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Juan del Encina's Figure of the Hermit

Juan del Encina uses the figure of the shepherd to entertain, move, and instruct his reading, listening, and watching public. His knowledge of the presentation and function of this character in the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions complements his familiarity with the culture of contemporary Leonese country people whose attitudes, customs, and even language he imitates with precision, art, and originality in his works. He combines elements from secular and religious traditions along with real life observation so adroitly that we consider him the finest creator of pastoral literature of his time. In addition, we remember him as the most vocal defender of the pastoral style, which, he argues, demands at least as much artistry as the middle and high styles if not more: "pues si bien es mirado, no menos ingenio requieren las cosas pastoriles que las otras, mas antes yo creería que más" (Encina, 6v).

Encina also incorporates into his poetry, songs, and theater another resident of the country, one who, like the shepherd, enjoys an extensive cultural history and belongs to the contemporary scene: the hermit. Just as the shepherds, the hermits in different works perform disparate functions and assume distinct roles. As a consequence, Encina portrays them with diverse characteristics.

In the *Representación a la muy bendita pasión y muerte de nuestro precioso Redentor*, for example, the old and the young hermits, who meet on a road that leads to the holy sepulcher, dialogue as if the former were the father, the beholder of wisdom who answers, and the latter, the son, the inquisitive seeker of truth who asks about the sad events of the passion, crucifixion, and burial as well as their meaning. Here, two pious ascetics abandon their solitude and silence and join together to talk as they journey to their Redeemer's grave. Encina uses them to dramatically recount the story of Jesus Christ—His suffering execution, and interment, the prelude to His resurrection, which is interpreted as the consummation of the New Law.

In the *Egloga de Cristino y Febea*, in contrast, the protagonist qualifies neither as pious nor as holy. Conscious of the evanescence of this life and

of the things of this world, weary of the daily struggles with his masters, and tired of the ups and downs in his amorous pursuits, the young shepherd with a reputation as a lover longs for a more meaningful existence. He decides, therefore, to renounce the temporal world, abandon his town, his friends, his profession and master, and, most surprising of all, his wooing, to embrace the eremtical life in order to seek and serve God through solitary good works. Encina convinces us at once of his sincerity and of the impossibility of his success. Justino, a friend as frank and youthful as he is wise, appraises the venture with accuracy when he suggests it is doomed to failure. Cristino turns out to be the caricature of a hermit: weak-willed, irrational, and irresolute. Tempted by pleasure, he fails to control his passions and must abandon the hermitage. More concerned with what the people of the town will think when he shows up dressed as a shepherd ready to resume his active life than how God will judge his betrayal and abandonment of the passive life, more disturbed and unsettled from having met the nymph Febea than from having failed to meet his Maker, Cristino epitomizes the false anchorite who turns the eremtical experience into a sham.

Among the "Villancicos de amores" that Encina publishes in his *Cancionero de 1496*, one features a character of particular interest to us now. Neither a practicing hermit nor a young shepherd from a rural village who tries but fails to follow the solitary life, the protagonist of this lyric is a young city dweller who is experiencing difficulty in seeing the fair object of his affection. His tale of suffering, service, and hopes unravels in simple verses according to the long-standing tradition of courtly love and the rhetorical embellishments of Isabelline poetry. Although the poem fails to explain both the state of the girlfriend (married or single) and the exact reasons why they cannot meet (either interference from husband or the father and the family), the reader or listener tends to associate this urban suitor's dilemma with the one Calisto experiences in *La Celestina*. The protagonist, at least while daydreaming about solutions to his urgent sentimental problem, chooses to take matters into his own hands—as opposed to turning them over to a savvy go-between, as happens in Rojas's tragicomedy. At least in his musings, of which the entire poem is made, he longs to become a hermit:

Hermitaño quiero ser;
por ver,
hermitaño quiero ser.

Por probar nueva manera	No mudaré mi querer.
mudar quiero mi vestir	Por ver,
porque en el traje de fuera	hermitaño quiero ser.
desconozcan mi bivar.	

Serán mis hábitos tales
que digan con mi dolor:
será el paño de mis males,
será de fe la color
y el cordón de padecer.
Por ver,
hermitaño quiero ser.

Será hecho mi cilicio
de muy áspero tormento,
tejido con mi servicio,
cosido con sufrimiento,
y elo siempre de traer.
Por ver,
hermitaño quiero ser.

Las cuentas para rezar
han de ser cien mil querellas;
el bordón para esforçar
ha de ser la causa dellas.
Y pues me dexé vencer.
Por ver,
hermitaño quiero ser.

Crecerán mis barvas tanto
quanto creciere mi pena.
Pediré con triste llanto
—Dad para la Madalena—
si me quisieren valer.
Por ver,
hermitaño quiero ser.

No peynaré mis cabellos
ni descansarán mis ojos
hasta que se duela dellos
quien me causa mil enojos,
si se quisiesse doler.
Por ver,
hermitaño quiero ser.

Haré vida tan estrecha
que peor sea que muerte
porque no tengan sospecha
que bivo por otra suerte.

Y no tomaré plazer.

Por ver,
hermitaño quiero ser.

Andaré sin alegría,
aquexado de cuydados,
por los páramos de día,
de noche por los poblados.
Y assí quiero fenecer.

Por ver,
hermitaño quiero ser.

Quiçá que por mi ventura,
andando de puerta en puerta,
veré la gentil figura
de quien tien mi vida muerta,
si saliesse a responder.

Por ver,
hermitaño quiero ser.

Los sospiros encubiertos
que he callado por mi daño
ora serán descubiertos
en hábito de hermitaño.
Ora ganar o perder.

Por ver,
hermitaño quiero ser.

Pensarán los que me vieren
que sospiro con pobreza.
La que mis ojos ver quieren
bien sentirá mi tristeza,
bien me sabrá conocer.

Por ver,
hermitaño quiero ser.

Fin.

¡O qué bien aventuraça
ternía mi coraçón
si cumpliesse mi esperança
viéndome en tal reliçión!

Haré todo mi poder.

Por ver,
hermitaño quiero ser.

As I have already written about the *Representación a la muy bendita pasión y muerte de nuestro precioso Redentor* ("Juan del Encina" 87-94) and the *Egloga de Cristino y Febea* (*Teatro* 34-47), I shall turn to

"Hermitaño quiero ser." Broadly speaking, Western culture and contemporary history played substantial roles in its creation. Among the ideas that underpin it are the classical dichotomy of the country versus the city, which we find woven into the very fabric of literature across the ages; the beatific vision so dear to Christians in the Age of Belief; "the spirit of fantasy" that permeated fifteenth-century art and life (Focillon 139-44); love, especially the stylized variety peculiar to the courtly love tradition; emphasis on the individual and on the "here-and-now," typical of the Renaissance; and the critical spirit of the Reformation that underscores the superficiality and hollowness of adhering to exterior forms of religiosity, along with the real problem of false hermits. Their true vocation contrasts with the expected solitary practice of asceticism and ranges in Encina's time—and, for that matter, as William Christian has shown, well into the seventeenth century—from the clever and successful entrepreneur to the pauper to the con artist (104, 108-112, 169-70). Among the literary techniques on which it depends are the *villancico* tradition, hyperbaton, allegory, comparison, hyperbole, metaphor, oxymoron, and repetition, as are symbolic clothing, accessories, parts of the body, and actions. With the mellow perspective of one already initiated in, bruised by, and recovered from the complexities of human love, with the originality of one steeped in tradition and freed from its grasp, and with the rigor of one trained in the mechanics of lyric poetry and able to use them to evoke and express ideas and sentiments, Encina creates this charming little piece.

In his "Arte de poesía castellana" (2r-6v), he defines the *villancico* as a subset of "arte real," that is, poetry written in lines of eight syllables (or their equivalent) or less. He classifies as a "mote o villancico o letra de alguna invención" a poetic composition containing two verses of an equivalent number of syllables and consonant rhyme, as in "No quiero tener querer / ni quiero querido ser" (93r), and as a "villancico o letra de invención" a poem containing three verses, all the same length or one shorter than the other two, and a pair of them exhibiting consonant rhyme, such as "No quiero que me consienta / mi triste vida bivar / ni yo quiero consentir" and "Remediad, señora mía, / pues podéys. / Señor, no me lo mandéys" (92r). Furthermore, he reminds us that in olden times the rhyme scheme of these compositions varied and implies the use of assonance because, he remarks, poets then did not strictly observe rules of versification, (as in the archaic-sounding "Ojos garços ha la niña; / quien gelos namoraría," 95v). Actually, if we follow the poet's definitions, what we would call the refrain constitutes the complete *villancico* we have before us. Encina classifies the dozen stanzas as a series of "glosas" or "coplas;" and, in fact, he wrote many compositions as variations on traditional or contemporary "motes," "villancicos," "letras de invención," and "canciones." Without fail, he identifies those that belong to someone else;

“Glosas de canciones y motes por Juan del Encina,” “Glosa de una canción que dize . . . ,” and “Coplas por Juan del Encina a este ageno villancico” serve as standard rubrics in his first *Cancionero* as opposed to those that he creates in their entirety (“Canciones hechas por Juan del Encina” and “Villancicos hechos por Juan del Encina” distinguish his work.). By its placement in the *Cancionero de 1496*, we know that “Hermitaño quiero ser,” in summary, belongs to the latter category; consequently, its three initial lines as well as the twelve stanzas that develop the main idea belong to Encina. Each strophe consists of four octosyllables that display alternate, consonant rhyme, of an additional octosyllable that introduces in a verse distinct from the refrain the rhyme it contains, and of the final two lines from the refrain. This, therefore, is the poetic scheme:

REFRAIN		
1	8	A
2	3	A
3	8	A
TWELVE STANZAS		
1	8	b
2	8	c
3	8	b
4	8	c
5	8	a
6	3	A
7	8	A

Its form corresponds—with two exceptions—to the precepts Encina outlines in his poetic treatise. The *villancico* contains three lines, two octosyllables and one short line. Contrary to standard practice, though, all three lines have consonant rhyme instead of having one free verse. The reason for the deviation seems obvious; line three repeats exactly line one. The same phenomenon occurs, for example, in this analogous *villancico*: “No te tardes que me muero, / carcelero, / no te tardes que me muero” (93v). It should be noted that this complete poem differs from the one presently under study in that it follows the form of the *zéjel*, that is, because three monorhyming octosyllables and the last two lines of the refrain constitute each stanza. The second anomaly involves the short line. In his “Arte de poesía castellana,” Encina writes that the short line of octosyllabic poetry is a tetrasyllable although the Castilian tradition of poetic license sanctions the use of a fifth syllable (“assí como dixo don Jorge: ‘como devemos,’” 4r). He also indicates that in dodecasyllables with a caesura, the stressed initial syllable of each hemistich (as well as the final one) counts as two. He never suggests, however, that a similar phenomenon occurs in the brief

line of *arte real*. If we follow his system of versification, therefore, the line "por ver" counts as three, not four, syllables, as required. Encina, by the way, uses the trisyllable short line in lyrics when the long one is a hexasyllable (like "Ya soy desposado, / nuestramo, / ya soy desposado," 100r). The only other similar exception I have been able to find is the exclamation "¡Huy ho!," together with its variant "¡Huy ha!," in the completely atypical *villancico* of the second *Egloga* whose form I already have discussed elsewhere (*Obras dramáticas* 116–17 n. 181).

That Encina repeats the last two lines of the refrain as the final verses of each stanza enriches the dimensions of the poem in several ways. Structurally, it alters the nature of the strophes otherwise comprised of octosyllables by adding the verse "por ver," which, as we have seen, appears to contain two syllables but counts as three and jars us since it should be constituted by four. Encina once more demonstrates here his artistic genius by making the form and meaning merge: in neither are things what they seem or even what one thinks they should be. In addition, the stanzas of "pie quebrado" highlight repeatedly the single trisyllable. One might expect the briefest verse to be the least significant; but quite the opposite occurs, again proving that things are not always what they seem or even what one thinks they should be. Conceptually, in fact, "por ver"—readers will want to keep in mind that *por* in this context is the medieval equivalent of *para* 'in order to'—turns out to be not only the reason the protagonist considers, in his fantasy, donning the garb of a hermit in order to imitate the visible manifestations of the ermetical life, but also his goal.

A subtle but effective tension exists between the refrain and the rest of the poem. Singers of this *villancico*, we must remember, not only begin and end with the three lines but also repeat them after each stanza. The refrain—"Hermitaño quiero ser; / por ver, / hermitaño quiero ser"—, thanks to its utter simplicity, its balance, and its repetition, which stresses commitment, transports us to the eremitical life, a life of solitude in a rural setting, of austerity, of contemplation, of self-sacrifice, of service to God. It also evokes in us thoughts of the hermit's contempt for and rejection of this world and its temporal goods along with his goal of mortification of the senses and the desires of the flesh. Moreover, the trisyllable of the refrain reminds us that the hermit foregoes happiness on earth in order to merit bliss in heaven, that is, in order to deserve the beatific vision. As listeners or readers, then, we initially should expect in the stanzas that are to follow development of these ideas. Encina counters that mind set in the first strophe. He has the protagonist reveal that he is in the process of considering changing his clothes and disguising himself as a hermit as an experiment ("Por probar nueva manera") and in order to fool others ("porque en el traje de fuera / desconoçan mi bivar") but that he has no

intention of changing the object of his love ("No mudaré mi querer.'). We see, then, that we have the makings of a hermit of a very different kind—not a genuine but a false hermit, who seeks to see not God but, as we are informed later on, "la gentil figura" of his unavailable girlfriend. As the story of the unrequited lover's fantasy unfolds in stages interrupted by the refrain, we alternate between our first impression of the true hermit and our second of the false one. This tension enriches the esthetic effect of the work; in fact, it replicates the fluid world of the imagination, a perfect complement to this daydream-of-a-lyric and the sweet music to which it is sung.

R. O. Jones intelligently observes (24–29) that Encina's preferred sentimental theme is love of the courtly type, at once a universal and European and Spanish phenomenon, in which passion overpowers reason, becomes an obsession, makes the suitor's existence a living death, causes endless suffering that the enamored sufferer considers a privilege, and requires perpetual service. Jones, furthermore, indicates that since the constancy of the lover parallels the faith of the believer, the "religion" of love parallels that of Christianity. Citing Encinian poems, he easily demonstrates how Encina borrows from this tradition in which the woman replaces God as the object of love or worship, the suffering of the lover becomes analogous to Jesus' passion, and correspondence of the loved one—sometimes physical, sometimes spiritual—produces a felicity akin to the glory that follows Christ's passion and death. I would add only one thought to this cogent summary: that Encina usually works from the perspective of *Omnia vincit amor* so that his characters, be they shepherds, courtesans, or city dwellers; Jews, Moors, or Christians; young, middle-aged, or old, succumb to the power of human love, which causes a revolution in their lives; or, as an Encinian shepherd put it, ". . . el amorío / . . . con su gran poderío / haze mudar el pellejo, / . . . / haze mudar los estados" (*Obras dramáticas* 209–10).

In the poem we have before us now, Encina varies the treatment of the religion of love and its power to alter the life of its practitioner by having the young suitor fancy becoming, not a shepherd as the courtesan Gil did in the *Egloga representada en recuesta de unos amores*, but rather a hermit. This variation allows Encina to draw parallels between the circumstances and sentimental outlook of the unrequited lover and the anchorite. Both, it turns out, face privation, solitude, suffering, sadness, and metaphoric death: the hermit, voluntarily, upon renouncing the things of this world, the lover, in spite of himself, upon failing to receive correspondence from his lady fair. Both, also, practice a religion rooted in constancy, faith, and service. The former practices the religion of profane love; the latter, the religion of divine love. In addition, both experience an austere

life, the first obligatorily; the second by choice. Finally, they both desire to see and to unite with the object of their love: the lady, in the case of the lover; God, in the case of the hermit.

Encina, in characteristic fashion, symmetrically divides the dozen strophes, that constitute the variations on the theme stated in the refrain, into an introduction (1), development of the main ideas (2–11), and a conclusion (12) so that the architecture of the *coplas* is 1 + 10 + 1. In the introductory strophe, Encina presents the two modes of his poem (description, action), the subject (the revolution love causes), and the form it takes (a suitor's fantasy). In addition he creates a second subtle tension in the poem. We may experience it less than contemporary readers or listeners since we have a poorer knowledge of Isabelline fashion and daily life than the poet's public did. The protagonist, being a young urban suitor, maintains, we must assume, an orderly and refined appearance. We need to visualize him—as illustrators of the early sixteenth century portrayed Victoriano—surely a direct descendent of the fellow in our poem—from the Encinian *Egloga* that bears his name—as a clean shaven, fair youth with shoulder-length, well-shaped and combed hair set off by a plumed cap worn atop his head and tipped to one side. Along with a richly decorated doublet that accentuates his broad shoulders, he wears tights and pointed shoes that accentuate his well-turned legs and sports a sword suspended from his waist. We also need to think of him as a young man who would live quite a pleasant and comfortable life were it not for the ravishes of love. This “manera” and “traje de fuera” to which the suitor refers in the first stanza serve as the basis for the implicit comparison with the hermit who gradually takes shape for us as the protagonist transfers him from his imagination to ours, a dishevelled, long-haired, unkempt, bearded anchorite dressed in austere garb, that is, in a coarse white robe tied at the waist with a rope, who carries with him a rosary and a cane as he ambles, poverty-stricken, around the countryside and towns asking for alms to maintain himself and the shrine honoring Mary Magdalen, to which he attaches himself.

The central section of 10 stanzas develops the theme that love produces pain and suffering. It consists, as one expects in works by Encina, of a balanced subdivision. In the fifth strophe of each set, the protagonist refers to his eyes, first to say that they will have no rest until his beloved takes pity on them (Anchorites often forego sleep as a form of penance and service while unrequited lovers often suffer from insomnia.) and then to say that he desires to see only the lady whom he adores. In the initial 5 stanzas (2–6), the protagonist describes the physical appearance of the hermit he imagines he will become. First he tells us how he will dress; then, how he will look, both in such a way that he communicates with each detail his heartache and agony. These strophes depend on the allegorical habit, 2-

3-4 (See the *Cancionero de 1496*, 82v, for a similar but far more complicated allegory based on armaments.) and parts of the body with symbolic value, 5-6. The final five stanzas (7-11) continue to develop the same theme; but now the protagonist explains the eremitical life that he contemplates for himself. In these stanzas static physical description gives way to dynamic action, which also underscores at every turn his affliction and grief; and the protagonist fantasizes that he might be lucky enough to see his beloved, whom, he feels certain, will recognize him—even in a hermit's garb—and will, upon seeing him, recognize as well the grief their separation has caused him. In the first three (7-8-9) strophes the protagonist envisions his impoverished existence in the hermitage and wilderness by day, door to door in the towns by night while in the last two (10-11) he imagines how he will be able to sigh publicly, all in the name of love and the misery and distress it causes. These strophes depend on the comparison, the metaphor and the oxymoron; in them, actions acquire symbolic value.

In the closing stanza, the forlorn lover returns to the "real" world and, heartened by his fantasy, exclaims what a fine piece of luck he would have if, indeed, he became a hermit and succeeded in making his daydream come true. Decided, he promises himself once more to do everything in his power to see his beloved and reaffirms his desire to be, for this purpose, a hermit. Across the centuries Encina communicates in this delightful poem not only the relentless desire of a young man in love to enjoy the companionship of his beloved and the relentless pain and suffering separation from her causes but also the inventive ways the human mind works to construct an imaginary world in which to play out possible solutions to life's most urgent problems.

Just as Encina drew upon the complex Western tradition of the shepherd to portray the Classical shepherd-poet, the Bethlehem shepherd, the Leonese shepherd and hybrid creations, so was he able to incorporate into his work hermits of different types. While in the *Egloga III* he portrayed two genuine hermits, here he first evokes the true eremitical tradition only to show how, in the fantasies of a desperate urban lover, its spirit might be violated, and later, in the *Egloga de Cristino y Febea*, he presents a young, amorous rustic who tries to embrace the solitary life and flatly fails. As urban dwellers in the Age of Negation and Technology, the call to the rural and solitary life may seem remote to us. Nevertheless, shepherd and hermit, regardless of their type, prove in Encina's hands to be the perfect characters to convey to the reading, listening, and watching public, then as now, even the most private thoughts and intimate feelings of this consummate artist.

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