galbert, ch. 118. Vulgate: *et ait illis reddite ergo quae Caesaris sunt Caesari et quae Dei sunt Deo.*

49 Dhondt, "Une mentalité du douzième siècle: Galbert de Bruges", p. 104.

50 Galbert, prologue: "Super hoc igitur mentis studio, quod in tam arcto positus, vestro et omnium fidelium auditui in communi commendavi, si quis quicquam obgarrire et detrahere contendat, non multum curo. Securum enim me facit, quod veritatem omnibus apertam qui mecum eodem percellebantur periculo loquor, et eam posteris nostris memorandam commendo".

VOICES OF FLANDERS

APPENDIX

Ch.	Type	Length	Speaker	Context
8	Speech	64	Bertulf†	Prelude to conspiracy.
11	Dialogue	110	Robert Puer†/Erembalds†	Conspiracy.
17	Dialogue	12	Walter Loker/murderers†	Cry for mercy and refusal (violent confrontation).
18	Dialogue	44	Isaac†/Fromold	Cry for mercy (violent confrontation).
19	Dialogue	22	Bertulf†/Fronold	Partial dialogue only; reply in reported speech.
22(a)	Speech	53	Paupers of Bruges*	Harangue to Bertulf to prevent removal of body of Charles.
22(b)	Speech	90	Canon of St. Donatian	Continuation of above.
25	Speech	26	Godescalc (knight)	Message from William of Ypres to Bertulf.
38	Dialogue	359	Hacket†/Walter (knight)	Parley between traitors and barons of the siege (*oratio/colloquium*).
43	Speech	31	"Sensible men" at siege	Resolution of conflict between Bruges and Gent.
44	Speech	54	Robert Puer†	Accusation of faithlessness at Desiderius.
47(a)	Reading	146	Louis VI of France	Summons to barons of Flanders to Arras.
47(a)	Reading	61	Thierry of Alsace	Claim to countship.
51	Oath	45	Citizens of Bruges*	Association.
52(a)	Reading	68	Louis VI of France	Announces election of William Clito (read by Walter of Eine).
52(b)	Speech	220	Walter of Eine	Comments on above letter (*vox litterarus latoris*).
54	Speech	22	Gervaise of Praat	
55	Reading	205	Citizens of Aardenburg*	Demands to William Clito.
56	Oath	22	Homages to William Clito*	
57(a)	Speech	16	Unnamed man of Ypres*	Taunt at Bertulf (violent confrontation).
57(b)	Dialogue	41	William of Ypres/Bertulf†	Interrogation of Bertulf (Violent confrontation).
59	Speech	106	Gervaise of Praat	Resolution of conflict (*oratio*).
66	Reading	45	Citizens of Saint-Omer*	To William Clito.
69	Speech	95	Baldwin VI of Flanders	Preliminary to oath (*promulgavit verba*).
82	Speech	17	Robert Puer†	Plea to citizens of Bruges.
84(a)	Speech	40	Isaac†	Remorse.
84(b)	Speech	30	Isaac†	Remorse.
84(c)	Speech	19	Bertulf†	Premonition of doom.
95(a)	Speech	251	Iwein of Aalst	Spokesman for Gent to William Clito (*prolocutor civium*).
95(b)	Speech	28	William Clito	Reply to above.
95(c)	Reading	54	Iwein of Aalst	To William Clito.
95(d)	Reading	29	Iwein of Aalst	To towns of Flanders.
95(e)	Speech	70	Citizens of Flanders*	Deliberations on above.
99	Reading	51	Thierry of Alsace	To citizens of Bruges.
100	Speech	97	Gervaise of Praat	To citizens of Bruges (*habuit cum eis orationem*).
101	Dialogue	54	Iwein, Daniel/Bruges*	(*interrogabant ... cives*).
104	Speech	139	Gervaise of Praat	To Thierry of Alsace, Changes sides (*oratio*).
106(a)	Reading	67	Louis VI of France	
106(b)	Speech	327	Citizens of Bruges*	Deliberations on above (*rationis et consilii studium inierunt*).
119	Speech	14	Godfrey duke of Louvain	Announces death of William Clito.

† = Member of Erembald family
* = Member of commonality