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Letter to the Editor: ‘The Pardoner’s Tale’ offers a medieval take on Trump



“The Pardoner’s Tale” surely will be the title of a forthcoming book, which would include a chapter: “Pardonpalooza,” on [the self-pardon effort](#) of the president. Citizen Trump leaves behind a treasure trove of tweets, tantrums, and tales of fakery along with his pardon spree.

In Chaucer’s “The Pardoner’s Tale,” the protagonist “had hair as yellow as wax, But smooth it hung, as does a strip of flax.” He carried a “wallet ... brimful of pardons come from Rome all hot” as he traveled the countryside preaching about the sin of avarice. He sold official church pardons and fake relics in exchange for forgiveness and made money for himself.

Before the age of tweets, the pardoner used his bully pulpit to endlessly berate pilgrims for their sinfulness, so as to intimidate them into donating money for his own self-promotion: “Thus I repay

folk who make trouble for us pardoners; Thus I spit out my venom under hue.”

Oscar Wilde lamented “There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about.” That is the organizing concept to understand the behavior of Donald Trump.

Citizen Trump, the best of autobiographers, could begin his “Pardoner’s Tale” with the last lines of “The Pardoner’s Prologue”:

*“For though myself be a very vicious man,
Yet I can tell you a moral tale,
Which I am accustomed to preach in order to profit.
Now hold your peace! My tale I will begin.”*

- Robert F. Lyons
Kennebunk