

## An Analysis of Characters in “The Shadow in the Rose Garden” from the Perspective of Cooperative Principle

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### Abstract

“The Shadow in the Rose Garden” is one of the famous short stories written by Lawrence which narrates the seemingly harmonious but alienated state between the husband and the wife to reveal the marriage tragedy under the background of capitalist industrialization, and severely criticizes the trauma caused by war to human beings. Cooperative Principle, as a core theory in pragmatics, is put forwards by Herbert Paul Grice, an American linguist. In recent years, this theory has been increasingly applied in analyzing literature. The paper focuses on the communications between the husband and wife to analyze the characters through the flouting of four maxims in Cooperative Principle, including the maxim of quantity, quality, relation as well as manner. It is hoped that linguistic approach to “The Shadow in the Rose Garden” can provide a different angle to appreciate this novel.

### Keywords

D.H. Lawrence; The Shadow in the Rose Garden; Cooperative Principle.

### 1. Introduction

“The Shadow in The Rose Garden” tells the story of a young couple on their honeymoon. The wife returns to her hometown for the sake of an early love affair, which annoys her husband later. The conflict between them is thoroughly intensified. However, the past studies about this work mainly concentrate on the use of symbolism writing technique, the class nature of society, the destruction of war and the obsolescence of moral customs it shows. Meanwhile, the dialogue between the husband and the wife is also a very import part of the article. American linguist Grice believes that people need to follow some principles in order to achieve a smooth conversation, which he names as “Cooperative Principle”. To further explain this theory, Grice defines four maxims, including the maxim of quantity, the maxim of quality, the maxim of relation as well as the maxim of manner. In some cases, one would intentionally violate some maxims in order to convey certain information or to achieve some purposes. The following analysis will employ this theory to appreciate “The Shadow in The Rose Garden” in a different angle.

### 2. The Analysis

In this part, the conversation between the couple will be illustrated in details according to Grice’s Cooperative Principle. Some typical communications of them are selected to demonstrate their different traits, or show different communicative intentions. The specific method is elaborating how their communications reflect the flouting of four maxims.

#### 2.1. The Maxim of Quantity

Grice explains that the maxim of quantity has two requirements, just as following:

- (1) Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
- (2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

(Grice, 1975: 45-46)

He means that the addresser should provide exact amount of information as the addressee needs, no more or no less. Generally, the amount of information the speaker express could express his social intends. Here is a conversation between the husband and the wife.

“What’s the matter?” he asked, a tinge of impatience in his voice. “Aren’t you feeling well?”

This was torture to her.

“Quite,” she replied.

His brown eyes became puzzled and angry.

“What is the matter?” he said.

“Nothing.”

(D.H. Lawrence, “The Shadow in The Rose Garden”:14)

When the wife suddenly knew that her old lover was still alive and became a madman, she had a lot of feelings in her heart. In this conversation, the wife's response to her husband is extremely little which gives less information than needed. She only uses a few of short words as the answer to the questions. Obviously, she has no desire to talk with her husband about this issue and try to flout the maxim of quality. Although she doesn’t want to answer the questions at that time, she doesn’t choose to refuse to answer or shows her sick of her husband completely, which displays her submissive and conservative character.

There was no answer.

Still she did not answer him anything.

(D.H. Lawrence, “The Shadow in The Rose Garden”:14)

Although the wife has shown her unwillingness to answer questions by reducing the quantity of the answers, the husband has not given up interrogating his wife. This time, the wife violated the maximum of quantity to the extreme. She directly ignored her husband's question and refused to give any reply.

## 2.2. The Maxim of Quality

Grice defines this maxim as “try to make your contribution one that is true”, especially in the following cases:

- (1) Do not say what you believe to be false.
- (2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

(Grice, 1975: 45-46)

To put it simply, one should not take lies or something uncertain for granted. As for the wife, she did not willing to let her husband know her past affair, so she violated this maxim in many conversations. Here is a conversation between the couple when the wife was asked about who she met.

“Have you run up against anybody?” he asked.

“Nobody who knows me,” she said.

(D.H. Lawrence, “The Shadow in The Rose Garden”:14)

The context of the article tells readers that this is the hometown of her wife and the place where she fell in love with her former lover. Therefore, when the wife said that no one knows her here, she was obviously saying something that she thinks was wrong. In the face of her husband’s inquiry, the wife immediately fabricates the corresponding lie, which shows implies she has made up the excuse carefully. These dialogues create a delicate and shrewd female image for readers.

### 2.3. The Maxim of Relation

Grice (1975:45-46) gives a very simple requirement to this maxim: be relevant. In other words, one should contribute closely-relevant information to the topic of the conversation. Under some situations, especially when someone doesn’t want to continue the present topic, he will change the subject by referring to irrelevant information.

“What’s the matter?” he asked determinedly.

She was sick with him. She could not look at him.

“Can’t you leave me alone?” she replied, averting her face from him.

(D.H. Lawrence, “The Shadow in The Rose Garden”:16)

When the wife came back from the rose garden, she learned that her old lover was still alive but became a lunatic. A lot of memories and feelings welled up in her heart. Obviously, her husband was also aware of her abnormal state so he raised a question. His obstinacy and possessiveness are shown in his language. But the wife was very annoying about her husband's constant questioning and felt sick with him. So instead of giving the closely-relevant information to the topic of the conversation, she turned to questioning her husband in the hope of ending the conversation. At this time, the contradiction between the them is gradually intensified, and the wife’s dissatisfaction marriage relationship has gradually reached the highest point.

“And how far did it go between you?” he asked at length, in a frightened, stiff voice.

“I hate your not-straightforward question,” she cried, beside herself with his baiting. “We loved each other, and we were lovers – we were. I don’t care what you think: what have you got to do with it? We were lovers before I knew you”

(D.H. Lawrence, “The Shadow in The Rose Garden”:23)

The husband is constantly pressing questions. He wants to know more about his wife's past experience. His speech began to turn rude and impolite. The wife realized this, so she didn't answer her husband's question directly but gave information on her past affair. At this time, she becomes desperate and even ignore her husband’s feelings to annoy him.

### 2.4. The Maxim of Manner

The core of this maxim is “be perspicuous”, and the specific requirements are as follow:

- (1) Avoid obscurity of expression.
- (2) Avoid ambiguity.
- (3) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

(4) Be orderly.

(Grice, 1975: 45-46)

“He was an officer – a sub-lieutenant – then he quarreled with his colonel and came out of army. At any rate”

(D.H. Lawrence, “The Shadow in The Rose Garden”:18)

My wife's words here don't conform to the syntactic structure and just like a list of phrases without order. This is obviously different from the usual communication language and the wife's normal. Flouting of the maximum of manner. It shows her inner entanglement and bewilderment after returning from the rose garden vividly.

“How long were you carrying on with him?”

“What do you mean?” she replied coldly.

“I mean how long were you carrying on with him?”

She refused to answer. Then she said:

“I don't know what you mean, by carrying on. I loved him for the first days I met him – two months after I went to stay with Miss Birch.”

(D.H. Lawrence, The Shadow in The Rose Garden:19)

Neither the reader nor the wife is sure what the husband really wanted to ask by using ‘carrying on’ because it can be understood as in a relationship, and also it may imply having a sexual relationship. It is hard to tell what the husband asked was when they met, when they fell in love or when they had sex.

### 3. Conclusion

We will try to say things which are true, relevant, as well as informative enough, and in a clear manner. Sometimes, a speaker will be fully aware of the possible implicatures of his speech, and if he does not want the hearer to interpret it in a particular way, then he will make it plainly clear that he does not intend that particular implicature. In “the Shadow of the Rose garden”, a lot of conversations between the wife and husband violate four maxims in Cooperative Principle, including the maxim of quantity, quality, relation and manner. It is noticed that in daily conversations the couple especially the wife do not usually say things directly but tend to imply them. These show the wife's intelligence and delicate mind, and depict the image of a husband who is straightforward, less educated but loves his wife. Also, those dialogues show the irreconcilability of their estrangement and contradiction vividly.

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