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might also indicate that the hands of l. 992a were interwoven in the manner of the animal carvings on the prow of the Oseburg ship, the crossed paws of the animals of the Vespasian Psalter, or the interlocking animals found on the Sutton Hoo helmet, purse, or shoulder clasps with their enamel, gold, silver, and garnets.<sup>5</sup>

In the context of a well-known motif of Anglo-Saxon

art, the line has color and significance, and the word *folm* retains its power and its relationship to Grendel.

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, R. H. Hodgkins, *A History of the Anglo-Saxons* (Oxford, 1959), II, plates 62, 56, 85, 83, 87.

## DONNE'S "THE CANONIZATION"

CLEANTH BROOKS, using "The Canonization" as a vehicle for his enlightening views on poetical paradox, sees Donne's poem as less than an organic unit: he feels that the last three stanzas are too heavy a burden for the two introductory stanzas which merely establish "a vein of irony" for the heavily weighted remainder of the poem, that is, for the Phoenix metaphor and the canonization metaphor with which the poem concludes.<sup>1</sup> Clay Hunt, in his excellent study of Donne's poetry, takes a similar position: that the two opening stanzas are "a debater's opening maneuver, a tactical device for disarming the opposition."<sup>2</sup> The functional significance of the opening stanzas pointed out by both commentators certainly is a most important aspect of Donne's colloquy, but a detailed examination of the formal Canonization *processus* as it was carried out by the Roman Catholic Church of Donne's time indicates that the poet may have intended a more complex function for the central metaphor designated in the title. The entire poem throughout the five stanzas may be said to be controlled by the Canonization metaphor as it proceeds from proof of personal sanctity, to proof of heroic virtue, proof of miracles, examination of the burial place and the saint's writings, and finally to the declaration of Sainthood and the veneration of the Saint. Thus it may be that Donne's "conceit of erotic sainthood"—as Professor Hunt calls it—derives not merely from the middle stanza but may be extended to include also the conceits of the first stanzas in which the lover offers proof of his "sanctity" and of his "heroic virtues" in precisely the order of the first steps of the *processus* governing the introductory investigation of a proposed saint. Indeed the dramatic dialogue between the lover and his antagonist on the literal level in the poem may be viewed as a remarkable ironic parallel to the antagonism between the "Devil's Advocate" and those who advance the case for the saint in the canonization procedure, for it is the position of the Devil's Advocate ever to view the prospective saint as a fraudulent seeker of canonization.

The canonization procedure of the "Romane Church" is alluded to in several of Donne's prose writings; for example, his jibe in *Ignatius His Conclave* is exceptionally bitter:

These things, as soone as *Lucifer* apprehended them, gave an end to the contention; for now hee thought he might no

longer doubt nor dispute of *Ignatius* his admission, who besides his former pretences, had now gotten a new right and title to the place, by his *Canonization*; and he feared that the *Pope* would take all delay ill at his handes, because *Canonization* is now growne a kinde of *Declaration*, by which all men may take knowledge, that such a one, to whom the Church of *Rome* is much beholden, is now made partaker of the principall dignities, and places in Hell.<sup>3</sup>

The change in the Canonization *processus* alluded to in the passage above probably is a reference to Pope Sixtus V's strengthening of Papal control over the rites governing Canonization in 1588. From this date a complex controversy on the subject continued among ecclesiastical authorities until a formal decree by Pope Urban VIII in 1625 finally codified the regulations concerning Canonization.<sup>4</sup> Donne's continued interest in the problem is shown by his attack on the Church's position in a sermon preached at St. Paul's Cross on November 22, 1629:

. . . the farmers of heaven and hell, the merchants of soules, the *Romane Church*, make this blessednesse, but an under degree, but a kinde of apprenticeship; after they have beatified, declared a man to be blessed in the fruition of God in heaven, if that man, in that inferiour state doe good service to that Church, that they see much profit will rise, by the devotion, and concurrence of men, to the worship of that person, then they will proceed to a *Canonization*; and so, he that in his *Novitiat*, and years of probation was but blessed *Ignatius*, and blessed *Xavier*, is lately become Saint *Xavier*, and Saint *Ignatius*. And so they pervert the right order, and method, which is first to come to *Sanctification*, and then to *Beatification*, first to holinesse, and then to blessednesse. (ML, pp. 568-569)

Donne's reference in his sermon seems unquestionably to be to the 1625 decree of Pope Urban, which not only codified the already existing procedure for Canonization, but defined the distinction between "beatifica-

<sup>1</sup> "The Language of Paradox," *The Language of Poetry*, ed. Allen Tate (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1942).

<sup>2</sup> *Donne's Poetry* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1954), p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*, ed. Charles M. Coffin (New York: Modern Library, 1952), p. 354. Hereafter cited within text as ML.

<sup>4</sup> Eric Waldram Kemp, "Theory and Historical Controversy from the Sixteenth Century to 1918," *Canonization and Authority in the Western Church* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1948), p. 145.

tion," a decree which "permits" veneration of a Saint by certain groups within the Church, and "Canonization," a final decree which binds the Universal Church to veneration of the established Saint.<sup>5</sup> Donne's attitude toward what he considered to be needless machinations by the Church is clear from the tone of his sermon.

But "The Canonization" clearly follows the Canonization *processus* as it existed *before* Pope Urban's decree, when the Saint was declared canonized immediately upon the termination of the inquiry and the approval of ecclesiastical authorities. The context of the poem indicates that it was written after 1588, that is, after the establishment of the extremely "litigious" nature of the *processus*, for it was only at that time that the ecclesiastical litigation which had been in effect since ancient times and which involved "the most minute and thorough enquiry" into the proposed saint's "writings, virtues and his alleged miracles"<sup>6</sup> was brought under the direct control of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. The inquiry, directed by the Postulator General—popularly called the "Devil's Advocate"—was submitted for approval to the Congregation; if approved, the subject was declared "Canonized."

Father Thomas F. Macken, in his book *The Canonization of Saints*, describes the meticulous juridical *processus* which is carried through several stages: an investigation into the subject's reputation and proof of personal sanctity, an inquiry into his practice of virtues in an heroic degree, an investigation of his alleged miracles, a detailed scrutiny of the subject's writings, and finally, an examination of the burial place and an identification of the remains or relics.<sup>7</sup> These stages of the Canonization process, followed in remarkable detail, seem certainly to have provided Donne with the dramatic pattern for his poem.<sup>8</sup>

At the opening of the poem the irascible lover snaps, "For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me love" at his interrogator—analogue to the Devil's Advocate—who has inquired into his reputation for personal sanctity. The irony of the next lines becomes clear when we consider that the lover answers the inquiry into his virtues with an ironic catalogue of infirmities which are, if not entirely reprehensible, at least morally questionable: "palsie," gout, baldness, and profligacy. The unmistakable reference in these lines is to diseases of age and dissolute life.<sup>9</sup> The next four lines addressed to the inquisitor have a twofold application: first, as Doniphan Louthan points out (p. 116), they show the renunciation of the world by the lover, that is, his virtuous self-denial for love which makes his life analogous to the saint's life. Father Macken's translation of the points of inquiry reveals how closely Donne followed the "information process"; "to enquire into the sicknesses of the servant of God, and the ordinary afflictions of life, the coldness and falling away of friends, the ridicule of the world, the opposition of even good men, the disfavour of those in authority; all his trials and sufferings are

closely examined."<sup>10</sup> Certainly the foregoing is an apt description of the lover's complaint in the poem. But however broad the context, the opening lines describe the physical sufferings and trials of the lover which by their nature are ironically opposite to those a prospective saint might suffer. A final association is made by Donne in the stanza with his use of the word "approve." Although the lover's indifference to the investigation is marked by the words "what you will," the approbation of the virtuous reputation of the subject by the Sacred Congregation of Rites is precisely the necessary object of the first step of the ecclesiastical inquiry.

The second stanza carries the information to the next stage: the inquiry into virtues practiced in an "heroic degree." Heroic virtue is defined by Church authorities as "a habit of performing continuous acts possessing the quality of goodness in a very remarkable degree," or as "a quality arising from the repetition of acts of virtue which can ordinarily be performed only with very considerable difficulty."<sup>11</sup> The "heroic" character of the lover's lament expressed in Donne's satiric conceits is obvious: "sighs," "tears," "colds," and fevers sufficient to drown "ships," cause floods, change seasons, and engender plague.<sup>12</sup> Donne's in-

<sup>5</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Charles Herberlein et al. (New York, 1907), p. 366.

<sup>6</sup> Reverend Thomas F. Macken, *The Canonization of Saints* (Dublin, 1910), p. 35.

<sup>7</sup> "Outline of the Procedure for Canonization."

<sup>8</sup> It would appear that Donne's pattern for the poem follows the procedure taken for the Canonization of "Confessors"—those pious men who lead heroically virtuous lives of self-denial, that is, lives of "prolonged martyrdom"—rather than the considerably less complex *processus* involved in the Canonization of "Martyrs."

<sup>9</sup> There is no more reason to believe, with Doniphan Louthan, *The Poetry of John Donne: A Study in Explication* (New York, 1951), p. 112, that the speaker's "five gray hairs" refers to "greying temples," than that it refers to an advanced stage of baldness, an affliction which would have shades of meaning not inconsistent with "palsie," "gout," and "ruin'd fortune" for 17th-century readers.

<sup>10</sup> Macken, p. 154.

<sup>11</sup> Macken, p. 158.

<sup>12</sup> A remarkable similarity exists between Donne's conceits and a description of the Phoenix legend by the fourth century Roman Christian poet, Lactantius. Lactantius' poetic description reads: "non huc exsanguis Morbi, no aegra Senectus / nec Mors crudelis nec Metus asper adest / nec Scelus infandum nec opum vesana Cupido / aut Ira aut ardens caedis amore Furor; . . . non ibi tempestas nec vis furit horrida venti / nec gelido terram rore pruina tegit." "Phoenix," *Minor Latin Poets*, eds. J. Wight Duff and Arnold M. Duff (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1934). Compare this with Donne's passage in connection with the Phoenix from his "XXII Meditation": "there is a propenseness to diseases in the body, out of which without any other disorder, diseases will grow, and so wee are put to a continuall labour upon this *farme*, to a continuall studie of the whole complexion and constitution of our body. In the *distempers* and *diseases* of soilles, *sourenesse*, *drinesse*, *weeping*, any kinde of *barrennesse*, . . . and there rises a kinde of *Phoenix* out of the *ashes*,

genious use of the conceits of the first stanzas maintains the ironic antithesis between the lover and saint, for not only is each statement a "leading question," but the virtues are "negative" virtues, neither type of testimony being permissible by the regulations governing the investigation leading to Canonization.<sup>13</sup> The last lines of the second stanza, "Soldiers finde warres, and Lawyers find out still / Litigious men, which quarrels move," is at once a comparison of the lover's virtues with those unvirtuous acts of other men, and an echo of the renunciation expressed in the first stanza reminding us of the gulf that exists between the lover—or the saint—and the rest of the world. The lines are acceptable as indicating a further analogy between the "Lawyers" and "litigious men" who oppose the lover, and the Judges and Courts who prosecute and decide the case for or against the saintly subject. In the literal context, of course, the meddlesome interrogator of the dissolute lover may, quite appropriately, be a lawyer.

In the first lines of the third stanza, the lover maintains his defense against his exacting interrogator. As noted by Brooks and Hunt the interplay of imagery culminates in the metaphor of the Phoenix.<sup>14</sup> A close reading of the stanza will show that two "miracles" are performed by the lovers: "two being one," and dying and rising "the same." Here the "miracles" of the Phoenix's life-in-death apply, as most commentators note, to the conventional "miracle" of love by which the lovers become as one, and to the lovers' sexual resuscitation. As Brooks observes (p. 55): because the lovers' love "can outlast its consummation," they are a "minor miracle . . . love's saints." And so the third stage of the Canonization process is reached—proof of miracles.

Following the proof of miracles—which is central to the poem as well as to the Canonization *processus*—the fourth stanza parallels two well-known steps of the informative procedure: the examination of writings, and the identification of the remains of the proposed saint. The writings are "carefully examined by the Congregation to see whether they contain any errors contrary to faith or morals, or any novel doctrine opposed to the sound and pure teaching of the Church."<sup>15</sup> The lover, continuing to react vigorously against the examination, defends his "legend" as "fit for verse" in the event it is not acceptable to the religious legislators; if he shall not be chronicled a saint, he says, his "sonnets" will suffice as "hymnes," and "all" men shall be his judge and "approve" the lovers "Canoniz'd for Love."

But the "Process on the Individual Virtues and Miracles is not complete until the body of the deceased servant of God and all relics and mementoes of the deceased are formally identified."<sup>16</sup> Examination of the tomb is then made to determine any further last cause either for or against Canonization. Here again the antithesis is evident: the unidentifiable "ashes" of the lover in the "urn" may be viewed as

the ironic counterpart of the relics of the saint interred in the tomb.<sup>17</sup>

Finally the lovers are declared "Canoniz'd"—all that remains after the formal decree is the fulfillment of the precept that the Saint now be venerated as an intercessor to God for the Universal Church. In the final stanza Donne composes the invocation or prayer to the Lover-Saint in which the earlier elements of the poem are synthesized. Brooks summarizes this remarkable poetic coda: "The lovers in becoming hermits, find that they have not lost the world, but have gained the world in each other, now a more intense, more meaningful world. . . . They are like the saint, God's athlete: 'Who did the whole worlds soule contract, and drove / Into the glasses of your eyes' . . . The 'Countries, Townes,' and 'Courts,' which they renounced in the first stanza of the poem. The unworldly lovers thus become the most 'worldly' of all."<sup>18</sup>

From first to last the poem is a coherent whole; the organic unity of the poem is maintained by the imposition of the procedure of Canonization upon the literal dramatic colloquy between the lover and his detractors and upon the central metaphor of the Phoenix. As H. J. C. Grierson remarks, Donne "as usual is pedantically accurate in the details of his metaphor."<sup>19</sup> It is possible that Donne intends a lampoon of the taut, formal *processus* of the Church's Canonization Rites, but the complex development of the ironic, paradoxical conceit of erotic sainthood would appear to carry the significance of the work beyond such a single, restricted objective.

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a *fruitfulness* out of that which was *barren* before, and by *that*, which is the barrenest of all, *ashes*" (ML, 455). Although this "Meditation" undoubtedly postdates "The Canonization," it is significant that Donne compares bodily illnesses with illnesses of the earth in general in much the same fashion as they are set down in the first two stanzas of the poem. In both works the comparisons culminate in the figure of the Phoenix.

<sup>13</sup> Macken, p. 67.

<sup>14</sup> "The Language of Paradox," p. 54. Brooks observes: "The comparison of the lovers to the phoenix is very skillfully related to the two earlier comparisons, that in which the lovers are like burning tapers, and that in which they are like the eagle and the dove. The phoenix comparison gathers up both."

<sup>15</sup> Macken, p. 115.

<sup>16</sup> Macken, p. 169.

<sup>17</sup> Although there is no doctrine of the Catholic Church expressly forbidding cremation, traditionally the practice of interment in the earth has been observed. It would be highly desirable in the Canonization rites investigation for the remains of a saint to be specifically identifiable, which, of course, ironically, they would not be, in the poem.

<sup>18</sup> Brooks, p. 53.

<sup>19</sup> *The Poems of John Donne* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), p. 16.