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## Philippine Pastoral: Tradition and Variation in Manuel Arguilla

JOSEPH A. GALDON

Fifty years ago (1923) in "The Function of Criticism," T. S. Eliot wrote that "Comparison and analysis . . . are the chief tools of the critic."<sup>1</sup> In the earlier essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," he had said:

One of the facts that might come to light in this process (of criticism) is our tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else. In those aspects or parts of his work we pretend to find what is individual, what is the peculiar essence of the man. We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors . . .; we endeavor to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously . . . No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relations to the dead poets and artists.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, the critic's task is analysis, and comparison of the writer's individual talent not only with similar, contemporary works, but with the tradition. The present paper is, therefore, an exercise in the tradition behind Arguilla's stories and in his individual talent.

I do not intend to impose a tradition upon Arguilla. Tracing influences is a hypothetical game in any case, and in the absence of clear biographical or literary data, it can be a risky business at best. It is a much better critical process to let the stories of Arguilla speak for themselves. No doubt what is in the stories is the result of Arguilla's own experience. He was writing about a setting that was rural and provincial. But it is interesting that

1. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1950), p. 21.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 4

what is in the stories is also in the tradition, whether Arguilla was aware of it or not.

One footnote from Martha Hale Shackford before we proceed. "It is in the East that we find our first pastorals and it is from the East that the pastoral extended until it was at home in nearly every language."<sup>3</sup> She cites the *Song of Songs* in the Bible as evidence, as well as the Greeks, Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, who wrote at a time when Greek culture was perhaps more Eastern than what we would call Western today. I am sure further study would reveal the existence of the pastoral throughout much of early Eastern and Oriental literature.

That Manuel Arguilla's published stories are in the pastoral tradition is not a new insight. Both Leonard Casper and Fr. Miguel Bernad have used the word "pastoral" to describe the stories of Arguilla.<sup>4</sup> Nineteen stories are collected in *How My Brother Leon Brought Home A Wife*. If we accept Empson's concept of proletarian literature as basically pastoral, as well as the traditional concept, only three of the stories cannot be called pastoral. These are "Mr. Alisangco," "Though Young He Is Married" and "The Maid, the Man and the Wife."<sup>5</sup> Casper calls these "the marriage group."<sup>6</sup> They might also be called the Malate group since they are all placed in that setting, and by reason of setting, as well as of form and content, can be squeezed into the pastoral tradition only with great distortion. Casper feels that only in these stories of the marriage or Malate group does "Arguilla's craft falter."<sup>7</sup> In other words, Arguilla's best work, and the bulk of his published work, is in the pastoral tradition.

3. Martha Hale Shackford, "A Definition of the Pastoral Idyll," *PMLA* 29 (1904): 584. See also Walter W. Greg, *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama* (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1959), p. 5n.

4. Miguel A. Bernad, S.J., *Bamboo and the Greenwood Tree* (Manila: Bookmark, 1961), p. 21; Leonard Casper, *The Wayward Horizon* (Manila: Community Publishers, Inc., 1961), pp. 10, 124.

5. Manuel E. Arguilla, *How My Brother Leon Brought Home A Wife and Other Stories* (Manila: Philippine Book Guild, 1940). All subsequent references to Arguilla's stories will be to this edition.

6. Casper, *Wayward Horizon*, p. 11.

7. *Ibid.*

## THE PASTORAL

The pastoral is a piece of literature dealing with life in the country, especially a poem or story that treats of the rustic lives and loves of shepherds in a conventionalized, artificial manner.<sup>8</sup> The pastoral, from the Latin *pastor* (shepherd), portrays rural life, especially a conventionalized form of rustic life among shepherds. It emphasizes the rural qualities of peace, simplicity, naturalness and quiet. It reflects a "realm far from fashion and fortune, open to all the influences of nature."<sup>9</sup> This insistence upon the objective pastoral setting is the first characteristic of pastoral, and Greg points out, "is of prime importance in understanding the real nature of pastoral . . ."<sup>10</sup>

Eight of Arguilla's nineteen stories are set in Nagrebcan, La Union. These stories deal with the province and with the simple occupations of the rural folk. Labang the carabao appears in six of them. "Elias" is set in Tarlac and is the story of sugar cane cutters and their women. "Imperfect Farewell" takes place in a rustic setting of "sky and wind and sun" at Sunset Beach in Mariveles.<sup>11</sup>

The Malate stories are not properly pastoral by reason of setting. They all take place in Manila in a decidedly urban setting. As if to emphasize the non-pastoral nature of the setting of these three stories, Arguilla makes Mr. Alisangco a college graduate and a teacher in a city high school, who says "Jawohl" in German to his wife to hide his embarrassment.<sup>12</sup> In "Though Young He Is Married," the description of the setting includes "a coloured print of the *Absinthe Drinker* by Picasso which he had cut out of an issue of *Vanity Fair*,"<sup>13</sup> and in "The

8. We need not delay on the historical development of the pastoral. That has been admirably treated in Greg, *Pastoral Poetry*. There is a briefer but still excellent history of the genre in James H. Hanford, "The Pastoral Elegy and Milton's *Lycidas*," *PMLA* 25 (1910): 403-447. The same article is reprinted with some revisions in C. A. Patrides, ed., *Milton's Lycidas: The Tradition and the Poem* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), pp. 27-55.

9. Shackford, p. 585.

10. Greg, p. 5

11. Arguilla, p. 153.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

Maid, the Man and the Wife," the narrator begins by telling us that he was "on the porch reading the latest copy of *Esquire*."<sup>14</sup> These studied details of sophistication apparently deliberately inserted by Arguilla are hardly a part of the rural setting of the pastoral.

"The Long Vacation" is an interesting fusion of the Nagrebcan and the Malate themes. The story is set in an urban or semi-urban environment, perhaps even Malate again, and Leon is a teacher, like Mr. Alisangco and the narrator of the three Malate stories. But the real setting is San Fernando and Poro Point in La Union. "It is really beautiful, you know," Leon says, "the sea on one side and the mountains on the other. . . . You could walk from the town and be in Poro in about an hour. There are no houses, no people, only the lighthouse keeper and his wife and a lame boy, their only son. The place is as wild and lovely as you could wish."<sup>15</sup> Leon has been trapped in the city, but now that his wife is dead, he wants to take "a long vacation"; he wants to return to the pastoral setting of La Union, to "climb the hills . . . swim in the sea . . . sit under the camachile trees . . . walk up and down those sand dunes, leave my footprints on them for the wind to bury again."<sup>16</sup>

The third group of stories in *How My Brother Leon Brought Home A Wife* is composed of the stories of social protest. "Caps and Lower Case" is set in Manila and could well be included among the marriage group, save that its message is so clearly social. "Apes and Men" also has Manila for its setting. "The Socialists" takes place on the slopes of Arayat, but its setting is closer to "Apes and Men" than to "Elias", for example. "Epilogue to Revolt" and "Rice" are set once again in Nagrebcan. The Social Stories, with the possible exception of "Rice" are not pastoral in the traditional sense. It is interesting to note that "Rice" at the end of the group of social stories provides a fusion between the social theme and the traditional pastoral stories of the Nagrebcan group, much as "The Long Vacation" does at the end of the Malate group.

14. Ibid., p. 123.

15. Ibid., p. 171.

16. Ibid., p. 174.

In summary then, if we insist upon the setting as the first characteristic of the pastoral, ten of Arguilla's nineteen stories are set in a provincial or rural setting. The Malate and Social Stories do not fit neatly into the rural setting, but there is one story in each group that provides a link to the Nagrebcan group. Two of the Social Stories take place in a provincial setting, and only five of the nineteen have no connection with the rural setting at all.

A corollary of the pastoral setting is simplicity of language. The earliest of the pastoral writers, Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, used the Greek Doric dialect, which was comparatively rustic and simple, even primitive and unsophisticated, compared with the more elaborate of the early Greek dialects, to convey the rustic simplicity of the characters in their pastorals. Spenser experimented with the English pastoral, introducing archaic and "... dialect words which were commonly felt to be nearer to the purely native language than the language of the cultured, and with these he combined modern colloquialisms appealing to his ear by their native ring, and archaisms both genuine and spurious."<sup>17</sup> Arguilla has attempted an interesting experiment at fusing the English and rustic dialect speech of his characters. The language remains English, but he has attempted to portray the rhythm and speech patterns of the dialect. He has added to this effect by interspersing dialect words, especially in the forms of address. Ina, Tia, Apo are frequent and he has scattered dialect words for the more common objects through the text, words like *talunasan*, *basi*, *tangga*, *dulang* and *ledda*. The result is a simplicity of rustic speech that is quite different from the more sophisticated English of the college educated characters in the Malate group. One further experiment at rustic speech, in "The Socialists," is not quite as successful. Here Arguilla attempts to portray the pronunciation of badly understood English. One of the socialists recites Markham's "The Man With the Hoe":  
 Is dis da ting da Lord God made and gabe  
 To habe dominion ober sea and land;

17. Edmund Spenser, *The Poems*, ed. J. C. Smith and E. De Salincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), p. xviii.

To trace da stars and serch da hibens for poweh,  
To feel da passion ob eternite?<sup>18</sup>

The result is humorous rather than rustic. But in most of the other stories there is no doubt that Arguilla's simple style, a style of understatement, is one of his chief virtues and adds immensely to the impact of the pastoral stories.

"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 up on 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 just eaten myself."<sup>19</sup>

The second characteristic quality of the pastoral genre is "a sense of the contrast between town and country."<sup>20</sup> "What does appear to be a constant element in the pastoral as known to literature," Greg continues, "is the recognition of a contrast, implicit or expressed, between pastoral life and some more complex type of civilization."<sup>21</sup> Some contemporary critics will use the term pastoral in its broadest sense to describe any work which deals with the contrast between simple and complicated ways of living. The pastoral exalts the naturalness and virtue of the simple man at the expense of the complicated man, whether the former be shepherd or child or working man. One of the first conditions of the pastoral, therefore, is that there be a sharp difference between two ways of life, the rustic and the urban. "The city is an artificial product, and if the pastoral poet lives in it or is the product of its schools and universities, considerable animosity may exist between the townsman and the countryman."<sup>22</sup>

This contrast between town and country, urban and rustic, is obvious in Manuel Arguilla. In *How My Brother Leon Brought Home A Wife* the Nagrebcan and Malate stories are clearly meant to indicate this contrast, and the Social Stories are an expression

18. Arguilla, p. 200.

19. Ibid., p. 20.

20. Greg, p. 7.

21. Ibid., p. 4.

22. Evelyn Nunes, "Renaissance" (Mimeographed class notes, Ateneo de Manila, Department of English, 1972), p. 17.

of the conflict between the city and the barrio, the simplicity and beauty of the province where people may be poor but are happy, and the life in the city where people suffer and die because of the social inequities.

The contrast is not only implicit in the actual arrangement and collection of Arguilla's stories, but is made quite explicit in several of the stories. Casper indicates this explicit contrast by the title of his essay on Arguilla: "Folk Culture and City Commerce: Confrontations."<sup>23</sup> The impact of the city on the barrio and its consequences is pictured in "The Socialists." Comrade Lirios had a sudden vision of 16,000,000 people of the same cast and mold, capable of the same direct, unselfconscious, child-like simplicity and earnestness. They till the soil and plant rice and they know the quality of rain and sun. The feel of pure honest earth is in their work-hardened hands; they stand on it with bare feet, toes spread apart . . . Comrade Lirios saw himself and his friends pouring beer down their throats in air-conditioned rooms in the City, biting into liverwurst sandwiches the size of shoeheels and costing 25 centavos apiece . . . As he bit into the flat triangle of white bread, there rang in his ears the words of the song, "planting rice is nay-ber fu-un . . ." The beer tasted flat; it was warm.<sup>24</sup>

The barrio-city contrast is at the heart of the title story, "How My Brother Leon Brought Home A Wife," where the question of Leon's happiness and that of Maria depends ultimately on whether city can ever learn to live in the barrio. Sunset Beach in "Imperfect Farewell" and Poro Point in "The Long Vacation" represent escapes from the complexities of urban living to the peace and simplicity of the rural. But this theme of escape is perhaps best discussed under the pastoral convention of the Golden Age.

Greg writes that "this contrast (between real life in the city and the pastoral life) is the source of the various subsidiary types of pastoral . . ."<sup>25</sup> The remaining three qualities of the pastoral convention then — the Golden Age theme, the emphasis upon romantic love, and the presence of allegorical satire

23. Leonard Casper, *New Writing From the Philippines* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1966), p. 38.

24. Arguilla, pp. 213-15.

25. Greg, p. 7.



in the pastoral, — can perhaps best be discussed in analyzing the three chief sub-genres of the pastoral — the idyllic, the romantic and the allegorical. The framework will also provide a further classification of the 19 stories of Arguilla.

#### THE IDYLLIC PASTORAL

More accurately, perhaps, the idyll is not so much a genre as a descriptive term for any work which is a short narrative with a marked emphasis upon descriptive and pastoral qualities. Shackford defines it as a

brief poem or story where some sort of simple happiness is dramatically presented, where no tragic elements enter. Idyllic means free from dissatisfaction. The idyll calls for no searching and discipline. It is the only sort of writing whose end is to make us enamored of life. In it we always have a charmed atmosphere, some suggestion of satisfying happiness. An idyll is a picture of life as the human spirit wishes it to be, a presentation of the chosen moments of earthly content.<sup>26</sup>

The pastoral idyll is brief, slight, but haunting. It has an immortality that does not need justification nor persuasive exposition, for it catches at some eternal yearning in the heart of man, and gives him for a moment the picture of content. And as in tragedy we are purified by sympathy and awe, so in the pastoral idyll we are purified by sympathy and joy. We desire the same tranquil delight, the same passion of love, the same freedom from strain and envy and ambition that we see in the pastoral idyll. This form . . . appeals to a feeling that is keen and permanent in the human spirit; and although it is no cry to arms, and may not rouse deep spiritual struggle or produce higher and loftier ideals of human conduct, it does effect again that ever-necessary reconciliation of man with the simplicity of his own being.<sup>27</sup>

The pastoral idyll achieves its effect most often by the dramatic presentation of some characteristic scene in the joyous life of herdsmen or simple country people. It insists on a scrupulous rendering of the most trifling detail and on description of nature. It often presents a story of love, although the characters lack deep characterization and are possessed of conventional traits.<sup>28</sup> The qualities of the idyll are found most clearly in the *Idylls* of

26. Shackford, pp. 586—87.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 592.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 591.

Theocritus, but they appear and reappear constantly down through the history of the genre.<sup>29</sup>

"Modernity has taught us, with some reason," Cory writes, "to laugh at pastorals. Nevertheless there is a deep humanity in the artificial songs of shepherds and shepherdesses."<sup>30</sup>

Poetry must furnish at times an escape from life — not always the clarion call to life's struggles . . . We have the same aspirations today as those poets when they wrote their pastorals, — moods that are not mere toys, but because hope is edged with doubt, we trifle with our dreams in ways no less artificial than the pleasant game of pastoral-making. We have not outgrown the pastoralist's moods.<sup>31</sup>

"Literature," as Greg says quoting Professor Raleigh, "has constantly the double tendency to negative the life around it, as well as to reproduce it."<sup>32</sup>

There can be little doubt of the idyllic nature of many of Arguilla's stories. Casper refers to "the idyllic and pastoral flute tones of certain of the first stories" and Hartendorp uses the adjective "idyllic" to describe "Midsummer."<sup>33</sup> Two other writers criticize Arguilla's stories for this very idyllic quality, because they do not understand the tradition and its place in Arguilla. Roseburg says that the "only flaw" in Arguilla's stories "is that they idealize country life."<sup>34</sup> San Juan is even more at sea because he fails to understand Arguilla's pastoralism: Arguilla is talented in supplying a type of indirect rendering of native mannerisms; but his scope, as far as psychological analysis and moral discrimination are concerned, is severely restricted. Arguilla's mode of appreciating character or of sizing up dramatic conflict in his plots reduces the complexity of experience to simplified schemes, caricatures and cartoon-like illustrations of identifiable "humours" in village stereotypes.<sup>35</sup>

29. See the history of the pastoral in Greg, *Pastoral Poetry*, or Hanford, "Pastoral Elegy."

30. Herbert E. Cory, "The Golden Age of the Spenserian Pastoral," *PMLA* 25 (1910): 241.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Greg, pp. 5—6.

33. Casper, *Wayward Horizon*, p. 10 (see also p. 124); and A. V. Hartendorp in his introduction to *My Brother Leon*, pp. 9—10.

34. Arturo Roseburg, *Pathways to Philippine Literature in English* (Quezon City: Alemar-Phoenix Publishing House, 1966), p. 51.

35. Epifanio San Juan, "Philippine Literature in Crisis: An Interrogation," *St. Louis Quarterly* 6 (June 1968): 161.

The point of criticism is precisely Arguilla's intent and virtue. The idyll is not intended to be either psychological or moral. It simply provides an escape from the harsh psychological and moral realities of life.

The best example of the pastoral idyll in Arguilla is "Mid-summer." The simple incident, the meeting of man and woman, is dramatically presented with no tragic elements to spoil the idyllic dream of boy meets girl.

He felt strong. He felt very strong. He felt that he could follow the slender, lithe figure ahead of him to the ends of the world.<sup>36</sup>

The characters are flat. They are not even given names. We don't know where the man is going or why, nor do we care. The situation is trite, and it all takes place in a kind of never-never land. How nice to eat simple food, and sweat in the sun, and meet a girl and be happy for the rest of your life with no worries and no problems! There is great attention to detail.

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 a banana leaf, and some dried shrimps.<sup>37</sup>

Nature, too, is described with great detail.

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. Farther, beyond the shimmer of the 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.<sup>38</sup>

The story is a masterpiece of the pastoral idyll. It does not preach; it does not challenge or demand. It simply presents a dramatic picture of a meeting of two people in a rural setting. There is contentment; there is satisfaction. It represents an escape from all the problems of everyday living.

36. Arguilla, p. 23.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Other examples of the idyll would be "Heat" and "A Son Is Born" though neither of these approach the classic simplicity of "Midsummer." "Heat" is very similar to "Midsummer" but it does not come off quite as well. It does however represent the idyllic dream where "the tobacco plants are tall and very still in the fields" and "the crickets are suddenly sharp and clear" and Meliang waits "in the shadow of the duhat tree."<sup>39</sup> In "A Son Is Born" the narrator recounts how his brother was born in the year the locusts came.

It was the year the locusts came and ate the young rice in the fields, leaving only raw stumps that had to be plowed under again to make way for a second planting. Harvest time came late that year and far into the month of November we cut the hay in the fields.<sup>40</sup>

The harvest is pictured in typical idyllic fashion:

Those were long nights, cutting hay under the November moon. Many others were out in the fields, and we shouted to one another, waved handfuls of the fragrant hay overhead. Masses of clouds, clean and white like cotton bursting in the pod, moved swiftly across the face of the moon, now east, now west, never stopping. And sometimes when you looked up it seemed the moon was traveling across the sky and you caught your breath at the white speed of it.<sup>41</sup>

How peaceful to harvest under the moon and come home and eat boiled bananas with sugar before falling asleep with the hard, clean fatigue of the fields!<sup>42</sup> As December comes the tobacco is planted:

Berting and I went ahead carrying between us on a bamboo pole the petroleum can that we used for getting water from the well at one end of the long field. Father followed, walking before Mother, on his shoulder the heavy pointed stake for making the holes in the little hollows we had cleared. Into these holes Mother planted the tobacco seedlings and Berting and I watered them.<sup>43</sup>

There is the idyllic beauty of the simple family working together in the fields, parents and children in one happy moment! The idyll is complete when the baby is born on Christmas Eve.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

42. *Ibid.* There is a striking resemblance in this scene to several of the Mower poems of Andrew Marvell which are set in the same pastoral tradition.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 60

And then it came, the first shrill cry of the baby just born. We heard it above the sound of the bells, Berting and I. . . . It was then that my mother's tired, pale face broke into a smile and she said, "His name shall be Jesus." My father cleared his throat and said, "Yes, his name shall be Jesus." And that was how my brother Jesus was born, in the year the locusts came.<sup>44</sup>

As a result of the contrast, implied or explicit, in the idyll between the pastoral and the complex civilization, "there arises an idea which comes perhaps as near being universal as any — the idea . . . of the 'golden age.' "<sup>45</sup> The idea that the world has been a better place and that men have degenerated, and that some of this primitive beauty and peace is preserved in the simplicity of the rural setting and among the simple folk of the unspoiled country, is a regular feature of the pastoral. The restoration of this Golden Age was a theme of the Virgilian pastoral and it was naturally taken over in the pastoral of the Christian era when, echoing Isaiah, the Golden Age was identified with the coming of Christ. This Golden Age is implicit in the idylls of Arguilla. It occurs in "Midsummer" and in "Heat" and is most obvious in "A Son Is Born" with its echoes of the biblical phrases, "A son is born" and "His name shall be Jesus." Man's age old desire to return to the golden age is clear in "The Long Vacation," where Leon wants to leave the complexities of the city world to return to the peace and contentment of San'do and Poro Point, and in a less obvious way in "Imperfect Farewell," where Sunset Beach in Mariveles operates as an idyllic golden world, contrasted with the turmoil of Manila.

One final element of the pastoral idyll which was inserted into the framework of pastoral paradise was the presence of death, thus giving birth to the pastoral elegy. But death in the idyll is simple, and clean and beautiful, even if it is sad and inevitable. It is the death of his wife that prompts Leon to take his trip back to Poro Point in "The Long Vacation."

Before she died, Leon went on, at the hospital when she complained of the heat, she would smile and say that as soon as she recovered we would go to San'do and there she'd stay until she was entirely well again.<sup>46</sup>

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 68—69.

45. Greg, p. 5.

46. Arguilla; p. 173.

Death is also present in "Imperfect Farewell":

The meaning of life lay revealed before you and it was all so simple and beautiful. You talked of death, yes, (as who is young and full of life does not) but death was a cordial rare and sweet. . . . A feeling of gloom invaded your spirit and less from mirth than from a need to shake off the unwelcome mood, you laughed. But in the middle of your laughter it seemed that all around you sounded Death's dark footfalls, softer than the falling grains of sand.<sup>47</sup>

Inevitably the idyll must end. The world of the idyll, although a necessary one for the harried spirits of contemporary man, must disappear. Like all human things, the idyll too must die.

#### THE ROMANTIC PASTORAL

The fourth element of the pastoral is its emphasis upon love, and it is under this heading that we can talk of the romantic pastoral. The romantic pastoral very often pictures "a purely sensual and pagan paradise, in which love with all its pains and raptures reigns supreme."<sup>48</sup> It is characterized by strong personal sentiment and highly individualized feelings of affection (though in the history of the genre these individualized feelings tend to become more conventionalized). In the spirit of the idyll as well as of the romantic mood, the loved one and the love relationship are highly idealized. The romantic pastoralist sees love as he wishes to see it and not as it is. The imagery is concrete and the situation is presented dramatically.

Arguilla's romanticism needs little proof. It is perhaps his most obvious quality, and his best stories, without a doubt, are romantic tales of innocent and melancholy love. "Mid-summer" is the best example of the type. "He felt that he could follow the slender, lithe figure ahead of him to the ends of the world."<sup>49</sup> The two characters are conventionalized and stereotyped, even to the point of having no names. The love is simple, sudden and overwhelming; even the sex is innocent and pure: In one lithe movement she brought 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

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 152-156.

48. Greg, p. 43.

49. Arguilla, p. 23.

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.<sup>50</sup>

The future will inevitably be happy, for that is the way it always is in romances. Meliang will always be waiting in the shadow of the duhat tree.<sup>51</sup>

In "The Strongest Man" the love is equally idealistic and romantic:

Ondong carried my aunt Onang to the raft. Tall and straight and without a word to say, he waded into the waves. Around his waist foam hissed and swirled and in his arms my aunt Onang lay quiet and unmoving. . . . And by and by the hand of my aunt Onang came out from under the arm of Ondong and went up to his shoulder and held him there.<sup>52</sup>

On the other hand, "Elias" is almost primitive in its simplicity. Elias and Andres compete for the hand of Pastora. (The name means shepherdess.) The struggle, of course, as it always must be in romances, is physical — muscle against muscle, bolo against bolo, and Elias kills Andres.

It was exactly midday when the two constabulary soldiers arrived. Elias submitted peacefully. He extended his great arms and the larger of the soldiers snapped on a pair of handcuffs. The big man then jerked his arms sidewise and he was free, the handcuffs dangling at his wrists uselessly. It was then that Elias smiled for the third time. He moved along with the soldiers and said, "I'll go with you," and smiled quickly, shyly. "What about Pastora?" I blurted out. He looked back and said, "Don't worry about her. We understand each other now."<sup>53</sup>

The ending reminds the reader of the final scene of O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*, which is O'Neill's own attempt at pastoralism.

"Felisa" is a delightful little romantic idyll. It begins: "In the early December morning Felisa walked with me along the beach."<sup>54</sup> And it ends:

And so it was that on Christmas morning Felisa walked with me again on the sands of Carlatan. Her steps were long and they were swift and they matched my own. She was full of joy. She laughed and she was beautiful to behold. She was my *Hail Mary full of grace*. She was my prayer of adoration. She was my song of praise.<sup>55</sup>

50. Ibid., p. 17.

51. Ibid., p. 52.

52. Ibid., p. 95.

53. Ibid., pp. 150–51.

54. Ibid., p. 158.

55. Ibid., p. 168.

How sad that Arguilla did not stop three sentences before the end, "She laughed and she was beautiful to behold." The ending as it stands is trite and melodramatic. But the story itself is a gem. In between the sands of Carlatan at the beginning and the end, there is much romanticism and falling in love, and the reciting of poetry:

This is the shape of the leaf, and this of the flower  
And this the pale hole of the tree  
Which watches its bough in a pool of unwavering water  
In a land we never shall see.<sup>56</sup>

There is the laughter of Felisa and her voice and "her light footfalls on the dust of the road among all those of her companions."<sup>57</sup> And seven days pass and seven nights, and on Christmas Day after the Midnight Mass, in the plaza in the shadow of a low-branching acacia, there is love:

"I love you."

"You never told me."

"I love you."

She was in my arms and I could not tell whether she was crying or she was laughing.<sup>58</sup>

In the romance, sadness is always very close to happiness. We have seen this in the discussion of the pastoral idyll, and it is also true of the romance. "Imperfect Farewell" and "The Long Vacation" with their stories of innocent and unspoiled love are romances as well as idylls, and the presence of death adds a melancholy note that has always been characteristic of the romance.

One of the best of the pastoral romances in Arguilla is, without a doubt, his title story: "How My Brother Leon Brought Home A Wife." The story begins romantically:

She stepped down from the carretela . . . with a quick delicate grace. She was lovely. She was tall. She looked up to my brother with a smile, and her forehead was on a level with his mouth . . . She was fragrant like a morning when papayas are in bloom.<sup>59</sup>

The story fuses the romantic and the pastoral. Can a girl from Manila find happiness as the wife of a farmer from the province?

56. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 96.



Maria passes the test, of course. Girls always do in romances! And the story ends with Arguilla's favorite technique of repeating the opening with a twist:

I looked at Maria and she was lovely. She was tall. Beside my brother Leon, she was tall and very still. Then I went out, and in the darkened hall the fragrance of her was like a morning when papayas are in bloom.<sup>60</sup>

The conventions of the romance are used everywhere in the story, and yet Arguilla manages to prevent them from sliding over into sentimentality. There is a sunset and the lovers' star. They have their nicknames for each other, and they sing "their" song as they remember nights at Ermita Beach. The romantic is cleverly fused with the city-barrio contrast of the pastoral. The houses, and the cars, and the people and the noise are contrasted with the Waig and the carabao and the fields where the air is clean, free of dust and smoke. Their love will be happy because it will grow in the unspoiled paradise of the province.

Romance is a difficult genre to handle. Arguilla's hand often falters and he often descends to triteness or melodrama. But when he succeeds, as in "How My Brother Leon Brought Home A Wife," he is magnificent.

Arguilla uses one other technique which helps him to highlight the romanticism of his stories. This is his use of the child as narrator. The technique enables him to see the world through the eyes of a child, which are essentially romantic and simple eyes. Casper writes:

The eyes of a child, half-knowing, yet all-caring, provide the ideal device for leaving the most important narrative matters unmentioned but not therefore untold. Arguilla's subtlety has been too long overlooked. It is the source of that intimate-yet-objective quality which give these stories their peculiar strength.<sup>61</sup>

Baldo, or his equivalent, is the narrator or a character in "Morning in Nagrebcan," "A Son Is Born," "The Strongest Man," "How My Brother Leon Brought Home A Wife," and "Epilogue To Revolt." The child-Baldo can also be seen in the slightly

60. Ibid., p. 105.

61. Casper, *Wayward Horizon*, p. 10. See also Herbert Schneider, "The Literature of the Period of Emergence," in *Brown Heritage*, ed. Antonio Manuud (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1967), p. 590.

older young men-heroes of "Elias," "Imperfect Farewell," and "Felisa." With the child as his point of view, Arguilla can surround his stories and immerse them in a kind of gentle, romantic glow. The eyes of a child are essentially innocent eyes and literary tradition has long equated the Golden Age with childhood. As Greg says, "The romance of childhood is the dream with which age consoles itself for the disillusionments of life."<sup>62</sup> Empson adds another dimension to the child-narrator technique when he broadens his definition of pastoral to include all stories of simple men, whether they be shepherds or children or working men, when contrasted with more complicated and "civilized" men.<sup>63</sup> The use of the boy narrative accentuates, therefore, the pastoral nature of Arguilla's stories. It enables him to simplify the world as he looks at it through the eyes of the child. The essential task of the . . . pastoral, which was felt to imply a beautiful relation between rich and poor, was to make simple people express strong feelings (felt as the most universal subject, something fundamentally true about everybody) . . .<sup>64</sup>

#### THE ALLEGORICAL PASTORAL

The final elements which we must consider in our discussion of the pastoral are the use of allegory and satire. It seems clear that essential to the pastoral, throughout the history of the genre, is that it be a type of allegory.

In this connection, G. P. Marsh noted that "pastoral poetry affects the manner or matter of rustic life, not for accurate description, but as a purely artistic device for conveying the interests and emotions of the poet himself, of the society not rural in which he lives."<sup>65</sup>

The pastoral early became a highly conventionalized form of poetry, the poet (Virgil is an example) writing of his friends and acquaintances as though they were poetic shepherds moving

62. Greg, p. 6.

63. William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (New York: New Directions Paperbooks, 1960), pp. 241-82.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

65. William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, *A Handbook To Literature*, revised and enlarged by C. Hugh Holman (New York: Odyssey Press, 1960), s. v. "pastoral."

through rural scenes. Greg points out that very often in the pastoral "actual personages are introduced, in the guise of shepherds, to discuss contemporary affairs."<sup>66</sup> And Hanford says:

All the charm of rustic manners, all the fresh beauties of Sicilian scenery were preserved in the idyls of Theocritus; but these served only as a setting for human passions.<sup>67</sup>

In this sense, the pastoral is a device for literary inversion, a means "of putting the complex into the simple," of expressing complex ideas through simple personages.<sup>68</sup> In other words, the pastoral operates as a rather simple allegory, which tells a simple story in simple language and yet communicates a much deeper and more profound reality. If Empson is right, all pastoral has this essentially allegorical structure.

We have seen this type of pastoral allegory operating in "How My Brother Leon Brought Home A Wife" on a rather simple level. City and barrio meet in the characters of Maria and Leon. A question is asked. Can city ever be reconciled with barrio? The answer is given. Yes, if city can adjust. But the allegory also operates on the level of marriage (How my brother brought home a *wife*!) Can two people from different backgrounds, different cultures, different races live happily together in marriage? Arguilla says they can, if they are willing and able to adjust.

The same type of allegory appears in "Midsummer." It is a simple story of boy meets girl in an idealized pastoral setting. We do not know where the setting is; we do not know the names of either boy or girl. But the girl is clearly Woman, and Arguilla has taken pains to emphasize her essential femininity. She does not just possess femininity; she *is* femininity. Arguilla calls attention to her breasts in the passage we have quoted above and then he goes on to write as follows:

"The underpart of her arm is white and smooth," he said . . . "And her hair is thick and black." . . . How graceful she was! Her hips tapered smoothly down to rounded thighs and supple legs, showing against her

66. Greg, p. 6.

67. Hanford, p. 29.

68. Empson, p. 23.

skirt and moving straight and free. Her shoulders, small but firm, bore her shapely neck and head with shy pride.<sup>69</sup>

And he is clearly Man in his masculinity:

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 muscles stuck out against his 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 front, fell in a cluster over his forehead.<sup>70</sup>

"Midsummer" is the story of Everyman meeting Everywoman.

The best example of this type of allegorical pastoral in the stories of Arguilla is "Morning in Nagrebcan," which is an allegory of the Garden of Paradise and of the loss of innocence, as well as of the presence of evil in the world. The story begins in perfect pastoral innocence:

It was sunrise in Nagrebcan. The fine bluish, mist, low over the tobacco fields, was lifting and thinning, moment by moment. A ragged strip of it, pulled away by the morning breeze, had caught on the clumps of bamboo along the banks of the stream that flowed to one side of the barrio. Before long the sun would top the Katayaghan hills, but as yet no people were around. In the grey shadow of the hills, the barrio was gradually awaking. Roosters crowed and strutted on the ground while hens hesitated on their perches among the branches of the camachile trees. Stray goats nibbled on the weeds on the sides of the road, and the bull carabaos tugged restively against their stakes.<sup>71</sup>

It is almost like the Garden before man was created. In the early morning, ten year old Baldo and his younger brother Ambo, play with their puppies, but they quarrel over the black spotted puppy that both of them want. Their quarrel becomes more serious, and they fight, brother against brother much like the biblical Cain and Abel. The noise of their fight awakens their father who beats Ambo and Baldo and kills the black spotted puppy. As the story ends, Baldo and Ambo bury the dead puppy in a corner of the field.

Baldo dug the grave with a sharp-pointed stake. Ambo stood silently by, holding the dead puppy. They covered the dog with soft earth and stamped on the grave until the disturbed ground was flat and hard again. With difficulty they rolled a big stone on top of the grave. Then Baldo

69. Arguilla, pp. 17, 19.

70. Ibid., p. 21.

71. Ibid., p. 24.

placed an arm around the shoulders of Ambo; they hurried up to the house.<sup>72</sup>

The pastoral innocence of morning in Nagrebcan has been shattered by the intrusion of evil, and sin and death. The world will never be the same again. Arguilla's pastoral is therefore not simply a story of two brothers and a black spotted puppy, but also a story of man and the loss of innocence. We have seen this same intrusion of death within the pastoral context in "Imperfect Farewell" and "The Long Vacation." It is one of the oldest and most pervasive allegories in literature — the allegory of evil.

This presence of evil is not very strong in Arguilla, but it is there. It is a much more real and ever present factor in the stories of N. V. M. Gonzalez, for example, who is the other Filipino writer in English whose stories are very much in the pastoral tradition. The comparison of the use of the pastoral tradition by the two writers would be a particularly instructive study.

"Ato" is a difficult story, because although pastoral, and allegorical, it is quite different from all the other of Arguilla's stories. It is a simple retelling of a myth or folk tale.

The Nagrebcan river has widened its banks and grown shallow, but the people say that Ato still walks on the river-bottom when the water is high. And it is also told that in the night when the wind grieves through the hollows of the Katayaghan hills and above the valley of Nagrebcan, one may yet hear Ato's great voice booming through the air like far-off thunder.<sup>73</sup>

Ato, the hunter, returns from the hills to discover that his wife and unborn child have disappeared, carried off by the river. In his anguish, he challenges the river and disappears beneath its waters. Man must always struggle against the evil that threatens him, even though he must always be defeated. There will always be a responsive chord for men like Prometheus, and Lear and Don Quijote.

As allegory, the pastoral becomes a means of saying the most profound things about life and man in the simplest, and therefore perhaps in the best way. It is this "complex illusion of simplicity" that operates so effectively in the stories of Arguilla.<sup>74</sup>

72. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

73. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

74. Casper, *Wayward Horizon*, p. 8.

We must make one last point about proletarian literature. According to Empson, the wider sense of the term pastoral "includes such folk literature as is by the people, for the people, about the people."<sup>75</sup> In that sense the underprivileged poor, the proletariat, are substituted for the simple shepherds of the traditional pastoral. The working man in modern civilization becomes the shepherd of another age. Accepting this definition in its broadest sense, we can then also classify the social stories of Arguilla as pastoral. The downtrodden of "Caps and Lower Case" and "Apes and Men" are contrasted with the alien world of the rich. "The Socialists," as we have seen, is a social story contrasted with the pastoral setting of the slopes of Arayat, and "Epilogue to Revolt" might be a simple pastoral if it were not for its obvious social message of the Sakdalistas. The pastoral contrast in these stories is not between town and country, but between rich and poor. The final story in the group and in the volume, "Rice," fuses the two themes — that of traditional pastoral and that of social or proletarian pastoral, much as "The Long Vacation" fused the Nagrebcan and Malate groups earlier in the book.

The allegorical structure of pastoral leads to the final quality of the genre to be discussed — that of satire. Implicit in the contrast between town and country must be at least a gentle satire of one or the other. The provinciano will gently chide Maria for being afraid of a carabao, the sophisticated city dweller will smile at the mispronunciations of the provinciano. The allegorical stories will satirize evil, and a father's uncontrollable temper. Even the simple, unsophisticated idyll will be a satire of that complicated civilization with which it is contrasted.

The social stories, however, provide a framework for a more pointed and bitter type of satire. Ansel, for example, in "Epilogue to Revolt":

"We pray for the souls of the dead," he went on, his voice unemphatic; he stared straight in front of him, beyond the heads of the people. "Then we stuff ourselves with food bought with money that is borrowed. We do

75. Empson, p. 6.

these things better than anything else I can think of. This is what I have learned. Just so long as we can pray and gorge on pig's flesh and chicken meat, the dead can rot in their graves.<sup>76</sup>

The point of the satire is the very contrast or gap which is at the heart of the pastoral, the contrast between what is and what is not, between reality and dream. It is a two-edged blade, and the pastoral writer can turn it as he wishes. The idyllic return to innocence represents one of the greatest needs in man, but so does allegory and satire, the need to say and to criticize complex things in a disarmingly simple way.

#### CONCLUSION

Arguilla is a traditionalist, perhaps not by intention, but certainly in fact. He is writing in the long tradition of the pastoral, in the tradition of the rural setting, the contrast between the country and the city, the idyllic escape from reality to a kind of golden age, romantic love, allegory and satire. But Arguilla is also an individualist. He has taken the tradition and made it Filipino. We have accepted him for being uniquely Filipino; perhaps his true talent will be recognized when we understand more deeply and accept the tradition in which he writes.

76. Arguilla, p. 224.