

The Coupling of Strange Bedfellows (?): Stylistics as Link between Linguistics and Literature

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt at closely examining the place of stylistics in literary interpretation. The writer believes that language *alone* leads to a mechanical (or soulless) interpretation of a literary text, and a literary criticism solely based on the critic's intuition does not hold much water (Cañares, 2002). Thus, stylistics, the branch of linguistics which studies the style of texts, mainly literature, emerged as a framework that intersperses the fields of linguistics and literary criticism, serving as a crucial link between these two complementary disciplines. In addition, the paper addresses issues that have been raised for and against literary experts and linguists in relation to stylistics. And to prove that stylistics is relevant to literature, one interesting short story titled "Midsummer" by a renowned Filipino author, Manuel E. Arguilla, was analyzed using the schema devised by Leech and Short (1981), particularly the lexical and grammatical categories. Pedagogical implications for teaching literature are also discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Linguistics, literary criticism, literature, stylistics

Through words, literature depicts different facets of life — something innate, unexpected, fresh, vibrant, subdued, tolerant, gentle, and sometimes cruel. These words weave tales, poets, eccentrics, psychologists, sociologists, philosophers, environmentalists, scholars, travelers, farmers — lives — real or dreamy, in the purest of all possible ways.

Relying on language *alone* leads to a mechanical (or soulless) interpretation of a literary text; a literary criticism solely based on the critic's intuition does not hold much water (Cañares, 2002).

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Language and literature (art) should embrace each other for their mutual benefit. In the book, *The aesthetics of power: The poetry of Adrienne Rich* by Keyes (2008), Rich (1979) believes that: “Poetry is above all a concentration of the power of language, which is the power of our ultimate relationship to everything in the universe” (p. 248).

1. Made for Each Other: The Mutual Relationship between Language and Literature

Language remains as the most formidable tool that writers use for literary creativity. It also serves as an avenue through which literature delights and instructs. It is indispensable to the creative artists and to the literary critics, who have a facility of words. Moreover, any “experience” (emphasis, mine) of literature is made possible primarily *in* and *through* language. Thus, linguistics, which is the scientific study of language and language use, functions as a critical key/way to unlock any literary text. Stylistics, the branch of linguistics which studies the style of texts, mainly literature, intersperses the disciplines of linguistics and literary criticism, serving as a crucial link between these two complementary disciplines. Roman Jakobson (1960) underscores the relationship between linguistics and literary studies (or stylistics) stating that:

If there are some critics who still doubt the competence of linguistics to embrace the field of poetics, I privately believe that ...linguists have been mistaken for an inadequacy of the linguistic science itself. All of us here, however, definitely realize that a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unacquainted with linguistic methods are equally flagrant anachronisms. (p. 337)

Further, Carter (1995, p. 4) describes stylistics as “a process of literary text analysis which starts from a basic assumption that the primary interpretative procedures used in the reading of a literary text are *linguistic* procedures.” Some advocates also argue that stylistics provides a principled method by which reading and interpretative skills can be developed by relating the linguist’s concern (with linguistic description) with the critic’s interest in aesthetic appreciation (Widdowson, 1975; Leech and Short, 1981).

Hough (1969 as cited in Cañares, 2002) explains that a stylistic analysis of a literary work rests upon the dictum that the text is an organic unity in which matter and manner, thought, and expression are indissolubly one.

Stylistics likewise provides a venue for the “systematic teaching” of literature and language (Widdowson, 1975, p. 82), for it integrates the two disciplines, *language* and *literature*. Leo Spitzer (as cited in Selden, 1988, p. 200) explains the symbiotic relationship between the literary critic’s concern of art appreciation and the linguist’s concern of linguistic description. To him, a cyclic motion exists in which linguistic observation stimulates or modifies literary insight; literary insight, on the other hand, incites further linguistic observation.

Furthermore, the poetic function of language is evident in literature, e.g., unusual syntax and punctuations deautomatize one’s expectations of these two aspects of grammar (Bradford, 1997). The reader, who encounters an unusual subject matter or idea, grammar, and syntax, becomes an active participant in the search of a text’s meaning. He then activates his schema or “knowledge of the world” (emphasis, mine) and “constructs/devises” a new schema that will help in the comprehension of the text (Ruddel et al., 1994, p. 493). Thus, instead of remaining just a “consumer of it [literary text], he becomes an active ‘producer,’ a creator like the artist who wrote it.”

Stylistics makes this metamorphosis of a reader possible. Linguistics provides him with a more systematic or methodical way of proving his intuition as he arrives at a meaning of any literary text. Linguistic structures, such as sentences, words, and punctuation marks, proffer access to the understanding of a literary text; that is, language and literature forge their partnership. In other words, linguistics, on the one hand, focuses on the language of the text, noting carefully how it “behaves” and “misbehaves” (Widdowson, 1975, p. 82.). Literature, on the other, lays its eyes on the “artful devices,” which imply its “flux,” “flow,” and “fluidity” (Widdowson, 1975, p. 82).

2. Love and Hate: Issues for and Against Stylistics

The interplay or interface between linguistics and literature (as “bedfellows”) seems strange. This generalization has raised various issues among literary critics/experts and linguists. There appears a fruitful working relationship between them; that is, through language, the relationship between linguistics and literature can be reinforced. The works of Leech (1969), Leech and Short (1981), and Short (1989) were instrumental in allowing stylistics find its niche the realm of literature. Furlong (2006) raised this issue: “Literary linguistics or stylistics, on the other hand, is regarded as secondary, parasitic or superfluous” (p. 326). Roland Barthes (1974 as cited in Macksey & Donato, 1970), a respected literary theorist, made this interesting point:

. . . those who carry on literary analysis must sometimes demand a linguistics which does not exist. It is their role to determine, to a certain degree, the need for a linguistics which does not exist. . . Literary analysis will need a change in linguistics. I insist on this kind of methodological relationship; literary semiotics cannot be considered as simply a follower and a parasite of linguistics (Barthes, 1974 as cited in Macksey & Donato, 1970, pp. 316–317).

Moreover, linguistics has long been closely examined by critics and theorists of literature. Furlong (2006) further argues that literary and critical theorists should ask the question: “How can linguistics shed light on the structures and interpretation of texts?” (p. 326).

A considerable number of literature (such as Eagleton, 1983) posit the use of the applied-linguistics framework (stylistics) to prove, for instance, the evidence of ideology in texts and the effect of stylistics on literary-text interpretation.. Assumingly, this socio-pragmatics has impacted literary studies. On the other hand, such a framework for literary analysis appears to be often highly technical; thus, it could be inaccessible to an average student of literature who does not have sufficient background knowledge about applied linguistics, pragmatics, and the like. So, how can students validate or confirm their understanding of literary texts?

In addition, stylistics has elicited criticisms from literary critics for its overly mechanical concern (which may take away the *soul* of literature) with the linguistic form of a literary text at the expense of social, historical, and any other contextual factors implied in a text’s meaning.

Perhaps, this argument holds water since stylistics is an offshoot of Russian formalism; thereby, stylistics could neglect contextual factors involved in meaning-making. Reflecting on the changing nature of linguistics, Leech and Short (1981 as cited in Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010) explains:

... linguistics itself has developed from a discipline with narrowly defined formal concerns to a more comprehensive, if more inchoate discipline, in which the role of language in relation to the conceptualization and communication of meaning has been fruitfully investigated. (p. 4)

Leech (2008 as cited in Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010) also elaborates the link between form and function as crucial to the definition of stylistics:

The interface between linguistic description and interpretation is precisely the sphere of stylistics as I see it: by undertaking a linguistic analysis as part of the interrelation between the two fields of study, we facilitate and anticipate an interpretative synthesis. Within stylistics, that is, linguistic and literary concerns are as inseparably associated as the two sides of a coin, or (in the context of linguistics) the formal and functional aspects of a textual study. (n.p.)

The coalescence of formal and functional aspects of language is an important aspect of stylistics. Saussure's (1916/1959 as cited in Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010) *social semiotic* and Halliday's (1985 as cited in Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010) *systemic-functional grammar* parallel Leech's (2008 as cited in Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010) model to describe form and function. However, this model of stylistics has faced different challenges. One of these is the charge of "interpretative positivism" by Stanley Fish (1981, p. 75 as cited in Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010), who questioned the objectivity of stylistics:

For both critics operate with the same assumptions and nominate the same goal, the establishing of an inventory in which formal items will be linked in a fixed relationship to semantic and psychological values. (p. 75)

In contrast to the above statement, Short et al. (1998) explicate the stance of stylistics:

For a stylistician, then, being objective means to be detailed, systematic, and explicit in analysis, to lay one's interpretative cards, as it were, clearly on the table. If you believe that the number of interpretations that a text can hold is not indefinitely large, then interpretative argumentation and testing will have to depend not upon something as unreliable as rhetorical persuasion, but on analysis of the linguistic structure of texts in relation to what we know about the psychological and social processes involved in textual understanding. This is what stylistics has traditionally involved. Of course ... we cannot expunge our personal response from our analyses, and would never want to. Like the natural and social scientists, we are human analysts, not machines. But, like them (...), we do think that it is incumbent upon us (a) to produce proper evidence and argumentation for our views, and to take counter-evidence into account when making our interpretative claims, (b) to make claims which are falsifiable and (c) to be explicit and open about our claims and the evidence for them. This does not constitute a claim to be natural scientists, but merely to be systematic, open, honest and rational.

Toolan (1996 as cited in Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010) presents his objective view about the opposing arguments with regard to stylistics:

Fish rightly argues that the stylistician's focus on a particular phonological or syntactical pattern in a text is itself an interpretative act. As I hope to have suggested, this in itself does not constitute an overwhelming argument to stop doing stylistics unless (a) that interpretative act is shown to be incoherent or ill-grounded, or (b) more coherent interpretative acts are presented, and preferably both. (p. 131)

Stylistics draws on a wide array of theories and methods from linguistics; it does not have a single set of parameters that defines the discipline. Such eclecticism is not a weakness; rather, it is theoretically sound and legitimate strength. Linguistics is a powerful tool for literary interpretation, for it provides a framework within which to describe and explain the function and construction of context (form). A good knowledge of linguistics is vital for a deeper understanding of the structure and the effects of literary works. The account of the language medium does not exhaust literature's artistic possibilities (or literariness); linguistics can add a profound and fresh experience to one's appreciation of literary texts.

Bringing together (no longer as strange bedfellows, but as *a legitimate couple*) linguistics and literary studies, which caused to bring out varied arguments (as if a love-and-hate affair), Barthes (1974 as cited in Macksey & Donato, 1970) suggests:

Linguistics should demand a literary theory which does not exist; the role of linguistics may be to determine, to a certain degree, the need for literary studies which does not exist. Literary studies need useful descriptions of the components of the text, and a rational, motivated concept of context. Linguistics can provide both, thus alleviating the poverty of literary studies. I profess in the sincerity of my heart that I have not the least personal interest in endeavouring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good, by relieving the critic, and giving some pleasure to the student of literature. (p. 316)

3. Tying the Knot: A Stylistic Attempt at Analyzing a Short Story

Leech and Short (2007) highlights: “If a text is regarded in objective simplicity as a sequence of symbols on a paper, then the modern linguist’s scrutiny is not just a matter of looking *at* the text, but of looking *through* the text to its significance” (p. 4). Stylistics, therefore, requires the peeling off of linguistic features of a text layer by layer.

It seems fundamental that in judging the merits of a literary work, the critic should avoid pitfalls laid by “affective” and “intentional” fallacies (Abrams, 1985, pp. 4 and 84). Such fallacies are elicited by the critic’s personal or subjective feelings about the work and his attempt to reveal the author’s presumed intentions in writing it. Thus, the critic should rely on a comprehensive and systematic linguistic theory, i.e., stylistics, in describing the literary merits or demerits of a work under consideration.

One interesting short story written by a renowned Filipino author, Manuel E. Arguilla, is “Midsummer.” This literary piece is a good material for a stylistic investigation. The story is about the encounter between a man and a woman in a remote village at noontime under the scorching summer heat. When it was about time for the man to rest and take his lunch under the shade of a tree beside the lake, his attention was immediately caught by the sight of a lovely lady standing by the lake.

Her presence made him very uneasy, but it did not prevent him from being friendly toward the lady when he finally got the courage to start a conversation with her. This unexpected encounter led the man to be invited in the lady's house where an instant attraction could possibly flourish into love.

The schema devised by Leech and Short (1981) satisfies the requirement for the stylistic analysis of Arguilla's "Midsummer," particularly the lexical and grammatical categories. It also presents a systematic way to analyze prose fiction, considering the premise that a text is not simply a composition of words and sentences, but it is couched in a language that is, in itself, a system of units and processes (Fowler, 1986).

3.1 Categories Lexical

3.1.1 Vocabulary

The impression that one gets from an initial reading of the story is its pervading atmosphere of action, activity, and vibrancy. Among these representative words loaded with action include:

pulled down his hat
crouched lower under the cover of his cart
lash of the noon-day heat
humped and bent itself like a fleeing snake
quivering heat waves
grating of the cartwheels on the pebbles of the road
dry rustling of falling earth
as lumps from the cracked sides of the gorge rolled down to the bottom
glistening thread of saliva spun out into the dry air
the animal had found some grass... and was industriously gazing

Interesting, too, are the palpable details that evoke sensations which can be visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory, or tactile.

Words that appeal to the sense of touch are:

lash of the noon-day heat

dry gorge of a stream
wet heavy planks
hot neck of the beast
dry bed of the stream
sharp fragments of the unheated rocks
 water slashed down on her breast
wet cloth
drenched flesh
hardened palms
 the broken rocks of the path had grown exceedingly hot
cooked rice still a little warm
 buried on the top was an egg now boiled hard

Attracting the sense of sight include:

longhaired tail
lowered head
rounded thighs and supple legs
shapely neck
wide brim
low hill on which grew a scrawny thicket of bamboo
sunburned cogon grass
cloud-palisaded sky
thin indigo line that was the sea

An earful of sounds includes:

grating of the cartwheels
 almost soundless shuffle of the weary bull
rustling of falling earth
 who stood mutely
rattling impact
 one long gurgle
 a low, rich rumbling rolled through the cavernous body of the beast
 he whistled to entice the wind

An olfactory detail: *sweet-smelling hay*.

Details that delight the sense of taste are the following:

cooked rice

an egg now boiled hard

a bamboo tube of salt, a cake of brown sugar wrapped in banana leaf, and some dried shrimps

rice and salt

sweetish water

The use of such words or expressions seems deliberate on the part of the writer. His reader must undergo the same experience that the character is having. Leon Edel (1955 as cited in Cañares, 2002) says that the reader shares not only the words that come from the character's or writer's mind but also the images that he creates in his inner world of fantasy – the sounds and smells of his perceptual experience, perhaps, a common or universal experience.

3.1.2 Parts of Speech

3.1.2.1 Nouns

Most of the words used in the story are simple. Majority of the nouns are concrete and common ones (*man* and *woman* are the obvious ones). Examples of these words are: *cart, bull, kerchief, grass, earth, rope, flanks, jar, beast, horns, sun, wind, sea,* and the like.

Another group of concrete nouns names places. They include *road, house, stream, banks, path, shade, hills,* and *land*.

There is likewise an interesting group of nouns that names parts of the human body and things that it wears. Among these are *shoulders, kerchief, head, nape, neck, skirt, hand, heels, knees, breast, bosom, flesh, palms, hat, fingers, lip, hair, legs, thighs, dimple, cheek, muscle, face, forehead,* and the like.

The simplicity of the vocabulary words, in this case, the use of more concrete and common nouns, leaves an impression of accessibility to or congruity with the story's theme – the universality of love. Likewise, a majority of the concrete nouns generally refer to the topographical features of the setting, remaining consistent with the title of the story. Hence, the words that refer to objects, persons, and places in the story resembles the idea of familiarity.

3.1.2.2 Adjectives

The following excerpts are the first four paragraphs of the story that supply, in particular, the adjectives scrutinized in this essay.

He pulled down his hat until the wide brim touched his shoulders. He crouched lower under the cover of his cart and peered ahead. The road seemed to writhe under the lash of the noon-day heat; it swung from side to side, humped and bent itself like a fleeing serpent, and disappeared behind the spur of a low hill on which grew a scrawny thicket of bamboo.

There was not a house in sight. Along the left side of the road ran the deep, dry gorge of a stream, the banks sparsely covered by sunburned cogon grass. In places, the rocky, waterless bed showed aridly. Father, beyond the shimmer of quivering heat waves rose ancient hills not less blue than the cloud-palisaded sky. On the right stretched a sandy waste of low rolling dunes. Scattered clumps of hardy ledda relieved the otherwise barren monotony of the landscape. Far away he could discern a thin indigo line that was the sea.

The grating of the cartwheels on the pebbles of the road and the almost soundless shuffle of the weary bull but emphasized the stillness. Now and then came the dry rustling of falling earth as lumps from the cracked sides of the gorge rolled down to the bottom. He struck at the bull with the slack of the rope. The animal broke into a heavy trot. The dust stirred slumberously. The bull slowed down, threw up his head, and a glistening thread of saliva spun out into the dry air. The driving rays of the sun were reflected in the point of light on the wet heaving flanks.

The man in the cart did not notice the woman until she had rounded the spur of land and stood unmoving beside the road watching the cart and its occupant come toward her. She was young, surprisingly sweet and fresh amidst her parched surroundings. A gaily-striped kerchief covered her head, the ends tied at the nape of her neck. She wore a homespun bodice of light red cloth with small white checks. Her skirt was also homespun and showed a pattern of white checks with narrow stripes of yellow and red. With both hands she held by the mouth of a large, apparently empty, water jug, the cool red of which blended well with her dress. She was barefoot.

The above excerpts contain a total of 51 adjectives. A majority of them are single-syllable (22 in frequency), such as *wide, low, deep, dry, blue, wet, dry, young, fresh, sweet, cool, and small*. Likewise, there are participles and modifiers that come from verbs (present participles). Examples are: *fleeing serpent, quivering heat waves, rolling dunes, falling earth, glistening thread of saliva, and heaving flanks*. The use of these modifiers suggests vibrancy and action, reflective of the flourishing love between the characters in the story.

3.1.2.3 Repetition

The words *water, wet, and bull* attract attention because of their repetition in the story. Such a case can be interpreted in terms of emphasis on the contrast brought about by the bareness of the landscape and the vigor of the characters (as suggested by the word *bull* and the *quivering heat waves*).

3.1.2.4 Deviation

Deviation can be in a form of introduction of new words into the language. In the story, the words *Kabuntitiao, Ading* (social deictic), and *Manong* (social deictic) are forms of deviation. They are local terms intentionally used by the writer to convey sincerity and familiarity and to contribute to the consistency of the story's setting.

3.2 Grammatical Categories

3.2.1 Sentence Complexity and Structure

By using again the first four paragraphs of the story, an analysis can be done with regard to sentence complexity and structure. Noticeably, the story is composed of simple and compound types of sentences. The simple sentences run parallel with the simplicity of the story's vocabulary, depicting the theme of universality. Introductory adverbial clauses or phrases that provide a point to orientation before launching into the main clauses were also used in the extracts. Thus, these sentences are elaborated by coordination and subordination – by progressive elaboration of “trailing constituents” – as if to showcase the vibrant and active setting of the story, in contrast with the barren milieu of midsummer. Examples of these are:

- a. Along the left side of the road ran the deep, dry gorge of a stream, the banks sparsely covered by sunburned cogon grass.
- b. Now and then came the dry rustling of falling earth as lumps from the cracked sides of the gorge rolled down to the bottom.
- c. The bull slowed down, threw up his head, and a glistening thread of saliva spun out into the dry air.

3.2.2 Pronoun Use

The use of person deixies (pronouns) exophorically also gives the impression of universality. The use of the third-person point of view suggests objectivity and commonality (the fact that the main characters are unnamed), allowing the reader to feel the similar experiences of physical attraction and love in the story.

3.2.3 Speech Representation

The preponderance of the Narrative Reported Action (NRA) is another significant aspect of stylistic investigation of the story. It seems that with the predominant use of NRA, the narrator is in control of the story; thus, sexually suggestive behaviors of the young characters are based on the writer's perceptions of their actions. Below is an excerpt from the story (with NRAs) that indicates such actions.

But when he caught hold of the bucket and stretched forth a brawny arm for the coil of rope in her hands, she surrendered both to him quickly and drew back a step as though shy of his touch. He lowered the bucket with his back to her, and she had time to take in the tallness of him, the breadth of his shoulders, the sinewy strength of his legs. Down below in the small of his back, two parallel ridges of rope-like muscle stuck out against the wet shirt. As he hauled up the bucket, muscles rippled all over his body. His hair, which was wavy, cut short behind but long in fronts fell in a cluster over his forehead.

3.2.4 Ellipsis and Comma

Another interesting facet of the story, which seems to be gender-sensitive, is revealed when the woman explains that she has to survive with only “rice and salt” in contrast with the young man’s “rice, egg, salt, brown sugar and dried shrimps.” She feels bad and hardly expresses it as shown by the writer’s use of ellipsis in “I would be ashamed...” The triple dot suggests the mind’s hesitation; the woman character appears to be deprived of simple necessities just like any other discriminated women in society.

The frequent use of comma, on the other hand, figures in an enumeration of details (progressive ones, which are as intensive as the *midsummer heat*). Centrally, the story depicts the flourishing and burning love between the main characters.

The above stylistic analysis is a principled attempt at reading and interpreting literature by operating on the description of observable linguistic features within the text, interspersed with aesthetic appreciation.

4. Stylistics: The *Union* between Linguistics and Literature

Stylistics has been a familiar and relevant subject over the recent past. Although it has been ransacked by critics and theorists of literature, it has gradually made itself legitimate as an approach to literary analysis. As a linguistic approach to literature, stylistics sets its eyes on forms and patterns that constitute linguistic features, which, in turn, serve to ground a literary interpretation and “helps explain why, for the analyst, certain types of meaning are possible” (Lintao, 2013, p. 36).

This paper confirms Widdowson's (1996) premise as regards the contribution of stylistics:

By investigating the way language is used in a text, it can make apparent those linguistic patterns upon which an intuitive awareness of artistic values ultimately depend. It provides a basis for aesthetic appreciation by bringing to the level of conscious awareness features of the text otherwise only accessible to trained intuition." (p 139)

By examining what exists *in, through, and beyond* the text, stylistics is not only capable of interspersing two complementary disciplines (i.e., linguistics and literature) but also of converging a variety of fields, such as gender studies, semiotics, structuralism, and the like. Stylistic analysis likewise sets the platform for the potential contextual and pragmatic effect of meaning(s) drawn from words in a selection. The words always represent the world (as mirrored in literature) in a certain way, and for this reason, language always, to some degree, promote a particular ideology (Halliday, 1994). Thus, stylistics, by its nature, is also interdisciplinary.

This paper validates the coalescence between linguistics and literature. As Short (1996) emphasizes, a "detailed and systematic analysis can be seen as an aid to our understanding and appreciation of the text under discussion as well as providing a rational language-based account to support interpretation and giving insights into the process by which we interpret when we read" (p. 27).

Insights from this paper take on pedagogical implications. Apparently, teachers lead their students to the interesting world of literature. They should be concerned not only with the *teaching* of literature but with its *learning* as well (Widdowson, 1975). To learn is to show proficiency in something that the learner participates in. One way by which students can actively participate is through *creative reading* – developing the independent ability to read literature for themselves. Carter (1995) opines that "stylistics provides students with a method of scrutinising texts, 'a way in' to a text, opening up starting points for fuller interpretation. The method is detailed and explicit, it shows how one can reach or begin to reach an interpretation. From a teaching point of view, students learn to open a text not only by osmosis but explicitly and consciously. A pedagogically sensitive stylistics can give students increased confidence in reading and interpretation" (p. 5).

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Appendix A

“Midsummer” by Manuel E. Arguilla

He pulled down his hat until the wide brim touched his shoulders. He crouched lower under the cover of his cart and peered ahead. The road seemed to writhe under the lash of the noon-day heat; it swam from side to side, humped and bent itself like a feeling serpent, and disappeared behind the spur of a low hill on which grew a scrawny thicket of bamboo.

There was not a house in sight. Along the left side of the road ran the deep, dry gorge of a stream, the banks sparsely covered by sun-burned cogon grass. In places, the rocky, waterless bed showed aridly. Farther, beyond the shimmer of quivering heat waves rose ancient hills not less blue than the cloud-palisaded sky. On the right stretched a land waste of low rolling dunes. Scattered clumps of hardy ledda relieved the otherwise barren monotony of the landscape. Far away he could discern a thin indigo line that was the sea.

The grating of the cartwheels on the pebbles of the road and the almost soundless shuffle of the weary bull but emphasized the stillness. Now and then came the dry rustling of falling earth as lumps from the cracked sides of the gorge fell down to the bottom.

He struck at the bull with the slack of the rope. The animal broke into a heavy trot. The dust stirred slumbrously. The bull slowed down, threw up his head, and a glistening thread of saliva spun out into the dry air. The dying rays of the sun were reflected in points of light on the wet, heaving flanks.

The man in the cart did not notice the woman until she had rounded the spur of land and stood unmoving beside the road, watching the cart and its occupant come toward her. She was young, surprisingly sweet and fresh amidst her parched surroundings. A gaily striped kerchief covered her head, the ends tied at the nape of her neck. She wore a homespun bodice of light red cloth with small white checks. Her skirt was also homespun and showed a pattern of white checks with narrow stripes of yellow and red. With both hands she held by the mouth a large, apparently empty, water jug, the cool red of which blended well with her dress. She was barefoot.

She stood straight and still beside the road and regarded him with frank curiosity. Suddenly she turned and disappeared into the dry gorge. Coming to where she had stood a few moments before, he pulled up the bull and got out of the cart. He saw where a narrow path had been cut into the bank and stood a while lost in thought, absently wiping the perspiration from his face.

Then he unhitched his bull and for a few moments, with strong brown fingers, kneaded the hot neck of the beast. Driving the animal before him, he followed the path. It led up the dry bed of the stream; the sharp fragments of sun-heated rocks were like burning coals under his feet. There was no sign of the young woman.

He came upon her beyond a bed in the gorge, where a big mango tree, which had partly fallen from the side of the ravine, cast its cool shade over a well.

She had filled her jar and was rolling the kerchief around her hand into a flat coil which she placed on her head. Without glancing at him, where he had stopped some distance off, she sat down on her heels, gathering the fold of her skirt between her wide-spread knees. She tilted the brimful jar to remove part of the water. One hand on the rim, the other supporting the bottom, she began to raise it to her head. She knelt on one knee, resting for a moment, the jar onto her head, getting to her feet at the same time. But she staggered a little and water splashed down on her breast. The single bodice instantly clung to her bosom molding the twin hillocks of her breasts warmly brown through the wet cloth. One arm remained uplifted, holding the jar, while the other shook the clinging cloth free of her drenched flesh. Then not once having raised her eyes, she passed by the young man, who stood mutely gazing beside his bull. The animal had found some grass along the path and was industriously grazing.

He turned to watch the graceful figure beneath the jar until it vanished around a bend in the path leading to the road. Then he led the bull to the well, and tethered it to a root of the mango tree.

"The underpart of her arm is white and smooth," he said to his blurred image on the water of the well, as he leaned over before lowering the bucket made of half a petroleum can. "And her hair is thick and black." The bucket struck with a rattling impact. It filled with one long gurgle. He threw his hat on the grass and pulled the bucket up with both hands.

The twisted bamboo rope bit into his hardened palms, and he thought how... the same rope must hurt her.

He placed the dripping bucket on a flat stone, and the bull drank. "Son of lightning!" he said, thumping the side of the bull after it had drunk the third bucketful, "you drink like the great Kuantitao!" A low, rich rumbling rolled through the cavernous body of the beast. He tied it again to the root, and the animal idly rubbed its horns against the wood. The sun had fallen from the perpendicular, and noticing that the bull stood partly exposed to the sun, he pushed it farther into shade. He fanned himself with his hat. He whistled to entice the wind from the sea, but not a breeze stirred.

After a while he put on his hat and hurriedly walked the short distance through the gorge up to the road where his cart stood. From inside he took a jute sack which he slung over one shoulder. With the other arm, he gathered part of the hay at the bottom of the cart. He returned to the well, slips of straw falling behind him as he picked his way from one tuft of grass to another, for the broken rocks of the path has grown exceedingly hot.

He gave the hay to the bull, Its rump was again in the sun, and he had to push it back. "Fool, do you want to broil yourself alive?" he said good-humoredly, slapping the thick haunches. It switched its long-haired tail and fell to eating. The dry, sweet-smelling hay made harsh gritting sounds in the mouth of the hungry animal. Saliva rolled out from the corners, clung to the stiff hairs that fringed the thick lower lip, fell and gleamed and evaporated in the heated air.

He took out of the jute sack a polished coconut shell. The top had been sawed off and holes bored at opposite sides, through which a string tied to the lower part of the shell passed in a loop. The smaller piece could thus be slipped up and down as a cover. The coconut shell contained cooked rice still a little warm. Buried on the top was an egg now boiled hard. He next brought out a bamboo tube of salt, a cake of brown sugar wrapped in banana leaf, and some dried shrimps. Then he spread the sack in what remained of the shade, placed his simple meal thereon, and prepared to eat his dinner. But first he drew a bucketful of water from the well, setting the bucket on a rock. He seated himself on another rock and ate with his fingers. From time to time he drank from the bucket.

He was half through with his meal when the girl came down the path once more. She had changed the wetted bodice. He watched her with lowered head as she approached, and felt a difficulty in continuing to eat, but went through the motions of filling his mouth nevertheless. He strained his eyes looking at the girl from beneath his eyebrows. How graceful she was! Her hips tapered smoothly down to round thighs and supple legs, showing against her skirt and moving straight and free. Her shoulders, small but firm, bore her shapely neck and head with shy pride.

When she was very near, he ate more hurriedly, so that he almost choked. He did not look at her. She placed the jar between three stones. When she picked up the rope of the bucket, he came to himself. He looked up--straight into her face. He saw her eyes. They were brown and were regarding him gravely, without embarrassment; he forgot his own timidity.

"Won't you join me, Ading?" he said simply. He remained seated.

Her lips parted in a half smile and a little dimple appeared high upon her right cheek. She shook her head and said: "God reward you, Manong."

"Perhaps the poor food I have is not fit for you?"

"No, no. It isn't that. How can you think of it? I should be ashamed. It is that I have must eaten myself. That is why I came to get water in the middle of the day--we ran out of it. I see you have eggs and shrimps and sugar. Why, be had nothing but rice and salt."

"Salt? Surely you joke."

"I would be ashamed..."

"But what is the matter with salt?"

"Salt...salt...Makes baby stout," he intoned. "My grandmother used to sing that to me when I complained of our food."

They laughed and felt more at ease and regarded each other more openly. He took a long time fingering his rice before raising it to his mouth, the while he gazed up at her and smiled for no reason. She smile back in turn and gave the rope which she held an absent-minded tug. The bucket came down from its perch of rock in a miniature flood. He leaped to his feet with a surprised yell, and the next instant the jute sack on which he lay his meal was drenched. Only the rice inside the coconut shell and the bamboo of tube of salt were saved from the water.

She was distressed, but he only laughed.

"It is nothing," he said. "It was time I stopped eating. I have filled up to my neck."

"Forgive me, Manong," she insisted. "It was all my fault. Such a clumsy creature I am."

"It was not your fault," she assured him. "I am to blame for placing the bucket of water where I did."

"I will draw you another bucketful," he said. "I am stronger than you."

"No, you must let me do it."

But when he caught hold of the bucket and stretched forth a brawny arm for the coil of rope in her hands, she surrendered both to him quickly and drew back a step as though shy of his touch. He lowered the bucket with his back to her, and she had time to take in the tallness of him, the breadth of his shoulders, the sinewy strength of his legs. Down below in the small of his back, two parallel ridges of rope-like muscle stuck out against the wet shirt. As he hauled up the bucket, muscles rippled all over his body. His hair, which was wavy, cut short behind but long in fronts fell in a cluster over his forehead.

"Let me hold the bucket while you drink," she offered.

He flashed her a smile over his shoulders as he poured the water into her jar, and again lowered the bucket.

"No, no, you must not do that." She hurried to his side and held one of his arms. "I couldn't let you, a stranger..."

"Why not?" He smiled down at her, and noticed a slight film of moisture clinging to the down on her upper lip and experienced a sudden desire to wipe it away with his forefinger. He continued to lower the bucket while she had to stand by.

"Hadn't you better move over to the shade?" he suggested, as the bucket struck the water.

"What shall I do there?" she asked sharply, as though the idea of seeking protection from the heat were contemptible to her.

"You will get roasted standing here in the sun," he said, and began to haul up the bucket.

But she remained beside him, catching the rope as it fell from his hands, coiling it carefully. The jar was filled, with plenty to drink as she tilted the half-filled can until the water lapped the rim. He gulped a mouthful, gargled noisily, spewed it out, then commenced to drink in earnest. He took long, deep draughts of the sweetish water, for he was more thirsty than he had thought. A chuckling sound persisted in forming inside his throat at every swallow. It made him self-conscious. He was breathless when through, and red in the face.

"I don't know why it makes that sound," he said, fingering his throat and laughing shamefacedly.

"Father also makes that sound when he drinks, and mother always laughs at him," she said. She untied the headkerchief over her hair and started to roll it.

Then sun had descended considerably and there was now hardly any shade under the tree. The bull was gathering with its tongue stray slips of straw. He untied the animal to lead it to the other side of the girl who spoke; "Manong, why don't you come to our house and bring your animal with you? There is shade and you can sleep, though our house is very poor."

She had already placed the jar on her head and stood, half-turned to him, waiting for his answer.

"I would be troubling you, Ading."

"No. You come. I have told mother about you." She turned and went down the path.

He sent the bull after her with smart slap on its side. Then he quickly gathered the remains of his meal, put them inside the jute sack which had almost dried, and himself followed. Then seeing that the bull had stopped to nibble the tufts of grass that dotted the bottom of the gorge, he picked up the dragging rope and urged the animal on into a trot. They caught up with the girl near the cart. She stopped to wait.

He did not volunteer a word. He walked a step behind, the bull lumbering in front. More than ever he was conscious of her person. She carried the jar on her head without holding it. Her hands swung to her even steps. He drew back his square shoulders, lifted his chin, and sniffed the motionless air. There was a flourish in the way he flicked the rump of the bull with the rope in his hand. He felt strong. He felt very strong. He felt that he could follow the slender, lithe figure to the end of the world.