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## 6. Lyric Secrecy

A prayer sung is ten said.  
Saint Augustine

To disclose song's secret, to name the names of the lover and the lady, to transform song's pronouns into proper nouns, is, as I have argued, to reduce, determine, and limit song's *potential* to signify. To betray the secret is to fix song's referent once and for all, to destroy, by singularizing, the multiplicitous singing ego.

Perhaps the most stark representation of song's resistance to the sort of limited referential historicity fostered by the *vidas* and *razos* is a version of the *razo* of Richart de Barbezill which emerges in Italian, in the thirteenth-century collection of brief *novelle*, or stories, known as *Il Novellino*.<sup>1</sup> In *Novella LXIV* of *Il Novellino*, breaking the lyric secret—naming, identifying, localizing, or in any way individualizing the desired lady—is figured specifically as an act of literary narration, as the telling of *novelle*. Yet this novel discourse is not celebrated as a literary triumph. Rather, story is blamed for the death of song and is ultimately expelled from courtly society by song's full-blown and multitudinous return. That is, the movement toward the mimesis of the interiority of the individual is enacted only in order to be scorned as a failure. Such a text as *Novella LXIV* absolutely contradicts the claims of recent readers of medieval lyric-narrativity, who would see story's emergence from song as a positively valorized shaking off of the shackles of convention, as a triumph that heralds the inauguration of a new regime of bourgeois individualism.<sup>2</sup>

*Novella LXIV*<sup>3</sup> opens under the rubric of an implied lyric-narrativity:

Qui conta d'una novella che avvenne in Proenza  
alla Corte del Po. (p. 269)

(Here it tells of a *novella* that happened in Provence at the Court of the Puy.)