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Juvenalian Satire and the Divided Self in Goethe's "Das Tagebuch"

"DAS TAGEBUCH" HAS A UNIQUE PLACE in Goethe's poetic oeuvre. In twenty-four stanzas of ottava rima, narrated for the most part in the first person, it tells the story of an erotic adventure that occurs by mishap. When his carriage breaks down several miles short of home and his matrimonial bed, the poem's narrator is forced to spend a night at an inn, where he is captivated by an initially innocent waitress. Not only is the incident caused by a breakdown, it is also ruled by one, for the midnight assignation that he arranges with the girl ends in disaster, when his potency deserts him. As the girl sleeps, he recalls his proud erection when standing before the altar on his wedding day, and the memory in turn stimulates him to arousal. But instead of taking advantage of his arousal, he exercises renunciation, and the poem ends by drawing a fairly conventional moral on the theme of the power of love.

The poem's combination of obscenity and blasphemy—in recalling his wedding day the narrator apostrophizes a "bloodstained Christ" on his "cross of misery" ("vor deinem Jammerkreuz, blutrünstger Christe," line 135)—made "Das Tagebuch" unpublishable, and it first appeared in a private edition of 1861. It is absent from some of the standard editions—the Jubiläumsausgabe and the Hamburger Ausgabe, for instance—and in the Weimarer Ausgabe it appears only in small type in the endnotes to the last volume of poems (WA 1.5). Once marginal to the canon, the poem is now central to our understanding of Goethe. In the first place, it is a shining example of the mature Goethe's narrative art and his exceptional flexibility as a poet. Recent work on the poem has also identified themes that it shares with the *Römische Elegien* and the *Venezianische Epigramme*, both of which projects gave rise to poems that were left unpublished on grounds of potentially offensive sexual and religious content.

Since critics began to take a serious interest in "Das Tagebuch" in the late 1970s, two opposed readings of the poem have come to the fore, which one might call the metatextual and the moral interpretations. Goethe himself described the poem as "erotisch-moralisch" (WA 1.36:399), and one line of criticism has emphasized the positive moral character of the poem that rescues it from being a mere "priapeischer Scherz." The diarist suffers an unprecedented bout of impotence that prevents him from having sexual intercourse with the young waitress. While the girl sleeps, he is aroused by memories of his wife, but instead of waking the girl in order to make good his earlier

failure, he accepts the lesson that the misdirection and misfiring of his desire has in fact confirmed him in his love for his wife. Two morals are drawn from the narrative, both cryptically formulated but clearly and emphatically relevant to the diarist's experience. The first, helpfully presented in italics, is that only in sickness does health prove itself: "*die Krankheit erst bewähret den Gesunden.*" According to the second, the final rhyming couplet of the poem, love keeps the diarist faithful where mere duty could not:

Und doch vermögen in der Welt, der tollen,
Zwei Hebel viel auf's irdische Getriebe:
Sehr viel die Pflicht, unendlich mehr die Liebe.

As T. J. Reed puts it, "Love itself rather than duty has kept him faithful, the organism has itself controlled his behaviour. Such is the potency of a natural morality—or the morality of a natural impotence."¹

On the other hand, Goethe's description of the poem as "erotisch-moralisch" has been interpreted by Hans Rudolf Vaget as a mere generic designation.² It is in this sense that Goethe himself acknowledged the poem to have been written in the manner of "moralische Erzählungen in Stanzen," namely the *Novelle galanti in ottave rime* of Giambattista Casti. (Casti was court poet to Emperor Joseph II; Goethe met him and heard him recite from these poems in Rome in 1787.)³ No-one would argue that Casti's poems are properly moral. Similarly, for Vaget "Das Tagebuch" is only moral in a generic and superficial sense. The closing moral is patently ironic, since it fails to do justice to the rich and complex narrative. Vaget instead reads the poem as metatextual. The diarist's impotence is accompanied by writer's block, and the resolution of the poem also contains a poetic unblocking. The poem's motto also refers to writing: only in the crisis of creativity is the full power of creativity revealed.⁴

Vaget's view is supported by the poem's multiple intertextuality. As Reed and other have observed, the reference to duty in the poem's last line appears to be a riposte to Kant's moral theory. Whereas Kant grounds his ethics in the idea of duty to the law, which alone can motivate our adherence to moral maxims, in Goethe's poem it is natural impulse that leads to moral behaviour. "Das Tagebuch" shares this anti-Kantian tenor with the exactly contemporary novel *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, in which Ottilie's renunciation of Eduard follows a natural course analogous in its outlines if not its detail to the diarist's experience in "Das Tagebuch."⁵ Of course, the poem's intertextual resonances are by no means confined to Casti, Kant or *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. Indeed "Das Tagebuch" is multiply intertextual, and any reading of the poem will have to take this into account. As we have noted, the poem was written in the manner of Giambattista Casti. It bears an epigraph from Tibullus. The core of the narrative, however, derives from a poem on the subject of impotence by Ovid. Allusions to Ariosto and Hoffmann von Hofmannswaldau have also been detected.⁶ The opening of the poem appears to allude to Paul, *Romans* 3, 23: "For all have sinned. . . ."⁷ It is possible that the motto "*die Krankheit erst bewähret den Gesunden*" derives from a fragment of Antiphon the Sophist.⁸

The allusion to Paul is, of course, ironic. The biblical text states that we are all sinners, but will be redeemed by our faith and the grace of God that is

in Jesus Christ. Goethe diverges from Paul in two respects. First, doctrine—and Paul is nothing if not doctrinal—is implicitly discounted:

Und wie man auch sich hin und wider wende,
 So sei der Christe wie der Heide sündlich.
 Das Beste bleibt, wir geben uns die Hände
 Und nehmens mit der Lehre nicht empfindlich. (ll. 3–6)

Second, in Goethe's poem Christ plays a quite different role from that of the redeemer. The diarist recalls how he had got an erection standing before the altar on his wedding day. Behind the altar stood the bloodstained Christ on his cross of misery. The opposition of healthy sexuality to perverted Christianity parallels the opposition of natural impulse to Kantian duty. Far from being the key to redemption, Christ is opposed to the healthy morality that the poem seems to advocate.

This opposition suggests that the kind of ironic, metatextual reading advanced by Vaget might not be incompatible with Reed's moralizing reading after all. Indeed Vaget himself suggests that there is an ethical problem at the root of the diarist's impotence: sex with the waitress would have been merely physical and would not have involved "der ganze Mensch."⁹ Vaget thus measures the diarist's experience by the yardstick of the anthropology of Weimar Classicism and specifically Schiller's *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*. I shall argue that Goethe's poem appeals to a different anthropology, that of Schiller's *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*. The kind of wholeness at stake in "Das Tagebuch" is the wholeness of consciousness as represented in Schiller's ideal of the naïve poet. Indeed, the diarist begins as a naïve poet, but becomes sentimental, in Schiller's sense, once he begins to reflect on his impotence. Impotence thus stands symbolically for the loss of immediacy. The pivotal moment in the poem is signalled by an instance of intertextuality that has hitherto gone unnoticed. In stanza XIV Goethe quotes the Roman satirist Juvenal, who—and here we see the appropriateness of the intertextuality—represents one of the types of the sentimental poet in *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*.

The argument will begin by explaining how Juvenal came to represent sentimental consciousness for Goethe and Schiller. I then follow Vaget in characterizing the two halves of "Das Tagebuch" in terms of an immediate first and a reflective second half. However, I part company with Vaget in assigning quite different values to immediacy and reflectiveness. Vaget argues that in the first half of the poem the diarist is naïve in the negative sense, whilst the second half effects a reintegration of the diarist's faculties. Like Reed, Vaget finds a resolution in the poem's close, albeit an ironic one. I shall argue that the resolution is still more imperfect than Vaget's ironic reading suggests. As a parallel between the penultimate stanza of "Das Tagebuch" and chapter 11, book I of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* confirms, far from reintegrating the poet's desire for the waitress into his marriage, the poem refuses to force errant desire back into the Pandora's box from which it has been released.

The documentary evidence for Goethe's reception of Juvenal can be quickly summarized. Modern reception of Juvenal most often takes the form of the quoting of well-worn maxims: "panem et circenses" (X. 81), "mens sana in corpore sano" (X. 356), "quis custodiet ipsos custodes" (VI. 347–48) and more of this kind. There are two examples of this in Goethe's works: one in a 1772 commonplace book (WA 1.36:92), one in conversation with Riemer in 1807 (WA 5.2:192). A longer quotation appears in the 1811 biographical essay on Phillip Hackert. Goethe wants to illustrate the corrupt history of the ancient Sicilian city of Agrigentum. To this end he quotes seven lines from Juvenal's eighth satire, adding that "dieß sind die Worte eines Dichters, auf dessen Sittenschilderung wir uns verlassen können" (WA 1.36:192). Finally, there are two diary entries that provide evidence of Goethe's reading of Juvenal. In Venice in April 1790 Goethe bought a cheap second-hand edition of Juvenal, which survives in his library in Weimar (WA 3.2:330). Markings in the text show that Goethe read at least as far as line 184 of Satire III while he was in Venice. In the summer of 1808 Goethe packed a text of Juvenal for his annual holiday in Karlsbad, and on July 3 he read the first satire (WA 3.3:420.357).

It should not surprise us that the visible evidence for Goethe's reception of Juvenal is so slight. There is something in the character of Juvenalian satire that made it hard for the late eighteenth century to assimilate. Juvenal presents himself as a moralist, but he is an awkwardly ambivalent and inauthentic one. He claims that the motivation for satire is indignation: "facit indignatio versum" (I. 79). But the persona of the angry plain man that he adopts is just that, a persona, and it is not kept up. In the exordium of the first satire he depicts himself assaulted by hordes of boring poets. In these circumstances, we are told, clemency is merely stupid, for abstaining from satire would mean missing an open goal (I. 17–18). Here, as elsewhere, it is not indignation that "makes the verse," but relish in demolishing the target. The persona's inconsistency grows painfully obvious at the end of Satire I. Juvenal praises his predecessor Lucilius, who is credited with inventing Roman satire. Lucilius attacked powerful Romans, and the result was "anger and tears" ("ira et lacrimae," I. 168). Yet what seems to be a rallying cry for fearless satire is in fact the cue for a sudden and unexpected retreat. Instead of attacking his contemporaries, Juvenal will attack the dead, who cannot hurt him. The impression is that he writes satire not so much because he hates moral depravity as because he loves satire.

Juvenal's more sophisticated readers have long noticed this. He has been as popular with readers who dislike conventional morality as with those who hate immorality. In the only extant ancient reference to the reception of the *Satires*, Ammianus Marcellinus describes the pleasure that Juvenal affords to those readers who detest conventional morality: "some who detest moral doctrines like poison read Juvenal and Marius Maximus with zealous enthusiasm, revelling in these volumes as in no others in their deep idleness."¹⁰ Dryden, similarly enthusiastic, treats Juvenal's ostensible moral purpose as secondary, when he compares the pleasure to be had from Horace's and Juvenal's satires:

It must be granted by the Favourers of *Juvenal*, that *Horace* is the more Copious and Profitable in his Instructions of Human Life. But in my particular Opinion, which I set not up for a Standard to better Judgements, *Juvenal* is the more delightful Author. I am profited by both, I am pleas'd with both; but I owe more to *Horace* for my Instruction, and more to *Juvenal*, for my Pleasure. . . . I must confess, that the Delight which *Horace* gives me is but languishing. Be pleas'd still to understand that I speak of my own Taste only. He may Ravish other Men, but I am too stupid and insensible to be tickl'd. Where he barely grins himself, and, as *Scaliger* says, only shews his white teeth, he cannot provoke me to any Laughter. His Urbanity, that is, his Good Manners, are to be commended; but his Wit is faint, and his Salt, if I may dare to say so, almost insipid. *Juvenal* is of a more vigorous and masculine Wit; he gives me as much Pleasure as I can bear.¹¹

Pleasure is set against profit. Horace is morally improving, but tame. The kind of pleasure afforded by Juvenal is exquisite, almost unbearable. This is why the judgement that Juvenal is poetically superior is a private one: it will not improve public taste. If Horace is an eminently social poet, Juvenal is an anti-social one.

Comparison of Dryden's reception of Juvenal with Schiller's shows how literary tastes changed during the Age of Sensibility. Schiller came to Juvenal quite late and was surprised when he found the satirist so enjoyable:

Ich bin dieser Tage über die lateinischen Poeten gerathen, die ich, wo möglich, diesen Winter meiner nächtlichen Romanen-lecture substituiren werde. Mit *Juvenal*, der mich gerade jetzt am meisten interessierte, machte ich den Anfang, und ich muß sagen, mit unerwartet großem Genuß, so daß ich recht brenne, fortzufahren. Aber manches, besonders von dem, was sich auf das *gemeine Leben* und auf *historische Züge* bezieht, hält mich doch auf. Ich habe mein Latein mehr aus einer edelern Welt und zu wenig aus Schriften, die von dem gewöhnlichen Leben handeln, geschöpft, daher es zu einer solchen Lecture [*sic*] nicht recht zureichen will.¹²

The contrast between the "nobler world" of universalizing, idealizing poetry, to which Schiller is accustomed and inclined, and the vulgarity of some of Juvenal's language is indicative. Understanding Juvenal requires an investment in the base and the particular that is alien to Schiller's own idealizing theory of poetry and the culture of Sensibility out of which it grew. Schiller knows this and knows that he must make the effort, but it will still be an effort.

A similar dichotomy can be found in the theory of satire in *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, the composition of which overlapped with and was possibly shaped by Schiller's reading of Juvenal.¹³ For Schiller, modern, sentimental poets come in two flavors: the satirist and the elegist. The sentimental poet is energized by the superiority of the ideal over reality, in one of two ways. Elegists are attracted to the ideal, and satirists are repelled by the real. Satirists can either be serious or jocular. Strictly speaking, neither of these is compatible with the essence of poetry, which for Schiller requires the free play of the imagination. So, in order to rescue satire for poetry, the serious satirist will aim for the sublime mode. The spirit from which serious

satire springs must imbued with a sense of the ideal. We find this, Schiller says, in Juvenal, Lucian, Dante, Swift, Young, Rousseau, Albrecht von Haller and others.¹⁴ At this point Schiller expresses an important reservation. The sense of the ideal will often not be expressed in the satire itself. Schiller's comments on the difficulty of reading Juvenal explain why the reservation is necessary. Satire is too preoccupied with the base world that repels it. Schiller is evidently caught in a dilemma. Satire can only keep its high status as one of the two pillars of the sentimental, if its repulsion from baseness springs from the ideal. The serious satirist will therefore elevate us to a sublime height from which we may look down on base reality. At this point Schiller switches back from talking about the effect of satire to what motivates it. The satirist, he claims, is "ein hoher Geist, der auf das Niedrige herabblickt."¹⁵ But this clearly cannot be Juvenal, even though he heads Schiller's list of serious satirists. Instead, Schiller takes as his example of satirical loftiness the historian Tacitus. In this way, Juvenal's role in *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* is limited. The problem is that he does not suit the culture of Sensibility with its aspiration to nobility of feeling, to which Schiller is wedded. There may be a sense of moral mission in Juvenal, but this is in tension with his commitment to the base, ignoble world that he satirizes. To be sure, the tension makes Juvenal a sentimental poet in Schiller's terms, but one who, wedded as he is to base reality, is not fit to embody the moral sublime.

Goethe's reception of Juvenal is in some respects similar to Schiller's. Juvenal has an important role in "Das Tagebuch." But because he has nothing to offer the poem's ostensible aim of finding morality through nature, his role is not advertised and has not been noticed by Goethe scholarship. In "Das Tagebuch" Juvenalian satire functions as a mode of representation. Following Schiller, Goethe treats the Juvenalian mode as a "sentimentalisch" one. When the poem's narrator falls into this mode, it is a sign that his consciousness has become alienated from nature. At the same time, Goethe's Juvenal has none of the sublimity that is so awkwardly ascribed to him in Schiller's theory of satire. Indeed, Juvenal serves as a medium through which the sublimely heroic world of ancient epic and tragedy can enter the modern world, only to reveal by contrast the ridiculous nature of the modern sentimental consciousness.

* * *

As we have noted, "Das Tagebuch" was composed in the style of Casti's *Novelle galanti*, which Goethe judged "nicht sehr ehrbar, aber außerordentlich schön" (WA 1.32:33). Casti is a generic intertext that determines the poem's form (ottava rima), its mode (comic narrative), and its subject matter (sexual misadventures), but virtually nothing of its detailed execution. Two classical texts contribute most to the poem's narrative.¹⁶ In *Amores* III. 7, Ovid whips up a storm of self-criticism when he suffers from impotence. Several details of Goethe's poem draw on Ovid's: the girl is the woman of his dreams; he imagines he has been poisoned or charmed by a witch; he engages in recriminations with himself, contrasting his present impotence with his past exaggerated potency; an erection arrives at last, but too late to be of use; he refers to himself as the master of his penis. However, Ovid is not the intertext that

the poem advertises. That, Tibullus I. 5, has a quite different tendency. In Tibullus the poet tries to wrench himself away from his mistress by various means, including affairs with other women, but every time he tries to be unfaithful he is inhibited by his mistress's memory. In order to make the epigraph a better fit with the narrative of "Das Tagebuch," Tibullus's "saepe aliam tenui" ("Often I held another woman") becomes a one-off event: just "aliam tenui." Clearly the epigraph is intended as a guide to the poem, mediating the main text of the poem for the reader by steering the reader towards a particular kind of reading. Its effect is twofold. First it advertises a link to Latin love elegy and to Goethe's own *Römische Elegien*, which conduct a constant dialogue with Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus and Ovid. The second effect of the epigraph is to steer the reader towards the kind of moralized psychology that would have the poet made impotent by memories of his mistress, or in Goethe's case, his wife. Tibullus supplies the psychological motivation for impotence that is lacking in Ovid. Goethe goes further than Tibullus in moralizing the impotence narrative. Most obviously his poem operates on a moral axis between Kantian duty and Christian renunciation on the one hand, and, on the other, a naturalistic version of eighteenth-century moral sense theory, which holds that an innate sense guides us towards right action. For, as the poem's moral has it in the final stanza, duty to a wife can go so far in keeping a man faithful, but love for a wife is a stronger force altogether. The omission of Tibullus's "saepe," whilst suggesting a close fit between moralizing epigraph and narrative, should also remind us that the relation between host text and intertext can be complex. As we shall see, the Tibullan epigraph is a misleading guide to the action of the poem.

The poem's narrator and author of the diary referred to in the title—the dual role and the existence of two texts, poem and diary, will concern us later—is forced by a broken wheel to spend a night at an inn just short of home. Here he takes a fancy to the girl who serves him his dinner, and she proposes a visit to his room once her duties are done. At midnight she appears and, by way of excusing her awkwardness, confesses to being a virgin. Having made her excuses, she climbs into bed with him, but the narrator's potency fails him. Luckily the girl seems satisfied with a kiss and a cuddle and falls asleep. The narrator lies squashed against the wall, as the girl, whom, in his embarrassment, he is afraid to disturb, has occupied most of the bed. In this compromised position he curses himself for his unaccustomed failure—a moment of high comedy at the centre of the poem. Ruminating on his failure, like Ovid's poet, the narrator recalls in stanza XVII how he had enjoyed unlimited potency with his wife, even getting an erection as they took their marriage vows:

Und als ich endlich sie zur Kirche führte,
Gesteh ichs nur, vor Priester und Altare,
Vor deinem Jammerkreuz, blutrünstger Christe,
Verzeih mirs Gott, es regte sich der Iste.

The symbolic confrontation of the Christian and the classical is played out in an extraordinarily provocative manner. Anti-nature and nature confront one another. Standing opposite a bloodstained Christ on his cross of pain—the

word *Jammerkreuz* is a calculated piece of familiarizing ridicule—is a man who begs God’s forgiveness while his erection grows. That erection is referred to with the Latin demonstrative pronoun “iste,” which, because it rhymes with the Latin vocative “Christe,” further magnifies the confrontation.

And yet the opposition of nature and anti-nature is not altogether straightforward. The pronoun “iste” (“that thing there”) implies that nature is somehow troublesome.¹⁷ The full title used elsewhere is “Meister Iste.” “Meister” conveys several ideas: Lord and Master; one who has attained skill and mastery; a master of a trade given his proper honorific title.¹⁸ But an allusion to the Ovidian intertext should also not to be overlooked, in which the girl, in an effort to arouse the poet, calls him her master (“dominus”): “et mihi blanditias dixit dominumque vocavit” (“and she spoke sweet flattery to me and called me her master”).¹⁹ The word “dominus” is part of sexual role-play. When Goethe’s narrator calls his own penis “master,” this could be, following Ovid, in order to bolster it and so prevent it letting him down. His organ, with its human title, has a personality, fragile but domineering, that needs and receives constant reassurance. An exception to this bizarre deference (but one which proves the rule) is in stanza XIX, when the narrator reverses the roles and calls his penis a slave (“Knecht”), at which the flaccid penis—contrarily and as if in response to being belittled—suddenly perks up and reasserts its phallic mastery.

The impotent narrator’s ruminations lead to memories of his marriage day, which stimulate him, and Meister Iste rises now to his full magnificence. This is the capriciousness of nature writ large, and an awkward moment, which shows why the narrator had taken care to placate his penis in the past, in a (vain) effort to keep a lid on its capriciousness. But as he moves now to kiss the girl, he is held back by memories of his wife. At this point the poem’s Tibullan epigraph comes into play: “*aliam tenui, sed iam cum gaudia adirem, / Admonuit dominae deseruitque Venus*” (“I had another in my arms, but just as I was about to reach my pleasure, Venus reminded me of my mistress and deserted me”). There are several discrepancies between the narrative and the expectations raised by the epigraph. Our modern Tibullus is further from his pleasure than the real Tibullus was, as his girl is fast asleep. Moreover, the idea of Venus deserting the narrator and his becoming impotent is not in play just at this point. The impotence occurred earlier, in stanza XI, and it was by no means clear then that the narrator’s wife was in his mind. Thus the explanation given for impotence in the epigraph is not the same as the actual cause of impotence given in the narrative. The poem would have been morally simpler and more digestible, if it had been. The narrator’s impotence would have been caused squarely by his guilt at committing adultery. The epigraph leads us to expect (wrongly) that this is the case. In doing so, the epigraph seems to whitewash one of the poem’s moral difficulties. The actual cause of the narrator’s impotence is the girl’s admission of her virginity, whether it was her reference to strict Christian sexual morality or her taking control of the situation that caused his difficulty. Both could plausibly extinguish desire: both alienating the man from his Priapic drive; both interposing an unwelcome moment of reflection into what was to have been direct, unthinking, “natural” male pleasure.

Instead of waking the virgin, the narrator acknowledges, in a moment of honesty that is not altogether typical of him, that he owes his arousal to his wife and not to the girl. In this sense, we have a reversal of Tibullus. It is arousal that the narrator owes to the memory of his wife, not impotence. Moreover, Tibullus was trying to get rid of his mistress by committing adultery, whereas Goethe's narrator was looking for a temporary substitute for his wife. Nevertheless the narrator sits down to commit the experience to his diary, which his wife will in due course see. Yet unlike the wonderfully fluent and explicit poem, the diary just will not flow, so instead of writing up the narrative he encapsulates it in a mysterious motto: "*die Krankheit erst bewähret den Gesunden*." Like the Tibullan epigraph, the motto simplifies the story for the sake of a (seemingly) clear, even if somewhat enigmatic moral. At any rate, it is clear that the motto is second best. The best, as the narrator tells us in stanza XXII, has to be kept secret. Moreover, the cryptic words of the diary, which conceal more than they reveal, are susceptible of two readings. Firstly, in trying but failing to be unfaithful to his wife, the narrator only demonstrates his faithfulness. Secondly, the narrator's potency fails, but in its very failure it is magnificently confirmed. An advantage of the second interpretation is that it takes the words "*die Krankheit*" and "*der Gesunde*" in a literal sense, whereas the first interpretation takes them as metaphors for moral conditions. Allowing both interpretations of the motto has the further advantage of keeping both versions of the poem's ethic in play: not only the philosophical opposition of Kantian duty versus moral sense theory, but also the provocative confrontation of Christ ("*die Krankheit*") and Priapus ("*der Gesunde*").²⁰

It should also be emphasized that the mysterious motto is the narrator's. It is not something that emerges independently out of the narrative or, like the epigraph, stands outside it. The narrator points us towards the motto. We catch the narrator in the act of fabricating a half-truth to deceive his wife. Unsurprisingly, he is no more honest with the girl, to whom he offers no explanation or consolation when she wakes, even though she is clearly embarrassed and confused. Instead he takes one last acquisitive look at her figure and leaves, with her image in his mind, to return rather pleased with himself to his wife. Finally the narrator wraps up his narrative in a moral that is again susceptible of multiple readings. Much can be achieved by duty but more by love:

Wir stolpern wohl auf unsrer Lebensreise,
Und doch vermögen in der Welt, der tollen,
Zwei Hebel viel auf's irdische Getriebe:
Sehr viel die Pflicht, unendlich mehr die Liebe. (XXV, 5-8)

The narrator's love for his wife saved him from consummating the adultery, when the mere sense of duty to his wife could not.²¹ Admittedly, there has been no talk of duty to his wife during the narrative: his duty to her is only implied. For this reason, we might choose to read the idea of duty into the narrator's relationship with the girl. His duty to perform for her, which her speech about losing her virginity makes it fairly plain *is* a duty, is too weak a stimulus to arouse Meister Iste, who instead is aroused by memories of sex

with the wife. So when the moral suggests that love is a stronger force than duty, the subject on which the forces of love and duty work could, on the former interpretation, be the narrator's moral self or, on the latter, his sexual potency. The latter is, of course, a suspiciously egotistical reading, inasmuch as it applies the moral not to the preservation of his faith, but to his sex drive. On the other hand, it is consistent with the Priapus-versus-Christ version of the poem's morality.

The ironic manner in which the moral is presented makes it clear that it is not meant to tidy up all of the loose ends left by the narrative. These are not only moral issues. The safer version of the poem's naturalistic ethics implies that the narrator's sex drive ("die Krankheit") will be domesticated. To some extent this is achieved: the narrator refrains from waking the girl once he has regained his potency. He seems to have learned a lesson. Yet the sex drive is not fully domesticated. As he leaves, the narrator cannot help admiring the figure of the girl who shared his bed the night before. The comedy of sexual misadventures has a momentum that cannot be arrested by moralizing.

* * *

The high-point of the poem's comedy occurs in stanza XIV. The narrator, having been wisely advised by Love, as he assures us in stanza IX, to occupy only a small part of his bed, now finds himself squashed against the wall, whilst the girl relaxes across the greater part of the bed. This is one of a number of comical role reversals between the experienced male and the inexperienced female. Formerly confident, he is now anxious, whereas she seems to have thrown off her anxiety and relaxed into the situation. He had previously commanded her, but now finds himself in the subordinate role, required to perform for her satisfaction. The simple Priapic idea of male sexuality has been enormously complicated, if not utterly overturned. In stanza XIV Goethe chooses to dwell on the comedy with an extended mock-heroic simile:

So lag sie himmlisch an bequemer Stelle,
 Als wenn das Lager ihr allein gehörte,
 Und an die Wand gedrückt, gequetscht zur Hölle
 Ohnmächtig Jener, dem sie nichts verwehrte.
 Vom Schlangenbisse fällt zunächst der Quelle
 Ein Wanderer so, den schon der Durst verzehrte.
 Sie atmet lieblich holdem Traum entgegen;
 Er hält den Atem, sie nicht aufzulegen.

Goethe drew the core of the simile from Juvenal's first satire, which, as we know from his diary, Goethe was reading while working on the poem.²² The passage in question is a joke at the expense of male inheritance hunters, who attempt to win over rich widows by satisfying them sexually. (It is significant, of course, that the original context of the simile is sexual comedy.) You can gauge the size of a man's inheritance, Juvenal says, by the size of his penis. But there is a hazard in this erotic legacy-hunting. The overproduction of semen required by his excessive sexual activity drains the legacy-hunter of

his color, so that he looks like someone who has trodden barefoot on a snake or is about to compete in Caligula's oratorical competitions at Lyons:

Each lover will get his cut,
A twelfth share of the estate, or eleventh-twelfths, depending
On the size of his—services rendered. By all means
Let him get the reward for all that spent blood, and look
As pale as a man who steps barefoot on a snake—or is waiting
His turn to declaim, at Lyons, in Caligula's competitions.²³

Goethe picks up the idea of the person treading barefoot on the snake and adds the detail of the traveller being nearly within reach of water, which contains a sexual innuendo—the well stands for the vagina and so for sexual intercourse.²⁴

Goethe's reason for quoting Juvenal here was that he wanted to exploit the possibilities of satirical voice that Juvenal offered. The chief characteristic of Juvenalian style is satirical exaggeration. This starts to be a feature of Goethe's poem when the narrator launches into recriminations against himself. The words "grinsend mich belachte" (stanza XIII) introduce the satirical mode. There follow several instances of satirical exaggeration: "vor tausend Flüchen mir die Seele kochte"; "Er hält den Atem sie nicht aufzuregen" (for how long?); "Weit lieber da wo's Hellebarden regnet." This last instance heaps solecism upon exaggeration—halberds being too heavy to throw, of course—and tops it off with a hugely inappropriate allusion to Euripides's *Medea*, that grimmest of tragedies of male-female incomprehension. Goethe's preposterous narrator would rather be in the thick of battle under a shower of halberds, than lying in bed with a useless member. The heroic *Medea* would rather have stood three times in the front line of battle, spear in hand, than have given birth once.²⁵

The allusion to *Medea* presents a heroic trope in a comic mode. The same is true of the simile from Juvenal. It belongs originally to epic. Goethe may have known that behind Juvenal's simile was a Homeric one. When in book III of the *Iliad* Paris meets Menelaus on the battlefield, he is compared to a man who stumbles on a snake in the mountains and steps back in shock (III. 30–37). At any rate, it would be surprising if Goethe had not noticed the simile's simple, objective epic elements: the thirsty traveller, the snake, the well. Parody of epic style—the application of epic style to flagrantly non-epic subjects—is typical of Juvenal. One can see why Juvenal's parody of epic seemed fitting to Goethe at this point, especially given the role-reversal that makes the narrator of "Das Tagebuch" seem so pitiful. The shift into a satirical voice accompanies and gives appropriate form to a change in the narrative perspective. In stanza XIII, immediately before the Juvenalian simile, a gap opens up in the narrator's consciousness. For the first time the narrator reflects from the outside upon himself as the subject of the narrative ("Doch als ich länger mein Geschick bedachte"). The simile, with its parodic epic objectivity, enables the narrator to objectify and ridicule himself. The dual tendency towards objectivity and ridicule continues in the following stanzas. After the simile and the associated shift into satire, the narrator begins to talk about himself in the third person, and this remains the case for the

rest of the poem. In other words, the Juvenalian moment stands at a pivotal point. The early part of the poem presents a whole self, albeit one driven by the Priapic imperative, in a complete identity of phallus and ego. Because his diary went into every last detail, the narrator's life was completely transparent to his wife. The diarist and the narrator are also one and the same naïve, unreflective person. After the moment of errant desire and impotence, a split develops. The narrating self and the subject of the narrative are separated out, as the narrator talks about the diarist in the third person. Similarly, a gap develops between husband and wife, as the diary that the wife will read falls cryptically short of the narrative. We can see a disjunction on a poetological level too, for the poem is clearly also about writing, its modes and motives. Initially writing is represented as naively objective: it records "des Tags Ereignis" in full detail. So it unites husband and wife by making his experiences during his absences from home completely present and transparent to her. This explicitness is threatened once he falls for the girl. The diary can no longer record "alle Kleinigkeiten" (stanza V). The result, predictably, is impotence, both sexual and poetic. The shift into a Juvenalian mode unblocks the obstruction, but at the cost of a loss of immediacy. The diary has become reflexive: it generalizes and moralizes. Finally, it tends towards self-parody, when in the final stanza it offers a moral that it admits is merely conventional.

The naturalistic ideal expressed in the motto "*die Krankheit erst bewähret den Gesunden*" promises that nature will heal itself. Nature is self-consistent and in need of no external, supernatural support. Illness will be subsumed seamlessly into health. Errant desire will be domesticated. But the poem shows that this is not altogether the case. The narrator's Priapic drive, which causes the whole debacle, persists beyond the moment of renunciation and is still active at the end of the poem. The diarist may fortuitously have remained faithful to his wife, but he still takes one last look at the girl's figure as they part wordlessly the next morning. A residue of the visual image remains when the girl has gone: "Im Auge bleiben ihm die schönen Glieder." This suggests that the diarist carries the image of the girl home to his wife. Perhaps the image of the girl will play a role in the diarist's domestic sex-life and appear to his imagination while he makes love to his wife.

This speculation is supported by a close parallel in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. We know that at the same time as writing "Das Tagebuch" in Karlsbad in July 1808, Goethe was also working on the novel. On July 3 he records reading Juvenal's first satire, from which he drew the snake simile. The following day he was working on chapter 11 of book I of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (WA 3.3:356). This chapter contains the notorious "Ehebruch im Ehebett," the scene of virtual adultery in the marriage bed. General similarities between *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* and "the Diary" have been noted before. A much more specific parallel suggests itself here. In the novel's scene of virtual adultery, husband and wife make love, while each imagines someone else. It is a terrible moment of divided consciousness, which, though it initially promises to reaffirm their marriage vows, in fact spells their end. I propose that we can read the divided consciousness of the narrator of "Das Tagebuch" in a similar way, as he carries the image of the

girl home, where he will experience in the comic mode a flight of the sexual imagination similar to that experienced in the tragic mode by Eduard and Charlotte in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*.

An image is not a physical reality, and that, perhaps, is the point. In bed with the sleeping waitress, the diarist was aroused by memories of his wife. Where physical reality and imagination diverge, moral difficulty ensues. A similar situation, so it is implied, will arise at home. In love-making with his wife the diarist will be split into two again, into the physical body that lies beside his wife and the imagination in which he lies beside the waitress. These instances of splitting are, of course, representative of a broader tendency in the poem, which enacts splitting or duplication on several fronts. The duplication begins when the diarist takes on the voice of Juvenalian satire in stanza XIV. Up to this point the narrator and the narrated self have been one person, united in the first person singular. Once the Juvenalian voice begins, the diarist speaks of himself in the third person: narrator and narratee have become two persons. The diarist is the author of two texts, the diary and the poem. So not only is he both a physical and an imagined being, a narrator and narratee, he also has two authorial roles. The diarist-cum-poet suffers from two failings: the misdirection of desire, when he falls for the waitress, and the misfiring of desire, when he fails to satisfy her. Accordingly, the poem ends with two morals: sickness validates health, and love trumps duty. Or rather the diary contains one moral and the poem another. The poem thus evolves towards a state of doubleness, in which it enacts the double nature of mankind.

If seemingly nothing can stop the duplication of being, this is primarily because desire, the motor of duplication, is itself unstoppable. In *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* desire appears to be finally dammed by the death and canonization of Ottilie: an object of desire, she is sublimated into the cultural practice of religious worship, where in theory all desire falls silent. Yet this does not occur without irony, as the final sentence of the novel testifies. Moreover, the sublimation of desire into culture is incomplete: another image of Ottilie perdures her death, the image on the chapel ceiling painted by the architect. And this angelic portrait betrays its origins as a product of desire. In "Das Tagebuch" the attempt is made to sublimate desire into language—or, more precisely, to contain desire within the language of the diary and, if that fails, within the form of "moralische Erzählungen in Stanzen." Veget is surely right to argue that the closing moral is ironic. As this analysis has shown, however, it is ironic because desire cannot be contained. Desire is sublimated into a linguistic form that both contains it and acknowledges that it is uncontainable.

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NOTES

1. T. J. Reed, *Goethe* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984) 87.
2. Hans Rudolf Veget, "Der Schreibakt und der Liebesakt: Zur Deutung von Goethes Gedicht 'Das Tagebuch,'" *Goethe Yearbook*, 1 (1982): 112–137; here 115.

3. *Italienische Reise*, III, 17 July 1787, WA 1.32:33.
4. Vaget, "Der Schreibakt und der Liebesakt," 131.
5. Hans Rudolf Vaget, "Introduction," in Goethe, *Erotic Poems*, trans. and ed. by David Luke (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988), ix–xlv (xxxvi–xxxvii). See also Reed, *Goethe*, 86, and Sven-Erik Rose, "Goethe's Splitting Image: Male Sexuality and/as Writing in 'Das Tagebuch' and Beyond," *Goethe Yearbook*, 9 (1999): 131–57.
6. See Vaget, "Der Schreibakt und der Liebesakt," 136.
7. Otto Schönberger, "Dichtung und Liebe: Zu Goethes Gedicht 'Das Tagebuch,'" *Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts*, 1988, 60–78; here 68: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (in the King James translation).
8. Schönberger 76.
9. Vaget, "Der Schreibakt und der Liebesakt," 125.
10. "Quidam detestantes ut venena doctrinas Iuvenalem et Marium Maximum curatiore studio legunt, nulla volumina praeter haec in profundo otio contrectantes," Ammianus Marcellinus, XXVIII. iv. 14. Translations from the Latin and Greek are mine, except where noted otherwise.
11. *A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693), in *The Works of John Dryden*, 20 vols (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: U of California P, 1956–2000) IV: *Poems 1693–1696*, ed. by A. B. Chambers and William Frost, 61–63. The comparison of Horace and Juvenal is a stock topos from the Renaissance onwards. For eighteenth-century England, see David Nokes, *Raillery and Rage: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Satire* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987) 50–52.
12. To Wilhelm von Humboldt, 29–30 November 1795, in Friedrich Schiller, *Werke und Briefe*, 12 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1988–2000) XII: *Briefe 1795–1805*, ed. by Norbert Oellers, 105.
13. See Schiller, *Werke und Briefe, Theoretische Schriften*, ed. by Rolf-Peter Janz, 8:740–48.
14. Schiller, *Theoretische Schriften*, 8:742.
15. Schiller, *Theoretische Schriften*, 8:742.
16. Goethe's freedom from Casti leads Karl Eibl to reject—wrongly, I think—the idea that Goethe drew anything much from Ovid (FA 2:1325).
17. See David Luke's comments in Goethe, *Erotic Poems*, 137.
18. Luke 137–38.
19. Ovid, *Amores*, III. 7. 11.
20. The association of Christ with sickness and Priapus with health is made in the unpublished epigram "Heraus mit dem Theile des Herrn" (FA 1:465). A hysterical young girl calls for the relic of Christ's penis to be brought out of St Mark's. The poet suggests that Priapus's member would be "heilsamer" for her. The point is that hysteria was believed to be caused by a lack of sexual intercourse, which caused the womb to dry out, as it was not lubricated by semen. The womb would then wander round the woman's body seeking moisture and giving rise to the 'hysterical' ailments. When the poet suggests Priapus would cure her, he means, of course, sexual intercourse.
21. This is Eibl's interpretation (FA 2:1328).
22. The consensus seems to be that the poem was substantially composed in 1810. See most recently Volkmar Hansen, "Das Tagebuch, 1810," in *Goethe-Handbuch*, 5 vols, ed. by Bernd Witte, Theo Buck, Hans-Dietrich Dahnke, Regine Otto and Peter Schmidt (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1997) 1:339–42, here 339. However, 1808 seems more likely to me

for the following reasons. Firstly, it seems most unlikely that the diary references of spring 1810 mark the full extent of work on the poem. Goethe's diary for 22 April records work "an den Stanzen"; on 23 April the work is confined to the morning ("Früh an den Stanzen," WA 3.4:112). To compose a poem of 200 lines in the complex form of ottava rima within one and a half days would have been beyond even Goethe's powers. In any case, the expression "an den Stanzen" on 22 April implies that the text already substantially existed before that date. It is, of course, possible that the work extended into the days immediately before or after 22 and 23 April, but in that case why does Goethe's diary record only the work on 22 and 23? On 27 April Goethe talked to Riemer "über moralische Erzählungen in Stanzen, Inhalt, Form, Reime" (WA 3.4:113). In this context Riemer records Goethe's view that "den Menschen ist nur mit Gewalt oder List etwas abzugewinnen. Mit Liebe auch, sagt man; aber das heißt auf Sonnenschein warten, und das Leben braucht jede Minute" (WA 5.2:308). The generalizing tenor of the conversation suggests reflection on a finished work, and indeed the poem was copied out by Riemer on 30 April. A natural interpretation of this evidence would seem to be that the poem substantially existed before 22 April 1810, and that the work in this period was confined to putting finishing touches to it. If we then ask when the poem was substantially written, the only external evidence points towards the summer of 1808. Goethe's diary for 19 May 1808 in Karlsbad records that he has "im Casti gelesen" (WA 3.3:337). The reawakened appreciation of Casti's ottava rime may have prompted Goethe to try his hand at the form. Alternatively, with a new project in mind he may have returned to Casti to remind himself of the style. By the end of the summer the poem had been planned. The diary for 30 August 1808 in Karlsbad records a conversation with Riemer "über eine Geschichte in Castischem Sinn und Geschmack und höchst moralisch" (WA 5.2:218). The plot and the closing moral must have been in place by this point. It is possible that Goethe had already drafted a substantial part of the poem. The use of Juvenal and thematic affinities with *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* discussed below, both of which can be firmly dated to early July 1808, add further weight to the argument.

23. Juvenal, *The Sixteen Satires*, trans. by Peter Green (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967) 66 (adapted): 'unciolam Proculeius habet, sed Gillo deuncem, / partes quisque suas ad mensuram inguinis heres. / accipiat sane mercedem sanguinis, et sic / palleat ut nudis pressit qui calcibus anguem / aut Lugudunensem rhetor dicturus ad aram' (Juvenal, I. 40–44).

24. Goethe probably picked this up from his extended study of the *Carmina Priapeia*, a collection of golden-age Latin Priapic verses.

25. Euripides, *Medea*, 251–2: "How I would have preferred to stand by a spear three times over to giving birth once" ('Ως τρίς ἂν παρ' ἀσπίδα | στῆναι θέλωμ' ἂν μᾶλλον ἢ τεκεῖν ἅπαξ').