Playing False

Representations of Betrayal

KRISTINA MENDICINO AND
BETIEL WASIHUN (EDS)

Peter Lang

CULTURAL HISTORY AND LITERARY IMAGINATION

Betrayal has never gone out of fashion. It is a ubiquitous phenomenon – from antiquity to the present, from the realm of politics to the most personal relationships. This book gathers essays by scholars from the fields of philosophy, comparative literature, classics, English literature, German studies and film studies to develop a fresh dialogue on betrayal as a problem that, above all, concerns representation. In contradistinction to approaches that privilege a notion of betrayal as a political or personal event, the working premise of this book is that all betrayals presuppose representational strategies.

What are the conditions, structures, masks and moves that allow one to play false? This question is posed with special attention to the theological, political, ethical and theatrical dimensions of betrayal, as they emerge in specific texts throughout the Western tradition. Works by Chariton, Seneca, Chaucer, Machiavelli, Shakespeare, Kant, Goethe, Schiller, Hegel, Kleist, Hamsun, Pound, Benjamin, Borges, Koestler, Roth, Bruno Dössekker alias Binjamin Wilkomirski and Fassbinder take centre stage in these diverse examinations of betrayal.

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KRISTINA MENDICINO AND BETIEL WASIHUN

Introduction

> You get the habit by being betrayed. What does it is betrayal. Think of tragedies. What brings on the melancholy, the raving, the bloodshed? Othello – betrayed. Hamlet – betrayed. Lear – betrayed. You might even claim that Macbeth is betrayed – by himself – though that's not the same thing. Professionals who've spent their energy teaching masterpieces, the few of us still engrossed by literature's scrutiny of things, have no excuse for finding betrayal anywhere but at the heart of history. History from top to bottom. World history, family history, personal history. It's a very big subject, betrayal. Just think of the Bible. What's that book about? The master story situation of the Bible is betrayed. Adam – betrayed. Joseph – betrayed. Moses – betrayed. Samson – betrayed. Job – betrayed. Job betrayed by whom? By none other than God himself. And don't forget the betrayal of God. God betrayed. Betrayed by our ancestors at every turn.
>
> — PHILIP ROTH, *I Married a Communist*[1]

You get in the habit of hearing betrayal. But think of the phrase representations of betrayal: it is impossible to decide whether the genitive is objective or subjective. Turning from one word to the other, you might ask: is betrayal represented? Or do representations arise from, within, as a result of, betrayal? At stake in this volume are, on the one hand, representations of a relational structure called betrayal. On the other hand, the faith that betrayal (seemingly) controverts turns upon representation. Only when something can seem, can it betray or reveal what it is – and appear to be something other than what it is. Representation turns upon a breach within the structure of appearance itself, before anything can

1 Philip Roth, *I Married a Communist* (London: Vintage, 1998), 185.

be betrayed for what it truly is (not). To betray does not necessarily have to refer to a breach of trust – the breach it involves is more primary. You might even claim that betrayal is the converse of representation. Betrayal can involve deceptive concealment as well as the disclosure of what was hitherto concealed – what should be apparent is not; what comes to appear should not. But this does not make its negative connotations a secondary matter. Representation as such does not cease to arouse doubts – as do appearances that are truly *mere* appearances. Since the Middle Ages, the 'schlimme Nebenbedeutung' ['bad connotation'] of the verb 'verraten' ['to betray'] appears beyond doubt,[2] and when one glosses it with related terms – deception, deceit, fraud, imposture, cheating, trickery, adultery, treason, high treason, traducement, lying – the 'bad connotation' remains.

This is not to gloss over the difference between betrayal and representation. The former term is more often laden with a negative charge, a charge – perhaps even an accusation – that distinguishes it from the (closely related) structure of representation. But the articulation of this distinction cannot be decisively revealed, disclosed or glossed. Turning from one term to the other, one quickly gets caught in the logic of betrayal and its representation, already at the level of the words that refer to it. One cannot even decisively distinguish between *betrayal* and *betrayal* – whereas in English and German, the verbs *betray* and (*sich*) *verraten* are as intimately entangled in revelation as they are in treachery, the verbs for betray in Ancient Greek and Latin, παραδίδωμι and *tradere*, refer first of all to handing or giving over, from the *tradition* [παράδοσιν] that had been passed down among the Jews (Mk 7:2–5), to the way the Apostles are described as *given over* [παραδεδομένοι] to the grace of God (Acts 14:26).[3] Judas's betrayal of Christ thus resonates with other traditions and transferals that lack those negative connotations this disciple's role in salvation came to have, while

2 Cf. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 32 vols (Leipzig 1854–1961, Quellenverzeichnis Leipzig 1971), vol. 25, col. 985–92.

3 For a discussion of the ambiguity of this verb, see Anthony Cane, *The Place of Judas Iscariot in Christology* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005), 19–23 and Almut-Barbara Renger, 'The Ambiguity of Judas: On the Mythicity of a New Testament Figure', *Literature and Theology* 26/4 (2012), 1–17. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are ours.

its 'bad connotation' stems from the Old Testament figure of the *masēr*, who delivers someone from the inside of the Jewish community to a politically and religiously foreign outside.[4] On the threshold of religious and political communities, suspended between (at least) two meanings and languages, Judas's handing-over of Christ epitomizes the ambivalence of the language(s) of betrayal – whereby one must remember that translation, too, is (in)famously close to treason: *traduttore, traditore*.

From text to text, language to language – in a single text and a single language – the sense of betrayal and its (linguistic) representations turn. The proper sense of betrayal – if there is a single one that casts suspicion upon giving over (or revelation, or tradition) – has no name. There is no synonym that might, as the early Church Father Origen urges readers of Scripture to do, 'purify' [καθαίροντες] the 'homonyms' [ὁμωνυμίας], amphibolies, 'proper usages' [κυριολεξίας] and periods that resonate with this term.[5] Especially when it comes to the foundational betrayal of Judas, who incarnates the ambivalence of the betrayal that characterizes him. One of the twelve disciples is both 'disciple' [μαθητὴς] *and* 'devil' [διάβολος] (John 6:70). Though Peter, too, will at one point be called Satan, doubling the dualism.[6] And when Jesus exposes Judas at the Last Supper as the one who will hand him over, the one to whom he directs his imperative, 'Whatever it is that you do, be done with it as quickly as possible' [ὃ ποιεῖς ποίσηον τάχιον, John 13:27], is at least two. In his commentary on the Gospel of John,[7] Origen underscores the necessarily ambivalent language of this betrayal, writing: 'To whom the "him" [of Jesus's address refers] is an amphiboly, since the Lord could have spoken to Judas himself or Satan' [Τίνι δὲ 'Αὐτῷ'

4 J. Duncan M. Derrett, 'The Iscariot, M^{c}Sira, and the Redemption', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 2/2 (1980), 2–23, 4.

5 Origen, *Commentarii in Genesim*, in J.-P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus*, 161 vols (Paris: Migne, 1862), vol. 12, 89.

6 See Mt. 16:22–3.

7 This is the first Church writing that devotes sustained attention to the figure of Judas. See Samuel Laeuchli, 'Origen's Interpretation of Judas', *Church History* 22/4 (1953), 253–68.

ἀμφίβολον, ἐπεὶ δύναται αὐτῷ τῷ Ἰούδᾳ ἢ τῷ Σατανᾷ εἰρηκέναι ὁ κύριος].[8] Addressee and word alike are an amphiboly, in a language where rhetoric and referent are indistinguishably intertwined. And as Origen continues to comment upon Jesus's words, they appear suspended between a battle-cry and a cry for help – to none other than the *traitor* or *hander-over* – in the divine economy of salvation.[9] The language of betrayal is essentially duplicitous – just think of the Bible – at every turn.

But at every turn, it is not the same thing: betrayal complicates any sense of the *same* as well as any acts and actors that might appear in a story situation. Not only is betrayal an ambivalent act; the subject that should perform it, too, is split. In fact, because the who and what of one of the most crucial betrayals in the Western world are so indeterminate, it cannot have the character of a willed, intentional act at all. Instead, Origen calls Judas's 'handing over' [προδοσία] a 'mystery' [μυστήριον][10] – and here one cannot forget the betrayal of God. Not only is the kingdom of God a mystery, too, that gradually (and punctually) betrays itself. Origen also suggests that the language of theology can only betray the acts of God with homonyms – words that are, like Christ's imperative, at once the same and radically other than what they appear to be, splitting His acts between the familiar and the unspeakable. The 'change of heart' [μεταμέλεια], 'rage' [ὀργή] and 'passion' [θυμός] of God are not of the same genus [συγγενής] as all other changes of heart, rages, passions. Each 'is a homonym, of which the name alone is common, but the *logos* of the essence that is named is different' [ὁμώνυμα δέ ἐστιν, ὧν ὄνομα μόνον κοινόν, ὁ δὲ κατὰ τοὔνομα τῆς οὐσίας λόγος ἕτερος].[11] This divine *logos* is not a word, but an effect: one nears it

8 Origen, *Commentaire sur Saint Jean*, ed. Cécile Blanc, 5 vols (Paris: Cerf, 1992), vol. 5, 312.

9 'He called his antagonist to the fight, or [he called] the hander-over to assist the economy that would be salvational for the cosmos' (προκαλούμενος τὸν ἀνταγωνιστὴν ἐπὶ τὴν πάλην, ἢ τὸν προδότην ἐπὶ τὸ διακονῆσαι τῇ σωτηρίῳ ⟨τῷ⟩ κόσμῳ ἐσομένῃ οἰκονομίᾳ). Ibid., 312.

10 Ibid., 306.

11 Origen, *Jeremiahomilien* in Erich Klostermann, ed., *Origenes Werke*, 12 vols (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1901), vol. 3, 177.

by asking, for example, 'what change of heart is worked by God, what was worked?' [τί μεταμέλεια ἐργάζεται θεοῦ, τί εἰργάσατο].[12]

But who could say, in any case, what is done? Perhaps – 'what does it is betrayal'. The very same schism that tears Christ's words between a call to Judas and a call to Satan, a call for help and a call to battle, shows that a breach can open in any account, even the most literal and concise one. The more it is reduced to the articulation of a mere doing, independent of doer, deed and purpose – e.g., 'Whatever it is that you do, be done with it as quickly as possible' [ὃ ποιεῖς ποίσηον τάχιον, John 13:27] – the less decidable it becomes. For this very reason, the familiarity of betrayal as a religious, political and private category is deceptive. The *name* would be, at least according to a Christological logic, a homonym – and a pseudonym.

'Adam – betrayed. Joseph – betrayed. Moses – betrayed. Samson – betrayed. Job – betrayed.' By whom? Before this universal monotony, one might be tempted to turn to the verse Origen cites when he accounts for Peter's refusal to allow Jesus to wash his feet:[13] 'Every man is an agent of falsehood' [πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ψεύστης]. Peter's statement, 'Never will you wash my feet' [οὐ μὴ νίψῃς μου τοὺς πόδας εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, John 13:8], is based on false assumptions and becomes false – literally 'falses itself through' [διεψευσμένην] – when Peter concedes to Jesus. 'Every man', even one so close to Jesus as Peter, would thus appear to be an 'agent of falseness'. But this passage from the Psalms of the Hebrew Bible – which Origen cites in the treacherously inexact Septuaginta translation – is turned inside out when Origen represents it so decisively. The singer of the Psalm turns to the Lord, after having once 'said in ecstasy: "every man is an agent of falsehood"' [ἐγὼ εἶπα ἐν τῇ ἐκστάσει μου 'πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ψεύστης'].[14] No longer ecstatic, for him the falseness of man becomes, if not denied, abruptly abandoned – the singer breaches his assumption of universal faithlessness.[15]

12 Ibid.

13 Origen, *Commentaire sur Saint Jean*, vol. 5, 226.

14 See Psalm 115:1–4, which we cite from the Greek *Septuaginta* translation of the Hebrew Bible, since this is the translation Origen quotes.

15 It is literally neither syntactically nor logically related to what follows; the speaker leaps from pointing to his previous depths and speech, to posing the question how he might repay the Lord his favours.

His turn away from a seemingly false remark, as well as Origen's return to it, cannot but make the universal truth of the statement – and with it, the universal truth of betrayal – suspect.

Both turns of the phrase are only possible because of a still more primary breach within the logic of the false itself. Any assertion of falsehood is already a truth in its own right. Any contradiction of a truth is a falsehood. When the Psalmist refuses his previous, true assertion of the falseness of man, he falsifies it – but by falsifying it, he affirms the truth of the falsehood he refuses. However one reads this passage, deception and veracity turn into, convert and controvert one another. If this incessant turning appears universal in the most literal sense of the word, its precondition is the minimal difference between true and false – a structural breach that precludes any syllogistic closure. In his own controversial, spurious commentary on the Psalms, Origen concludes that the sentence is aporetic, an impasse to any logical or philosophical verification.[16]

The logic of falsehood leads to an *aporia*, or a privation (*a-*) of passage (*poros*), as do the betrayals of the Western tradition, from the Bible to Shakespeare and Roth – differently at every turn. 'Othello – betrayed. Hamlet – betrayed. Lear – betrayed.' No single version of betrayal is representative of another, let alone betrayal as such. For the reader still engrossed by literature's scrutiny of things, it comes down to articulating the singular language, breaches and aporias of each dramatic configuration. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603) – to turn to a deceptively familiar drama of betrayal – Hamlet cries 'Treachery' when his poisoned mother Gertrude falls and orders, 'let the door be lock'd!' (*Ham*. V ii 298–9). The treacheries and deaths of the play culminate at a literally aporetic moment, where all passage is (b)locked. Before this, a proliferation of abortive journeys, false starts, departures and returns revolve around the death of the former king Hamlet, the (re-)marriage of Gertrude and

16 On the spuriousness of parts of the *Selecta in Psalmos*, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'Die Hiera des Evagrius', *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 63 (1939), 86–106, 181–206. See Origen, *Selecta in Psalmos*, in J.P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus*, vol. 12, 1576.

Claudius, and, above all, the madness of Hamlet. Hamlet's ecstasy, real and feigned,[17] stands outside the register of verification and drives the events of the play far more than Claudius's crime (*Ham.* III i 160, III iv 138) until nearly all agents of falsehood and truth have either died or gathered in the 'Prison-House' of Denmark (*Ham.* I v 14, II ii 239). No way out truly opens; instead, the indeterminate treachery of the drama that Hamlet decries is the ineluctably attractive aporia that draws, hinders and occludes its actors.

The words treachery and treason will repeat with an unprecedented frequency in the fifth act,[18] in a locked room, and in a way that, for all the false play of Claudius, his subordinates and Hamlet himself, is reducible to no one agent of falsehood. The final bloodbath culminates in a unison call – the only one in the text – 'Treason! Treason!' (*Ham.* V ii 310). With these words, an anonymous *All* responds to Hamlet's stabbing of the king. The exclamation is too vague to name one act or accuse one person, and it is too brief to be characterized as a shocked declaration, an accusation, a call to arms or a call for help. Thus, it resonates with the way treachery spills and bleeds from one agent and patient of falsehood to the next – from the poison the Queen drinks in lieu of Hamlet, to Hamlet and Laertes's mutual wounding with the same 'treacherous instrument' (*Ham.* V ii 304) that Laertes had coated with venom, to Hamlet's stabbing and poisoning of the King with the 'poison temper'd by himself' (*Ham.* V ii 315).

But what brings on the melancholy, the raving, the bloodshed? Such treason, attributable to no one, is also, ultimately, without advantage, intention or cause. *Hamlet* is a poetic work where betrayal on the political and

17 The undecidability of Hamlet's 'madness' is a commonplace in Shakespearean scholarship; for two very different readings, see Jaques Lacan, who accents the feigned aspect of his madness in 'Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*', *Yale French Studies* 55/56 (1977), 11–52, and Karin S. Coddens '"Suche Strange Desygns": Madness, Subjectivity, and Treason in *Hamlet* and Elizabethan Culture', in Mary Beth Rose, ed., *Renaissance Drama: Essays on Renaissance Dramatic Traditions* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990) 51–77.

18 Before this, it only occurs four times, two of which appear in the Player's speech on Hecuba: *Ham.* II ii 488–9, 556; III ii 168; IV v 119–21.

private stage operates beyond any readily identifiable motivations. Every individual caught in it dies, while sovereignty falls to Fortinbras of Norway, who was otherwise uninvolved in the many intrigues of the play. In this respect, the drama of betrayal and falsehood in *Hamlet* differs sharply from the one to which the events in Denmark are compared from the very first scene: *Julius Caesar*. If Horatio compares the Ghost's appearance to the ghoulish (and portentous) nights that troubled Rome 'a little ere the mightiest Julius fell' (*Ham.* I i 114), the signs that disturb Denmark can have no such import. The King of Denmark has already fallen, and the logic of prophecy and omen that foretold Roman political history proves unhelpful to the story of (young and old) Hamlet. At the end, Horatio distances the events of the drama from those that fit into any fateful, temporal or logical chain. He proposes:

> And let me speak to the yet unknowing world
> How these things came about; so shall you hear
> Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
> Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters,
> Of deaths put on by cunning, and forced cause,
> And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
> Fall'n on the inventors' heads. All this can I
> Truly deliver. (*Ham*. V ii 366–73)

Not only is the fugue of fate absent; even the jointures of action, cause and purpose are disturbed in this speech. Although these terms still belong to Horatio's vocabulary, they do so only to be qualified by their opposites, set in dissonance. The '*act*' is echoed and followed by '*acc*ident'; '*cas*ual slaughter' counters the purposiveness of '*cau*se'. Purposes – private and political – are not carried out, but fall instead upon the heads that contrived them in a phonic logic that controverts the relational structures of speech, argument and action. It is all too appropriate that the only 'Caesar' who is killed in *Hamlet* is a Player-Caesar – namely, Polonius, whom Hamlet stabs in his mother's chamber in lieu of King Claudius, and who says shortly before his death: 'I did enact Julius Caesar; I was killed i' the Capitol; Brutus killed me' (*Ham*. III ii 97–8).

With this, the stakes and roles of treason, so important to Shakespeare's own Roman play, are ironized, if not emptied out. But any drama of betrayal, theatrical and political, cannot be understood apart from the still more fundamental functions of language and representation through which it is articulated. History from top to bottom – world history, family history, personal history – are evoked in *Hamlet*, only to be betrayed in a language that impurifies the homonyms, amphibolies and proper terms that make up its tradition. In the only other passage where Julius Caesar is mentioned – in the graveyard – Hamlet says:

> Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,
> Might stop a hole to keep the wind away;
> Oh, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
> Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw! (*Ham.* V i 201–4).

The roads of all men, even for one of the greatest Romans, lead to a dead end – an aporia, a banal stopgap. The parodic irreverence of this quatrain resonates with Hamlet's earlier reply to Polonius's boast – 'It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there' (*Ham.* III ii 99–100) – which had levelled the proper names of Caesar and Brutus, together with the capital treason that twained them, to common names. But whereas the earlier sentence traduces and translates the names of Caesar, Brutus and the Capitol into near-homonyms – and thereby opens them to further shifting – the graveyard verses, from the phonetic closure of the rhyme to its rhetoric of hole-stopping, tend towards a final limit. Towards the point, that is, where the movements of sense and motivation – the melancholy, the raving, the bloodshed – halt. To think betrayal to its end – along with the revealing, passing-over, trading and shifting of allegiance it names – also entails thinking the problem of an end and the emptiness of that moment when the breaches that open passage and drive passion get stopped.

The passage that Philip Roth's traitor in *The Human Stain* (2000) chooses to take – to move to a *Brutus* of the twentieth century – leads equally to a dead end. Roth's protagonist Coleman Silk, a classics professor and Dean of Athena College in the Berkshires, is emphatically lined

up in the Western tradition of traitors, most revealingly so by the middle name he was given by his father:

> The father who had another way of beating you down. With words. With speech. With what he called 'the language of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dickens.' With the English language that no one could ever take away from you and that Mr. Silk richly sounded, always with great fullness and clarity and bravado, as though even in ordinary conversation he were reciting Marc Antony's speech over the body of Caesar. Each of his three children had been given a middle name drawn from Mr. Silk's best memorized play, in his view English literature's high point and the most educational study of treason ever written: the eldest son was Walter Antony, the second son, Coleman Brutus; Ernestine Calpurnia, their younger sister, took her middle name from Caesar's loyal wife.[19]

In the middle – at the heart of these children's names – are names from another history and another drama that pivots upon betrayal. And indeed, the many fathers of Coleman Brutus Silk that resonate in his name – his own, as well as Shakespeare and Brutus – will come to haunt him. Ironically. Treacherously. Tragically. But if the words from another text of Roth – 'betrayed by our ancestors at every turn'[20] – appear to hold true here, the host of spectres that echo in Coleman Brutus Silk's proper name preclude any identification of a traitor. As he distances himself from his African American heritage – concealing and betraying it – in order to adopt a career of letters, Coleman Brutus Silk amplifies the dissonance of his name(s) *himself*. As one figure says of Macbeth in Roth's *I Married a Communist*: he 'is betrayed – by himself – though that's not the same thing.'[21]

It's not the same thing as Judas's betrayal of Christ or Claudius's betrayal of Hamlet, when Coleman Brutus Silk (is) betrayed (by) himself – as a self that splits into differences that preclude any inclusive definition or reconciling closure. Still, he is beaten down, not with his name, but with a single word: 'spooks'.[22] It is a word that he articulates in class to refer to 'the two

19 Philip Roth, *The Human Stain* (London: Vintage, 2001), 92f.
20 Philip Roth, *I Married a Communist* (London: Vintage, 1998), 185.
21 Ibid.
22 Roth, *The Human Stain*, 6.

missing students, who turned out to be black'.[23] Perceived as a racial slur, 'spooks' – in his father's spirit – triggers the downfall of Roth's Brutus, costing him his career, his reputation and his family. In more ways than one, he belongs among the others the word denigrates – although Coleman Brutus Silk had, for most of his adult life, *passed* as a white Jew. The Shakespearean premise allows for the fatal end of this passing to be glimpsed very early – though it is no fugue of fate, but Silk's 'revolt [...] against the Negro fate' that turns him back to the point he had so 'passionate[ly] struggle[d]' to flee.[24]

You get in the habit of being betrayed. Soon, passing is the everyday *status quo* for Silk. But the habit – or *ethos* – of betrayal becomes an ethical problem in the novel that haunts him. Within the voice of Silk himself (or the narrator Nathan Zuckerman, who, in indirect speech, represents and betrays the thoughts of his protagonist), the accusations of his father's spirit echo: 'The tragic, reckless thing that you've done! And not just to yourself – to us all. To Ernestine. To Walt. To Mother. To me. To me in my grave. To my father in his. [...] Whom next are you going to mislead and betray?'[25] Even if the narrator and Roth himself strongly foreground that Coleman's choice to pass as a white Jew was 'strictly utilitarian' and that it had 'nothing to do with the ethical, spiritual, theological or historical aspects of Judaism' or 'with wanting to belong to another "we"',[26] there is no doubt that Silk had manoeuvred himself into a moral *impasse*.

But just as Hamlet's and the Psalmist's ecstatic proclamations of treason and falsehood stand outside the register of verification, Silk's betrayal precludes moral judgement. After all, the heart of the tragedy of Coleman Brutus Silk lies not so much in the betrayal towards his family, but primarily in the betrayal towards himself – which is itself (several) other(s). The betrayal of others and self-betrayal turn into, convert and controvert each other like the truth and falsehood of the statement: 'every man is an agent of falsehood'. As the name Coleman *Brutus* Silk implies, both betrayals

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., 183.
25 Ibid.
26 'Zuckerman's Alter Brain.' Interview by Charles McGrath. *New York Times*, 7 May 2000.

are less a matter of a fixed opposition with clearly demarcated boundaries, than the function of an articulation that can be shifted, varied, displaced. Everything pivots upon the specific way the relationship between the self and the other is inscribed in betrayals.

Inscribed – by whom? In fiction, every voice is at least two – the (false) plays among writers', narrators' and protagonists' words double or divide each speaking self. At least since Pindar, tellers of tales have been accused of telling lies.[27] And, in a way, writers and narrators are always bound to betray that is to reveal and falsify the personae they represent. Any speaking *per-sona* – any sounding-through – is *per se* a mask. Any account that is *made* – fictive or factual – is also, to an undecidable extent, made up. From pseudo-biographies like *The Human Stain* to auto-biographies, the inscription of any life and any self first makes it (other than) what it is. For this reason, turning from one genre to the other, it is impossible to decide precisely where the *pseudos* ('false') distinguishes itself from the *autos* ('self').

The fictional narrator of *The Human Stain* is the double of both its author and yet another, failed author: Coleman Brutus Silk. Zuckerman takes over (and over-writes) the book that Silk had begun about his own downfall, entitled *Spooks*,[28] after Silk's death – and after identifying with his protagonist, who himself wanted 'to become a new being', 'to bifurcate'.[29] Writing in his place, Zuckerman sets himself to transcribing the 'book' that was Silk's 'life',[30] which was 'more white than the "whites"' – and unwritten, blank. His personal story only begins to sound through when Silk's performance as a white Jew (like Zuckerman) is revealed – by a narrator who, assuming an African American's voice, performs black.[31] Conjuring

27 Pindar speaks of the 'lies' (ψεύδεσι) of Homer in the twenty-second verse of his seventh Nemean ode. See *Pindari carmina cum fragmentis*, ed. Bruno Snell and Herwig Maehler (Leipzig: Teubner, 1987).

28 Cf. Roth, *The Human Stain*, 43.

29 Ibid., 342.

30 Ibid., 345.

31 See Tim Parrish's essay 'Becoming Black: Zuckerman's Bifurcating Self in *The Human Stain*', in Derek Parker Royal, ed., *Philip Roth: New Perspectives on an American Author* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), 209–24, esp. 220.

his dead double, 'Coleman, Coleman, Coleman, you who are now no one [and] who now run my existence', Zuckerman (ghost-)writes:[32] 'Writing personally is exposing and concealing at the same time, but with you it could only be concealment and so it would never work.'[33] What fills in the blank, what blackens the page, what does it – is betrayal. The inscription of Coleman's biography turns upon a breach between his life and another's, between his false performance and its exposure by a different persona. He can only be betrayed for what he truly is (not) in a work that denies as much as it affirms his personal whiting/writing.

On the other hand, Zuckerman also betrays – exposes and conceals – the work of his author, Philip Roth. Biographically, Zuckerman corresponds closely with Roth, from his profession to his ethnicity (Jewish-American); he is a self-avowed 'alter brain', or pseudo-self.[34] And don't forget his literal correspondence with the author of *The Facts: A Novelist's Autobiography*. Roth starts this text with a letter to Nathan Zuckerman, asking him not only for his 'candid' opinion, but also whether to publish the (already-printed) book.[35] The autobiography is crossed-through and double-crossed, when it closes with Zuckerman's harsh response: 'I've read the manuscript twice. Here is the candor you ask for: Don't publish – you are far better off writing about me than "accurately" reporting your own life.'[36]

Silk – betrayed. Zuckerman – betrayed. Roth is betrayed – by himself – but that's never the same thing from person to person, text to text. There are other configurations in which the lines of pseudo- and auto-biography are drawn differently. In his autobiographical-novelistic essay *Le traître* [*The Traitor*, 1958], the Marxist philosopher Gerhart Hirsch *alias* Gerhard Horst *alias* André Gorz *alias* Michel Bosquet – who is author, third-person

32 Remarkably, Zuckerman appears for the first time in Roth's novel *The Ghost Writer* (1979).

33 Roth, *The Human Stain*, 345.

34 'Zuckerman's Alter Brain.'

35 Philip Roth, *The Facts: A Novelist's Autobiography* (New York: Penguin, 1988), 3–10.

36 Ibid., 161.

narrator and protagonist at the same time – betrays his own betrayal.[37] Self-betrayal and self-revelation meet, as the Parisian thinker Gorz (et al.) personally writes that he was born into a Jewish-Catholic family in Vienna and survived the Holocaust at a Swiss boarding school. One day, he decides – similarly to Coleman Brutus Silk – to be what he was not: a Frenchman. Or rather, he decides to incorporate the 'not' – the 'negation' – of being an 'autre indifférencié parmi d'autres' ['undistinguished other among others'].[38] This decision amounts to becoming many and to negating each one among several names. But his most personal metonymic chain does not lead to escape, although he traces betrayal – along with mysticism, materialism and writing – to 'une même attitude fondamentale de fuite et de négation du réel' ['one identical, fundamental attitude of escape from and negation of the real'].[39] To be sure, he changes his name(s) and nationality, denies his Jewish background and abandons his mother tongue to distance himself from his family – and not least from National Socialism. But any foundational flight is necessarily a contradiction in terms. As in *Hamlet* and *The Human Stain*, every passage is an impasse. The very moment of escape from any category cements it; the gesture of rejection makes an identity one's own; the fictionalization produces the fact. The bonds at stake in betrayal, be they political or personal, do not depend upon pre-existing social categories, norms or even laws, but coincide with those singular moments of refusal that first make identification what it is (not). To 'incarnate the negation' cannot take place without equally incarnating the negated; the negation at stake is not absolute, but determinate. Indeed,

37 Significantly, the psychiatrist Wolfram Schmitt takes Gorz as a prime example for self-betrayal. Wolfram Schmitt, 'Verrat an sich selbst. Selbstentzweiung und Selbstversöhnung', in Dietrich von Engelhardt, ed., *Verrat. Geschichte, Medizin, Philosophie, Kunst, Literatur* (Heidelberg: Mattes Verlag, 2012), 197–213, 197.

38 'Être Juif, être Chinois, être Negre, être Nazi: il avait toujours souhaité incarner la Négation de ce qu'il était en tant qu'autre indifférencié parmi d'autres.' André Gorz, *Le traitre. Avant-propos de Jean-Paul Sartre* (Paris: Seuil, 1958), 147. 'To be Jew, to be Chinese, to be Negro, to be Nazi: he had always hoped to incarnate the Negation of that which he was, as an undistinguished other among others.'

39 Ibid., 163.

André Gorz only partially negates one of his 'proper', German names, then re-incorporates it literally. The name 'André' is a permutation of the German root 'ander-' ('other'); his becoming an*other* becomes his first name. And 'Gorz' appears as the anagrammatic reduction of 'Gerhard Horst' – insofar as the 'z' would be pronounced 'ts' in German: 'G~~erhard H~~orts'. On the threshold of religious and political communities, suspended between (at least) two languages, the false name speaks its proper truth. André Gorz is 'another Gerhard Horst' – just as *Le traître* is, in every sense of the word, a true profession of falsehood.

To examine betrayal is to examine the forked tongues in which language is spoken and disclosure is made – or made up.[40] The contributions of this volume are divided into three groups, proceeding from the languages of politics and theology; to the relationships among betrayal, emotions and ethics; to the theatricality involved in playing false. Each section also intersects with the others, so that the theatricality that is traced in, for example, the final contribution on Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* has everything to do with the political and social codes that necessitate role-playing and betrayal on the parts of its characters.

The point of departure is Judas's betrayal of Christ. Joachim Harst's contribution on the figure of Judas in Jorge Luis Borges's *Tres versiones de Judas* [*Three Versions of Judas*] shows the necessary interdependence between Judas's betrayal and the revelation of Christ – as it takes place both in the Bible and in Borges's fiction of a theologian's commentary. Contrasting Borges's strategies of representation with those of German baroque drama, Harst elaborates the duplicity through which salvation comes to light, as well as the irreducible difference and coincidence between the false disciple and true Messiah. In her chapter, Kristina Mendicino traces the function of betrayal in Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* [*Phenomenology of Spirit*]. Although – or because – Hegel's Christology presents 'the life of God', as

40 In a recent special issue of *The New Centennial Review* on betrayal, Richard Block and Michael du Plessis stress the linguistic permutations and traditions without which 'betrayal' cannot be understood. See Richard Block and Michael du Plessis, 'A Treacherous Subject: An Introduction', *The New Centennial Review* 12/3 (2012), 1–15.

well as the development of self-consciousness, as an 'autokinesis of form', each conversion of spirit involves a moment of self-betrayal that is as crucial as it is understated. The absence of Judas from Hegel's text cannot conceal the way in which betrayal is the crux of the system, without which spirit could not grasp itself. Turning to fratricide in Senecan and Shakespearean drama, Eric Dodson-Robinson compares *Agamemnon* and *Hamlet* to show the way in which cycles of treachery and revenge resolve differently within the pagan and Early Modern traditions. Despite important dramaturgical similarities between the plays, Shakespeare turns away from the inevitable, physical transmission of debt that perpetuates crime in Senecan tragedy, thereby betraying his indebtedness to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Horst-Jürgen Gerigk's chapter on political betrayal and the double proceeds from the betrayals of Knut Hamsun, Ezra Pound and Arthur Koestler in the mid-twentieth century to a closer examination of the *Doppelgänger* in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The most intimate duplicity of Stevenson's strange case, in turn, sheds light on betrayals in the public sphere.

The second part of this volume includes four chapters that unfold the relationship between affect and betrayal in four different genres, which formally constitute different matrices for the evocation and experience of emotions: drama, film, prose fiction and autobiography. The discoveries of this section undermine the assumption that betrayal, even in its most calculated forms, can be considered apart from the emotional involvement of its participants. To the contrary, each case study discloses the emotional excess that drives and surpasses the calculations involved in every act of betrayal. Ritchie Robertson's juxtaposition of Kantian practical philosophy with the dramatic œuvre of Schiller shows how Schiller's dramas put Kant's ideal, ethical rejection of betrayal to the test and articulate those aspects of betrayal that exceed philosophical logic. His contribution, which bridges the considerations of politics in the previous section with those of affect and ethics, is followed by a comparative literary study by Betiel Wasihun, in which she examines the problem of betrayal in Heinrich von Kleist's novella 'Die Verlobung in St. Domingo' ['The Betrothal in St. Domingo'] and Philip Roth's novel *The Human Stain*. In both texts, figures who belong to neither side of the socially constructed colour-line betray in committing

themselves to one racially defined social group or the other – and through this self-betrayal, they are ultimately destroyed. Here, the ethnical and the ethical coincide in singular texts that expose the problem, not of betraying one *side* or another in a political opposition, but of choosing a side at all. At the heart of the betrayals she addresses is the emotional and cognitive dissonance that inevitably precipitates the decision to betray. Whereas Wasihun examines the fictional selves that populate the texts of Kleist and Roth, Bernd Blaschke presents a study of the fictional self that Bruno Dössekker constructed in his *fake* Holocaust memoirs. First, he uncovers the many levels of betrayal in this pseudo-autobiographical text – which exceed even the number of names and masks Bruno Grosjean *alias* Bruno Dössekker *alias* Binjamin Wilkomirski bore. Then, he pursues the emotional and ethical responses to the transgressive text of Dössekker (et al.), which indicate a limit that nonetheless evades clear definition. For Dössekker blatantly claims a life he had not empirically lived within a medium that, on the one hand, should disclose personal truths, and on the other is necessarily constructed and therefore always fictional. The section closes with Anne Julia Fett's study of Fassbinder's film, *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden* [*In a Year with Thirteen Moons*], where the protagonist Erwin/Elvira Weishaupt attempts to reconstruct his/her life, undergoing a sex change for the sake of a lover who abandons him/her. Here, the problem is not whether one identity is true or false, but the way in which both Erwin/Elvira incorporate a double negation: his/her new identity and the old one are at once true and false, overlapping with one another on the same body. Fett not only investigates the emotions bound up with the self-betrayal of the film's protagonist, but also the way Fassbinder's filmic technique betrays and thus undoes the melodramatic conventions that often solicit emotional identification among film audiences.

Anne Julia Fett's chapter works as a transition to the third section of the volume, which is devoted to the formal, theatrical aesthetics involved in betrayal. The section begins with a chapter about Walter Benjamin's essay on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften* [*Elective Affinities*]. In her contribution, Anna Henke shows how Benjamin's usage of the *umlaut* – a visual, diacritical marker – becomes a way to expose the opacity of the literary text, which the critic must encounter (and betray) in order

to see and to speak anything of the text at all. Benjamin's argument pivots upon subtle shifts in rhetoric between synonyms such as *Schleier* ['veil'] and *Hülle* ['veil'], along with the graphic veiling that the *umlaut* performs *à la lettre*. It is the deceptive shifting of letters – as graphic, phantasmatic phenomena – that Rebecca Haubrich addresses in her essay on Kleist's 'Der Findling' ['The Foundling']. A visible anagram seduces Nicolo, the eponymous protagonist of the narrative, to identify with Colino, the love interest of his stepmother Elvire, when the letter-bearing dice that compose his own name spell out the name of another before his eyes. The chance appearance of Nicolo's letters gives way to his literal appearance as Colino on the day he attempts to rape Elvire. However, the logogryphic substitutions at play in Kleist's narrative do not end (or begin) here. As Haubrich shows, Nicolo also resembles the biblical figure of the antichrist, whose status as a substitutor manifests itself above all in the deceptive, undecidable difference between (his) *logos* and (His) *logos*.

Following this pair of chapters are two contributions that speak to the issue of betrayal and (theatrical) mimesis in Chariton's ancient novel *Callirhoe* and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. In the first of these essays, Gillian Granville Bentley shows the way Chariton's ancient Greek novel draws on theatrical vocabulary in order to narrate political events in fifth-century BC Akragas. Jealous political leaders manipulate the tools of theatre to private ends in order to separate a pair of lovers, thereby realizing Plato's worst fear – namely, that theatre might slip from stage to life. In her chapter on Chaucer's narrative poem, on the other hand, Felisa Baynes-Ross shows the way in which theatricality can reach an extreme that leaves no alternative to betrayal and renders every face or visage an opaque mask of ambiguity, or *ambage*. Betrayal becomes a structural necessity in a world where all behaviour and speech is governed by at least two codes at the same time. Criseyde's infamous betrayal of Troilus is no isolated case, but a rigorous consequence of a social setting in which no one is exempt from the practices of *playing false*.

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PART I

States of Treason – Theology and Politics

JOACHIM HARST

Perversions of Judas. Betrayal in 'Baroque' Literature: Borges and Gryphius

> Yo suelo regresar eternamente al Eterno Regreso.[1]
> [I tend to return eternally to Eternal Return.]
>
> — J.L. BORGES

Borges and 'Baroque' Literature

Ten years before Jorge Luís Borges wrote his famous collection *Ficciones* [*Fictions*, 1944], he published an anthology of biographical sketches under the title *Historia universal de la infamia* [*Universal History of Infamy*, 1933]. In a way that would become characteristic of his fictional style, these early attempts in the narrative genre conflate historical facts and fictional form. They are, as Borges writes pejoratively in the prologue to the second edition (1954), 'a falsification and distortion' of historical anecdotes and 'el irresponsable juego de un tímido que no se animó a escribir cuentos y que se distrajo en falsear y tergiversar (sin justificación estética alguna vez) ajenas historias' ['the irresponsible pastime of a timid person who didn't dare to write short stories and who distracted himself by falsifying and distorting (sometimes without aesthetic justification) foreign stories'].[2] On another

1 Jorge Luis Borges, 'El tiempo circular', in *Historia de la eternidad* (1936), ed., *Obras Completas* 4 vols (Barcelona: Emecé, 1996), vol. 1, 393. All translations are mine.

2 Jorge Luis Borges, 'Prólogo a la edición de 1954', in *Historia universal de la infamia* (1935, 1954), in *Obras Completas*, vol. 1, 291.

level, the title itself announces a complex of problems to which Borges will repeatedly return in his later stories: the notion of infamy, personified in the figure of the traitor, and the idea of a 'universal history', a timeless structure that endlessly repeats throughout history. The speculative connection between the two becomes apparent in a quote from Borges's collection of essays called *Historia de la eternidad* [*History of Eternity*, 1936], in which he engages with the idea of 'Eternal Return' on a theoretical level. The Stoic idea that history proceeds in structurally analogous circles leads him to conclude that, '[s]i los destinos de Edgar Allan Poe, de los Vikings, de Judas Iscariote y de mi lector secretamente son el mismo destino [...] la historia universal es la de un solo hombre.'[3] ['If the destinies of Edgar Poe, the Vikings, Judas Iscariot and my reader secretly are the same destiny, (...) then universal history is the history of a single man.'] As an illustration of this idea, Borges sketches out a 'fantastic tale', which he claims to have invented a long time ago: 'Un teólogo consagra toda su vida a confutar a un heresiarca; lo vence en intrincadas polémica, lo denuncia, lo hace quemar; en el Cielo descubre que para Dios el heresiarca y él forman una sola persona.'[4] ['A theologian consecrates his whole life to refute a heresiarch; he defeats him in intricate polemics, denounces him and has him burnt; in Heaven he discovers that for God, the heresiarch and himself are a single person.'] However, it will take thirteen more years until Borges publishes the tale, repeating the striking assertion of the identity of persecutor and persecuted: 'En el paraíso, Aureliano supo que para la insondable divinidad, él y Juan de Panonia (el ortodoxo y el hereje, el aborrecedor y el aborrecido, el acusador y la victima) formaban una sola persona.'[5] ['In paradise, Aureliano knew that for the unfathomable divinity, he and Juan de Panonia (the orthodox and the heretic, the hater and the hated, the accuser and the victim) were a single person.'] From an eternal perspective, the binary logic of oppositions that seems to drive history merges into a truly uni-versal,[6] *and therefore*

3 Borges, 'El tiempo circular', 395.

4 Ibid.

5 Jorge Luis Borges, 'Los teólogos', in *El Aleph* (1949), in *Obras Completas*, vol. 1, 556.

6 At first sight, the term 'universal' seems to evoke uniformity, especially when one derives it from the Latin words 'unus' and 'versus' and translates, 'turned into one';