

**BERTULF OR GALBERT?
CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING A SAMPLE OF HISTORICAL
AND PSYCHOANALYTICAL CRITICISM OF MEDIEVAL
DREAMS¹**

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Antecedents

Since the sixties, the history of mentalities has emerged as a particularly popular area of study within medieval studies, but has nonetheless been severely hampered for a long time by both conceptual and theoretical vagueness (Gurevich, 1992; Graus, 1987). By seeking a connection with methods from ethnology, and by renaming the history of mentalities *historical anthropology*, French historians in particular, such as Jacques Le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt, have been responsible for introducing considerably more clarity and methodical rigour. Rudi Künzel is also among the most important proponents of a more scientific and critical approach to more or less elusive cultural, psychic and social phenomena from the past. During the nineties, he twice tried to encourage medievalists to adopt a more systematic and meticulous historical critique in research into medieval representations, emotions and forms of communication. His research into traces of pagan-Christian syncretism (Künzel, 1992) and of oral transmission (Künzel, 1995) each produced a sort of checklist of criteria that was intended to establish the authenticity of written accounts of these phenomena.² In a third, similar exercise, he has once again during this psychohistorical conference earned the gratitude of the guild of medievalists for an unusual historical critique of the medieval narrative sources. This time, it is medieval accounts of

1. In response to the contribution by Rudi Künzel, *Medieval Dreams. A Sample of Historical and Psychoanalytical Criticism* (this issue: 215-233).

2. Both checklists are subsequently repeated by Künzel in a somewhat more abstract form (Künzel, 1997: 277-284).

dreams whose authenticity is pondered. These accounts may be either autobiographical in nature, or records of other people's dreams. The most significant methodological innovation that Künzel introduces in this quest for authenticity is, exactly one hundred years after Freud's *Traumdeutung* (Freud, 1900a), to extend the scope of traditional historical criticism and historical anthropology by the incorporation of psychoanalytical research criteria (cf. Künzel, 1998). His exercise is presented as a "proposal" and as a "sample", and thus lends itself ideally to commentary, questions and discussion. In what follows, as a discussant, I take up this invitation with alacrity.

The quest for authenticity and its problems

Questions of authenticity have represented the spearhead of historical criticism since the investigations of the Maurist, Jean Mabillon (1632-1707). However, the question of whether the content of a dream as recorded in an historical text is based on a real dream experience may nonetheless still appear strange – certainly for the postmodern cultural scientist. Even a thousand criteria will not succeed in establishing this point with any certainty. And why should a fictional dream not be able to provide us with useful historical information about the preoccupations, obsessions and desires of individuals, groups or cultures? Yet a good many historians continue to seek out the boundaries between fact and fiction, even when they are studying particularly elusive phenomena. For visions, for example, numerous traces of which may be found in the medieval sources, similar questions are posed: can one draw a line between genuine hallucinatory visions and purely literary creations such as the *Divina commedia* of Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) (Ebel, 1968) and can psychology help us with this (Vergote, 1978; 1986)? There can thus be little doubt that Künzel has, with his investigation of dream, ventured into one of the most treacherous terrains of traditional historical criticism. His research interest is pertinent from the viewpoint of the history of mentalities: have dreams been handed down that provide us with reliable evidence of the internal, psychological world of concrete historical individuals? At the same time, however, he himself is the first to emphasise that this can never be ascertained with any certainty, and that, at best, a plausible answer may be given. To this end, Künzel has had the intellectual courage to present us with a discussable proposal of criteria. In the following brief remarks, I therefore do not allow myself to be guided by an *a priori* postmodern scepticism; rather, I attempt to act as a devil's

advocate, and to assail Künzel's checklist with considerations from historical criticism. In doing this, I shall firstly focus on the way in which he has presented the relation between oral culture and written culture. Secondly, I shall also ask for a little more attention to be given to the role of the author in the recording of the dream in writing. For the sake of clarity, I begin by setting out once again the nine criteria distinguished by Künzel (this issue: 219-228), although I shall not be treating them in this order in what follows:

- (a) If a description of a dream in text B refers directly to a description of a dream in an earlier text A, then the dream described in text B probably is not a real dream.
- (b) If a person could have recounted a dream to promote some personal interest of his own, the possibility should be considered that he might have made up or distorted the dream.
- (c) Does the text have features indicative of the oral transmission of the content of the dream?
- (d) Does the description of the dream in the written text have a certain colloquial sound to it, so that it is likely to have originated from an oral source?
- (e) Does the text to be examined contain indications of how the dream was transmitted?
- (f) If the contents of a dream are in keeping with what we know about the preoccupations of the dreamer, if they are psychologically plausible, then the dream can have been dreamt.
- (g) If the description of a dream has features indicating that dream-work has been done (graphic, non stereotype images, tangibility, and displacement), it is all the more probable that the described dream is authentic.
- (h) The account of the dream contains recognizable aspects that arouse empathy.
- (i) Ideas come into the mind of the person reading the account of the dream that are comparable to the associations people have during psychoanalysis.

Right at the start of his contribution, Künzel (this issue: 219) states that "a distinction needs to be drawn between the literary stereotypes and the authentic dreams". It is therefore not surprising that various of his criteria are based on the assumption that the oral tradition is considerably more candid and spontaneous than the written, which may force the authentic element of the individual dream experience into the background with its literary formalism and commonplaces. However, this assumption needs to

be nuanced somewhat. Two closely associated criteria that cannot be used without care in this connection are (c) and (d), concerning the traces of oral transmission and of colloquial phraseology in medieval dream accounts. The problem is that if these requirements are met too strictly, this may in fact sometimes turn out to discredit the veracity of the narrated dream. Firstly, it is obvious that the lengthier the oral transmission that has preceded the recording of the dream in writing, the more deviations there may have arisen from the genuinely dreamt core of the dream. Thus, the oral tradition is not unsuspect by definition. On the other hand, in the textual setting of an autobiography or of writings in which a father confessor describes the experiences of his mystically gifted pupil, it may well be that texts display little or no sign of oral transmission, and yet reproduce hallucinations particularly faithfully. Finally, especial allowance should be made for the acuity of medieval authors, who were themselves well aware that their texts conveyed more of a sense of authenticity when they provided them with passages in direct speech and with traces of oral communication. For example, this is quite clear from the thirteenth century onwards, when the use in religious propaganda texts of a simple vocabulary, a paratactic style and direct speech became a recurrent rhetorical strategy on account of the renewed interest in lay preaching. The *exempla* of authors such as Jacques de Vitry (ca. 1160/70-1240) or Thomas of Cantimpré (ca. 1201-1266) offer fine examples of this.

Künzel's arguments in support of criteria (h) and (i), concerning the extent to which the dream account evokes empathy and associations in the modern reader, are also coupled with a strict distinction between dream descriptions that are on the one hand authentic and on the other borrowed from literary traditions. Literary stereotypes, it is suggested, will arouse less empathy and will also not really be compatible with authentic *dream thinking*. But need literary stereotypes and authentic dreams really be so incompatible? Both medievalists and sociolinguistically trained anthropologists warn us against placing oral and written culture in an excessively antagonistic relation with one another. We need only think here of the work of Patrick Geary (1994: 12-15) and Brian Street (1995: 74-98, 153-159). When in his discussion of criterion (e) regarding the transmission of the dream Künzel proposes the interesting concept, inspired by cultural anthropology, of *dream-narrating communities*, it should be pointed out that at the same time, *textual communities* – a concept of Brian Stock's – also developed within medieval society. By textual communities Stock means communities in which a given corpus of

texts structures the mutual behaviour of the group members and intensifies internal solidarity in the confrontation with the outside world (Stock, 1983: 88-92). In certain milieus – monastic communities, for example – even very early on in the Middle Ages people sometimes thought and lived according to patterns that were partly influenced by literary culture. We may think here, for example, of the research of Jean Leclercq into the place of the Bible in the daily life of medieval monks (Leclercq, 1957).³ That such religious people, who were steeped in Biblical and liturgical culture, may also have dreamt of and through well-known Biblical images and symbols seems to me highly likely. Anyone who has just been reading or has seen an exciting film may well also dream of literary or film topoi which manifest themselves as a sort of day residue in the dream.

In addition, every culture probably also possesses a repertoire of recurrent narrative motifs, a good many traces of which may be identified in both oral and literary culture, which may also have formed the subject matter of real dreams. The circulation of such topoi is often not without significance. They may point to collective, recurrent obsessions in given historical and cultural contexts. In monastic texts about dreams, visions and miracles, for example, the theme often recurs of the devil coming to disturb the monks in their sleep in the guise of a female seductress (Dupont, 1999: 179-182). If criterion (a) is applied strictly, such a narrative motif may only derive from a real dream in its very first written version. Yet in my view it is not implausible that more than one ascetic monk may have really dreamt of a naked woman and regarded this as a trick by the devil, especially as the old monastic rule of Johannes Cassianus (ca. 360-430/435) actually states that the sixth and most difficult stage in the monk's ascetic training is reached when "temptation by a woman's shade ceases to arouse illusions in sleep" (Pichery, 1958: 131-133; cf. Foucault, 1982). An example of a contemporary narrative motif of this kind that often recurs in people's dreams is the realisation that, without wishing it, they are suddenly naked in public.

Stereotypes should therefore not necessarily be regarded as an obstacle to the authenticity of dream narratives. On the other hand, it is not always easy for the modern researcher to recognise all the topoi and symbolism in

3. I permit myself here to also refer to my own research into the cognitive profile of the 12th century German prophetess Hildegard of Bingen, in which I stressed the importance of the textual community of the monastery in relation to the cognitive development of simple, often uneducated religious (Deploige, 1998: 101-114). The internal dynamic of a textual community can ensure that even those of its members that have not had any real education, or are even simply illiterate, may nonetheless be permeated by a specific corpus of texts, as a result, for example, of preaching and regulation.

medieval dreams as such. What may seem to us to simply be a rather original plastic representation or an instance of accidental metaphor in a dream, may in the Middle Ages sometimes have had a particular symbolic significance. I am thinking here of the dream that, according to Rodulfus Glaber (ca. 985-1047), the religious dissident Leutard had around the year 1000. Rodulfus tells us that Leutard dreamt during an afternoon nap in the fields of a swarm of bees that penetrated his body, stung him, came out again through his mouth and called him to a special vocation (Borst, 1973: 588-590). According to Künzel, the most obvious explanation for this dream is that Leutard was actually assailed by insects during his afternoon nap, and that he dramatised this disturbance in his dream. Of course, Künzel's explanation is perfectly possible. As my fellow-discussant Katrien Heene remarked during the Ghent psychohistorical conference, another possibility should also be taken into account, however. Right from antiquity, the bee symbolised eloquence, poetic prowess and intellect. Of Pindar (ca. 520-445 BC) and Plato (ca. 427-347 BC) it was said that bees settled on their lips when they were still in the cradle. Of the church father Ambrosius of Milan (ca. 340-397), who was famed for his eloquence, it was also told that bees had brushed across his lips and flown into his mouth. The idea of Virgil (70-19 BC) that bees had divine Intelligence in them was adopted by medieval Christianity. Thus, according to Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) the bee was a symbol for the Holy Spirit, who had fortified the apostles to spread the Christian message (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1969: I, 3). In view of the bee's historical background as a classical and Christian symbol, it seems not unlikely, of course, that the bees in Leutard's dream would have symbolised his vocation and his later work as a preacher to his followers, thanks to this almost grotesque allusion to the traditional Ambrosian symbolism (cf. Borst, 1973: 591).

It is thus not always an easy matter to determine how intentional the inclusion of a dream in a narrative source may have been. This brings me to Künzel's criterion (b), which states that if someone uses a dream account to achieve some personal end, the dream's authenticity may be called into question. This position obviously possesses a basis of truth, but in actual research it will be difficult to determine the point at which this personal end has a truly *disruptive* effect. If an individual recounts his or her manifest dream to himself or herself by means of a so-called *monologue intérieur*, this will anyway take place in a highly subjective, intentional context, and instances of so-called *resistance* will arise in any case. In other words, right from the first stage of the dream transmission process, dream distortion is at work, guided to a greater or lesser extent by

conscious or unconscious personal motives.⁴ This, incidentally, was also Freud's starting-point. And as soon as an author decides to include a dream account in his or her text, it is obvious that there will inevitably be, again, some specific purpose behind this decision. For this reason, criterion (b) should perhaps be reformulated to state that whenever a dream is more or less explicitly related to some future event, a degree of suspicion is not out of place. In this way, criterion (b) could be coupled with criterion (f), concerning the dreamer's preoccupations and the dream's psychological plausibility. For these "preoccupations" could be made a little more specific by paying specific attention to whether the dreamer draws in his dream on day residues, remembrances from childhood, physical impressions, and so on – the sources from the subject's past that are traditionally emphasised by psychoanalysis as dream material. Finally, given that criterion (b) starts out from the assumption that, within the culture in which the dream is recounted and, possibly, *abused*, there is an openness to the idea that dreams can have a specific significance, it seems to me in any case to be a desirable addition to dream research to investigate when and for what reason dream narrations are included at precisely this or that particular place by the source's author in the temporal structure of his or her historical narrative.

Finally, the role of the authors of the texts in which medieval dreams are transmitted can also be called into question in relation to Künzel's criterion (g). According to criterion (g), signs of dream-work in the description of the dream make it more likely that the described dream is authentic. However, the question is whether we cannot encounter signs of dream-work when fictional dreams are recounted? A psychoanalyst will not necessarily have any problem with the analysis of dream accounts that are not based on real dreams. In his essay on the novella *Gradiva* by the German author Wilhelm Jensen (1903), Freud actually devoted himself to the analysis of "dreams that have never been dreamt at all" (Freud, 1907a: 31). In the process, he investigated above all the relation between author and fictional character. Freud formulated the hypothesis that writers draw from the same source as analysts, namely the unconscious, but that they express this unconscious in an artistic manner, via the characters in their novels. Only very recently, it was demonstrated by Hans-Jürgen Bachorski that medieval dream accounts that may be regarded as pure literary

4. In this context, Katrien Heene presented during the conference four stages that can be distinguished in the dream transmission process: the latent dream, the manifest dream as the individual recounts it to him- or herself, the oral tradition in which the dream is subsequently recounted and, finally, its writing down.

constructs may also be approached in an innovative fashion by devoting particular attention to signs of dream-work. He too concentrated his investigation on the "complex nesting" of speaking subjects in the dream accounts: literary figures, narrators, the implicit and the real author. The problem of this "nesting" is no less real in texts where the possibility exists that the described dream goes back to the actual dream experience of an historical individual. Here too, we are confronted with an author (chronicler, hagiographer, etc.) who consciously or unconsciously further *processes* the dream account and thus irretrievably denies us access to the original dream (Burke, 1997: 28). We may therefore wonder with Bachorski, "Between which of the many conscious minds is the dream-work taking place? Whose unconscious is asserting itself against the internal censor in the displacements and condensations of the dream? About which of the speaking/narrating subject's economy of drives does the dream inform us?" (Bachorski, 2000: 96). Another argument for not losing sight of the preoccupations of those who recorded the dream in writing! Let alone those of the psychohistorian who wishes to include the alleged dream in his historical analysis...

Historical criticism and psychoanalysis: extra suggestions

That dream accounts can contain specific information for the historical anthropologist is beyond question. Yet in connection with my next point of discussion regarding Künzel's contribution, I would like to consider to what extent the extended historical critique he has proposed to determine the authenticity of dreams also opens up methodological insights as regards the reading of other historical sources. I am prompted to offer this discussion by the particular emphasis that Künzel, before setting out his criteria, placed on the importance of the specific process by which medieval dreams have been transmitted. In this transmission process he distinguishes three phases: the actual dream, the process of oral tradition in which the dream is then recounted, and finally the phase of recording in writing. But this model is of course by no means exclusively applicable to the transmission of dreams. A striking parallel with Künzel's division into phases may be found, for example, in the famous commentary by Jacques Fontaine on the late classical *Vita Martini* of Sulpicius Severus (ca. 400). In this study, Fontaine refers to the "triple métamorphose des faits bruts" that takes place in the genesis of saints' lives. He shows how the stylisation of facts from the historical reality into a hagiographical text undergoes three phases, in which the subjectivity of the saint's personality,

the oral tradition that continues to convey the historical substrate and, finally, the written recording by one or more authors are decisive (Fontaine, 1967: 185-188). And this model may be generalised still further by using it for the transmission of events, ideas, aetiological myths and so on. Thus, when Künzel (this issue: 229) argues in his conclusion that "At the various stages of dreams being passed down, they are indicative of what was important to the people who played a role in the transmission process. This is the value of dreams as historical sources", one may equally well substitute the words "lives of the saints" or, even more generally, "cultural narratives" for the word "dreams" (see also Maza, 1996).⁵

The originality of Künzel's contribution obviously lies in the fact that he has also employed psychoanalytical investigative criteria in order to approach the transmission of narratives in a historical-critical fashion using the traditional model *à la* Fontaine (especially criteria (f) and (g)). However, Künzel does not do this in his research into the authenticity of medieval dreams from a traditional Freudian perspective of enquiry. For Freud, the final purpose of psychoanalysis was certainly not to determine the authenticity of his patients' dream narratives. He considered their accounts, whose truthfulness he did not in fact call into question, as the royal road along which he sought to penetrate what he termed *the unconscious*. To this end, he devoted particular attention during his "talking cures" to associations, condensations, displacements and other signs of dream-work. In Künzel's approach, this investigative process is somewhat inverted. Insofar as he uses psychoanalysis in his enquiry into authenticity, he does so in order that, as soon as he thinks he has encountered signs that point to actual dream-work, and hence to the activity of the unconscious of an historical individual, he can take this as an argument for the possible authenticity of the described dream (criterion (g)). But can we not also take this psychoanalytical sensibility that Künzel has displayed in his assessment of medieval dreams, and use it in a more traditional Freudian direction for the critical examination of our source material? Can we not also take his suggestion to pay attention to features such as *displacements*, *condensations* and, more generally perhaps, associations and chains of association, and use it to generate innovative

5. On this point, it is a pity that it was not possible for Künzel's lines of approach during the conference to be confronted with the approach of Miri Rubin, who was unable to attend. Rubin's recent research, which she had wanted to use as a starting-point for her contribution to the psychohistorical conference, deals with precisely such a narrative, a completely out of hand anti-Semitic *urban legend* that is first attested to in Paris in the thirteenth century, and which then spread all over Europe and led to bloody persecutions and trials (Rubin, 1999).

questions on the basis of more implicit messages in medieval narratives? Because traces of displacements of meaning, condensations, associations and the like can be found in a great many texts, and medieval authors often appear to have even cultivated them in order to develop new ideas, to make up strange etymologies or genealogies, to assimilate certain traditions, and so on – in short, to help symbolise and legitimise "preoccupations" (criterion (f)). Two examples may illustrate this.

I take my first example from Ernst Kantorowicz's renowned study of the historical-theological genealogy of the late 16th century English legal theory regarding the *King's two bodies*. In his enquiry, Kantorowicz among other things pointed to the importance, for the development of the medieval idea of kingship, of the seventh-century *Isidoriana*, a compilation of older canonical decretals that were attributed in the Middle Ages to Isidore of Seville (ca. 560-636). In this influential collection, alongside a great many other decrees, there is included the pronouncement of a bishop, who declared at the Council of Chalcedon (451) that God "imperatorem erexit ad zelum", meaning that "God has spurred on the emperor to zeal". However, this assertion entered the *Isidoriana* in corrupt form. Instead of *zelum*, the word *celum* was transmitted – different by just one letter, though rather similar in sound. However, this error gave a completely different meaning to the original, modest assertion. Henceforth, it was claimed that God "has raised the emperor up into the heavens". What may originally have been an innocent scribal error – the consequence of an association on the basis of a similar word picture – thus forged a vital link in the construction of the medieval theology concerning the double, divine and human nature of kingship (Kantorowicz, 1997: 64).

For my second example, I move on to medieval Hainaut, where the abbey of St.-Ghislain was situated. According to traditional historiography, this abbey was founded some time in the 7th century by St. Gislenus, and later destroyed, possibly by the Normans. In the 10th century, it was supposedly restored by the monastic reformer Gerardus of Brogne († 959). In 1994, Anne-Marie Helvétius subjected all the preserved sources, both hagiographical texts and diplomatic documents, all of them dating from the 10th century or later, to a fresh and thorough examination. Her enquiry brought to light a completely different historical process. For on closer inspection, it appears that the abbey of St.-Ghislain was only founded around 931, under the guidance of Gerardus of Brogne. The building's sponsor was probably Duke Gislebertus of Lotharingen, who around this time was in search of a position of political equilibrium between the kingdoms of the West and East Franks, and on whose land the

newly-founded abbey was established. To give his new abbey a little prestige, a patron saint naturally had to be found, who would immediately impart some historical roots to the establishment. The way in which this figure of Gislenuus now took shape appears to me to be a brilliant example of historical condensations and displacements slipping forth by means of associations. In the oldest, early 10th century *Vita Gislenui* it is recounted that Gislenuus was a Greek monk who had studied in Athens and had then left for Rome. There, he was entrusted by the Pope with missionary work in Gaul. This simple story line appears to be a reproduction of the life of the popular saint, Dionysius of Paris (who was not of Greek origin, but who from as early as the 9th century had been confused with Dionysius the Areopagite, the first bishop of the church of Athens). This hagiographical "displacement" is no coincidence: Gerardus of Brogne was in close contact with the monks of the abbey of St.-Denis in the kingdom of the West Franks, and had already received from them some relics of St. Dionysius for his own abbey in Brogne. Gislenuus' feast day, incidentally, was set on 9 October, exactly like that of Dionysius. By contrast, his relics were discovered "miraculously" on 29th September, the feast day of the surely no less important St. Michael, whose cult around this time was usually associated with the *Imperium* ideal of the East Franks. Finally, there is the name Gislenuus, whose roots appear to be more Germanic than Greek, and which is not attested to in the preserved sources before the 10th century. Might the historian regard this as a "condensation"? For the name Gislenuus represents a hypocoristic version of the Duke's name Gislebertus, which was very well known at that time ... (Helvétius, 1994: 222-231).

One can of course object that the examples just given are particularly far removed from the object of study and finality of traditional psychoanalysis. It is indeed true that it is not enough to look out for displacements of meaning, associations and conspicuous manipulations. The "psychoanalytical sensibility" must be deployed in concrete – but not necessarily psychoanalytical – enquiries. Thus one could use, e.g., both the examples just given in order to consider the narrative strategies by which "father figures", such as rulers or patron saints, were constructed. The example of the invented tradition of Saint-Ghislain is, moreover, one in which displacement and condensation constitute an element of a successful historical campaign of manipulation and falsification that had historians fooled for nearly eleven centuries. It might be interesting to draw parallels between such a construction of the past and the historiography that is required in a psychoanalysis, when the patient rewrites his or her life story. In the third part of my contribution, I shall

come back to this point. In any case, it seems to me that a more systematically organised enquiry into displacements of meaning, condensations, associations, *lapsus*, invented chronologies, the use and misuse of stereotypes and so on – matters that have also claimed Künzel's attention – could lead to a considerable number of new insights into the way in which medieval people reasoned and argued, into their intellectual worries and emotions, into their fears and fantasies (cf. also Freud, 1901*b*). Literary theorists have long used psychoanalytical insights in order to bring to the surface "l'inconscient de l'œuvre" (Macherey, 1966: 113). In the light of Künzel's contribution, I am convinced that historians too, and in particular historical anthropologists, can benefit from a discourse analysis and ideological critique that is partly inspired by psychoanalytical method.⁶

An example: Bertulf's dream reconsidered

To illustrate some of my points by means of a concrete historical example, I will make use of a case that is also presented by Künzel. In his contribution, Künzel refers on a number of occasions to a passage from the famous journal that the Bruges *notarius* Galbert kept in 1127-1128 in connection with the murder of the Count Charles the Good of Flanders (ca. 1082/86-1127). In this, Galbert describes three portents that God is supposed to have sent to provost Bertulf, one of the main conspirators against the Count. This Bertulf is said to have twice escaped the collapse of a house, and to have received a third portent in the form of a dream in which he was put to death at the garrotting post in Ypres. This execution in Ypres would actually take place subsequently. Künzel stresses that Galbert must have included this dream in his journal with a didactic intent, but nonetheless believes it not at all unlikely that this passage is based on an authentic dream. He bases this belief on his criterion (d), which states that the use of a "colloquial sound" makes an oral information source likely, and hence – in view of criterion (c) – makes the dream more likely to be authentic. In Galbert's text, one does indeed find a spontaneous exclamation, albeit translated into Latin: "Almighty God, what did I dream last night? For I saw in a dream that I was fixed to that very gallows!"

6. I am thinking here of a cross-fertilisation between socio-historical linguistic and textual analysis *à la* Mikhaïl Bakhtin (see for example the numerous starting-points in Bakhtin, 1986) and the structuralist-linguistic sensibility that is required especially in Lacanian psychoanalysis. Such a cross-fertilisation seems to me to be possible, despite the initial scepticism of Bakhtin and his intellectual peers with regard to Freudian "subjectivist mysticism" (Volochnov, 1980). See for example Baker (1995) and the Marxist-psychoanalytical ideological critique of Žižek (1991).

(Rider, 1994: 136 rr. 54-56). Bertulf's fear of public execution was, moreover, certainly not groundless, in view of his complicity in the Count's murder. Given that he was confronted perhaps daily with the sight of this public pillory and thus was certainly in a position to collect sufficient day residues, the authenticity of Bertulf's dream as described was, thinks Künzel, arguing on the basis of his criterion (f), also psychologically plausible.

Against the authenticity or even indeed the plausibility of Bertulf's dream – which, it should be pointed out, is only mentioned in a very summary version – some doubts may legitimately be raised. Thus, it is highly striking throughout his whole narrative that Galbert of Bruges was an outstanding storyteller. He liked to get into the minds of his characters. In his description of the way in which Bertulf was led out to the garrotte just before his actual execution, we read, for example: "And, if I remember rightly, he [Bertulf] called out – not out loud, but in the secret recesses of his heart – for help from the ever-helpful God" (Rider, 1994: 108 rr. 57-60). Galbert also makes use on more than one occasion of the colourful colloquialisms of spoken language and of direct speech. That this narrative style need not always go back to specific utterances is apparent, for example, from as early as chapter 8, in which a character sketch is given of the vain and boastful provost Bertulf. Galbert embellishes his description with a passage of direct speech that is intended more for its illustrative qualities than as an exact quotation, and that begins as follows: "He would often rant and jeer at the count: 'If I had only wanted ... (etc.)'" (Rider, 1994: 21 lines 7-13). Such passages do not of course undermine the validity of Künzel's criteria (c) and (d) in certain other cases, but they do clearly illustrate that one should not underestimate the rhetorical qualities of medieval authors.

There is also a small problem with the psychological plausibility of Bertulf's dream on account of the latter's heavy conscience after his involvement in the Count's murder. Let us review the chronology of the events. The Count's murder took place on 2 March 1127 in Bruges. During the nights of 17 and 18 March, Bertulf secretly fled via Keiem to Veurne and later on to Warneton. He remained in hiding near there until he was delivered over on 11 April to the bastard Count Willem of Ypres, who organised Bertulf's execution that same day in the marketplace at Ypres. It is thus unlikely that Bertulf with his heavy conscience was frequently confronted with the sight of the stake in the Ypres marketplace, which would make his dream psychologically plausible. For Galbert, who need not concern himself in his journal with psychological plausibility or with

the day residues of his protagonists, but who above all wanted to provide an *exemplum* of a portent from God, this did not present a problem. But Künzel's criterion (f), which obviously takes no account of the possible existence of an almighty God who sends portents, can only be invoked from the point at which Bertulf was actually walking round with complicity in murder on his conscience.

And yet this very example of Bertulf's dream may be used, as I suggested earlier, to extend the "psychoanalytical sensibility" in reading accounts of medieval dreams to narrative sources more generally. The focus of enquiry has to be shifted here to the author of the text, in this instance Galbert of Bruges, and his treatment of the described facts. As a starting-point for this alternative reading of Galbert's text, I want to focus on the points at which Bertulf's execution is mentioned within the temporal structure of Galbert's journal. The sequence of two passages is of crucial importance here. In chapter 57, where he deals with the events of 11 April 1127, Galbert recounts how Bertulf is lynched and hanged after being subjected to extreme humiliations and torments in Ypres marketplace. Galbert implies by means of a few interposed remarks ("*et sicut aiunt*") that he was not actually present. Yet his description is extraordinarily lively and colourful. A mixture of satisfaction at the punishment and revulsion at the cruel way in which it was carried out comes across (Rider, 1994: 106-109). Only much later in Galbert's journal, in chapter 84 concerning the period between 7 and 21 May 1127, is Bertulf's famous dream referred to. Galbert includes a moralising digression there on the importance of repentance and the almightiness of God, who still tried to help even the greatest of sinners. Among other things, he describes the remorse of Bertulf's nephew Isaac, a conspirator whose execution had already been mentioned very briefly in chapter 48 concerning 23 March 1127, and contrasts him with the remorseless Bertulf, who despite everything is said to have received three portents from God, including a visionary dream with the completely accurate foreshadowing of his subsequent execution in Ypres (Rider, 1994: 134-136). Portents that Bertulf, with hindsight, simply cast into the wind.

These passages and the way they fit together obviously tell us a good deal about Galbert and his cast-iron belief in the ever-helpful, almighty God and in the importance of repentance. This belief caused him to simply trust in the existence of ominous and visionary interventions, and sometimes led him to be more interested in what was edifying than in what was strictly true. It is precisely as a result of this cast-iron belief that Galbert, not at all innocently – remember Künzel's criterion (b) – has

inserted Bertulf's dream at precisely this place in his text. Regarding this treatment of the facts, it is certainly not out of place to recall here the words of Jan Dhondt, as formulated in an outstanding article that was an example of psychohistory *avant la lettre*: "[...] pour Galbert, Dieu régit expressément tous les actes des hommes. C'est la une conception sous-jacente à tout son récit et qui s'exprime presque à chaque page [...]. [...] Galbert prête à Dieu sa propre logique et veut, par conséquent, retrouver dans les événements des séquences intelligibles à son propre esprit. Il est assez remarquable que Galbert vise à intégrer l'ensemble des événements dans un plan unique, plan divin, naturellement, et qui se ramène au châtement divin inéluctable de ceux qui ont commis le mal" (Dhondt, 1957: 107).

Whether Bertulf really ever dreamt of his execution in some fashion, we shall probably never know. What is clear is that we can draw a number of interesting parallels between Galbert's historiographical method and what psychoanalytical theory teaches us. As Freud observed during his consultation, the "historiography" that is involved in a psychoanalysis comes down time and again to a systematic "rewriting" of one's own life-story, in an attempt to master and symbolise the inexpressible, unbearable reality (cf. Geerdyn & Deploige, 1999). This is also apparent from his clinical studies of the *family romance* and of so-called *screen memories*. The neurotic, for example, as a response to the eruption of sexuality, fantasises a new history that results in a false genealogy, in which he imagines that his parents are not his parents (Freud, 1909c). Or certain memories of youth are assigned by the subject a place in earliest childhood, but appear on closer inspection to be simply construed as reactions to the confrontation with the trauma of death and sexuality (Freud, 1899a). If we now analyse the division into phases of Galbert's "historiography" in a similar fashion, we might use the registers of the real, the symbolic and the imaginary that are distinguished by Lacan.⁷ As a reaction to the traumatising events associated with the Count's murder and the persecution of the conspirators (phase I – eruption of the real), Galbert creates what is for him an acceptable and logical continuity by assigning Bertulf a visionary dream (phase II – symbolising) which confirms his

7. Lucid, succinct accounts of the registers of the real, the symbolic and the imaginary are hard to find in the work of Lacan. Nevertheless, this conceptual triad emerges at an early stage in his thinking, and formed the title of a lecture on 8 July 1953 in connection with the commencement of the activities of the *Société française de psychanalyse* (cf. Lacan, 1982 [1953]). Somewhat reductionistically, one can state that the Real corresponds to the unspeakable and the traumatising, the Symbolic is the social register of language, law and culture, and the Imaginary is the register of narcissism and speculative identification.

faith in his almighty and just God and anchors him solidly once again amid the confusing reality that surrounds him (phase III – imaginary image of the divine).

Conclusion

"Psychoanalytic history [...] is at its most ambitious an orientation rather than a specialty", argued Peter Gay in his plea on behalf of "history informed by psychoanalysis" (Gay, 1985: 210). I believe that both Künzel's suggestions and my embellishments on them confirm the truth of this position. Without historians having to identify themselves with psychoanalysts in terms of the finality of their enquiries, they can nonetheless draw valuable inspiration from psychoanalysis on the methodological and theoretical planes. Psychoanalytical epistemology reminds the historian that even less obvious specific details, unexpressed *unconscious* motives, absurdities and apparent chance associations – all of them matters regarded from the traditional positivist viewpoint as irrelevant, meaningless or at best evidence of falsification – may prompt completely new lines of enquiry. And given that psychoanalytical method itself does not dispel all ambiguity, the possible orientation it has to offer to historians will increase our appreciation of polysemy. My psychoanalytically inspired approach of a number of text fragments from the journal of Galbert of Bruges is thus far removed from that of Künzel. In Künzel's interpretation, the emphasis is on a specific passage in the text, Bertulf's dream, and on the question of its reliability. In my approach, the dream becomes just one element in an analysis of the way in which Galbert, the text's author, handled the brutal events in his immediate life story, and how this process contributed to the construction of his image of the world and of God. The question of the authenticity, or even the probability of Bertulf's dream is put to one side in the process. It may be objected that ultimately I have in this way simply appropriated the postmodernist's scepticism with regard to questions of authenticity. It is true that beyond a certain point it ceases to matter much whether a described dream is in fact authentic or made up. The fact that something is presented as a dream is in itself meaningful and interesting to the historical anthropologist. On the other hand, however, I only arrived at my alternative reading after applying a traditional historical critique. As may hopefully be clear, it was not therefore my intention to call Künzel's sample into question in itself so much as to use a number of marginal comments on it as a means of opening the way for an even more

extensively psychoanalytically-inspired historical critique. Because we share the same methodological aim: to determine how can we integrate insights from other disciplines, including psychoanalysis, into a new approach to our already familiar historical source material.

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Summary

Bertulf or Galbert? Considerations Regarding a Sample of Historical and Psychoanalytical Criticism of Medieval Dreams

This is a review article on Rudi Künzel's proposed historical and psychoanalytical critique of medieval dreams. Firstly, the authenticity criteria proposed by Künzel are discussed critically. In particular, doubts are raised about an excessively strict distinction between oral and written culture. Next, a proposal is formulated to use psychoanalytical sensibility in the discourse analysis of other medieval narratives. Finally, some ideas are formulated with reference to an example from Galbert of Bruges' famous journal on the murder of the Count Charles the Good of Flanders in 1127.

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Key words

Dreams, Middle Ages, Historical Criticism, Psychoanalysis, Künzel.