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## 8. Nameless Lovers

Di sé faceva a sé stesso lucerna,  
ed eran due in uno e uno in due.

(Of himself he made for himself a lantern, and they were two in one  
and one in two.)

Dante (on the troubadour Bertran de Born), *Inferno* XXVIII

The pronoun of courtly song is truly a pro-noun, a name *before* it has been made proper, before someone has become its proprietor. A brief look at a strange, anonymous text known as *Des Deux Amans* (“Of the Two Lovers”) will strengthen our sense that the pro-noun’s failure or refusal to nominate signifies a resistance to the new order of novelistic narration.<sup>1</sup> This little text tells the story of a story that never begins precisely because the name is never named, because the plurality or impersonality of lyric subjectivity is not successfully overthrown at the outset.

At the outset of the text the narrator announces his intention to tell a story about two lovers who are, apparently, the *deux amans* of the title. This story will begin, in typical romance fashion, with the naming of the names of those whose adventures will be recounted:

Mès ainçois que je plus vous die,  
Ne de l’ami ne de l’amie,  
Vous vueil *deviser en romanz*  
*Le nom* d’ambes .ij. les amanz. (ll. 7–10)

(But before I tell you any more, either about the lover or the lady, I want to say in romance [*deviser en romanz*] the *name* of both lovers.)

This *deviser en romanz* means, for one, to “say in the vernacular.” Yet it also connotes the narrator’s plan to devise a romance—to compose *en romanz*, “in the manner of romance.” The narrator wants to “say, in the manner of romance, the name” (*deviser en romanz* / *Le nom*). As we shall see, the narrator does in fact *deviser* the *nom*, but certainly not in the manner that he