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Twin Flocks: Guiraut Riquier's *Pastorelas* and his Book of Songs

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

TWIN FLOCKS: GUIRAUTRIQUIER'S PASTORELAS AND HIS BOOK OF SONGS Guiraut Riquier's six pastorelas are his best appreciated works. Carefully ordered and dated probably by Riquier himself (Bertolucci Pizzorusso 119-21), these verse dialogues between poet and shepherdess create an appealing cycle. ¹"A graceful miniature romance," declared in 1905 a literary historian seldom charmed by troubadour poetry (Anglade 230). A present day scholar praises them as "a sixpart psycho-drama of gender relations" which yields "a particularly successful manifestation" of the "fragmentation and fictionality of the authorial T" (Cholakian 155). Though hailing from markedly different critical persuasions, these two appraisals share a common denominator: they look upon the six pastorelas as a complete, self-contained cycle of lyrics, as a set of

poems quite distinct and independent from the rest of Riquier's corpus of works. That is how his *pastorela* cycle is generally interpreted and enjoyed. But is that a sufficient reading? Is it possible that these six poems are also interlinked in important ways with the main body of Riquier's lyric works, his compilation of *cansos* and *vers*? That is the question which the present article wishes to answer. There is no denying that the six dialogues are closely knit together: their narrative and thematic continuity is remarkable. A simple plot line yokes them together. Riquier plays the role of a journeying poet who comes across the same shepherdess on six different occasions over a stretch of twenty-two years. In each episode, he makes advances toward her, which she resists with lucid wit. From random encounters emerge six dialogues which are richly cumulative. Reminiscences are traded, old banter is renewed, and the two speakers extend the thread of their earlier conversations. As we overhear their wishes and cares, we fill in the gaps. We see their lives unfold: his as an artist bent on achieving fame, hers as a laborer who eventually becomes an innkeeper and as a mother raising her daughter from infancy to womanhood. Meetings and conversations that occur as if by chance tempt us to imagine two life stories. Tiny happenstances are smoothly stitched into the fabric of the poems. The dialogues within them knit up across the years, tempting us to regard the six episodes as a self-enclosed fiction, as a unified whole. Each time they meet, poet and shepherdess spar with teasing flattery and gibes, falling into a seemingly predictable comic routine. These duels are, however, more than a vaudeville ritual. Their comic skirmishing, as I hope to show, is a fable which dramatizes the poet's struggles with his medium and the nature of artistic fame. Riquier's inner vision of what he must achieve in his art blends together two kinds of yearning: one is the erotic desire projected by the poet-narrator onto the figure of the witty, elusive shepherdess; the other is the poet-craftsman's longing to master an ideal poetical form. On occasion, the shepherdess becomes a metaphor of that ideal form. By repeatedly escaping from his wiles, she reminds the poet of an elusive metrical configuration which he is attempting to shape and master. Its design would be a perpetual round of rhymes and stanzas, creating a perfectly cyclical song. In short, the charms of the shepherdess figuratively connote the enticing dream of composing a flawless *canso redonda*. Nevertheless, the shepherdess is not merely a metaphor. She is also a brisk imaginary interlocutor, who on several occasions spells out to Riquier what he must achieve in his career as a court artist. Tacitly, then, she connotes an ideal form; dramatically, she instructs the poet as his virtual muse. As early as *Pastorela I*, the poet coyly intimates that the shepherdess coincides with the poem he is shaping: MICHEL-ANDRÉ BOSSY¹⁵¹ *Toza, mot m'agrada quar vos ay trobada, si-us pue sc az autar.* (21-23) [Young girl, I'm so glad to have found/composed you, especially if I can please you.] "*Vos ay trobada*" means "I have made you into song" as well as "I have found you on my journey." The poet-lover fancies himself almost as a thirteenth-century Pygmalion wooing a Galatea which he himself has formed. The shepherdess, however, refuses to be defined as either a found object or a found poem: *Trop m'ave tz sercada, senher? Si fos fada, pogra m'o pessar.* (24-26) [So you've been looking all too long for me, sir? If I'd lost my mind, I guess I could believe that.] Hearing...

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