APPENDIX I

PROSE AND POETRY IN THE PROSIMETRA

In any prosimetrical text, the hermeneutic interplay between the verse and prose sections engages the attention of the reader. How significant this interplay is largely depends on the poetic skill of the author and his interest in incorporating what poetic genres have to offer into his own text. As expected, Boethius provides the most important model for later practice. In the *Consolation*, poetry functions in a number of different ways. The text begins with verse and ends with prose, so the two modes of composition represent in a very rough way the prisoner’s self-indulgent, elegiac state of mind as the text opens, and his newly reawakened rational awareness by the *Consolation*’s end. It is clear, however, that poetry is not solely the territory of the meretricious muses Lady Philosophy expels from the prisoner’s cell, since she herself addresses him frequently in verse. In this way Boethius takes account not only of the self-focused Latin elegiac tradition, but also, as Gerard O’Daly has noted, of the long-standing ancient function of poetry as a vehicle for philosophical truth that is sometimes immediately evident, but at other times can be revealed only through careful interpretation. Moreover, through poetry Boethius was able to inscribe himself in the Latin poetic tradition as well as the philosophical tradition, satisfying both aesthetic and intellectual desires.

How similar were the poetic ambitions of the twelfth-century prosimetrum writers? To be sure, the quality of their versifying varies a great deal. Adelard, for one, has little time for verse. In fact, he includes only two passages of poetry in the *De eodem*, elegiacs spoken by Philocosmia and Philosophia, respectively. These echo the arrangement of many of the short poems in Boethius’s *Consolation*, as they identify a particular man or sort of man (“he who does/is . . .”) and conclude with a wish or exhortation directed at him (“let him do this”). Compare *Consolation*

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2 See the conclusions drawn in ibid., 236–237.
2 m7 (He who seeks only glory, let him compare the small earth with the large heavens...), 3 m 11 (Whoever seeks truth, let him look inside himself), and a number of others. In this format Adelard has Philocosmia proclaim a curse on philosophers:

Qui primum dignam docuit vanescere mentem
ut rerum falsas credat imaginibus...

Hic, inquam, procul elisus pellatur ab oris,
atque suos secum sub loca ceca trahat...

He who first taught the worthy mind to think empty thoughts,
so that it believed in the false images of things...
this man, I say, should be crushed and banished far away from our shores;
he should drag his followers with him down to the regions without light.³

The gloss “Pythagoras” in the margin at the first line of verse makes it clear that the object of this criticism and curse is in fact the legendary foundational figure of philosophy. Not long afterward, a corresponding curse on those who scorn reason is spoken by Philosophia:

Quisquis dissimulans oculi lumen melioris,
his que non sentit nescit habere fidem,
qua precellebat rationis luce relictus,
det sua fortune colla premenda iugo.
...lumine privatus pro veris falsa requirat,
dum rerum causas disputat esse—nihil.

He who, ignoring the light of a better eye,
knows not how to have trust in that which he does not perceive,
abandoned by the light of reason, by which he used to excel,
let him put his neck under the heavy yoke of fortune.
...Deprived of light, may he seek false things for true,
while he argues that the causes of things are—nothing.⁴

For Adelard, verse elevated these sentiments to an almost sacral level of discourse. Philocosmia and Philosophia perform the primary speech acts in the De eodem here as they define the destinies of their mortal opponents in elegiac couplets. Bernard Silvestris, at the other extreme from Adelard in terms of the quantity of verse he includes (most notably his 482-line poem on the creation of the cosmos, itself nearly the length of a book of epic poetry), also seems to associate

³ Adelard of Bath, On the Same and the Different, 12–13.
⁴ Ibid., 26–29, with some small adjustments to the translation.