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Movie as affective self-portrait : Body-narration and narrative identity in Neil Jordans "Breakfast on Pluto"

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Twardoch-Raś

**Movie
as affective self-portrait**
*Body-narration and
narrative identity
in Neil Jordan's
Breakfast on Pluto*

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Introduction: narration as a way of shaping one's identity

In his theory of film narrative, Edward Branigan writes that subjective narration is applied when the power over space-time is entrusted by the director to one of the characters, which at the same time indicates the importance of the point of view in film narration (Branigan, 1984: 64). This observation is also confirmed by David Bordwell, who states that an attempt to present narrative subjectivity is one of the main incentives for experimentation in cinema which has contributed to the development of this field (Bordwell, 2006: 72–82). On the other hand, George Wilson situates this question in the context of reflections on cinema's transparency, which is eliminated or lost when a filmic work of art attempts to present subjective narration, usually from the point of view of one of the characters. "It is often said that viewers are meant to imagine that they are seeing the relevant fictional items and events 'through the eyes' of the relevant character" (Wilson, 2006" 84). Wilson doubts that "seeing through the eyes" of the character is completely possible; however, it does not change the fact that actions connected with the representation of subjectivity in cinema make us at least try to watch a movie from the perspective of someone's narration and must question the transparency of the filmic medium. The problem of movie's narrative seems therefore always connected with medium specificity, which from the beginning was ambiguous for critics (Helman, Ostaszewski: 6–9).

One encounters this particular subjectivized kind of narration in *Breakfast on Pluto*, which is suggested by the introductory sequence, in which the main character, Patrick/Patricia¹, starts telling the story. It is indicated even by the fact that from the very beginning the world in which the protagonist appears is presented from his perspective. He speaks of construction workers who make him indecent proposals in a very explicit way – as of hyperactive males, and the movie does not contain any element which would deny this interpretation. Therefore, the protagonist's vision determines not only the reality of Patrick's story but also the movie's diegesis. All that happens, including stories by other characters, is presented through the prism of the story of life or, more precisely, coming of age, told by the boy. We are aware from the very beginning that the movie is an adaptation of Patrick McCabe's diaries; thus the basis of the movie is intimate literature written in the form of first-person narration, confirmed additionally by the bodily transformation of the hero. The plot has been divided into chapters, which present the main events from the protagonist's life, in this way being a filmic counterpart of the *Entwicklungsroman*. However, the initiation which Patrick experiences will not be a mere introduction into adult life but also a way of constituting his own self, especially the physical one, consisting of affective experiences.

The action of specific storytelling is of great importance to the protagonist in the process of creating his identity. Branigan defines storytelling as a way of making a person's experiences and the world surrounding him or her understandable (Branigan, 1984: 3). Capturing the story of life in the process of writing or telling one also gives this existence some significance and solidifies

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1 Speaking of the protagonist as male or female is rather problematic in *Breakfast on Pluto*, while accepting a different perspective would disturb the clarity of the article; therefore, I will conventionally write about the protagonist as a man, Patrick, until – in my opinion – he undergoes an actual mental transformation into a woman, when he becomes Patricia.

it (Bauman, 1998: 204) as well as gives meaning to what is happening, fulfilling one of the basic assumptions of narration understood in accordance with the philosophy of existentialism (Ryan, 2004: 2–3). Following Paul Ricoeur's statement, Jan Kordys believes that created and recreated plots composing our lives, which have shaped and raised us, help us develop our narrative identities (Kordys, 2006: 135). "Narrative competence" acquired in this way allows us to create subjective reality, organize our emotional lives and experiences. This "narrative competence" may also be called, citing Marie Laure Ryan, the ability to narrativize. It means a certain cognitive property of human beings which allows them to create mental narrative scripts/constructs (Ryan, 2004: 9). Those can be elicited by a text or by another medium "being narrative" itself (Ryan, 2004, 9) as well as by everyday experiences which have narrative potential ("having narrative") to the viewer. Jan Kordys, accepting a point of view concordant with Ryan's theses, states that storytelling makes us constitute our "selves" and the world belonging to them in a narrative manner, of course, by means of numerous narrative messages which surround us but also, first and foremost, through confrontation with external reality (Kordys, 2004: 136) and with the interior of our body (Shusterman, 2008: 192–197). Furthermore, Monika Fludernik opts to accept the importance of narrativity based on natural cognitive parameters in relation to "real-life experience," experience of a human being who narrativizes what he or she goes through and feels every day. According to Fludernik: "In my model there can therefore be narrative without plot, but there cannot be any narrative without a human (anthropomorphic) experienter of some sort at some narrative level" (Fludernik, 1996: 9). The abovementioned scientists present slightly different research perspectives (existential and cognitivist), although the common element of their observations is the fact that people have a natural ability to narrativize events from their own lives and the surrounding reality, even if those do not meet formal narratological requirements. The concept of narrative identity assumes also that the gesture of storytelling and narrativizing has enormous potential to discover and form identity. The shaping of identity understood in this way has only symbolic meaning, as it allows for taking into consideration events and experiences from real life in the process of constituting the just as real "self" of the bodily subject. It is not a story for the story's sake but a complicated process of not only linguistic formation of an individual's identity, which I will attempt to show. The question of narrativity in relation to *Breakfast on Pluto* may thus be analyzed in two ways: as a formal narrative structure, which the movie undoubtedly does possess and which the viewer may reconstruct in a number of ways, and as the narrative potential of Patrick's affective experiences, which the protagonist does notice and which he presents in the movie as the process of shaping his narrative identity. In the present text I will focus mainly on the second type of narration – the specific kind of storytelling from the main character's point of view.

Patrick will try to tell a story about himself or events which have been important to him in a number of ways and a number of times. Such a story will be the composition written for his English lesson, stories told to men he meets (the singer, magician or priest), his "little book" about the "phantom lady," or the story for Charlie's daughter, which is the basis of the movie's plot. By means of each of them, Patrick will try to tell the truth about himself and embrace his experiences in the form of narration, incorporate them in his shaping identity. He will also emphasize that not everyone will be able to understand the story of Patrick "Kitten" Braden; therefore, it will be a story

for the chosen, which accentuates its significance and remarkability. The exceptionality of this reminiscence stems also from the fact that the protagonists will find a different language or apply a counterpart of a semiotic system created for his own needs and based on physical experiences in order to tell his story. I will focus on this aspect of narration in the last part of the article.

The purpose of a message structured in this manner may be approached in yet another way. In accordance with F. R. Hart, confession is “a personal story which tries to communicate or express the basic nature of and the truth about one’s own self,” and thus an ontological category (Hart, 1974: 227) while John Maxwell Coetzee, following F. R. Hart’s definition of “confession,” believes that confession is one of the elements of the sequence comprising transgression, confession, contrition and forgiveness (Coetzee, 2007: 92). Of course, all of the elements are understood by the author in a symbolic way, as elements composing a conventional pattern for autobiographical plots, which aim at expressing the author’s identity. Forgiveness means here closing a chapter of one’s life, ending a stage in the development of one’s identity (Coetzee, 2007: 91). The therapeutic function of such confession is reduced to its role in preparing the basis for some novelty without the need to repress a part of oneself from one’s consciousness. It appears that we witness a similar pattern in *Breakfast on Pluto*: here, transvestitism, so ambiguous, dynamic performative form of the body, and being rejected by one’s parents would be a metaphorical transgression, while confession is the story told by Patrick; therefore, storytelling fulfills also an ethical role in the movie. Contrition has been replaced by forgiveness given to others: forgiving one’s parents and oneself for a long inability to accept one’s own fate, for the search for oneself full of dangerous adventures. Finally, forgiveness itself is the full consent to one’s identity and arranging one’s life according to rules transcending cultural patterns. This proposal seems important because it situates the act of telling one’s own story within a broader process, which is composed not only of the constitution of one’s “self” by means of language but also by placing it in tamed space-time and body’s interior, by opening to the world and new experiences. It is also a remedy for the transient state characteristic of every change, which also seems the aim of the story of oneself told by Patrick.

Deconstructing the stereotype of man

The theory of identity politics is based on the thesis of gender difference, which states that identity – speaking in a rather simplified manner – must be either masculine or feminine, as an identity which does not belong to any of those categories has no right to exist (Agaciński, 200: 23–24). According to this thesis usually the process of socialization also takes place, beginning in the earliest childhood. The child is taught to be a boy or a girl, in this way subject to the principles of his or her cultural gender (Korzińska, 2003: 53–54). Patrick has also experienced aspects of this process of socialization “into being a boy.” Once, when his foster mother walked in on him wearing lipstick, her shoes and his sister’s dress, she gave him a drastic bath. In this way she was trying to wash off the boy’s actual gender identity remaining in discord with his biological gender, which was beginning to show at that time. The ablation, so the strong affective experience, was accompanied by the boy’s

declaration of his male identity, ordered by the mother and repeated three times, as if in magical spells, which, by the way, are important part of every fairy narrative. The mother also immediately started buying football magazines for the boy and forcing him to watch matches. However, in response to this coercion, while watching TV, Patrick imagined himself as a princess wearing a beautiful long dress, running on the playing field. In this way the protagonist began the deconstruction of the image conventionally ascribed to a male child, paving the way for the constitution of his own identity. Such deconstruction seems also narrative way of personality's creation.

Patrick encountered other signs of socialization at school, where a division into classes for boys and for girls was made. Young women were prepared to assume roles ascribed to them in the patriarchal world by learning needlework and "household economy," while boys were signed up for classes developing their intellects so that they could occupy managerial posts in the future. From the very beginning, Patrick did not agree for such dualism. He preferred sewing clothes to learning "manly duties." His tutors approached his refusal to acquire the attributes generally believed to remain in concord with his biological gender as behavior issues. To the protagonist, on the other hand, it was the first stage of his process of storytelling. His refusal to accept the imposed conditions and to be placed within the only correct story had the power of establishing his own narration.

As early as in his teenage years, Patrick began to change his appearance. He replaced physical strength and emotional coldness traditionally ascribed to men (Szczepaniak, 2005: 28) with fragile posture, submission and expressiveness. He had long hair and make-up; gradually, he also began wearing female clothes. Additionally, the protagonist rejected the basic "paradigms of manhood": violence, control and domination over the weaker (Szczepaniak, 2005: 29), taking care of his friend with Down syndrome or refusing to fight against the violence both from the "revolutionaries" accusing him of stealing guns as well as from police officers. He did not agree with the traditional destiny of man to work and fight either (Szczepaniak, 2005: 31); Patrick did various odd jobs and asked by a police officer why he would not find himself a steady one, he replied he was completely hopeless with it. The protagonist did not join political and military riots taking place in his town; at the initial stage of shaping his identity he expressed the gender he felt to be true mainly through language and affective reactions. He spoke of himself as of a woman, changed his vocabulary into language culturally accepted as womanly (he eschewed swear words but used diminutive expressions very often). Those first stages of shaping his own history appear identical with the beginnings of shaping one's storyworld – the space where, following Ryan's assumptions, his story could come into being (Ryan, 2014: 32). Ryan also adds that "[i]f a storyworld is anybody's world, it is the world of the character" (Ryan, 2014: 32). On the one hand, this space was the protagonist's internal, bodily world and, on the other hand, it was external reality composed of specific patterns of behavior and language.

Patrick gradually demystified certain elements building the myth of manliness and selected variants of behavior which suited him. He rejected the process of initiation into manhood consisting mainly in separating a boy from the world of femininity (Szczepaniak, 2005: 28) and imbuing him with manly habits, overwhelming the actual "self" of a man with a number of stereotypes. This demystification is interesting as Patrick does not change his gender physically. Biologically, he is still a man, but he has different aspirations and needs as an individual, and expresses it through affective behavior

and reactions. In this way, he unveils the aporia between cultural placement of a human creature in reality and his or her own pursuit for the possibility of shaping his or her own identity and telling his or her own bodily-story.

Transgression taking place in Patrick is thus more in concord with the pattern of “rites of passage” proposed by Arnold von Gennepe (Gennepe, 2006: 30–45). According to this theory, a person undergoing the rite of passage must be excluded from the accepted social and cultural structure by negating it, then remain in the transition zone for some time (this is the time of absorbing elements of the new structure) to finally be included in the universe as someone completely different. This mythical and thus more universal variant of initiation is used by Patrick to replace the cultural process of initiation into manhood to which he should yield. Negation of the myth of manhood forces Patrick to be temporarily excluded from the space-time to which he used to belong: he leaves his foster home and school and heads for London to look for his birth mother, one of the basics of his identity. At that moment he becomes an exterritorial creature (Bauman, 2003: 287) and his fate is marked with the element of transience – he is both a refugee and a newcomer. His journey also takes place parallel to the process of changing into Patricia. Therefore, exclusion and transience are experienced on two levels – one of space-time and one of bodily identity, inextricably connected with the process of narrativization.

Becoming a woman

“By pursuing physical transformation, transgender people express, sometimes in a pompous manner, the need for psychological, physical and social specification of their gender: they must acquire all actual and symbolic attributes of the *cultural gender* which they wish to have...” (Agaciński, 2000: 25; own translation – E.T.). It is easily observable that Patrick does the same thing: he demystifies the social and cultural role of man, paradoxically absorbing the myth of femininity. Each of the levels composing this new identity is thus shaped in accordance with the rules of the patriarchal world! It is worth mentioning that the process of changing from Patrick into Patricia is determined by some gradation: from the least visible changes in his appearance, behavior and thinking, to nearly complete acceptance of the cultural and social pattern of femininity and the storyworld “suitable” for being a woman. Therefore, before the viewer’s eyes, the performative shaping of the protagonist’s gender, according to Judith Butler, takes place (Butler, 1994–1995: 57); his becoming a woman is more and more strongly manifested. Only after assuming this new role will Patrick perform a noteworthy metamorphosis of his femininity.

The aforementioned gradation may be noticed as early as on the most basic level of the protagonist’s representation. As a teenager, Patrick used only some of female accessories for accentuating one’s beauty. Those included lipstick, mascara, sometimes nail polish and high-heeled shoes. When he met the first man in whom he fell in love, Patrick also began wearing female clothing. He appeared on stage dressed up as a Native American woman, wore blouses and female coats. He was visibly impressed by the fact that at that time he was already mistaken for a woman by some people. At that time he also began moving and behaving “like a woman”: he shook his hips, batted his eyelashes, looked longingly at men, shrugged his shoulders to express helplessness, shyness and innocence. Creating narration about oneself was thus supported mostly on the level of affective and visual representation – an

element which in itself is not a particularly important factor for narration but meant the further shaping of his own storyworld to Patrick.

At that moment the protagonist for the first time also expressed his melodramatic dreams: he longed for an engagement ring, sweets and flowers; dreamed of a small, cozy house and a strong man who would save him from every danger. He agreed to be a mascot and the magician's assistant. Finally, he tried working as a prostitute and accepted a short-term sponsorship offer from an older man. At clubs the protagonist appeared as an attractive lady in red and let himself be treated to drinks. Under arrest, he imagined himself to be a Nikita in a black leather suit saving the world with antiterrorist spray (a bottle of perfume)... Therefore, with his appearance and aspirations, the protagonist fitted into the stereotypical role of a woman. Beauty and constant dreams of marriage and great love (Korzińska, 2003: 49–80) became the main components of Patrick's sexual identity. It was also the stage at which the protagonist accepted certain elements of the typical image of woman as well as absorbed whole narrative modes of behavior traditionally associated with femininity. Those were stories of a beautiful house and a noble knight rescuing a damsel in distress. The stories had been told in different versions for centuries and Patrick adapted them for his own narration.

The constant imperative of taking care of the appearance, to which the protagonist yields, also makes it easier for men to control him – he becomes a “showcase for every man” – an addition to the singer's crew and the magician's mascot. Patrick accepts the dictate of fashion (Gucci tights) but he also realizes that not only does woman have to be beautiful; she should also change her image according to expectations (Korzińska, 2003: 52). Therefore, the protagonist styles himself to be a delicate “lady” wearing a light pastel dress on one occasion; some other time he puts on a bright red coat and turns into a dangerous *femme fatale*. He constantly adjusts his image to the preferences and lifestyles of men whom he dates.

His strong need to have a man by his side (preferably a husband) is also connected with some social indoctrination. “A ‘spinster’ is someone whom no one wanted, dust, spider web” (Korzińska, 2003: 55; own translation – E.T.). Being single also implicates being left alone in the face of danger (Patrick expresses his constant obsessive vision of being in deadly danger from which he is saved by a strong man) and the deepening of the state of permanent sexual and emotional transience. In other words, femininity, to Patrick and probably also to public opinion at that time, might be culturally and socially legitimized only by means of marriage (Korzińska, 2003: 53), a ritual with a distinct narrative structure. By means of belonging to another person and, simultaneously, a given environment, the protagonist wishes to achieve the accepted shape of life and identity. “Man deprived of roles does not exist to society and sociology” (Dahrendorf, 2005: 545; own translation – E.T.) and thus oversteps the borders of social order, becoming a scrap (Bauman, 2003: 251). Patrick is such a “side effect,” monster, phantom (Bauman, 2003: 267) of cultural and social norms only because he does not accept the cultural gender ascribed to him. Transvestites are named the “third gender” or “transgender” by newer theories of sexuality, which additionally emphasizes their exceeding the norms of sexuality (Baer, 2004: 23). The protagonist did not fit in any of the rules governing both the world of his town as well as any other place where he stopped, which always resulted in his exclusion from the community or becoming a curiosity, as if from Antoine Artaud's theater. His mother called him a monster, the “revolutionaries” – “the mental nancy boy.”

In each of the environments he felt an outcast with an ontologically, bodily fluid social and cultural status. He did not even know the basics of this status (his parents). During this processual act of becoming a woman, he might have wanted to meet the social and cultural norms and give his new identity a permanent, undisputed (not only emotionally but also “objectively”) shape. As he himself stressed, he also wished to belong to some space-time and to another person. However, presumably not knowing what the life of a woman really looks like, or longing for its variation known only from melodramatic plots and love songs, Patrick was disappointed a number of times. Billy, who promised a small house and roses, left. The man met in the car, pretending to be a fan of love songs, used violence against Patrick. The magician took advantage of the protagonist’s naivety in order to increase the attractiveness of his show. Patrick began to understand that by accepting the role of a woman he doomed himself to numerous limitations and humiliations. He became more and more aware of the fact that the storyworld composed of typically feminine elements did not suit his story.

Another significant transformation occurred when the protagonist began working at the peepshow as the “svelte gamine,” which was the only legal job which his friend, a police officer, found for him. The job made Patrick embody a woman almost completely. Therefore, he changed his hair color to blond and applied more make-up; he presented himself to the clients as an ethereal “butterfly” playing on a swing. To the protagonist, this disparaging occupation seemed the only alternative to life by a rich husband’s side, in the possibility of which the boy no longer believed. At that time, he reduced his new identity to the body as an erotic tool. Paradoxically, in this way he treated femininity just as a man in the patriarchal world does. Although the stage ended in failure in the process of shaping his identity, it still was a very significant moment in Patrick’s storytelling, as it revealed that narrative identity is to a much greater degree than through conventional attributes created on the corporeal level, the level of the body’s needs, experiences and transformations. Even when Patrick could not entirely express his feelings verbally, his body did it for him in a non-linguistic manner.

He is shaken awake from this sense of resignation by the visit from his biological father, a priest, who gives Patrick his mother’s address. The protagonist also decides to help his friend Charlie, whom his father took in. After the priest’s house is set on fire, Charlie and Patrick move to another city. When the girl’s child is born, they both decide to lead a life breaking away from the accepted cultural and social conventions. They become two independent women who have managed to preserve the true value of a person’s individuality in the androcentric world. Patricia (as I believe this is the moment when Patrick has found the right way to the fulfillment and constitution of the cultural gender he feels) decides to no longer consent to the role of an erotic or circus toy. She has broken the stereotype of the necessity to base her identity on beauty, marriage and motherhood, at the same time fulfilling her needs to be with another person and for another person. In this way, the protagonist has left the transitional zone and has been included in the new space-time, a tamed place, constituted on the basis of relations with other people, providing a stable ground for the continuation of the fate which she once chose for herself – the storyworld appropriate for the creation of full narration related to experiences from the real world and body. The symbolic forgiveness has taken place as well – the closing of a chapter in life has given space for the wished-for novelty.

The subversive variant of one's own story

The process of discovering Patrick's true individual sexuality and narrativization of this process are the basic elements of shaping his own identity. On the other hand, the discovery of the protagonist's complete identity takes place simultaneously with the discovery and creation of language (not only verbal) in which the story may be told. In other words, creating a story from one's own life would be impossible without shaping the most important element of narration, a medium proper to it.

The choice of a sign system for the purpose of expressing one's own story is, in Patrick's case, especially important for a number of reasons. Some time ago, theoreticians of feminism reached the conclusion that language in the patriarchal world was manly, belonged to men and using it placed non-men within the androcentric pattern. Hence feminists' interest in alternative language. In relation to those theses, one should also ask whether a man believing himself to be a woman can speak either men's or women's language. Is any of the languages his own? How to tell a story which is simultaneously the deconstruction of manhood and the discovery and construction of womanhood? One cannot reject sexuality altogether, as it has been emphasized on numerous occasions that in the search of language proper to one's expression of self it is impossible to escape corporeality and sexuality. "Subjectivity has its dimension, absolutely corporeal and, additionally, determined sexually" (Rembowska-Pluciennik, 2005: 58; own translation – E.T.). Distinct "empirization of the authorial voice" is also important (Nycz, 2000: 9), as writing "with the body and about the body" is an indicator of the structure of the subject (Rembowska-Płóciennik, 2005: 59) – also in the filmic medium. How to find a sign and linguistic equivalent of the expression of body "in transition" and under constant changes? It appears that Patrick, as the author of his story, has determined two kinds of narrative poetics and additionally applied them in a subversive variant. Those are poetics of fairytales and poetics of parody. They are some systems of patterns and conventions which make his process of narrativisation efficient representation of his story.

"To create fiction in a way means to reject reality, especially the belief that reality is the truth" (Federman, 1983: 424; own translation – E.T.). This is what Patrick does: he repeatedly emphasizes that the story which he writes about himself is about someone else. Also his "sub-plots" – shorter stories, accounts, imaginations – are to undermine the truth of reality. The fact that the protagonist escapes the real world is also confirmed by the fact that he mimics characters in movies which he watches, styles himself as stars from fashion journals, tries to make situations from love songs come true; he also tests various media and available popular narrations creating space for the convention of femininity. Moreover, he borrows sign systems belonging to them in order to find one suitable for him. He also mythicizes his name, adding the alias "Kitten," allegedly borne by St. Patrick's helper. When he finds the fairytale-like house at the park, he states he would like to live in one like this forever. In his narrative, robins speak human language and tell one of the many stories – in the form of a story within a story incorporated on the basis of the plot.

In a way, Patrick's story is a version of that of Cinderella, the ugly duckling or Pinocchio (by the way the really important character for LGTB-people) – each of the characters was an outcast at the beginning and later achieved

eternal happiness as reimbursement for the sufferings. However, in the abovementioned fairytales a different motif than the victory of good over evil dominates. This is the motif of certain existential transgression of the characters, suspension between poverty and richness, ugliness and beauty, the artificial and the real body. Patrick's need to meet his prince charming and live in a small fairytale-like house additionally gives his story a fictional character. Accepting such poetics allows the protagonist to establish some distance between his own personality and reality as well as feel solidarity with the characters, looking for the right path toward happiness and personal fullness just as he does. The convention of a fairytale is not accidental here for yet another reason: it has a steady narrative pattern (Propp, 2011), which appears to be a useful constant in the process of telling one's story based on never-ending transgression and uncertainty. Therefore, a phenomenon called the transposition of narrativization, that is narrativizing one's own life on the example of some existing narrative convention, occurs here. Of course, it is difficult for Patrick to change the world around him into a fairytale. Hence the dissonance between the objective dimension of events (the existence of which the boy does realize) and their subjective interpretation (narrativization) by Patrick. The protagonist oversteps the conventions of fairytales with his story, implementing their rather subversive counterpart. To him, an old van is a secret place, while the fairytale house emerges as a mere mock-up – part of a children's playground. The happy ending which is supposed to appear in every fairytale has a rather perverse equivalent as well – after all, there is no fairy to transform the protagonist into a princess. He does not change his body into that of a woman either. His metamorphosis consists in growing up to accept his individuality and to discover the true value of femininity, thus being a mental change or an autobiographical journey inside of oneself (Kozicka, 2003: 77). Paradoxically, transposition of the pattern of narrativization allows him to create his own narration.

The poetics of parody fulfills an even more important role in Patrick's story, as the travesty of fairytale motifs arises to a great degree from its application; therefore, this motif requires a more detailed analysis. "Parody satirizes the 'normal' and 'everyday,' undermines their axioms, exposes their contrasts and inaccuracies" (Kulpa, 2002: 12; own translation – E.T.). Laughter engendered by parody causes negation and derision of the official (Dentith, 2010: 17). The protagonist of *Breakfast on Pluto* emphasizes a number of times that he does not want to be serious and that he is not going to treat seriously whatever happens in his life. Patrick's father, while telling the boy his story, says that he used to know a boy who, in spite of his unfortunate fate, constantly laughed in order to cover his tears. Therefore, the protagonist avoids giving his life the serious, pompous tone by exposing its ridiculousness. However, parody does not disrupt actual reality – it does transform and travesty it, but does not lead to its complete destruction (Kulpa, 2002: 12). So it happens in Patrick's story. The protagonist by means of his clothing ridicules the norms in force at his foster home, at school, during his journey to London. He composes his story in a parodic style, which prevents his dangerous adventures with men from gaining a dramatic dimension – they are grotesque. Patrick mocks both himself and the world around him. In spite of this grotesque background, the viewer is still aware that the story told by the protagonist is a struggle for his own identity, for the discovery of his own roots, self-acceptance and self-awareness.

Above all, parody deprives reality of its obviousness, not its importance. The protagonist cannot speak of himself in accordance with moral, legal or

customary norms, as they do not apply to him and exclude him from the area of correctness. Therefore, he has to reevaluate his narration or even profane the world in order to find himself in it; he has to treat his “textual world” analogically to the way in which he is treated by reality – with scorn, a grain of salt and a dose of cruelty. For this reason, the title of the chapter in which a bomb is planted at the club and Patrick suffers quite serious injuries during the explosion is “My tights! They’re in ribbons.” For the same reason, he tells the potential story of his biological mother being seduced by a priest in the form of a pornographic movie (another with the application of narrative patterns). He is also enchanted with the story of breakfast on Pluto told by the encountered motorcyclist. After all, Pluto is a planet uninhabited by people where completely different topographic, meteorological and geological laws than those on Earth are present. Paradoxically, this is the world of which a dissident like Patrick can dream. The existence of completely new reality would give him a chance not to be treated like a ready-made project which can be either accepted or rejected. Probably this is another reason for which the boy tries to find his own place, participating in various shows which suspend the clear-cut nature of reality and its social and cultural determinants. They also create a new perspective of looking at some behavioral anomalies, as their domain remains illusion (Dentith, 2010: 2).

Parody also “desacralizes all sanctities: gender, religion, the universe” (Kulpa, 2002: 12; own translation – E.T.), simultaneously allowing one to transgress the convention and sacralize the sphere approved individually. The completion of this process is most excellently expressed by the sequence introducing the story of Patricia. She ironically rejects the construction workers’ comments (earlier, she would probably have replied to them with sentimental emphasis) and, looking at the baby, begins to tell her story. One may understand this behavior as symbolic support for new values: true love for another person and identity constructed individually by means of one’s own language, not hackneyed clichés of actions and emotions. Therefore, parody helps the protagonist not only to undermine certain rules governing the world but, most of all, to build a real basis for existence (thus one may speak here of subversion).

Conclusion

Is it possible to tell oneself and about oneself anew? Can one narrativize his or her own affective reactions, emotions and facts from his or her life so that they form a true and complete identity? The analysis of Patrick “Kitten” Braden’s narration of identity – multi-level and multi-aspect narration – allows us to answer the questions positively. It is also worth adding that the model of narration in *Breakfast on Pluto* is a subversive, bodily model of traditional discourse. The fragmentariness and poetics of parody apparently make it incomplete (as they conduct a stylistic and compositional transformation within the proposed pattern of an autobiographical novel by J. M. Coetzee). However, such implementation of the discourse has been perfectly adjusted to the subject telling the story. It expresses the processuality of the construction and existence of his identity. Therefore, paradoxically, Patrick’s story does not destabilize his subjectivity and reality but makes the protagonist’s internal, bodily world and space-time around him more coherent as a result.

Breakfast on Pluto is an interesting example of narrativization of one's own life by a movie character. The fact of creating one's own narrations and using the existing narrative patterns within a movie with a predefined narrative structure shows how complex the creation of narration within one medium may be and how interesting results it may bring in relation to the issues of autofictionality and autobiography.

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