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Blanche and Stanley, polar opposites. A pragmastylistic analysis of interactions from Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Abstract

The paper is an attempt at demonstrating how the language used by fictional dramatic characters contributes to their characterization, that is, how the readers (audiences) perceive them based on inferences drawn from a variety of textual cues. These cues include explicit self- and other-presentation as well as implicit hints retrieved from conversation structure, aspects of turn-taking or features of the language used by the character. In this paper, Blanche DuBois and Stanley Kowalski from Tennessee Williams' play *The Streetcar Named Desire* are analyzed and characterized as being polar opposites.

Keywords: American drama, pragmatics, pragmastylistics, characterization

The approach – theoretical background

The combination of stylistics with pragmatics and aspects of conversation analysis is an approach that lends itself particularly well to the analysis of dramatic dialogues. Fictional as they are, dramatic dialogues can be analyzed with the same tools and frameworks as naturally-occurring conversation. Traditionally, linguists have favored examples derived from authentic, naturally-occurring speech over the invented, inauthentic ones that are sometimes dismissed as unable to reflect the complexity of spoken language. Jucker and Locher[1] review a number of attitudes that linguists have had towards fictional language and contend that while in the past fictional, written language did not seem reliable enough for pragmaticists, a shift has been observed that led to the treatment of fictional language as an interesting variety in its own right. Moreover, there have been new areas of research that do not rely on strictly literary language, but on dialogues found in movie scripts and even sitcoms. This is the result of a realization that dramatic dialogue, though

[1] A. H. Jucker and M. A. Locher, *Introducing Pragmatics of Fiction: Approaches, trends and developments*, [in:] *Pragmatics of Fiction*, eds. A. H. Jucker and M. A. Locher, Berlin 2017, p. 1-22.

somewhat more contrived and more 'rehearsed' compared to everyday speech, does in fact reflect the same mechanisms that govern naturally-occurring interactions. Mick Short[2], who has written quite extensively about the contextual embeddedness of drama and how the layers of discourse interact within a play or performance, argues that "when sensitive and experienced readers interact with a play-text they in effect infer how the play would be performed on the stage" and provides a list of 'systems', or frameworks, which allow us to infer performance features from texts of plays; including: background knowledge or schemata that pre-set our contextual expectations, the implicature (inferencing) framework, politeness theories, turn-taking, speech act theory, sociolinguistic conventions, the meaning of sound, grammatical structure and lexis[3]. Consequently, an informed reader is able to infer character from the dialogue and occasional secondary text. McIntyre and Bousfield[4] note that works of fiction give us access to characters' thoughts, motivations, and intentions; and as a result, enable us to interpret their utterances (and interactions with other characters) better than we would in real life.

1. Characterization

There are a number of approaches to character in fiction (cf. Eder et al.[5]) which largely depend on the discipline. For the purposes of this paper, a view of character as a representation of human being will dominate, considered in the specific contextual frame comprising the context of production (the historical background of the play), the context of the fictional world (the 'as-if world'; the setting of the play) and the co-text, or the way that dialogues unfold to reveal character relations and emergent phenomena such as conflict.

One of the ways in which we arrive at conclusions (judgments, opinions) about fictional characters is through the application of certain schemata. As McIntyre and Bousfield[6] remark, a schema refers to our background knowledge that helps us establish expectations of a situation, place or person, based on our experience and

[2] M. Short, *From dramatic text to dramatic performance*, [in:] *Exploring the Language of Drama: from Text to Context*, eds. J. Culpeper, M. Short and P. Verdonk, London−New York 1998, p. 9.

[3] Ibidem, p. 13.

[4] D. McIntyre and D. Bousfield, *(Im)politeness in Fictional Texts*, [in:] *The Palgrave Handbook of Linguistic (Im)politeness*, eds. J. Culpeper, M. Haugh and D.Z. Kadar, London 2017, p. 759-784.

[5] J. Eder, F. Jannidis and R. Schneider, *Characters in Fictional Worlds: An Introduction*, [in:] *Characters in Fictional Worlds. Understanding Imaginary Beings in Literature, Film and Other Media*, eds. J. Eder, F. Jannidis and R. Schneider, Berlin 2011, p. 3-66.

[6] D. McIntyre and D. Bousfield, *(Im)politeness…*, op. cit., p. 759-784.

interaction or exposure to other people's views, the media or literature. Schemata are sometimes divided into frames, representing permanent typical characteristics, and scripts that refer to the logical, expected development in relation to the situation (place, person). As we read, we consider the context of the exchanges relying on our schemata and assess the characters' linguistic behavior. In this way, the schema theory contributes 'top-down' to characterization.

A variety of textual cues, in turn, constitute the 'bottom-up' approach, laid out in detail by Culpeper[7] and Culpeper and Fernandez-Quintanilla[8]. The two approaches applied together allow us to correlate certain attributes, verbal behaviors or cues with certain characteristics. Culpeper[9] emphasizes the assumption that his research concentrates on "perceptions in first encounters", which can be understood as legitimate reliance on the above-mentioned schematic, logical interpretations of situations and people. Still, pragmatic analyses are necessarily accompanied by reference to context, which facilitates the understanding of behaviors outside the schemata.

A comprehensive checklist of textual cues to character found in Culpeper[10] is divided into sets of explicit, implicit and authorial characterization cues, in relation to linguistic frameworks where applicable. The first set, explicit characterization cues, includes self-presentation (a character talks about themselves) and other--presentation (other characters talk about him or her). As will be shown on the examples from *Streetcar*, self-presentation is rarely reliable, as it is strategic and calculated for a desired effect. Similarly, other-presentation can be manipulative, for example, if the character speaking is the only source of information and has their own interests at heart. Implicit characterization cues form a broader category, because they convey character information that the reader must derive by inference. They include verbal and non-verbal cues, such as conversational structure, the character's lexis and grammar, paralinguistic and non-verbal features, as well as sociolinguistic cues such as dialect. Authorial cues include symbolic names and important features of the setting and broader context, found in stage directions. All of these will be returned to and considered in relation to the paper's title characters, Blanche DuBois and Stanley Kowalski from Tennessee Williams' play *A Streetcar Named Desire*, in order to indicate features of Williams' character construction of complete opposites.

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[7] J. Culpeper, *Language and characterisation: People in plays and other texts*, Harlow 2001.

[8] J. Culpeper, C. Fernandez-Quintanilla, *Fictional characterization*, [in:] *Pragmatics of Fiction*, eds. M.A. Locher, A.H. Jucker, Berlin 2017, p. 93-128.

[9] J. Culpeper, *Language and…*, op. cit., p. 163.

[10] Ibidem, p. 163-234.

2. Language of the play

Tennessee Williams' plays are often said to reflect the theatre trend called poetic realism. *Streetcar* is on the one hand poetic, highly lyrical and symbolic; and on the other – realistic, set in precisely described neighborhood in New Orleans. His characters are psychologically viable, coherent and multi-faceted, though through the verbosity of the plays they may seem grotesque. For the analyst, however, their loquaciousness is a tremendous source of insight into their character. Krasner[11] emphasizes the significance of music (background sounds) and poetic language of Williams' play that "elevate the melodramatic style of American drama to heretofore unexperienced levels" and quotes Arthur Miller, Williams' contemporary playwright, who said that Williams "had pushed language and character to the front of the stage". The lines spoken by characters often rely on such rhetorical devices as repetition, which makes their speech rhythmical and song-like; but their style also reflects the characters' status or background. While not being quite realistic, they may be said to conform to the principle of foregrounding, so typical of poetry. Foregrounding, as Simpson[12] says, "typically involves a stylistic distortion of some sort, either through an aspect of the text which deviates from a linguistic norm or, alternatively, where an aspect of the text is brought to the fore through repetition and parallelism". Therefore, some utterances in the play that sound unnatural, in fact, provide hints to characterization.

3. Blanche and Stanley, polar opposites

It should be noted that the historical context of the play's creation determines the perception of the characters, too. Released in 1947, the play reflects Williams' critical attitude towards American uniformity, conformity and homophobia that are said to have pervaded society of the post-war decade. Blanche's otherness and exceptional sensitivity have led her to being ostracized and literally driven out of town. As far as context is concerned, the most conspicuous variable here is power: a constant struggle for power between the two characters, and a certain symmetry of power – what Blanche has, Stanley does not – and vice versa. This struggle is violently won by Stanley in Scene Eight, when he rapes the weak, helpless and intoxicated Blanche.

[11] D. Krasner, *American Drama 1945-2000. An Introduction*, Malden 2006, p. 43.
[12] P. Simpson, *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*, London 2004, p. 50.

Returning now to Culpeper's[13] checklist of textual cues in characterization, we can see that both Stanley and Blanche explicitly present themselves in the presence of others, creating impressions of what they would like to be – or how they would like to be perceived. From the very beginning, Blanche takes care not to reveal too much about the reasons for her arrival and cautiously doses information while drawing her sister Stella's attention to other aspects, like her looks:

(1) Blanche: Now, then, let me look at you. But don't you look at me, Stella, no, no, no, not till I've bathed and rested!
(2) Blanche: (…) Now don't get worried, your sister hasn't turned into a drunkard, she's just all shaken up and hot and tired and dirty!
(3) Blanche: You haven't said a word about my appearance.

Stella: You look just fine.

Blanche: God love you for a liar! Daylight never exposed so total a ruin!

(4) Blanche: (…) I want you to look at *my* figure! [*She turns around*.] You know I haven't put one ounce in ten years, Stella?

Blanche is preoccupied with creating an impression; in the first scene it is in the presence of her sister, Stella. To quote Blanche's own words, she is 'fishing for a compliment' through the use of negative self-assessments, and her utterances foreground her obsessions: she craves for admiration and creates a world of illusion, constantly bathing (symbolic washing off her disgust with herself) and hiding from daylight. She thrives on others' attention. The first impression we have from these characterization cues is that Blanche is sensitive and fragile, insecure and perhaps immature in her behavior. Interestingly, self-presentation is an explicit textual cue, but one cannot help deriving a conviction that (2) generates an implicature: without Stella's reproach or even a slightest remark, Blanche feels obliged to make an excuse for pouring herself a drink. This little irrelevance signals to the reader that in fact it is the opposite – Blanche has a problem with alcohol.

Examples of Stanley's self-presentation make it evident just how he wants to be perceived and what aspects of his identity he values more than other ones. Even with limited resources, he retains his self-worth and a love of himself. Some of the lines include "Be comfortable is my motto" and "It looks to me like you have been swindled, baby, and when you're swindled under the Napoleonic code I'm swindled *too*. And I don't like to be *swindled*." Later in the play, in Scene Eight, we learn how offended Stanley is when he is taken for granted or not treated with the respect he thinks he deserves:

[13] J. Culpeper, *Language and…*, op. cit., p. 163-234.

(1) Stanley: (…) Don't ever talk that way to me! "Pig—Polack—disgusting—vulg ar—greasy!" —them kind of words have been on your tongue and your sister's too much around here! What do you two think you are? A pair of queens? Remember what Huey Long said — "Every man is a king!" And I am the king around here, so don't forget it! [*He hurls a cup and saucer to the floor*.] My place is cleared! You want me to clear your places?

(2) Blanche: (…) You healthy Polack, without a nerve in your body, of course you don't know what anxiety feels like!

Stanley: I am not a Polack. People from Poland are Poles, not Polacks. But what I am is a one-hundred-per-cent American, born and raised in the greatest country on earth and proud as hell of it, so don't ever call me a Polack.

Stanley is very face-sensitive about his background; he does not want to be associated with immigrants. He boasts to be one-hundred-per-cent American, and being a citizen of the greatest country, he feels entitled to his share of greatness. He will not take criticism and emphasizes his position by action – hurling plates to the floor. His turns are packed with imperatives, which emphasize his relative power.

Cohn[14] comments on Blanche's turn of phrase and behavior, pointing out that she believes in her role of a proper Southern lady most of the time: chronologically, throughout the play, she acts like a *grande dame* when she sees the Kowalskis' place; she behaves in a seductive manner towards Stanley; she protects her love letters from him; plays the refined lady with Mitch; insists on her (and her sister's) almost aristocratic background as she calls Stan an ape and attempts to see her role through to the end. In Scene Five, when Stanley confronts her with the revelations he learned about her past, Blanche insists on the image she has been creating of herself as a prim-and-proper lady:

(1) [*Blanche laughs breathlessly as she touches the cologne-dampened handkerchief to her temples*.]

Blanche: I'm afraid he does have me mixed up with this "other party." The Hotel Flamingo is not the sort of establishment I would dare to be seen in! (…) The odor of cheap perfume is penetrating.

Her body language reveals how haunted and frightened she is, but she asserts Stella and Stanley, in whose presence she delivers this turn, that she has fallen victim to malicious accusations of encounters with strangers in the cheap hotel Flamingo. Through her firm, zealous assurance of her superiority, Blanche convinces the readers of exactly the opposite. This self-presentation is clearly strategic: Blanche

[14] R. Cohn, *Dialogue in American drama*, Bloomington 1971, p. 103.

puts on a mask, but the mask can be seen, leading to inferences to the contrary. In Scene Ten, realizing that she can no longer turn the trick, Blanche presents herself emphasizing her qualities other than physical attractiveness:

(1) Blanche: (…) This man is a gentleman and he respects me. [*improvising feverishly*] What he wants is my companionship. Having great wealth sometimes makes people lonely! A cultivated woman, a woman of intelligence and breeding, can enrich a man's life—immeasurably! I have those things to offer, and this doesn't take them away. Physical beauty is passing. A transitory possession. But beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit and tenderness of the heart—and I have all of those things—aren't taken away, but grow! Increase with the years! How strange that I should be called a destitute woman! When I have all of these treasures locked in my heart. (…) But I have been foolish—casting my pearls before swine!

Quite desperately, Blanche tries to convince herself and Stanley that she has a lot to offer that has nothing to do with appearance or sexuality, usually perceived as 'power' that women have over men. Blanche's imaginary admirer apparently values her true treasures: a tender heart, intellect, culture. With this assertion, Blanche sounds superior and powerful – she does not need to prove anything. Simultaneously, she hints that she regards Stanley to be inferior, unworthy of her attention and attempts (though at times insincere) to befriend him.

In *Streetcar*, other-presentation of Blanche is usually provided by Stanley and vice versa, and Stella is the addressee, entangled in the conflict. The textual cues found in other-presentation are counter to those from self-presentation excerpts above; that is, while Blanche attempts to whitewash herself, Stanley does not hesitate to denigrate her; and when Blanche exposes Stanley's shortcomings or plain villainy, he brings out his best and enchants Stella with his caring and supportive attitude. One of the most powerful and best-known turns is Blanche's description of Stanley in Scene Four:

(1) Blanche: Well–if you'll forgive me–he's *common*!

Stella: Why, yes, I suppose he is.

Blanche: Suppose! You can't have forgotten that much of our bringing up, Stella, that you just *suppose* that any part of a gentleman's in his nature? *Not one particle, no!* Oh, if he was just—*ordinary*! Just *plain*—but good and wholesome, but—*no*. There's something downright—*bestial*—about him! You're hating me saying this, aren't you?

Stella [*coldly*]: Go on and say it all, Blanche.

> Blanche: He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! Eats like one, moves like one, talks like one! There's even something—sub-human—something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes, something—ape-like about him, like one of those pictures I've seen in—anthropological studies! Thousands and thousands of years passed him right by, and there he is—Stanley Kowalski—survivor of the Stone Age! Bearing the raw meat home from the kill in the jungle! And you—*you* here—*waiting* for him! Maybe he'll strike you or maybe grunt and kiss you! (…) *God!* Maybe we are a long way from being made in God's image, but Stella—my sister—there has been *some* progress since then! Such things as art—as poetry and music—such kinds of new light have come into the world then!

Blanche explicitly associates Stanley with the most negative notions that stagger her imagination. She ridicules him, compares to an ape, scorns his modest educational background and simple manners, juxtaposing his boorishness with what she thinks her and Stella's aristocratic heritage involves: sophistication, refinement, sensitivity. She brings out the big guns, as Stella is the stake of the conflict, pulled from one side to the other. Blanche summons the past and their upbringing to make Stanley seem incongruous; but she is blind to the fact that Stella is satisfied with her life. Stanley, on the other hand, uses a combination of explicit and implicit (indirect) characterization cues, relying also on sarcasm, rhetorical questions or hyperboles for stronger effect and as a vehicle for emotions, as in Scene Two:

> (1) Stanley: Open your eyes to this stuff! You think she got them out of a teacher's pay? (…) Look at these feathers and furs she has come here to preen herself in! What's this here? A solid-gold dress, I believe! And this one! What is these here? Fox-pieces! [*He blows on them*.] Genuine fox fur-pieces, a half a mile long! (…) Pearls! Ropes of them! What is this sister of yours, a deep-sea diver? (…) And diamonds! A crown for an empress!
> Stella: A rhinestone tiara she wore to a costume ball.
> Stanley: What's rhinestone?
> Stella: Next door to glass.
>
> (2) Stanley: Temperature 100 on the nose, and she soaks herself in a hot tub.
> Stella: She says it cools her off for the evening.
> Stanley: And you run out an' get her cokes, I suppose? And serve'em to Her Majesty in the tub?

These expressions of envy and accusations are indicative of their struggle for power – Stanley will not put up with feeling worse. Here, however, Stanley appears incompetent or downright ignorant, jumping to conclusions about Blanche on the

basis of her fake, inexpensive jewelry which he cannot recognize. He exaggerates and calls Blanche an empress and a queen, ridiculing her aristocratic air. He is also visibly envious of Stella's devotion, which he thinks of as servility.

With regard to implicit cues, a lot of information can be retrieved from lexical and grammatical features of the language that Stanley and Blanche use. In this respect, too, they are polar opposites. As has already been indicated, Blanche's style is melodramatic and rich in rhetorical devices that create her character. Krasner[15] points to the fact that even "Stanley's speeches, blunt and crude, are poetic", but even if they happen to be so, they are still far from grammatical accuracy. Blanche is the only character whose language is grammatically correct, lexically rich and syntactically varied. These are all signs of high status, intelligence, competence, education; in short, all the features that Stanley lacks. Blanche's vocabulary can be exemplified by the following:

(1) Possess your soul in patience!
(2) I've been stood up by my beau.
(3) I intend to be given some explanation from someone!
(4) My, my, what a cold shoulder! And such uncouth apparel!

Blanche's language is accurate; she uses complex sentences and varied means of linguistic expression: in contexts where familial, colloquial speech would be enough, she effortlessly uses passive voice, conditional structures, comparisons, cleft sentences. While Culpeper[16] admits that "research on real-life talk has not established a clear relationship between syntactic complexity and cognitive organization", we may assume that fictional dialogues follow the principle that the simpler a character's syntax, the more simple-minded the character is. Even bearing in mind that sentences are a feature of writing and utterances are units of spoken language and cannot be assessed in the same way, we are still under the impression that Blanche is characterized by her long, garrulous and sometimes convoluted turns that on the one hand reflect her superior mental skills, and on the other, mask her anxiety. Blanche uses Latin-derived vocabulary: "judicial", "transitory", "heterogenous". In his discussion of lexical differences as characterization cues in *Romeo and Juliet*, Culpeper[17] says that Latinate lexis is more complex, rare, formal and it suggests high status and education. Sometimes she speaks in clichés, aiming to sound dramatic, but Cohn[18] notices that Blanche's imagery tends to be rather weak. Indeed,

[15] D. Krasner, *American…*, op. cit., p. 43.
[16] J. Culpeper, *Language and…*, op. cit., p. 203.
[17] Ibidem, p. 186.
[18] R. Cohn, Dialogue…, op. cit., p. 105.

the similes she comes up with often sound pretentious, e.g., on Blanche's birthday, when she wants Stella to save candles for the baby's birthdays, she talks about the child saying: "(…) I hope that his eyes are going to be like candles, like two blue candles lighted in a white cake!", which sounds as if she is forcing sophistication and resorts to the first image she sees around her.

Nevertheless, Blanche's background and superiority are revealed in the dialogue on many occasions. As Cohn[19] summarizes, Blanche's lines carry numerous cultural references. She evokes the father of horror story when she sees Stella and Stanley's apartment in New Orleans: "Never, never, never in my worst dreams could I pictureonly Poe! Only Mr. Edgar Allan Poe!—could do it justice!" She recognizes that the lines on Mitch's cigarette case belong to a sonnet by Elizabeth Browning: "Oh! [*reading with feigned difficulty*] 'And if God choose,/I shall but love thee better—after—death!' Why, that's from my favorite sonnet by Mrs. Browning!" As a teacher of American literature, she mentions Poe, Hawthorne, and Whitman. Her cultural references extend beyond American culture; she asks the paper delivery boy: "Has anyone ever told you that you look like a young Prince out of the Arabian Nights?"; she calls Mitch 'Samson' referring to his strength. In Scene Five, where Blanche goes on a date with Mitch, she puts on an act by speaking French to him:

(1) [(…) *Then Mitch appears around the corner with a bunch of roses*.]

Blanche [*gaily*]: Look who's coming! My Rosenkavalier! Bow to me first… now present them! *Ahhhh—Merciiii!*

(2) Blanche: We are going to be very Bohemian. We are going to pretend that we are sitting in a little artists' café on the Left Bank in Paris! [*She lights a candle stub and puts it in a bottle*.] *Je suis la Dame aux Camellias! Vous etes—Armand!* Understand French?

This obviously impresses Mitch, and the references are to (1) *Knight of the Rose*, opera by Richard Strauss (1911) and (2) the play *La Dame aux Camelias* (1852) by Alexander Dumas, in which the heroine is a courtesan forced to give up her true love, Armand. As it can be seen, different characterization cues overlap in Williams' play, and the extract in French also generates implicature, implicitly characterizing Blanche, who consciously likens herself to a prostitute when the hearer cannot understand it. In Scene Nine, when Blanche is sent to a mental asylum while she expects being taken on a cruise by her imaginary admirer, Stella and her neighbor Eunice help Blanche get dressed. They contemplate her jacket and lay some sweet lines on Blanche, who is unaffected and points out their ignorance:

[19] Ibidem, p. 104-5.

(1) Eunice: What a pretty blue jacket.

Stella: It's lilac colored.

Blanche: You're both mistaken. It's Della Robbia blue. The blue of the robe in the old Madonna pictures. Are these grapes washed?

Stanley's language, by comparison, is plain. He is unabashed by his mostly simple vocabulary, grammatical incorrectness and syntax typical of spoken, everyday English of the working class. This serves as evidence of his lack of education (or lack of interest therein) and his dismissal of "this Hollywood glamor stuff": he is down--to earth, practical and resourceful. His language leaves no doubt about his social background, retrieved from such characterization cues as: "practickly", "I'm the team captain, ain't I?", "I done nothing to no one", or "And wasn't we happy together?".

With regard to other implicit textual cues, Blanche displays more features of personal affect. She uses a great many pauses; she hesitates ("It's just—well—"), tries to hedge her intended meanings; her mood swings; she is anxious and suddenly delighted in turns. She uses affectionate terms of address when she talks to Stella (honey, sweetie) and title and surname when she talks about their neighbors, Eunice and Steve ("Mr. and Mrs. Hubbel"). When it comes to turn-taking, the length of turn and total volume rarely indicate topic control or dominance. Stanley's turns are shorter but more powerful, direct and categoric. Blanche's style can also be regarded as submissive: expressions of uncertainty, non-fluency in speech, pausing are characteristic of insecure speakers; as in: "Money just goes—it goes places. [*She rubs her forehead*.]", accompanied by a gesture that reinforces the impression.

Another type of textual cue that contributes to characterization is conversational implicature: a level of meaning that has to be inferred by the addressee of the turn (in the case of drama, by other characters, but also readers or audiences), which is generated when conversational behavior proceeds against some established expectations. Grice's[20] Cooperative Principle is a convenient framework which explains that our expectations follow from the assumption that conversations are rational and purposeful. Our exchanges reflect the operation of four maxims: of quantity, quality, relation and manner, which describe (rather than prescribe) the way we normally behave in conversations: we say as much as is necessary, we do not intentionally mislead, our turns are relevant to the topic and we avoid ambiguity or obscurity of expression. Cooper[21] says that "[w]e rarely fail to observe the maxims casually, for no reason, but we do fail to observe them intentionally for a variety

[20] H. P. Grice, *Logic and conversation*, [in:] *Speech Acts*, eds. P. Cole, J. Morgan, New York 1975, p. 41-58.

[21] M. M. Cooper, *Implicature…*, op. cit., p. 57.

of reasons. The most interesting reason for failing to observe a maxim is thereby to say something indirectly." When a speaker flouts a maxim, the hearer is invited to infer the intended meaning; something that motivated maxim nonobservance and drew the hearer's attention to it. In drama, inferences about characters are drawn in the same way as they would be about real people in real-life conversations; moreover, on the level of contextual relations between the play and audience, conversational implicature serves as dramatic irony, a device that allows the audience (readers) to infer more information about a character than he or she is aware of. An interesting example of conversational implicature is found in Scene Five, as Stanley reacts to the fact that Blanche was born under the sign of Virgo. His short, uninformative and obscure response immediately turns the readers' attention to the implicature: Virgo, the Virgin, is what Blanche definitely is not. The expectation might be different, as Stanley, the Capricorn, can be easily associated with his zodiac sign; Blanche, on the contrary, is the opposite of her sign.

(1) Blanche: (…) What sign were you born under?
Stanley [*while he is dressing*]: Sign?
Blanche: Astrological sign. (…)
Stella: Stanley was born just five minutes after Christmas.
Blanche: Capricornthe Goat!
Stanley: What sign were *you* born under?
Blanche: Oh, my birthday's next month, the fifteenth of September; that's under Virgo.
Stanley: What's Virgo?
Blanche: Virgo is the Virgin.
Stanley [*contemptuously*]: *Hah!*

Another implicit cue relevant for characterization is appearance: the character's posture, clothes, facial expression, attractiveness. Blanche and Stanley are polar opposites along these lines, too. Blanche arrives in New Orleans dressed in white clothes that make her look lady-like, and, as Williams comments in stage directions, incongruous with the working-class neighborhood: her suit, hat, gloves, bodice and a string of pearls suggest delicacy, uncertainty, like that of a moth. Stanley, on the other hand, wears jeans ("Be comfortable is my motto", he says at the beginning) and a T-shirt or a green, silky bowling shirt. The significance of the bowling shirt, along with the silk pajamas he wears on big occasions, lies in its vivid color that suits the "gaudy seed-bearer", as Williams calls him in stage directions. What is also apparent is that Blanche is fragile and weak, while Stanley is strong, well-built and masculine. Such impressions are reinforced throughout the

play. Finally, authorial cues include symbolic names – and knowing how highly symbolic Williams' plays tend to be, we should consider names as characterization cues. Blanche DuBois explains her name to Mitch in what counts as self-presentation, translating from French: "white woods. Like an orchard in spring." White is the color of innocence, so Williams' choice of Blanche's name is not random; she lost her innocence but tries to regain it by reversing her life in a new environment. Cohn[22] notices that "[w]hen anglicized, Blanche's name is Duboys, and under her chaste surface, Blanche lusts for boys." Stanley Kowalski is a name that represents the heterogenous New South, opposed to aristocratic pretensions of the likes of Blanche. The name has Polish origin; it is common, symbolizing crudeness, lack of sophistication, and low class.

To sum up, Tennessee Williams' plays are a wonderful source of linguistic data that carries numerous textual cues for characterization. Applying two approaches to characterization, top-down and bottom-up, we can draw inferences about fictional characters using the same linguistic (pragmatic, stylistic) frameworks that we would use assessing real people in real-life encounters. The two characters that have been analyzed in this paper are indeed polar opposites. Considering Culpeper's[23] comprehensive list of textual cues and drawing on the knowledge of contextual variables, it can be concluded that these two fascinating, struggling characters were constructed with such attention to detail that they differ radically in every respect, and consequently provide a frame for multi-dimensional conflict in *The Streetcar Named Desire*.

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Blanche i Stanley, całkowite przeciwieństwa.
Analiza pragmastylistyczna dialogów dramatu Tennessee Williamsa
„Tramwaj zwany pożądaniem”

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł jest próbą ukazania, w jaki sposób język, którym posługują się fikcyjne postacie, np. dramatyczne, może stanowić podstawę ich charakterystyki; to znaczy, jak czytelnik (lub widz) postrzega bohaterów, polegając na skojarzeniach wywołanych przez sygnały (wskazówki) tekstowe, wyrażone wprost lub ukryte. Mogą to być wypowiedzi, w których bohater opisuje sam siebie lub jest opisywany przez inną postać; ale także wskazówki płynące ze struktury konwersacji lub stylu wypowiedzi. W artykule przedstawiono dwoje antagonistów ze sztuki Tennessee Williamsa *Tramwaj zwany pożądaniem*, Blanche DuBois i Stanleya Kowalskiego, omawiając wpływ wskazówek tekstowych na konstrukcję tych postaci jako całkowitych przeciwieństw.

Słowa kluczowe: dramat amerykański, pragmatyka, pragmastylistyka, charakterystyka