Wolfgang Müller-Funk
The Architecture of Modern Culture

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Wolfgang Müller-Funk

The Architecture of Modern Culture

Towards a Narrative Cultural Theory

Dedicated to my *Drosendorf* seminar students

Preface

These collected essays bring together important issues arising from my work over the last decade on cultural analysis and cultural studies and are presented here for the first time to an English-speaking audience. As in my German books *Die Kultur und ihre Narrative* (*Culture and its Narratives*) and *Kulturtheorie* (*Theory of Culture*), the first section of the volume contains essays in which narratology is understood and developed as a key concept of and a central approach to cultural analysis. This section includes texts on the relations between narrating and remembering and the function of narratives for the construction of individual and collective identity. It also contains an essay that further develops my concepts of hidden narratives.

Looking at a more systematic issue in cultural theory that goes hand in hand with the so-called "turns" (the spatial turn, the performative turn), the book develops the idea of a narrative theory of culture that is no longer exclusively a narratology in the sense of a standard theory of literature. On the one hand, it can be shown that narratives have both a spatial and a performative aspect. The characters in a story all act in and on certain places and are, at the same time, actors. On the other hand, formulating a narrative cultural theory makes it possible to correct the lopsidedness of contemporary cultural theories that are based only on concepts of space or performance. For example, many traditional theories of memory, since Saint Augustine, are obsessed with the spatial aspect, corresponding with the idea of storing and places of memory. With a narrative theory of remembering (see chapter three) it is possible to develop the idea that remembering is a never-ending process that includes processes of re-narrating and changes of identities. Mikhail Bakhtin did not develop the idea of *chronotopos* in a systematic way, but used it rather in a metaphorical sense; nevertheless, I think that his idea of a time in space that integrates both elements into a new single element is still extraordinarily important for a narrative cultural theory, combining the spatial aspect ("globalisation") with the temporal one (modernity, modernism).

Narrative, like music, is based on time, and time remains a very important factor in the era of globalisation. It is the doubled and broken time of the narrative (the time of storytelling, the time of events that is expressed by the process of storytelling) that creates continuity and identity, a relative stability of symbolic order, and change in constancy (and vice versa). Certain features and structures are present in central elements of what we call culture (or Culture) narrative: for example in creating values, in remembering and recollecting, in constructing identity, and in constructing meaning. As opposed to (Foucauldian or non-Foucauldian) discourse, narrative always entails a reference to the *Lebenswelt*. It

creates empathy and integrates our body into the process of constructing a symbolic world. Narrative is a very powerful– maybe even the most powerful – symbolic "weapon" in structuring a world that is always, in the end, a cultural one. Extending and deepening central theses from the book *Die Kultur und ihre Narrative* (Müller-Funk 2002/2008), I argue that such a narrative theory is not only broader than standard theories of literature because it also refers to film, visual arts and new media (including computer games), but is also an important part of cultural theory, because it analyses the function of narrative for the construction of the symbolic order we call culture.

The second and the third parts of the book should be read as adaptations of the first, theoretical part. Part 2 (*Space, Time and the Global)* deals with important questions of contemporary cultural analysis such as translation, time and space, and globalisation. The central idea is the notion of an exemplary and, at the same time, fragmentary contribution to relevant aspects of modern culture from a narrative perspective. Part 3, *The Heritage of Classical Modernism*, is a collection of close readings of (Austrian) modernist authors such as Robert Musil, Hermann Broch and Elias Canetti, whose oeuvre can be read as cultural analysis in the medium and form of literature. What I am interested in is the question of how far the dialogue about modernity and modernism can be related to the mainstream discourse in contemporary cultural studies, which very often operates on a synchronic level. In a narrative theory of culture, a historical and temporal element automatically comes into play: the question of how to tell the story about modernism and its transfer in a globalised world. This is a topic that runs through each of the chapters of parts two and three, for example in the study of the work of the Japanese artist On Kawara.

In contrast to philology, the works of these and other authors are analysed in contributions to cultural analysis. As in my book on "Essayism" (Müller-Funk 1995), I read *The Man without Qualities* as a cultural analysis in a literary form. The same can be said of Canetti's ambitious essay on power and the crowd. In the essays on Lenau and Kafka, I connect theories of stereotype (the Aachen School, Homi Bhabha) with a narrative approach; clearly stereotypes are based on certain narratives in which symbolic positions are fixed. In this respect, the structure of the book works as a network. I hope that all the essays in this book can be linked to one another, as is the case in a network structure.

This is a book written by a German native speaker, who has received professional support by English native speakers. Following Benjamin's idea of translation, I did not want to extinguish the traces of German language and Austrian culture. These "strange" elements will be noticeable in the English text. What I have in mind is that this book should be part of a cultural transfer, in a double sense. Without my academic years in Birmingham (UK), I would never have

written this book. So it represents a transfer from the English-speaking world to the German-speaking one. But at the same time it is a journey from Austria to the English-speaking "continents".

Among many others, I have to thank especially Chris Barber, Michael Böhringer, Malcolm Spencer and Joanna White for correcting individual texts. My colleague John Heath read the whole manuscript and also provided a great deal of help in giving the book a consistent style. My theory seminars with my academic PhD "team" – Lena Brandauer, Daniel Bitouh, Daniela Finzi, Nicole Kandioler, Ursula Knoll, Gerald Lind, Emilija Mancic, Matthias Schmidt, Gottfried Schnödl, Eva Schörkhuber, Alexander Sprung and others – have always been a source of intellectual inspiration, as is the case with "companions" and colleagues such as Anna Babka, Marijan Bobinac, Milka Car, Michele Cometa, Pál Dereky, Heinz Fassmann, Isabel Gil, Endre Hars, Alfrun Kliems, Ingo Lauggas, Brigitta Pesti, Mauro Ponzi, Sonja Neef, Ansgar Nünning, Clemens Ruthner, Andrea Seidler, Antonio Sousa Ribeiro, Heidemarie Uhl and Birgit Wagner, the spokesperson for our working group, Cultural Studies/Kulturwissenschaften at the University of Vienna.

This book has arisen out of many different places and environments: the *Gießen Centre for the Study of Culture* (GSCS), where I was senior scholar in 2009; my scholarship at GWZO (Leipzig University 2010) and at Trinity College in Dublin 2012; an academic residence in Lisbon and Coimbra; and a series of lectures in 2011, organised by the Austrian Cultural Forum in New York and Los Angeles.

The last work on the book has been done during my research fellowship at the Trinity College in Dublin in September 2012. So, I would like to thank Jürgen Barkhoff, the director of Long Room Hub, including his kind and professional team, and Clemens Ruthner, the director of Research at the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies.

Modern literary theory has taught us that authors are unable to control their readers and the reception of their books. Nevertheless, it is possible to hope that this book will be welcomed in foreign territory, i.e. that it will find interested readers in the English-speaking realm.

Dublin, Vienna and Drosendorf, October 2012

Content

Part 1
Culture and its Narratives

Identity, Alterity and
the Work of the Narrative

A Transdisciplinary Discourse Report

I.

In *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities*, the Dutch cultural theorist Mieke Bal develops the idea that terminologies and concepts are not stable and fixed within a certain academic discipline, but are transferred from one academic field to another – within but also beyond the humanities (Bal 2002a, Neumann/Tygstrup 2009; Müller-Funk 2010, 332–349). This suggests a dialogical relationship between various fields of research. Moreover, it becomes striking that the 'same' terminology has different meanings in different disciplines. This is true for key concepts and terms in cultural analysis such as discourse, space, and narrative, but also for identity. There are two reasons for these different meanings. Firstly, literary studies or art history have different references to and understandings of cultural and social reality than, for example, history or sociology, which concentrate on practice and actions. Secondly, they have a different focal point, or – in the terminology of literary narratology – another perspective, another focalisation. In other words, one can argue that the transdisciplinary field of cultural studies and cultural analysis is also a territory in which productive dispute and discussion can take place.

This is extremely important with regard to our topic. Identity is a typical travelling concept; one can find discourse on identity in different schools of philosophy, in sociology and political science, in psychoanalysis, in British cultural studies and German *Kulturwissenschaften* (see: Straub 2004, 277–303), and in modern literature. For example, whereas phenomenology has discussed the problem of identity from an internal perspective, British empirical philosophy in the tradition of John Locke and David Hume has analysed it from an external focus. In the case of identity, this is decisive. From an internal perspective, Lucius, the hero transformed into a donkey in a novel by the Latin writer Apuleius, remains the same person whether he is a human being or a donkey (Bakhtin 1989, 38f). In contrast to this internal perspective, the donkey and the human being called Lucius are not identical as far as his social surroundings are concerned, because a donkey and a human being cannot be identical.

Sociological functionalism and cultural constructivism also choose perspectives from outside, describing identity as an artificial and illusionary procedure that is constitutive and necessary for social action and for one's place in a given

symbolic space. In contrast to our internal experience of the uniqueness and authenticity of our identity, the social sciences and cultural studies make clear that this kind of self-experience is illusionary and imaginary. Here identity is either the result of a social procedure (identification) or the result of a symbolic process.

Psychoanalysis as modern fiction offers an interesting in-between approach, since in this symbolic field the focus is itself the wandering between the inside of a patient and the outside of an emphatic person, namely the therapist (Erikson 1959/1973, 17f). And in literature, especially in modern novels, there is always the possibility of changing perspectives and therefore of the confrontation between inside and outside. Already on a structural level, identity can be seen here as a dynamic phenomenon that is based on the presence of an other, the 'reality' of an unavoidable *Other*, a difference, which at the same time is a structure. In contrast to Erikson, this has been interpreted in French structuralist and poststructuralist theory as the end of classical identity (Descombes 1979/1981, 93).

Widening Bal's concept, one can say that there are at least three levels of travelling concept with regard to "identity":
– Travelling within the humanities and social sciences.
– Travelling between different national cultures which have different traditions of science and culture.
– Travelling between the social sciences and humanities, and literature and the arts.

As Odo Marquard and Karlheinz Stierle have pointed out, an essential part of the vocabulary of identity (as a person, as a role, as a mask) comes from theatre and/or literature (Marquard 1979, 11). As we will see, the concepts are forever changing during their travels and what distinguishes one discipline from another is the different use they make of seemingly identical terms. With regard to identity, one can differentiate at least three 'journeys' and shifts of concepts in general:
– A journey from the social sciences to philosophy, as Odo Marquard has pointed out in his article *Identität: Schwundtelos und Mini-Essenz. Bemerkungen zu einer Genealogie einer aktuellen Diskussion* (*Disappearing Telos and Mini-Essence – Remarks on the Genealogy of a Contemporary Discussion*) in the volume *Identität* (*Identity*) in the series *Poetik und Hermeneutik* (*Poetics and Hermeneutics*). Referring to G.H. Mead and symbolic interactionism, Marquard alludes to the multiple importation of a sociology of identity from Anglo-Saxon into German speaking academic spaces (Marquard 1979, 349), but he also adds later that the term had previously migrated from philosophy (Marquard 1979, 353).

– A theoretical import from French post-war philosophy into Anglo-Saxon cultural studies and to contemporary cultural analysis und *Kulturwissenschaften*. At the centre of this transfer is the interest in the figure of the *Other* and its function for identity.

– A shift from modern psychology and sociology to literature (and from literature to psychology and sociology). This refers to a type of literature and artistic production that is used as the 'medium' of an experimental form of knowledge as is the case in Musil, Broch, Valéry, Borges, Joseph Roth, Proust, Frisch, Kundera, Marías and many others. Here literature is understood as a specific episteme or, to borrow from Schelling, as an intellectual view ("*intellektuelle Anschauung*").

In the following sections I will discuss these different approaches in the field of German philosophy, Anglo-Saxon social sciences, French philosophy, in cultural studies and *Kulturwissenschaften*, and in classical modern and postmodern literature. I will look for the interdependences and breaks which have taken place in the in-between of these different forms of *epistemai*.

The title of this essay implies the simple question whether there is any identity beyond culture. And how can one describe the relationship between identity and alterity? What is the function of the narrative aspect? I will begin with the German philosopher Odo Marquard and later discuss Paul Ricœur's concept of two different forms of identity and his analysis of narrative identity. In a further step, I will read two European novels, one from a modernist author, Joseph Roth, the other from a postmodern writer, Javier Marías. Both novels have a programmatic reference to the topic itself. At the end of the essay I will try to perform the art of differentiation with regard to our topic: culture, identity and alterity.

II.

Marquard states that the master-word identity is a topic that has a problem with identity. It was never a central concern of traditional philosophy; it was Schopenhauer who distinguished between personal identity, ownership and property, and representative identity (Marquard 1979, 348f). From the perspective of (German) philosophy, identity comes from the outside or at least from its margins. Identity always produces problems and splits. There is, for example, an official and an unofficial identity. Especially in contemporary social science and its focus on role distance, the accent is no longer on the true and hidden but on the hiding Self (Marquard 1979, 350). The philosopher Marquard agrees with the sociologist Niklas Luhmann that identity is an essential issue of cultural modernity: It

is absolutely necessary, Luhmann argues, for self referential complex systems to find identity in their 'environment', "*Umwelt*" (Luhmann, in: Marquard 1979, 318). Identity is seen as an operation and as a functional element in modern societies. Identity always comes into play when it is threatened by change. It is interpreted as a substitute for traditional metaphysics, a vestige of such emotive terms as essence (*essentia*) or *telos*. The question of absolute beginning or origin is replaced by the problem of identity.

There are two interesting distinctions in Marquard. Firstly he speaks about the old facets of identity as being religions, states, nations and classes, and the new issues of identity as being reflexive, communicative and concerned with a universal identity that undergoes permanent change (Marquard 1979, 352). I dare say that there is a mix of "old" and "new" identity in the contemporary discussion and discourse on culture. There are, on the one hand, suspicions regarding a universalistic concept of identity and a return to particularistic identity, yet on the other hand, there is an insistence on the fact that this particularity is constructed, meaning that it is part of a dynamic process, i.e. culture. Thus, identity is the result of the breakdown of traditional terms such as "essence" and "teleology" (Marquard 1979, 358f).

Secondly, the German philosopher also contrasts an identity of generality with an identity of particularity. The first version has its roots in ancient Greek philosophy, which states that every being is identical with itself. Here, identity negates difference. In contrast, the Jewish idea of *Jahwe* ("I am, who I am" or "I am, who I will be") lives from the indefinite qualitative difference, as Marquard points out by quoting from Kamlah's theological work (Marquard 1979, 354). The first version of identity is beyond time (and space), the second has a strong historical aspect; it is in time and space. Or in other words, it is a constructed narrative identity. Or to put it yet another way, 'cultural' identity in particular is always an inscribed narrative matrix.

III.

According to postmodern philosophy or post-structuralism, identity no longer can be seen as the authentic kernel of a nut. This idea was central e.g. to the classical autobiography and the *Bildungsroman,* especially in German literature, for example in Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit* or *Wilhelm Meister,* or in a Romantic and ironic version in Eichendorff's *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts*. The corresponding narrative is based on the "chronotopos" (Bakhtin) that after a long period of wandering and straying, the homodiegetic narrator and protagonist finds his/her true calling. Elias Canetti's autobiography in three volumes is also

based on the idea of an identity that is found at the end, a typical adaptation of the Aristotelian idea of entelechia. It is a fixed kernel within yourself (Currie 1998, 2ff) that becomes visible at the end of the story. There is a strong deterministic aspect to this concept of identity. In the first chapter of his life story, Elias Canetti writes that all his later experiences had already happened earlier in Rustchuk (Canetti 1977, 9). Compared with the 'classical' *Bildungsroman* or autobiography, a new moment comes into play that has similarities with the idea of psychoanalysis (although Canetti, like Musil, was a harsh critic of Freud) – namely, the idea that it is the experiences in early childhood that prove formative for one's later life. Canetti's autobiography also includes the classical *telos* that he was predestined to become a writer.

In all these literary examples, identity is understood more or less as a fixed and durable element, a reliable factor in one's life, which is beyond time and space, constant and immobile as Aristotle's unmoved mover. From a narrativistic perspective, this is itself a narrative construction of identity, a story about how a specific human being searched and found his/her true "self" at the end.

There is another concept of identity in modernity, namely a social and sociological one, which describes how a person, a collective or a community finds his, her or its place in the world of modern society. Here, man or woman is not seen as a fixed being but is formed through the process of socialisation in institutions such as the family or school. Identity is seen as the result of identification. His/her identity, personality and language are the result of that process, which is seen as integration into society and/or culture (Ruegg 1969, 229; Lohauß 1995, 129–161).

Erikson's theory of identity may be seen as a concept that bridges the gap between psychoanalysis and the social sciences. Here, identity is understood as the result of the drama of childhood but also as a complicated balancing of three key elements of personality: the *Es*, the *Ich* and the *Über-Ich*, or id, ego and super-ego. Identity is seen as a creative synthesis between our desires and the demands of a culture. The interesting point is that it is the figure of the father (and to some extent of the mother) who represents the dimension of the *Other* on two levels: on a personal level and a collective one. Through a complex process of identification, identity is generated on a personal *and* a collective level because the father represents the super-ego (Erikson 1959/1973, 11–54; Peter Lohauß 1995, 30f), the Lacanian symbolic order. In the theoretical framework of Lacan's version of psychoanalysis, personal identity is also illusionary and imaginary. However, I would add that this does not mean that it does not represent a cultural 'reality'.

It is the oedipal triangle that proves to be the symbolic space where the process of identity building takes place. It entails a difficult process, which is seen as positive integration into society and its specific symbolic order (culture). Identity is the cornerstone of what is called socialisation: finding a place in

society and culture. In contrast to Straub (Straub 2004), there is no real difference between personal and collective identity, for example an imagined community (Anderson 1991/1996). Identity is seen as the result of positive development. Moreover, identity is the precondition of psychological health. Similar to the concept of humanistic *Bildung*, identity has an extremely positive denotation and connotation. This affirmative moment is distinguished in post-structuralism but also in British cultural studies. Here, identity takes on a widely negative meaning. Identity is seen as an illusionary idea and – together with the double meaning of subject – a symptom of oppression by society (Straub 2004, 277f).

In the eighth chapter of Robert Musil's unfinished novel *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (*The man without qualities*), the essayistic voice speaks about the strange, unreal and uncanny configuration of *Kakanien*, a country in which everybody distrusts each other. The author uses the German word *Charakter* in this context in an unspecific sense that is quite similar to identity. It is mentioned that every inhabitant of this multicultural empire has at least nine identities (or characters): profession, nationality, state, class, geography, gender, consciousness, unconsciousness, and privacy. The last *Charakter* is the most interesting one. On the one hand, it bands together all the other identities within itself; on the other, it is dispersed by all those others. This private identity or character is compared to a small and eroded hollow into which all the other characters drain and out of which they then come again to fill, together with other small rivulets, another hollow, which is defined as the passive fantasy of unfilled spaces (Musil 1978, 34).

Thus, identity disappears in Musil's novel into the imaginary. Ulrich is not so much a man without qualities, as the English translation suggests, but a man who lives in these unfilled spaces as a man without identity. There is no longer a strict relation to the sample of identities, rather there is a radical vacuum behind all the qualities and characters. In the interior of modern identity there lies: nothing. The plurality of identities undermines identity itself, it becomes an empty phenomenon, a 'fader' (S. Weber 1978, 85–97).

To a certain extent, the diagnosis in Musil's novel can be understood as a parallel analysis of society and culture in the decades between 1870 and 1930 with regard to disciplines such as sociology and psychology (Lepenies 1985, 239–401). But Musil also has something in common with post-structuralism, namely the idea that identity is a complex, fragmented and doubled phenomenon.

As far as I can see, there is in Musil neither a focus on the symbolic aspect of the process of identity production, nor a specific interest in the dynamic between self and other, which goes hand in hand with this process. This is also true of modern sociology. Yet these two aspects of identity – alterity and the role of narrating – have become central to the humanities and social sciences in the wake of

what have been called the new cultural turns in the *Kulturwissenschaften* (Bachmann-Medick 2006).

IV.

In my view, Paul Ricœur's contribution to this topic is remarkable, because he has presented a new perspective in his three-volume monograph *Temps et récit* (Ricœur 1983–1985/1988–1991) and a book about the relationship between selfness and otherness – *Soi même comme un autre* (Ricœur 1990/1996). The connection between both topics is striking, although the French philosopher elaborates on this relation in an explicit form in only one chapter of his later book, where he differentiates between personal and narrative identity (Ricœur 1990/1996, 144–206).

In this book, the author discusses not only the complicated relations between the Self and the Other but also differentiates between two aspects of identity: Whereas identity in the sense of the Latin word *idem* (*sameness*) is connected with constancy in time (and space), identity in the sense of the Latin *ipse* (*selfhood*) does not imply the idea of an unchangeable kernel of a personality (Ricœur 1990/1996, 11). With regard to alterity, it follows that there are also two aspects to alterity: otherness and (cultural) alterity, which correspond to sameness and selfhood respectively. As in other concepts (for example the Lacanian dyad *je* and *moi*), there is a double fragmentation: On the one hand, identity has two sides that are connected and divided at the same time. On the other hand, the Self is always split because of the priority of the Other that is written into it. It is quite clear that the *idem* identity is very abstract and symbolically empty; in contrast, the *ipse* identity contains positive predicates. The two elements work as in mathematical logic: *x(a), there is an x that is a*. Or A=A (Marquard 1979, 360). The first identity is absolute, but like Musil's it is hollow, tautological and deictic. In Pierce's terminology it is indexical (Peirce 1991: 350). As the word *I* (*Ich*), it refers to a person but has no (explicit cultural) meaning itself. It becomes meaningful only by the addition of the predicate (woman, worker, Austrian etc.). Only the second, changeable aspect of identity refers to our topic: cultural identity, although one might argue that the other aspect of identity, the self-reference that is perceived by an internal focalisation, has also affected cultural change. It becomes important in post-traditional, modern, Western or non-Western cultures, in which every human being is required to work out this relationship to the Self (Straub 2004, 280).

Narrative is not only a manner of speaking, a speech-act or a *Sprachspiel* (Wittgenstein), but is a central element with regard to identity. It is the narra-

tive that integrates the two aspects of identity, the *idem* and the *ipse*, or in Marquard's terminology, a general with a particular identity. Narrative generates a configuration of events. It suggests continuity and produces sense by transforming contingency into narrative necessity (Ricœur 1990/1996, 173–186). Narrative identity makes it possible to combine constancy with change. Through narrative, one can invent or imagine possible (*ipse*) identities and play with them, as it is the case in the famous Bob Seger song *If I were a carpenter and you were a lady*. Or one can tell the story about the young and enthusiastic communist one was in one's youth. Narratives of emigration also have a similar structure. Here, in contrast to the main person – the narrated I – providing the stable element in the narrative, this is instead represented by the voice of the storyteller, since the narrated I is potentially undergoing permanent change. It is the narrative process itself that creates identity through a complex dialectic between sameness and selfhood, otherness and alterity. It represents continuity and therefore the aspect of the *idem*, the idea of the uniqueness of a certain person, and it contains all the metamorphoses, transformations and conversions of a person who is telling his or her life story. The frog and the prince, the ardent communist and the harsh conservative, Saul and Paul are connected in a paradoxical way, so that one is the other and at the same time is not. The narrative guarantees duration in change.

V.

As I have shown in an earlier essay (Müller-Funk 2009b, 365–382; Müller-Funk, 2009a, 241–261), narrating not only means telling a story, but telling a story to someone. Sometimes this can be very abstract and not represented by the manner of speaking (as is the case in many classical modernist novels, which often avoid the gesture of having an empirical person narrate the story). Nevertheless, the other is written into the configuration of the narrative matrix. There is always a hidden I who speaks to an *Other*. There is always, as Mieke Bal has shown, a dialogical element which has the structure of an abstract letter (Bal: 2002b, 7–43; Müller-Funk 2010, 332–349). Therefore, it also entails an ethical aspect (Ricœur 1990/1996, 207–246). Narrating means an invitation to identification, a plea for recognition and especially the idea that my story is 'true' or, in the case of literary fictions, plausible or reliable. Identity needs confirmation by the Other, who is – from a cultural perspective – part of the symbolic field that is established not least by narratives. The narrative is the unavoidable medium of this cultural procedure. Therefore, only narratives are able to create collective identities, which are based on narrating communities, on groups of readers, who become storytellers at the same time. This kind of narrative always tells a story about who we are

and who we are not. On an individual level, it creates a narrative unity of life. On a collective level, it suggests – in an act of abstraction and imagination – the 'life' of a nation, the history of a movement, a group etc. Identity establishes a clear order with a very often unconscious negative identity that is similar to the image of another we fear to be or to become. It is the image of a misused castrated body, an ethnic group or an exploited social minority (Erikson: 1959/1973, 28).

Coming back to Musil's novel, what does loss of identity mean? What kind of identity is it? These confusing and irritating cases of narrativity can be, as Ricœur argues, formulated anew in his terminology as the revelation of the *ipse* identity by the loss of the *idem* identity that is supporting it (Ricœur 1990/1996, 184). Following this argument, the hero is someone who can be characterised by interference between the two levels. In the case of anti-heroes such as Musil's Ulrich or Max Frisch's Stiller, this relation is broken. Nevertheless, those works contain a narrative that is the loss of identity and character, a master narrative of classical modernism, one the philosopher Günter Anders has given the title *Man without world*. It is the story of alienation (Anders 1984, XI). It is part of the modern cultural laboratory in which new forms of narrating are experienced.

VI.

The idea that identity depends on the figure of the *Other* is, in many aspects, an astonishingly late one. It was to be picked out as a central theme in at least three symbolic fields: in French philosophy, in contemporary cultural analysis, but also in modern and postmodern literature. It is literature that is best able to present the paradoxes of identity under the circumstances of global modernity.

Joseph Roth's text *Beichte eines Mörders erzählt in einer Nacht* is a literary masterpiece and an object lesson for every narrative theory because it demonstrates several important aspects of narrative configuration, of the performance of narrating, the *Sprechweise* (manner of speech), but also of the function of narrative in creating and sustaining communities. This, in particular, points to the phenomenon that identity is always based on its opposite, alterity. The short novel (more a novella) is set in the late 1930s in Paris and also presents the (fictional) audience, the narrative community (*Erzählgemeinschaft*). This is a very specific narrative community, namely a diaspora, here Russian anti-communist exiles who meet each other night after night in a particular restaurant. Diasporas, which have become prominent in contemporary cultural studies (Appadurai 1996), are highly interesting narrative communities with regard to their (fragile) identity. Emigrants live in between the old and the new identity, between the

symbolic space of their old national culture and of the culture of the immigration country. Thus there is a strong and permanent need for storytelling.

In contrast to many other 'classical' modernist writers, Roth plays with the act of narrating itself by using a form of storytelling which seems to be very traditional in the sense of Benjamin's famous essay (Benjamin 1977, 385–410), but proves to be post-traditional at the same time. Using Genette's terminology, the novel is intradiegetic, i.e. it includes a narrative frame with two storytellers, the embedded narrator named Golubtschik, who, night after night, tells the visitors of Tari-Bari his fantastic life story, and a non-identifiable frame narrator, who represents the visitors in the restaurant, but is displaced for two reasons. He presents himself to the audience and to the embedded narrator as a German writer, a person who speaks many European languages, including Russian. Like the guests in the Russian restaurant, he is an emigrant, but he is not part of the diasporic, anti-communist Russian community. His identity is mysterious. The inside and outside perspectives do not fit together. Like many other protagonists in Roth's œuvre, the frame narrator is the author's double and also has a double in the text itself. He has something in common with the author (his Central European origins, his knowledge of foreign languages, his European attitudes, that he is a German native speaker, that he was in Russia in World War I and that he lives as a writer in exile in Paris). At the same time, he is also the mediator to the real audience outside the world of the text, which is important, because this small novel also refers to the problem of reliability. Through its figures, the novel presents three cultural spaces; Russia, France and Central Europe, which includes Germany, Austria and Hungary.

It is also important to mention that time stands still in this exile restaurant, firstly because there is not a specific time to order as is usually the case in French restaurants, and secondly because the clock has stopped. Everyone (incidentally, there are no women in the Russian restaurant) is looking clandestinely at the wall clock, although they know that it no longer works (Roth 1984, 79). This is a rhetorical reference to a specific moment of storytelling: Narrating is an act in which the past is preserved and suddenly becomes contemporary. During Golubtschik's narration, present time disappears. Everyone feels as if he had experienced Golubtschik's life (Roth 1984, 47). During this night, Old Russia rises again.

But there is also another interesting aspect of cultural alterity. As an expert of another culture, the frame narrator explains to the reader why Russian émigrés are so careless about time: it is because they have lost their cultural orientation in exile. They are out of time because they have lost their former identity. But they also neglect time because they want to demonstrate their cultural difference to French culture. They play *"echte Russen"* ("authentic Russians"), those people who do not have the same kind of calculating mentality as those in the West.

This is a story about the insecurity of identity that is itself the result of wrong or false stories. Entering the world of the text, we get to know the private space of identity, a hollow filled with vacuum and fantasy, as it is described in Musil's novel. This post-Romantic prose combines the topic of wrong or false stories with the motif of the double. There are a lot of mirroring effects: between Golubtschik and the frame narrator, between the frame narrator and the author, between Golubtschik and his 'false' brother Krapotkin, who proves to be a rival in love, and between Golubtschik and the demonic Hungarian devil Jenö Lakatos.

But there is also a break in identity with regard to time. Golubtschik and his mistress Lutetia have lost their former selfhood. This becomes evident at the end when Golubtschik's narration is caught up by time. The ugly woman who comes for Golubtschik is none other than the former beauty, the model Lutetia. Names and life stories are permanently changing in the novel (Roth: 1984, 123). This creates an atmosphere of uncanniness, which Freud described in his interpretation of Hoffmann's piece *Der Sandmann* (*The Sandman)*, which in turn played a key role in Julia Kristeva's definition of the strange that irritates every form of identity (Kristeva: 1988/1990, 199–202). Speaking critically, Kristeva identifies the strange of the unconscious with the cultural strange in an undifferentiated way.

In contrast to Hoffmann, in Roth the darkness of the narrative space is increased in so much as the embedded narrator, but also all embedded narrators within his own narration, are unreliable storytellers (Nünning: 1998, 3–39). According to the narration of old Golubtschik, the embedded narrator, the young Golubtschik is driven by the oedipal fantasy that 'in reality' he is not the son of a forest official, but – this is an oedipal narrative – is the illegitimate offspring of a mighty, fantastically rich prince. Influenced by the devil, the obscure Hungarian businessman and spy Jenö Lakatos, he tries to gain recognition as the son of this prince, called Krapotkin. He wants the name of 'his' father. He spends half his life on his obsession with becoming a Krapotkin instead of a Golubtschik. The Slavic name has a connotation with *dove*. So Golubtschik means he is a cock pigeon, a male dove. But this possibility of a metamorphosis from a small peaceful being into a powerful person is thwarted by the official son of Prince Krapotkin. Golubtschik's insidious adviser Lakatos makes him believe that his rival is not the real son of the Russian aristocrat. In his view, he, and not Krapotkin junior, is the real son of the superior 'father'. Golubtschik, the male dove, becomes a spy and a member of the Tsarist secret service, the Okhrana. This murky field is ideal for the disappearance of all fixed identities. He evolves to become a master at blackmail, control and betrayal. After a failed attack on his rival he has to leave the country and continue his job in Paris. Ironically, he now adopts the pseudonym Krapotkin.

There is also an interesting female protagonist in the novel, called Lutetia – this is the Latin name for Paris. The misogynistic gender construction in the text is instructive. Lutetia, the model, the allegory of Paris, is an artificial creature, a mask, pure performance, the broad *kat´ exochen*. Woman, especially a French one, has no identity (Riviere: 1994, 40), only false names and stories, changing clothes, lingerie, gestures and perfumes. Lutetia is the mere *ipse without* any *idem*. Her restless lover, however, is also a man who failed to find an identity in another way. This is the kernel of the narration, of his life story, of his confession. The reliability of his story remains ambivalent. For example, he did not murder his rival and his faithless lover, although he tried to do so. At the end, he finds his rival again in Paris as part of the Russian community that has been expelled by the Communist regime after the civil war. The heinous Lutetia is also still alive. She has lost all her beauty. This is a form of revenge and, at the same time, it is a melancholic plot of perishability. But when she enters the restaurant on that very morning, she has a scar, a trace of the attack of her lover years ago. So this part of Golubtschik's story might be true.

She is the same and, at the same time, she is another. The abyss of time ruins identities that were connected by the chain of events in Golubtschik's confession. This is an indication that Golubtschik's story cannot be totally false. There is another uncanny effect in the text when, at the end of the story, Lakatos reappears as the frame narrator's neighbour in the hotel. This ending signals the return of the same disaster for the narrator that was so characteristic of Golubtschik. The frame narrator has never seen Golubtschik and his narrative community again, but Lakatos remains in this demonic world.

The story is perhaps also characteristic of the situation of a very specific cultural minority and its fragile identity. One could relate this private story to history, to the breakdown of patriarchal pre-modern Tsarist Russia in 1917. In this reading, the novel could be understood as a noteworthy piece of literature with a psychoanalytic background. It is located on the margins of space and time and describes the transformation of a peripheral cultural region under the conditions of a modern, non-transparent world. In this interpretation, Golubtschik's confession is an integrative part of the symbolic reservoir of a narrative community.

But it is also quite evident that Roth's novel is part of the narrative complex of alienation or, to refer to Ricœur, a narrative version of the revelation of the *ipse* identity through the loss of the *idem* identity. This could be seen as the deep structure of so-called globalisation. In different ways, the protagonists in the novel are people without identity: Golubtschik, Lutetia and, especially, Lakatos. They still have a certain identity, as men or women, as French, Hungarian or Russian, but this identity is mere appearance and no longer has any supportive power.

The opaque demimondes of the secret service, of fashion, but also of the diaspora (which in Roth's novel is a bleak and comfortless symbolic space) are presented as a metaphor for the modern world. The covert ruler of this modern uncanny dystopia is, as in other texts by Joseph Roth, the globalised Hungarian, the entrepreneur Jenö Lakatos, who, like Lutetia, is only a surface, a squire and enchanter, a phenomenon of performance without any story – with the exception that he is marked as a Hungarian and that he jumps on one leg like the devil (Roth 1984, 31). Roth's narrative version of modernity is extremely pessimistic, conservative and demonic and one could reduce the emplotment of Roth's text to the statement that the symbolic overkill of narrative acts neutralises all serious forms of narration. Therefore, all forms of identity have become weak and eroded; firstly because all narrations prove to be lies, secondly because it seems that there is no longer any need for storytelling. When Golubtschik meets his rival again in Paris and tries to apologise for the attack years ago, Krapotik jun. answers that he should not speak about the past, but only about the present and future (Roth 1984, 127).

VII.

There is a strong dialogical moment in Roth's story about storytelling. The majority of the visitors in the restaurant already know the confession of the 'murderer'. Confession itself has a dialogical structure: It needs an alter ego who is the addressee of the mysteries and shares one's life.

The *Other* is the instance which takes the position of a moral or juristic instance. S/he is the one who exculpates, acquits, pardons or forgives the person who confesses about a chain of events from his or her life to another person, either someone directly involved in the narrative or an outsider who is seen as neutral. The confession is a radical form of narration, but this aspect is hidden in all sorts of narrative processes. It marks the ethical dimension of storytelling.

Again and again, the embedded narrator pauses in his story and there is time for the audience's reflection, especially the frame narrator's mediations on whether his story can be true (Roth 1984, 47, 123). A narrative always has an addressee who is not – under modern circumstances – a direct and explicit one, as is the case in Roth's novel. Narrating means to narrate something to someone. This dialogical element, this presence of the other in the narrative matrix is also the precondition for what one may call cultural identity. Cultural identity presupposes that a group of people, a community, believes that a certain story or a narrative complex is true, realistic and reliable. The goal of all storytelling is that my counterpart believes in 'my' story. In contrast perhaps to the contempo-

rary readers, the visitors of the Tari-Bari in Roth's text have decided to believe in Golubtschik's story in a weak sense, because even invented stories are true in at least one sense: They reveal the character of the narrator and are symptomatic of the situation of a cultural group. They *want* to believe the 'murderer's' story. Up to a certain point, all cultural identity is based on the will to believe a story. Quite evidently, the criteria are not rational but entail psychological aspects. In Golubtschik's case it is his body language which makes the audience believe him (Roth 1984, 123).

The topic of credibility is prominent in Javier Marías' novel *Maňana en la batalla piensa en mí* (1994) too. Here, the addressee of the narration is not a cultural minority as in Roth, but a single person, Luisa. She is the sister of a dead woman, Marta, who died half-naked immediately before the first sexual encounter with her new lover while her husband was absent abroad. The frustrated lover, Victor, is the homodiegetic narrator of the story, who reflects on the necessity of persuading his dead lover's sister of the painful and implausible events of some weeks ago. As a potential narrator he comes under pressure. Whereas he has no identity within the surroundings of the dead woman (because he is unknown, has no name, no face, no story), he himself has a precarious identity. It becomes central to reveal this, or his, 'true' identity.

As in Roth, there is an aspect of confession in the story. Victor has to tell Marta's sister that he was with her before she died and left her young son alone with the dead woman. There is no doubt that he, as the possessor of a mystery, has power (Marías: 1994, 270f), but only narrating it enables him to reveal *and* neutralize the symbolic power of his narrative. It is a painful situation in which the listener, Luisa, the double of the dead sister, is assigned the role of moral authority or judge. So it becomes decisive to tell the painful story about the events of that night in such a way that his attractive vis à vis – the gender relations play an important role in the process of narrating – does not find him guilty. Through true storytelling he is able to establish a common narrative community à deux, which is based on the idea that only these two persons know the real story about what happened. They have a secret in common (Marías 1994, 278–295). His confessions evoke further confessions from other people, firstly Luisa's, and secondly the confession of the dead wife's husband.

Like Roth's text, Javier Marías' novel is self-referential. It is a literary piece on the complex logic of narrating, otherness and a common symbolic space that is established by a type of narrative which has a mystery at its centre. Sameness and otherness, selfhood and alterity are intermingled in this story. As the representative of Victor's conscience, Luisa functions as an abstract other, but she has her own story and her own personal and collective identity as a heterosexual woman – that is, her symbolic alterity to the man. The abstract process on

the level of *idem* is overlapped by their reciprocal erotic attraction to each other. There is an interesting detail in the novel. Luisa refuses to allow Victor to tell his version of her sister's last night alive in his own flat (Marías 1994, 278). The spaces of man and woman are separated in this case, because they have different positions within the symbolic field. So a neutral third space has to be found. This is the restaurant. After they have told each other their version of what happened, Luisa accepts Victor's invitation to continue the talk at his flat. And in the end, she also accepts his offer to have a drink with him.

Although there is some sort of cultural difference in this embedded process of narrating, I doubt that one can say that Victor and Luisa live in separate cultures. They may have different positions in one and the same cultural space, yet they share not only a common language (also metaphorically), but also a middle-upper-class background and the values, attitudes and habitus of a Spanish postmodern individualistic culture.

British Cultural Studies has taught us to understand culture with regard to the trinity of race, class and gender. Each of these three symbolic margins can be part of a specific national culture with all its subcultures. I would like to propose using the term cultural alterity only for those phenomena in which differences of language, religion, tradition and history, manners or mentalities play a central role. In all other cases (gender, sexual orientation, life-style, profession, milieu, generation), I would prefer the term symbolic alterity, because all these differences refer to implicit but varying and changing positions *within* one society. The person from another national culture, however, traditionally only has one possible position: the position as a figure at the edge, at the margin. It is true that globalisation suggests that this difference between inside and outside has been cancelled. Yet I am not sure if this is true.

If Luisa and Marta were young women from the Middle East or from West Africa with a Muslim background, or if Victor were not a writer but a carpenter from South America, it would be a totally different novel. It is not certain whether, in these hypothetical cases, Victor's confession could take place and, moreover, would lead to such a peaceful end as in Marías' text. The narratives of new intimacy Luisa and Victor have in common are part of the same symbolic household of an enlightened, Western European, postmodern, national culture. They share these values, although they might have different opinions about the details because of symbolic alterity (gender, age or life style).

VIII.

On our journey with the travelling concept of identity, we started with the philosophical suspicion that identity is a symptom of that kind of a crisis that we call modernity. In different philosophies, identity exists twice; abstract and non-narrative, and particular and narrative. The discourse on identity in sociology and psychology tends to the statement that identity goes hand in hand with a process of integration. Modern cultural analysis, postmodern philosophy and (post-)modern literature offer two different figures of alterity – as the Other and as the stranger – figures that do not have a visible place in disciplines such as sociology, psychoanalysis and traditional philosophy. Thus, the constitutive aspect of the Other for creating identity is a basic and important contribution of contemporary narrative cultural analysis.

I accept that all these differentiations I have proposed throughout my programmatic literary reading are not binary and exclusive oppositions, but overlapping phenomena, as is the case in Ricœur's distinction between sameness and selfhood. It is the work of analysis to differentiate between otherness, symbolic and cultural alterity. It is the work of narrative to mingle and connect them in the chains of events, in the emplotment, in the characters of the figures, which construct identities. Narrating is the art of the impossible, connecting substance and process, timelessness and time, constancy and change, and transforming them into a new artificial unit. It is literature that makes it possible to overcome binary oppositions and shows how they are fitted together or broken in the narrative process itself. With regard to cultural alterity, one might argue that the narrative is the symbolic process in which a human being or a group finds his/her/its symbolic place by displacing others.

Identity is a space that is empty and crammed at the same time, and the narrative is not only linked with all forms of identities but also links the tautological, non-narrative and empty aspect of identity with the symbolically filled one. The figure of the Other is inscribed at the empty and abstract level of identity, whereas heterogeneity ("hybridity"), the mixture of identities (e.g. in language, 'race' or gender) takes place in the "location of culture" (Bhaba 1994, 225f, 251). Identity is the result of an all-embracing and regulating system in which the identity of a subject is produced through the act of narrating, as Warning writes in his essay *Forms of Narrative Construction of Identity in the Courtly Novel* (Warning, in Marquard, 553). Identity is always a double.

If narrating is also a form of creating personal and collective identity, of building symbolic spaces, then the development of post-traditional models of identity and alterity depends on innovative forms of narrative in which the Other in a double sense (the principal *Other* as the counterpart of the *idem,* and the cul-