

# The Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolf

Author: Unknown

Printed in Latin: 1488

Printed in Middle English: 1492

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## Editor's Introduction

**History/Background/Author Information:** No manuscript of *Solomon and Marcolf* earlier than 1410 has survived, with the earliest printed version dated 1473. The popularity of the dialogue launched the text into several Latin versions and many European vernaculars, with German-speaking scholars especially taking an interest in this text. Once the text began circulating in the eleventh century, it remained quite popular for about six hundred years, and was printed in forty-nine editions. Throughout Medieval Europe, *Marcolf* inspired plays, poetry, and riddle-contests (including Giulio Cesare Croce's *Bertoldo* of 1606), and is referenced by the troubadour Raimbaut d'Orange (or d'Aurenga), William the Bishop of Tyre, and John Audelay.

**About the Manuscripts:** Only a couple of dozen transmittable texts survived to be recognizable Latin dialogue, with the earliest one only including nine proverb exchanges. All current existing manuscripts have been dated as from the fifteenth century, with nearly all of them being copied in southern Germany and Austria, an evidence of its popularity in German-speaking nations. Nancy and Scott Bradbury in their University of Rochester edition, provide some interesting details about the manuscripts, as follows:

*“Sixteen of these manuscripts transmit a “long” version of the text, presenting all five verbal contests: (1) rival genealogies, dueling proverbs with about 138 exchanges, riddles, arguable propositions (e.g. “I think nature is more influential than nurture”), arguments “on both sides of an issue.”*

These types of riddle contests are peppered throughout custom and culture in many lands. This classic dialogue of *Solomon and Marcolf* provides a perfect example.

A wonderful edition of the translation from Latin to Middle English has been prepared by Nancy Mason Bradbury and Scott Bradbury, available at Rochester.edu.

But, no one seems to have provided a free modern English version, making it more accessible to the public today. That is what I have tried to accomplish by making this edition, with the Rochester.edu version in one column and my own efforts at modern English in parallel. My translation includes modernized spelling and grammar, and where I have not been able to translate a word, I have left it in italics. I have also inserted footnotes into the modernized text after phrases and words that need contextual and historical explanation. I have used for these footnotes the excellent explanatory footnotes of Nancy Mason Bradbury and Scott Bradbury. Additional textual footnotes that further inform on individual word history and derivations can be found within the Rochester Middle English edition.

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**THIS IS THE DYALOGUS OR  
COMMUNYNG BETWIXT THE WYSE  
KING SALOMON AND MARCOLPHUS**

Here begynneth the dyalogus or comynicacion betwixt Salomon the king of Jherusalem and Marcolphus that right rude and great of body was but right subtyll and wyse of wyt and full of undrestandyng, as thereafter folowyng men shall here.

Upon a season hertofore as King Salomon, full of wisdome and riches, sate upon the kinges sete or stole that was his fadres Davyd, sawe comyng a man out of th'este that was named Marcolphus, of vysage greatly myshapen and fowle, nevyrthelesse he was right talkatyf, elloquend and wyse. His wif had he wyth hym, whiche was more ferefull and rude to beholde. And as they were bothe comen before King Salomon, he behelde thaym welle.

This Marcolf was of short stature and thykke. The hede had he great, a brode forhede rede and fulle of wrinkelys or frouncys, his erys hery and to the myddys of chekys hangyng, great yes and rennyng, his nether lyppe hangyng lyke an horse, a berde harde and fowle lyke unto a goet, the handes short and blockyssh, his fynGRES great and thycke, rownde feet, and the nose thycke and coked, a face lyke an asse, and the here of hys heed lyke the heer of a goet. His shoes on

**This is the Dialogue or Communication  
Between Wise King Solomon and Marcolf**

Here begins the dialogue or communication between Solomon, the King of Jerusalem, and Marcolf, who was rude and great of body but subtle and wise of wit and full of understanding, as men shall hear in the following.

Once upon a time, as King Solomon, endowed with wisdom and riches, sat upon the king's seat or stool that had belonged to David his father,<sup>1</sup> he saw a man coming out of the East named Marcolf. He had a visage greatly misshapen and foul; nevertheless he was talkative, eloquent, and wise. His wife had he with him, who was more fearful and rude to behold. And as they were both coming before King Solomon, he beheld them well.

This Marcolf was short and thick of stature<sup>2</sup>. He had a broad forehead, red and full of wrinkles and frowns. His ears were hairy, hanging to the middle of his cheeks;<sup>3</sup> he had great runny eyes, his bottom lip hung like a horse's, his beard was hard and foul like a goat's, his hands short and blocky, his fingers great and thick. He had round feet, a thick and crooked nose, and a face like a donkey. The hair on his head was like the hair of a

<sup>1</sup> 1.1 *Salomon . . . sate*. [B Prol.] 3 Kings 2:12, "And Solomon sat upon the throne of his father David" ["Salomon autem sedit super thronum David patris sui"]. Compare 3 Kings 2:24 and 1 Paralipomenon (1 Chronicles) 29:23.

<sup>2</sup> 2.1–3.6 *short stature and thykke*. [B Prol.] Coarse, animal-like features are conventional in medieval descriptions of peasants (Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant*, chap. 7). The language applied to Marcolf and his wife can be compared, for example, to Chaucer's description of his stoutly built ("thikke") and hairy Miller (*CT* I[A]545–66, at 549). Marcolf has a beard like a goat's, the Miller like that of a sow or fox. Marcolf's hair also resembles a goat's, his face that of an ass. Polycana has eyebrows like the "brostelys of a swyne" (3.2); the Miller's wart has sprouting hairs like "the brustles of a sowes erys [ears]." The Miller and Polycana have large, flaring noses, the Miller's with "nosethirles blake . . . and wyde" and Polycana's with "right great nosethrylles" (3.5).

<sup>3</sup> 2.3 *L subcominus*. [B Prol.] The word is unattested; many manuscripts have *subterius* [lower].

his fete were ovyrmoche chorlysh and rude, and his clothys fowle and dyrty; a shorte kote to the buttockys, his hasyn hynge full of wrynkelys and alle his clothes were of the moost fowle coloure.

His wyf was of short stature, and she was out of mesure thycke wyth great brestys, and the here of hyr hede clustred lyke thystelys. She had longe wynde browes lyke brostelys of a swyne, longe erys lyke an asse, renning yen, berdyd lyke a goet; hyr vysage and skyn blacke and full of wrynkelys, and upon hyr great brestys she had, of span brode, a broche of leed. She had short fyngres, full of yren ryngys. She had right great nosethrylles, hyr leggyss short and hery lyke a bere; hyr clothes were rough and broken. Of suche a woman, or of anothere lyke unto hyre, a yonge man hath made thies verses folowyng:

Femina deformis tenebrarum subdita formis  
Cum turpi facie transit absque die.  
Est mala res multum turpi concedere cultum,  
Sed turpis nimirum turpe ferat vicium.

That is to saye, an evyll favouryd and a fowle blacke wyf behovyth to shewe the dayes lyght. It is to oure yes medycyne to se that fayre is and fyne.

As Kyng Salomon thies two persones thus had seen and beholden, he demaunded of thaym of

goat. His shoes were overly churlish and rude, and his clothes foul and dirty;<sup>4</sup> he wore a short coat coming to his buttocks, his hose hung full of wrinkles and all his clothes were of the most foul colors.<sup>5</sup>

His wife was of thick and short of stature with big breasts, and her hair was knotted like thistles. She had long windy brows that were like the bristles of a pig, long ears like a donkey, runny eyes, and she was bearded like a goat. Her face and skin<sup>6</sup> were black and wrinkled, and upon her breasts she had a leaden brooch a span wide. She had short fingers, which were full of iron rings. She had large nostrils and short hairy legs like a bear's, and her clothes were rough and torn. For this woman, or a woman like her, a young man had written the following verse<sup>7</sup>:

*Femina deformis tenebrarum subdita formis  
Cum turpi facie transit absque die.  
Est mala res multum turpi concedere cultum,  
Sed turpis nimirum turpe ferat vicium.*

Which is to say: an evil favoured and a foul wife<sup>8</sup> behooveth to show the day's light. It is to our best medicine to see that which is fair and fine.

### Rival Genealogies

As King Solomon saw these two persons and beheld them, he demanded of them whence

<sup>4</sup> .6 *his clothys fowle and dyrty*. [B Prol.] L *pellis* [hide; peasant's cloak]; *pannitiosus* [tattered, ragged.]

<sup>5</sup> 2.7 *his hasyn hynge full of wrynkelys*. [B Prol.] In classical Latin, *caligae* are soldiers' boots, but the plural here seems to mean "stockings, hose." Ziolkowski (*Solomon and Marcolf*, p. 113) suggests "patched and repatched" for L *repagulatus*.

<sup>6</sup> 3.3 *vysage and skyn*. [B Prol.] In Leeu's Latin print (3.2), Polycana has an "aspectum colubrinum" [face like a snake]. The ME translation omits this comparison.

<sup>7</sup> 3.7 *thies verses folowyng*. [B Prol.] The two elegiac couplets are clear in their misogyny but obscure in meaning. Literally, they mean, "The ill-shapen woman, subjected to the forms of darkness, / With her ugly face passes by without the light of day. / It is a bad thing to grant excessive adornment to an ugly woman, / But let the ugly woman endure her very ugly defect." Leeu's Latin print has *transit* [passes by (or through)]; some manuscripts have *transeat* [let her pass by], which offers better sense. The ME translator does not translate the two couplets, preferring to supply the gist of their meaning. His language is identical to a Dutch translation of 1501, indicating that the two translations are related (see introduction, 6.c).

<sup>8</sup> 3.8 *wyf*. [B Prol.] ME *wyf* translates L *femina* and often means simply "woman."

whens they weryn and of what lynage they were comyn. Marcolphus thereto answeyrd: “Saye furste to us youre kynrede and genleagie, and of youre fadres, and than shall I shewe and declare you of oures.”

Salomon: “I am of the xii kyndredes of patryarkes, that is to wete, that Judas gate Phares, Phares gat Esron, Esron gat Aron, Aron genderyd Aminadab, Aminadab gat Naazon, Naazon gat Salmon, Salmon gat Boos, Boos gat Obeth, Obeth gat Ysay, Ysay gat Davyd king, David gat Salomon the king, and that am I.”

Marcolfus answeyrd: “I am of the xii kindred of chorlyS: Rusticus gat Rustam, Rusta gat Rustum, Rustus gat Rusticellum, Rusticellus gat Tarcum, Tarcus gat Tarcol, Tarcol gat Pharsi, Pharsi gat Marcuel, Marcuel gat Marquat, Marquat gat Marcolphum and that is I. “And my wyf is comen of the blood and xii kyndredes of untydy wyves, that is to knowe, of Lupica that gat Lupicana, Lupicana gat Ludibrac, Ludibrac gat Bonestrung, Bonestrung gat Boledrut, Boledrut gat Paldrut, Paldrut gat Lordan, Lordan gat Curta, Curta gat Curtula, Curtula gat Curtella, Curtella gat Polica, Polica gat Polycana, and thys is my wyf Polycana.”

they were and of what lineage<sup>9</sup> they were. Marcolf answered: “Say first to us your kindred and genealogy, and of your fathers, and then shall I declare to you ours.”

Solomon: “I am of the twelve kindreds of Patriarchs, that is to say, Judas begat Phares, Phares begat Esrom, Esrom begat Aram, Aram begat Aminadab, Aminadab begat Naasson, Naasson begat Salmon, Salmon begat Booz, Booz begat Obed, Obed begat Jesse,<sup>10</sup> Jesse begat King David, and David begat Solomon the king, who I am.”

Marcolf answered: “I am of the twelve kindred of churls: Rusticus begat Rustam<sup>11</sup>, Rusta begat Rustum, Rustus begat Rusticellum, Rusticellus begat Tarcum, Tarcus begat Tarcol, Tarcol begat Pharsi, Pharsi begat Marcuel, Marcuel begat Marquat, Marquat begat Macolf, who I am. My wife is a descendant of twelve kindreds of untidy wives,<sup>12</sup> Lupica who begat Lupicana, Lupicana begat Ludibrac, Ludibrac begat Bonestrung, Bonestrung begat Boledrut, Boledrut begat Paldrut, Paldrut begat Lordan, Lordan begat Curta, Curta begat Curtula, Curtula begat Curtella, Curtella begat Polica, Polica begat Polycana, who is my wife.”

<sup>9</sup> 4.1a–3b *of what lynage . . . xii kyndredes of patryarkes . . . xii kindred of chorlys . . . xii kyndredes of untydy wyves*. [B 1a–3b] We follow Benary in numbering this section as part of the proverb contest, although we regard the exchange of genealogies as a separate verbal contest. Solomon’s words at 4.3a suggest that it has served as a kind of preliminary match, qualifying Marcolf for the next round, a long exchange of what are usually called “proverbs” for convenience, though they include various types of remarks.

<sup>10</sup> 4.2a *Ysay*. [B 2a] Solomon’s genealogy makes Isai David’s father, as at Ruth 4:17–22; the more familiar genealogies at Matthew 1:1–6 and Luke 3:32 make Jesse his father.

<sup>11</sup> 4.2b *Rusticus gat Rustam*. [B 2b] Marcolf improvises a parodic genealogy that includes derivatives from *rusticus* [peasant, country person] and forms of his own name. *Tarcus* may derive from *tartarum* [wine dregs] and *Pharsi* could derive from *far*, a type of grain. See Marini, *Il dialogo di Salomone e Marcolfo*, p. 140n8; Ziolkowski, *Solomon and Marcolf*, pp. 116–17.

*Marquat gat Marcolphum and that is I*. In the Latin text, Solomon’s genealogy ends with the declaration *et ego sum Salomon rex* [and I am Solomon the king]. Marcolf ends with the parallel declaration *et ego sum Marcolphus follus* [and I am Marcolf the fool]. Interestingly, the ME translator, both here and at 6.1, omits *follus* [fool], an epithet that resonates with Marcolf’s many twists on the biblical and proverbial idea that the self-styled “wise man” is in reality the fool, and the self-aware “fool” is the wiser man. See for example 4.6ab, 4.16ab, 4.51ab, 4.64ab, 4.79ab, and esp. 7.1–10, as well as these exchanges in the appendix: B 89ab, B 90ab, B 115ab.

<sup>12</sup> 4.2c *untydy wyves*. [B 2c] The ME translator’s softening of *lupicanae* [whores] from *lupa* [she-wolf].

	<b>The Proverb Contest</b>
<p>Salomon sayde: “I have herd of thee that thou kanst right wele clatre and speke, and that thou art subtile of wyt, although that thou be mysshapyn and chorlyssh. Lete us have betwene us altercacion. I shal make questyons to thee, and thou shalt therto Answere.”</p>	<p>Solomon said: “I have heard of thee, that thou canst speak and clatter, and that thou art subtle and witty, even though thou art misshapen and churlish. Let us have a debate<sup>13</sup> between us. I shall ask thee a question, and then thou shalt answer.</p>
<p>Marcolphus answeyrd: “He that singyth worste begynne furste.”</p>	<p>Marcolf answered: “He that sings worst begins first.”<sup>14</sup></p>
<p>S: “If thou kanst answere to alle my questyons, I shall make thee ryche, and be named above alle othre withyn my Reaume.”</p>	<p>S: “If thou canst answer all of my questions, I will make thee rich, and name [exalt] thee above all others within my Realm.”<sup>15</sup></p>
<p>M: “The phisician promysyth the seeke folke helthe, whan he hath no power.”</p>	<p>M: “The physician promises the sick folk health, when he has no power.”</p>
<p>S: “I have juged betwixt two light women, whiche dwelyd in oon house and forlaye a chylde.”</p>	<p>S: “I have judged between two prostitutes, who dwell in the same house and both have brought forth a child.”<sup>16</sup></p>

<sup>13</sup> 4.3a *altercacion*. [B 3a] (The ME text reads *altercacon*.) A formal academic debate. Woodcuts accompanying printed versions of the *Dialogue* often show the two speakers using their hands to count off debating points, a conventional way of representing academic disputation (Jones, “Marcolf the Trickster,” p. 152). Over the course of the work, the two interlocutors alternate in the roles of master (who initiates and questions) and pupil (who must respond appropriately). Solomon first requires that Marcolf recite his genealogy and then declares that Marcolf must “answer” him (4.3a) in the proverb contest. At 6.3–4 Marcolf usurps the role of master or wisdom figure and initiates a third verbal contest, posing riddles that Solomon cannot solve. Solomon then retakes the initiative by posing the “covered by the same cow” riddle at 8.2–3. Solomon also initiates the waking contest at 9.1 by threatening to decapitate Marcolf if he falls asleep, but Marcolf introduces the five propositions for which Solomon then demands proof. Finally, Marcolf initiates the last major verbal contest by implying at 17.28 that he can lead Solomon into self-contradiction by causing him to dispraise women as strongly as he praised them at 17.18–25. *questyons to thee*. Echoing God to Job at Job 38:3, “I will ask thee, and answer thou me” [“interrogabo te, et responde mihi”]; see also Job 40:2 and 42:4.

<sup>14</sup> 4.3b *He that singyth worste*. [B 3b] Samuel Singer (*Sprichwörter*, 1:53) gives analogues for the equivalent Latin expression, “Qui male cantat, primo incipiat.”

<sup>15</sup> 4.4a–4.91b The proverb contest. In this long exchange, Marcolf’s responses in Latin include a number of close verbal parodies of Solomon’s scripture-based pronouncements as they occur in the wisdom books of the Latin Vulgate Bible. Unlike the expressions we usually call proverbs, these made-for-the-occasion Marcolfian verbal parodies would not have circulated in common speech. They might better be called mock-proverbs, though many draw upon traditional ideas that do occur in proverbial form. In Leeu’s Latin text, Marcolf’s responses imitate closely the language of Solomon’s proverbs in these exchanges: 4.13ab, 4.15ab, 4.71ab, 4.72ab, 4.79ab, 4.81–84ab. At least seventeen more exchanges of this type are present in the fullest manuscripts but do not appear in the printed texts: they are included in our appendix as numbered by Benary: B 15ab, B 26ab, B 30–34ab, B 38ab, B 40ab, B 46ab, B 48ab, B 69ab, B 89ab, B 112ab, B 125ab, B 128ab, and B 138ab. The exchanges omitted from the printed texts represent some of the most trans-gressive pairings, many involving scathing scatological parody of scriptural language, substituting “shit” for “wisdom,” for example, or “the arse” for “the Lord.”

<sup>16</sup> 4.5a *juged betwixt two light women*. [B 5a] For Solomon’s judgment, see 3 Kings 3:16–27.

M: “Were erys are there are causes, where women be there are wordys.”	M: “Where men are there are causes, and where women are there are words.” <sup>17</sup>
S: “God yave wysdam in my mouth, for me lyke is none in alle partys of the worlde.”	S: “God put wisdom in my mouth, and there is no one like me in all the world.” <sup>18</sup>
M: “He that hath evyll neighborys praysyth hymself.”	M: “He who has evil neighbors praiseth himself.” <sup>19</sup>
S: “The wykkyd man fleyth, no man folwyng.”	S: “The wicked man flies, no man following.” <sup>20</sup>
M: “Whan the kydde rennyth, men may se his ars.”	M: “When the kid runs away men will see his arse.” <sup>21</sup>
S: “A good wyf and a fayre is to hir husbonde a pleasure.”	S: “A good wife and a fair is to her husband a pleasure.”
M: “A potfull of mylke muste be kept wele from the katte.”	M: “A potful of milk must be kept well away from the cat.” <sup>22</sup>
S: “A wyse woman byldeth an house, and she that unwyse and a fool is, distroyeth with hir handes that she fyndeth made.”	S: “A wise woman buildeth a house, an unwise and foolish woman destroys what she finds created.” <sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> 4.5b *where women be there are wordys*. [B 5b] Whiting W497 gives versions of an antifeminist proverb in English that is obviously related to Marcolf's: "There women are are many words, there geese are are many turds." Another related expression in English is W253, "A young wife and a harvest goose, much gaggle (chatter) with both."

<sup>18</sup> 4.6a *God yave wysdam*. [B 6a] 3 Kings 3:11–13, "And the Lord said to Solomon: Behold I . . . have given thee a wise and understanding heart, insomuch that there hath been no one like thee before thee, nor shall arise after thee. . . . I have given thee. . . riches and glory, so that no one hath been like thee among the kings in all days heretofore" ["et dixit Dominus Salomoni. . . dedi tibi cor sapiens et intelligens in tantum ut nullus ante te similis tui fuerit nec post te surrecturus sit. . . dedi tibi divitias scilicet et gloriam ut nemo fuerit similis tui in regibus cunctis retro diebus"].

<sup>19</sup> 4.6b *He that hath evyll neighborys praysyth hymself*. [B 6b] Singer, *Sprichwörter*, 1:50, Whiting N79; compare Whiting P349, "He must praise himself since no man else will."

<sup>20</sup> 4.7a *wykkyd man fleyth*. [B 7a] Proverbs 28:1, "The wicked man fleeth, when no man pursueth" ["Fugit impius, nemine persequente"].

<sup>21</sup> 4.7b *Whan the kydde rennyth, men may se his ars*. [B 7b] Whiting K22, with reference to a related expression about seeing the backside of a climbing ape. Marcolf's statement about the white markings of a fleeing deer or roebuck (*L capriolus*) has its basis in observation of nature. Solomon moralizes about the ill effects of a bad conscience; Marcolf's characteristic reply stresses the kinship between humans and animals and reminds Solomon of what Bakhtin calls "the material bodily lower stratum," the parts of the body associated with defecation and filth but also with fertility and birth.

<sup>22</sup> 4.8b *potfull of mylke*. [B 8b] Whiting C109 cites a sixteenth-century expression about the irresistibility of milk to a cat. In 4.12b Marcolf poses a similar thought as a rhetorical question.

<sup>23</sup> 4.9a *wyse woman byldeth*. [B 10a] Proverbs 14:1, "A wise woman buildeth her house but the foolish will pull down with her hands that also which is built" ["Sapiens mulier aedificat domum suam; insipiens exstructam quoque manibus destruet"].

<p>M: "A pot that is wele baken may best endure, and that clene is browyn that may they fayre drinken."</p> <p>S: "A ferdefull woman shal be praysed."</p> <p>M: "A catte that hath a good skyn shal be flayne."</p> <p>S: "A shamefast wyf and a fayre is mekyll to be belovyd."</p> <p>M: "To pore men whyte mete are to be kept."</p> <p>S: "A woman stronge in doying good, who shall fynde?"</p> <p>M: "Who shal fynde a catte trewe in kepyng mylke?"</p> <p>S: "."</p> <p>S: "Noon."</p> <p>M: "And a woman seldom."</p> <p>S: "A fayre woman and an honest is to be praysed above alle rychesse that a man fynde may."</p>	<p>M: "A pot that is well-baked endures, and what is well-brewed that may they fairly drink."<sup>24</sup></p> <p>S: "A faithful woman shall be praised."<sup>25</sup></p> <p>M: "A cat with a good skin shall be flayed."</p> <p>S: "A modest wife and a fair is much to be cherished."<sup>26</sup></p> <p>M: "White meat is to be kept for poor men."<sup>27</sup></p> <p>S: "A woman who is strong in doing good is hard to find."<sup>28</sup></p> <p>M: "Who shall find a cat true in keeping milk?"</p> <p>S: [missing]</p> <p>S. "No one."</p> <p>M: "And a woman seldom."</p> <p>S: "A fair and honest woman is to be praised above all riches that man may find."</p>
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<sup>24</sup> 4.9b *that clene is browyn*. [B 10b] Benary's edition has "olla bene cocta melius durat, et qui merdam distemperat merdam bibit" [A well-fired (earthenware) pot stands up very well to use, but whoever stirs in shit, drinks shit]. Leeu's Latin print substitutes the sense-destroying *mundam* [clean, fine] for *merdam* in the second clause. The ME text does not translate the apparently garbled second clause of the Latin text; rather, it offers a meaningful and logically consistent second clause, "what is brewed cleanly is good to drink." "To drink as one brews" is a ME proverbial expression that takes many forms (see Whiting B529; Singer, *Sprichwörter*, 1:35–36).

<sup>25</sup> 4.10a *A ferdefull woman shal be praysed*. [B 11a] Proverbs 31:30, "the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised" ["mulier timens Dominum ipsa laudabitur"].

<sup>26</sup> 4.10b *A catte that hath a good skyn shal be flayne*. [B 11b] Another of many instances in which Marcolf responds to Solomon's sententious pronouncements about humanity with cynical statements about animals. Whiting C99 gives two examples of the related saying that a cat with a fair skin shows itself abroad while a singed cat stays home. The expression occurs in Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Prologue (CT III[D]348–54), where the fictional Wife implies that her misogynist husbands applied it to her. An application to women is also implied here by the juxtaposition of Marcolf's reply to Solomon's statement.

<sup>27</sup> 4.11b *whyte mete*. [B 12b] *L lactinia* [dairy products (?)], obviously from *lac* [milk], but the meaning is unclear. Benary's edition reads "vacca lactiva" [a cow pro-ducing milk], but *lactivus* occurs in no major dictionaries.

<sup>28</sup> 4.12a *woman stronge in doying good*. [B 13a] Proverbs 31:10, "Who shall find a valiant woman? far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her" ["Mulierem fortem quis inveniet? procul et de ultimis finibus pretium ejus"].



<p>M: “A fat woman and a great is larger in yevyng than othre.”</p> <p>S: “A whyt kerchyf becomth wele a womans hede.”</p> <p>M: “It standyth wryten that the furre is not all lyke the slevys, and undre a whyte cloth often are hyd mothys.”</p> <p>S: “He that sowyth wyckydnesse shal repe evyll.”(N15ab)</p> <p>M: “He that sowyth chaf shal porely mowe.”</p> <p>S: “Out of the mouth of a holy man shal come good lernyng and wysedom.”</p> <p>M: “The asse behovyth to be allweye where he fedyth, for ther it growyth. Where he etyth oon gres, there growe xl ayen; where he dungyth, there it fattyth; where he pyssyth, there makyth he wete; and where he wallowyth, there brekyth he the strawe.”(N16b)</p>	<p>M: “A fat woman is more generous in giving than the other.”<sup>29</sup></p> <p>S: “A white kerchief becometh a woman’s head.”</p> <p>M: “It is written that the fur is not like the sleeves, and under a white cloth are often hidden moths.”<sup>30</sup></p> <p>S: “He that soweth wickedness shall reap evil.”<sup>31</sup></p> <p>M: “He that sows chaff shall mow poorly.”</p> <p>S: “Out of the mouth of a holy man comes good learning and wisdom.”</p> <p>M: “The ass behooveth to always be where he feeds,<sup>32</sup> for there it grows. Where he eats one [blade of] grass, there grows forty back again. Where he dungs, there it fattens, where he pisses, there he makes wet; and where he wallows, there he breaketh the straw.”</p>
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<sup>29</sup> 4.13b *A fat woman and a great is larger in yevyng than othre*. [B 14b] Leeu’s Latin print says that the fat woman is larger or more generous [*largior*] in giving *visa* [things seen], which the translator apparently omits as nonsensical. Some manuscripts read *in dando jussa* [in giving farts], a reading which fits well with Marcolf’s persistent scatology.

<sup>30</sup> 4.14b *furre is not all lyke the slevys*. [B 16b] *L pellicia* [fur coat]. The idea that a fair exterior can hide ugliness or corruption is widespread proverbial wisdom; see Ziolkowski, *Solomon and Marcolf*, p. 129, for Latin examples. That a woman’s attractive exterior hides ugliness or destructive qualities underneath is a com-monplace of antifeminist discourse.

<sup>31</sup> 4.15ab *He that sowyth wyckydnesse shal repe evyll*. [B 17ab] Proverbs 22:8, “He that soweth iniquity shall reap evils” [“Qui seminat iniquitatem metet mala”]. Compare Job 4:8; Galatians 6:8. The idea appears frequently in medieval sermons and proverb collections; see Whiting S542 for instances in English. Solomon uses the image of sowing and reaping metaphorically to warn against wickedness; Marcolf’s reply is more concrete and agricultural, especially in ME: “he who sows chaff [the lifeless outer husks that surround the fertile grain] mows a poor harvest.”

<sup>32</sup> 4.16b *The asse behovyth to be allweye where he fedyth*. [B 19b] The longest of Marcolf’s retorts and one of the most revealing. The medieval association between peasants and asses (and other beasts of burden) was very strong. See Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, p. 78: “The ass is one of the most ancient and lasting symbols of the material bodily lower stratum, which at the same time degrades and regen-erates”; see also Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant*, pp. 48, 134, 140–47. Marcolf’s statement that the ass’s dung fertilizes the ground and his urine waters it implies a symbolic justification for the scatology and crudeness of his replies to Solomon: his fertilizing scatology helps to regenerate Solomon’s static and aging discourse. Of the connection between defecation and fertility, Bakhtin writes, “To degrade . . . means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth. Degradation . . . has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one” (*Rabelais*, p. 21). Marcolf returns to the connection between bodily emissions and fertility in 15.1–10.

*strawe*. Leeu’s Latin print, like most of the manuscripts, has *glebas* [clods of earth]. Breaking up the clods is a final example of the animal’s positive effect on the soil of the field where it grazes. The point is somewhat obscured by the ME translation, *strawe*.

S: "Lete an othre preyse thee." (N17a)	S: "Let another praise thee." <sup>33</sup>
M: "Yf I shulde myself dyspreyse, no man shall I please."	M: "If I should myself disparage, no man shall I please."
S: "Thou shalt ete moche ony."(N18a)	S: "Thou shalt eat much honey." <sup>34</sup>
M: "That beys dryve lykke faste theyre fyngres."	M: "That bees lick their fingers fast."
S: "In an evylle wyllled herte the spyryt of wysedome shalle not entre."(N19a)	S: "Into an evil-willed heart wisdom will not enter." <sup>35</sup>
M: "As ye smyte wyth an axe in an hard tre, beware that the chippes falle not in youre ye."(N19b); (T19b)	M: "As you strike a hard tree with an ax, beware that the chips do not fall in your eye." <sup>36</sup>
S: "It is hard to spurne ayenst the sharp prykyl."(N20a)	S: "It is hard to spurn against the sharp pricks." <sup>37</sup>
M: "The ox that drawyth bacwarde shal be twyse prycked."	M: "The ox that draws backwards shall be pricked twice."
S: "Fede up youre children and from thayre youthe lerne thaym to do welle."(N21a)	S: "Feed up thy children and from their youth teach them to do good." <sup>38</sup>
M: "He that fedyth well his cowe etyth often of the mylke."(T21b)	M: "He that feeds his cow well has milk often."

<sup>33</sup> 4.17a *Lete an othre preyse thee*. [B 20a] Proverbs 27:2, "Let another praise thee, and not thy own mouth: a stranger, and not thy own lips" ["Laudet te alienus, et non os tuum; extraneus, et non labia tua"].

<sup>34</sup> 4.18a *Thou shalt ete moche ony*. [B 23a] In Leeu's Latin print, the command is negative ["ne comedas"], a curtailed version of the biblical dictum at Proverbs 25:16, "Thou hast found honey, eat what is sufficient for thee, lest being glutted therewith thou vomit it up" ["Mel invenisti, comede quod sufficit tibi, ne forte satitus evomas illud"], and 25:27, "As it is not good for a man to eat much honey. . ." ["sicut qui mel multum comedit non est ei bonum"]. The ME text makes Solomon's prohibition into a positive commandment, and the mention of honey opens the way for another allusion to animal husbandry from Marcolf.

<sup>35</sup> 4.19a *In an evylle wyllled herte the spyryt of wysedome shalle not entre*. [B 24a] Wisdom 1:4, "For wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul" ["quoniam in malivolam animam non intrabit sapientia"].

<sup>36</sup> 4.19b *As ye smyte wyth an axe in an hard tre, beware that the chippes falle not in youre ye*. [B 24b] Whiting C235. The proverb appears in ME in various forms, e.g., John Gower, *Confessio Amantis* 2.1917–18, "Fulofte he heweth up so hihe [high], / That chippes fallen in his yhe [eye]."

<sup>37</sup> 4.20a *It is hard to spurne ayenst the sharp prykyl*. [B 25a] Acts 26:14 (Jesus to Saul of Tarsus), "It is hard for thee to kick against the goad" ["Durum est tibi contra stimulum calcitrare"]. A *prykyl* or goad is a spiked object, used as a spur to drive an animal. The expression warns against the futility and pain of running up against an intractable obstacle.

<sup>38</sup> 4.21a *Fede up youre children and from thayre youthe lerne thaym to do welle*. [B 35a] Proverbs 19:18 and 29:17, "Erudi filium tuum" [chastise (or "instruct") your son].

S: “All maner kyndes turne ayen to theyre furste nature.”	S: “All sorts turn again to their first nature.”
M: “A worne tabyllcloth turnyth ayen to his furste kynde.”(N22b)	M: “A worn tablecloth turns again to his first kind.” <sup>39</sup>
S: “What the juge knowyth of right and trouthe that spekyth he out.”(N23a)	S: “What the judge knows of truth and right he speaketh out.” <sup>40</sup>
M: “A bisshop that spekyth not is made a porter of a yate.”(N23b)	M: “A bishop that speaks not is made the porter of a gate.” <sup>41</sup>
S: “Honoure is to be yeven to the maistre, and the rodde to be feryd.”(N24a)	S: “Honor is to be given to the master, and the rod to be feared.” <sup>42</sup>
M: “He that is wonte to anointe the juges handes oftyn tymes he makyth his asse lene.”(N24b)	M: “He that anoints the judge’s hands often has a lean ass.” <sup>43</sup>
S: “Ayenst a stronge and myghty man thou shalt not fyghte, ne stryve ayenst the streme.”(N25a); (T25a)	S: “Against a strong and mighty man thou shouldst not fight, nor swim against the stream.” <sup>44</sup>
M: “The vultier takyth the skyn of stronge fowles and makyth thaym naked of theyre fethres.”(N25b)	M: “The vulture takes the skin and feathers of strong fowls.” <sup>45</sup>
S: “Lete us amende us in good that unwythyngly we have mysdone.”	S: “Let us amend and make good what we unwittingly have misdome.”

<sup>39</sup> 4.22b *A worne tabyllcloth turnyth ayen to his furste kynde*. [B 37b] Leeu’s Latin literally says “A worn out tablecloth turns back into flax fiber / hemp.” See Ziolkowski, *Solomon and Marcolf*, pp. 141–42, for commentary on a variant Latin text.

<sup>40</sup> 4.23a *What the juge knowyth of right and trouthe that spekyth he out*. [B 39a] Compare Proverbs 12:17, “He that speaketh that which he knoweth, sheweth forth justice: but he that lieth, is a deceitful witness” [“Qui quod novit loquitur index justitiae est; qui autem mentitur testis est fraudulentus”].

<sup>41</sup> 4.23b *bisshop that spekyth not*. [B 39b] Marcolf’s response appears to comment wryly on the rarity of silence among bishops: a silent bishop would be out of a job as bishop.

<sup>42</sup> 4.24a *Honoure is to be yeven to the maistre, and the rodde to be feryd*. [B 41a] Compare Proverbs 29:15, “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but the child that is left to his own will bringeth his mother to shame” [“Virga atque correptio tribuit sapientiam; puer autem qui dimittitur voluntati suae confundit matrem suam”].

<sup>43</sup> 4.24b *juges handes. . . asse lene*. [B 41b] The man who bribes a judge (“greases his palm”) has no money left to feed his pack animal. The Latin text refers to the judge’s mouth [*buccam*], but the ME translator prefers “hands.” *L azella, asella* is a “she-ass.”

<sup>44</sup> 4.25a *Ayenst a stronge and myghty man thou shalt not fyghte, ne stryve ayenst the streme*. [B 43a] Compare Ecclesiasticus 8:1, “Strive not with a powerful man, lest thou fall into his hands” [“Non litiges cum homine potente, ne forte incidas in manus illius”], and 4:32, “Resist not against the face of the mighty, and do not strive against the stream of the river” [“Noli resistere contra faciem potentis, nec coneris contra ictum fluvii”].

<sup>45</sup> 4.25b *vultier takyth the skyn*. [B 43b] To Solomon’s image of coercion as an imper-sonal force of nature such as a rushing stream, Marcolf responds with a harsh image of predation. Singer (*Sprichwörter*, 1:37) notes that the vernacular poet Marcabru uses a version of this expression.

M: “As a man wypyth his ars he doth nothing ellys.”	M: “As a man wipes his arse he does nothing else.”
S: “Wyl thou not disceyve any man wyth fayre word?”(T27a)	S: “Wilt thou not deceive any man with fair words?”
M: “By wyt he etyth that gretyth the ether.” (N27b)	M: “By wit he eats that greets the other.” <sup>46</sup>
S: “Wyth brawlyng people holde no companye.” (N28a)	S: “With brawling people hold no company.” <sup>47</sup>
M: “It is reson that he of the swyne ete that medlyth amonge the bren.”(N28b); (T28b)	M: “It is reason that he that eats of the swine meddles among the bran.” <sup>48</sup>
S: “There be many that kan have no shame.”	S: “There are many that have no shame.”
M: “They lyve undre the men that are lyke to howndes.”	M: “They live under the men who are like hounds.”
S: “There are many that to theyr good doers do evyl for good.”(N30a)	S: “There are many that do evil to their good-doers.” <sup>49</sup>
M: “He that yevyth bred to anothere manys hownde shall have no thanke.”	M: “He that giveth bread to another’s hounds shall have no thanks.”
S: “It is no frende that dureyth not in frendeshyp.”(N31a)	S: “It is no friend that endures not in friendship.” <sup>50</sup>
M: “The dung of a calf stynkyth not longe.”	M: “The dung of a calf does not stink long.”

<sup>46</sup> 4.27b *wyt*. [B 45b] *L ingenium* or ME *wyt* is Marcolf’s most salient quality in this dialogue; his improvisational cleverness is repeatedly matched against Solomon’s *sapientia* or moral wisdom. Here Marcolf’s response implies that the clever man makes a point of greeting someone who is eating so that the eater is pressured to share. (The Latin text makes it clearer that “the other” is eating.) Incessant hunger is another of Marcolf’s characteristic traits.

<sup>47</sup> 4.28a *Wyth brawlyng people holde no companye*. [B 47a] Compare Proverbs 22:24, “Be not a friend to an angry man, and do not walk with a furious man” [“Noli esse amicus homini iracundo, neque ambules cum viro furioso”].

<sup>48</sup> 4.28b *It is reson that he of the swyne ete that medlyth amonge the bren*. [B 47b] Leeu’s Latin literally says “Rightly do the swine eat him who wanders into the bran.” Ziolkowski (Solomon and Marcolf, p. 147) cites various Latin proverbs to this effect, with the implication that one must watch where one is going and whom one is with. In the Latin text, Marcolf’s thought parallels Solomon’s at 4.28a but transposes it into barnyard imagery. The ME translation reverses the thought and makes the man the eater of the swine; the reversal disrupts the parallel with Solomon’s admonition.

<sup>49</sup> 4.30a *There are many that to theyr good doers do evyl for good*. [B 50a] Compare Proverbs 17:13, “He that rendereth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house” [“Qui reddit mala pro bonis, non recedet malum de domo ejus”].

<sup>50</sup> 4.31a *It is no frende that dureyth not in frendeshyp*. [B 51a] Proverbs 17:17, “He that is a friend loveth at all times: and a brother is proved in distress” [“Omni tempore diligit qui amicus est; et frater in angustiis comprobatur”].

S: "He sekyth many occasions that wolle departe from his maister."(N32a); (T32a)	S: "He seeks many occasions that will depart from his master." <sup>51</sup>
M: "A woman that wolle not consente seyth that she hath a skabbyd arse."(N32b); (T32b)	M: "A woman that will not consent saith that she hath a scabby arse." <sup>52</sup>
S: "A kynges worde shulde be unchaungeable or stedfaste."	S: "A king's word should be unchangeable and steadfast."
M: "He is sone wery that plowyth wyth a wolf." (N33b)	M: "He who plows with a wolf is soon weary." <sup>53</sup>
S: "The radissh rotys are good mete but they stynke in the counsell."(N34ab); (T34a)	S: "The radish roots are good to eat, but they stink in the council." <sup>54</sup>
M: "He that etyth radyssh rotys coughyth above and undyr."	M: "He that eateth radish roots cough above and under."
S: "It is lost that is spokyn afore people that undrestande not what they here."	S: "What is spoken before people that understand not what they hear is lost"
M: "He lesyth his shafte that shetyth in the sande."(N35b)	M: "He loseth his shaft that shitteth in the sand." <sup>55</sup>
S: "He that stoppyth his erys from the crying of the pore people, oure Lord God shall not here hym."(N36a)	S: "He that stops his ears from the crying of the poor, our Lord God will not hear him." <sup>56</sup>
M: "He that wepyth afore a juge lesyth his terys."	M: "He that weeps before a judge loses his tears."

<sup>51</sup> 4.32a *from his maister*. [B 52a] The Latin has *ab amico* [from a friend]. Proverbs 18:1, "He that hath a mind to depart from a friend seeketh occasions" ["Occasiones quaerit qui vult recedere ab amico"].

<sup>52</sup> 4.32b *she hath a skabbyd arse*. [B 52b] The implication of this antifeminist proverb seems to be either that a woman will claim to have a scabby arse as an excuse for not having sex or, perhaps more in keeping with Marcolf's sense of humor as it emerges later in the work, he may be claiming (as a disincentive to refusal) that a woman who refuses to have sex is thereby admitting that her backside is scabby.

<sup>53</sup> 4.33b *plowyth wyth a wolf*. [B 53b] Leeu's Latin text reads *lupo* [wolf], and the translator follows suit, but the best manuscripts read *vulpes* [fox], and the folly or impossibility of plowing with a fox was already proverbial in antiquity, as Ziolkowski demonstrates (*Solomon and Marcolf*, p. 150).

<sup>54</sup> 4.34ab *radissh rotys*. [B 54a] The exchange plays on the theme of eating radishes as a source of bad breath, burping, and farting.

<sup>55</sup> 4.35b *in the sande*. [B 56b] The translator has tried to make sense of the obscure reading *trimpum / tripum*; Benary prints *scirpum* [rush, bulrush].

<sup>56</sup> 4.36a *He that stoppyth his erys*. [B 57a] Compare Proverbs 21:13, "He that stoppeth his ear against the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself and shall not be heard" ["Qui obturat aurem suam ad clamorem pauperis, et ipse clamabit, et non exaudietur"].

<p>S: “Ryse up, thou northren wynde, and come forth, thou southren wynde, and blowe through my gardeyne, and the wele smellyng herbys shalle growe and multiplie.”(N37ab)</p> <p>M: “Whanne the northren wyndes blowe, than ben the high howses in great trouble and daunger.”</p> <p>S: “The deth nor povertye wyll not be hyd.”</p> <p>M: “A man that is brostyn and hyde it, they growe the more.”(N38b); (T38b)</p> <p>S: “As thou syttyst at a riche mans table, beholde diligently what comyth afore thee.”(N39a)</p> <p>M: “Alle metys that is ordeyned for the body muste through the bely, and it goth in the stomak.”</p> <p>S: “Whan thou syttyst at the tabyll, beware that thou taste not furst.”(N40a)</p> <p>M: “He that syttyth in the hyghest sete, he holdyth the uppermost place.”</p> <p>S: “As the stronge the weyke wynneth, he takyth all that he hath.”</p>	<p>S: “Rise up, thou northern wind, and come forth, thou southern wind, and blow through my garden, and the good-smelling herbs shall grow and multiply.”<sup>57</sup></p> <p>M: “When the northern winds blow, then the high houses are in great trouble and danger.”</p> <p>S: “Neither death nor the poverty shall be hid.”</p> <p>M: “A man that is <i>brostyn</i> [broken?] and hide it, grows all the more.”<sup>58</sup></p> <p>S: “When thou sittest at a rich man’s table, behold diligently what cometh before thee.”<sup>59</sup></p> <p>M: “All meat that is ordained for the body must go through the belly, and it goes in the stomach.”</p> <p>S: “When thou sittest at the table, beware that thou taste not the food first.”<sup>60</sup></p> <p>M: “He that sits in the highest seat, he holds the uppermost place.”</p> <p>S: “When the strong wins over the weak, he taketh all that he hath.”</p>
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<sup>57</sup> 4.37ab *Ryse up, thou northren wynde*. . . [B 58ab] Solomon quotes from Canticles (Song of Songs) 4:16; Marcolf contradicts Solomon’s positive image of the north wind by referring to its destructive potential. The contrast suggests that a north wind aroused more positive associations in the biblical Holy Land than it did in medieval Europe. Here the ME text translates only the first line of the two-line poem in the Latin text; the second line reads, “He who has a hernia is not in good health.”

<sup>58</sup> 4.38b *A man that is brostyn and hyde it, they growe the more*. [B 59b] References to digestion, defecation, and diseases, such as the scabby arse in 4.32b or the hernias here, are part of Marcolf’s ongoing insistence on the needs, frailties, and indignities of the body.

<sup>59</sup> 4.39a *As thou syttyst at a riche mans table, beholde diligently what comyth afore thee*. [B 63a] Proverbs 23:1, “When thou shalt sit to eat with a prince, consider diligently what is set before thy face” [“Quando sederis ut comedas cum principe, diligenter attende quae apposita sunt ante faciem tuam”].

<sup>60</sup> 4.40a *Whan thou syttyst at the tabyll, beware that thou taste not furst*. [B 64a] Ecclesiasticus 31:12, “Art thou set at a great table? be not the first to open thy mouth upon it” [“Supra mensam magnam sedisti, non aperias super illam faucem tuam prior”].

M: “The catte seeth wele whoos berde she lycke shall.”(N41b)	M: “The cat sees well whose bird she shall lick.” <sup>61</sup>
S: “That the wycked feryth, that fallyth hym often.”(N42a); (T42a)	S: “That which the wicked feareth, falleth on him often.” <sup>62</sup>
M: “He that doth evylle and hopyth good is disceyvdyd in thaym bothe.”(T42b)	M: “He that does evil and hopes for good is deceived in them both.”
S: “For the colde the slouthfull wolde not go to plough; he beggyd his brede, and no man wolde hym yeve.”(N43a); (T43a)	S: “In the cold the slothful would not go to the plough; he begs his bread, and no man would to him give.” <sup>63</sup>
M: “A nakyd ars no man kan robbe or dispoyle.”(N43b)	M: “A naked arse no man can rob or despoil.” <sup>64</sup>
S: “Studye makyth a maystre wele wyllled.”	S: “Study maketh a master well willed.”
M: “Th’andys that are usyd in the fyre fere not the ketylle.”	M: “The hands that are used in the fire fear not the kettle.”
S: “Brawlers and janglers are to be kaste out of alle good Companye.”	S: “Brawlers and janglers are to be cast out of all good company.”
M: “An angry howsewyf, the smoke, the ratte, and a broken plater are often tymes unprofytable in an howse.”(N45b)	M: “An angry housewife, the smoke, the rat, and a broken platter are oftentimes unprofitable in a house.” <sup>65</sup>

<sup>61</sup> 4.41b *The catte seeth wele whoos berde she lycke shall*. [B 65b] Whiting C108. This widespread proverb appears in ME in various forms, including this example from a bilingual collection of c. 1300: “Well wot hure [our] cat, whas berd he lickat” / “Murelegus bene scit, cuius barbam lambere suescit.” It appears in Latin as well as in the Old French *Li Proverbe au vilain* and in the ME *Proverbs of Hending* (c. 1325); its meaning varies by context (Singer, *Sprichwörter*, 1:38–40). Here in the mouth of Marcolf it could reassert the power of the seemingly weaker but craftier member of a pairing: Solomon says that the strong man takes all from the weak; Marcolf’s reply may mean that a cat knows very well how to get what it wants from a human.

<sup>62</sup> 4.42a *That the wycked feryth, that fallyth hym often*. [B 67a] Proverbs 10:24, “That which the wicked feareth, shall come upon him” [“Quod timet impius veniet super eum”].

<sup>63</sup> 4.43a *For the colde the slouthfull wolde not go to plough*. [B 68a] Proverbs 20:4, “Because of the cold the sluggard would not plough; he shall beg therefore in the summer, and it shall not be given him” [“Propter frigus piger arare noluit; mendicabit ergo aestate, et non dabitur illi”].

<sup>64</sup> 4.43b *A nakyd ars no man kan robbe or dispoyle*. [B 68b] Solomon warns that the lazy man who does not plant his crops may not be able to beg bread when he is hungry; Marcolf’s rejoinder suggests that a man with nothing has nothing to lose. Marcolf’s expression is Whiting A196, with no other examples, but a related saying, B528, occurs in a sixteenth-century dialogue in proverbs by John Heywood, “There is nothyng more vayne . . . Than to beg a breeche of a bare arst man” (*A dialogue conteynyng the number of the effectuall prouerbes in the Englishe tounge*, in Heywood, *Works*, pp. 18–101).

<sup>65</sup> 4.45b *An angry howsewyf*. [B 75b] A widespread proverb that goes back to scripture and thus might be thought to belong to Solomon’s discursive world rather than Marcolf’s: “a wrangling wife is like a roof continually dropping through” (Proverbs 19:13), “Roofs dripping through in a cold day, and a contentious woman are alike” (Proverbs 27:15). Proverbs 10:26 testifies to the irritation to the eyes caused by smoke. Medieval writers commonly refer to “three things” that cause a man to flee his own house (see Ziolkowski, *Solomon and Marcolf*, p. 162, for Latin

S: “For Goddys love men are bownden to love othre.”	S: “For God’s love men are bound to love others.”
M: “If thou love hym that lovyth not thee, thou lesyth thyn love.”	M: “If you love him that loves you not, you lose your love.”
S: “Saye not to thy frende, ‘Come tomorowe, I shal yeve thee,’ that thou maiste forthwyth yeve hym.”(N47a)	S: “Say not to thy friend, ‘come tomorrow, I shall give thee,’ that thou mayest forthwith give him.” <sup>66</sup>
M: “He sayth an othre tyme he shalle doo it, that hath noth wherwyth redy for to do it withalle.”	M: “He says another time he shall do it, that does not have the wherewithal to do it.”
S: “He that is wyne dronken holdyth nothing that he sayth.”(N48a)	S: “He that is drunken with wine holds to nothing that he says.” <sup>67</sup>
M: “An opyn arse hath no lord.”(N48b)	M: “An open arse hath no lord.” <sup>68</sup>
S: “Many coveyte to have rychesse that with povertye are holden undre.”	S: “Many covet riches that are held in poverty are hidden under.”
M: “Ete that ye have, and se what shall remaine.”	M: “Eat what ye have, and see what shall remain.”
S: “There are many that susteyne hungry, and yet fede they theyre wyves.”(T50a)	S: “There are many that sustain hunger, and yet feed their wives.”

examples; Whiting T187 for English versions). Often the “three things” are the elements from scripture: a scolding wife, a leaking roof, and smoke. Compare Chaucer’s Wife of Bath’s Prologue, *CT* III(D)278–80, and Tale of Melibee, *CT* VII(B2)1086; also William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, B.17.319–24, for a husband plagued by the same three, including, with Langland’s characteristic concreteness, “reyn on his bedde.” In Benary’s manuscript-based edition, Marcolf gives just two irritants in the form of a short proverb poem: “Domina irata / et patella perforata / dampnum sunt in casa” [An angry woman and a pan with holes are ruinous in a house]. The Latin printed editions, including Leeu’s, add another line to produce four irritants: “Domina irata / fumus, et ratta / patella perforata / damnum sunt in casa” [An angry woman, smoke, and a rat, a pan with holes, are ruinous in a house]. The ME translator softens *damnum* to “unprofytable.”

<sup>66</sup> 4.47a *Saye not to thy frende*. [B 80a] Proverbs 3:28, “Say not to thy friend: Go, and come again: and to morrow I will give to thee: when thou canst give at present” [“Ne dicas amico tuo: Vade, et revertere, cras dabo tibi, cum statim possis dare”].

<sup>67</sup> 4.48a *He that is wyne dronken holdyth nothing that he sayth*. [B 82a] Compare Ecclesi-asticus 20:7, “A wise man will hold his peace till he see opportunity: but a babler, and a fool, will regard no time” [“Homo sapiens tacebit usque ad tempus; lascivus autem et imprudens non servabunt tempus”].

<sup>68</sup> 4.48b *An opyn arse hath no lord*. [B 82b] Ziolkowski (Solomon and Marcolf, pp. 164–65) cites Latin parallels to suggest that the thought here might once have been that it is not possible to control the farting of a *culus confractus* or “opyn arse.” Certainly, the arsehole and the fart are frequent topics in Marcolf’s discourse, especially as represented by the fullest manuscripts. Equally Marcolfian is the antiauthoritarian ideal of having “no master” or “no lord.” The connection to Solomon’s pronouncement may be that neither the drunken man nor the “opyn arse” submits to censorship or restraint — an undesirable state from Solomon’s perspective, but a positive image of freedom from Marcolf’s



M: "The pore had ne breed and yet he bought an hownde."(N50b)	M: "The poor had no bread and yet he bought a hound." <sup>69</sup>
S: "The fole answeyryth aftyr hys folisshnes, for that he shulde not be knowyn wyse."(N51a)	S: "The fool answers after his foolishness, so he should not be known as wise." <sup>70</sup>
M: "What the stone heryth, that shalle the oke answeyryth."(N51b); (T51b)	M: "What the stone hears, that shall the oak answer." <sup>71</sup>
S: "Wrathe hath no mercy, and therefore he that angrely spekyth beyth evyle or shrewdly."(N52a); (T52a)	S: "Wrath hath no mercy, and therefore he that angrily speaketh be evil or shrewd." <sup>72</sup>
M: "Saye not in thyn angre to thy frende no evyl, lest thou forthynke it afteward."	M: "Say not in thine anger to thine friend any evil, lest thou forsaketh it afterword."
S: "The mouthe of an ennemye kan saye no good, ne hys lyppys shall sownde no trouthe."(N53a)	S: "The mouth of an enemy can say no good, nor shall his lips sow any truth." <sup>73</sup>
M: "He that lovyth me not doth not diffame me."	M: "He that loveth me doth not defame me."
S: "Slepe as ye have nede."(N54a)	S: "Sleep as ye have need." <sup>74</sup>
M: "He that leyth hym downe to slepe and kan not is not at his hertys ease."	M: "He that lies down to sleep and cannot is not at his heart's ease."

<sup>69</sup> 4.50b *The pore had ne breed and yet he bought an hownde*. [B 84b] Implied criticism of the poor man who buys a dog or feeds his dog before himself is Marcolf's cynical response to Solomon's apparent praise of the poor man who feeds his wife before himself. Whiting indexes Marcolf's remark as P300 with no other instances, but a closely related saying is H564, "the hound eats what the poor man saves," found in a bilingual proverb collection of c. 1300: "hund eet, that hen man spelat / 'Sepe vorat gnarus canis id quod servat avarus.'" Kemble (*Dialogue of Salomon and Saturnus*, p. 63) lists other related sayings.

<sup>70</sup> 4.51a *The fole answeyryth aftyr hys folisshnes*. [B 85a] Proverbs 26:5, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he imagine himself to be wise" ["Responde stulto juxta stultitiam suam, ne sibi sapiens esse videatur"]. Leeu's Latin text and the ME translation, however, state that the fool *himself* responds according to his foolishness, lest he seem to be wise [to others].

<sup>71</sup> 4.51b *What the stone heryth, that shalle the oke answeyryth*. [B 85b] Benary's edition reads "Petra quod audit, illi respondet echo" [What the stone hears, to that the echo responds]. The Latin prints substitute an oak [*quercus*] for the echo. Whiting's entry S788 cites no other instances but refers the reader to the related expression "to preach to the post" (P317), which suggests a possible inter-pretation for Marcolf's cryptic remark as we have it here: like the post, the stone hears nothing, not even Solomon's moralizing, and the oak answers nothing back, a negative situation from Solomon's point of view, but one that suits Marcolf admirably.

<sup>72</sup> 4.52a *Wrathe hath no mercy*. [B 86a] Proverbs 27:4, "Anger hath no mercy, nor fury when it breaketh forth: and who can bear the violence of one provoked?" ["Ira non habet misericordiam nec erumpens furor; et impetum concitatis ferre quis poterit?"].

<sup>73</sup> 4.53a *mouthe of an ennemye*. [B 87a] Compare Proverbs 26:24, "An enemy is known by his lips, when in his heart he entertaineth deceit" ["Labiis suis intelligitur inimicus, cum in corde tractaverit dolos"].

<sup>74</sup> 4.54a *Slepe as ye have nede*. [B 92a] Compare Proverbs 6:4, "Give not sleep to thy eyes, neither let thy eyelids slumber" ["Ne dederis somnum oculis tuis, nec dormitent palpebrae tuae"].

S: “We have well fyllyd oure bellys, lete us thanke God.”(N55ab); (T55a)	S: “We have well filled our bellies, let us thank God.” <sup>75</sup>
M: “As the ousell whystelyth, so answeyryth the thrusshe; the hungry and the fulle syngge not oon songe.”	M: “As the ousel whistles, so answers the thrush; the hungry and the full sing not the same song.”
S: “Lete us ete and drinke; we shall alle deye.”	S: “Let us eat and drink; we shall all die.”
M: “The hungry dyeth as wele as the full fedd.”	M: “The hungry dies as well as the full fed.”
S: “As a man playeth upon an harpe, he kan not wele indicte.”(N57a)	S: “As a man plays upon a harp, he can not well compose” <sup>76</sup>
M: “So whan the hownde shytyth, he berkyth noth.”	M: “When the hound shits, he doesn’t bark.”
S: “The wretchyd wombe is full; go we now to bedde.”	S: “The wretched womb is full; go we now to bed.”
M: “He turnyth and walowyth and slepyth evyl that hath not for to ete.”	M: “He that has nothing to eat turns and wallows and sleeps badly.”
S: “Dyspyse thou not a lytyll yifte that is yeven thee of a trewe frende.”(N59a)	S: “Despise thou not a little gift that is given to thee of a true friend.” <sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> 4.55ab–56ab *We have well fyllyd oure bellys, lete us thanke God . . . as wele as the full fedd.* [B 93ab–94ab] These two exchanges on hunger articulate important themes of the whole dialogue. Solomon speaks from the point of view of the feaster, whose present pleasure helps to console him for the sorrowful knowledge that one day he must die, as at 1 Corinthians 15:32, “Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we shall die” [“Manducemus, et bibamus, cras enim moriemur”]. Marcolf points out that the hungry and the well-fed do not sing the same song (or see the world from the same perspective) and that, like the feasters, the hungry also die, but without the consolation of banquets and merrymaking. The “ousel/ousell” (L *merulus* [blackbird]) who sings joyfully (*jubilat*) suggests Solomon, whose songs [*carmina*] numbered “a thousand and five” (3 Kings 4:32). Benary’s edition reads “respondit ei cuculus” [the cuckoo answered him] — this harsh-voiced respondent suggests Marcolf, whose brash “song” does indeed contrast sharply with Solomon’s language. The Latin prints give *graculus* [jackdaw] for *cuculus*, which sustains the idea of a harsh-voiced bird, such as a crow, jay, or grackle. The ME translator’s choice of *thrusshe* blunts the contrast somewhat, as it usually indicates a songbird.

<sup>76</sup> 4.57a *Indicte*. [B 95a] ME *indicte* [to write, compose], here, perhaps, a song. L *palogisare* in the Leeu print is unattested, though *paralogizari* [reason falsely] occurs, but this sense seems inappropriate. Benary prints *parabolisare*, which he takes to mean “speak artfully”; it could also mean “speak in proverbs.”

<sup>77</sup> 4.59a *Dyspyse thou not a lytyll yifte that is yeven thee of a trewe frende*. [B 97a] While most of Solomon’s sententious remarks come from scripture, Benary’s edition has at this point a distich derived from the *Distichs of Cato*, a medieval schooltext: “Exiguum munus cum dat tibi pauper amicus / Accipito placite et plene laudare memento” [When a poor friend gives you a meager gift, accept it graciously and remember to praise it heartily]. Leeu’s Latin print contains the first line, but the second is abbreviated to “noli desplicere” [do not scorn it]. Many proverbs, medieval and modern, testify to the wisdom of appreciating even a small gift and valuing the generosity behind it above the value of the gift.

M: “That a geldyd man hath, that yevyth he to his neighborwes.”(N59b)	M: “That which a gelded man hath, that giveth he to his neighbors.” <sup>78</sup>
S: “Go thou not wyth the evyll man or the brawelyng, lest thou suffre evyll for hym or peryle.”(N60a)	S: “Go thou not with the evil man or the brawling, lest thou suffer evil or peril for him.” <sup>79</sup>
M: “A dede bee makyth no hony.”(N60b)	M: “A dead bee makes no honey.” <sup>80</sup>
S: “If thou make frendeshipe with a false and evylwyllled man, it shal hyndre thee more than proffyte.”(N61a)	S: “If thou makest friends with a false and evil willed man, it shall hinder thee more than it profits.” <sup>81</sup>
M: “What the wolf doth, that pleasyth the wolfesse.”	M: “Whatever the wolf does pleases the she-wolf.”
S: “He that answeyth afore he is demaundyd shewyth hymself a fole.”(N62a); (T62a)	S: “He that answers before he is asked shows himself a fool.” <sup>82</sup>
M: “Whan a man tredyth, drawe to you youre fete.”(N62b)	M: “When a man treads, draw to you your feet.” <sup>83</sup>
S: “Evrything chesyth his lyke.”(N63ab)	S: “Everything chooses its like.” <sup>84</sup>

<sup>78</sup> 4.59b *That a geldyd man hath, that yevyth he to his neighborwes*. [B 97b] As so often, Marcolf’s reply is cryptic, and varying interpretations have been offered. The ME translator makes *vicine sue* plural (“his neighborwes”), though the Latin is grammatically singular: “What the castrated man has, he gives to his female neighbor.” This could possibly be a wry way of saying that (as a sex partner) the castrated man has *nothing* to give to his female neighbor. Ziolkowski (*Solomon and Marcolf*, p. 171) suggests that the castrated man “satisfies his [female] neighbor as best he can.” Beecher (*Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolphus*, p. 208n62) proposes to emend *castratus* [castrated] to *crassatus* [foolish], suggesting that “what a dim wit owns he gives away.”

<sup>79</sup> 4.60a *Go thou not wyth the evyll man or the brawelyng*. [B 99a] Compare Ecclesiasticus 8:18, “Go not on the way with a bold man, lest he burden thee with his evils: for he goeth according to his own will, and thou shalt perish together with his folly” [“Cum audace non eas in via, ne forte gravet mala sua in te; ipse enim secundum voluntatem suam vadit, et simul cum stultitia illius peries”].

<sup>80</sup> 4.60b *A dede bee makyth no hony*. [B 99b] The Latin print uses a coarser expression, “A dead bee does not shit [caccat] honey.” Whiting B171 offers no other medieval examples but provides cross-references to postmedieval proverb collections.

<sup>81</sup> 4.61a *friendeshipe with a false and evylwyllled man*. [B 100a] Proverbs 16:29, “An unjust man allureth his friend: and leadeth him into a way that is not good” [“Vir iniquus lactat amicum suum; et ducit eum per viam non bonam”].

<sup>82</sup> 4.62a *He that answeyth afore he is demaundyd shewyth hymself a fole*. [B 101a] Proverbs 18:13, “He that answereth before he heareth sheweth himself to be a fool, and worthy of confusion” [“Qui prius respondet quam audiat, stultum se esse demonstrat, et confusione dignum”].

<sup>83</sup> 4.62b *tredyth*. [B 101b] *L pungit* [poke, prod]. Beecher (*Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolphus*, p. 208n64) takes Marcolf’s advice to mean “when someone is pestering you, leave,” which is an acceptable meaning of *retrahere pedem* [depart, withdraw]. Ziolkowski (*Solomon and Marcolf*, p. 172) suggests that the retracting of the foot is in order to kick. That is, if you are poked, you draw back your foot to retaliate. The ME translator apparently takes the prodding to refer to treading on one’s foot: if it looks as though someone will step on your foot, you prudently pull it back, a thought consistent with Marcolf’s wary self-preservation.

<sup>84</sup> 4.63ab *Evrything chesyth his lyke*. [B 102ab] Ecclesiasticus 13:19, “Every beast loveth its like; so also every man that is nearest to himself” [“omne animal diligit similem sibi sic et omnis homo proximum sibi”]. Variations on the idea that “Everything is attracted to its like” are widespread in medieval proverb tradition. For many English

<p>M: “Where a skabbyd horse is, he sekyth his lyke and eyther of thaym gnappyth othre.”</p> <p>S: “A mercyfull man doth wele to his sowle.”(N64a); (T64a)</p> <p>M: “He dyspyseth a great yifte that knowyth not hymself.”(N64b)</p> <p>S: “He that skapyth the wolf metyth the lyon.”(N65ab); (T65a)</p> <p>M: “From evyll into worse, as the cooke to a bakere.”</p> <p>S: “Ware that no man do thee non evyll; if he do, do it not ayen.”</p> <p>M: “The styлле standyng watyr and the man that spekyth but lytylle, beleve thaym not.”(N66b)</p> <p>S: “We may not alle be lyke.”</p>	<p>M: “Where a scabbed horse is, he seeks his like and either of them nips the other.”</p> <p>S: “A merciful man does well to his soul.”<sup>85</sup></p> <p>M: “He despises a great gift that knows not himself.”<sup>86</sup></p> <p>S: “He that escapes the wolf meets the lion.”<sup>87</sup></p> <p>M: “From evil into worse, as the cook to a baker.”</p> <p>S: “Beware that no man do thee evil; if he do, do it not to him again.”</p> <p>M: “The still standing water and the man that speaks but little, believe them not.”<sup>88</sup></p> <p>S: “We may not all be alike.”</p>
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examples, see Whiting L272 (Marcolf’s particular expression about scabby horses is indexed as H523 with no other examples). Marcolf’s cynical response contests the ideal offered by Solomon, that man and beast each love the others of its kind, and he uses yet another animal image to remind the reader of man’s animal body and its susceptibility to disease (the horses are “skabbyd”). The *MED* notes that the rare verb *gnappen* is used by Robert Mannyng to describe tormented people who “gnapped” their own feet and hands as dogs do when they gnaw at their leads; the context here suggests that the horses snap at one another, further contradicting Solomon’s idealistic claim that like is affectionate toward like.

<sup>85</sup> 4.64a *A mercyfull man doth wele to his sowle*. [B 103a] Proverbs 11:17, “A merciful man doth good to his own soul” [“Benefacit animae suae vir misericors”].

<sup>86</sup> 4.64b *He dyspyseth a great yifte that knowyth not hymself*. [B 103b] Whiting G73 gives no other examples of Marcolf’s particular wording, but the implicit injunction, “Know thyself,” K100, is one of the oldest and most common of European proverbs. It seems noteworthy that Marcolf, not Solomon, utters this significant piece of proverbial wisdom. Its message resonates with Marcolf’s gibes at Solomon’s self-aggrandizement: see for example 4.3ab, 4.6ab, 4.76ab, 7.7–10.

<sup>87</sup> 4.65ab *He that skapyth the wolf metyth the lyon. / From evyll into worse, as the cooke to a bakere*. [B 104ab] See Ziolkowski (*Solomon and Marcolf*, p. 173) for the Aesopian associations of Marcolf’s reply. A modern equivalent is “out of the frying pan and into the fire.”

<sup>88</sup> 4.66b *The styлле standyng watyr and the man that spekyth but lytylle, beleve thaym not*. [B 105b] A widespread medieval proverb. Singer (*Sprichwörter*, 1:54) notes its presence in the *Distichs of Cato* 4.31. Whiting gives many variants on the well-known expression “still waters run deep” (W70); he indexes Marcolf’s particular version separately as W63 with references to postmedieval proverb collections. The proverb warns against still waters because they can conceal unsuspected depths or hazards; metaphorically it urges caution in dealing with people who keep their thoughts to themselves.

M: "It standeth wryten in a boke, 'He that hath no horse muste go on fote.'"(N67b)	M: "It is written in a book, 'He that hath no horse must go on foot.'"89
S: "A chylde of an hundred yere is cursyd."(N68ab)	S: "A child of a hundred years is cursed."90
M: "It is to late an olde hounde in a bande to lede."	M: "It is too late for an old hound to lead a band."
S: "He that hath, shal be yeven, and shall flowe."(N69a)	S: "He that has, shall be given, and shall flow." 91
M: "Woo to that man that hath frendes and no breed."	M: "Woe to that man that has friends and no bread."
S: "Whoo to that man that hath a dowble herte and in bothe weyes wyll wandre."(N70ab)	S: "Woe to that man that hath a double heart and in both ways will wander."92
M: "He that wolle two weyes go muste eythre his ars or his breche tere."	M: "He that will go two ways must either his arse or his britches tear."
S: "Of habundaunce of th'erte the mouth spekyst."(N71a)	S: "Of abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."93
M: "Out of a full wombe th'ars trompyth."	M: "Out of a full womb the arse tromps."
S: "Two oxen in one yocke drawn lyke."	S: "Two oxen in one yoke draw alike."
M: "Two veynes go lyke to oon ars."	M: "Two veins go alike to one arse."

<sup>89</sup> 4.67b *in a boke*. [B 106b] *L in casibus* from *casus* [fall; incident; case; misfortune]. The ME translator, understandably perplexed about the author's intent, has chosen a meaning to fit the context. Benary's edition has "in breve" [in brief]. The ME translation thus creates a rare instance of Marcolf citing from books.

<sup>90</sup> 4.68ab *A chylde of an hundred yere . . . It is to late an olde hounde in a bande to lede*. [B 110ab] Solomon's prophetic injunction is a variation on Isaias 65:20, "There shall no more be an infant of days there, nor an old man that shall not fill up his days: for the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed" ["non erit ibi amplius infans dierum, et senex qui non impleat dies suos, quoniam puer centum annorum morietur, et peccator centum annorum maledictus erit"]. Marcolf replies with a homely observation about the difficulty of training an old dog to the leash for which Singer (*Sprichwörter*, 1:51–52) gives numerous Latin analogues. The modern equivalent is of course the familiar saying, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks."

<sup>91</sup> 4.69a *He that hath, shal be yeven, and shall flowe*. [B 111a] Matthew 25:29, "For to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound" ["Omni enim habenti dabitur, et abundabit"]; also Matthew 13:12.

<sup>92</sup> 4.70ab *hath a dowble herte . . . that wolle two weyes go*. [B 113ab] Ecclesiasticus 2:14, "Woe to them that are of a double heart and to wicked lips, and to the hands that do evil, and to the sinner that goeth on the earth two ways" ["Vae duplici corde, et labiis scelestis, et manibus malefacientibus, et peccatori terram ingredienti duabus viis"]; also 3:28. In this amusing pairing, Solomon's monologic belief in a single path toward a single truth is undercut by Marcolf's literal warning against the anatomical and sartorial hazards of walking in two directions at once. In exchange 4.72ab, Marcolf again uses the human backside to make a point about singularity and doubleness.

<sup>93</sup> 4.71a *Of habundaunce of th'erte the mouth spekyst*. [B 116a] Matthew 12:34 and Luke 6:45, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" ["ex abundantia enim cordis os loquitur"].

<p>S: "A fayre woman is to be lovyd of hire husbande."(N73a)</p> <p>M: "In the necke is she whyte as a dove, and in the ars blacke and derke lyke a molle."(N73b)</p> <p>S: "Out of the generacion of Juda is my moost kyndrede; me the Lord of my fadre hath made governoure ovyr his people."(T74a)</p> <p>M: "I knowe wele a tabylcloth and of what werke it is made."</p> <p>S: "Nede makyth a right wyse man to do evyll."(N75a)</p> <p>M: "The wolf that is takyn and set fast, eythre he byteth or shytyth."</p> <p>S: "Were it so that God alle the world undre my power had set, it shulde suffyse me."</p> <p>M: "Men kan not yeve the katte so moche but that she woll hyr tayle wagge."(N76b)</p> <p>S: "He that late comyth to dyner, his parte is leest in the mete."</p> <p>M: "The glouton kan not se or renne al aboute."(N77b)</p> <p>S: "Though it be so that thy wif be sowre, fere hir not."</p>	<p>S: "A fair woman is to be loved of her husband."<sup>94</sup></p> <p>M: "In the neck she is as white as a dove, and in the arse black and dark like a mole."<sup>95</sup></p> <p>S: "Out of the generation of Judah is most of my kindred: it is I that the Lord of my father hath made governor over his people."</p> <p>M: "I know well a tablecloth and of what work it is made."</p> <p>S: "Need makes a wise man do evil."<sup>96</sup></p> <p>M: "The wolf that is taken and set fast, either bites or shits."</p> <p>S: "Were it so that God set all the world under my power, it should suffice me."</p> <p>M: "Men can not give the dog so much and she will wag her tail."<sup>97</sup></p> <p>S: "He that cometh to dinner late, his part has the least meat."</p> <p>M: "The glutton cannot see or run all about."<sup>98</sup></p> <p>S: "Though it be so that thy wife be sour, fear her not."</p>
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<sup>94</sup> 4.73a *A fayre woman is to be lovyd of hire husbande*. [B 118a] Compare Ecclesiasticus 26:21, "As the sun when it riseth to the world in the high places of God, so is the beauty of a good wife for the ornament of her house" ["sicut sol oriens mundo in altissimis Dei sic mulieris bonae species in ornamentum domus ejus"]; Proverbs 12:4, "A diligent woman is a crown to her husband" ["Mulier diligens corona est viro suo"].

<sup>95</sup> 4.73b *derke*. [B 118b] *L irsuta* is "hairy, shaggy" rather than "dark."

<sup>96</sup> 4.75a *Nede makyth a right wyse man to do evyll*. [B 120a] Compare Ecclesiastes 7:21, "For there is no just man upon earth, that doth good, and sinneth not" ["Non est enim homo justus in terra qui faciat bonum et non peccet"].

<sup>97</sup> 4.76b *katte*. [B 122b] The ME translator's rendering of *L catulus* [puppy].

<sup>98</sup> 4.77b *The glouton kan not se or renne al aboute*. [B 123b] The meaning of the L "Gluto non currit per totum" [The glutton does not run through everything] is unclear. Benary's edition has "non comedit" [does not eat] in place of "non currit" [does not run], but the thought would make better sense without the negative *non* (i.e., "the glutton eats through everything"), as Ziolkowski points out (*Solomon and Marcolf*, p. 182). The ME translator seems to imagine vision and mobility problems resulting from gluttony.

M: “The shepherde that wakyth welle, ther shall the wolf no wolle shyte.”(N78b); (T78b)	M: “The shepherd that walketh well, there shall no wolf shit.” <sup>99</sup>
S: “It becomth no foles to speke or to brynge forth any wyse reason.”(N79a)	S: “It becomes no fool to speak or to bring forth any wise reason.” <sup>100</sup>
M: “It becomyth not a dogge to bere a sadyllle.”(N79b)	M: “It becomes not a dog to bear a saddle.” <sup>101</sup>
S: “Whyles the children are lytyll, reighte theyre lymmes and maners.”(N80a)	S: “While the children are little, correct their limbs and manners.” <sup>102</sup>
M: “He that kyssyth the lambe lovyth the shepe.”	M: “He that kiss the lamb loveth the sheep.”
S: “Alle reyght pathys goon towards oon weye.”	S: “All right paths go towards one way.”
M: “So done alle the veynes renne towards the ars.”	M: “So do all veins run towards the arse.”
S: “Of a good man comth a good wyf.”	S: “Of a good man comes a good wife.” <sup>103</sup>
M: “Of a good mele comyth a great torde that men wyth theyre fete trede. So muste men also alle the bestyalle wyves trede undre fote.”	M: “Of a good meal comes a great turd that men tread with their feet. So must men also all the best wives tread under foot.” <sup>104</sup>
S: “A fayre wyf becomyth well by hir husband.”	S: “A fair wife is welcomed by her husband.”

<sup>99</sup> 4.78b *The shepherde that wakyth welle, ther shall the wolf no wolle shyte*. [B 124b] An attentive shepherd does not fall asleep and leave his sheep to be eaten by wolves, who therefore do not excrete the sheep’s wool. The ME translator produces the right sense despite an erroneous Latin text: “Molli bergario lupus non cacat lanam” [When the shepherd is lax, the wolf does not shit wool]. This proverb was widely used in medieval works as a criticism of bad supervision or leadership. Singer (*Sprichwörter*, 1:48–49) gives analogues for the Latin expression, and Whiting S241 and S242 offer parallels from Langland and Chaucer. The C-text of Langland’s *Piers Plowman* gives versions in both ME and Latin that resemble Marcolf’s saying quite closely: “Thyne sheep are ner al shabbyd [covered with sores], the wolf shiteth woolle. “Sub molli pastore lupus lanam cacat” (Passus 10, line 264). Chaucer’s Physician’s Tale uses a sanitized version of the expression to chide lax parents: “Under a shepherde softe and necligent / The wolf hath many a sheep and lamb torent [torn apart]” (CT VI[C]101–02).

<sup>100</sup> 4.79a *It becomth no foles to speke or to brynge forth any wyse reason*. [B 126a] Proverbs 17:7, “Eloquent words do not become a fool” [“Non decent stultum verba com-posita”].

<sup>101</sup> 4.79b *It becomyth not a dogge to bere a sadyllle*. [B 126b] A widespread proverbial comparison ridicules an inappropriate form of human behavior (such as the dispensing of wisdom by a fool mentioned by Solomon in 4.79a) by evoking the image of a saddle worn by an inappropriate animal: Whiting S533 cites a version with a sow and C501 features a cow. For Latin examples, see Ziolkowski, *Solomon and Marcolf*, pp. 183–84.

<sup>102</sup> 4.80a *Whyles the children are lytyll, reighte theyre lymmes and maners*. [B 127a] Compare Ecclesiasticus 30:12, “beat his sides while he is a child” [“tunde latera ejus dum infans est”].

<sup>103</sup> 4.82a *Of a good man comth a good wyf*. [B 130b] The sentiment is close to Ecclesiasticus 26:3, “A good wife is a good portion, she shall be given in the portion of them that fear God, to a man for his good deeds” [“Pars bona mulier bona, in parte timentium Deum dabitur viro pro factis bonis”].

<sup>104</sup> 4.82b *alle the bestyalle wyves trede undre fote*. [B 130b] One of the ugliest antifeminist images in the print versions of the dialogue. An ample meal produces an ample turd that men trample under foot, just as they should trample “bestiales mulieres” [bestial women]. The ME print has an overturned *u* in *wyues* that makes the word look like *wynes*. Overturned *u*’s and *n*’s are a common typesetting error in the ME text, as our textual notes witness.

M: “A pot full wyth wyne becomth well by the Thrusty.”	M: “A pot full of wine is welcomed by the thirsty.”
S: “Wel becomyth a fayre sworde by my syde.”	S: “Well becomes a fair sword by my side.”
M: “Wel becomth my hegge a great hepe of stonys.”	M: “Well becomes my hedge a great heap of stones” <sup>105</sup>
S: “The gretter that ye be, the more meke shulde ye be in alle thyngys.”	S: “The greater thou art, the meeker thou shouldst be in all things.” <sup>106</sup>
M: “He rydyth well that ridyth wyth his felawes.”	M: “He rides well that rides with his fellows.” <sup>107</sup>
S: “The wyse chylde gladyth the fadyr, and the folyssh childe is a sorwe to the modyr.”(N86a)	S: “The wise child pleases the father, and the foolish child is a sorrow to the mother.” <sup>108</sup>
M: “They synge not al oon songe, the glad and the sory.”	M: “They sing not all one song, the glad and the sorry.”
S: “He that sowyth wyth skaerstye repyth skaersly.”(N87a)	S: “He that sows sparsely, so shall he reap.” <sup>109</sup>
M: “The more it fryseth, the more it byndeth.”	M: “The more it freezes, the more it binds.”
S: “Do alle thynges by counsell, and thou shalt not aftre forthinke it.”(N88a)	S: “Do all things by counsel, and thou shalt not after rethink it.” <sup>110</sup>

<sup>105</sup> 4.84b *hepe of stonys*. [B 132b] Leeu’s Latin print has *strues* [stack, heap], where most manuscripts have *strontus* [turd]. Perhaps this was a sanitizing gesture, though ample scatology remains. The phrase “of stonys” is the ME translator’s addition. This pairing (4.84ab) is a good reminder that the term *proverb* applies only very loosely to a number of the remarks in this verbal contest. Marcolf’s rejoinder is a close verbal parody of Solomon’s reference to his sword, a symbol of his aristocratic position in the social hierarchy, which Marcolf reduces to a mundane barnyard image. A house and shed surrounded by a hedge was a characteristic peasant dwelling in medieval Europe, and the pile of dung mentioned by the manuscript versions would be no uncommon sight. A similar but more transgressive pairing (B 40ab in Appendix) is omitted from the prints: there Solomon evokes another symbol of aristocratic status by declaring that a black boss fits perfectly on a white shield; Marcolf replies that a black arsehole sits perfectly between white cheeks.

<sup>106</sup> 4.85a *The gretter that ye be, the more meke shulde ye be in alle thyngys*. [B 133a] Ecclesi-asticus 3:20, “The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things” [“Quanto magnus es, humilia te in omnibus”].

<sup>107</sup> 4.85b *He rydyth well that ridyth wyth his felawes*. [B 133b] For “wyth his felawes,” Leeu’s Latin print gives *cum paribus* [with his equals]; this is probably the import of the ME expression as well.

<sup>108</sup> 4.86a *The wyse chylde gladyth the fadyr*. [B 136a] Proverbs 10:1, “A wise son maketh the father glad: but a foolish son is the sorrow of his mother” [“Filius sapiens laetificat patrem; filius vero stultus moestitia est matris suae”].

<sup>109</sup> 4.87a *He that sowyth wyth skaerstye repyth skaersly* [B 137a]. 2 Corinthians 9:6, “He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly” [“Qui parce seminat, parce et metet”].

<sup>110</sup> 4.88a, 89a *Do alle thynges by counsell*. . . *Alle thynges have theyre seasons and tyme*. [B 139a, 140a] Solomon appears to play his strongest cards just as the match ends: these two biblical sayings are among the most widely cited pieces of Solomonic wisdom in medieval literature. In English alone, Whiting records about twenty citations of the



<p>M: “He is seke ynough that the sekenesse drawyth or folowyth.”</p> <p>S: “Alle thinges have theyre seasons and tyme.”</p> <p>M: “‘Now daye; tomorwe daye,’ sayde the oxe that the hare chacyd.”</p> <p>S: “I am wery of spekyng; lete us therefore reste.”</p> <p>M: “Therefore shall not Y leve my clapping.”</p> <p>S: “I may no more.”</p> <p>M: “Yf ye maye no more, yelde youreself ovyrcomen and yeve me that ye have promysed.”</p> <p>Wyth that spake to Marcolf Hananyas, the sone of Joiade, and Zabus, the kinges frende, and Adonias, the sone of Abde, whiche hadden the charge and governaunce ovyr the kynges tribute, and sayde:</p> <p>“Thou shalt not herefore be the thyrdde in the kingedome of oure soveraigne lord. Men shall rather put bothe thyn worst yen out of thy moost vyle hede, for it becomyth thee bettyr to lye amonge berys than to be exalted to any dignyte or honour.”</p> <p>Than Marcolphus sayde: “Wherfor hath the king than promysed?”</p>	<p>M: “He is sick enough that the sickness draws or follows.”</p> <p>S: “All things have their seasons and time.”</p> <p>M: “‘Now day: tomorrow day,’ said the ox that the hare chased.”<sup>111</sup></p> <p>S: “I am weary of speaking; let us therefore rest.”</p> <p>M: “Therefore shall not I leave my chattering.”</p> <p><b>Solomon confesses himself beaten</b></p> <p>S: “I may no more.”</p> <p>M: “If you may no more, yield yourself as overcome and give me that which you promised.”</p> <p>With that spoke to Marcolf Hananias, the son of Joiade, and Zabus, the king’s friend, and Adonias, the son of Abde, who had charge and governance over the king’s tribute, and said:</p> <p>“You shall not therefore be the third in the kingdom of our sovereign lord. Men shall rather put both your eyes out of your most vile head, for it becomes you better to lie among berries than to be exalted to any dignity or honor.”</p> <p>Then Marcolf said: “Why then did the king promise?”</p>
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advice from Ecclesiasticus 32:24, “Do thou nothing without counsel” (C470) and a similar number for Ecclesiastes 3:1, “All things have their season [time]” (T88).

<sup>111</sup> 4.89b *Now daye; tomorwe daye*. [B 140b] The Latin “Diem hodie, diem cras” might be translated “Today is a day, tomorrow is [another] day,” with the implication “there is always tomorrow, if I don’t succeed today,” an expression of resignation appropriate to a lumbering ox who tries to catch a hare. Singer (*Sprichwörter*, 1:49–50) gives parallels.

Than sayde the kinges xii provostes, that is to wyte, Nenthur, Benadachar, Benesya, Bena, Benanides, Banthabar, Athurady, Bominia, Josephus, Semes, and Samer:

“Whereto comth this fole, oure soveraign lorde al thus to trouble and mocke? Why dryve ye hym not out wyth stavys of his syghte?” Tho sayde Salomon: “Not so, but yeve hym wele to ete and drinke and lete hym than goo in pease.”

Tho spak Marcolphus goyng his weye to the king: “I suffre nough what that ye have sayde. I shall alweyes saye, ‘There is no king were no lawe is.’”

Onys upon a tyme the king rode an huntynge wyth his hunterys and howndes and fortunyd hym to come by the house of Marcolf, and turnyd hymself thidrewardes wyth his horse and demaunded, wyth his hede inclyned undre the dorre bowe, who was wythinne.

Marcolf answeryd to the king: “Wythin is an hool man, and an half, and an horse hede, and the more that they ascende, the more they downe falle.”

To that spak Solomon: “What menyst thou therewithall?”

Tho answeryd Marcolphus: “The hole man is myself syttyng wythin, ye are the half man

Then said the king’s twelve counselors, that is to wit, Nenther, Benadacher, Benesya, Bena, Benanides, Banthabar, Athurady, Bominia, Josephus, Semes, and Samer.<sup>112</sup>

“To what purpose comes this fool, to trouble and mock our sovereign lord so? Why do you not drive him out with staves, out of our lord’s sight?” Said Solomon: “Not so, but give him to eat and drink and let him then go in peace.”

Then spoke Marcolf going his way to the king: “I suffer enough what that you have said. I shall always say, ‘There is no king where there is no law.’”

### **The Riddling Contest**

Once upon a time the king rode a-hunting with his hunters and hounds and by fortune came by the house of Marcolf, and turned himself toward it with his horse and demanded, with his head bent under the arch of the door, who was within.<sup>113</sup>

Marcolf answered the king: “Within is a whole man and a half, and a horse head, and the more they ascend, the more they fall down.”

To that said Solomon: “What meanest thou?”

Marcolf answered: “The whole man is myself sitting within, you are the half man sitting

<sup>112</sup> I count only 11.

<sup>113</sup> 6–8 [B 2.1–3] The riddling contest. In sections 6 through 8, the scene moves from Solomon’s court to Marcolf’s peasant house, imagined as sufficiently close by for the king and his men to come upon it while hunting. On his home ground, Marcolf takes the lead by posing riddles, just as Solomon led off in the exchanges of genealogies and proverbs that took place at his court. Figure 5 depicts the answers to each of Marcolf’s riddles, as they are given in 6.6–9 and 6.16–20. For analogues to these riddles, see Ziolkowski, *Solomon and Marcolf*, pp. 196–99. Solomon’s lack of success in solving Marcolf’s riddles presumably arises from his lack of experiential knowledge. The solutions involve basic realities of peasant life: preparing food, raising crops, fighting off vermin, preparing a body for burial, and conceiving a child. Bakhtin observes that riddles can transform life’s most terrifying mysteries into a “gay and carefree” game (*Rabelais*, p. 233).

sytyng wythoute upon youre horse, lokyng in wyth youre hede declyned, and the horse hede is the hede of youre horse that ye sytte on.”

Than Salomon demaunded of Marcolphus what they were that clymen up and fallyn downe.

Marcolph answeyrd and sayde: “They are the benys boyllyng in the pott.”

Salomon: “Where is thy fadyr, thy modyr, thy sustyr, and thy brothyr?”

Marcolph: “My fadyr is in the felde and makyth of oon harme two. My modyr is goon and dooth to hir neighborwe that she nevyr more shall do; my brothyr sytting wythoute the house sleyth alle that he fyndeth. My sustyr sytthy in hire chambre and bewepyth that aforetyme she laughyd.”

Salomon: “What betokenth they?”

Marcolph: “My fadyr is in the felde and puttyth or settyth thornys in a footpath, and comyng men they make an othre path therby, and so he makyth of oon harme two.

My modyr is goon and closyth the yes of hir neyghborwe deying, the whiche she shall nevyr more do.

My brothyr sytting withoute the house in the sonne and lowsyth, and alle that he fyndeth, he sleyth.

My sustyr the laste yere lovyd a yonge man and wyth kyssyng, laughing, tastyng, japyng, and playing, she was getyn wyth chylde whereof she now travayllyth, and that now she bewepyth sore.”

outside upon your horse, looking in with your head bent, and the horsehead is the head of your horse that ye sit on.”

Then Solomon demanded of Marcolf what they were that climbed up and fell down.

Marcolf answered and said: “They are the beans boiling in the pot.”

Solomon: “Where is thy father, thy mother, thy sister, and thy brother?”

Marcolf: “My father is in the field and makes of one *harm* [pain?] two. My mother is gone and does to her neighbor that she never more shall do; my brother sitting outside the house slays all that he finds. My sister sits in her chamber and weeps over that which she used to laugh.”

Solomon: “What does that mean?”

Marcolf: “My father is in the field and puts or sets thorns in a footpath, and coming men they make another path, and so he makes of one harm two.

My mother is gone and closes the eyes of her dying neighbor, of which she will never more do.

My brother sits outside the house in the sun and picks lice, and all he finds, he slays.

My sister last year loved a young man and with kissing, laughing, tasting, japing, and playing, she was gotten with child of which she is now in travail, so that now she weeps sore.”

**Solomon concedes the riddling contest.**

<p>Salomon: “How comyth to thee alle this wysdome and subtyltye?”</p> <p>Marcolfus: “In the tyme of King David youre fadyr, there was a yonge man his phisician, and as he onys had takyn a vulture for to occupye in his medicins and had takyn therof that was to hym expedyent, so toke youre modyr, Barsebea, the herte and leyde it upon a cruste of breed and rostyd it upon the feyre and yave you the herte to ete, and I thanne beyng in the kechin, she kast at my hede the cruste through moysted wyth th’erte of the vulture, and that ete I and therof, I suppose, is comen to me my subiltie, lyke as to you is comen by etyng of th’erte wysedom.”</p> <p>Salomon: “As verelye God helpe thee! In Gabaa, God appieryd to me and fulfyllled me wyth sapience.”</p> <p>Marcolphus: “He is holdyn wyse that reputyth hymself a fole.”</p> <p>Salomon: “Haste thou not herde what rychesse God hath yevyn me aboven that wysdome?”</p> <p>Marcolph: “I have herde it, and I knowe well that where God woll, there reynyth it.”</p>	<p>Solomon: “How cometh to thee all this wisdom and subtlety?”<sup>114</sup></p> <p>Marcolf: “In the time of King David your father, there was as his physician a young man, and as he once had taken a vulture to use for his medicines and had taken thereof that which was to him expedient, so took your mother, Bathsheba, the heart and laid it upon a crust of bread and roasted it upon the fire and gave you the heart to eat, and I then being in the kitchen, she cast at my head the crust moist through with the heart of the vulture, and that I ate and thereof, I suppose, has come to me my subtlety, like as you have come by eating the heart of wisdom.”<sup>115</sup></p> <p>Solomon: “Verily God help thee! In Gabaa, God appeared to me and filled me with wisdom.”</p> <p>Marcolf: “He is held wise that holds himself a fool.”</p> <p>Solomon: “Hast thou not heard what riches God hath given me above that wisdom?”</p> <p>Marcolf: “I have heard it, and I know well that where God will, there it reigns.”</p> <p><b>Evidence and Argumentation</b></p>
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<sup>114</sup> 7.1–10 [B 2.2] The origins of Solomon’s wisdom and Marcolf’s cleverness. This intriguing etiological tale, nestled between the two parts of the riddling match, begins with Solomon’s demand for an explanation of the unexpected wit he discovers in this coarse rustic. Scholars have noted a mild anomaly in the narrative frame, in that Marcolf seems to arrive as a stranger to Solomon when the work opens, and now we have a flashback to a past in which Marcolf was present when Solomon’s mother prepared her son the vulture’s heart that gave him his extraordinary wisdom. That Barsebea roasted the heart on a piece of bread and “gave” it to Solomon to eat (*L tibi comedere dedit*, ME “yave you the herte to ete”), but only afterward threw the uneaten crust to Marcolf (*L projecit*, ME “kast at my hede”), suggests that Marcolf may simply have been a hungry boy lurking about the royal kitchen who received little attention from either Solomon or his mother and need not have been recognizable as an adult to his sovereign. Solomon denies the truth of Marcolf’s tale in 7.7, unsurprisingly preferring the biblical account in which his wisdom was God-given rather than a result of his mother’s sorcery (see 3 Kings 3:4–15). Marcolf makes up a number of self-serving fictions over the course of the work, and this one too may be a tall tale, not to be taken literally as part of the framing narrative. Marcolf’s hunger has symbolic resonance throughout the work, and in 8.17 he again implies that his hunger and his cleverness are related.

<sup>115</sup> 7.2 *there was a yonge man his phisician*. [B 2.2] The physicians of the Latin text (*medici*) become a single physician in ME.

<p>To that sayd Salomon alle laughyngly: “My folkys wayte upon me withoute. I may no lengyr wyth thee talke, but saye to thy modyr that she sende me of hir beste cowe a pot full of mylke, and that the pot of the same cowe be coveryd, and bringe thou it to me.”</p> <p>Marcolphus: “It shal be done.”</p> <p>King Salomon wyth his companye rydyng towardys Jerusalem was honourably receyvyd as a riche and moost puysant king.</p> <p>And whan Floscemya, Marcolphus modyr, was comyn home to hir house, he dede to hir the kings message.</p> <p>Than she, taking a pot full wyth mylke of hir cowe, and coveryd it wyth a flawne of the same mylke made, and sent it so forth to the king by hir sone.</p> <p>As Marcolphus went ovyr the felde, the wethir was warme of the sonne, sawe lying there a drye bakyn cowe torde, and for haste he unnethe cowde set downe the pot to the erthe but that he had etyn the flawne and toke up the cowe torde and therwyth covyrd the pot, and so covyrd presentyd it before the king.</p> <p>And he askyd: “Why is the pot thus covyrd?”</p> <p>Marcolf: “My lord, have not ye commaunded that the milke shulde be covyrd of the same cowe?”</p>	<p>To that said Solomon laughing: “My people are waiting for me.<sup>116</sup> I may no longer talk with thee, but say to thy mother that she send me of her best cow a pot full of milk, and that the pot be covered by the same cow, and bring thou it to me.”</p> <p>Marcolf:<sup>117</sup> “It shall be done.”</p> <p>King Solomon with his company riding towards Jerusalem was honorably received as a rich and most powerful king.</p> <p>And when Floscema, Marcolf’s mother, came home to her house, he gave her the king’s message.</p> <p>Then she, taking a pot full of milk from her cow, covered it with a flan of the same milk made, and sent it so forth to the king by her son.</p> <p>As Marcolf went over the field, the weather was warm from the sun, and he saw lying there a dry baked cow turd, and with haste he <i>unnethe cowde</i> set down the pot on the ground, ate the flan. Then he took up the cow turd and covered the pot with it, and so covered presented it to the king.</p> <p>And he [the king] asked: “Why is the pot thus covered?”</p> <p>Marcolf: “My lord, did you not command that the milk should be covered of the same cow?”</p>
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<sup>116</sup> N8.2–3 *pot of the same cowe be coveryd*. [B 2.3] Here Solomon rashly offers a riddle of his own: he requests a pot of milk “covered” by the cow that produced the milk. Marcolf’s mother, Floscemya, readily offers a solution: she covers the milk with a flat cake (L *placenta*) or, in English, a flan, also prepared with the milk of the family cow. Marcolf discomfits Solomon with an alternate solution: a “drye bakyn cowe torde” also allows one to cover the jug of milk with the product of the same cow.

<sup>117</sup> 8.20 *the pot I have thus coveryd wyth a cowe torde*. [B 2.3] Marcolf has the last laugh in the riddling match, just as he prevails in 4.91ab at the end of the proverb contest. Solomon’s lack of success at posing his own riddle seems to arise from the same problem that impeded him in answering Marcolf’s riddles: he lacks sufficient awareness of the openness of language to multiple interpretations as well as a knowledge of the gritty barnyard realities of peasant life. In envisioning an appetizing solution to the “covered by the same cow” riddle, Solomon thinks of the kind of milk-glazed delicacy someone prepares for him but not of the dung produced by the cow.

Salomon: “I commaunded not so to be done.”	Solomon: “I commanded not so to be done.” <sup>118</sup>
Marcolph: “Thus I undyrstode.”	Marcolf: “I understood it thus.”
Salomon: “It had ben bettyr coveryd wyth a flawne made wyth the mylke of the same cowe.”	Solomon: “It had been better covered with a flan made with the milk of the same cow.”
Marcolph: “So was it furste done, but hungyr chaungyd wyt.”	Marcolf: “So was it first done, but hunger changed it.” <sup>119</sup>
Salomon: “How?”	Solomon: “How?”
Marcolph: “I wyste wele that ye had no nede of mete, and I havynge great hungyr ete the flawne wyth mylke anynted, and for that wyth wyt chungyd, the pot I have thus coveryd wyth a cowe torde.”	Marcolf: “I knew well that ye had no need of food, and I having great hunger, ate the flan made with milk, and the pot I have thus covered with a cow turd.”
Salomon: “Now leve we alle this, and yf that thou thys nyght wake not as wele as I, thou mayste have no truste tomorne of thy hede.”	Solomon: “Now let us leave all this, and if thou this night stay not awake as well as I, thou mayest have no trust tomorrow of thy head.” <sup>120</sup>
Salomon and Marcolph consentyd bothe, and wythin a lytyll whyle aftyr Marcolph began to rowte.	Solomon and Marcolf both consented, and within a little while after, Marcolf began to drowse.
Salomon sayde: “Marcolf, thou slepyst?”	Solomon said: “Marcolf, thou sleepest?”
Marcolph answeyrd: “Lord, I do not. I thinke.”	Marcolf answered: “Lord, I do not. I think.”
Salomon: “What thinkyst thou?”	Solomon: “What thinkest thou?”

<sup>118</sup> 8.14–15 *I commaunded not so to be done*. . . *Thus I undyrstode*. [B 2.3] Solomon’s insistence and Marcolf’s rejoinder once again emphasize the difference in perspective between the two, the difficulties they face in communicating across contrastive discourses, and Marcolf’s deliberate exploitation of this gap in communication.

<sup>119</sup> 8.17 *hungyr chaungyd wyt*. [B 2.3] The ME translator may have chosen this literal rendition of “fames mutavit ingenium” as a way of acknowledging the Latin text’s play on the meanings of *ingenium* here and in 8.20 (“pro ipso ingenio”), where the word also applies to Marcolf and can mean either by his “wit” or by his “clever contrivance or stratagem” (see Cosquin, “Le Conte du chat,” pp. 390–91). For discussions of *ingenium* or cleverness as a controversial intellectual faculty, see Hanning, *Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance*, especially pp. 105–38, and Blamires, “Women and Creative Intelligence.” For Marcolf’s *ingenium*, contrasted with Solomon’s received wisdom, as a source of the dialogue’s unity and dynamism, see Bradbury, “Rival Wisdom.”

<sup>120</sup> 9.1–13.8 Propositions and proofs. Sections 9 through 13 [B 2.4–8] present a contest within a contest. Growing annoyed with Marcolf, Solomon condemns him to beheading if he cannot stay awake all night (9.1). Each time Solomon accuses him of sleeping, Marcolf responds with a proposition, and Solomon demands that he prove it, again on pain of death.

<p>Marcolf: “I thinke that there are as many joyntys in the tayle of an hare as in hire chyne.”</p> <p>Salomon: “If thou prove not that tomorne, thou arte worthy to deye.”</p> <p>Salomon beyng styлле, began Marcolph to slepe ayen, and sayde to hym: “Thou slepyst?” And he answeryd: “I do not, for I thynke.”</p> <p>Salomon: “What thinkest thou?”</p> <p>Marcolphus: “I thynke that the pye hath as many whyte fethrys as blacke.”</p> <p>Salomon: “But thou also prove that trewe, thou shalt lese thyn hede.”</p> <p>As Salomon ayen began to be styлле, Marcolph began ayen to rowte and to blowe, and Salomon sayd to hym: “Thou slepyst?”</p> <p>Marcolphus: “Nay, I thinke.”</p> <p>Salomon: “What thinkest thou?”</p> <p>Marcolph: “I thinke that undre th’erthe is no clerer thing than the daye.”</p> <p>Salomon: “Is the daye clerer than mylke?” Marcolph: “Ye.”</p> <p>Salomon: “That muste thou prove.”</p> <p>Anone herupon began Marcolphus to slepe.</p> <p>Salomon: “Thou slepyst.”</p> <p>Marcolph: “I slepe not, but I muse.”</p>	<p>Marcolf: “I think that there are as many joints in the tail of a hare as in her chin.”</p> <p>Solomon: “If thou provest not that tomorrow, thou art worthy to die.”</p> <p>Solomon being still, began Marcolf to sleep again, and [the king] said to him: “Thou sleepest?” And he answered: “I do not, for I think.”</p> <p>Solomon: “What thinkest thou?”<sup>121</sup></p> <p>Marcolf: “I think that the magpie hath as many white feathers as black.”</p> <p>Solomon: “Except thou also prove that true, thou shalt lose thine head.”</p> <p>As Solomon again began to be still, Marcolf began again to drowse and to snore, and Solomon said to him: “Thou sleepest?”</p> <p>Marcolf: “Nay, I think.”</p> <p>Solomon: “What thinkest thou?”</p> <p>Marcolf: “I think that under the heart is no clearer thing than the day.”</p> <p>Solomon: “Is the day clearer than the milk?” Marcolf: “Yea.”</p> <p>Solomon: “That thou must prove.”</p> <p>Hereupon Marcolf began to sleep.</p> <p>Solomon: “Thou sleepest.”</p> <p>Marcolf: “I sleep not, but muse.”</p>
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<sup>121</sup> 9.17 *wery of waking*. [B 2.4] After challenging Marcolf to stay awake all night in 9.1, at the end of the night Solomon grows “wery of waking,” just as he grew “wery of spekyng” at the end of the proverb contest (4.90a). In the hyperpolarized world of the *Dialogue*, the emphasis on Solomon’s weariness may imply that he represents an ancient, fixed, canonical tradition that is running out of precepts and out of energy, whereas Marcolf possesses the energy of newer discourses gaining ground over the course of the Middle Ages with their capacity to improvise, challenge authority, and foster change. See Corti, “Models and Antimodels in Medieval Culture,” and Bradbury, “Rival Wisdom.”

Salomon: “What musyst thou?”	Solomon: “What musest thou?”
Marcolph: “I muse how that men may not surely truste the women.”	Marcolf: “I muse how that men may not surely trust women.”
Salomon: “And that of thee shal be provyd.”	Solomon: “And that of thee shall be proved.”
Anon aftyr as Salomon was styll, began Marcolf ayen to blowe and to slepe.	Soon after, as Solomon was still, Marcolf again began to snore and to sleep.
Salomon: “Thou slepyst?”	Solomon: “Thou sleepest?”
Marcolph: “I do not, but I thinke.”	Marcolf: “I do not, but I think.”
Salomon: “What thinkest thou?”	Solomon: “What thinkest thou?”
Marcolph: “I thinke how that nature goth afore lernyng.”	Marcolf: “I think how that nature goes before learning.”
Salomon: “If thou prove not that trewe, thou shalt lese thyn hede.”	Solomon: “If thou prove not that true, thou shalt lose thine head.”
Aftyr that the nyght was ovyrpassyd and Salomon, wery of waking, put hymself to reste.	Finally, night was over and Solomon, weary of waking, put himself to rest.
Than Marcolf lefte the king and ran hastely to hys sustyr Fudasa and fayned hymself sorwefull and hevvy, and sayde to hyre: “The king Salomon is ayenst me, and I may not bere hys threytys and injuries, and but I shall take this knyf and hyde it secretly undyr my clothes and therewyth thys daye all pryvely, he not knowyng, I shall smyte hym to th’erte and sle hym.	Then Marcolf left the king and ran with haste to his sister Fudasa <sup>122</sup> and feigned himself sorrowful and heavy, and said to her: “The king Solomon is against me, <sup>123</sup> and I may not bear his threats and injuries. So I shall take this knife and hide it secretly under my clothes, and therewith this day, all privily, he not knowing, I shall stab him in the heart and slay him.

<sup>122</sup> 10.1 *hys sustyr Fudasa*. [B 2.5] The sister of Marcolf is first mentioned without name in the riddle contest as weeping over her unwed pregnancy (6.19–20); here she is given the name Fudasa (Fusada in Benary’s edition). As a result of the pregnancy, she is “thicker than she was of lengthe” (12.4), and she also bears an unfortunate resemblance to Marcolf in the face (*vysage*, 12.5), much to Solomon’s amusement when he first sees her in 12.3. Marcolf’s face is caricatured in 2.2–5.

<sup>123</sup> 10.2 *The king Salomon is ayenst me*. [B 2.5] The ME translation of Marcolf’s statement, “Rex Salomon contrarius est mihi,” conveys the primary meaning of the statement in context. Given the academic language of this section (the repetition of the verb *probare* [prove]), a possible secondary meaning is “King Solomon is contrary to me,” in the sense of an opposite or logical contrary, another reminder of the polarized nature of this entire dialogue between king and peasant and of the many oppositions the two represent. The importance of contraries, contradictions, and opposites in medieval literature has been the subject of extensive scholarship: see Solterer, *Master and Minerva*; Brown, *Contrary Things*; Kay, *Courtly Contradictions*; and Bouchard, “Every Valley Shall Be Exalted.”



<p>Now good dere sustyr, I praye thee, accuse me not but in any wyse kepe it secrete, ne shewe it not to myn owne brothyr Bufrydo.”</p> <p>Fudasa answeyrd: “My dere and leevest brothyr Marcolf, put no doubttes therin. I had levyr dye and be brent at a stake rather than I shulde discovre it or accuse thee.”</p> <p>Aftyr that retournyd Marcolf alle pryvely towardys the kynges courte.</p> <p>The sonne rysyng and spredyng hyr beamys ovyr th’erthe illumined and fulfyllyd the kingys palayce, and Salamon, rysyng from his bed, wente and sat in the trone or sete of his palayce.</p> <p>Than commaunded he to bringe afore hym an hare, and as many joyntes in his tayle as in hys chyne were fownden by Marcolph and nombredyd.</p> <p>Thanne was there a pye brought before the king, and as many whyte fethrys as black were fownden by Marcolph.</p> <p>And thanne toke Marcolph a great panne wyth mylke and set it in the kinges bedchambre alle pryvely, and closyd to alle the wyndowes that no lyght myght in come.</p> <p>Thanne kallyd he the king into the chambre, and as he come in he stumblyd at the panne and was nygh fallyn therin.</p>	<p>Now good dear sister, I pray thee, accuse me not but keep it secret, nor shew it to mine own brother Bufrydo.”</p> <p>Fudasa answered: “My dear and loved brother Marcolf, have no fear. I had rather die and be burnt at a stake rather than I should discover it or accuse thee.”</p> <p>After that Marcolf returned privily to the king’s court.</p> <p>The sun rising and spreading her beams over the earth illuminated and filled the king’s palace, and Solomon, rising from his bed, went and sat in the throne or seat of his palace.<sup>124</sup></p> <p>Then commanded he to bring before him a hare, and as many joints in his tail as in his chin were found by Marcolf and numbered.<sup>125</sup></p> <p>Then was there a magpie brought before the king, and as many white feathers as black were found by Marcolf.</p> <p>And then Marcolf took a great pan with milk and set it in the king’s bedchamber privily, and closed all the windows that no light might come in.</p> <p>Then called he the king into the chamber, and as he came in he stumbled on the pan and nigh fell therein.</p>
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<sup>124</sup> 11.5 *he stumblyd at the panne and was nygh fallyn therin*. [B 2.6] Solomon’s stumble causes him, in his own words, nearly to break his neck (11.8). The inversion of his words of wisdom in the proverb contest now becomes a literal near-inversion of his royal person. The comic upending (or the thrashing or uncrowning) of a king was for Bakhtin a carnivalesque image that offers a symbolic “element of victory” for the popular spirit over official forces of authority and intimidation, “the defeat of power, of earthly kings, of the earthly upper classes, of all that oppresses and restricts” (*Rabelais*, p. 92; see also pp. 197–208).

<sup>125</sup> 11.7 *Juge egaly* (i.e., “judge impartially”). [B 2.6] Solomon is of course famed for his just judgments, most notably that between the two women who claim to be the mother of the same child, mentioned at 4.5a and 16.1–4. As part of the comic inversion enacted by this work, Marcolf “schools” the king in what should be Solomon’s own virtues by asking him to rule justly (here and in 11.9) and with patience (12.23). In Benary’s edition (II.9), Marcolf implicitly chides Solomon for the lack of mercy [*misericordia*] shown to him at court. See 5.11 and 13.7 for more criticism of Solomon’s kingship.

Tho was the king angry and displeasyd and sayd: “Thou fowle evyl body, what is it that thou doost?”

Marcolphus answeyrd: “Ye ought not herefore to be angry. For have ye not sayd that milke is clerer than the daye? How is it that ye se not as wele by the clerenesse of the mylke as ye do bi the clerenesse of the daye? Juge egaly and ye shall fynde that I have nothyng mysdone unto you.”

Salomon: “God foryeve thee! My clothys be alle wyth mylke sprongyn, and nygh I had my necke brokyn and yet thou haste me nothing trespasyd?”

Marcolphus answeyrd: “Anothre tyme se bettyr tofore you. Nevyrthelesse, sytte downe and do me justyce upon a mater that I shall shewe afore you.”

Whan he was set, Marcolph complayned and shewyd: “Lord, I have a sustyr that hath to name Fudasa, and she hath yeven hyrself to horedam and is wyth childe wherwyth she shamyth and dishonestyd alle oure bloode and lynage, and yet wolde she parte wyth me in my fathres good and herytage.”

Thanne sayde Salomon: “Lete hyr come afore us, and we shall here hyr what she woll saye herto.”

As Salomon sawe hyr come from ferre, sayde all lauhyngly: “Thys may wele be Marcolphus sustyr!”

This Fudasa was short and thycke, and therto was she great with chylde, and thus was she thycker than she was of lenththe. She had thycke leggyss and short, and went on fote lame, wyth vysage, yen, and stature lycke to Marcolph.

The king was angry and displeased and said: “Thou foul evil body, what is it that thou doest?”

Marcolf answered: “You ought not to be angry. For did you not say that milk is clearer than the day? How is it that ye see not as well by the clearness of the milk as ye do by the clearness of the day? Judge equally and ye shall find that I have nothing misdono unto you.”

Solomon: “God forgive thee! My clothes be all splattered with milk, and I nearly had my neck broken and yet thou hast me nothing trespassed?”

Marcolf: “Another time watch where you are going. Nevertheless, sit down and do me justice upon a matter that I shall show before you.”

When he was set, Marcolf complained and said: “Lord, I have a sister by the name of Fudasa, and she has given herself to whoredom and is with child wherewith she shames and dishonors all our blood and lineage, and yet would she wants a share of my father’s goods and heritage.”

Then said Solomon: “Let her come before us, and we shall hear her what she has to say about it.”<sup>126</sup>

As Solomon saw her come from afar, [he] said, laughing: “This may well be Marcolf’s sister!”

This Fudasa was short and thick, and since she was great with child, she was thicker than she was long. She had short, thick legs and one lame foot, with a face, eyes, and stature like Marcolf.

<sup>126</sup> 12.20 *thou doost alle thy thynges by crafte and subtyltye* [B 2.7]. Solomon’s remark calls attention once again to Marcolf’s central characteristic, his amoral cleverness.

Salomon sayde to Marcolph: “What complaynest or askyst thou of thy sustyr?”

Marcolph answeyrd: “My lord, I complayne and shewe opynly afore you of my sustyr, that she is a stronge harlot and a strumpet and is wyth chylde, as ye may se, and alle oure blood and kynrede by hyr is shamyd. That wythstandyng, she wolde dele and parte wyth me in my fathres good and herytage. Wherefore, I requyre you of justyce and that ye commaunde hire that she take no parte ne make no clayme therto.”

This heryng, Fudasa, replete wyth angre and woednesse, cryed on hygh and sayde: “Thou fowle mysshapyn harlot, wherefore shulde not I have my parte in oure fadres good and herytage? And is not Floscemya moder to us bothe?”

Marcolph: “Thou shalt not have any dele or parte therin, for thin offense jugeth thee clerely therfro.”

Fudasa: “Therefore, I may not lese myn herytage. For have I mysdone, I shalle amende it, but oon thyng I promyse thee and swere by God and all hys myght. Yf thou wylt not lete me be in pease and suffre me to have my parte in the land, I shall shewe suche a thyng of thee that the king, or it be nyght, shall do thee to be hangyd.”

Marcolphus: “Thou fowle stynkyng hore, what kanst thou saye of me? I have no man mysdone. Saye thy worste, I dyffye thee.”

Fudasa: “Thou haste moche misdome, thou fowle facyd knave and rybaulde that thou art. For thou gladly woldyst sle the king, and yf ye beleve not me, seke undyr his cote and ye shall fynde the knyf.”

Solomon said to Marcolf: “What is thy complaint against or demand of thy sister?”

Marcolf answered: “My lord, I complain and show openly before you that my sister is a thorough harlot and a strumpet and is with child, as ye may see, and all our blood and kindred is shamed by her. That notwithstanding, she would deal and share with me in my father’s goods and heritage. Wherefore, I require you of justice that you command her that she take no part not make no claim thereto.”

Hearing this, Fudasa, replete with anger and woe, cried high and said: “You foul misshapen harlot,<sup>127</sup> why should not I have my part in our father’s good and heritage? Is not Floscema mother to us both?”

Marcolf: “You shall not have any deal or part therein, for your offense clearly convicts you therefore.”

Fudasa: “God forbid that I may lose my heritage. If I have misdome, I shall amend it, but one thing I promise you and swear by God and all His might, If you will not let me be in peace and suffer me to have my part in the land, I shall show such a thing of you that the king, before it be night, shall have you hanged.”

Marcolf: “You foul stinking whore, what can you say of me? I have no man misdome. Say your worst, I dare you.”

Fudasa: “You have much misdome, foul-faced knave and ribald that you are. For you would gladly slay the king, and if ye believe me not, seek under his coat and ye shall find the knife.”

<sup>127</sup> We tend to think of “harlot” as being a woman, but in Middle English usage, a harlot was an idle rogue, a vagabond or beggar.

<p>Tho was the knyf sought by the kinges servauntys and it was not fownde.</p> <p>Sayde Marcolph to the king and to the aboutestanders: “And have I not sayde trouthe, that men shulde not put ovyrmoche truste or confidence in the women?”</p> <p>Wyth that they alle began to laughen.</p> <p>Tho sayd Salomon: “Marcolph, thou doost alle thy thynges by crafte and subtyltye.”</p> <p>Marcolph answeyrd: “Lord, it is no subtyltye, but that my sustyr had promysed me to have kept it secrete, and she hath falsely discovered it, as though it had ben of a trouthe.”</p> <p>Salomon: “Wherefore haste thou sayd that arte or nature goth before lernyng?”</p> <p>Marcolph: “Take pacyence a lytyll, and afore or ye go to bedde, I shal shewe you.”</p> <p>The daye passyd ovyr and the tyme of souper cam on.</p> <p>The king sat to sowper and othre wyth whom sat Marcolph and had alle pryvely put into hys sleve thre quyk myse.</p> <p>There was norysshyd in the kinges house a catte, that every nyght as the king sat at sowper was wont to holde betwyxt hyre forefeet a brennyng kandell upon the tabyll.</p>	<p>Though the king’s servant sought for the knife, it was not found.</p> <p>Said Marcolf to the king and the bystanders: “And have I not said truth, that men should not put overmuch trust or confidence in women?”</p> <p>With that they all began to laugh.</p> <p>Said Solomon: “Marcolf, thou doest everything by craft and subtlety.”</p> <p>Marcolf answered: “Lord, it is no subtlety, but that my sister had promised me to have kept it a secret, and she hath falsely discovered it, as though it had been truth.”</p> <p>Solomon: “Wherefore hast thou said that art or nature goeth before learning?”</p> <p>Marcolf: “Be patient, and before you go to bed, I shall show you.”</p> <p>The day passed over and the time of supper came on.</p> <p>The king and the others sat down to supper with whom sat Marcolf,<sup>128</sup> who had secretly put into his sleeve three live mice.</p> <p>There was living in the king’s house a cat, that every night as the king sat at supper was wont to hold betwixt her forefeet a burning candle upon the table<sup>129</sup></p>
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<sup>128</sup> 13.8 Neythre so nor so shall the wyse Salomon of Marcolf be quyte. [B 2.8] Marcolf’s assertion that Solomon will never be rid of him reminds the reader of the persistence of the values for which Marcolf stands, including the needs, appetites, and instincts of the body and man’s necessary connection to the natural world. The ME translator does not render the epithet *britone / bricone* [rogue, scoundrel] applied to Marcolf in Leeu’s Latin text.

<sup>129</sup> 13 *in the kinges house a catte . . . wont to holde . . . a brennyng kandell*. [B 2.8–9] For Marcolf’s proof of the fifth and final proposition of this contest, that nature wins out over nurture, the author draws upon a widespread folktale that can also take the form of an exemplum or a proverb. For the dispersion of “the cat and the candle” motif, see Cosquin, “Le Conte du chat”; Beecher, ed., *Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolphus*, pp. 215–16n106; Ben-Amos, *Folktales of the Jews*, 1:397–404; and Ziolkowski, *Solomon and Marcolf*, pp. 217–18. In “The Story of the Cat and the Candle in Middle English Literature,” Braekman and Macaulay edit and comment on a related ME dialogue between “Kynd” [Nature] and “Nurtur,” in which Nurtur owns the carefully trained cat and tries to use it to “preve that nurtur passis kynd,” only to be refuted by Kynd, who employs a mouse in the same way that Marcolf does. (See also V. J.

Thanne lete Marcolph oon of the myse go out of his sleve. As the catte that saugh, she wolde have lept aftyr, but the king yave hyr a wynke or countenance that she bode styлле syttyng and removyd not.

And in lyke wyse dede she of the secunde mowse. Thanne lete Marcolph the thrydde mowse go, and as the katte sawe she cowde no lenger abyde, but kaste the kandell awaye, and lept aftyr the mowse and toke it.

And as Marcolph that sawe, sayde to the king: “Here I have now provyd before you that nature goth afore lernyng.”

Tho commaunded Salomon his servauntes: “Have thys man out of my syghte, and if he come hythre any more, set my howndes upon hym.”

Marcolphus: “Now for certayne I knowe and may saye that where as the hede is seke and evyll at ease, there is no lawe.”

As Marcolph was thus out dryven, he seyde to hymself: “Neythre so nor so shall the wyse Salomon of Marcolf be quyte.”

On the next mornyng folowyng as he was out of his couche or kenel rysen, he bethoughte hym in his mynde how he myght beste gete hym ayen into the kinges courte wythout hurte or devouryng of the howndes.

Then Marcolf let one of the mice go out of his sleeve. The cat saw it, and would have lept after, but the king gave her a wink or face that she should bide, sitting still and not moving.

Likewise did she with the second mouse, but when Marcolf let the third mouse go, and when the cat saw, she could no longer abide, but cast the candle away and lept after the mouse and caught it.

And as Marcolf saw it, he said to the king: “Here I have now proved before you that nature goes before [is stronger than] learning.”<sup>130</sup>

Then commanded Solomon to his servants: “Get this man out of my sight, and if he comes hither any more, set my hounds upon him.”

Marcolf: “Now for certain I know and may say that where the head is sick and ill at ease, there is no law.”

As Marcolf was thus driven out, he said to himself: “The wise Solomon will not be rid of Marcolf so easily.”

On the following morning as he [Marcolf] rose from his couch, he thought how he might get again into the king’s court without hurt or being eaten by the [king’s] hounds.

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Scattergood, 'Debate between Nurture and Kynd' for the ME dialogue and some literary relations.) In the ME poem, found in London, British Library, MS Harley 541, fols. 212v–213r, the roles of Nurtur and Kynd correspond intriguingly to those represented by the two interlocutors in our prose dialogue. Solomon’s innumerable moral precepts and the schoolmasterish persona given him in the various versions of our dialogue make him ideally suited to defend the side of Nurtur, education or “lernyng,” as the ME translator calls it in 9.16 and 13.5. In contrast, Marcolf’s investment in nature (inborn qualities) over nurture (learned behavior) follows from his necessary reliance on his native wit in the absence of formal education. In our dialogue, Solomon carefully trains the cat and Marcolf takes advantage of its instincts and appetites.

<sup>130</sup> The Nature-Nurture controversy, never settled is a feature of Middle English literature and philosophical debate down to the present day. An extended debate between these concepts personified occurs in *Silence*, a 13C French Arthurian romance. Nature and Nurture present their cases, and Reason serves as judge.

<p>He went and bought a quyk hare and put it undre his clothis, and yede ayen to the courte.</p> <p>And whan the kinges servauntes had syghte of hym, they set upon hym alle the howndes, and forthwyth he caste the hare from hym, and the howndes aftre, and lefte Marcolph, and thus came he ayen be the king.</p> <p>And as he sawe hym, he askyd who had letyn hym in.</p> <p>Marcolph answeyrd: “Wyth great sutyltie am I in comen.”</p> <p>Salomon: “Beware that thys daye thou spytte not but upon the bare grownde.”</p> <p>The palayce was all coveryd wyth tapettys, and the walles hangyd wyth riche clothys.</p> <p>Marcolf wythin short space aftyr wyth his talkyng and clateryng wyth othre, his mouth was full of spytyll, began to cough and reche up, beholdyng al aboute hym where he myght best spytte and cowl fynde no bare erthe, sawe a ballyd man stondyng by the king barehedyd, and spatyld evyn upon his forehede.</p> <p>The ballyd man was therwyth ashamyd, made clene his forehede, and fyll on kneyes before the kingys fete, and made a complaynt upon Marcolph.</p> <p>Salomon: “Wherefore haste thou made fowle the forehede of this man?”</p> <p>Marcolph: “I have not made it fowle, but I have dundyd it or made it fat. For on a bareyne grownde, it behovyth dunge to be layde, that the</p>	<p>He went and bought a live hare and put it under his clothes, and went back to the court.</p> <p>And when the king’s servants saw him, they set the hounds on him; he at once threw down the hare, and the hounds went after it and left Marcolf, and thus he came again to the king.</p> <p>And as he saw him, he asked who had let him in.</p> <p>Marcolf answered: “With great subtlety have I come in.”</p> <p>Solomon: “Be careful this day that thou spit only upon the bare ground.”<sup>131</sup></p> <p>The palace was all covered with tapestries, the walls hung with rich cloth.</p> <p>Marcolf, within a short time, with his talking and chattering with others, his mouth was full of spittle, and he began to cough and retch,<sup>132</sup> and looking all about him, to see where he might best spit and finding no bare earth, saw a bald man standing by the king with a bare head, and spat upon his forehead.<sup>133</sup></p> <p>The bald man was therewith ashamed, and cleaning his forehead, he fell on his knees before the king’s feet, and made a complaint against Marcolf.</p> <p>Solomon: “Wherefore hast thou made foul the forehead of this man?”</p> <p>Marcolf: “I have not made it foul, but I have dunded it or made it fat [fertile]. For on a barren ground, it behooves dung to be laid,</p>
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<sup>131</sup> 15.1–10 *spytte not but upon the bare grownde*. [B 2.10] Marcolf’s claim that his spit will benefit the bald man’s head by fertilizing it (making it “fat”) so that hair can grow echoes the language of 4.16b, his longest contribution to the proverb contest, where he stresses the fertilizing benefit that the waste products of an ass offer to a field.

<sup>132</sup> 15.15 *And be it pease in thy vertu*. [B 2.10] Psalm 121:7, “Let peace be in thy strength” [“Fiat pax in virtute tua”].

<sup>133</sup> 15.12 *Balydnesse is a flyes nest*. [B 2.10] *L. muscarum ludibrium* is literally ‘butt of jokes for flies.’ Ziolkowski notes that the attraction bald heads hold for flies is a familiar motif in fables (*Solomon and Marcolf*, p. 224).

corne that is theron sowyn may the bettyr growe and multiplie.”

Salomon: “What is that to this man?”

Marcolph: “My lord, have ye not forbedyn me that this daye I shulde not spytte but upon the bare erthe? And I sawe his forehede alle bare of herys, and thynkyng it be bare erthe, and therefore I spytted upon it. The king shall not be angry for this thing for I have done it for the manys proffyte, for and if his forehede were thus usyd to be made fat, the herys shulde ayen encrease and multiplie.”

Salomon: “God yeve thee shame! For the ballyd men aught to be aboven othre men in honure, for balydnesse is no shame, but a begynnyng of worshipe.”

Marcolphus: “Balydnesse is a flyes nest. Beholde I not, syre, how the flyes folowe more his forehede than alle the othre that ben wythin thys house? For why they trowen that it be a vessell turnyng full wyth som good drinke or ellys to be a stone anoynted wyth any swete thyng, and therefore they haste thaim to his bare forehede.”

To this sayd the ballyd man afore the king: “Wherto is this moost vyle rybaulde sufferyd in the kinges presence us to rebuke and shame? Lete hym be kast out!”

Marcolph: “And be it pease in thy vertu, and I shal be styll.”

Herewythall come yn two women bryngyng wyth thaim a lyving chylde, for the wyche they afore the king began to stryve.

that the grain that is sown thereon may the better grow and multiply.”

Solomon: “What is that to this man?”

Marcolf: “My lord, did you not forbid me this day to spit only upon the bare earth? And I saw his forehead all bare of hair, and thinking it be bare earth, therefore I spat upon it. The king shall not be angry for this thing for I have done it for the profit of many, for if his forehead were thus used to be made fat, the hairs should again multiply.”

Solomon: “God give thee shame! For the bald man ought to be above other men in honor, for baldness is no shame, but a beginning of worship.”

Marcolf: “Baldness is a fly’s nest. Look, sire, I see how the flies follow more his forehead than all the others that are within this house? That’s because they believe that it be a vessel turning full with some good drink or else be a stone anointed with any sweet thing, and therefore they hasten to his bare forehead.”

To this the bald man said to the king: “Why is this most vile ribald suffered in the king’s presence to rebuke and shame us? Let him be cast out!”

Marcolf: “Be it to please thy virtue, and I shall be still.”

There came in then two women, bringing with them a living child, over which they began to strive before the king.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>134</sup> 16.1–4 *two women bryngyng wyth thaim a lyving chylde*. [B 2.11] The famous judgment of Solomon between two women who lay claim to the same child, very much as narrated in 3 Kings 3:16–27. In 18.1–4 below, Marcolf deliberately misrepresents Solomon’s intentions toward the child as part of his campaign to make Solomon contradict his speech in praise of women.

<p>For the oon sayde it belongyd to hyre, but the oon of thaym had forlayne hyre chylde slepyng so that they were in stryve for the levying chylde.</p> <p>Salomon sayd to oon of his servauntis: “Take a sworde and departe thys chylde in two pecys, and yeve eyther of thaym the oon half.”</p> <p>That heryng, the naturall modyr of the lyvyng chylde sayde to the king: “Lord, I besече you, yeve it to that woman all hool lyvyng for she his the verraye modyr therof.”</p> <p>Than sayde Salomon that she was the modyr of the chylde and yave it to hire.</p> <p>Marcolph demaunded of the king how he the modyr knewe.</p> <p>Salomon: “By chaungyng of hir colure and affection, and by effusyon of terys.”</p> <p>Marcolphus: “Ye myghthe so be disceyved, for beleve ye the wepyng of the women, and are so wyse and knowe the crafte of thaym no bettyr?”</p> <p>Whyllys a woman wepyth, she laughyth wyth th’erte. They kan wepe wyth oon yie and lawgh wyth the othyr. They make contaunce wyth the vysage that they thinke not. They speke wyth the tunge that they mene not wyth th’erte. They promyse many tymes that they parfome not, but they chaunge theyre contaunces as theyre myndes renne. The women have innumerable craftes.”</p>	<p>For the one said it belonged to her, but the one of them had substituted her [dead] child for a sleeping so that they were in strife for the living child.</p> <p>Solomon said to one of his servants: “Take a sword and part this child in two pieces, and give each of them one half.”</p> <p>Hearing that, the natural mother of the living child said to the king: “Lord, I beseech you, give it to that woman all whole, living, for she is the very mother thereof.”</p> <p>Then said Solomon that she was the mother of the child and gave it to her.</p> <p>Marcolf demanded of the king how he knew which one was the mother.<sup>135</sup></p> <p>Solomon: “By changing of her color and affection, and the effusion of tears.”</p> <p>Marcolf: “You might be deceived, for believe ye the weeping of the women, and are so wise and know the craft of them no better?”</p> <p>While a woman weeps, she laughs in her heart.<sup>136</sup> They can weep with one eye and laugh with the other. They make countenance with a face that shows other than they think. They speak with the tongue that means not with the heart.<sup>137</sup> They promise many times that they perform not, but they change their countenances as their minds run. Women have innumerable arts.”</p>
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<sup>135</sup> 17.3–7 *Ye myghthe so be disceyved*. [B 2.12] Here, as in the proverb contest, the two speakers trade conventional remarks in praise and blame of women. An excellent introduction to the primary sources of this ongoing medieval debate is Blamires, ed., *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*. Versions of the saying that “Women can weep with one eye and laugh with the other” were pro-verbial in English (Whiting W538) and appear in Chaucer, *Book of the Duchess*, lines 633–34, and Robert Henryson, “The Testament of Cresseid” (*Poems*, ed. Elliott), lines 230–31. The other antifeminist sentiments Marcolf expresses here regarding women’s propensity for deceit and manipulation were also familiar in Latin and in the vernaculars. For ME examples, see Whiting W495, W498, W505, W508 and W532.

<sup>136</sup> 17.26 *thinkyth wyth his herte as he spekyth wyth his mowth*. [B 2.12] The thought is related to Matthew 12:34 and Luke 6:45, “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” [“ex abundantia enim cordis os loquitur”].

<sup>137</sup> 17.26 *thinkyth wyth his herte as he spekyth wyth his mowth*. [B 2.12] The thought is related to Matthew 12:34 and Luke 6:45, “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” [“ex abundantia enim cordis os loquitur”].



<p>Salomon: “As many craftes as they have, so many good condicyons and propyrtyes they have.”</p> <p>Marcolphus: “Saye not good condicyons or propyrtyes, but saye shrewdnessys and decepcyons.”</p> <p>Salomon: “Surely she was an hore that bare suche a sone.”</p> <p>Marcolph: “Wherefore saye ye so?”</p> <p>Salomon: “For thou blamyst alle women, and they are honest, chaste, meke, lovyng, and curtayse.”</p> <p>Marcolf: “To that myght ye adde and saye that they are brotyll and mutable.”</p> <p>Salomon: “If they be brotyll, that have they of manys condicyon; yf they be chaungeable, that have they by delectacioun. Woman is though made of mannys rybbe and yeven unto hym for his helpe and comfort. For woman is as moche to saye as a ‘weyke erthe’ or a ‘weyke thyngge.’”</p> <p>Marcolph: “In like wyse it is as moche to saye as a ‘softe erreure.’”</p> <p>Salomon: “There lyst thou, false kaytyf. Thou muste nedys be evyll and onhappy that sayst so moche shame and harme of women. For of women we are alle comen, and therefore he that seyth evylle of the kynde of women is greatly to be blamyd. For what is rychesse, wat is kingdomes, what is possessions, what is goold, what is sylver, what is costely clothyng or precieuse stonys, what is costely metys or</p>	<p>Solomon: “As many arts as they have, so many good conditions and properties they have.”</p> <p>Marcolf: “Say not good conditions or properties. But say shrewdness and deceptions.”</p> <p>Solomon: “Surely she was a whore that bore such a son.”</p> <p>Marcolf: “Why do you say that?”</p> <p>Solomon: “For thou blamest all women, and they are honest, chaste, meek, loving, and courteous.”</p> <p>Marcolf: “To that might ye add and say that they are untrustworthy and mutable.”</p> <p>Solomon: “If they be untrustworthy, that they have many conditions: if they be changeable, that have they by spiritual sense. Woman though is made of man’s rib and given unto him for his help and comfort. For woman is as much to say as ‘weak earth’ or a ‘weak thing’.”<sup>138</sup></p> <p>Marcolf: “You might just as well say a ‘soft error’.”</p> <p>Solomon: “There liest thou, false caitiff. Thou must needs be evil and unhappy that sayest so much shame and harm of women. For we are all come of women, and therefore he that saith evil of the kind of women is greatly to be blamed. For what is riches, what is kingdoms, what is possessions, what is gold, what is silver, what is costly clothing or precious stones, what is costly meats or</p>
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<sup>138</sup> 17.15–16 ‘weyke erthe’ or a ‘weyke thyngge.’ [B 2.12] In Leeu’s Latin text, Solomon states that the word for woman, *mulier*, derives from *mollis res* [soft thing] (*mollis aer* [soft air] occurs in some manuscripts). The ME text renders *mollis res* with a doublet, “a ‘weyke erthe’ or a ‘weyke thyngge.’” Ziolkowski (*Solomon and Marcolf*, p. 228) notes that Isidore of Seville, following Varro, derived *mulier* from *mollities* [softness] in his vastly influential *Etymologies*. Marcolf retorts that *mollis error* [soft mistake] would be a more apt derivation.

<p>drinks, what is good companye or solace, what is myrthe withoute women?</p> <p>On trouthe, they may kalle wele the world deed that from women are exiled or banysshed. For women muste bere the chylde, they fede and norysse thaym up, and love thaym welle. She desyryth thayre helthys.</p> <p>She governyth the household. She forwyth the helthe of hyr husband and household.</p> <p>Women is the dilectacioun of alle thinges. She is the swetnesse of youthe. She is the solace or joye of age. She is gladnesse of childe. She is joye of the daye. She is solace of the nyght. She is the glad ynd of laboure. Of alle hevynesses she is the forgeter. She servyth withoute grutchyng, and she shall watche my goyng out, and myn incommyng.”</p> <p>Therupon answeyrd Marcolphus: “He seyth trouthe that thinkyth wyth his herte as he spekyth wyth his mowth.</p> <p>Ye have the women in great favoure, and therefore ye prayse thaym. Rychesse, nobylnesse, fayrenesse, and wysedom be in you, and therefore it behovyth you to love women. But Y assure you one thyng, albeit that ye now prayse thaym ovyr moche, or ye slepe ye shal dysprayse thaym as faste.”</p> <p>Salomon: “Therof thou shalt lye, for alle my lyve dayes I have lovyd women and shall duryng my lyf. But now go from me and se wele to that before me thou never speke evyll of women.”</p>	<p>drinks, what is good company or solace, what is mirth without women?</p> <p>On truth, they may well call the world dead from which women are exiled or banished. For women must bear the children, they feed and nourish them up, and love them well. She desires their health.</p> <p>She governs the household. She furthers the health of her husband and household.</p> <p>Woman is the spiritual root of all things. She is the sweetness of youth. She is the solace or joy of age. She is the gladness of the children. She is the joy of the day, She is the solace of the night. She is the glad end of labor. Of all heaviness she is the forgetter. She serves without grudging, and she shall watch my going out, and my coming in.”</p> <p>Thereupon answered Marcolf: “He says truth that thinks with his heart as he speaks with his mouth.</p> <p>You hold women in great favor, and therefore you praise them. Riches, nobleness, fairness, and wisdom be in you, and therefore it behooves you to love women. But I assure you of one thing, as much as you over-praise them now, before you sleep you ye shall dispraise them as much.”<sup>139</sup></p> <p>Solomon: “Thereof thou shalt lie, for all my days I have loved women and shall during my life. But now go from me and see well to that before me thou never speak evil of women.”</p>
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<sup>139</sup> 17.28 *or ye slepe ye shal dysprayse thaym*. [B 2.12] Marcolf initiates the final verbal contest by boasting that Solomon will soon dispraise women as strongly as he praised them in 17.18–25. This last contest draws upon the ancient and medieval rhetorical practices of crafting arguments on both sides of an issue [*in utramque partem*] and composing elaborate speeches of praise and blame. Solomon will in fact deliver two more speeches on women, one of blame (21.1–7) and one of praise (23.4–10). The final speeches of blame and praise are a tissue of scriptural citations from Ecclesiasticus 25–26, quoted verbatim (or nearly so). Ecclesiasticus was attributed to Solomon in the Middle Ages, and thus the self-contradiction in which Marcolf traps Solomon in this dialogue also reveals self-contradiction in the supposed biblical writings of Solomon, another example of the work’s irreverent stance toward holy writ.

Than Marcolphus, goyng out of the kynges palayce, kallyd to hym the woman that had hir childe to hyre yeven ayen by the king and sayd to hyre:

“Knowyst thou not what is done and concluded in the kingys counsell todaye?”

She answeryd: “My chylde is yevyn me ayen alyve, what ellys there is done, that knowe not I.”

Tho sayd Marcolph: “The king hath commaunded and is uttyrly determyned that tomorwe thou and thy felawe shall come ayen afore hym, and that thou shalt have the one half of thy chylde and thy felawe the othre half.”

Than sayde the woman: “O what evyll king, and what false and untrewre sentence yevyth he!”

Marcolph sayde: “Yet shall I shewe thee grettyr matiers and more chargeable, and of grettyr weyghte. The king and his counseyle hath ordeyned that evyr man shall have vii wyves, therfor remembre and thinke what therin is best to be done. For as one man hath vii wyves, so shall ther nevyr more be reste or pease in th’ouse. One shal be belovyd, anothe shall displease hym. For hir that he lovyth shal be moost wyth hym, and the othre nevyr or seldom. She shal be wele clothyd, and the othre shal be forgetyn. Hyr that he lovyth best shall have ryngys, jowellys, goold, sylvyr, fures, and were sylkys. She shal kepe the keyes of alle the house, she shal be honouryd of alle the servauntys and be kallyd ‘Mastres.’

Then Marcolf, going out of the king’s palace, called to him the woman that had her child to her given by the king and said to her:

“Do you know what is done and concluded in the king’s counsel today?”

She answered: “My child is given to me alive, what else was is done there that know I not?”

Then saith Marcolf: “The king hath commanded and is utterly determined that tomorrow you and your fellow shall come again before him, and that you shalt have the one half of your child and your fellow the other half.”

Then said the woman: “O what an evil king, and what false and untrue sentence he giveth!”

Marcolf said: “Yet shall I show you greater matters and more chargeable, and of greater weight. The king and his counsel have ordained that every man shall have seven wives,<sup>140</sup> wherefore remember and think what is best to be done about it. For if one man has seven wives, so shall there never more be rest or peace in the house. One shall be beloved, another shall displease him. For her that he loveth most shall be most with him, and the others never or seldom. She shall be well clothed, and the other shall be forgotten. Her that he loveth best shall have rings, jewels, gold, silver, furs, and wear silks. She shall keep the keys of all the house, she shall be

<sup>140</sup> 18.1–15 *thou shalt have the one half of thy chylde and thy felawe the othre half . . . evyr man shall have vii wyves.* [B 2.13] Marcolf’s account of Solomon’s planned injustices to women is of course a web of lies spun to goad his female subjects into rebellion against the king so that he will veer from extreme praise of women to equally extreme blame, as Marcolf has promised. The fictions Marcolf weaves in order to win this verbal contest resemble the earlier deceptions he practiced in order to exasperate his sister Fudasa into breaking her promise, thereby supporting Marcolf’s contention that a woman’s word cannot be trusted. That Solomon can only quote the culture’s central canonical text while Marcolf improvises amoral but imaginative new fictions situates the two speakers at the extremes of yet another polarity.

Alle his goodes shall falle to hire. What shall than saye the othre vi? And yf he love tweyne, what shall the othre v saye? And yf he love thre, what shall saye the othre iiiii? and yf he love iiiii what shall the othre iii do, etc.?

That he lovyth best, he shall alwayes have by hym and kysse hire and halse hyre.

The othyr shall nowe saye that they are neythre wydowes nor weddyd, nor yit unweddyd, nor wythoute husbände. They shal nowe well forthynke that they have theyre maydenhede loste. There shall evyr stryff, angre, envye, and brawelyng reigne, and if there be not fownde a remedy herefore, many great inconvenyencys shall growe thereof.

And by cause that thou arte a woman, and well acqueynted wyth the condicyons of women, haste thee and shewe thys to alle the ladyes and women wythin this citie, and advyse thaim that they consente not to it in any wyse, but wythstande it and saye ayenst the king and his counseyll.”

Marcolf retourned and went ayen to the courte and pryvely hyd hym in a corner. And the woman trowyd his wordys to be trewe, ranne trough the citie, and clappyd hire handys togydre, and cryed wyth opyn mowthe and shewyd all that she had herd and more.

And eche neyghborwe or gossyp saide it forth to anothere, so that in short tyme there was a great assemble or gaderyng of women, wel nigh that alle the women that weren wythin the citie, and so gadred, went to the kynges palayse well by the nombre of vi thousand women, and brak up dorys and ovyrwent the kyng and his counsell wyth great malyce and lowde crying.

honored of all the servants and be called ‘Mistress.’

All his goods shall fall to her. What then say the other six? And if he love two, what shall the other five say? And if he love three, what shall the other four say? And if he love four, what shall the other three do, etc.?

That he loveth best, he shall always have by him and kiss her and embrace her.

The others shall now say that they are neither widows not wedded, not yet unwedded, not without husband. They shall now well forthink that they have their maidenhead lost. There shall ever be strife, anger, envy, and brawling reign, and if there be not found a remedy for it, many great inconveniences shall grow thereof.<sup>141</sup>

And because you are a woman, and well acquainted with the conditions of women, haste thee and shew this to all the ladies and women within this city, and advise them that they consent not to it in any way, but withstand it and say against the king and his council.”

Marcolf returned to the court and hid himself in a corner. And the woman, who believed his words to be true, ran through the city, and clapped her hands together, and cried with open mouth and shewed all that she had heard and more.

And each neighbor and gossip [goodwife] said it forth to another, so that in a short time there was a great assemble or gathering of women, well-nigh all the women that were within the city, and so they gathered, and went to the king’s palace by the number of

<sup>141</sup> 18.14 *many great inconvenyencys shall growe thereof.* [B 2.13] A softened version of the Latin "una preparabit alteri venenum" [one will prepare poison against the other].

The king, as he this herde, axyd what the cause was of thayre gaderyng. To that, oon woman that wyser and more eloquent than the othre sayde unto the king:

“Moost myghty prynce to whom goold, sylver, preciouise stones, and alle rychesse of the world to you are brought, ye do alle thyng as ye woll, and non ayensayth youre pleasure. Ye have a quene and many quenys, and ovyr that ye have concubynes or paramours wythoute nombre or as many as you pleasyth, for ye have all that ye wol. So may not every man do.”

Salomon answeyrd: “God hath anynted and made me king in Israhel. May I not than do and accomplyssh all my wylle?”

She answeyrd: “Do youre wylle wyth youre owne, and medle not wyth us. We are of the noble blood of Abraham and holde Moyses lawe. Werfor woll ye thane that chaunge and altre? Ye are bownden to do right and justyce. Wherefore do ye unrhyght?”

Tho sayde Salomon wyth great unpacyence: “Thou shamfull wyf, what unright or wronge do Y?”

She answeyrd: “As great unright do ye as kan be thought or ymaged. For ye have ordeyned that every man shal have nowe lawefully vii wyves, and certaynli that shall not be. For there is not that prynce, duke, or erle that so riche and puysaunt is, but that oon woman alone shall

six thousand women,<sup>142</sup> and broke up doors and went to the king and with great malice and loud crying.

The king, as he heard this, asked what the cause was of their gathering. To that, one woman wiser and more eloquent than the other said unto the king:

“Most mighty prince to whom gold, silver, precious stones, and all riches are brought, you do all things as you will, and no one says anything against your pleasure. You have a queen and many queens, and over that you have concubines and paramours without number or as many as it pleases you, for ye have all that you will. So many not every man has.”<sup>143</sup>

Solomon answered: “God hath anointed and made me king in Israel. May I not then do and accomplish all my will?”

She answered: “Do your will with your own, and meddle not with us. We are of the noble blood of Abraham and hold Moses’ law. Wherefore will ye then change and alter it? You are bound to do right and justice. Why then do you do injustice?”<sup>144</sup>

Said Solomon with great impatience: “Thou shameful wife, what injustice or wrong do I?”

She answered: “You do as great and injustice as can be thought or imagined. For ye have ordained that every man shall now have

<sup>142</sup> 19.4 *vi thousand women*. [B 2.14] Leeu’s Latin text reads *septem milia mulierum* [seven thousand women]. The ME print reads *vi. Mi.*, presumably a typesetting error.

<sup>143</sup> 20.13 *youre sentences ben false and unrightfull*. [B 2.15] ME “sentences” = L *sentencie*; in context the primary meaning is Solomon’s judicial sentences or royal proclamations, but in both languages “sentences” also applies to the proverbial wisdom spoken by Solomon in the proverb contest and throughout the dialogue. Since Solomon’s reputation rests on his excellence in both areas, Marcolf tricks the women into verbalizing a direct attack on Solomon’s standing as just king and wisdom figure.

<sup>144</sup> 20.7 *Wherefore do ye unrhyght?* [B 2.15] The criticism of Solomon’s kingship by his infuriated female subjects echoes Marcolf’s own earlier reproofs in 5.11, 11.7, and 13.7 above. Even one of Solomon’s loyal councilors joins this chorus of criticism in 22.1–3.

now fullfyller alle his desyres and wylle. What thanne shulde he do wyth vii wyves? It is aboven any mannys myght or power. It were bettyr ordeyned that oon woman shulde have vii husbondes.”

Than sayd Salomon all laughyngly: “I had not trowed that of men had ben fewer in nombre than of women.”

Tho kryed alle the women as mad people wythoute any reason: “Ye are an evyle king and youre sentences ben false and unrightfull. Now may we wel here and se that it is trouthe that we have herd of you, and that ye have of us sayde evyll, and therto ye skorne and mocke us before oure vysages that we se it. O Lord God, who was so evyle as Saule that regnyd ovyr us furste? Yet Davyd was worse, and now this Salomon werst of alle!”

Than the king beyng full of wraethe sayde: “There is no hede more worse than the serpent, and there is no malyce to the malyce of a woman, for it were bettyr to dwelle wyth serpentys and lyons, than wyth a wyckyd woman.

Alle evylles are but lytyl to the cursydnesse of a shrewd woman. Alle wyckydnesse falle upon

lawfully seven wives, and certainly that shall not be. For there is not that prince, duke, or earl that so rich and powerful is, but that one woman alone shall fulfill all his desires and will.<sup>145</sup> What then should he do with seven wives? It is above any man’s might or power. It would be better ordained that one woman should have seven husbands.”

Then said Solomon laughingly: “I had not believed that men had been fewer in number than of women.”

Then cried all the women, as if mad people, without any reason: “You are an evil king and your sentences are false and unjust.<sup>146</sup> Now may we well hear and see that it is truth that we have heard of you, and that you have said evil of us, and thereto you scorn and mock us before our faces. O Lord God, who was so evil as Saul that reigned over us first? Yet David was worse, and now this Solomon is worst of all!”<sup>147</sup>

Then the king, being full of wrath said: “There is no head worse than the serpent, and there is no malice like the malice of a woman, for it were better to dwell with serpents and lions, than with a wicked woman.<sup>148</sup>

<sup>145</sup> 20.10 *For there is not that prynce . . . but that oon woman alone shall now fullfyller alle his desyres and wylle.* [B 2.15] Leeu’s Latin text seems to mean that no man is so wealthy or powerful that he could fulfill in [even] one single wife [all] her desires [“qui uni soli uxori suas impleat voluntates”]. How then will he handle multiple wives? The ME text assigns the desires to the man but keeps to the point that one wife is enough for any man: no man is so wealthy or powerful that his desires cannot be met by a single woman.

<sup>146</sup> 20.13 *youre sentences ben false and unrightfull.* [B 2.15] ME “sentences” = L *sentencie*; in context the primary meaning is Solomon’s judicial sentences or royal proclamations, but in both languages “sentences” also applies to the proverbial wisdom spoken by Solomon in the proverb contest and throughout the dialogue. Since Solomon’s reputation rests on his excellence in both areas, Marcolf tricks the women into verbalizing a direct attack on Solomon’s standing as just king and wisdom figure.

<sup>147</sup> 20.15 *now this Salomon werst of alle.* [B 2.15] Another direct hit at Solomon’s prestige is this attack on his patriarchal lineage. Just as Marcolf parodies the solemn series of “begats” recited by Solomon in 4.2a by rehearsing a disreputable list of his own mock-ancestors in 4.2b, so these angry women invert the positive force of Solomon’s royal genealogy by claiming that King Saul was evil, King David worse, and King Solomon worst of all.

<sup>148</sup> 21.1–7 *There is no hede more worse. . . wyckyd woman.* [B 2.16] As our biblical citations indicate, Solomon’s attack on women is drawn mainly from Ecclesiasticus 25–26, beginning with 25:22–23, “There is no head worse than the head of a serpent: And there is no anger above the anger of a woman. It will be more agreeable to abide with a lion and a dragon, than to dwell with a wicked woman” [“Non est caput nequius super caput colubri, et non est ira super iram mulieris. Commorari leoni et draconi placebit, quam habitare cum muliere nequam”].

women as the sande fallyth in the shoes of the oolde people goyng up an hylle. So a talkatyf woman and dishobedyent is a great confusyon. That wyf that is hir husbondes maister is evyr contrarye to hym. An evyl wyf makyth a pacient herte, and a sory vysage and is as plage of the deth.

A woman was the begynnyng of synne, and through hire we dye alle. The woman that is luxuriouse may men knowen in the uppermost of hire yes, and by hir browes. For hire yes are wythoute revyrence and ther nede no man wondre although she forgete hir husbonde.”

As the king al thus had sayd, so spak Nathan the prophete and sayde: “My lord, why rebuke ye and shame ye thus alle thies women of Jherusalem?”

Salomon: “Have ye not herd what dishonoure they have sayd of me wythoute deservyng?”  
Nathan answeyd: “He that woll wyth hys subgiettys lyve in reste and pease, he muste som tyme be blynde, dumme, and deaf.”

Salomon: “It is to be answeyd to a fole aftyr his folysshnes.”

Tho sprange Marcolph out of the corner that he sat in and sayde to the king: “Now have ye

All evils are but litle to the cursedness of a shrewd woman.<sup>149</sup> All wickedness falls upon women as the sand falls in the shoes of the old people going up a hill. So a talkative and disobedient woman is a great confusion. That wife that is her husband’s master is ever contrary to him.<sup>150</sup> An evil wife makes a patient heart, and a sorry face and is as the plague of the death.<sup>151</sup>

A woman was the beginning of sin, and through her we all die.<sup>152</sup> The woman that is luxurious may men know the uppermost of her eyes, and by her brows. For her eyes are without reverence and there need no man wonder although she forget her husband.”<sup>153</sup>

As the king had thus said, so spake Nathan the prophet and said: “My lord, why do you rebuke and shame thus all these women of Jerusalem?”

Solomon: “Have ye not heard what dishonor they have said of me without deserving?”  
Nathan answered: “He that will with his subjects live in rest and peace, he must sometimes be blind, dumb, and deaf.”

Solomon: “It is to be answered to a fool after his foolishness.”

<sup>149</sup> 21.2–3 *cursydnesse of a shrewd woman . . . sande fallyth in the shoes*. [B 2.16] Ecclesiasticus 25:26–27, “All malice is short to the malice of a woman, let the lot of sinners fall upon her. As the climbing of a sandy way is to the feet of the aged, so is a wife full of tongue to a quiet man” [“Brevis omnis malitia super malitiam mulieris; sors peccatorum cadat super illam. Sicut ascensus arenosus in pedibus veterani, sic mulier linguata homini quieto”].

<sup>150</sup> 21.4 *That wyf that is hir husbondes maister is evyr contrarye to hym*. [B 2.16] Ecclesiasticus 25:30, “A woman, if she have superiority, is contrary to her husband” [“Mulier si primatum habeat, contraria est viro suo”].

<sup>151</sup> 21.5 *An evyl wyf makyth a pacient herte*. [B 2.16] Ecclesiasticus 25:31, “A wicked woman abateth the courage, and maketh a heavy countenance, and a wounded heart” [“Cor humile, et facies tristis, et plaga cordis, mulier nequam”].

<sup>152</sup> 21.6 *begynnyng of synne, and through hire we dye alle*. [B 2.16] Ecclesiasticus 25:33, “From the woman came the beginning of sin, and by her we all die” [“A muliere initium factum est peccati, et per illam omnes morimur”]. At this point, Leeu’s Latin print inserts two lines from Ecclesiasticus 26:8–9; these verses are missing in the ME text: “Dolor cordis et luctus mulier zelotypa. In muliere zelotypa flagellum linguae, omnibus communicans” [A jealous woman is the grief and mourning of the heart. With a jealous woman is a scourge of the tongue which communicateth with all].

<sup>153</sup> 21.7 *The woman that is luxuriouse*. [B 2.16] The adjective *luxuriouse* [lustful] renders the implications of *L fornicatio*. Ecclesiasticus 26:12–14, “The fornication of a woman shall be known by the haughtiness of her eyes, and by her eyelids. . . . Take heed of the impudence of her eyes, and wonder not if she slight thee” [“Fornicatio mulieris in extollentia oculorum, et in palpebris illius agnosceatur. . . . Ab omni irreverentia oculorum ejus cave, et ne mireris si te neglexerit”].

spokyn aftyr myn intent. For ones thys daye ye prayed women out of alle mesure, and now have ye disprayed thaym as moche. That is it that I sought, alwayes ye make my saying trewe.”

Salomon: “Thou fowle evyle body, knowyst thou of this commocion?”

Marcolph: “Nay. Nevyrthelesse, ye shulde not yeve credence to alle thing that ye here.”

Tho sayd the king Salomon: “Go from hens out of my syghte, and I charge thee that I se thee no more betwixt the yes.”

Forthwith was Marcolph kast out of the kinges palayse.

Thanne they that stoden by the king sayden: “My lord, speke to these women sumwhat that may please thaym to here to th’entent that they may departe.”

Than turnyd the king towards thaym and sayd: “Youre goodnesse shal undrestande that I am not to be blamyd in that that ye laye to my charge. That evyl sayer, Marcolf, that ye here late sawe, hath out of hymself alle this matier surmysed and fayned. And every man shall have hys owne wyf and hyr, wyth faythe and honestie, love and cherysshe.

That I have spokyn ayenst the wyves, I have not sayde it but ayenst the froward wyves. Who shulde of the good wyves speke any evyll? For a good wyf makyth hyr husbande glad and blythe wyth hyre goodnesse.

She is a parte the lyvying of hyre husbond upon erthe, and hyr lernyng advauntagyth or forthryth hys body. She is a yifte of God. A wyse wyf and

Then sprang Marcolf out of the corner that he sat in and said to the king: “Now have you spoken after mine intent. For once this day you praised women out of all measure, and now have you disparaged them as much. That is what I sought; always you make my sayings true.”<sup>154</sup>

Solomon: “Thou foul evil body, knowest thou of this commotion?”

Marcolf: “No. Nevertheless, you should not give credence to all things that you hear.”

Then said the king Solomon: “Go hence from my sight, and I charge thee that I see no more betwixt thy eyes.”<sup>155</sup>

Forthwith was Marcolf cast out of the king’s palace.

Then they that stood by the king said: “My lord, speak to these women somewhat what may please them to hear to the intent that they may depart.”

Then turned the king towards them and said: “Your goodness shall understand that I am not to be blamed in that that thou layest to my charge. That evil sayer, Marcolf, that thou sawest here just now, has out of himself all this matter surmised and feigned. And every man shall have his own wife and her, with faith and honesty, love and charity.

That which I have spoken against the wives, I have said it only against the froward wives. Who should of the good wives speak any evil? For a good wife makes her husband glad with her goodness.

<sup>154</sup> 22.5–6 *Now have ye spokyn aftyr myn intent. . . alwayes ye make my saying trewe.* [B 2.17] Marcolf declares victory over Solomon in their last major verbal contest.

<sup>155</sup> 22.9 *Betwixt the yes.* [B 2.17] *Betwixt the yes* [Between the eyes] = *L in mediis oculis*. Repeated in 24.1, the idiom “to see someone ‘amidst’ or ‘between’ the eyes” receives an interesting twist in the punchline to this jest in 24.12.



a styll is a grace aboven graces. A good, shamefast and an honeste wyf is lyke the sonne clymmyng up to God. A wyf of good condicyons is the ornament or apparayle of the house. She is a lyght shynyng bryghther than the lyght of candellys. She is lyke the goolden pyller standyng upon hir feet, and an ovyrfaste fundament grwnded upon a sure stone wythoute mutacions and the commandemantys of God evyr in hyr mynde. The Hooly God of Israhel blesse you and multiplie youre sede and kynderede unto the ende of the worlde.” Tho sayde they alle ‘Amen’ and toke leve of the king and went theyre weyes.

Marcolph, beryng in his mynde of the unkyndnesse that the king had commanded hym that he shulde no more se hym betwixt the yes, thought in hymself what was best to do. It happenyd that the next nyght folowyng fyll a great snowe. Marcolphus toke a lytyll cyve or temse in his oon hande, and a foot of a bere in the othre hande, and he turnyd hys shoes that stode forwardes upon his feet bakward, and

She is a part of the living of her husband upon earth, and her learning advantages his body.<sup>156</sup> She is a gift of God. A wise and still wife is a grace above graces.<sup>157</sup> A good, shamefast, and honest wife is like the sun climbing up to God. A wife of good condition is the ornament or apparel of the house. She is a light brighter than the light of candles.<sup>158</sup> She is like the golden pillar standing upon her feet, and overfast fundament grinded upon a sure stone without mutations and the commandments of God ever in her mind. The Holy God of Israel bless thee and multiply thine seed and kindred unto the end of the world.”<sup>159</sup>

Then said they all ‘Amen’ and took leave of the king and went their ways.

Marcolf, bearing in his mind the unkindness that the king had commanded him that he should no more see him betwixt the eyes, thought in himself what was best to do. It happened that the next night following, there was a great snow.<sup>160</sup> Marcolf took a little jar

<sup>156</sup> 23.6–7 *hyr lernyng advauntagyth or forthryth hys body. She is a yifte of God.* [B 2.18] The ME text follows the Latin in making *disciplina* the subject of *impinguabit* [will fatten]. L *disciplina* here is “discipline” rather than “lernyng,” as is clear from Ecclesiasticus 26:16–17, “The grace of a diligent woman shall delight her husband, and shall fat his bones. Her discipline is the gift of God” [“*gratia mulieris sedulae delectabit virum suum, et ossa illius impinguabit. Disciplina illius datum Dei est*”].

<sup>157</sup> 23.7 *A wyse wyf and a styll is a grace aboven graces.* [B II.18] The line telescopes Ecclesiasticus 26:18–19, “Such is a wise and silent woman, and there is nothing so much worth as a well instructed soul. A holy and shamefaced woman is grace upon grace” [“*Mulier sensata et tacita; non est inmutatio eruditae animae. Gratia super gratiam mulier sancta et pudorata*”].

<sup>158</sup> 23.8–10 *the sonne clymmyng up to God. . . ornament or apparayle of the house. . . lyght shynyng bryghther. . . lyke the goolden pyller. . . the commandemantys of God evyr in hyr mynde* [B 2.18]. Ecclesiasticus 26:21–24, “As the sun when it riseth to the world in the high places of God, so is the beauty of a good wife for the ornament of her house. As the lamp shining upon the holy candlestick, so is the beauty of the face in a ripe age. As golden pillars upon bases of silver, so are the firm feet upon the soles of a steady woman. As everlasting foundations upon a solid rock, so the commandments of God in the heart of a holy woman” [“*Sicut sol oriens mundo in altissimis Dei, sic mulieris bonae species in ornamentum domus ejus. Lucerna splendens super candelabrum sanctum, et species faciei super aetatem stabilem. Columnae aureae super bases argenteas, et pedes firmi super plantas stabilis mulieris. Fundamenta aeterna super petram solidam, et mandata Dei in corde mulieris sanctae*”].

<sup>159</sup> 23.5–10 [B 2.18] Solomon’s praise of women. Like his attack in 21, his praise is a tissue of verses from Ecclesiasticus 26:3, 16–19, 21–24, some cited verbatim, some only approximate. The ME translator gives the general sense of the passage rather than a close translation. Our punctuation of the Latin text follows the Bible, insofar as it is possible.

<sup>160</sup> 24.2–3 *a great snowe.* [B 2.19] This heavy snowfall, accepted as a matter of course by Solomon and his councilors, is incongruous with the supposed setting in biblical Jerusalem but consistent with Marcolf’s identity as a European peasant. Clearly the sieve and bear paw, like the reversed shoes, are meant to confuse Solomon and his men as they hunt Marcolf, tracking him like an animal. Why he chooses a sieve and bear paw in particular is not explained, but the use of one very human implement and one animal paw suggests the ambiguity of Marcolf’s humanity evident from the

upon the mornynge erly he began to go lyke a beste upon alle fowre feet through the strete.

And whan he was comen a lytyll wythouthe the towne, he fownde an olde ovyn and crept into it. And as the lyght of the daye was on comen, oon of the kingys servauntys founde the footstappys of Marcolph and thought that it was the trace or stappys of a merveyulous beste, and in alle haste went and shewyd it to the king.

Thanne incontynent wyth huntres and howndes, he wente to hunte and seke the sayd wondrefull beeste and folowed it unto they comen before the oven where they had loste and fownde no more of the steppys. The king Salomon discended from hys hors and began to loke into the oven. Marcolphus laye all crokyd, hys vysage from hymwardes, had put downe hys breche into hys hammes that he myght se hys arshole and alle hys othre fowle gere.

As the kyng Salomon, that seyng, demawnded what laye there, Marcolph answeryd: "I am here."

Salomon: "Wherefore lyst thou thus?"

Marcolf: "For ye have commaunded me that ye shulde no more se me betwyxt myn yes. Now and ye woll not se me betwyxt myn yes, ye may se me betwene my buttockys in the myddes of myn arsehole."

Than was the king sore meovyde, commaunded his servauntys to take hym and hange hym upon a tre.

or strainer in his one hand, and a foot of a bear in the other hand, and he turned his shoes that stood forward upon his feet backwards, and upon the morning early he began to go like a beast upon all four feet through the street.

And when he had come a little outside the town, he found an old oven and crept into it. And as the light of day was oncoming, one of the king's servants found the footsteps of Marcolf and thought that it was the trace or steps of a marvelous beast, and in all haste went and shewed it to the king.

Then, with hunters and hounds he went to hunt and seek the said wonderful beast and followed it until they come before the oven where they lost the trail and found no more of the footprints. King Solomon got down from his horse and began to look into the oven. Marcolf lay all crooked, his face turned from him,<sup>161</sup> had put down his britches to his thighs that the king could see his arsehole and his other foul parts.

As King Solomon saw these things, he demanded what lay there. Marcolf answered: "I am here."

Solomon: "Wherefore liest thou thus?"

Marcolf: "Because you have commanded me that you should no more see me between my eyes. Now you will not see me between my eyes, you will see me between my buttocks in the middle of my arsehole."

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opening description of him, with its many animal comparisons. The repeated application of the word *beste* to Marcolf emphasizes this ambiguity: "lyke a beste" (24.3), "a merveyulous beste" (24.5), "the sayd wondrefull beeste" (24.6).

<sup>161</sup> 24.8 *Hys vysage from hymwardes*. [B 2.19] That is, the bent-over Marcolf faces away from Solomon, who is thus confronted with "hys arshole and alle hys othre fowle gere." Without spoiling the joke, the ME text bowdlerizes mildly the corresponding Latin text: "nates, et culus, et curgulio, et testiculi" [cheeks, and arsehole, and penis, and testicles]. Citing J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (London: Duckworth, 1982), pp. 33–34, Ziolkowski (*Solomon and Marcolf*, p. 240) notes that *curculio* [corn weevil] is used of the penis in Persius, *Satires* 4.38. The Venetian vernacular print edited by Quinto Marini bowdlerizes this passage in a manner similar to the ME text: "le nateghe, el culo e li membra deshoneste" (*Il dialogo di Salomone e Marcolfo*, p. 135).

Marcolph, so takyn, sayde to the kyng: "My lord, will it please you to yeve me leve to chose the tre wherupon that I shalle hange?"

Salomon sayde: "Be it as thou haste desyred, for it forcyth not on what tre that thou be hangyd."

Than the kinges servauntes token and leddyn Marcolph wythoute the citie, and through the Valé of Josaphath, and ovyr the hyghte of the hylle of Olyvete, from thens to Jericho and cowde fynde no tre that Marcolf wolde chese to be hanged on.

From thens went they ovyr the Flome Jordane and alle Arabye through, and so forth all the great wyldernesse unto the Rede See. And nevyrmore cowde Marcolph fynde a tre that he wolde chese to hange on.

And thus he askapyd out of the dawnger and handes of King Salomon, and turnyd ayen unto hys howse, and levyd in pease and joye.

And so mote we alle do aboven wyth the Fadre of Heven. Amen.

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Leeu**

Then was the king sore moved, and commanded his servants to take him and hang him upon a tree.

Marcolf, so taken, said to the king: "My lord, will it please you to give me leave to choose the tree whereupon I shall hang?"<sup>162</sup>

Solomon said: "Be it as thou hast desired, for it doesn't matter on what tree thou be hanged."

Then the king's servants took and led Marcolf out of the city, and through the valley of Josaphat, and over the height of the hill of Olives, from thence to Jericho and could find no tree that Marcolf would choose to be hanged on.

From thence they went over the River Jordan and all Arabia through, and so forth all the great wilderness unto the Red Sea. And nevermore could Marcolf find a tree that he would choose to be hung on.

And thus he escaped out of the danger and hands of King Solomon, and turned again unto his house, and lived in peace and love.

And so might we all do with the Father of Heaven above. Amen.<sup>163</sup>

**Printed at Antwerp by M. Gerard Leeu**

<sup>162</sup> 25.2–6 *yeve me leve to chose the tre wherupon that I shalle hange*. [B 2.20] Marcolf's last jest, yet another verbal quibble, saves his life.

<sup>163</sup> 25.7–8 *And thus he askapyd out of the dawnger and handes of King Salomon*. [B 2.20] Benary's text ends with the Latin equivalent of this statement: "Et sic Marcolfus evasit manus regis Salomonis." Ziolkowski aptly calls this abrupt ending "the opposite of closure" (*Solomon and Marcolf*, p. 6); Marcolf simply escapes from his most recent predicament. Interestingly, texts in the print tradition add another clause to give not just closure but a happy ending to Marcolf's adventures: "Post hoc domum remeans quievit in pace" ("And turnyd ayen unto hys howse, and levyd in pease and joye"), the "joye" an addition on the part of the ME translator. The prayer for the salvation of the author and reader appended to the ME text is a common addition to the endings of nonreligious texts such as metrical romances.