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Recycling contexts : reconstructing gender identities in Daniel MacIvor's A Beautiful View and Never Swim Alone

Recycling Contexts

Reconstructing Gender Identities in Daniel MacIvor's *A Beautiful View* and *Never Swim Alone*

Michaela Pňačeková

I. Introduction

In this article, I will pinpoint trends towards resistance of gender ideologies and the promotion of gender and sexuality fluidity in contemporary drama, not only as we see it in real life, but also as a means to completely deconstruct the gender binaries available only in art forms. More specifically, this article focuses on the reconstruction of gender identities in dramatic discourse based on a comparative study of two plays, *Never Swim Alone* (1991) and *A Beautiful View* (2006), published in *I Still Love You: Five Plays* (2006) by the Canadian playwright Daniel MacIvor. These two plays were chosen, firstly, because they share the same author and thus the same style and cultural context, and, secondly, for their challenging virtue: they try to question normative ideas about gender and sexuality in contemporary drama *via* the usage of language and gender ideologies. However, the main question is whether this attempt is successful. More concretely, to examine the ways language recontextualizes in order to reconstruct gender identities this article uses various sociolinguistic theories of recontextualization (Gumperz 1982), performativity (Butler 1990, 1993, 1997), iconicity (Gal, Ir-

vine 2000), and indexicality (Silverstein 1979, 2005; Ochs 1992). I take a poststructuralist stance in regard to subject positioning (Baxter 2003), hence ask: To what degree are gender identities constructed by gendered discourses (Sunderland 2004) and ideologies? And, to what extend is the use of these for deconstruction and irony efficient? I should also stress the article's slightly un-conventional application of language ideologies and socio-linguistic theories in the analyzing of dramatic discourse.[1]

II. Methodology—Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis

Poststructuralist discourse analysis (PDA) is an analytic tool that is embedded in poststructuralist approaches to such notions as discourse, power, subject, and identity. And there are some differences that arise when comparing PDA to critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA, on the one hand, assumes that some social groups have power; therefore, it focuses on analysis of such groups and their linguistic means of gaining and preserving that power. PDA, on the other hand, focuses on the shifts and ambiguities of power relationships according to changes in discursive contexts. PDA's primary focus is, thus, on subject positioning, not on the means of power preservation by one social group. Another crucial difference is that PDA sees materiality differently than CDA—i.e., in Butler's view it cannot function outside the range of discourse, hence material realities are hard to separate conceptually from social realities. Baxter (2003: 10) claims that,

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[1] In this case "dramatic text" means written drama, a script to be played. I distinguish between "dramatic text" and "dramatic discourse" in the sense that the latter involves processes that happen between the dramatic text and its context, basically their dialectics. Moreover, I also use "discourse" in the Foucauldian sense, as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972: 49), and as "different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practice" (Fairclough 1992: 43).

> competing discourses work to determine and fix the meanings of the material world and hence our experience of social realities […] Thus experience of material and social realities are always produced discursively so that people's identities and subject positions as speakers are being continuously reconstructed and open to redefinition through discourse, but never outside it.

Moreover, contrary to CDA, PDA involves a deconstructive reading of the text; it challenges commonly shared knowledge such as male/female oppositions (and the hierarchical relations often seen between them) or the sex/gender binary. It, thus, creates alternative approaches to social realities and new effective strategies.

III. Ideologization in Dramatic Discourses

The main focus here is on the first part of the theatre process, and that is the dramatic text, the touchstone of a performance (unless it is an improvisation or a happening). With regard to the text ideologization that comes with a reader's interpretation, the reader is here considered to be the translator/dramaturge/director, one who becomes a crucial part of the semiotic process of staging a play. Hence, the dramatic text becomes the first layer of the complex theatre semiotics: a discourse between the author (sender, addresser), dramatic text (message), and the reader—the director, translator (the receiver, addressee). I will focus, however, only on gendered discourses that "ideologize" both the writer's encoding and the reader's decoding of the text.

Firstly, the ideologization process begins on the level of the author, whose voice comprises many other voices (Bakhtin 1981) and discourses. Secondly, the reader is another participant in this dialogic process; therefore, the response to the text and its interpretation varies. Some readers might interpret it according to the author's intentions, some might recognize the intentions and yet reject them, and some interpret it very freely. Nonetheless, their concretizations al-

ways include text ideologization: the reader projects her or his ideology, which originates from other discourses. For instance, the discourse of heteronormativity imposes certain presuppositions on the author of the text and on the reader, who then infers certain meanings based on these "heteronormative" presuppositions, which are linguistically transformed into the discourse. In *A Beautiful View* (2006), heteronormative discourse reconstructs Liz's and Mitch's relationship. Not only do they perform their relationship, but they also talk about it and, thus, recreate it:

> LIZ: I'd have to stop naming things. "I am a," "We are a." "She is a." If we could only let it be what it is and be what it is and be okay with that. "A friendship." "A love affair." "A soulmate." Those are just names so other people can feel comfortable … (MacIvor 2006: 241)

This is a perfect example of how Mitch's and Liz's relationship is reconstructed in their language. Here we can see how difficult it is for Liz to label their relationship, and these "unsuccessful" forms of deixis[2] presuppose the heterosexual hegemonic discourse (heteronormativity) that discriminates against homosexuality.
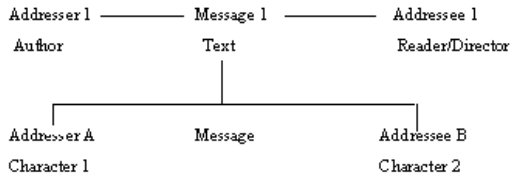
I draw upon Silverstein's notion of linguistic ideologies as "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (1979: 193). Another important concept is the Foucauldian (1972) notion of truth "constituted only within discourses that sustain and are sustained by power. That is, all truth is constituted by ideology, if ideology is understood to be power-linked discourse" (Schiefflin, et al. 1998: 7). Hence, language and gendered ideologies are understood here as power-based discourses with ideological aspects of linguistic gendered differentiation. The notion of gendered

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[2] Deixis is the means by which the relationship between language and context is expressed in the structure of language. The grammatical features it uses are demonstratives, first and second person pronouns, tense, specific time and place adverbs like *now* and *here*.
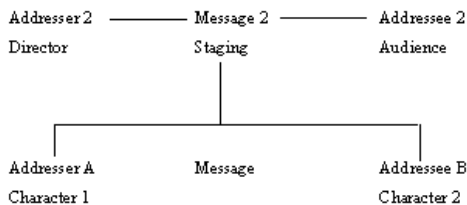
(not only speech) differences (male talk/female talk) is considered an ideological and power-linked discourse. Such ideologies and discourses are crucial in identity construction, as subjects are positioned in them. Schiefflin, et al. (1998: 5) explain the dialectical relationship between language ideology and social practice and identification: "language ideology stands in dialectical relation with—and thus significantly shapes—social, discursive, and linguistic practices." It is a link between social forms and forms of talk. Language ideologies are not only about language, but they also endorse ties to identity as well as other parts of social life—that is, social institutions such as religious ritual, child socialization, gender relations, the nation-state, schooling, and the law (Schiefflin, et al. 1998).

Figure 1
Dramatic and Theatre Semiotic Processes

Level 1 – the text

Addresser 1 ——————— Message 1 ——————— Addressee 1

Author   Text   Reader/Director

Addresser A   Message   Addressee B

Character 1   Character 2

Level 2 – the staging

Addresser 2 ——————— Message 2 ——————— Addressee 2

Director   Staging   Audience

Addresser A   Message   Addressee B

Character 1   Character 2

IV. Text, Context, Dramatic Discourse

Figure 1 illustrates the discursive features of a dramatic text. Mick Short's schema (1996) was used as the basis; however, my approach also uses the interpretative level ignored by Short, by employing one of Osolsobě's (2002) semiotic ideas about communication, its metalinguistic features: "theatre is a communication of communications about communication." All in all, as this analysis concerns only the dramatic text, the model is purposefully simplistic (i.e., it does not concern theatre processes in greater detail).

In the dramatic text, several "texts" can be distinguished. In Fischer-Lichte's terminology (1983), there are:

- the *Haupttext* (the main text)—that is, the dialogue or monologue itself (speech acts, utterances);

- the *Nebentext*—that is, the extra-dialogic text which contextualizes the dialogue.

The *Nebentext* comprises the names of the characters and the stage directions which create the extra-linguistic reality of the text being produced on the stage. These texts work dialectically: each constructs the other. Moreover, there is an interpretational context, which comprises the author's, the reader's, and finally the viewer's contexts. The concretization of the text is the result of a directorial concretization that proceeds from the directorial context, and then is confronted by the spectatorial context. Both contexts "have something in common: *the socio-cultural context*" (de Toro 1995: 110). Those discourses that are part of the socio-cultural context reflecting itself through language and constructing gender ideologies are understood here as *gendered discourses* (heteronormative discourse, discourse of gender differences, and so on), Sunderland identifies them as those that usually position "women and men in different ways, i.e., they are constitutive" (2004: 21). Finally, the term *dramatic discourse* includes all the dialectical relations between the

text, the context and the socio-cultural discourses. The next example will illustrate the dramatic discourse dialectics.

The dialectics of dramatic discourse—the ability to construct its contexts—is an important aspect of dramatic and theatrical semiotics. This is mainly due to the performative character of dramatic texts. The theoretical take on dramatic performativity stems from Austin's theory of performative speech acts. Austin (1975) claims that there have to be conventions and felicitous conditions for an act to be performative (such as a baptism or wedding). However, the rules for bringing that which we name into being vary in different theories. Butler (1993: 5) took performativity theory outside the realm of language, considering it "the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names, but, rather, as that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains." Every personal act is political, "our most personal acts are, in fact, continually being scripted by hegemonic social conventions and ideologies" (Butler 1997: 7).

When applying Austin's and Butler's theory to dramatic discourse, every utterance pronounced by a character becomes a (speech) act;[3] and "within speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names" (Butler 1993: 13). A speech act can, thus, produce that which it names, however only by reference to law (accepted norm, code, contract), which is cited or repeated (and thus performed) in the pronouncement. Characters arise *via* speech acts—and thus, in drama, every speech act is performative. They not only change the world but also recreate it. And as theatre is an imaginative system where the characters "act" and "the stage is the world," speech acts are acts in their very existence.

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[3] Butler's theory itself is based on theatre. "But the theatrical sense of an 'act' forces a revision of the individualist assumptions underlying the more restricted view of constituting acts within phenomenological discourse. As a given temporal duration within the entire performance, 'acts' are a shared experience and 'collective action'" (1988: 525).

In dramatic discourses, contexts are created in *Haupttext* as well as in *Nebentext,* which can be changed quickly and easily, thanks to the performative force of dramatic discourse. For instance, *Never Swim Alone* starts with a stage direction: "Up centre a tall referee chair, stage left a small table and chair for Bill, stage left a small table and chair for Frank. A scoreboard" (MacIvor 2006: 3). The extra-situational context reminds one of a TV competition. However, shortly after the greetings, the Referee says:

> A beach. A bay. The point. Two boys on a beach. Late afternoon ... Nearby is a girl ... She turns her head a little over her shoulder and speaks to the boys: "Race you to the point?"
> This is the beach.
> Here is the bay.
> There is the point. (MacIvor 2006: 5)

The Referee changes the context from a room the competition takes place in to a beach in the past (due to the performative force of theatrical discourses). Shortly afterwards, she changes the situational context again when she blows her whistle and says, "Round one: Stature" (MacIvor 2006: 5) starting the competition. These are typical instances of contextual construction in dramatic discourse. The first is constructed by stage directions (*Nebentext*), the second by the character's speech (*Haupttext*). The difference between them is not only on the discursive level, but also the linguistic means they use. The stage directions use full nouns ("centre," "chair," "stage left," "stage right," "a scoreboard"), while the Referee's speech is full of deictic features ("this," "here," "there"). The Referee constructs her own context.

In *A Beautiful View*, the main theme is the relationship between two women through which feminine gender and homosexuality are addressed and also constructed. This theme becomes essentially the plot of the play; and, as it develops, the two protagonists enact various scenes from their relationship from the beginning to the end, for example their

first encounter, first love-making, first fight, and so on. Liz
and Mitch "perform" a show about their relationship.

> LIZ: We should start.
> MITCH: From where?
> LIZ: From the very beginning. (MacIvor 2006: 206)

The two characters are going to depict the story of their rela-
tionship to the audience. In the example above, the three
speech acts presuppose and construct a certain context at the
same time—their relationship. This theme is then contextu-
alized into the structure of the play—into the plot—the con-
textual level of the dramatic discourse. The story of the rela-
tionship between two women functions as a certain dis-
course in which femininities are positioned.

Another crucial characteristic of dramatic discourse is its
metalinguistic aspect, which is another part of language-
context dialectics. The following instance demonstrates this
metalinguistic characteristic:

> FRANK & BILL: How's things?
> Can't complain.
> How's the family?
> Just great.
> How's the business?
> Well a whole heck of a lot better than it was this time
> last year let me tell you.
> Ha ha ha.
> How's the blood pressure.
> *(aside and snide)* Ha ha ha. (MacIvor 2006: 6)

In this excerpt, simultaneous speech functions as an ironic
paraphrasing of small-talk conventions, and the irony is again
achieved *via* recontextualization of the metafeatures of lan-
guage. Also, concerning the semiotics of dramatic discourse,
there is the *metatextual*, or rather the *metadiscursive* feature of
language. Metadiscourse is discourse that uses discursive

means to discuss discourse itself.[4] The ironical paraphrasing of small-talk conventions *via* simultaneous speech, which stresses the rehearsed structure of small-talk, is also an instance of metadiscourse (metatalk), which functions ironically to disclose the uselessness of learned and meaningless small-talk phrases.

V. Recontextualization and Dramatic Structures

As already mentioned, language and context work dialectically; concretely, they do it *via* a specific characteristic of language—contextualization—which functions as an element of challenging certain notions of gender in dramatic discourse.

Gumperz (1982: 10) defines contextualization as "all activities by which participants activate, make relevant, maintain, revise, delimit, cancel—in short, index—any aspect of interactional context as relevant for locally situated meaning-making." The present article will understand contextualization also in the Bakhtinian sense (1981)—that is, the way genres (and speech styles in our case) contextualize talk and are, at the same time, dialogic. Language contextualization presupposes and, thus, recreates gendered stereotypical communication itself. In language ideology, this phenomenon works as a way of perpetuating stereotypes. In this context, speech styles as well as gendered discourses will serve as "genres" through which not only is context presupposed, but it is also constructed, and gender identities are positioned. In the following example from *Never Swim Alone*, Bill calls his wife. His speech is not contextualized in the previous utterances; therefore, all the contextualization processes take place in his speech.

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[4] Metadiscourse works in the same way as metalanguage and metatheatre, theatre that deals with theatre, language that talks about language (Regarding metalanguage and its metapragmatic features, see Silverstein 1993).

BILL: Hi doll! Listen sorry I was short with you before. Did you go ahead and had dinner anyway? Ahh. ... Well how bout I pick up a pizza on my way home? And a movie? Something funny? Something romantic! That sounds nice! Okay "Turnip." I do you too. Bye bye. *Frank and Bill hang up.*

(MacIvor 2006: 18)

Bill uses various contextualization devices or "cues" (Gumperz 1993: 234)—lexical, phonological, prosodic, and so on. His style of speech changes; he uses politeness devices ("sorry," "how bout," "That sounds nice!"), he expresses intimacy ("Hi doll!" "Okay Turnip." "I do you too.") Thanks to these contextualization devices, the reader can interpret that Bill is talking to someone close, concretely his female wife/lover ("doll"). He calls her a "doll" and "turnip," which downgrades her to an object; hence, male or female talk is here considered a speech style through which gender identities are not only indexed, but are also viewed as having a certain gendered discourse in which gender identities are positioned (She is positioned as an object of male desire).

Another ability of language that helps to determine the language-context relationship is recontextualization, which is the "linguistic ability to reconstitute contexts and to reproduce them in order to construct language ideologies" (Gumperz 1982). More specifically, it is a process that extracts certain parts of the text from its original context (decontextualization) and introduces it in another context in order to create different meanings. Per Linell defines it as "the dynamic transfer-and-transformation of something from one discourse/text-in-context ... to another" (1998: 154). Here language recontextualization is understood as the ability of language to reconstitute its contexts and, thus, to reproduce them in order to de/re/construct gender ideologies; it is also a process through which gender identities are constructed.

VI. Reconstructing Gender Identities in Contexts

Butler claims that "gender identity is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity, instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (1993: 17). Constructivism views identity as a social act. Redman (in Zábrodská 2009) defines identities as performative, always acted out through the subject positions created by language and other cultural codes: "Identity is a complicated social activity" (Zábrodská 2009: 13; my translation). To sum up, identity is a social act; it is performative; and it is co-produced by language. Combined with gender, which is seen as a socio-political construct based on the differences between males and females, gender identities are learned and performed. All in all, identities are constructed *via* subject positioning in various gendered discourses and ideologies.

In Butler's theory of performativity (1990), speech acts construct gender (and identity, as Zábrodská states) as well as reality itself, but they are a series of repeated discursive acts. Cameron and Kulick claim that "The classification of sexual desires, practices and identities does two things simultaneously: it produces categories and it labels them, gives them names" (2006: 24). Consequently, according to queer theory, gender and sexual identities are performative; therefore, it can be said that they are constituted through discursive histories of repeated acts of identification.

In terms of the dramatic text, this means that every (speech) act "done" by a character has already been scripted in other discourses. The input is not made only by the originator of the work, the author: gender is constructed via *hegemonic discourses* and ideologies. But, where does change come into play? In the Derridian sense (1987), repetition is inherently flawless; thus, it is susceptible to change and subversion. Thanks to these misrepresentations, challenging discourses arise. This article claims to explore these sites of change: it looks at dramatic texts that challenge gendered ideologies, heterosexual hegemony and gender/sex binaries.

VII.   Reconstructing Gender in the Realm of Language Ideologies: Indexicality

The relationship between language and gender involves a complicated interaction of language ideologies mapped to standardized social gender norms in tension with collective and individual action (Ochs 1993). Indexicality, as a context-based form of language, can be understood as a linguistic feature of gendered language ideologies, since it reflects the direct relationship of language and context. Ochs defines indexicality as a "property of speech through which cultural contexts such as social identities (gender) and social activities are constituted by particular instances or acts" (1993: 338). As has been mentioned earlier, gender differences can be understood as forms of language ideology, hence enforcing certain presupposed ideas upon the speakers. Moreover, the relation of language and gender is constituted by the relation of language to acts, and communicational practices sustain these gender hierarchies. Gendered acts are performative; therefore, *via* indexing gender, we also perform and construct our identities at the same time. Because performance and identity construction both involve indexing, indexicality can be used performatively, and as a means of breaching gendered language ideologies.

The following interaction reflects the stereotyped female talk focused on relationships; in a narrower pragmatic sense, it focuses on establishing rapport. It demonstrates how the women affirm their relationship.

> LIZ: And we have all this weird stuff in common.
> MITCH: We both have the same birthday.
> MITCH: And neither of us can swim.
> LIZ: And we're both terrified of bears.
>
>   (MacIvor 2006: 233)

In this set of speech acts, the women express the stances they have in common and, thus, establish togetherness. I am taking Sara Mills's (2003) stance that the dominance/differ-

ence binary approach is obsolete in the language and gender debate. Therefore, I take Janet Holmes' (1997)[5] language and gender universals as gendered discourse in which gender identities are positioned. Firstly, she says that women tend to focus on the affective functions of an interaction more than men. Secondly, women tend to use linguistic devices that stress solidarity more often than men do. Thirdly, women tend to interact in ways that will maintain and increase solidarity, while (especially in formal contexts) men tend to interact in ways that will maintain and increase their own power and status (Holmes, in Bergvall 1999: 281).[6] These universals, when stressed or hyperbolized, work as stereotypes of feminine talk, and as gendered discourses *via* which identities are re/constructed. However, in the play, neither hyperbolization nor parody of gender stereotypes is spotted: it focuses on the construction of sexual rather than gender identity.

The following shows a specific conversational pattern of the characters in *A Beautiful View*, and demonstrates various ways that femininities are positioned in gendered discourses of speech differences—indexing ways in which feminine speech behaviour differentiates from the masculine.

> LIZ: Hi.
> MITCH: Hi. Remember me? We met at Outdoor Outfitters? The Girl in The Tent?
> LIZ: Oh yeah hey hi.
> MITCH: Hi. […]
> LIZ: (*re: band*) They're great eh?
> MITCH: Yeah. A moment. So do you really play guitar?
> LIZ: You mean was I lying?

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[5] In her research, Holmes focuses on the difference model (later also the dominance model) of gendered communication. She looks at gender difference as cultural difference (for instance, in the same way accents index social status, male/female linguistic differences index gender).

[6] We have to be aware that these universals may be used to perpetuate stereotypes rather than to challenge them. In the present article, they will serve as devices testing gender construction and to answer whether they are used as a means of stereotype deconstruction or perpetuation.

MITCH: No I mean like, are you good?
LIZ: I'm okay
MITCH: No yeah but no yeah.
LIZ: I'm okay.
MITCH: No I just, in case I lost my guitar player or something. (MacIvor 210)

This excerpt comes from the beginning of the second scene, which is Liz and Mitch's second encounter. The women do not know each other very well yet, hence the wide range of pragmatic features expressing solidarity (assumptions, tentations),[7] emotiveness (discourse markers), and indirectness (hedges). After the greeting, Mitch poses a series of three questions which express uncertainty and, thus, indirectness as well as politeness. The last two questions appear as tentations, indirect speech acts, which are signs of politeness in English conversation. Liz's answers are a series of pragmatic markers, finishing with the greeting "hi." The pragmatic markers "oh" and "yeah" express surprise and then confirm the reception of information by the hearer. Liz is first surprised, but the pragmatic markers "hey" and the final "hi" express recognition. These two sentences are perfect examples of politeness and indirectness in conversation. Another pragmatic marker "eh" is used as a tag question asking for confirmation, which may express an attempt to establish solidarity between the two speakers (also indexing their "Canadianness"). The next question follows, starting with the pragmatic marker "so," which signals a new thought but is also referential to a preceding utterance (in scene 1, they were talking about Mitch's band); the assumption is meant only as a continuation of the preceding conversation—however, Liz's reaction is defensive. Therefore, Mitch includes in her response a series of hedges—for example, "I

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[7] Tentations are lexical markers which emphasize the assumptiveness of the assertions—for example, hypothetical verbs (*I suppose, assume*), hearsay verbs (*I understand*), inferential adverbs (*then, so*), potential adverbs (*perhaps, possibly*), adverbs of assurance (*doubtless, of course*), and impersonal expressions (*it must be that, it is to be hoped*) (Urbanová 2003: 39).

mean like"—to be more indirect and to weaken the assumption. Her next response expresses a great degree of uncertainty—"no yeah but no yeah"—where she expresses negation, then confirmation again, then hedges it, and does the same again. This expresses not just uncertainty, but also a great degree of awkwardness, as the assumption "Do you really play guitar?" has a competitive illocutionary force: it expresses doubt and, therefore, is intrinsically impolite. Mitch is trying to get out of this uncomfortable situation by hedging all of her statements, including the last one ("I just," "in case," "or something").

This is the way in which dramatic dialogue indexes feminine gender and, thus, positions feminine identities in gendered speech ideologies. In such ideologies, female talk is more affectionate, communicative, polite, and affirmative than male talk, but it is also more insecure. These examples demonstrate how, on the difference model, the stereotype of women's polite conversation and solidarity constructs the feminine gender. Hence, Gender is constructed dialectically; on a dialogic level, female talk indexes the establishing and affirmation of relationships; this is then recontextualized in the plot (the story of the relationship of the main characters). The stereotypical notion of women talking about relationships becomes the main theme. Hence, gender is co-constructed on the contextual level of dramatic discourse. The theme of the relationship and the plot (which lies on the contextual level of the discourse), as well as the conversation itself, indicates the stereotype of feminine identification that women talk and focus on relationships. The main focus is on sexual identity construction (Are the two women lovers, partners or just friends?); however, gender identities are constructed stereotypically, and the lack of challenge is seen due to the absence of irony and hyperbolization. Femininities are positioned in stereotypical gendered discourses through the indexicality of certain linguistic features. These facts stand in great opposition to the competitive conversational model in *Never Swim Alone*.

In *Never Swim Alone*, there are three characters: Frank and Bill and a woman, the Referee. In contrast to *A Beautiful View*, this play does challenge stereotypical gendered conversation (masculine), and it does this through the principle of language recontextualization. According to Holmes' gender difference universals, women tend to express higher solidarity in their speech, while men tend to "interact in ways that will maintain and increase their power and status" (Bergvall 1999: 281). Among other stereotypes, the aggressiveness and competitiveness of men's speech prevail. The play takes the form of a competition of thirteen rounds in which the two men compete, first through linguistic means, later through physicality. When they compete linguistically, they are speaking together, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes through a dialogic monologue (Mukařovský 2001).

Here masculinity is constructed on the structural level of the play's discourse (the structure) and in the extra-linguistic reality (the body); and it is also indexed *via* the two men's speech. In this play, masculine performance—physical as well as linguistic—is the main theme. The most masculine talk wins. Frank says after winning the first round:

> … And if I might, I would like to start off with a favourite quote of mine: "We do not place especial value on the possession of virtue until we notice its total absence in our opponent." Friedrich Nietzsche.
>
> (MacIvor 2006: 6)

After winning the second round, Bill says:

> … And I'd also like to add a bit of a quote myself, as my old man always used to say: "If bullshit had a brain it would quote Nietzsche." Thank you. (MacIvor 2006: 8)

Bill uses the quote ironically to offend Frank and is actually implying that quoting Nietzsche is "stupid." The main aim is to win over the opponent by showing him that the other is more "masculine," by positioning their identities in various masculinity discourses (talking about women, money) where

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power is the main element. There are no examples of tentativeness and solidarity in their speech. If they cannot take the floor completely, they just talk simultaneously; they use imprecatives such as "bullshit," "shit," "fuck you"; and, in the end, their rough speech is replaced by physical violence.

In the following excerpt, Frank uses incomprehensible stock-market jargon ("preferreds," "hard call protection," and "rolling it into goodwill") to create his understanding of money and the stock market—thus, positioning his masculinity in the "money-means-power discourse."

> FRANK: You've got auction preferreds yielding seventy percent of prime and 50/51 up either side what do you want to do? Convert with three year hard call protection, two-year pay back, the hedge is a lay up? I don't think so. I say capitalize the loss by rolling it into goodwill and amortizing over forty years. Of course profits will be decreased by the itch from FIFO to LIFO. And then remember Bethlehem! Where application of FASBY 87 meant balance sheet quality went way down because of the unfunded pension liability. I mean if we were in the clear I could offer at one half and give up an eighth to the market maker for three eighths net fill, but unfortunately we're not. Are you with me?
> *BILL takes Frank's cigar and puts it out in the palm of his hand.* […] *REFEREE gives the victory to BILL.*
>
> (MacIvor 2006: 23)

Although Frank constructs his masculinity *via* successfully positioning himself in the stock-market discourse, he does not win. It is, again, physical power that wins the round.

VIII. Reconstructing Gender in the Realm of Language Ideologies: Iconization

As mentioned already, in *Never Swim Alone* stereotyped masculine interaction is recontextualized on the structural level of dramatic discourse; hence, gender is constructed on the

contextual level, which comprises the structure and the motifs of the play. Also, verbal aggressiveness is transformed into physical violence, thus lying in the contextual level of the discourse. Verbal competitiveness and aggressiveness is transformed in the structure of the play—stereotypical gendered speech patterns and the linguistic features that index masculine gender (the competitive talk) are recontextualized into the structure—the structure takes the form of the competition. The process of iconization occurs. Gal and Irvine (2000: 37) define iconization as

> a process that involves transformation of the sign relationship between linguistic features (or varieties) and the social images they are linked with. Linguistic features that index social groups or activities appear to be iconic representations of them, as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group's inherent nature or essence ... By picking out qualities supposedly shared by the social image and linguistic image, the ideological representation—itself a sign—binds them together in a linkage that appears to be inherent.

In the present analysis, iconization (the process) is used in a "structural" sense—that is, as a transformation of a sign relationship between text and its structure (*enstructuralization*). The stereotype of male/female (speech) differences is transformed into the dramatic structure which becomes an iconic representation of this communicational gendered stereotype. Concretely, in *Never Swim Alone* this stereotype acquires the resemblance of a competition between two men. All in all, the ideology of male/female talk is recontextualized (when language co-constructs its contexts) or rather enstructuralized in the structure and extra-linguistic contexts of the dramatic text. In language ideology, iconization works to perpetuate stereotypes; however, because the *Haupttext*, the *Nebentext*, and the contextual levels (structure, setting) of dramatic discourse work dialectically, iconization works in the opposite direction, as a way to breach stereotypes.

As mentioned, Frank and Bill compete in rounds, and every time one wins, he gets the floor and is allowed a mono-logue. In a tie, Frank and Bill just talk simultaneously:

REFEREE ends the round. She calls a tie. FRANK and BILL speak simultaneously, the capitalized phrases time out to be spoken in unison.

FRANK: Please be warned that if you think I'm going to stand here and start dishing dirt and airing laundry about HIS FATHER, I won't. But let's just say the desperation he displays comes from HIS FATHER.

BILL: Now this is more than name calling here although of course that is the temptation but HIS FATHER drove his mother crazy. I mean she did have a drinking problem but HIS FATHER didn't help at all.

(MacIvor 2006: *22*)

The topic of this monologic dialogue (Mukařovský 2001) is the recurring theme of "the father-figure," and the aim here is to see who can use him to offend the other the most. Simultaneous speech metaphorically mirrors the power relationship: the one who takes the floor is the strongest. The contest becomes very theatrical, but also indexical to the stereotype of men's speech: the one who wins gets to speak, and gets the stage for himself. Hence, he "rules" the stage. The next example is an instance of taking the floor force-fully by Frank, who physically attacks Bill: this, again, ad-dresses the topic of competitiveness. This is the moment when the aggression becomes physical violence, which again indexes the masculine communicational stereotype.

FRANK: I'd like to make a few things clear. These are my ears, these are my eyes, this is the back of my hand. *FRANK strikes BILL with the back of his hand. BILL goes down.*
And the winner has, and will always, rule. That is the way of the world. Like battle, like business, like love. A few may fall along the way but compared to the prize what are a few. And the prize is what you want and what

you want is what you hear in every mouth, every buzz, every bell, every crack, every whisper: "me, my, mine." Don't be afraid. The thing we must learn is how to balance compassion and desire. For example: Bill? You like this tie?
FRANK takes his tie off and puts it around BILL's neck.
Have it.
FRANK yanks on the tie. (MacIvor 2006: 32)

In Frank's monologue, masculinity is positioned mostly within discourses of power (physical, financial, heterosexual, ownership). These gendered discourses are then iconized in the play's structure (It is a competition of the best performed masculinity). In the first two rounds, masculinity is constructed by performing the body. In round one, "Stature," they compete as to height, and Frank wins. In round two, titled "Uniform," they compete in regard to who has better socks, and Bill wins. The gender stereotype that is indexed in these two rounds is that only the taller, better-dressed man can be a winner. Thus, masculinity is not only constructed *via* language but also *via* the body, which resides in the extra-linguistic reality constituted in our minds and which is part of the discursive level of discourse. As the play develops, the competition becomes more violent; the men become more offensive, both verbally and physically. The competition ends with a fight, and the two men aim guns at each other. In round six, "Members Only," masculinity is again performed by the body, as they compare their penises. It is again a tie.

Thanks to visible hyperbolization of the gendered discourses in which Frank's and Bill's masculinities are positioned, as well as thanks to the iconization processes, *Never Swim Alone*, in contrast to *A Beautiful View*, uses every stereotype of masculine behaviour to construct an ironic play about masculinity.

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IX. Conclusion

This article's aim was to show the language/context relation in various discursive and semiotic processes that take place in dramatic discourse, and the ways these re/construct gender identities. It can be said that, in MacIvor's plays, gender is constructed *via* a linguistic ability to index and iconize gendered speech patterns. Gender construction happens on the conversational level *via* speech acts through which the characters "do" and "create" their gender, and on the contextual level *via* language recontextualization. The speech acts also presuppose certain contexts (for example, certain notions of gender) thanks to their social indexicality. Gender is constructed through the semiotic processes of male/female talk recontextualized on the extra-linguistic level of the dramatic discourse (its structure, plot, motifs). Thus, gender construction happens on the contextual level of dramatic discourse; and, if taken further, it is recreated in the discursive level, because language contextualization presupposes and, thus, recreates gendered stereotypical communication itself. In language ideology, this phenomenon works as a way of perpetuating stereotypes: in dramatic discourse, it should work in the opposite direction.

In *A Beautiful View*, Liz and Mitch's femininity is constructed *via* positioning their identities in the discourse of gendered speech differences—by using tentativeness, by establishing rapport, and by talking about their relationship. However, in this case, it is not a purposeful parody of gendered discourse, but rather an ideologization of femininity construction. Whereas, in *Never Swim Alone*, by constructing masculinity *via* positioning it in various gendered discourses and using them in other contexts (iconization), this results in an ironic, even parodical effect that deconstructs masculine stereotypes. The stereotype of competitive speech behaviour is recontextualized into the structure of the play, which is the competition itself.

All in all, by hyperbolizing gender ideologies in *Never Swim Alone*, MacIvor is being ironic about them. His characters position themselves purposefully in gendered binary discourses, constructing masculine and feminine gender through the difference model. In the play, male conversational stereotypes are exaggerated in order to show their absurdity; masculinity is made even "more masculine" and femininity "more feminine" *via* iconicity and the indexicality of each gender's supposed linguistic features.

Conversely, in *A Beautiful View* Mitch and Liz are constructed stereotypically—as two women whose whole conversation revolves around their relationship, and whose identities are positioned in the discourse of speech gender differences (women are more polite and show greater solidarity). Hence, due to a lack of hyperbolization and irony, their performance is not parodical and enforces certain gender ideologies.

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Abstract

This article focuses on gender reconstruction in dramatic discourse based on a comparison of Daniel MacIvor's *Never Swim Alone* (1991) and *A Beautiful View* (2006). It is divided into two parts; in the first, the focus is on theoretical applications of contextual theories (recontextualization) to the discursive processes of dramatic texts. In the second part, language recontextualization will be used as a process through which gender identities and ideologies are reconstructed. Ochs's (1993) theory of social indexicality and Gal's and Irvine's (2000) language ideology theory (which includes iconicity) will be taken as processes of recontextualization that function as a means of gender reconstruction. The semiotics of dramatic discourse will be discussed as well: the conversational level

of dramatic discourse (the dialogic level) and the contextual level of dramatic discourse (which also comprises the transformation of metalanguage into the structure and main motifs of the plays) will be considered in order to examine gender reconstruction. The article explores stereotypical gendered communication and gendered ideologies as a means of reconstructing gender identities in regard to both their employment in dramatic discourse and their dramatic potential to shift stereotypical notions of gender.

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