### Annotative Text of Chaucer’s *Pardoner’s Tale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Original Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Lordynges-quod he-in chirches whan I preche,</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>I <em>peyne me</em> to han an hauteyn speche,</td>
<td>Peyne me: Take Pains (Pratt, 421)</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>And rynge it out as round as gooth a belle,</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>For I kan al by rote that I telle.</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>My theme is alwey oon and evere was,</td>
<td>Merrix says this of the prologue: “…there is something far more important at this juncture in the prologue: there is the self-expose of the Pardoner himself, the direct antithesis of what one might expect from a representative of the church.” (240)</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>Radix malorum est Cupiditas.</td>
<td>Richmond says that the Pardoner uses Latin to “add flavor and impress his audience.” The idea that this makes readers see that his typical audience is “credulous” (Richmond, 120).</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>First I pronounce whennes that I come,</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>And thanne my bulles shewe I, alle and some;</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>Oure lige lordes seel on my patente,</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td>That shewe I first, my body to warente,</td>
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<td>53</td>
<td>That no man be so boold, ne preest ne clerk,</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>Me to destourbe of Cristes hoolywerk.</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>And after that thanne telle I forth my tales,</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td>Bulles of popes and of cardynales,</td>
<td>Dinshaw suggests that “…the Pardoner surrounds himself with objects-relics; sealed documents; even words, regarded as objects-which he substitutes for his own lacking wholeness”</td>
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57 Of patriarches and bishopes I shewe,

58 And in Latyn I speke a wordes fewe,

The Pardoner says that he speaks Latin which is often used in the church Mass. Ackerman gives evidence to discredit the Pardoner’s knowledge of Latin. Ackerman states, “Since the Pardoner is never said to be a priest, the offertory reference may be merely a jibe at his avarice, not to be taken literally. The fact that he is represented as preaching after the offertory rather than before, in accordance with the standard order of the Mass, causes difficulty.” (28)

59 To saffron with my predicacioun,

60 And for to stire hem to devocioun.

61 Thanne shewe I forth my longe cristal stones,

62 Yerammed ful of cloutes and of bones;

63 Relikes been they, as wenen they echoon.

Khinoy states this about the Pardoner’s relics: “Ordinarily, relics admirably express the traditional relationship between the inside and the outside. A relic may be set in gold, but the obvious value and beauty of the precious setting is supposed to point to the far greater but invisible virtues of the relic it encloses. Furthermore, the holy object as an object is not so important as the meanings it contains.” (259-260) (9)

64 Thanne have I in latoun a sholder-boon

65 Which that was of an hooly Jewes sheepe.

66 Goode men, I seye, taak of my wordes keepe:

67 If that this boon be wasshe in any welle,

68 If cow, or calf, or sheep, or oxe swelle,
That any worm hath ete, or worm ystonge,  
Taak water of that welle, and wassh his tonge,  
And it is hool anon; and forthermoor,  
Of pokkes and of scabbe and every soor  
Shal every sheepe be hool that of this welle  
Drynketh a draughte; taak kepe eek what I telle,  
If that the goode man that the beestes oweth,  
Wol every wyke, er that the cok hym croweth,  
Fastynge, drinken of this welle a draughte,  
As thilke hooely Jew oure eldres taughte,  
Hise beestes and his stoor shal multiplie.

And, sire, also it heeleth jalousie;  
Sturges says this in relation to why the villagers accept the Pardoner: “The relics are a source of power or potency; they also have the ability to remove or destroy the villagers’ power. And since the power in question is only the power to offer wealth to the Pardoner, he leave them in the unenviable position of either giving up their own relation to the ultimate source of potency and grace, or giving up their money to the Pardoner.” (72)

For though a man be falle in jalous rage,  
Lat maken with this water his potage,  
And nevere shal he moore his wyf mystriste,  
Though he the soothe of hir defaute wiste,  
Al had she taken preestes two or thre.  
Heere is a miteyn, eek, that ye may se:  
He that his hand wol putte in this mitayn,  
He shal have multipliying of his grayn  
What he hath sowen, be it whete or otes,  
So that he offre pens, or elles grotes.

Goode men and wommen, o thyng warne I yow,  
There is a question as to whether the pardoner’s preaching is allowed to preach. Several Cannons from Chaucer’s time strictly prohibit pardoners from preaching. (Manly, 129)
Charles Moseley speaks of the irony of the Pardoner’s actions. “...every time he offers pardon with the motives he does, he increases his own guilt, and the victims he despises come out better than he does in the end. In him, Chaucer underlines the self-destructiveness of sin, and the nature of a universe, a divine comedy, where the mercy of God can work even through the deepest and most unrepentant evil.”

(Cookson, 49)

92 If any wight be in this chirche now,  
93 That hath doon synne horrible, that he  
94 Dar nat for shame of it yshryven be,  
95 Or any womman, be she yong or old,  
96 That hath ymaad hir housbonde cokekold,  
97 Swich folk shal have no power ne no grace  
98 To offren to my relikes in this place.  
99 And who so fyndeth hym out of swich fame,  
100 He wol come up and offre, on Goddes name,  
101 And I assoille him, by the auctoritee  
102 Which that by tulle ygraunited was to me.  

Kittredge states that, “[The Pardoner] preaches for money, and has no concern for the reformation of morals or for genuineness of repentance on the part of those who offer to his relics and absolution. (119)

Just like the Wife of Bath, the Pardoner acknowledges his sins, but he does so in a boastful and unrepentant manner. (Ackerman, 32)

The Pardoner is telling all of the travelers on how he deceives people; John Halverson explains why he
does this based on his drinking habits. “Drunkenness then accounts not only for the rambling style of the ‘confession’ and ‘sermon’ preceding the tale proper, but also for the extraordinary cheek of his self-revelations.” (185)

104 An hundred mark, sith I was pardoner.
105 I stonde lyk a clerk in my pulpet,
106 And whan the lewed peple is doun yset,
107 I preche so, as ye han heerd bifoore,
108 And telle an hundred false japes moore.
109 Thanne peyne I me to streche forth the nekke,
110 And est and west upon the peple I bekke,
111 As dooth a dowve sittynge on a berne.

112 Myne handes adn my tongue goon so yerne “Hands and tongue here are ends in themselves, performative objects of vision and hearing, bodily attributes that the congregation is to appreciate for themselves rather than for their transcendent symbolic expression (Sturges, 97)”

113 That it is joye to se my bisynesse.
114 Of avarice and of swich cursednesse
115 Is al my prechyng, for to make hem free
116 To yeven hir pens; and namely, unto me!
117 For myn entente is nat but for to wynne,
118 And no thyng for correccioun of synne.
119 I rekke nevere, whan that they been beryed,
120 Though that hir soules goon a blakeberyed,
121 For certes, many a predicacioun
122 Comth ofte tyme of yvel entencioun.
123 Som for plesance of folk, and flaterye,
124 To been avancaed by ypocrisy.
125 And som for veyne glorie, and som for hate.
126 For whan I dar noon oother weyes debate,
127 Thanne wol I styngyme with my tongue smerte
128 In prechyng, so that he shal nat astert
129 To been defamed falsly, if that he
130 Hath trespas to my bretheren, or to me.
For though I telle noght his propre name,
Men shal wel knowe that it is the same
By signes, and by othere circumstances.
Thus quyte I folk that doon us displesances,
Ironically the Pardoner compares himself to a snake, in which he claims to have the remedy for a bite in his relics. He says that he has the cure for a poison that he himself, although indirectly gives. (Noll, 159)
Thus spitte I out my venym, under hewe
Of hoolynesse, to semen hooly and trewe.
But shortly, myn entente I wol devyse;
I preche of no thyng but for coveityse.
I preche no thyng but for coveitise;
Of this mateere it oghte ynogh suffise.
Thus kan I preche agayn that same vice
Which that I use, and that is avarice.
But though myself be gilty in that synne,
Yet kan I maken oother folk to twynne
And wynne gold and silver for I teche,
That I wol lyve in poverte wilfully?
Nay, nay, I thoghte it nevere, trewely.
I wol noon of the apostles countrefete,
I wol have moneie, wolle, chese, and whete,
Al were it yeven of the povereste page,
Or of the povereste wydwe in a village,
Al sholde hir children sterve for famyne.
Nay, I wol drynke licour of the vyne,
And have a joly wenche in every toun.
But herkneth, lordynges, in conclusioun:
Your likyng is, that I shal telle a tale.

Now have I dronke a draughte of corny ale, “The Pardoner is, in effect, saying to the pilgrims: ‘I am about to tell you a moral tale. I am going to preach you one of my sermons. You will find the sentiments of this sermon enexceptionable. Don not thin, however, that I expect you to believe me in earnest. You know what kind of fellow I am, and this is my trade.” (Kittredge, 121)

By God, I hope I shal yow telle a thyng
That shal by resoun been at youre likyng.
For though myself be a ful vicious man,
A moral tale yet I you telle kan,
Which I am wont to preche, for to wynne.
Now hoold youre pees, my tale I wol bigynne.
Works Cited


Merrix, Robert P. “Sermon Structure in the Pardoner’s Tale.” *Chaucer Review*. 17 ()

