

The shepherdess in Cerveri de Girone's fourth pastorele

Article

Published Version

Cadart-Ricard, O. (1983) The shepherdess in Cerveri de Girone's fourth pastorele. Reading Medieval Studies, IX. pp. 34-44. ISSN 0950-3129 Available at <https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/85050/>

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See [Guidance on citing](#).

Publisher: University of Reading

All outputs in CentAUR are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including copyright law. Copyright and IPR is retained by the creators or other copyright holders. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the [End User Agreement](#).

www.reading.ac.uk/centaur

CentAUR

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online

The Shepherdess in Cerveri de Girone's Fourth Pastorela

In a recent study entitled *La Pastourelle: Poésie et folklore au moyen âge*, Zink notes that at all times the pastourelle has known great success in all the Romance languages and that this genre is well alive today, even though it has been through some transformations.¹ He also observes that many analyses and treatises on the subject have been written. Why this interest in the pastourelle? 'Why have the courtly poets cultivated with so much favour a genre which so diverged from the rest of their output?'² He sees in the shepherdess and in her relations with the knight the most important element of the pastourelle. If the shepherdess takes first place, it is because she personifies a unique image: 'that of a woman, pure object of pleasure, brought about by the wild and sensuous nature, and foreign to their [the poets'] civilized sensitivity'.³ In short, Zink asserts that the pastourelles had simply been written for the purpose of exteriorising the fantasies and libido of the poet and of his audience.

Can such a concept be applied to a troubadour from the end of the thirteenth century, that is, to a poet writing right at the decline of the troubadour's art? What are the most significant elements of the action in the pastourelles composed by Cerveri de Girone and how has he represented and used the character of the shepherdess? I have chosen to study the fourth and last *pastorela*. In so doing I hope to shed light on some questions which critics and contemporary readers have raised, and thus contribute to enlarging our understanding of a world still mysterious to us, that of the medieval poet.

First of all, it is necessary to determine as accurately as possible the domain of the pastourelle: its definition and typology thus form the first frame of my study. Next, I will place the fourth *pastorela* of Cerveri in this perspective. Lastly, I will study the character of the shepherdess and her role in the poem, thus bringing to light the message she transmits and bringing forth the necessary conclusions.

Definition

The Occitan pastourelle (*pastorela*) presents itself as a narrative poem which puts on the stage several characters, at least one of whom is a shepherd or shepherdess, and where the action unfolds in a rustic setting. The poet, who always assumes the role of narrator, plays a more or less active part in the little drama he relates. As for the scenario, it is simple and unfolds in the following manner:

1. A knight - the poet narrator himself - is riding in the countryside when he encounters a young and pretty shepherdess watching her flock.

Captivated by the engaging aspect of the pretty maiden he dismounts and without great pretences he proposes to her to make love behind the bushes. This is the requête d'amour (request for love).

2. The shepherdess (pastora) then engages in a verbal debate with the knight, either refusing to agree to his request notwithstanding the gifts he promises or the commitments he makes (including even a promise to marry) or consenting even though she does not want to accept too soon. This is the débat d'amour (love debate).

3. The denouement is marked either by the success of the knight or by his discomfiture.

By the force of events the characters of this little rustic drama are reduced to a minimum. The action, while remaining simple, offers a certain variety ranging in tone and content from the serious type depicted with sensitivity to the comically grotesque of true buffoonery.

The pastourelle is a very conventional poetic genre whose stereotyped elements are only a series of variations on the theme of the encounter between a young man and a young woman. The variations on the theme are, in their turn, strictly codified so as to be integrated in the larger context of the fin'amor; they should still conform to the laws of courtly love. In the context of courtly love, we most often find the poet in love courting a married lady, the domna, of a social status much higher than his own. He is required to adopt toward her a very ritualised manner and to use words required by social conventions, thus allowing no place for the expression of his true personal feelings and forbidding him any rein of imagination. To express his personal style, the poet has only one possibility which is to alter the form of the poem according to his desires and plans of that moment, playing with the strophic structure or with the rhythm of the verse and the combinations of rhymes and letting his lexical preferences run freely.

In the Occitan pastourelle, we note with interest that the characters are placed on the social ladder in an order exactly opposite to that which exists for the protagonists of courtly love in the more traditional situation.⁴ The domna has become a little peasant girl and the poet now occupies the higher position conferred upon him by his social rank and his education. Since the frame of fin'amor must be maintained, the poet presents his love request to the shepherdess in a manner which mimes more or less sincerely the conventional ritual that would have occurred in all communications between the domna and her amic. And since one finds so few sentiments and emotions expressed in the pastourelle, it is in the play of the characters that one must search for interest.

Typology

Edmond Faral has established a classification of the different types of French and Occitan pastourelles which seem simple and adequate.⁵ I have drawn a table based on that classification (see appendix, p.43).

Types I and II of Faral represent the classic scenario of the pastourelle whose outline has been given above. What the denouement brings to the shepherdess creates the distinction between Types I and II: if she succumbs to the request of the knight, we have a pastourelle of Type I, while if she resists successfully the advances of the suitor, the pastourelle belongs to Type II. Types III and IV are the proof that a break from the classic scenario has occurred. In the Type III pastourelle, the knight - thus the poet-narrator - plays a passive role: he is only the witness of the scene he is relating. Often while hidden, he looks at the shepherds and shepherdesses in the midst of their games, quarrels, love encounters and even fights: from actor he has become voyeur. The shepherdess maintains the important role she had had in the other two types of pastourelle but her partner is now the shepherd, or any other peasant fellow whenever she wishes to take revenge against her country lover. On the other hand, the pastourelles of Type IV occur seldom and are quite different: they are, according to Faral, 'evolved and very rare forms of the pastourelle'.⁶ In this context, the knight assumes again his role of actor but the drama has taken a new significance: the love request having disappeared, it is replaced by a love debate between the knight on one hand and the shepherd or shepherdess (or sometimes both) on the other hand. The love debate has lost its essential characteristics to become a mere conversation or exchange of ideas between two parties - knight opposed to shepherd or shepherdess - with very different rank and culture, the former aristocratic through his education and even social rank, the latter common, unrefined and even gross and definitely crafty, but not always devoid of wit. The action, whenever it exists, is reduced to a few insignificant events, evidently a stratagem to give the knight an opportunity to intervene verbally. However, one important factor remains - the subject of the love debate is still love, the sorrow or joy resulting from love, or both emotions mingled. At that point the knight consoles and comforts the shepherdess, or the shepherd, or else he is very condescending to her. Whatever the case may be, the ensuing events give the knight an opportunity to show his wisdom. However, some pastourelles can be found where the situation is reversed: wisdom and finesse are found on the side of peasantry!

Cerveri de Girone's Fourth Pastorela

- I) Pre d'un jardi encontrey l'altre dia
una nina que paonetz guardava,
qui.m dix c'axi tritz passar no solia;
ez eu dix li qu'en dos fyls meus pessava
q'en escolas volion far viatge. (5)
E cil dix mi que trop mal estaria
a las valens donas d'aquest repayre
si per ayço perdia [m'] alegratge;
e dix qu'escrit d'aycelas me daria,
qui.m devion far secors ses estrayre. (10)
- II) Qu'entre Canet e Castelnou n'auria;
e Cortzavi e Cabrens que.y comtava,
e Carmanço, Martça, Urgs que.y metia,
Rocaberti, Pals, Cassa no.y laxava (15)
Fuxa, Torren, Cruylas ses oltratge
Begur, Monclus, Requezen no.y jaquia
Bas, Ostolas ne Baga per mal trayre
ne Cardona, qui no.m deu laxar gatge,
Urgel, Queralt e Cabreyra.y dizia (20)
ab Cerveyllo trenta e sis de bon ayre.
- III) De Cardona e de Peralta falria
e d'Entensa.l comtes si.y bescomtava;
d'Anglerol'ab Cerveyra finaria
l'escrit. Ço dix, car valor affinava: (25)
'Na nineta, tenran vos a folatge
las reynas domnas de cortezia
si el comte no van can li duy frayre ...'
'Seyner, pus an sobre totas estatge
may que totas devon far tota via,
car part totas sabem qu'es lors lauzayre.' (30)
- IV) 'Na nineta, be.m parlatz a ma g[ra]cia.'
'E vos, seyner, trop meyls qu'eu no.m cuyava;
mas er conosc que tot segles cambia,
que l'altre jörn grans compaynie passava (35)
de cavalers rics e de gran lynatge,
ez entre totz un caval no.n avia,
e vos anatz a caval. Co.s pot fayre?'
'Nina, si.l ric mermon pretz e paratge,
e.l cavaler laxon cavaleria,
vilas seran de pretz en l'auzor cayre.' (40)

- V) 'Seyner, del rey e dels baros volria
saber s'en cort nuylls hom patz en parlava.'
'Na nineta, la terra.n mays valria
si.ls seus del rey, el rey d'el[s] se lauzava.'
'Seyner, car vol de totz pendre.l bovatge (45)
ez il no fan lo dreit c'al rey playria
no.ls aug del rey ne.l rey d'els lauzar gayre.'
'Nina, .l rey vol gitar tot mal usatge
de sa terra, ez als baros par sia
tortz ço qu'el fay, car no sec l'us del payre.' (50)
- VI) 'Seyner, a Deu, c'afar ay dins l'estatge,
e can venretz parlarem altre dia.'
'Nina, dregat avetz gen vostr'afayre.'
- VII) 'Ans que faço l'escola lor viatge,
seyner, devas las domnas tengon via (55)
e puy veyrem cals faran l'escrit rayre,
- VIII) e metrem n'i d'altras d'estrayn repayre.'

Cerveri wrote four pastorelas. The edition used for this study is that of Martin de Riquer in his Obras completas del trovador Cerveri de Girona, published in Barcelona in 1947.⁷ In an article which will be published subsequently, I have analysed the character of the shepherdess in Cerveri's four pastourelles.⁸ For the present study, I chose the fourth pastourelle because it is the most remarkable of the series. The first two pastorelas, Entre Lerida e Belvis and Entre Caldes e Penedes, are of Types I and II respectively, and reveal nothing exceptional other than the fact that they together form a whole, a little rustic drama featuring the same shepherdess. The third pastourelle, En may, can per la calor, seems at first to be a buffoonery related to Type III. Such is not the case; this poem belongs to Type IV by the use of allegory, by its ensenyamen (morality) and by the political considerations which underlie the debate between shepherd, shepherdess and knight. The same thematic situation occurs in the fourth pastourelle, Pres d'un jardi encontrey l'altre dia: it is worth our sustained attention.

First of all, it is worth mentioning that for the first time, Cerveri has taken great care to observe that the shepherdess watched a flock, not of mere sheep or cows or lowly pigs, but of young peacocks, the royal bird par excellence (v.2). This simple fact confers upon the shepherdess a dignity of significant importance. As for the shepherd, he has been done away with,

as well as the love request, the lovers' quarrels and the exchange of arguments designed to obtain a sexual satisfaction or to escape it. In this poem, we encounter a sad and pensive poet (v.3) and a young shepherdess who is trying to help him (vv.6-24). 'There are many ladies of high standing around here who will be able to bring back your happiness to you,' she says to him (vv.6-8) and she mentions twenty-eight towns where he will be able to find these ladies (vv.11-24). To Cerveri, who remained unbelieving, she replies that because of their rank these courtly ladies ought to be more generous than any other ladies (vv.28-30). 'They ought to do more than any others throughout their lives,' she adds wisely.

may que totes devon far tota via (v.29)

Then all of a sudden, the shepherdess launches a discussion on the world and the manners at the court, both of which she finds in a state of change (stanza IV). Better yet, the following stanza brings forth, always upon the initiative of our shepherdess, a question of pressing reality which must have caused quite a bit of commotion at the time: the new taxes created and collected by the king and most particularly a tax on cattle (vv.45-47). Cerveri quickly offers an explanation (vv.48-50). Only after this extraordinary digression are we able to come back to the initial problem expressed in the pastourelle - viz., how the noble ladies can help Cerveri surmount his sorrow (vv.54-57). It is worth noting that the latter will remain an enigma until the end, since the poem does not offer any satisfactory solution to this matter.

Personality of the Shepherdess

How has Cerveri pictured the shepherdess? With what colours has he painted her and what substance has he given her? Is this very young girl credible? What is motivating her? These are the questions that must be answered in order to give meaning to this important character.

We note right away that the pastora remains anonymous, not only because she has no name, but also because the poet gives of her only a very brief and conventional description. The fourth pastourelle is, regarding this matter, a masterpiece of concision: one word suffices, nina. However, as I have pointed out earlier, she watches over a flock of peacocks, rare and prized birds with a high monetary value. This simple fact carries much more meaning than is perceived at first glance. Indeed, these valuable peacocks would not have been placed in the care of a 'bird-brain' keeper or, worse yet, of a simpleton. Our shepherdess must be endowed with a lot of common sense and a good dose of intelligence. Naturally, the rest of the story will prove this!

Thus, the shepherdess appears to us with an aura of dignity since she

has been chosen to watch over birds found only in the gardens or on the table of kings and princes. This fact might explain this most surprising reversal of the roles which any reader perceives with astonishment: is not the pastora the one who counsels and comforts the disoriented knight? Cerveri does not reveal how a young peasant girl is able to name towns or places where a good number of noble, generous and compassionate ladies hold court. However, it is plausible that this kind of information could have been known by quite a few people, peasants included: our young shepherdess, as well we know, was not born yesterday. Stanzas IV and V prove without any doubt that she is endowed with an inquisitive and perceptive mind. When she assures the poet that the courtly ladies will bring succour to him, it is because she knows that noblesse oblige. When the poet compliments her, 'young girl, you speak well to my liking', she spontaneously replies, 'And you, my lord, far better than I thought' - though her reply shows no impertinence (vv.31-32). The shepherdess is the one who directs the conversation towards unexpected subjects: does she not ask the knight to give her some explanations on the matter of the changing manners at the court? 'But it is the whole world which is in a state of change,' she adds perceptively (tot segles cambia, v.33). Cerveri concurs, proclaiming that if the high-ranking lords diminish in merit and courtliness and if knights abandon the rules of chivalry, peasants will have to show merit in their place (vv.38-40) - a statement which could have toppled walls in those days, if one remembers that this was written at the end of the thirteenth century!

'Nina, si l ric mermon pretz e paratge,
e l cavalier laxon cavaleria,
vilas seran de pretz en l'auzor cayre.' (vv.38-40)

'At the court of the king and of his barons, was there any talk about peace?' asks the young maiden, alluding here to a delicate question, that of the cattle tax imposed by King James of Aragon upon all the nobles, members of the clergy and cities of Catalonia: this tax was indeed ill-received by the privileged classes and there is no doubt that the pros and cons were hotly debated at all levels of society.⁹ The peasants were, on all evidence, the first to be concerned since they had the task of raising the oxen belonging to their lords, and since they used them for their work in the fields. Therefore, it is hardly astonishing that the shepherdess is eager to receive the knight's advice on this subject since he frequents the court of a lord. What is far more astonishing is the commentary made by the young peasant girl with all that it means: she remarks that the king wishes to receive the tax from everyone and because not everyone is paying it, he shows much discontent with his subjects. Is this not a more or less veiled protest against social injustice? If the king has shown his sense of equality by raising a tax from everybody, he is indeed poorly served by all those who do not pay their share: thus the shepherdess

vents her bitterness in the face of social inequalities. Cerveri has understood her message very well and he is quick to exonerate the king by explaining that the king's intent is to 'extirpate all the bad customs from his land' (vv.48-49). Such a conversation, which should have been on the pleasant matter of love, proves to be so serious and weighty. The poet himself compliments the shepherdess for having well presented her business (v.53). During the whole encounter, he has shown respect and sympathy for the young peasant girl. This fact can be proven in several ways, one of which is to compare the words used by Cerveri to address the girl: in this last *pastourelle*, he calls her *nina* or *nineta* when he had called her *toza* in the other three. Though these words all mean 'young maiden', they have different connotations. *Toza* is simply a young maiden or a young girl in the most general sense of the word; *nina* is already more affectionate, coloured with sympathy; and *nineta*, by the very fact that it is a meliorative diminutive, reinforces the connotation of tender feelings towards a young person. Lastly, Cerveri did not present any love request (we are talking about sexual love here) to the shepherdess: a convincing proof of his respect for her. Until the end of the poems our shepherdess remains in possession of all her mental faculties. She is the one, indeed, who manages to bring the conversation back to its starting point and who places it back in its context of courtly love, that is to say, the question of the noble and helpful ladies who can give succour to the poet.

It is evident that this *pastora* who graces Cerveri's fourth *pastourelle* with her ingenuousness and her spontaneous sincerity greatly differs from the traditional shepherdess. Cerveri has often been compared to Guiraut Riquier, his contemporary, yet I have not found any similarity between his presentation of the shepherdess in his fourth *pastourelle* and that made by Guiraut of a shepherdess - always the same person but at different times in her life - in his series of six *pastourelles*.¹⁰ Guiraut's shepherdess always remains very close to the conventional types even when she moralises, while Cerveri's has become an altogether different person. Audiau has shown in his treatise on the Occitan *pastourelle* that the last troubadours demonstrated a tendency to moralise and that their *pastourelles* reflected the decadence of the profane literature through their shift towards a more religious type.¹¹ Cerveri's fourth *pastorela*, as well as his third, proves that the frittering-away of the *pastourelle* was already well under way at the end of the thirteenth century. However, it is interesting to note that Cerveri's *pastourelles* contain no religious allusions, contrary to the custom of that time.

I have shown that the new tone found in the fourth *pastourelle* - as well as in the third - reflects Cerveri's interest in, and even concern with, social questions. It is clear that Cerveri did not write his fourth *pastourelle* in the spirit attributed by Zink to the troubadours, that is to say, to provide a sexual outlet either for himself or for his audience. Furthermore, neither the frame nor the affective climate of *fin'amor* are maintained: on the contrary,

we note that the poet and his message have been politicised. The remarks of the knight and shepherdess are intended to denounce the frittering-away of the courtly qualities that had been the hallmark of the higher class, and to reveal the injustices created by social stratification. 'The whole world is in a state of change; what does that mean?' asks the pastora, and Cerveri replies, in essence, that if the nobles cannot maintain an exemplary behaviour, then peasants will have to do it in their stead. Those of the troubadours born into a lower social class were on all evidence very conscious of the disparity between their social position and that of the masters they served. Cerveri appears to us as one of the most contestatory among them, so much so that he was often forced in his poems to mention his protectors. When he could not name these persons he used a stratagem: he would name a place or a town where his security was assured. This indeed is the only way we can interpret the long list of twenty-eight towns made by the shepherdess in stanzas II and III of the fourth pastourelle: the maiden clearly says that the poet will find secur near the courtly ladies who live there. Secur means help or succour. In this context the meaning of protection is evident. Hence we find in this pastourelle a very special use of the locus: a political locus as opposed to the traditional locus which furnishes the spatial elements of a poem.

It would be a mistake to consider this new role of the pastora as that of a mere instrument or 'mouthpiece' for the poet. The behaviour of the shepherdess, unexpected in an illiterate peasant girl, provides the key to the characterisation of this persona. In the second pastourelle she had already insisted on being treated as a courtly lady, a domna. In the fourth poem she behaves as a true domna, offering her help to the knight whom she now treats as an amic, the beloved friend. She discusses with him the current affairs which are the topic of the conversations at court. Thus the peasant girl has risen above her social class and Cerveri has voiced the reason for this extraordinary change in verses 38-40, cited above: 'Nina si. I ric mermon pretz e paratge ...' We have come full circle: if the nobility does not protect and does not practise virtues and moral qualities, there are peasants who wish to do so and are quite capable of it. We have in this an affirmation of the intrinsic value of the human being above and beyond the artificial value conferred by social rank. The humanist revolution which was going to flourish during the Renaissance and after is already seminally contained in Cerveri de Girone's pastourelles and the salient fact is that his little pastora surrounded by her dignity carries in her the first visible signs of this revolution.

ODETTE CADART-RICARD
OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

TYPOGRAPHY OF THE PASTOURELLE BASED ON FARAL

Type	Love Request	Love Debate	Denouement	Characteristics of the Action
I	Knight rides in countryside, finds shepherdess alone, requests love-making. Knight is an actor.	Shepherdess resists, argues; knight promises different things (even marriage), offers gifts.	Shepherdess gives in, because influenced by promises, gifts or arguments of knight/because wishing to avenge herself of her lover/because taken by force by knight.	Active verbal exchange and variety in the events - a small drama.
II	Same scenario.	Same scenario.	Shepherdess does not give in; she is saved by her ruses (arguments, threats, screams) or with the help of her lover or other peasants.	Same as above.
III	Shepherds of both sexes dance, sing, make love. Knight watches them. Knight is a voyeur.	No love debate with the knight. Love debate between peasants, very limited.	Shepherdess gives in to her lover/beats him/ is hit by him; often a general fight ensues. Knight joins in/does not join in in the end.	Little verbal exchange, but violent action (blows, screams); the tone is gross and vulgar - a buffoonery.
IV	Knight riding in countryside converses with shepherd or shepherdess who asks for advice or sympathy. No love request. Knight is an actor.	Love debate becomes an exchange of ideas or a lesson about love.	It is not a question of shepherdess resisting or giving in (this is not the theme of the poem).	Active verbal exchange but no happenings - an intellectual debate, a lesson about love.

Table by O. Cadart-Ricard

NOTES

1. Michel Zink, La pastourelle: Poésie et folklore au moyen âge, Paris 1972, pp.5-7.
2. Ibid., p.97.
3. Ibid.
4. For a detailed study of the pastourelle genre, see William Jones, The Pastourelle: A Study of the Origins and Traditions of a Lyric Type, Cambridge, 1931.
5. Edmond Faral, 'La pastourelle', Romania XLIX, 1923, 204-259.
6. Ibid., 225.
7. Martin de Riquer, Obras completas del trovador Cerveri de Girona, Barcelona 1947, pp.38-41.
8. Odette Cadart-Ricard, 'The character of the Pastora in Cerveri de Girone's four Pastorelas' in Anthology of Feminine Criticism on the Middle Ages, ed. Kittye Delle Robbins. (Forthcoming.)
9. For more details on this subject, see Martin de Riquer's note on line 45, p.41. Also from the same author, see Historia de la literatura catalana, Barcelona 1964, vol.1, 134.
10. The six pastorelas of Guiraut Riquier are found in the study by Jean Audiau, La pastourelle dans la poésie occitane du moyen âge, Paris 1923, pp.44-79.
11. Ibid., pp.xiv-xvi.