



## Sidney's *ASTROPHIL AND STELLA*, 31

10           Then even of fellowship, O moon, tell me,  
Is constant love deemed there but want of wit?  
Are beauties there as proud as here they be?  
Do they above love to be loved, and yet  
              Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess?  
Do they call virtue there ungratefulness?

### In Memoriam

Louis G. Locke, a founder of *The Explicator* in 1942 and James Madison Distinguished Professor Emeritus of James Madison University, died on March 26, 1991. A dedicated student of literature and the humanities, he taught with enthusiasm and delight. Of his many books, his energetic leadership in the editing of *Readings for Liberal Education*, which appeared in five editions from 1948 to 1967, influenced two decades of students, not least in its introducing explications of poetry and fiction. Our grief at his loss is mingled with happy memories of our association with him.

*Astrophil and Stella's* sonnet 31 is conceivably (and justifiably) the most famous of Sidney's poems. But its sestet—in particular the relationship between the last line and lines nine through thirteen—has continued to baffle explicators. His latest editor, Katherine Duncan-Jones in her *Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1989), from whom I quote the passage, comments about line fourteen, "Inversion of the order of subject and object makes it hard to determine whether this means 'Do ladies in heaven call their lovers' virtue 'ungratefulness', i.e. 'un-pleasingness', or 'Do ladies in heaven call their own ungratefulness virtue?' " She asserts that the second sense is "the likelier."

It is perplexing to read about a supposed inversion of "subject and object" here. If there is an inversion, the subject, "they," does not form part of it, as Duncan-Jones's own paraphrases show. Rather, what she and others see are two possible interpretations, in the first of which (where the order is normal) "virtue" is direct object and "ungratefulness" object complement, while in the second (where the order would be inverted) "virtue" is the object complement and "ungratefulness" the direct object.

Are both interpretations equally possible, or is one more valid? If so, must we agree with Duncan-Jones that the second reading—with its inversion—is "the likelier"? Technically, both readings are possible. But I do not think that Sidney intended to be ambiguous. Moreover, I think it is the first reading offered by Duncan-Jones that is the likelier, although only if we interpret the sense of "ungratefulness" differently.

The idea that Sidney has inverted the word order and makes Astrophil ask "Do ladies in heaven call their own ungratefulness virtue?" apparently originated with Charles Lamb, as is explained in what has in recent decades been the standard edition, that by W. A. Ringler, Jr., *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962, p. 472). As Ringler notes, there seems to be support for this interpretation in lines written by Giovanni della Casa, Boccaccio, and Tasso. But the mere fact that other authors also expressed a particular notion, and did so in similar terms, cannot be adduced as proof that Sidney must have done the same. I believe that there are two good reasons for rejecting Lamb's interpretation. First, that interpretation would compel us to see an inversion of normal word order in the line. I submit that there is no hint that Sidney wishes to inflict

that upon us, and that the existence of inverted word order should be assumed only if the line cannot otherwise be made to yield satisfactory sense. Second, I do not think that Lamb's reading takes sufficient account of what precedes.

In the sestet, Astrophil draws a comparison between his own position and that of the moon, in such a way as to suggest that if only we take a detached view of his plight we can see how absurdly Stella has treated him by not answering his love. Assuming, rhetorically, that the moon, too, is in love, Astrophil raises the question in line ten: "Is constant love deemed *there* but want of wit?" We need to emphasize "there," because Astrophil's point is that *here*—on earth, and in his case—constant love such as his is judged by Stella to be no more than lack of intelligence. Her attitude, he implies, is unreasonable anyway, but the more so if we ask how it would be viewed on a higher plane. As lines twelve and thirteen show, Stella is illogical in wanting to be loved while scorning the person who loves her.

Just as she deems constant love but want of wit, she also calls her lover's virtue "ungratefulness." We must note that she *calls* virtue ungratefulness—it *is* not so. Her name-calling is a final example of her outrageous unreasonableness. Astrophil displays virtue in that he is a constant lover, but also, no doubt, in that he holds back sexually. Such restraint is painful and deserves sympathy. But instead of showing sympathy (let alone offering relief), Stella accuses her lover of "ungratefulness." This does not mean, of course, that his virtue is confused with "unpleasingness." Rather, "ungratefulness" has its ordinary meaning here, nothing farfetched. Stella feels that she is reasonable in letting Astrophil serve her, in a position of "virtue." He should be content with what he has; that is, be grateful. Instead, he of course wants more. At this point, Sidney introduces a little joke. It is not, in fact, Astrophil's chastity that Stella rebukes, but the fact that he wants to abandon it. It is, ultimately, his would-be lack of virtue that she calls "ungratefulness."

But humor is not incompatible with seriousness. Stella is unreasonable in calling faithful service and sexual restraint "ungratefulness," but no less so in using the term as one of rebuke for Astrophil's manifestation of desire. The satisfying complexity of Sidney's writing will escape us if we do not realize that his word order in the last line is normal, and that "ungratefulness" has its usual meaning. Lamb did Sidney a disservice in inventing an inversion where none was intended and created unnecessary difficulties for his successors, among whom Ringler and Duncan-Jones are representative—not, unfortunately, exceptional.

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## Shakespeare's I HENRY IV

At the beginning of act two, scene four of *I Henry IV*, Prince Hal and Poins simultaneously summon the drawer Francis, casting him into indecision. Shakespeare may be using this comic episode as a dramatic parallel to the prince's own vacillation between two conflicting voices, those of Hotspur and Falstaff. As a second Harry, who makes "conquests for a prince to boast of" (I.i.76),<sup>1</sup> Hotspur represents the public role of warrior-king that the prince is supposed to adopt as an adult. Falstaff represents an abnegation of responsibilities, the more private, childlike impetus toward self-indulgence and fun.

Much of *I Henry IV* dramatizes the prince's conflict over the two roles. When we first meet Hal, he is engaging in a frivolous but delightful conversation game with Falstaff (I.i.1-103). When left alone, however, Hal delivers the "I know you all" soliloquy (I.ii.189-211) in which he intimates that the friendship with Falstaff is only a means to attain the warrior-king role. This soliloquy is unsettling, for the impression we receive of the prince as cold and calculating neither negates nor corresponds with our first impression of him as one who takes a warm and unfeigned delight in Falstaff. But the discomfort we feel as we attempt to integrate the two seemingly contradictory impressions of Hal evidences a brilliant dramatic device by which Shakespeare draws the audience into a state of conflict mirroring the conflict of the protagonist, a young man struggling to integrate an intellectual drive toward assuming his adult role (or his public body) with an emotional attachment to childhood (to indulging his private body).

As the drama progresses, the prince is portrayed responding alternately to the calls of both, with the voice of the warrior-king becoming ever more insistent and thus intensifying the prince's conflict. We meet him first enjoying Falstaff, and next paying private lip service to his vocation as warrior-king, lip service that as yet demands no action. When we meet Hal again, in the robbery episode of act two, scene two, he is once more having a rollicking good time with Falstaff, and we see him attempting to remain in this posture during his next entrance in scene four. Yet the audience may sense an almost desperate quality to the attempt in the prince's opening plea to Poins—"Ned, prithee ... lend me thy hand to laugh a little" (II.iv.1-2)—and in the uncharacteristic length and agitation of the speech that follows (II.iv.4-33). In that speech, Hal designs the game in which Francis will be forced into conflict by having two voices competing for his attention, but immediately after this ostensibly comic incident the prince commits a significant *non sequitur* in which the name of Hotspur seems to spring from nowhere:

That ever this fellow should have fewer words than a parrot, and yet the son of a woman! His industry is all upstairs and downstairs, his eloquence the parcel of a reckoning. I am not yet of Percy's mind, the Hotspur of the north, he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife, "Fie upon this quiet life! I want work." (II.iv.98-103)