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CHAUCER'S BLOODY PARDONER

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The complexity of Geoffrey Chaucer's character, the Pardoner, still remains one of the most debated topics among scholars of Middle English. Most scholarly conversations isolate one feature of his character, whether his clothes, his physical appearance, his relics, his sexuality, his language, his attitude, or his intent, to come to specific conclusions that aid in the understanding of his complexity. In Chaucer's day, identity was understood in terms of the four humors (choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic, and sanguine), a classical conception that continued into the Middle Ages and was consistently used to analyze personalities, illnesses, and behaviors. These humors could potentially become imbalanced, and it became imperative to rebalance, although some people went to extreme measures to do so. Application of the humoral theory to the Pardoner's identity provides a tool to address all his features and reasons for action together.

I suggest that the Pardoner is of the sanguine humor. His characteristics reflect those of a sanguine man through several physical and symbolical connections, which are important to understand the totality of his character. I evaluate several details in the

Pardoner's portrait and explore how each is representative of his sanguine humor. It is the Pardoner's sanguine humor, blood that becomes imbalanced, causing his unpredictable behavior with the other pilgrims and exemplifying his ability to deceive. The Pardoner's sanguine humor is reflected in all of his attributes, whether positive or negative. My argument for the Pardoner's sanguinity, does not reduce the complexity of his character, but sheds light on his characteristic ambiguities. The evidence of his sanguinity provides another reading of his character as well as another complex feature, aiding in understanding the totality of his identity.

KEYWORDS: Chaucer, Pardoner, humors, humours, sanguine, melancholic, phlegmatic, choleric, and characterization

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CHAUCER'S BLOODY PARDONER

INTRODUCTION

“Cherisseth blood, natures freend...,” (SqT 353) explains Sleep in The Squire’s Tale, referring to the bloody humor, sanguine. Sanguine is a description often associated with the color red or blood; however, it is also a term utilized to explain a personality type known as a humor or temperament. There are four humors, melancholic, sanguine, choleric, and phlegmatic, and were used well into the seventeenth century as a way to explain people’s personalities. Medieval literature is famous for its descriptions of the sad melancholic man or the cheerful sanguine. Humors are understood in terms of the fluids black bile, blood, yellow bile, and phlegm, and became part of a theory or ideology utilized as a way to describe people’s complexions and actions. This theory was developed in late antiquity and was used predominately in the medical and physiological fields well into the early 1900s. In the Middle Ages, numerous people were physically treated based on the knowledge of the four humors. In fact, Geoffrey Chaucer makes several references to certain pilgrims’ humors, including the Franklin whose “complexioun [is] sangwyn,” (GP 333). There is also mention of humors in The Knight’s Tale and The Squire’s Tale. The fact that Chaucer makes references to the humors is not out of the ordinary, as several of his contemporaries used these same terms to help their audience understand different characters. For example, when Chaucer defines the Franklin as sanguine, audiences immediately recognize him as a charismatic man who likes to communicate, is optimistic, and has a reddish complexion. Noga Arikha explains that “in fact, none of the humours needed to be visible to exert hold on the imagination, and to provide a credible, at times effective physiological account of the unseen

operations within the body” (9). Humorology or the study of humors provides a more in-depth understanding of people, their actions, and reasons for those actions.

A person who was healthy and did not act out of the ordinary had a balance of all four humors. Every person had his or her own unique combination of the humors, but there was normally a dominant humor that helped to explain a person’s personality, eating habits, and health. However, the dominant humor was normally out of balance if the person had an illness or displayed stranger behavior than normal. Physicians used their understanding of humors, fluids, diets, seasons, environments, and astronomy to diagnose illnesses and advise treatment options. All of these aspects were interconnected and the humor was a product of these variations (Arikha xviii). Humors were also used to describe someone’s personality or physical appearance. Medieval humorology only slightly differed from its origins in Hippocrates and Galen, but systematically this theory has remained unchanged. This figure below was a common depiction of the humors and the several physiological, psychological, and astrological connections. Figure 1 diagrams the humors into sections and provides the different elements (air, water, fire, and earth), the astrological signs, and the planets that are governed by each humor. This ideology was not uncommon to Chaucer’s medieval audience as many people understood its importance to their physical and mental health. The theory was so important that many people went through different means to rebalance their humors, including bloodletting. However, understanding the historical context of *The Canterbury Tales* is important in understanding Chaucer’s audience and how humors affected their daily lives.



Figure 1: Walkington, Thomas. *The Optick Glasse of Humors*. 1639. Courtesy of National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland.

Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* provides a unique glimpse into post-plague England with subtle critiques about the government, marriage, the church, chivalry, and other medieval social issues. During Chaucer's life, there were a number of changes in government, clerical responsibility, and medicine. The beginning of the thirteenth century brought the Fourth Lateran Council, which made several changes in the Roman Catholic Church as well as physician duties. Held in 1215 by Pope Innocent III, the Fourth Lateran Council presented seventy canons or decrees to be accepted by the Roman Catholic Church. Many of these canons were intended to right different wrongs from the Crusades. However, the twenty-second canon forbade physicians to prescribe any treatment to a patient until he or she had called in "physicians of the soul," and the fourteenth through seventeenth canons spoke directly against clerical drunkenness, non-chastity, and other issues (qtd. in Arikha 79). Nicholas Watson explains that "twelfth-century reform

movements which culminated in the Lateran Council, were still a force in Chaucer's age" (77). As part of that reform, many people still joined a yearly pilgrimage for healing, indulgences, pardons, and penances. The Canterbury pilgrims were among many who sought forgiveness and healing from shrines with saint's relics, and performed their Christian duty. Chaucer's pilgrims provide an internal glimpse into a ritual performed, the types of people who would be a part of the journey, the people's interactions, and their humoral understanding.

The setting of *The Canterbury Tales* provides Chaucer with the opportunity to critique the different types of people who would have participated as well as comment on a number of medieval issues. Being a part of the papacy and notorious cheats, Pardoners are normally included in medieval literature and critiques. Not only were they a common character, but Chaucer's Pardoner continues to enter into academic conversations about the Middle Ages, as he has been observed as more of a nuisance than help to his fellow pilgrims. Most scholarly conversations about the Pardoner include his clerical intent, sexual preference, effeminate appearance, or greedy behavior. There is, however, little mention of the Pardoner's humor or reasons for his actions in *The Canterbury Tales*. As previously stated, many scholars continue to argue his identity or intentions, but there is a lack of scholarship that examines his identity in connection with the reason for his actions. Many of the arguments include a one-sided understanding of his identity or intentions, but do not examine all of these pieces of his identity together and how each is interconnected. The complexity of the Pardoner's characteristics has aided in the lack of works of scholarship that examines multiple dimensions of his character and the many different facets of his personality. Though some scholars have used multiple

characteristics to explain his sexuality or his intentions, the means of examination normally lack a discussion of the Pardoner's humor. Combining information about the Pardoner's physical appearance, connections to the saints, and his reasons for actions all point to him as a sanguine man.

Many physical and symbolic connections characterize the Pardoner as a man whose dominant humor is sanguine. First, examining the Pardoner's physical appearance will provide the basic foundation to how he represents a sanguine person. His portrayal never defines him as a sanguine man, but there are several references to his hair, eyes, face, and neck that suggest a sanguine humor. Although his physical appearance alone does not prove his sanguinity, his appearance is central to most scholarly conversations regarding his identity and becomes essential to his sanguine humor. Other conversations about the Pardoner include his connection to several saints, which is also critical to understanding the Pardoner's sanguine humor. These saints include Saint Veronica, Saint Thomas, and Saint Ronan. Each saint provides a symbolic connection to the sanguine humor, whether through a connection to blood or astrology. The Pardoner's connections to several physical and symbolic pieces of information demonstrate that he is a sanguine man. However, there is not one isolated instance that makes the Pardoner a sanguine man, but rather all of these small connections put together provide ample evidence of his sanguinity. Some of the connections that depict the Pardoner as a sanguine man also demonstrate how his sanguine humor has become imbalanced.

Defining the Pardoner as a sanguine man may make it seem as if I am undermining the complexity of his character; however, this examination does not make the Pardoner any less of a complex character, but magnifies his complexity beyond the

many scopes of argumentation. Examining the Pardoner as a sanguine man whose humor is in a state of imbalance provides a way to understand his licentious behavior towards the pilgrims and the papacy. The Pardoner is not a sanguine man because of his actions, but he is sanguine because of his physical appearance and symbolic connections. Through the connections, his humor is not only sanguine, but out of balance and is in need of being rebalanced. Not all of the Pardoner's actions point to an imbalanced sanguine humor, yet all represent his sanguinity. Suggesting that the Pardoner is a sanguine establishes a more tangible reason as to why he steals, lies, confesses, or blasphemes than just arguing him to be a poor representation of the papacy. It offers a clearer reason to why his sexual identity is inconclusive, why he is irrational, why he loves money, why he promotes social interaction, why he speaks with such eloquence even though he does not believe his own words, or why he does not care about the people's souls. Granted, not all people who have a sanguine humor are thieves, liars, or blasphemers, but an imbalanced sanguine humor explains why the Pardoner acts in certain ways. The Pardoner's sanguinity is not portrayed in one aspect, but through several observations it becomes clearer that the Pardoner is sanguine. It is important to start with the Pardoner's physical appearance and his symbolic connections to the saints before any of the posed ambiguities about his character can be answered. Therefore, this essay will examine his physical and symbolic connections to the sanguine humor before I offer any reason as to why his actions demonstrate his sanguinity and sanguinity imbalance. However, the Pardoner's actions do not make him sanguine, but it is only when we observe him through this sanguine lens that we can truly understand his need to act as he does and recognize that his actions are a direct result of his sanguine humor.

WHAT IS SANGUINE?

Many people in the Middle Ages understood humors and utilized their knowledge and the knowledge of medieval physicians to help remedy illnesses, whether physical, emotional, or mental. Medieval physicians, like Chaucer's Physician, studied the human condition through a Hippocratic and Galenic understanding of the physical and psychological body. Chaucer explains that the "[Doctour of Phisik] knew the cause of everich maladye, / Were it of hoot, or coold, or moyste, or drye, / And where they engendred, and of what humour" (GP 419-21). That is, the physician is someone who knows the cause of every sickness, whether it is hot, cold, moist, or dry, and what humor was caused the sickness. Chaucer's physician, like Hippocrates, researched environmental interactions and causes including astronomy. Robert Alder explains that "[Hippocratic physicians] believed that disease occurred when some kind of change upset the normal balance of competing forces in the body. These forces manifested themselves in the form of four basic fluids or humors – blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile" (10). These four basic humors were later expounded by Galen in the first century.

Galen took the ideology of the four basic humors and combined them to make what he called temperaments, which are equivalent to the modern understanding of personalities. Altogether, Galen had nine temperaments that descended from the original four. The first temperament was an equally balanced personality among all four humors. A person with this temperament would have acted normal and not had any physical illnesses. The four, what Kagan states as "less ideal," were when one of the four humors became dominant. For example, someone whose bloody humor was in excess may need to undergo bloodletting to reach an equally balanced temperament. The last four

temperaments resulted when two humors were paired together and dominated the complementary pair, and these four were the temperamental categories Galen called melancholic, sanguine, choleric, and phlegmatic (Kagan 2). Kagan explains that “each was the result of an excess of one of the bodily humors that produced, in turn, the imbalance in paired qualities” (2). In the Middle Ages, Galen’s ideology of the nine temperaments was narrowed down to just the last four: melancholic, sanguine, choleric, and phlegmatic. These four humors were what medieval audiences would have understood in combination with the fluids, black bile, blood, yellow bile, and phlegm. Galen took the fluids and added a certain pair and also connected the elements, seasons, and directions. The phlegmatic humor was connected to phlegm, winter, north, and the element of water. The sanguine humor was connected to blood, spring, east, and the element of air. The choleric humor was connected to yellow bile, summer, south, and the element of fire. And the melancholic humor was connected to black bile, autumn, west, and the element of earth. Each humor (phlegmatic, sanguine, choleric, and melancholic) had a combination of the physical conditions, cold, dry, moist, and hot. For example, in addition to the previously mentioned, the phlegmatic was a combination of cold and moist, the sanguine a combination of moist and hot, the choleric humor was a combination of hot and dry, and the melancholic humor was a combination of dry and cold (Kagan 3). These combinations are what Galen labeled as temperaments, but have become more commonly known as the humors.

As the humoral theory grew to a broader understanding, physical appearances and characteristics were connected to each humor, and by the Middle Ages, humorology was understood and used by most people. For instance, medieval audiences would have

understood that someone who had a melancholic humor would have been a person with sloped shoulders, an oval face, and large eyes. People were categorized by their humor, and were demonstrated many different aspects of their physical appearance, and this ideology remained the most common practice of medicine until the eighteenth century. Medieval audiences would have been familiar with all of the humoral connections and understanding. Examining the description of the Pardoner will provide several pieces of evidence that he is a sanguine man. There is not one particular feature that proves he is sanguine, but looking at his hair, face, neck, and voice together will provide crucial pieces of information in understanding his sanguinity.

PHYSICAL SANGUINITY

As each character is introduced in the General Prologue, Chaucer provides his readers with specific details about his or her physical appearance, profession, and personal qualities. As Robyn Malo explains, Chaucer spends only forty-five lines on the Pardoner's description, fourteen of which describe his physical features (82). Like Malo, many critics place an emphasis on the relics being described in the General Prologue because Chaucer spends more lines explaining the relics than the Pardoner's physical appearance. However, the physical description of the Pardoner is more important to understand his humor. The General Prologue begins by describing his physical description:

This Pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,
But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex;
By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,
And therwith he his shuldres overspradde;
But thynne it lay, by colpons oon and oon. (GP 675-79)

Chaucer uses these first five lines to explain and illustrate the Pardoner's hair. Chaucer spends more lines on the Pardoner's hair than any of his other physiological features. The Pardoner's long locks of golden hair lie thinly on his shoulders and are not covered with his hood, but a cap. According to Randy Rolfe, a sanguine man is more than likely to be victim of premature balding, which is an outward expression of the sanguine humor being imbalanced (55). The Pardoner's long, yet thin hair is part of his outward expression of his inward imbalance. Others like Walter Clyde Curry argue that the long, thin hair depicts the Pardoner as a cunning man. Curry quotes Antonius Polemon Laodicensis's

claims that “long and soft hair, immoderately fine in texture and reddish or yellow in color ‘indicates an impoverished blood, lack of virility, and effeminacy of mind; and the sparser the hair, the more cunning and deceptive is the man’” (58). Polemon’s evaluation of the Pardoner as a cunning and deceptive man is not wrong because through his later actions he is deceptive. Yet, Polemon’s explanation of blonde hair indicating an impoverished blood could be evaluated as somewhat problematic in connection with the sanguine humor. At first glance, this description could be interpreted as a lack of blood; however, the description means a lack of nutrition within the blood itself, not a lack of blood within the body.

Galen provided a unique understanding of the way the two central organs worked properly together to transfer blood and nutrients to the entire body. Galen believed the liver was the central organ for veins and the brain received blood from the liver through the nerves, which then created psychic pneuma:

The brain pumped psychic pneuma out through the nerves, which he thought were hollow, to the muscles and sense organs. The liver absorbed the digested food, changed it into blood, and sent it to the heart via the large vein at the top of the liver. It also transformed pneuma into “vegetative pneuma,” and sent this primary source of nourishment to the vena cava at the top of the heart, from which it flowed throughout the body. (Alder 34)

Therefore, according to Galen, the nourishment of blood came from the foods that were ingested and then digested by the liver. This Galenic theory was also utilized in the Middle Ages and many medieval physicians needed to be “proficient in theory and

practice, the two main branches into which medieval medicine is usually divided” (Curry 5). The Pardoner’s thin hair indicates his lack of nourishment in his blood, but not a lack of blood. The Pardoner’s excessive blood and excessive lack of nourishment in that blood indicate his sanguine humor.

A lack of nourishment may not have been uncommon among the lay people of medieval England because of poverty or healthy foods being less available. However, the Pardoner does not have a shortage in money and would have been able to supply his need for food. Yet, in *The Pardoner’s Introduction* after the Host has asked the Pardoner to tell his tale, the Pardoner takes a moment to overindulge in ale and cake. Ale of the Middle Ages was very similar to present-day beer, the only difference being the present-day additive of hops. Arikha presents a translation of the Hippocratic *Regimen sanitatis Salernitatum*, which states that

Beer nourishes thick humours, gives strength,
Fattens the flesh, produces blood,
Provokes urine, has a laxative effect, causes gas,
And has a cooling effect. (102)

Curry, R.F. Yeager, and Robert E. Nichols, Jr., all agree that the Pardoner’s overindulgent behavior before he tells his tale provides clear evidence that the Pardoner is a glutton, which is the sin he preaches to abstain from doing. Yet, they do not examine the Pardoner’s gluttony as a way to help his imbalanced humor. An imbalanced sanguine humor can produce an overabundance of heat and moisture. This heat and moisture can cause a need for cold and dry to counterbalance, and sometimes food or drink was used for this counterbalance. Before the Pardoner will tell his tale, he claims, “I wol bothe

drynke and eten of a cake'” (PardT 322). For a person’s personality and health to remain in balance, all four fluids need to be in balance with one another. For example, winter is cold and moist and it is common for people to contract the flu. Their phlegmatic humor becomes dominant and consuming certain foods can rebalance the humors and heal the sickness. The pilgrimage takes place during springtime, and moisture and heat can cause an imbalance in the blood. The ale that the Pardoner drinks provides his body with the cooling effect his body needs and it also provides nourishment to his thick humor, blood. The Pardoner’s impoverished blood, as expressed through his sparse, thin, yellow hair, receives nourishment through his perpetual drinking. The more the Pardoner indulges himself drinking the ale, the more his blood is nourished. However, the ale also aids in the production of more blood. By cooling his body, the Pardoner’s attempts to rebalance his humor could make the imbalance worse.

Scholars like Nichols and Joseph R. Millichap explain that the ale and cake represent transubstantiation or the Eucharist that was performed in Mass. During Mass, the congregation joined together to fulfill the Sacrament of the Eucharist and gave offerings to the church. Medieval people, like today’s Roman Catholics, believed in the sanctity of the Eucharist as a Sacrament and the reality of Jesus’ blood and body, which is known as transubstantiation. Transubstantiation is the belief that the bread and wine are Jesus’s body and blood, and the bread and wine must be consecrated by a priest or bishop before Jesus embodies the elements. Millichap argues that “the cake and ale he consumes before beginning his tale represent the degradation of the sacramental bread and wine which should be his real sustenance” (107). If the Pardoner’s intent is to degrade the sacrament, it does not affect his imbalanced humor, but his consumption of the ale or

blood does. Symbolically, the ale is the blood of Jesus, which is believed to be shed for all the sins of humanity. As the Pardoner consumes the ale, he consumes the blood of Jesus and provides another symbolic connection to the sanguine humor. The blood was already shed from Jesus and now that the Pardoner is consuming the ale, the blood becomes metaphorically excessive. The ale represents the excess blood and while the Pardoner drinks the ale, he is nourishing his physical blood. The Pardoner's act of degradation of the sacrament is not just in the consumption of the ale, but also in the eating of the cake.

The cake is physically eaten to soak up the excess humor because the Pardoner needs to ingest dry food. The Pardoner's reason for eating the cake has been the part of several arguments. The *OED* defines cake in the Middle Ages as "a comparatively small flattened sort of bread, round or oval, or otherwise regularly shaped" ("cake" *OED*). Nichols explains how others, like Kittridge, have defined this cake as a wafer and compared it to the bread of the Eucharist. As with the ale, the cake is an outward representation of the Eucharist and the degrading behavior of the Pardoner. The Pardoner will not speak until he has eaten the cake, and the reason is to try to balance his humor before telling his tale. Cakes in the medieval period were normally made by poorer people and consisted of ground grain and water and were bland. During pilgrimages, many people sold these cakes to the travelers, so it was not uncommon to have cakes on a trip. The dry, bland cake is a physical representation of adding more of the dry or earth humor into the Pardoner's diet in hopes of balancing. With the mixture of the cooling ale, the Pardoner's snack is directly connected to the melancholic humor, which is the complete opposite of the sanguine humor. By ingesting cake and the ale that is directly

connected to the melancholic humor, the Pardoner is aggressively attacking the imbalance. However, most scholars examine the Pardoner's actions as gluttonous and blasphemous, and I agree with those interpretations, although those interpretations do not extend the argument to include the Pardoner's sanguine humor. When his sanguine humor is examined in connection to his reason for drinking ale and eating cake, it points to an opportunity for him to rebalance his sanguine humor.

A man who is sanguine is normally described as having reddish or ruby cheeks. Although the Pardoner is not defined as having ruddy cheeks, he is portrayed as having a youthful appearance. Arikha describes the sanguine as being associated with childhood or youth. The childhood of a man's life was considered to be governed by the sanguine humor. In the General Prologue the narrator continues the Pardoner's physical description by explaining, "No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have; / As smothe it was as it were late shave" (689-90). Curry quotes Goclenius stating that "a man beardless by nature is endowed with a fondness for women and for crafty dealings, inasmuch as he is impotent in performing the works of Venus" (qtd. in Curry 58). Goclenius's critique about beardless characters is rather complex and multifaceted; nevertheless, it is a unique understanding of a man from the Middle Ages described the same way as the Pardoner. However, Alistair Minnis explains that the Pardoner's beardless face is a product of a combination of humors (149). Minnis explains that women normally had a combination of cold and humid and men normally had a combination of hot and dry humors. Minnis cites (pseudo) Aristotle, who explains that because women and eunuchs are not hairy they tend to have excess moisture (150). The Pardoner's beardless face demonstrates excess moisture, which connects him to the sanguine humor. Minnis does not suggest a specific

combination, but alludes to the Pardoner's humor as a combination of cold and moist because he does not have hair to prove his capability of sex. Men who had underdeveloped or no testicles were considered to be cold and dry, which is the melancholic humor. However, the melancholic humor is associated with maturity and being introspective (Arikha 10). This humor becomes problematic when equated to the Pardoner because he acts neither mature nor introspective; therefore, the Pardoner's humor is not cold and dry. Nonetheless, the Pardoner is a man and therefore would have a combination of hot and dry humors, but he is beardless. His beardlessness demonstrates moisture instead of dryness. Therefore, the Pardoner's humors are hot and moist, which is the combination of the sanguine humor. Not only does the Pardoner's beardless face brings speculation about his sexual identity, it also brings speculation about his humor.

According to Curry, a beardless man was considered to have a partiality towards women; however, many scholars would disagree that the Pardoner is such a man. This disagreement is stemmed by complication with the Pardoner's sexual preferences when he proclaims he will "have a joly wench in every toun" (PardT 453). Most would agree with the interpretation that the Pardoner is untruthful in order to portray himself as more manly and heterosexual. Several arguments allude to the Pardoner and the homosexual tendencies he has for the Summoner, while others debate that the Pardoner is a eunuch rather by birth or castration. It would seem that his cocky proclamation is a cover up for his impeding physical issues. The third part of Golcenius's examination expresses an impotence to accomplish the works of Venus or sex and love; therefore, he would have been physically unable to have a wench in every town. Whether his claim is a masquerade or not, it points to his youthful indiscretions, youthful arrogance, and

youthful appearance. His appearance points directly to a young sanguine man who is still completely immersed in his youthful tendencies. His beardless face connects to his ungodly behavior, displays his youthful appearance, and depicts his sanguinity.

Rolfe explains that a “sanguine is smaller than average build, solid of shape, rounded behind, small but angular shoulders, shorter than average neck, with shapely legs and arms” and critiques the face as tending to be “heart-shaped with deep set, almond-shaped eyes and petite, rosebud mouth, and often curly hair” (50 and 53). Now, she does mention that these descriptions are not always found in every sanguine person because every person has a mixture of the four humors. Unfortunately, Chaucer’s description of the Pardoner is limited in the General Prologue; however, the *Ellesmere Manuscript*, written in the early fifteenth century, exemplifies the Canterbury pilgrims and provides the earliest pictures of all the pilgrims. This manuscript illustrates many of the pilgrims. Here is the picture of the Pardoner. There are several illustrations of Chaucer’s Pardoner, but the timeliness of the *Ellesmere Chaucer* provides an accurate visible account we have for the Canterbury pilgrims. Figure 2 is a picture of the Pardoner’s portrait illustrated in the *Ellesmere Chaucer*. The Pardoner’s clothing depicts a clergy man complete with the Saint Veronica emblem and cross in his hands. In comparison to the illustrations of the other pilgrims, the Pardoner’s stature is small, again making his appearance youthful. In the picture, the Pardoner daintily sits upon the mule and holds the most sacred emblem of the Catholic Church, the cross. His face does not show any sign of a beard, and His face structure seems to be heart-shaped, which, as Rolfe demonstrates, is a sanguine physical feature. The Pardoner’s eyes are deep-set and almond-shaped as Rolfe’s physical representation of sanguine eyes suggests (53). The narrator continues his account of the

Pardoner by stating that “glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare” (GP 684). Curry argues that glaring eyes “are directly associated with [shame], impudence, gluttony, and licentiousness” (58). None of these associations would be deemed inaccurate when it comes to the Pardoner and his unprecedented actions, yet his glaring eyes in this picture express a look of shock or insecurity. His eyes round out the sullen look of impotence and lack of humility. The Pardoner truly does not care for others’ well-being and is conceited and fake in all his acts and words. Pretentiousness is another connection to a youthful behavior, which is an attitude that can represent someone whose sanguine humor is imbalanced.



Figure 2: *Ellesmere Chaucer*, the Pardoner, EL 26 C9f. The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Another physical feature of the Pardoner that has been analyzed is his neck. Curry quotes that Goclenius “is of the opinion that a ‘long, slim neck is a sign of garrulity, haughtiness of spirit, and of evil habits’” (58). Here, Curry uses Goclenius’s medieval reference to men with long necks as being haughty and evil. The Pardoner’s actions are evil because he takes joy and pleasure as he swindles money from people. However, the

Pardoner's neck is not long, when the Pardoner states "Thanne peyne I me to strecche forth the nekke / and est and west upon the peple I bekke" (PardT 395-96), he explains how he conducts his preaching to the masses and that it pains him to stretch his neck, though this pain indicates a struggle. The General Prologue does not affirm the Pardoner's long neck as Curry suggests, but the fact that when the Pardoner has to stretch provides another alternative to the length of his neck. Rolfe claims that a sanguine has a shorter than average neck (50). Granted, the Pardoner's description could be another masquerade to express the spiritual pain or the struggle he has when he preaches, gives pardons, and takes money every wretch. Yet, most scholars would agree that the Pardoner does not truly care for the people he cons. But that does not exclude the reading that his "neck pain" is a form of a struggle not a physical pain. Though the Pardoner's length of neck is not mentioned, the picture from the *Ellesmere Chaucer* shows a shorter than average neck. The Pardoner's neck becomes one more feature that connects him to the sanguine humor, just like his unique voice.

One characteristic that provides complexity to the Pardoner is his voice, and many scholars theorize why he sounds like a woman. However, these conclusions do not connect his voice to his sanguine humor. The General Prologue defines the Pardoner's voice "as small as hath a goot" (GP 688). Curry cites the Middle English version of the *Secreta Secretorum* that says, "[A]mong other tokens of a shameless man are 'ryst opyn eighyn and glysinge,' and adds the significant remark that 'tho that haue the voice hei, smale and swete and pleasant, bene neshe and haue lytill of manhode, and i-likened to women'" (qtd. in Curry 57-58). This explanation states that the Pardoner was more like a woman than a man because his voice sounded like a goat. It could be that the Pardoner

never went through puberty because he was born a eunuch, as Curry argues, and demonstrated to readers his cunning and deceptive behavior. The sound of his voice could also be his commonality to women, whose humors were known to be moister than those of men. Like the Pardoner's beardless face, his feminine voice provides another connection to the sanguine humor. Nonetheless, this continual ambiguity Chaucer uses makes a precise understanding of the Pardoner's characteristics challenging, while providing another way to read his character as sanguine, which was known to be commonly connected with springtime.

The Canterbury Tales starts the pilgrimage by describing the setting, which is an essential detail that demonstrates the Pardoner's imbalanced sanguinity. The General Prologue states, "Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote / The droghte of March hath perced to the roote" (GP 1-2). Chaucer's pilgrims start their famous pilgrimage to Canterbury in the middle of spring when the April showers bring forth new life. The pilgrims are traveling during the rainy season and the "Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth," (GP 5). Spring time was a busy time for pilgrims and palmers, but it was also the season of the year, as Jerome Kagan explains, when "the body naturally became warmer and more moist...; hence, people became more sanguine" (Kagan 3). As previously discussed, the sanguine humor was connected to the season of spring because the temperatures began to rise, and the rains made the atmosphere moister. As Chaucer begins the tales, there is an immediate connection to sanguinity and an opportunity for the sanguine humor to become imbalanced. Granted, since it is springtime, all of the pilgrims' sanguine humors could potentially become imbalanced, but the Pardoner is the only character whose questionable actions can be identified as a sanguine humor that is

imbalanced. Therefore, the pilgrimage's springtime setting provides another foundational component to proving the Pardoner's dominant humor is sanguine and could potentially become imbalanced. The April showers replenishing the dry ground combine the moist and dry earthly elements of the sanguine humor. Also, the wind provides a breeze for the pilgrims to enjoy their journey and is also symbolic for its direction into the east. The most basic foundation for the opportunity to have an imbalanced sanguine humor is set in the first five lines of the General Prologue.

SAINT'S SANGUINARY SYMBOLISM

Saint Veronica

The Pardoner has an emblem sewn on his cap, which is a part of his physical description, but this emblem also has a symbolic connection to the sanguine humor. The depiction of the Pardoner states that the Pardoner has “A vernycle ... sowed upon his cappe” (GP 685). The “vernycle” has been identified as a badge of Saint Veronica and was the sign or emblem for someone who had participated on a pilgrimage to Rome. These signs or emblems could be sewn onto hats or caps, like the Pardoner’s, or onto the sleeves of clothing. According to the Roman Catholic tradition, “Veronica is the woman who wiped Christ’s perspiration when he was carrying the cross to his crucifixion” (Sandoval 140). The tradition holds that the cloth she used to wipe Jesus’ brow was imprinted with his Holy Face, which later became known as the Veil of Veronica, the Holy Veil, or Veronica’s Veil. It is known that “during the Middle Ages, devotion to the Holy Face spread throughout Europe” (Nevins). Unfortunately, there is very little truly known about this veil, but historians document its residence in Rome during Pope Innocent III’s papal reign until it was reportedly destroyed during a sack of Rome in 1527. Nonetheless, the Pardoner proudly begins his Canterbury pilgrimage making an audacious statement about his recent endeavors and the conception of his pardons.

The “vernycle” the Pardoner wears immediately connects to Saint Veronica. Medieval audiences would have been familiar with the Veil of Veronica as well as her miraculous healing. His reason for wearing the emblem in essence denotes his faithful behavior to the papacy; however, the Pardoner’s gaudy actions speak otherwise. Recently, the Pardoner has returned to England and now travels with the pilgrims to

Canterbury, while boastfully displaying his overflowing wallet filled with papal pardon slips. The falsified pardons that are overflowing from the Pardoner's wallet demonstrates his haughty personality. Also, his behavior represents his ability to offer indulgences regardless of the person's soul. Many scholars argue that Chaucer is making a statement about the Pardoner's character, profession, and lack of humility, because the Pardoner's relics and pardons were fake. James Rhodes suggests that "The *vernycle* does represent many of those things that the Pardoner is said outwardly to covet or desire: youth, the power of miracles, the need for spiritual wholeness, the absence of pain and suffering, and the redemptive grace of pardon" (38). Rhodes's interpretation is not wrong, but he does not look at the "vernycle" in connection with the humors and the "vernycle's" symbolic meaning, which is essential in understanding the totality of the Pardoner's character. The Pardoner wears the emblem not just as an outward expression of the conception of the overflowing, but rather through the identity of Saint Veronica. This is another connection to the Pardoner's sanguine humor and symbolic connection to the overabundance of blood, which is a direct result of an imbalanced sanguine humor.

The symbol of Saint Veronica connects to blood in extreme amounts. As previously stated, Saint Veronica is the woman known to have wiped Jesus's brow while he was carrying his cross to Golgotha's hill, and the cloth later became known as the Holy Veil or Veronica's Veil. However, some manuscripts like the Gospel of Nicodemus identify Veronica as the woman Bernice, whom Jesus heals of hemorrhaging. Bernice is an English translation of the Greek name βερενίκη, which means "bearer of victory," and Veronica is the Latin translation. Therefore, the Bernice in the Greek manuscript has been translated to Veronica in the Latin and English versions. According to Thomas

Nelson, the Gospel of Nicodemus was written by Nicodemus, a disciple of Jesus (22). This Gospel actually receives its name during the Middle Ages, and Chaucer would have at least had access to it. Granted, the Gospel of Nicodemus has been excluded from the modern Biblical canon, yet Nelson states,

The Gospel of Nicodemus was in use among Christians and churches at the end of the third century. It was considered Canonical until its removal by various edicts and councils of the early church. There is much evidence of supernatural phenomena presented in The Gospel, backed up by Biblical evidence. (Nelson 22)

The Gospel of Nicodemus's canonical inclusion could be important if it were being used to help analyze scripture, but in this case, it will be used to identify a character and not used to reinterpret events.

The Gospel of Nicodemus provides a better understanding of who this woman was that Jesus healed: “[A] certain woman named Veronica, said, I was afflicted with an issue of blood twelve years, and I touched the hem of his garments, and presently the issue of my blood stopped” (Gospel of Nicodemus 5:26). In the book of Mark, the miracle is a little more detailed, as the woman had been suffering for twelve years and she knew if she touched Jesus she would be healed. She made her way through the crowd and touched the hem of his garment and she was healed (*NIV* Mark 5:25-34). Yet, the Gospel of Nicodemus recognizes her as Veronica, who is the same woman on the emblem the Pardoner wears on his cap. The Pardoner has a symbolic connection to Saint Veronica through her excessive blood. The Pardoner's devotion to the Roman pilgrimage is not just a spiritual representation, but is a physiological and temporal connection to the

hemorrhaging she suffered. The excessive blood is another association with the sanguine humor and its imbalance in the Pardoner. When the sanguine humor becomes imbalanced, the humor has produced an excess of blood, which needs to be treated. The Pardoner may not be physically bleeding, but symbolically this links him to the sanguine humor.

Saint Thomas à Becket

In addition to Saint Veronica, there is another Saint who is symbolically connected to the sanguine humor and to the Pardoner: Saint Thomas à Becket. Many pilgrims who attend pilgrimages seek spiritual or physical healing. The Canterbury pilgrims embark to Canterbury to be blessed by Saint Thomas and receive their healing at the shrine through relics that were once his or a representation of his life. However, the Pardoner's reason for attending the pilgrimage is not his need of healing or his being dedicated to his profession. Rather, as some scholars argue, the Pardoner's presence on the pilgrimage is for his own monetary gain. Performing his sermon wherever he goes in hopes to add extra money to his own pockets seems to be his only obligation. For the Pardoner, his connection to Saint Thomas is more than greed, even though he is greedy; his connection is a symbolic representation of his sanguinity.

Saint Thomas's murder in 1170 was very bloody and gruesome. Just like Saint Veronica, Saint Thomas's death connects the Pardoner to the overabundance of blood. As previously stated, excessive blood represents the sanguine humor. The Pardoner would have been well aware of Saint Thomas's personal history of being an extravagant person who loved food, wine, and clothes, yet when Saint Thomas was consecrated as the

Archbishop of Canterbury he changed his demeanor. An excerpt from *All Things Chaucer* explains that “Thomas became a model archbishop...,” and some accounts say he began caring for the poor, wearing inexpensive clothing, and sleeping on stones for penance of previous sins. Daniel Knapp describes in detail the monks’ depiction of Saint Thomas’s murdered body. The monks discovered hair breeches that clung to his body “like a second skin,” and “the breeches sheltered not only the usual lice but also maggots, in a long open wound doubtless caused by the garment itself” (Knapp 6). As Knapp reports, the breeches are a sign of true penance and Saint Thomas’s willingness to be chastened (5-6). These breeches absorbed the blood of Saint Thomas and were hung in the shrine with other relics. Saint Thomas’s actions prove to many his sanctification and humility, and any pilgrim who was traveling to see the shrine would “kiss the breeches” as a sign of reverence and penance (5). These breeches symbolically associate with the sanguine humor and the excess of blood that would have been absorbed in them. These breeches do not make the Pardoner equivalent to Saint Thomas, but provide another small connection to the sanguine humor. Not only is the Pardoner wearing an emblem that is connected to an excess of blood, but he is also visiting a shrine that has bloody relics.

Saint Thomas’s not-so-humble beginnings brought him to a place of humility and genuine care for his church. A number of pilgrims came to Canterbury, and “his tomb remained fashionable, especially for those who could not afford a more exotic pilgrimage destination” (“Thomas À Becket”). The trip to Canterbury was not an expensive trip; therefore, the arguments that claim the Pardoner is just attending to become rich are less plausible. Granted, the Pardoner is looking to make money, but he will not make a fortune and he knows this to be true. Money was not an issue for the Pardoner as he

boasts about making one hundred marks a year, which was equivalent to sixty-six pounds. According to Lawrence Office and Samuel Williamson's calculations in 1380 sixty-six pounds of income or wealth would be equivalent to forty-three thousand pounds or sixty-three thousand dollars in today's currency. The Pardoner may not have been the wealthiest on the pilgrimage, but he has enough money to sustain his needs. Therefore, he could be attending the pilgrimage to look to Saint Thomas as a real opportunity to alleviate his greedy behavior and receive penance. Alan Kendall reports "that the great pilgrimages [were] imposed as [penance] for more serious crimes" and the tomb of Saint Thomas of Canterbury was listed as a great pilgrimage (109). The Pardoner's greedy actions and lack of care for the people he swindles are considered serious crimes because of his position within the church. These actions point to a pretentious man and are immediate connections between the Pardoner and the sanguine humor. In addition, the bloody breeches represent not only Saint Thomas's inner desire to glorify God and live an unpretentious life, but they also represent his ability to live this way, which the Pardoner is unable to do. In comparison, the Pardoner behaves completely different than Saint Thomas, and this comparison helps to explain how the Pardoner's sanguine humor is imbalanced. The Pardoner is overcome with greed and an inability to subdue his greedy behavior; however, his spiritual and physical journey to the shrine can help him overcome his greedy behavior. The Pardoner's reason for attending the pilgrimage is not an accident because he is visiting a shrine consecrated to a man who was brutally and bloodily murdered. His pilgrimage to Saint Thomas gives him the opportunity to receive forgiveness through penance, but the Pardoner is more obsessed with greed. Although the Pardoner's true reasons for attending the pilgrimage are unknown, he is still symbolically

connected to the blood of Saint Thomas. However, the audience does not know if the Pardoner takes this opportunity given to him by the shrine of Saint Thomas, if he kisses the bloody breeches, or if he partakes in the Sacrament of penance, but the audience can be assured he will at least finish the journey. What is also known is the Pardoner's greed, which is depicted through Saint Ronan.

Saint Ronan

There is another Saint whom the Host, Harry Bailly, and the Pardoner both swear by in the Pardoner's Introduction: Saint Ronan. During the Host's speech in the introduction, he calls the Physician "a proper man, / And lyk a prelat, by Seint Ronyan" (PardT 309-10). Towards the end of the introduction, the Host asks the Pardoner to "Telle us som myrthe or japes right anon" and the Pardoner utilizes the same language as the Host and states "It shal be doon ... by Seint Ronyon!" (PardT 318-20). According to *The Riverside Chaucer*, Saint Ronan was a Scottish Saint (320n310). However, there were at least twelve Scottish saints named Saint Ronan, and a sixth century "patron of the abbey of Tavistock, and several other places" like Cornwall and Brittany (*The Book of the Saints* 617). There is also a sixth century saint known as Ronan of Locronan, which is a town just north of Quimper, France, and it has not been confirmed that the latter two saints were the same or not. Therefore, there is speculation about the true identity of the saint that the Host and the Pardoner swear to, and some scholars like Jacqueline de Weever explain that it is really Saint Ninian because Ninian means "testicle," while others state he is a first century Celtic saint whose legend stems around a holly and birth control (316). Though there are some uncertainties on whom exactly the Host and the

Pardoner are swearing by, the exact identity of the man who is sworn by does not devalue the Pardoner's symbolic connection to this saint. However, for this examination, Saint Ronan from Locronan will be evaluated as the saint these men swore by because his French heritage is essential to the symbolic connection to the sanguine humor. Even though Saint Ronan's true identity is speculative, his name is most important. The Host uses his name as a way to justify religious talk that sounds more blasphemous than genuine or he uses it to make fun of saints. The name Ronan is a vital part of the Pardoner's symbolic connection to this saint, and is not just a name by which he will tell his tale. The Middle English pronunciation of the word *Ronyon* is very similar to the French pronunciation of the word *rognon*. In French, *rognon* means kidney ("rognon" *Larousse's French/English Dictionary*). Granted, there is no definite evidence that Saint Ronan was named for a kidney, but being from Locronan his name was French. If we then take it one step further and look to what kidneys represent in medieval times, then there is an interesting connection to the Pardoner and the astrological sign, Libra, through Saint Ronan.

In the Middle Ages, each body part was identified with one of the astrological symbols, which was a part of understanding the humors. The Zodiac Man became an icon used to explain the astrological symbols and each organ, and also the body part that was governed by that particular sign. Most depictions display a man who is naked but has symbols all over his body. From top to bottom, there is the ram sitting on the man's head, next there is bull on top of the man's shoulders, then there are twins on either shoulder. The next symbols are the crab that sits between his pectoral muscles, a lion in the center of his chest, and a woman in the upper abdomen region. The scale is situated in the lower

abdomen region, a scorpion in his genital region, and an archer on his upper thighs. At his knees the Capricorn goat sits, at his legs a person pours out water, and under his feet are two fish. Each symbol is placed in its respective place according to what that sign governs. These illustrations were normally colorized and used to explain astrological connections to the zodiac symbols as well as to the body parts.

In the middle of the Zodiac Man is the balance symbol, which is governed by the kidney and the astrological sign, Libra. Libra is one of the three signs governed by the sanguine humor, as medicine and astrology were so closely related in the Middle Ages. Libras dislike hard work and are generally defined as being lazy; however, they have great instincts when it comes to making money. They are normally liked by everyone and are known as being diplomatic and committed, but also as being superficial and untrustworthy. Chaucer never provides clarity on the Pardoner's birthdate or zodiac sign, but uses astrology in *The Miller's Tale*, *The Merchant's Tale*, and *The Man of Law's Tale* and many other tales. Nonetheless, the inadvertent swearing by Saint Ronan provides a unique connection to the Libra sign.

A Libra's sign is the scale, which is normally used in businesses, tax collections, or other forms of money distributions, and is also used as a symbol of justice. Medieval understanding of astrological symbols is consistent with a modern interpretation. A person's date of birth would determine the astrological symbol that would govern his or her personality, and to some degree the person would embody the sign's characteristics. For example, the astrological symbol for a Capricorn is a goat and someone who is a Capricorn may be stubborn, but willing to complete hard work. Symbols were given to explain a type-set for characteristics of those particular people. Therefore, it is fitting that

the scale is the sign of the Libra, which can be physically associated with the Pardoner because of his greedy desires to have more money and take from others, but can become problematic because of his failure to demonstrate justice. This begs the question, if the Pardoner is a Libra and his scales suggest balance and justice, then why is he stealing money and does not care for the people's souls? If the scales are examined symbolically than there is an instance of sanguine connection and an understanding of his physical actions.

The previous physical and symbolic connections made to the Pardoner being a sanguine all point to an opportunity for his humor's being imbalanced. Granted, looking at each one by itself does not prove the Pardoner's sanguinity, but all of them together provide accumulative evidence of his sanguinity and sanguinity imbalance. Making the Pardoner's imbalanced sanguine humor balanced is important, and symbolically the scale can help him accomplish this task. As his sanguine humor becomes more imbalanced, his need for money becomes greater and he begins to steal more money and scam more people in order to make the scale balanced. More than likely he did not use a scale to count his own fortunes. However, the scales symbolically represent balance and justice, which lacks because of his imbalanced humor. Out-of-balance humors can potentially cause a normal behavior to change, and the Pardoner's actions do not display balance or justice. His lack of balance is demonstrated through his need for more money; he never seems to acquire enough, and his lack of justice is displayed through his manipulation of the congregation. Physically, the Pardoner's only resource to balance his symbolic scale is to thief from anyone who is gullible enough to listen to his sermon and give of their money. Utilizing the Pardoner's swearing to Saint Ronan provides a unique connection to

the astrological signs and symbols that would have been used and known by the medieval audience. Examining the Pardoner's symbolic connection to Saint Ronan, the kidney, and the Libra sign help to demonstrate his continual need to balance his sanguine humor. The Pardoner's greedy behavior demonstrates one instance caused by his imbalanced sanguine humor. The greedy behavior does not make the Pardoner sanguine, but his way of rebalancing his sanguine humor is through greed and thus his sanguine humor has caused this behavior. The Pardoner's inability to keep his humors balanced has also caused him to become greedy and take money from gullible people and give them falsified pardons, but his greed also outwardly expresses his overabundant sexuality.

SANGUINE-CAUSED BEHAVIOR

Greedy Sexuality

One of the most prominent features of people who are sanguine is their hypersexual libido, which is strong and very apparent in their behavior; however, this could become problematic in connection to the Pardoner. The Pardoner's sexuality has been a part of the many debates and conversations in Chaucerian scholarship, and it still generates new ideas and claims. Most of the disagreements stem from one line from the Pardoner's description in the General Prologue, which states "I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare" (GP 691). This one line produces several arguments about the Pardoner's genitals, sexual preference, and overall sexual identity. Curry claims the Pardoner is *eunuchus ex nativitate* or born a eunuch, while Robert P. Miller suggests he is a scriptural eunuch (Curry 59, Miller 182). Richard Firth Green asserts the Pardoner is a womanizer (Green 307). However, Monica McAlpine argues that the Pardoner is homosexual and Alistair Minnis proposes that the Pardoner does not have one single sexual identity (McAlpine 8, Minnis 147). Yet, Jeffrey Myers adds a new claim to this argument and states that most of these arguments are just based on the singular assertion in the General Prologue, but that examining the entirety of the Pardoner's character suggests he is a female eunuch (54). These scholars disagree upon the Pardoner's sexual identity and preferences, but all agree that his sexuality is important to understanding his character, which is also important to his sanguinity.

According to Rolfe, people who have a dominant sanguine humor have a strong libido (83). Even though the Pardoner claims he has a wench in every town, as previously stated, his claim is more of a masquerade. Scholars are all unsure if the Pardoner is as

sexually active as he professes; therefore, his lack of sexual activity could potentially negate his being a sanguine man. Nevertheless, there is one argument that suggests the Pardoner's greedy behavior is a substitute for his sexual needs. In *The Shipman's Tale*, a merchant is married to a lovely woman who is beautiful, but their sexual relationship is mediocre. A young monk, named Sir John, visits their home and explains that he is a relative of the merchant. In the tale, the wife confides in Sir John about her husband's frugal behavior and implores with Sir John to provide her with a loan. He agrees to the loan and secretly seeks the money from the merchant. The merchant is more than willing to provide the money to Sir John and he boastfully declares that money is his plow. "But o thing is, ye knowe it wel ynogh / Of chapmen, that hir moneie is hir plogh" (ShT 287-88). Plows are used to prepare the ground to plant crops, and in this merchant's claim, he expresses how money is his means of planting. Plowing is a physical job that requires hours of laboring in a field, or in the case of the merchant laboring to make all his money. Yet, the connotation of plowing has often been associated with sex and the statement made by the merchant suggests that all merchants have the ability to satisfy their sexual needs through money.

As for the Pardoner, his occupation places him in the category of merchant as he sells items and makes a profit. The Pardoner's ability to sell faulty relics to gullible people displays his need for money and greedy behavior, which is a characteristic he does not deny about himself. If money is a merchant's plow and we consider the Pardoner as a merchant because he is able to make profits, then money is also the Pardoner's plow. The Pardoner confesses in the prologue:

For I wol preche and begge in sondry landes;

I wol nat do no labour with myne handes,
Ne make baskettes and lyve therby,
By cause I wol nat beggen ydelly. (PardT 443-46)

The Pardoner claims that he will preach and beg to gain his money and he will not labor with his hands because when he begs it will not be in vain. He knows that the people will offer their money to receive their pardons and that he will not have to commit any effort. Examining the Pardoner's labor in connection with the plow at first becomes problematic because he states he will not work with his hands, and therefore he will not utilize his plow at all. However, two lines later he explains that he does not need to labor with his hands because the people will give him their money. Money is his plow, and physical labor is not needed to use his plow. The Pardoner does not need to labor with his hands or fulfill his own sexual desires because the people freely give him his satisfaction through their money. The people's actions in giving money to the Pardoner boost his greed, which satisfies his sexual needs.

Most scholars examine the Pardoner's greed as a way of undermining his own sermon and committing two of the seven deadly sins, greed and gluttony. However, looking at his greed as a way to fulfill his sexual desires makes his character more complex. The Pardoner's sanguine humor generates a high sexual libido, which makes his need for money greater so he can achieve sexual satisfaction. Regardless if the Pardoner has testicles or not, as Curry and other scholars argue, his sexual desires are fed through his greed. The Pardoner's greediness does not only suggest his licentious behavior and comment on his crooked profession, but it is a means for him to fulfill his sexual needs and desires. The Pardoner's sanguine humor directly influences his high

sexual libido, and even though he boasts about having “a joly wenche in every toun” (PardT 453), there is no textual evidence to suggest he is physically active in sex. With all of the different speculations about his sexuality, one part of the argument remains the same, which is his ambiguity. Considering the Pardoner’s humor as sanguine provides a better understanding the importance of his sexuality. As a sanguine, the Pardoner’s greed becomes another symbolic way for him to stay balanced, and also provides him with an opportunity to feel satisfied in a number of ways, which include sexually. Other features of the Pardoner’s character that have produced many conversations is his intent in joining the pilgrimage and why his behavior is irrational.

Irrationality and Caused Imbalance

Scholars like Melvin Storm suggest that the Pardoner’s attendance is for his relics to be a “substitute” for the “true indulgences promised by the shrine,” so he can con the pilgrims, take their money, and give them his papal indulgences (810). The Pardoner has returned from Rome with a heaping bag of pardons from Rome, and he is described as having “His walet, biforn hym in his lappe, / Bretful of pardoun comen from Rome al hoot” (GP 686-87). Debra J. Birch explains that a pilgrimage to Canterbury cost significantly less than a trip to Rome or other shrines. A horse “cost at 24d from Southwark to Canterbury, one way” and a bed cost around a penny and for “dinner with [a] beer a bit more” (Birch 202). With at least six towns between London and Canterbury, each pilgrim would need a minimum of five shillings or sixty denarius. However, the narrator explains that,

But with these likes, when that he fond

A prove person dwellynge uppon lond,

Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye

Than that the person gat in monthes tweye... . (GP 701-04)

Later, in *The Pardoner's Prologue*, the Pardoner boasts about making one hundred marks in year; therefore, in just one day he could make four shillings or forty-eight denarius, which is more than a Parson would make in two months. Granted, the Pardoner may not work every day, so the amount could be more or less than four shillings a day. There were twenty-nine pilgrims and since this was a pilgrimage that did not require ample amounts of money, their funds could have been minimal. Although the pilgrims financial statues ranged from rich to poor, if each pilgrim gave a denari then the Pardoner's profit would be just a little more than half of his normal daily gain. Normally, people gave more than just a penny for a pardon or relic because the pardon was utilized for forgiving their sins and limiting their time in purgatory. The profits the Pardoner would have made on the pilgrimage may not make him the minimum amount of money he normally receives each time he sells pardons. Granted, he could have received less than a normal day's wages, but the fact that he tries to take their money meant for the shrine is irrational. Taking money is not an irrational behavior, but rather his persistence to be the substitute for the shrine makes him irrational.

Scholars' biggest concern is determining the Pardoner's intent for attending the pilgrimage. As Storm suggests, the Pardoner tries to substitute his relics for the shrine's indulgences. The Pardoner's actions are irrational not because he is trying to make money, using relics, or selling pardons, but because he does not have a problem with being the substitute. He irrationally pretends that his relics are better than what the shrine

has to offer the pilgrims. His behavior indicates that his sanguine humor has become unbalanced. There is another indication that the Pardoner acts irrationally, and that is after he explains his con; the first person he tries to obtain money from is Harry Bailly. After the Pardoner's tale, he singles out the Host and states:

I rede that oure Hoost heere shal bigynne,
For he is moost envoluped in synne.
Com forth, sire Hoost, and offre first anon,
And thou shalt kisse the relikes everychon,
Ye, for a grote! Unbokele anon thy purs. (PardT 941-45)

The Pardoner chooses to confront Harry Bailly, and he also suggests that Harry is the "moost envoluped in synne." These five lines provide a glimpse into the Pardoner's thought process. He thinks that the Host is more sinful than any other person on the pilgrimage and confronts him in front of all the pilgrims. The Pardoner's suggestion to the Host displays the Pardoner's inability to recognize his own sin. The Pardoner makes bold claims about the Host and himself and it depicts his lack of rationality. The Pardoner's greed, as most would argue, blinds him from seeing his own spiritual problem and demonstrates his lack of concern for the other pilgrims attending the Canterbury pilgrimage. This greed makes him oblivious to the issues he constructs within the group of pilgrims, which all demonstrate his sanguine imbalance. His persistence to make money and perform the con perfectly indicates his imbalanced sanguine humor because he will not take no for an answer from the Host without becoming argumentative. The Pardoner is not of a sanguine humor because of his stubborn attitude, but his tenacious attitude is an outward expression of the sanguine imbalance. The Pardoner's imbalanced

humor keeps him from accurately seeing his materialistic need and his greedy behavior, but his sanguine humor also shows his ability to promote social interaction.

Social Interaction

The Pardoner is one of the only characters to have a number of interactions with other characters. For most of *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer's characters tell their tales and that is all the audience hears from them, but the Pardoner's thoughts and actions are depicted throughout the tales. After Chaucer introduces the Summoner, he introduces the Pardoner and explains that the Pardoner was

... his freend and his compeer,

That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.

Ful loude he soong "Com hider, love to me!"

This Sumonour bar hym a stif burdoun... . (GP 670-73)

The Pardoner and the Summoner's relationship has been argued as homosexual. However, Minnis claims that the Pardoner does not display a single sexual identity; therefore, it is impossible to state that the Pardoner and Summoner are lovers. The Pardoner and Summoner are not lovers, but more like best friends, who enjoy singing and laughing with one another. According to Rolfe, singing and being joyful is an action of someone who has a sanguine humor, and the very first moment that the Pardoner is introduced there is a sense of this humor "because he craves relationships" (70). His friendship with the Summoner depicts the Pardoner's inclinations to be joyful and sing, but it also demonstrates his ability to encourage social interactions.

After the Physician finishes his tale, the Host begins lamenting and swearing over the Physician's tale and he asks the Pardoner to "Telle us som myrthe or japes right anon" (PardT 319). The Pardoner agrees, but the pilgrims exclaim "Nay, lat hym telle us of no ribaudye! / Telle us som moral thyng, that we may leere / Som wit, and thanne wol we gladly heere" (PardT 324-26). All of the pilgrims want him to tell a tale based on morality so they may learn. The Pardoner does not object to all of their suggestions and decides to tell his tale about death. The Pardoner does not ask the pilgrims what type of tale they want him to tell, but all of them feel comfortable suggesting a moral tale, which brings all of them together in agreement. Being a sanguine man, "he makes decisions based on the effects [sic] on all present and rarely reconsiders" (Rolfe 70). The Pardoner's action of fulfilling the requests of the pilgrims depicts his need to promote social agreement. He wants to honor their wishes; therefore, he tells his tale about trying to outsmart death. As previously stated, the Pardoner completes his tale and he suggests that the Host is the biggest sinner of all the pilgrims and needs to buy some pardons. The Pardoner's accusations cause the Host to begin quarrelling with him, and the Knight interrupts and tells the Host and Pardoner:

Sire Pardoner, be glad and myrie of cheere;

And ye, sire Hoost, that been to me so deere,

I prey yow that ye kisse the Pardoner.

And Pardoner, I prey thee drawe thee neer

And, as we diden, lat us laughe and pleye. (PardT 963-67)

The two kiss and are able to continue their journey. Granted, it is the Knight who suggests that they kiss-and-make-up, but the Pardoner's actions called for someone to

step in and alleviate the problem. The Knight is the one who brings the Host and Pardoner to reconciliation, yet without the conflict there would have been no need for the Knight to be a part of the solution. This interaction with the Host provides textual evidence of his capacity to promote social interactions, whether the interactions are fulfilling the wishes of all or demoralizing the Host. The demoralizing interaction also indicates his sanguine humor and a partial imbalance. As a sanguine, the Pardoner's personality and instincts are to create an environment that everyone will enjoy in a group setting, which is demonstrated through his need to tell a moral tale that all the pilgrims want to hear. However, when he becomes argumentative with the Host, it depicts his imbalanced sanguine humor because his actions demonstrate a selfish tendency than actions that are for the good of the group. Their exchange not only requires the Knight to step in and help them come to reconciliation, it also requires the pilgrimage to stop. After the Host and the Pardoner kiss, they "ryden forth hir weye" (PardT 968), which confirms the progression of the pilgrimage was delayed. The Pardoner's sanguine humor characterizes his need to enjoy the people in the pilgrimage, but there are times when his sanguine humor is depicted as being imbalanced, and the encounter with the Host is one of those times. There are also interactions the Pardoner has with other pilgrims, like the Wife of Bath, that display his ability to bring the different pilgrims together, and also his "hot air."

Airy Communication

Sanguine humors are known as the hot, moist humors that are directly connected to the element air. "The sanguine man can be accused of being a windbag, or full of hot

air, because he or she is driven to talk, persuade, interact, and communicate” (Rolfe 70). In the chapter “Bodies” of *A Companion to Chaucer*, Linda Ehrsam Voigts states, “[I]n personality, the sanguine person was a sociable and generous extrovert (42). The *Online OED* defines a “wind-bag” as “an empty pretender, or something pretentious but unsubstantial; *esp.* a voluble and senseless talker” and “hot-air” refers to “empty or boastful talk, pretentious or insubstantial statements or claims (“wind-bag” and “hot air” *Online OED*). These definitions unswervingly point to the Pardoner, yet he is not a sanguine man because he prefers to speak pretentiously, he arrogantly speaks because he is sanguine.

The Pardoner’s Prologue gives the Pardoner an opportunity to begin his rhetorical persuasion of the pilgrims. He admittedly shares his trickery with all the pilgrims even though he does not believe a single word he shares. These words are merely “hot-air” to him and even to the Host, who does not actually buy any pardons after he is morally attacked after The Pardoner’s Tale. His prologue displays his satisfaction in making money and lack of empathy towards those whose money he steals. His relics and forged pardons falsify any true indulgence one may gain and his sermon points to his sanguine tendencies to speak boisterously. Colloquially, the Pardoner would be “full of hot air” and no one would truly want to listen to his words. Before the Pardoner has a chance to give his prologue and tale, he interrupts the Wife of Bath while she is discussing marriage in her prologue and states,

Ye been a noble prechour in this cas.

I was aboute to wedde a wyf: allas!

What sholde I bye it on my flesh so deere?

Yet hadde I levere wedde no wyf to-yeere! (165-68)

First, the Pardoner recognizes the Wife of Bath as a preacher, either to flatter her or truly express his gratitude towards her “words of wisdom.” During the Middle Ages, women were not permitted to be preachers and for a man commissioned by the church to give pardons and collect indulgences, to address her as such demonstrates his bombastic attitude and “airy” communication. Sanguine people are cheerful and capable of speaking for long periods of time. Here, the Pardoner cheerfully speaks to the Wife and then candidly speaks about his thoughts of marriage. This conversation also exhibits the masquerade the Pardoner has about his “secret,” as Curry calls it or his sexual ambiguity. Therefore, it is fitting that the pilgrims would ask him to “telle us sum moral thyng wol we gladly heere” (PardT 325). Regardless, the pilgrims ask and he delivers a masterful sermon full of greed, deceit, lies, and death. His uncanny ability to address the pilgrims in a way that proposes their greed and need for his forged pardons displays a unique ability to persuade, interact, and communicate, all of which are a part of his sanguine humor.

A number of scholars like Robert P. Miller have equated the Pardoner with the Old Man in his tale, and Alfred David quotes Miller’s claims ““that Old Man ... lives and exerts his influence[s] in the great pilgrimage of life”” (41). David continues to explain that “Like the old man the Pardoner wanders ceaselessly through city and village, sending men up the ‘croked wey”” (41). Nelson Bushnell has also compared The Old Man to the “Wandering Jew,” but I think that Miller’s interpretation is more accurate.

The Old Man uses wit and compassion to gain the three men’s sympathy for his current situation and he tells them,

... I ne kan nat fynde

A man, though that I walked into Ynde,

Neither in citee ne in no village,

That wolde chaunge his youhte for myn age (PardT 721-24)

As this passage indicates, the Old Man has walked to India or a remote place on the earth and cannot find someone who will change their youth for his age. The fact that he walked all the way to India could be true since he has lived for so long and cannot die, but his words seem over exaggerated. Looking at the Pardoner as the Old Man in terms of negating the shrine indulgences for his own, then the Old Man's words are just as empty as the Pardoner's. The Old Man continues his conversation with the men expressing a deep desire for death to overtake him because his flesh, blood, and skin are wasting away and he asks, "[W]han shul my bones been at reste?" (PardT 732-33). His sorrowful state of being seems to be a masquerade just like the Pardoner talking about greed or gluttony, and the three unknowing men unfortunately become victims of the Old Man's charade. Undoubtedly, he knew what was at that tree, knew the three men were drunk, and knew they would become greedy. The Old Man's sorrowful state of being sends these three men on a drunken adventure to slay death, but death is what they receive. For this examination of the Pardoner and the Old Man, their intent is not the main focus, but their speech, which is full of "hot air." Both speak only words they think the audience will understand and move to action, whether it is buying pardons or trying to slay death. The Pardoner and the Old Man are both depicted as the person of knowledge and are sought for their expertise. Yet neither cares for those he is educating. Through his words, the Pardoner's airy sanguine humor mocks all who hear, especially when his rhetoric includes being pretentiously self-confessional.

Self-Confessing Sanguine

The Pardoner uses the prologue of his tale as a way to explain his tactics of persuasion, but also as an opportunity to confess to his fellow pilgrims how he swindles the public and take their money. As the Pardoner addresses the pilgrims, he explains that “...I kan al by rote that I telle. / My theme is alwey oon, and evere was— / *Radix malorum est Cupiditas*” (PardT 332-34). The Pardoner knows his sermon by heart, and it is always about 1 Timothy 6:10, “The love of money is the root of all evil.” The Pardoner continues speaking in his prologue about how he begins his sermon, how he shows the congregation all of his indulgences, how he displays to the congregation all of the relics they may purchase, and how each one will aid in their needs. The Pardoner does explain to the pilgrims exactly how he would explain each relic to the people and what sickness each will heal or what monetary gain they may receive. He then explains how he announces to the congregation that

If any wight be in this now chirche now
That hath doon synne horrible, that he
Dar nat, for shame, of it yshryven be,
Or any woman, be she yong or old,
That hath ymaked hir housbonde cokewold,
Swich folk shal have no power ne no grace
To offren to my relikes in this place.
And whoso fyndeth hym out of swich blame,
He wol come up and offre a Goddes name,
And I assoille him by auctoritee

Which that by bulle ygraunted was to me. (PardT 378-88)

After the Pardoner explains his call to action for the congregation, he boastfully shares with the pilgrims that with this he makes one hundred marks every year. The Pardoner continues his self-confessional by explaining how his “entente is nat for to wynne, / And nothing for correccioun of synne” (PardT 403-04). He does not care about the people’s problem with sin or correcting their problems, but he confesses his only intent is gaining money. At first glance, the confessional may seem insincere and a way for the Pardoner to be more boastful in his actions. Several scholars like Susan Gallick and Gerald Morgan have examined his confessional intent. However, for this examination and connection to the sanguine, his intent is not the central issue, but the fact that he does confess to the pilgrims and his behavior when he confesses.

According to Rolfe, two symptoms of a sanguine humor being imbalanced are a self-blaming attitude and a pretentious demeanor (73). A self-blaming attitude refers to someone who blames himself or herself for his or her behavior and though the Pardoner condones his behavior, he claims “I preche nothing but for coveitise” (PardT 343). Here, the Pardoner’s confession blames himself for preaching to satisfy his greed, which is a greed that many pardoners were known to have. Robert Shaffern quotes Bishop John Waltham and that lay pardoners or questors “‘were to explain papal and episcopal privileges and indulgences, *but not to preach*’ that is, not to proclaim them from the pulpit” (qtd. in Shaffern 51). Although pardoners were not permitted to preach from the pulpit, it did not exclude them from preaching in other venues or stop them from breaking the rules. The Pardoner preaches from the pulpit and he confesses this deed to the pilgrims. The Pardoner claims that “in chirches whan I preche, / I peyne me to han an

hauteyn speche” (PardT 329-30). Each time the Pardoner speaks, he confesses his actions whether right or wrong, which can also be seen when he tells the Wife of Bath that he has thought about marriage but decided against it. These times of admission symbolize confession, but he is not truly sorrowful for his actions. According to Catholic tradition, for a confessional to be sincere and gain forgiveness, the person needs to have a repenting heart. However, just because someone does not display sorrow does not mean the confessional is not a confessional, it just may not provide the person with forgiveness. As I examine the Pardoner’s confessions, his attitude displays a self-blaming aspect, but he also pretentiously makes claims about how he can cheat all of these people. Gallick explains that during his confession, he cannot help himself but to start preaching to the pilgrims in hopes of gaining their money (467). The demeanor of the Pardoner as he expresses his self-confessional is bombastic. He boastfully states how much money he earns in a year, that he will never go without money, food, or clothes, and that he will never labor for money. The Pardoner’s attitude revealed during his confessional lacks sorrow and sincerity and he boldly makes claims to the pilgrims that his needs will always be met by his cheating scams. The Pardoner’s self-confession and the way he confesses express his sanguine humor. His confession does not make him a sanguine man, yet his appearance and symbolic connections to sanguine previously established make him sanguine, and his sanguinity gives reason why he confesses. Thus, his confession and the tone of his confession display an imbalanced sanguine humor and give another reason as to why he behaves in this manner. Although the Pardoner’s tone is boastful and pretentious and may not be effective in receiving forgiveness, it is effective because it demonstrates that his sanguine humor is imbalanced. The Pardoner’s attitude is

just one more of many small instances that portray him as a sanguine man whose humor has become imbalanced.

CONCLUSION

Chaucer's Pardoner is notorious for stealing gullible people's money in order to receive a pardon that only he knows is falsified. Critics have analyzed and criticized a number of details about the Pardoner to develop a number of proposed reasons why he commits different actions. The Pardoner's livelihood and occupation bring him to the forefront of scholarly conversations; however, most works of scholarship isolate one feature of his character, whether it is trying to understand his physical appearance, his relics, his sexuality, his choice of language, his unpredictable attitude, or his intent. Examining only one or two of these aspects at a time, provides many conclusions, but when all of these features of his character are studied together with regard to the humors, it points to his being a sanguine man. There are several instances when his character is physically and symbolically depicted as a sanguine man, which is important to understanding the totality of his character. The Pardoner's intent or reason for acting the way he does is not based on one particular issue with his personality, but is because of his humor. The Pardoner's sanguine humor is reflected in all of his attributes, whether positive or negative. Yes, he is a greedy, dubious man who deceives gullible people daily and even boasts about his accomplishments, but he is also a character who enjoys people, speaks with eloquence and persuasion, makes friends, and understands how to generate income.

Most scholastic conversations agree on the complexity of the Pardoner's identity. However, these analyses do not discuss his sanguine humor and how it has affected his actions. The conversation about the Pardoner's identity is not complete without including his sanguinity and how his sanguinity is the reason for his actions. Proving the Pardoner's

sanguinity opens a new realm of interpretation and analysis about his character. The Pardoner's complex characteristics make him a vital part of *The Canterbury Tales*, and understanding the entirety of his character provides scholars with an overall critique that most medieval audiences would have known. The Pardoner's being a sanguine man does not make his character less complex, but the humoral theory illuminates on this complexity. The Pardoner is only a greedy man without any emotions if studied without regards to the humors, but analyzing his sanguinity points to reasons for his greed, his lack of serenity, and his behavior. The Pardoner's sanguine humor is his reason for action and his reason for greed.

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