

## Seeking Pardon for Chaucer's Pardoner: A Critical Pilgrimage

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Disapproval is as predictable as the sun coming  
up in the morning. -Richard Carlson, psychologist

Even a casual perusal of the critical literature on Chaucer's Pardoner will reveal that he is the object more controversy than any other material in *The Canterbury Tales*.<sup>(1)</sup> That without further investigation might seem cause for rejoicing, except for the fact that the body of criticism can only be characterized as a chorus of disturbingly negative accusations. Michael Read states the situation fairly, I believe, when he identifies the typically negative position readers have taken and adds his own approbation to that judgment against the Pardoner. He claims that "the Pardoner's supreme evil is a critical commonplace and I have no wish to challenge this moral judgment."<sup>(2)</sup> It is the main purpose of this paper to trace the body of the more important negative criticism that has been written since Kittredge's famous early [1893] essay<sup>(3)</sup> and to suggest an alternative point of view that might be more consistent with the facts presented by Chaucer in *The Tales*.

Let us begin with an analysis of those critics whose position it is that Chaucer was mistaken in writing "The Pardoner's Tale." In his essay already referred to Kittredge cites those critics who find that although Chaucer possessed "a genius eminently dramatic, and a matchless talent for story-telling" he

frequently allowed his Medieval love of moralizing to defeat, for the moment, his narrative powers, and now and then grossly violated dramatic propriety, whether carelessly or from the exigencies of satire.<sup>(4)</sup>

Armed with this presupposition these readers have been disposed to explain away any problem in "The Pardoner's Tale" for which an immediate solution is not readily available.

Other readers have focused on some portion of the tale or material dealing with the Pardoner, viewing that area alone as problematic and, thus, embarrassing to its author. G. G. Sedgewick, for example, concludes that the Pardoner's exposure of himself is "dramatically impossible;"<sup>(5)</sup> while R. M. Lumiansky believes that the sermon was taken from different material by Chaucer who did a poor job at patching up the joints.<sup>(6)</sup>

Those readers not willing to place themselves openly against so renowned and generally masterful a writer as Chaucer have skirted the problem entirely by not considering the prominent issues suggested by the text. Instead of tackling questions about the Pardoner himself they have shifted interest by their concentration on the sermon material;<sup>(7)</sup> and, those not even willing to tackle an issue of that dimension concentrate on trivialities such as whether or not a tale is being told in a tavern.<sup>(8)</sup>

Still others, who *are* willing to see that the focal point of interest is the Pardoner himself, and that the tale can only be rightly considered in relation to the Pardoner, attempt to explain away the character, as it were, by pointing to the literary convention of the "Faux Semblant" in *The Romance of the Rose* and, by doing so, they are able to escape any psychological consideration of the character with all its attendant problems.<sup>(9)</sup>

However, against those who find Chaucer wanting there is evidence that 'the prologue, the tale, and the epilogue all show Chaucer at the height of his powers'<sup>(10)</sup>, as well as the fact that the "Pardoner is the only pilgrim dramatically given literary powers comparable to those of Chaucer himself."<sup>(11)</sup> Indeed, if one takes a psychological approach to the tale's teller, any looseness of structure in the tale can be sufficiently accounted for by the character of the teller.<sup>(12)</sup> Thus, John Spiers sees that

The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale are organically one, a dramatization of the Pardoner, and unmistakably one of Chaucer's most maturest achievements.<sup>(13)</sup>

This evaluation confirms Sedgewick's earlier (1940) assessment that no responsible critic during the last sixty years has doubted the Pardoner's

credibility.<sup>(14)</sup>

Although those critics whom Sedgewick labels "responsible" have not doubted Chaucer's literary powers, they have doubted the character of the Pardoner himself, since a great deal of the criticism written since the time of the Kittredge essay assails the character of the Pardoner. "The Pardoner," writes Bernard Huppé,

is the victim of the sin of wanhope, despair, the occasion for which is ultimately his physical affliction, setting him apart from other men [and these] afflictions impatiently borne, lead him to the hatred of God and neighbor.<sup>(15)</sup>

While it is true that the Pardoner's physical affliction intimated by Chaucer might very well be the cause of the despair that the character sometimes exhibits, however, because that is so compelling a reason for despair, it should elicit from us a sympathy for the character rather than a quick judgment against him. In addition, there is no evidence within the text that the affliction is, as Huppé states, impatiently borne. Huppé's remark becomes, in this respect, an exemplum of the kind of negative criticism that the Pardoner seems to have been unfortunate enough to draw on more than one occasion. The error made by Huppé and others is overreaching the evidence provided by the text, so that wild surmise begins to preempt confirmed conclusions.

Following Huppé for just a moment provides us with a more concrete example of this critical misjudgment. Quoting the following lines from the tale

For I wol preche and begge in sondry landes;  
I wol nat do no labour with myne handes. [443-444]

Huppé concludes that despair is the Pardoner's problem, since the Pardoner "prides himself on his idleness" and "Despair is a branch of sloth."<sup>(16)</sup> However, these lines do not indicate what Huppé says they do, unless we are willing to agree that labor with hands is synonymous with labor of any kind, in which case not only should the Pardoner be indicted

but such Medieval notables as St. Thomas Aquinas, who never did so much as pen his own texts, be likewise imputed.

A close reading of the data given us by Chaucer, then, suggests a modified view of that taken by some major critics during the last eighty years. Simply stated the modification involves seeing the Pardoner as something more complex than the totally evil character many have taken him for. In what follows I would like to consider what I believe to be the substantiating data for this claim, as well as to indicate some of the current critical dispositions in these matters and the inadequacy of these views.

Richard Lanham, holding a view somewhat similar to my own, has stated that for Chaucer

Human personality was the very opposite of single, solid, or substantial. It emerged from a social situation, a fragile growth which . . . withered as soon as the supporting social context was removed.<sup>(17)</sup>

If this be true then the very first point that should be made is that the social context for the Pardoner was the Canterbury pilgrimage, and since that journey was of its very nature a religious quest, tainted though it be by the moral complexity of the pilgrims' characters, and since a pilgrimage only makes sense for those in need of redemption or reparation for sin, we may conclude that the Pardoner is a sinner who is seeking redemption.

Lumiansky, in questioning the Pardoner's motives for taking the journey, has so missed the obvious reason that he must conjecture, without the least textual evidence, that the Pardoner:

met his friend the Summoner, who was going on a Pilgrimage . . . [and] decided to go along to match wits with the other pilgrims and extract money from them if possible.<sup>(18)</sup>

Such commentary also assumes that the Pardoner has laid aside his keen sense of sizing up possible money making situations, and is totally unaware that the group he will join consists of knowing individuals who,

unlike his usual marks, are not likely to be duped by him.

That the pilgrimage is a society which the Pardoner finds himself a part of is the second point. Sedgewick notes: "The only Pilgrim who rides with him is the scrubby Summoner, "his friend and compeer" ---an association that quietly insists on attention.<sup>(19)</sup> However, the more obvious fact, and one which more loudly insists on attention, is the fact that the Pardoner is a member of the entire company, and, I think we are perfectly justified in concluding, has been at least conditionally accepted by that larger society. This at least seems to be supported when in the conclusion of the tale the noble Knight calls for the Pardoner and Harry Bailly to kiss and make up. Thus while it might be true that the Pardoner is something of an outcast surely his place in the pilgrimage and among the Pilgrims indicates that his isolation is slight in relation to the fact of his active presence there as pilgrim, teller of tales, and comrade in arms.

The Pardoner's sociability is given added credence by the fact that he is flexible to the will of the others when they request a moral tale from him instead of the mirthful entertainment he had intended to tell. Similarly, his social grace is indicated by his willingness to kiss Harry Bailly at the conclusion of his tale.<sup>(20)</sup> Regarding this it has been suggested at least on two occasions that the Pardoner really had no choice, since the protest is a "device" by which "Chaucer jockeys his Pardoner into a corner from which he can escape in only one way."<sup>(21)</sup> However, the fact of the matter is that he did not have to tell any tale at all if he did not wish to, and indeed, might not have done so if he were as unsociable as certain readers claim him to be.

Also, there is no justification in the text for the idea that the Pardoner's final wish is to tell any other kind of tale than the one he does, in fact, tell; and it is perfectly consistent with his pilgrimage that the tale, like the pilgrimage, should have as its subject the quest for redemption -the putting death to death, and should have, as I will later try to demonstrate, the edification of the Pilgrims as its primary object. Furthermore, to believe, as Seymour Gross does, that the tale is vengeance for the Pilgrims' insulting demand to tell a moral tale is, once again, completely without textual justification and rests only on the presumption that the Pardoner is totally evil.<sup>(22)</sup>

The Pardoner's confession is the next stumbling block for many critics. Instead of seeing the confession for what it is at face value and seeing how logically the confession fits the context of the pilgrimage and its purposes, readers have made wild leaps to textually unjustified claims about why the Pardoner exposes himself as a sinner.

Perhaps most egregious among these readers is one who concludes that the Pardoner's tongue has been loosened by intoxication. David Harrington believes he finds justification for this view in Chaucer's use of hyperbaton, an unnatural order of words and ideas which emphasize the narrator's excited or disordered state of mind, "or, more specifically, in the case of the Pardoner, reveal his drunkenness,<sup>(23)</sup> Harrington's textual data is correct, but the hyperbaton he sees there can just as easily be explained by the fact that the Pardoner is engaged in a true confession of his sins which can easily be imagined as an unsettling, emotionally disturbing action producing the same effect.

Fortunately many readers have seen through Harrington's suggestion. John Halverson notes that Chaucer does not say that the Pardoner is drunk, which he could have done if that is what he intended for us to believe.<sup>(24)</sup> Kittredge objects that one draft of ale would hardly fuddle so seasoned a drinker;<sup>(25)</sup> and, with a comment that has a similar effect, Edwin Howard notes that this was the age in which the drinking of alcoholic beverages was so universal that even nuns had a daily allowance of a gallon of it.<sup>(26)</sup>

Another less glaring but nonetheless unjustified notion is that the confession can be explained away as a formal convention. John Spiers writes:

The confession should simply be accepted as a convention like those soliloquies in Elizabethan plays in which the villain comes to the front of the stage, and, taking the audience entirely into his confidence, unmask himself.<sup>(27)</sup>

First it should be noted that the Elizabethan plays to which Spiers refers do not have the villain reporting his villainy to all the other principals in the play as well as to the audience. As in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*

the unmasking of the self is always preceded either vocally or implicitly through the stage movement of the character by the question and answer "Am I alone? I am." Second, Chaucer has other means at hand by which to expose the flaws of his characters if he wishes to do so. The description of the characters in the prologue, or, more effectively, the various modes of interaction among the characters on the journey, are evidence enough of the means available to Chaucer for this purpose. We must, therefore, lay this reading aside as unfounded and place it among the unfortunately growing lot of mistaken attempts to assassinate the Pardoner's character.

A more cynical view of the matter construes the confession as a deliberate flaunting of evil. Halverson reads it as "bravado of the successful Montebank, taking perverse pride in his own skill as spell-binder and swindler."<sup>(28)</sup> In like manner, Huppé says "He tells the truth simply in order to reinforce his own clear, conscious pride in his villainy."<sup>(29)</sup> "Not only is he evil, but he recognizes his evil and rejoices in it."<sup>(30)</sup> Kittredge also refers to it simply as a "cynical confession."<sup>(31)</sup> In none of these readings, however, is there any specific textual justification for such a conclusion; rather, all of them seem to be based on a general condemnation of the Pardoner inferred from the description of the Pardoner's appearance in the General Prologue and from information in the text given principally by the Pardoner himself about his unsavory occupation. It is much more reasonable to take Cecil Watts view. Watts questions the plausibility of the idea that the Pardoner would spoil his own sales pitch by so candid an initial revelation of his turpitude. Watts goes on to say:

A more plausible theory is that, having recounted the extent of his turpitude, the Pardoner tells a tale so forcefully effective that his hearers are deeply impressed; and, on seeing that they are spellbound, he gambles that they may after all be fooled by his customary sales-talk.<sup>(32)</sup>

This interpretation, while plausible when considered from a purely psychological point of view, becomes less compelling when we appreciate the degree of effort the Pardoner - a self confessed sinner -

must be making 'against the grain,' as it were, to be on this redemptive quest to Canterbury. Surely the circumstances in which he tells his tale must weigh heavily on his consciousness and provide an overpowering motivation for his actions.

In addition to reading the confession as true confession, an understanding promoted by a recognition of the *prima facie* context of the pilgrimage, other evidence can be submitted that indicates that the confession is a good instead of an evil act. Kittredge has noted the circumstances are right for confession, since the Pardoner is among those he will never have to encounter again. Although Kittredge sees this as a freedom to boast of his villainy<sup>(33)</sup>, the Pardoner's action make equal sense if one construes them in light of what is a common component of true confession, namely the anonymity of the penitent in order to promote frankness and to spare him shame. Another point of enormous importance to properly construe the confession is to be conscious of the fact that confession has as one of its purposes the bringing to consciousness one's evil tendencies so that, once being made aware of them, they may be combated all the more effectively. This corroborates a reading of the Pardoner's confession as a positive act, since it is followed by his telling of a tale whose express purpose is to point out the very sin that he has become conscious of in the confession.

Rightly to understand it we must read the confession as a unit with the tale the Pardoner tells, as well as an appropriate act within the context of the purposes of the pilgrimage on which he has chosen to go. Thus, these three: pilgrimage, confession, and tale can be seen as working together in laying the groundwork for the salvation, not only of the Pardoner himself, but of the other pilgrims who are themselves pilgrims and audience to the Pardoner's revelations.

Derek Pearsall notes that there is "irresistible encouragement from Chaucer to read the Pardoner's Prologue and Tale as an elucidation of character in action." and the tale itself as a "profound psychological revelation" of the character. Pearsall cites, among others, Kittredge [1893], Curry [1926], and Miller [1955] who have done this.<sup>(34)</sup> Therefore I believe it is important to probe what the tale might be able to tell us of the Pardoner's character.



Although the evil of the Pardoner has rarely been questioned there is nothing false about his preaching.<sup>(35)</sup> The moral of the tale he tells is, quite literally, that the wages of sin is death;<sup>(36)</sup> but the sin of the three rioters in the tale might have been less quickly embraced had they knowledge of the true nature of the sin-death relationship. William B. Toole has thoughtfully noted that the rioters problem finds its source in their inability to understand the nature of the spiritual and this causes "their unwitting attempt to usurp the function of Christ" <sup>(37)</sup> as one who puts death to death. However, Christ's purpose is realized not by an attempt to attack and destroy death as the rioters propose to do, but rather by a voluntary submission to death. At this juncture it is beneficial to recall that in Genesis the serpent promises that divine knowledge and death will both be realized by the eating of the fruit. The realization of redemption, as a development of our humanity through free participation in the pilgrimage of life whose terminal is death, is what prompts St. Augustine to proclaim that the original sin is a "felix culpa" --- a happy fault.

If this be true, then the tale the Pardoner tells, which suggests the relationship between the rioters' ignorance and their unwillingness to "taste" death, that is, to submit freely to it, is of great service to the Pilgrims as they wend their way to Canterbury Cathedral, the site of the death of St. Thomas à Becket. From this point of view the Pilgrimage might be seen as synonymous with the movement of life itself, and the task of accepting change, quintessentially in the form of death, the primary act of human participation in God's redemptive plan; and the tale the Pardoner tells, the quintessentially necessary story that needs to be told to the pilgrims as they journey toward Canterbury Cathedral.

Angus Alton confirms that because of the Pardoner's abilities as story teller the Pardoner does save souls in large numbers.<sup>(38)</sup> The text supports this view when the Pardoner states:

Yet can I maken oother folk to twynne  
From avarice and soore to repente. [430-431].

Thus, the telling of the tale must be seen as an act of great service to the

other pilgrims. Alton further observes that there is a close relationship between the Pardoner and the effect that his tale has on others, and this must be taken into account in arriving at a "final view" of the Pardoner:

Whatever his intentions may be, he is doing God's work remarkably successfully. Indeed it is hard to resist the conclusion that he is much more likely to save souls by his preaching than the pious Parson is with his.<sup>(39)</sup>

As such the telling of the tale cannot be viewed as anything other than an act contributing to the Pardoner's own redemption.

By saying this I do not suggest that the telling of the tale is done by the Pardoner with a fully conscious intention to convey its beneficial meaning to the other pilgrims. It is clear from the text that despite his intention to mend his way to Canterbury the Pardoner is still ambivalent about his need to profit physically from his actions. However, the primary fact remains that the Pardoner has voluntarily become a member of the pilgrimage and, because of this, he must have some preconscious understanding, some inkling as it were, of the relationship between the meaning of the tale that he tells and the journey he is undertaking. This, I believe, largely corrects the acrimonious view of the Pardoner still being taken by readers like Charles Mosely, who claims that the Pardoner is "the mirror image of all that is good."<sup>(40)</sup>

That the tale is bounded at both ends with accusations that bring to light the pilgrims' sins, first, the Pardoner's own sin before the tale begins, then Harry Bailly's sin after it concludes, and as a result of the pilgrims all becoming more conscious of those accusations, the Pardoner moves them all in the direction of the first step that must be taken to achieve redemption: that is, knowledge and admission of one's guilt. However, redemption is not simply a matter of confession. Confession of one's inadequacies, mirroring the inadequacy of a life bounded by death, without belief in some more perfect state can lead to despair. The Pardoner is aware of this which is why he does not stop with the passing on of a view of the negative condition of men, but rather he goes on to establish the true source of grace and stability in the person of Jesus

Christ. Many readings of the benediction that follows the tale have not recognized its organic relationship to the tale and to the rest of the Pardoner's actions, and thus they have thus failed to perceive its true meaning.

Some readers in an attempt to understand the benediction have fallen back on clichéd notions such as the postulation that it was merely conventional to end a sermon with a blessing.<sup>(41)</sup>

At least ten of his fellow-pilgrims conclude their turns with a benediction . . . and, of course, medieval narrative generally ends on some such conventional note. Primarily, therefore, the Pardoner is . . . following a tradition.<sup>(42)</sup>

This explanation, however, begs the point. Perhaps the benediction was a matter of convention. It is nevertheless true that it is also necessary and appropriate as a conclusion to the tale that the Pardoner Tells and, as such, can be read as a sincere and meaningful act by the Pardoner.<sup>(43)</sup>

Another view of the benediction reads it as a momentary abandonment, an instant of recovery, of a lost soul.<sup>(44)</sup> But surely anyone who has premeditated his actions so carefully and who is repeating something he has recited many times before cannot be thought of as losing control of what he is saying now. In addition, if we may work those critics who claim total evil for the Pardoner against themselves, we might add that momentary lapses of the kind they wish to make of the benediction can only take place under certain psychological conditions. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton points out that Satan, who is now recalcitrant in his commitment to evil, upon seeing the new world created by God, almost repents in his guise as a cherub, but this repentance could only take place before full recognition of his commitment to evil. Therefore, if, indeed, the Pardoner is so steeped in sin as to openly boast of it, he is far too advanced in his commitment to evil to have such a "lapse." Certainly, therefore, to construe the benediction, as Kittredge does, as a momentary better mood in a character for whom repentance or reformation is never possible, is highly unlikely.<sup>(45)</sup>

The Pardoner's confrontation with Harry Bailly must be understood as

related to the Pardoner's confession, tale, and the benediction that takes place before it. Any other understanding of this incident does Chaucer a disservice as an artist, a maker of an integrated work of art. What better way for the Pardoner to stimulate the other pilgrims to apply what they have heard in the tale to themselves than by accusing a notable among them of the very sins he has been recounting to them? To think, as D. W. Robinson, Jr. does, that the attempt to sell the Host the relics is nothing but an attempt to foster cupidity in his audience<sup>(46)</sup> can only rest on the previously stated, textually unfounded, assumption that the Pardoner is some kind of evil genius. Here I must agree with Lumiansky. If the Pardoner is an evil genius "it is incredible that [he] otherwise so astute, should make so foolish a move and fail so miserably."<sup>(47)</sup> Sedgewick also agrees. Only an "utter fool" would act as the Pardoner has done, and there is no reason to believe that he is such a fool.<sup>(48)</sup>

In their attempt to avoid a reading of this incident which agrees with and can be integrated with the other important events concerning the Pardoner, some readers have been jockeyed into postulating elaborate and, quite frankly, silly explanations. Thus, Edwin Howard states that the most logical explanation of the Pardoner's actions is that the attempt is only an illustration of his selling technique with the pilgrims.<sup>(49)</sup> To respond to this notion one needs only to look at the reaction to the Pardoner's suggestion to understand that the Host does not regard the offer as merely an example of the Pardoner's selling technique, but rather he understands it for exactly what it was: a serious accusation about his moral condition.

Why does the Pardoner specifically approach the Host with his relics? There are several reasons for this. First the Host, who is a tavern owner, is related to at least some of the sins mentioned in the tale, since the tavern is a place where these sins were practiced.<sup>(50)</sup> Second, the Host can be understood as a representative of all men, since the tavern is the place of sin and the local meeting place for all men in the village.<sup>(51)</sup> Third, the Host is the "controller of games" on this journey and, therefore, may be seen as acting spokesman for all the pilgrims. Finally, it is clearly seen by his response to the Pardoner, the Host is indeed worthy of the Pardoner's demeaning offer. Sedgewick wisely comments:

The Host is indeed prone to "rough jocularities" . . . . But his words to the Pardoner pass the jocular limit. For sheer brutality they have no parallel in *The Canterbury Tales* --- and that is saying a good deal.<sup>(52)</sup>

Therefore, in light of the foregoing, it would be wiser to recognize the justice in the Pardoner's offer to the Host than to see the offer as coming from someone who is totally evil.

An article that attempts to mitigate the Pardoner's malignity, but does not quite compare with the more positive view being taken in this paper, is Richard Lanham's "Game, Play and High Seriousness in Chaucer's Poetry." Lanham's thesis, that *The Tales* is a game does not seem to be justified either by the text or by the logic of the situation. Bearing on the specific question here, Lanham states:

The game contestant . . . does not want to destroy his opponent. The opponent is essential if the game is to continue. . . . Accommodation, not annihilation, sets a limit to victory.<sup>(53)</sup>

According to Lanham it is clear that the Pardoner is another figure to be interpreted in terms of the game he is playing and it is finally as a player that he is to be assessed.<sup>(54)</sup> A suggestion of confirmation for this idea comes from Toole, who believes that "We begin and end the affair with a laugh that need not be either strident or bitter unless we feel inclined to be so in ourselves."<sup>(55)</sup> Read, supporting the idea that the Pardoner's actions must be understood as part of the game, notes that:

surely we are not to believe that he [the Pardoner] is really trying to sell pardons. One of the qualities of a successful salesman is good judgment ; another is plausibility. If the Pardoner is serious he shows neither here: obviously he can hardly hope to sell his pardons having exposed his methods and motives; not can he expect anyone to believe his absurd suggestion that one or two might break their necks on the sedate ride to Canterbury. If, however, he is joking, the exaggerations fall into place.<sup>(56)</sup>

Nevertheless, it should be understood that the game theory of *The Tales* does not exclude the possibility of the my own interpretation, since Lanham states that a man may tell the truth, even in the context of the game<sup>(57)</sup> and it is clear from the writings of twentieth century psychoanalysts that games are often the vehicle used to convey profound messages which in a more direct form might not otherwise be palatable or conveyed.

In sum, what then may we conclude about the Pardoner. Surely Curry's idea that the Pardoner is suffering from some secret spiritual impotency due to his eunuchry<sup>(58)</sup> is not borne out by the text. If in the Prologue Chaucer thinks the Pardoner is a eunuch, we certainly have no right to go beyond that hypothesis unless the text clearly justifies our doing so. Indeed, as Cedric Watts has pointed out, in light of the information given about the Pardoner which follows the Prologue, there is every reason to suspect that he might not even be a eunuch.<sup>(59)</sup> In general, the readings that seek to ignore the behavior of the Pardoner and, instead, seek for some spiritual dimension of evil in the Pardoner not clearly in evidence, are, to my mind, misguided. Those who take this approach offer neither textual evidence nor logical justification to any satisfying degree for a convincing reading of *The Pardoner's Tale*.

That the Pardoner is half horrified and half fascinated by his subject is reason enough to suspect that Chaucer has given us a complex character that is "variable and imperfect,"<sup>(60)</sup> patently a sinner, but one trying to journey towards redemption for himself and for others. In the words of Cedric Watts it is far wiser to see that Pardoner as "homo duplex," a double man, "contaminated with the sin of Adam, yet enlightened by the words of Christ."<sup>(61)</sup> While Pearsall does not accept the challenge he notes that for all readers there is "a challenge to rescue the pardoner from moral responsibility for his depravity, to enter psychological pleas in mitigation, and to enroll him in the margins of humanity."<sup>(62)</sup> I trust that in this paper I have accepted that challenge and have even gone beyond enrolling the Pardoner "in the margins of humanity." In short, my own view regarding the Pardoner is that the he is an active member of the church -the group bound by the belief that promotes their journey to Canterbury. In summing up his worth perhaps we can do no better than to align ourselves with Chaucer's view of the Pardoner when he says:

But trewly to tellen atte laste  
He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste.

#### NOTES

- ( 1 ) Edwin J. Howard, *Geoffrey Chaucer*, (New York: Twayne, 1964), p. 159.
- ( 2 ) Michael Read, "The Tale Outside the Tale: The Pardoner and The Host," in *The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale*, edited by Linda Cooksan and Bryan Loughrey, (Burnt Mills, United Kingdom: Longman, 1990), p. 58.
- ( 3 ) George Lyman Kittredge, "Chaucer's Pardoner," in *Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism*, edited by Edward Wagenknecht, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 116.
- ( 4 ) Kittredge, p. 117.
- ( 5 ) Kittredge, p. 118.
- ( 6 ) R. M. Lumiansky, *Of Sundry Folk: The Dramatic Principle in The Canterbury Tales*, (Austin, Texas: University of Texas, 1955), p. 214.
- ( 7 ) C. G. Sedgewick, "The Progress of Chaucer's Pardoner, 1880-1940," in *Chaucer Criticism, Vol. 1*, edited by Richard Scheeck & James Taylor, (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1970), p.196.
- ( 8 ) Sedgewick, p.201.
- ( 9 ) John Halverson, "Chaucer's Pardoner & The Progress of Criticism," *Chaucer Review* 4: 1969-1970, p. 188.
- (10) Kittredge, p. 119.
- (11) Charles Muscatine, "Canterbury Tales: Style of the Man and Style of the Work," in *Chaucer & Chaucerians: Critical Studies in Middle English Literature*, ed. by D. S. Brewer, (Tuscalusa, Alabama: University of Alabama, 1966), p. 112.
- (12) Halverson, p. 185.
- (13) John Spiers, "The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale" in *The Pelican Guide to English Literature: The Age of Chaucer*, ( Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1959), p. 107.
- (14) Sedgewick, p. 191.
- (15) Bernard Huppé, *A Reading of the Canterbury Tales*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1964), p. 211.
- (16) Huppé, p. 211.
- (17) Richard A. Lanham, "Game, Play, and High Seriousness in Chaucer's Poetry," *English Studies*, 48, 1967, p. 24.
- (18) Lumiansky, p. 204.
- (19) Sedgewick, p. 203.
- (20) Kittredge, p. 120.
- (21) Sedgewick, p. 208 (See also p. 192).
- (22) Halverson, p. 187.
- (23) David Harrington, "Narrative Speed in the Pardoner's Tale," *Chaucer Review* 3, 1968-1969, p. 56.
- (24) Halverson, p. 186.

- (25) Kittredge, p. 119.
- (26) Howard, p. 161.
- (27) Spiers, p. 107 .
- (28) Halverson, p. 188.
- (29) Huppé, p. 216.
- (30) Huppé, p. 218.
- (31) Kittredge, p. 120.
- (32) Cedric Watts, "Problem-areas of 'The Pardoner's Tale,'" in *Critical Essays* edited by Cooksan and Loughrey. p. 11.
- (33) Kittredge, pp. 119-20.
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