

Die Tagung war die vierte in der Reihe der alle zwei Jahre stattfindenden Konferenzen des REELC/ENCLS (Réseau européen d'études littéraires comparées/European Network for Comparative Literary Studies). Dieses Netzwerk versteht sich als Plattform für interdisziplinären Dialog zu Kultur, Literatur und Literaturwissenschaft. Es wurde 2003 von einer Gruppe namhafter KomparatistInnen (die bereits seit 2001 an der Idee arbeitete) ins Leben gerufen und hat zum Ziel, den Austausch von Ideen und Informationen unter WissenschaftlerInnen und Organisationen, die sich mit allgemeiner und vergleichender Literaturwissenschaft beschäftigen, zu fördern, möchte internationale Kooperationen in Forschung und Lehre sowie den Austausch von Studierenden und MitarbeiterInnen begünstigen, fachrelevante Diskussionen durch Publikationen und Konferenzen anregen und die Arbeit regionaler, nationaler und transnationaler Komparatistik-Gesellschaften und Vereinigungen unterstützen und eine Plattform für die internationale Sichtbarkeit von deren Tätigkeiten bieten. Das REELC/ENCLS ist über eine Website präsent (<http://encls.net>), auf der Informationen zu allen Aktivitäten des Netzwerks gefunden werden können: eine Übersicht über die Mitglieder, aktuelle Informationen zu den letzten Treffen des Netzwerks, zu Konferenzen, Publikationen, Forschungsprojekten, Calls for papers etc. Eine Mitgliedschaft ist einfach und kostenlos: Es reicht die Registrierung auf der Website.

Neben dem wissenschaftlichen Austausch werden die alle zwei Jahre stattfindenden Konferenzen für Generalversammlungen sowie Treffen des jeweiligen Exekutivausschusses des REELC/ENCLS genützt. Die derzeitigen Mitglieder dieses Ausschusses sowie vor allem deren Vorsitzende, Marina Grishakova (University of Tartu, Estonia), planen für die Zukunft die verstärkte Sichtbarkeit des Netzwerks, die sich u.a. auch durch die Präsenz auf anderen Konferenzen bzw. die Kooperation mit nationalen Vereinigungen bei der Organisation von Tagungen oder bei Forschungsprojekten zeigen könnte. Die Publikation der Tagungsakten der REELC/ENCLS-Konferenzen, die es auch für die Konferenz in Skopje und Ohrid geben wird, hat ebenfalls hohe Priorität für die größere Bekanntmachung der Tätigkeit des Netzwerks unter KomparatistInnen. Die nächsten Konferenzen des Netzwerks werden 2013 und 2015 stattfinden, geplante Tagungsorte sind Madeira und Dublin. Die Calls für diese beiden Tagungen werden über die REELC/ENCLS-Website publiziert.

*Sandra Vlasta*

### *Playing False: Representations of Betrayal*

16. bis 17. September 2011, Lincoln College, Oxford University

From antiquity through the present, from the political sphere to the most personal relationships, betrayal is a ubiquitous and multifaceted phenomenon. Because of its many forms, however, betrayal demands an intensive examination within an interdisciplinary forum that transcends the narrower, political or literary spheres of betrayal, and that strives to address the multiplicity of its representations, rather than reducing it to a single definition. It is precisely such a forum that the conference, »Playing False: Representations of Betrayal« created, which Dr. Betiel Wasihun and Kristina Mendicino organized.

The conference was divided into three panels over the course of two days, September 16 – 17, 2011 at Lincoln College, Oxford University. Since political betrayal and the betrayal of Judas form the most well-known instances of betrayal, the first panel was devoted to exploring political and theological moments of betrayal. The first keynote speech, delivered by Prof. Horst-Jürgen Gerigk (Heidelberg), opened the conference with a study of the treason cases of the poets Knut Hamsun, Ezra Pound and Arthur Koestler, which segued into a more probing analysis of the relationship between political betrayal and poetics, and led to a turn towards the issue of self-betrayal, as it appears in the Romantic literary figure of the *Doppelgänger*. This broad study, which moved from the twentieth-century to the eighteenth-century and spanned the disciplines of literature, philosophy and political theory, was counterbalanced by a presentation of film scholar Dr. Ute Wölfel, which specifically studied the DDR director Konrad Wolf's cinematic examination of the political betrayals that took place during Nazi Germany in his 1976 film, *Mama, ich lebe*.

In a second section of the first panel, Prof. Eric Dodson-Robinson and Dr. des. Joachim Harst turned to the theological problem of betrayal, as it is represented in Senecan drama, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, German Baroque martyr plays, and the fiction of Jorge Luis Borges. In both of the papers presented in the second panel, the poetics of theology came to the fore as much as the poetic representations of theological problems. Whereas Shakespeare adopts a Christian solution to the cycles of revenge that drive ancient Roman tragedy – not to mention the »eldest curse« of Cain's slaughter of Abel – Borges's fiction drives the theatricality inherent to Baroque Christianity to such an extreme, that the figures of Jesus and Judas become indistinguishably crucial Messiah(s).

The accent upon drama with which the first panel concluded formed a bridge to the second panel, devoted to the intersection of betrayal, ethics and emotions, which the second keynote speaker, Prof. Ritchie Robertson (Oxford), opened. His talk showed how the dramas of Friedrich Schiller put Immanuel Kant's ideal, ethical rejection of betrayal to the test, only to affirm a certain degree of Machiavellian pragmatism. If betrayal must be the exception for any social or political network of associations to remain sustainable, absolute idealism threatens to be as treacherous as treachery, when the ability to assess singular relations and circumstances goes lost. His talk was followed by a comparative study by Dr. Betiel Wasihun, which examined the problem of betrayal in Heinrich von Kleist's *Verlobung in St. Domingo* and Philip Roth's *The Human Stain*. In both texts, figures who belong to neither side of the socially-constructed color-line commit betrayals 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 in choosing a side at all.

The second section of Panel 2 turned from the issues of ethics, emotions and betrayal within literature to the genres of the memoir and film. Dr. Bernd Blaschke presented a broad study of the ethical transgressions and emotional reactions to Benjamin Wilkomirski's »fake« Holocaust-memoirs, uncovering the many levels of betrayal that surround this text and its aftermath – which exceed even the number of names and masks Bruno Grosjean / Bruno Dössekker / Benjamin Wilkomirski bore. Anne Julia Fett, on the other hand, presented a probing study of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *In*

*einem Jahr mit 13 Monden* (1978), which revolves around the love-motivated sex-change of Erwin Weishaupt and its fatal consequences. There the superimposition of his masculine and feminine (non-)identity, along with his reckless self-sacrifice for the sake of the lovers that would betray him, reveals the simultaneity of self- and interpersonal betrayal, matched only by the world of ruthless, capitalist trade in postwar Frankfurt.

The third panel of the conference, devoted to theatricality and betrayal, began with a study by Kristina Mendicino on G.W.F. Hegel and Aristophanes. The one exceptional moment where Hegel considers betrayal seriously, is in his discussion of Aristophanic comedy in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, where comic actors speak the irony of substantial, divine masks, betraying the gods and ethics of ancient society. At the same time, however, the singularity of these ancient voices speaks *only* through their play with the mask, rendering the revelation of their own truth dependent upon their coverings. Her talk was followed by Anne Henke's examination of Walter Benjamin's essay on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*, which turned to a different way in which the work of art most emerges as such to the critic in its covering. As opposed to a veil (*Schleier*) that might be lifted, in order to reveal ideal beauty, the materiality of the work of art manifests itself rather as an opaque covering (*Hülle*), which the critic must encounter in its opacity, in order to speak the truth of the work of art.

From these maskings and coverings, the conference turned in its final section from Walter Benjamin's modernity back to antiquity and the Middle Ages, with talks by Gillian Bentley on Chariton's *Callirhoe* and Felisa Baynes on Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* that addressed theatricality in broader terms. Chariton's ancient Greek novel draws on theatrical vocabulary, in order to show the way in which jealous political leaders manipulate the tools of theater to private ends, in order to separate a pair of lovers and avenge themselves on the successful wooer of the novel's heroine, realizing Plato's worst fears concerning theatrical mimesis. Chaucer's narrative poem, on the other hand, shows the way in which theatricality can reach an extreme that hardly leaves any alternative to betrayal. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, betrayal becomes a nearly inevitable, structural necessity in a world where all behavior and speech is governed by at least two codes at the same time. The figures of *Troilus and Criseyde* betray either their martial valor or their status as courtly lovers, as they variously - and sometimes simultaneously - act in these capacities. All of this complicates the apparently isolated case of Criseyde's betrayal of Troilus for her new partner Diomedes, in that her old and new lover are equally involved in processes of playing false.

In a gathering of scholars of Classics, Medieval Studies, Comparative Literature, German Studies, and Film Studies, the conference facilitated cross-disciplinary discussions and gained a sharper understanding of the structure of betrayal in its various manifestations across cultures and epochs. The concluding discussion stressed the importance of conceiving betrayal as a structural moment rather than an event. This also places in question the binary opposition that betrayal seems to instigate: What if betrayal in a radical sense pluralizes any binary opposition by focusing on the moment in which someone or something is »turned over«? To think of betrayal along these lines would reduce the ethical connotations of the term and at the same time open it for more complex investigations in literary studies.

A publication of conference proceedings is planned.

*Betiel Wasihun, Kristina Mendicino*