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Travels with Kierkegaard

Abstract

The idea of traveling, as a theme, topic, or metaphor, is present in Kierkegaard's production—namely, in the dialectics between the objective and subjective, the role of the imaginary in recollection, the reflection on memory, space and time, and, more significantly, in the dialectics of recollection and repetition. Moreover, the idea of traveling has a pivotal role within the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious stages, which structure all of his writings. *In Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition*, traveling lies at the core of the philosophical debate. I begin by presenting the Gilleleje notes, followed by the recurrent use of *Opdagelse-reise* (great voyage of discovery) in his works; then, I introduce his idea of ethical traveling and the ensuing conception of the Christian as a traveler; I also discuss his ambivalent disposition regarding the demand for traveling in his day. In the second part, I analyze the philosophical use of the idea of traveling by focusing first on Abraham's journey to Mount Moriah in *Fear and Trembling* and then on the seminal proposal of a dialectical relation between repetition and recollection in *Repetition*. I end by drawing conclusive remarks from the previous analyses, which guide me to elaborate proposals for a more holistic understanding of the genre of travel literature.

Keywords

Kierkegaard, Travel Literature, Repetition, Recollection, Imaginary

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The set of entries that marks the beginning of the journals of the Danish thinker Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55) takes the form of a travelogue. These are the nearest to travel literature of all his writings or signed by any of his pseudonym authors. Entries AA 1–11, most likely written in 1836, report a summer stay in the area of Gilleleje, a fishing village on the northern coast of Zealand, from June 17 to August 24, 1835. Read retrospectively by the

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Kierkegaardian reader more familiar with what he published after 1843, the year the philosopher marked as the beginning of his activity as an author, the Gilleleje notes are relatively homogeneous in terms of literary identity. Whereas Kierkegaard's posterior works tend to be ostensibly hybrid in the genre, since a title often includes various chapters with equally various genre profiles and even authors,¹ the Gilleleje travelogue contains somewhat similarly styled entries in the form of a diary, what he saw and felt on his wanderings in that scenic area, as well as commentaries reflecting preparatory research on customs and monuments. The Gilleleje notes display modes of description similar to those which form the tissue of the prose of the epitome of travelogues in Kierkegaard's day—Goethe's *Italienische Reise* (1786–1787), a work in which the knowledge of art, history, music, geology, geography, botany, all pertain to observations and commentaries on nature, monuments, works of art, or traditions and customs which Goethe encountered on his trip.² Kierkegaard emerges as a beholder who is simultaneously inquisitive and reflective, seemingly following Goethe's dictum in the early stages of *Italienische Reise*—"But what is seeing without thinking?," (Goethe 1982, 54) a question that echoes what had been admitted a few pages before—"My purpose in making this wonderful journey is not to delude myself but to discover myself in the objects I see" (Goethe 1982, 40). The Gilleleje notes go one step further and highlight the constant interaction between the objective and the subjective, thus portraying Kierkegaard as a more typical romantic observer than Goethe could have been. The object of description eventually becomes a subject in the dialogue between observer and object observed, and their dispositions are now attuned:

Looking down from this high point into the valley where the town of Tisvilde lies, and informed of the nature of the terrain both by the inscription on the column and by the lush buckwheat growing on both sides, there nature, friendly and smiling, meets our eye. The small but very neat houses lie each surrounded by fresh verdure (unlike larger cities which when we approach them impress on us the clear outline of the whole mass of buildings, these are, if I may so put it, like individuals extending a friendly hand to one another in a smiling totality) (Kierkegaard AA:1, KJN 1, 3).

¹ For example, fragments, diaries, literary, theatre or music reviews, philosophical or theological *tractati*, short letters or very long ones, Platonic-like dialogues, letters which are sermons, and sermons that could be labeled as letters (in the sense of the biblical epistles), and pamphlets.

² Heinrich Heine and H. C. Andersen most certainly inspired the young Kierkegaard. See Fenger 1976: 81-131.

When describing the pilgrims and their rituals on the site of the gravestone of Saint Helen, Kierkegaard comments that “the whole inspires a certain mood of melancholy evoked by the strange mystery of the place, by the dark side that superstition always brings with it, escaping the eye of the observer yet intimating a whole system or nexus” (Kierkegaard AA:1, KJN 1, 5). Then, focusing his attention on Lake Gurre and Lake Søborg, the personification of nature becomes even more perceptible:

When this landscape is viewed in the afternoon light and the sun is still high enough to give the necessary sharp contours to the friendly landscape, like a melodious voice accented sharply enough not to lisp, our entire surroundings seem to whisper to us, “It’s good to be here (Kierkegaard AA:2, KJN 2, 6).

During his walk through Grib Forest during a storm, the intuition of nature as a realm of the known and the unknown, where immanence finds a way to transcendence, reaches its climax as the soothing remembrance of his departed loved ones joins the contemplation of the scenery from Gilbjerg, the highest viewpoint in the region:

Often, as I stood here on a quiet evening, the sea intoning its song with deep but calm solemnity, my eye catching not a single sail on the vast surface, and only the sea framed the sky and the sky the sea, while on the other hand the busy hum of life grew silent and the birds sang their vespers, then the few dear departed ones rose from the grave before me, or rather, it seemed as though they were not dead. I felt so much at ease in their midst, I rested in their embrace, and I felt as though I were outside my body and floated about with them in a higher ether [...] (Kierkegaard AA:6, KJN 1, 8-9).

The feeling of gratitude for nature is then gradually replaced by blessedness before the realization of himself as a divine creation: “[As] I stood there alone and forsaken, and the power of the sea and the battle of the elements reminded me of my nothingness, while the sure flight of the birds reminded me on the other hand of Christ’s words, ‘Not a sparrow will fall to the earth without your heavenly Father’s will’” (Kierkegaard AA:6, KJN 1, 10).

This sample of quotations illustrates how the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious conflate in writings which that would be labeled as solely aesthetic. The traveler needs to be armed aesthetically as an observer, but their contact with immediacy also requires disposition and knowledge to recognize, interpret and grasp the entire content and meaning of the objects contemplated, be it castles, lakes, or people, in sum, all it takes to feel attuned with the atmosphere around. As their contemplation deepens, their awareness of themselves as God’s creature and creation develops via ethical-

religious introspection. Moreover, the mere ‘seeing’ of the traveler who seeks to collect beauty is replaced by the ethical observation of a natural world inhabited by all objects of creation and the Creator. Only much later, in 1847, would the traveler be ranked behind the Christian for being incapable of experiencing the ethical-religious empathy, or mercy, towards the neighbor as the single individual: “Thus if a traveler saw how slaves groan under the chains, he would become aware, his sympathy would be aroused, and he would give a vivid description of the dreadfulness of slavery. But he would not become aware of the meek slave; he might even believe that it was the master who was the good one” (Kierkegaard 1993, 244).

An aesthetic-ethical view of traveling gains a new tone in the term *opdagelsesrejse*—in Danish, this word designates voyages of exploration into the unknown or expeditions involving scientific research. Marco Polo, Darwin, Gama, and Livingstone are examples of *opdagelsereisender*. It is thus striking to note that Kierkegaard applied the word to quite diverse protagonists of life experiences and pursuits. We encounter the anxiety of the young poet of the *Diapsalmata*, who is about to leave everything behind to go on his journey of self-discovery (Kierkegaard 1987a, 37); Socrates’ “renowned journey of discovery [...] not to find something but to convince himself that there was nothing to find” (Kierkegaard 1989, 93); Don Juan who experiences desire as victory (Kierkegaard 1987a, 81), or the opposite, from an ethical point of view, marriage as the possibility of going on the great journey of discovery (Kierkegaard 1988, 89); and not surprisingly, Constantin Constantius, the main narrator of *Repetition*, designed his trip to Berlin to test the possibility of repetition, as *opdagelsesrejse* (Kierkegaard 1983, 150). Discovering God is the equivalent of the hardest of all great travels—an expedition to the North Pole—albeit an interior one:

To come to relate oneself to God is a voyage of discovery that can be to some extent compared with a North Pole expedition—so seldom has a pers[on] ever really pressed on in that direction, to the discovery. But imagined doing it [?]-Yes, all the centuries, and almost everyone, have done that. Yet this voyage for the discovery of God is an *interior journey*; the point of it is precisely to preserve oneself in singularity, and then, internally, simply to put aside, to get rid of, the obstacles (Kierkegaard NB34:30, KJN 10, 350).

In 1847, the opening pages of *On the Occasion of a Confession*, a discourse appropriately focused on repentance and regret, contain a one-page *metaphore filée* that brings to light the dynamics of the idea of traveling and the traveler’s experience in Kierkegaard’s thought (Kierkegaard 1993, 13-14).

The starting point is identifying a danger for the Christian—going astray—and the qualification of regret as a guide. The subsequent paragraph further develops the need for guidance. It begins by stating that “[o]ver every human’s being’s journey through life there watches a providence who provides everyone with two guides: the one calls forward, the other calls back” (*ibidem*). Awareness of immanent pitfalls is shown to be as relevant as the guidance of providence, and all of this is expressed using the experience and the lexicon of the traveler. There follows a succession of incidents derived from the semantic field of ‘going astray,’ which are recognizable as rules of traveling or hardships of the ordinary traveler in Kierkegaard’s day but are used here as metaphors for the obstacles of the Christian’s journey. I quote a few examples to illustrate the rhetoric of the text: “safeguard the journey,” “wrong road,” “continuation (...) on a wrong road, by unremittingly pressing forward,” or the two guides “determine the place and indicate the road” and “the casual traveler who goes down the road quickly does not know it as does the traveler with his burden.”

In other works, we also find analogies with the experience of traveling. The following one underscores the need for reflection in the journey of the Christian, a disposition that the casual traveler often lacks:

In the world of spirit, the different stages are not like cities on a journey, about which it is quite all right for the traveler to say directly, for example: We left Peking and came to Canton and were in Canton on the fourteenth. A traveler like that changes place, not himself; and thus it is all right for him to mention and to *recount* the change in a direct, unchanged form. But in the world of spirit to change place is to be changed oneself, and therefore all direct assurance of having arrived here and there is an attempt à la Münchhausen (Kierkegaard 1992, 281).

Kierkegaard’s use of the idea of traveling in his writings is also based on his travels. Although he did not travel widely across Europe, like Goethe or Andersen, five years after Gilleleje, he took a three-week journey in Jutland from July 17 to August 8, 1840; the notes make up Notebook 6, in thirty-five entries of variable length. The Gilleleje travelogue is self-contained in form and style, but the Jutland notes, despite the beautiful style, are more fragmentary and much more heterogeneous in content, showing less concern for textual coherence. Impressions and raw factual information about the trip run parallel with reflections on his pilgrimage to the region where his father was born and raised, next to the notes for possible future sermons. However, the contribution of both of these trips to the density of mentions and allusions to places, legends, and typical characters that permeate Kierkegaard’s

writings is absolutely remarkable. Conversely, his first journey to Berlin, from October 25, 1841, to March 6, 1842, and the second one, from May 8 to 30, 1843, are much more relevant not only to understanding his ambiguity towards the urge to travel, but also his fictional experimentation with repetition and recollection, at two levels which are most commonly juxtaposed in the text—that is, as the actual theme or topic and as the organizational structure of the text.

Before addressing the latter in the second part of this essay, it must be said that Kierkegaard felt divided between the need to travel, in consonance with the expected pattern of the Grand tour or *Bildungsreise* of the time, and the fear of being misunderstood as an author, or of misusing his call as a writer. In 1848, he made plans to travel for a couple of years and thus “interrupt the productivity and have some recreation” (Kierkegaard NB7:114, KJN 5, 144). Nevertheless, he also recognized that traveling never managed to halt his productivity. A year later, he would eventually admit that it was impossible for him to travel for recreation and that what really overwhelmed him was his compulsive writing:

In fact, I actually had already thought of stopping as early as *Either/Or* [1843]. But I was never closer to stopping than I was with the publication of *Christian Discourses* [1848]. I had sold the house and had earned two thousand on it. Spending the money on travel appealed to me very much. But I’m no good at traveling and would probably just have remained productive, as I very much tend to do when I travel (Kierkegaard NB9:79, KJN, 5, 262).

His productivity during his travels to Berlin is well-documented; but this is not the case in his journals, which do not keep a daily follow-up of his whereabouts. The notes from the Schelling’s lectures he attended in Berlin are the only record of his first trip to Berlin. (Kierkegaard Not 11:1–42, KJN 3, 303–366) Yet, most scholars have established that he was busy with the final touches on *Either/Or* (Fenger 1976, 7–14) while being more than aware of the *furor* that Franz Liszt created during the same period (Sousa 2008, 100–108). His second trip to Berlin in May 1843 is subsumed in one single entry;³ it has been demonstrated, nevertheless, that he was actively working

³ “*Berlin, 10 May 1843*. The day after my arrival I was in a very bad way, on the brink of collapse. In Stralsund I almost went mad hearing a young girl overhead play the piano, also Weber’s last waltz, among other things. The previous time I was in Berlin it was the first piece that greeted me in Thiergarten, played by a blind man on a harp. It’s as if everything were designed just to bring back memories. My pharmacist, who was a confirmed bachelor, has married. He offered several explanations in that connection: one lives only

on *Repetition* and *Fear and Trembling* (Kierkegaard KJN 2, 498). From May 14 to 24, 1845, the third trip deserves a trivial commentary on a fellow traveler, proving his observational and descriptonal skills.⁴ Furthermore, according to his biographer, when he was in Berlin for the last time, from May 5 to 16, 1846, what he sketched might well have been written in Copenhagen (Garff 2005, 475).

In fact, his admission that he remained productive even while traveling shows that he reproduced the pattern of his home routine, divided between peripatetic tours of Copenhagen, usually accompanied—he was deemed to be very communicative—and writing until late in the evening (Kierkegaard 1993, x, n. 6). The knowledge of human nature and the expertise in its descriptions were practiced on the streets of Copenhagen and may have compensated for his limited experience as a traveler. His stance as a philosopher and theologian, his literary skills, and the urge to fulfill his call to be a poet just spoke higher; thus, his most relevant travels took place in imaginary realms.

2

I will now address a moment in Kierkegaard's oeuvre, already based on the dialectics of recollection and repetition and using a journey as setting, namely, "*Stemming*," the enigmatic first chapter of *Fear and Trembling*, which follows an extraordinary structural plan to develop the content. The title should be rendered as a case of the simultaneity of two of the meanings of the term *stemming* we encountered earlier—'disposition' and 'attunement.' The dialectics of recollection and repetition take place at three levels. The first is contextualized on the introductory page, where we learn of a man who has been overwhelmed by one particular recollection all his life, right after first

once, one must have someone to whom one can make oneself understood. How much there is in that [thought]; especially when said with absolutely no pretension. Then it hits really hard. In the Hotel de Saxe I have a room looking out on the water where the boats lie. Heavens, how it reminds me of the past.—In the background I have the church—and when it sounds the hours the chimes go right to the marrow of my bones (Kierkegaard JJ:109; KJN 2, 162).

⁴ "14 May 1845 // arrived at Berlin. // The only usable figure on board the steamship was a young fellow (a lad) wearing a velvet cap that was held on by a kerchief, a striped tunic over a coat; in front, a walking stick hanging by a cord from one of the buttons. In-genuous, open, on a journey, attentive to everything, naive, bashful, and yet dauntless. By combining him with a melancholy traveler (such as Mr. Hagen) a mournful effect could be produced" (Kierkegaard JJ:327; KJN 2, 224ff).

hearing “the beautiful story of how God tempted Abraham and of how Abraham withstood the temptation” (Kierkegaard 1983, 9). The more he heard it, the more obsessed he became; the man’s admiration and enthusiasm increased as he grew older whereas his understanding of the story declined, and he eventually focused on a single wish that could never be fulfilled in actuality:

His craving was to go along on the three-day journey when Abraham rode with sorrow before him and Isaac beside him. His wish was to be present in that hour when Abraham raised his eyes and saw Mount Moriah in the distance, the hour when he left the asses behind and went up the mountain alone with Isaac—for what occupied him was not the beautiful tapestry of imagination but the shudder of the idea (ibidem).

The second level requires the extensive use of the imaginary and it consists in the creation of fictional narratives of travels in order to describe the only possible way of accompanying Abraham on his dramatic journey and of rendering the man’s reflective recollection of it. The third level is the responsibility of Johannes, as the omniscient narrator—it is Johannes’ own act of recollection and repetition of the man’s story and his reflections as he aspires to understand Abraham. After the opening section, there are four parts (Kierkegaard 1983, 10–14), each with two texts—a more detailed one narrating distinct variations of this episode (the first is twice the dimension of the others); and a separate short paragraph (3 to 7 lines) on different methods of child weaning. The repetition of the imaginary recollections of the man is also intended to direct the reader to the central theme of *Fear and Trembling*—to question the possibility of the suspension of the ethical, which would also be a possible solution for the man to understand the story of Abraham. Part I opens with the quote from Genesis 22:2, which encapsulates the story of Abraham and the offering of Isaac. Then, the fictionalized recollections of Abraham’s journey imagined by the man during his own solitary pilgrimages to Mount Moriah are presented by Johannes as the only possibility of fulfilling his wish of riding side by side with Abraham. They are repeated four times, each time differently, each time with varying components typical of any fictional narrative, changing the setting, the preparation for departure, the detailed description of actions and gestures, and intensifying the psychological depth of the characters involved, namely, Abraham and Isaac, who figure in the biblical episode, but also of Sarah and Eliezer. The first sentence is the only one to be repeated almost literally in all four parts. For the sake of a clearer illustration of the poetic nature of the narration, the fictionalizing components I mentioned, and how the movement of traveling accompanies the movement of thought and recollection, I quote section II:

It was early in the morning when Abraham arose: he embraced Sarah, the bride of his old age, and Sarah kissed Isaac, who took away her disgrace, Isaac her pride, her hope for all the generations to come. They rode along the road in silence, and Abraham stared continuously and fixedly at the ground until the fourth day, when he looked up and saw Mount Moriah far away, but once again he turned his eyes toward the ground. Silently he arranged the firewood and bound Isaac; silently he drew the knife—then he saw the ram that God had selected. This he sacrificed and went home. — — —From that day henceforth, Abraham was old; he could not forget that God had ordered him to do this. Isaac flourished as before, but Abraham's eyes were darkened, and he saw joy no more. //

When the child has grown big and is to be weaned, the mother virginally conceals her breast, and then the child no longer has a mother. How fortunate the child who has not lost his mother in some other way! (Kierkegaard 1983, 12).

I deem this chapter to be the most perfect actualization of the dialectics of recollection and repetition as put forward by Constantin Constantius in *Repetition*: “what is recollected has been, is repeated backwards, whereas repetition properly so called is recollected forwards” (Kierkegaard 1983, 132). The succession of lively recollections of Abraham's journey, whatever the way, the company, or the hour of the day, always lead to the core of the question—the (im)possibility of the suspension of the ethical. A journey of inner anxiety becomes a quest for understanding this ethical dilemma.

Significantly, *Fear and Trembling*, *Repetition*, and *Three Upbuilding Discourses* were published simultaneously on October 16, 1843, and recollection and repetition are indeed inseparable from each work's diegesis. In *Three Upbuilding Discourses*, the first two bear exactly the same title and use the same verses of Peter's first epistle—“Love will hide a Multitude of Sins” as their motto. As we have seen, Abraham's journey to Mount Moriah is a superb literary construct that involves the dialectics of recollection and repetition at three levels. *Repetition* is more elaborate than the others because repetition is also operational in the diegesis. The dialectics is also fictitiously staged, but, instead of an omniscient narrator as in “*Stemning*,” there are two narrators in the first person—Constantin Constantius in the first part and as the author of the introduction of the second part and the closing letter to the reader; and the Young Man, who is submitted to a psychological experiment by Constantius in the first part, becomes the main narrator in the second, and as the author of letters to Constantius. The narration in the first person also conflates two levels where the sequence of events in actuality and in recollection and reflection are narrated; the one of the actual events appears to be chronologically simultaneous with the one made of recollections of past experiences and reflections on present ones.

Furthermore, these two levels are redoubled because the two narrators create two different degrees of focalization—in the first part, the experiences, intermingled with recollections and reflections of Constantius on his ‘external’ journey (a second trip to Berlin) are seen from his own point of view. In the second, the Young Man, *in absentia*, communicates his experiences, recollections, and reflections in letters to his former mentor, narrating his ‘internal’ journey to discover a meaning to his suffering through faith. Moreover, the various stages of existence—the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious—form multifarious intersections in each part, frequently in distinct directions. For the present purpose, I focus solely on Constantius’ trip to Berlin, which is a performative repetition based on the recollected actions of a first trip, and designed to be the scenery of his endeavor to question the (im)possibility of repetition and to substitute Hegelian mediation for the dialectics of repetition and recollection (Kierkegaard 1983,148).

The work opens with Constantius’ statement that repetition is equivalent to what recollection was to the Greeks (Kierkegaard 1983, 131). He then draws a parallel between knowing by recollection in Greek thought and living by repetition in modern philosophy (Kierkegaard 1983, 132). Immediately after this, there is the famous claim I cited above—“what is recollected has been, is repeated backwards, whereas repetition properly so called is recollected forwards,” to be followed by a new dichotomy—happiness/unhappiness—“Repetition, therefore, if it is possible, makes a person happy, whereas recollection makes him unhappy” (*ibidem*). Next, the introduction of the sub-claim stating that recollection’s love is unhappy, whereas repetition’s love is happy, validates the psychological experiment to which the Young Man will be submitted. His love failed to be returned, and, having confided in Constantius, he is advised to stage a successful love experiment (Kierkegaard 1983, 133-147). Some pages later, before his expedition in search of objective proof of the possibility of repetition, Constantius expresses his speculative reasoning on the issue:

The dialectic of repetition is easy, for that which is repeated has been—otherwise it could not be repeated—but the very fact that it has been makes the repetition into something new. When the Greeks said that all knowing is recollecting, they said that all existence, which is, has been; when one says that life is a repetition, one says: actuality, which has been, now comes into existence (Kierkegaard 1983, 149).

Of all the narrative strategies that Kierkegaard’s genius would have provided him with, of all the existential experiences he might have used to stage this great journey of discovery, he chose the most common trip of any Dan-

ish intellectual of his time in order to illustrate his philosophical claim—thus, also submitting his potential Danish readers to a psychological experiment. What looked easy before the second trip to Berlin turned out to be difficult to prove in a clear-cut way because, instead of pursuing this theoretical thinking, Constantius' second trip to Berlin turned out to be a casestudy where the subject also becomes the object of the psychological experiment. The report of Constantius begins by *amplificatio* of what Kierkegaard registered in his diary concerning his own second trip to Berlin (see note 4). In general, something appears to happen exactly as before, but one or two details prevent the precise repetition of the previous experience. The thirty-six hours inside the carriage are just as exhausting, but he sits on a different seat (Kierkegaard 1983, 151). When he reaches his former apartment (the reader learns of the harmonious *stemming* he had enjoyed there via a vivid description of the rooms and furniture), he finds out that his solicitous landlord changed (with) his marital status—“[...] he went on to prove the esthetic validity of marriage. He succeeded marvelously, just as well as he had the last time in proving the perfection of bachelorhood” (Kierkegaard 1983, 152). Next, Constantius “became completely out of tune, or [...] precisely in tune with the day” (*ibidem*) when he realized that the view from the window has completely changed because the city “lay in a cloud of dust” due to the wind. However, he discards this as a case of failed repetition because he had no previous recollection of the weather. What follows brings insight into his theories of traveling since he contrasts his personal attitude towards traveling with those of the ‘professional’ traveler:

If he is a traveler *ex professo* [by trade], a courier who travels to smell what everybody has smelled or to write the names of notable sights in his journal, and in return gets his in the great autograph book of travelers, then he engages a *Lohndiener* and buys *das ganze Berlin* for four *Groschen*. This way he becomes an impartial observer whose utterances ought to have the credibility of any police record. But if on his journey he has no particular purpose, he lets matters take their course, occasionally sees things others do not see, disregards the most important, receives a random impression that is meaningful only to him. A careless wanderer like this usually does not have much to communicate to others, and if he does, he very easily runs the risk of weakening the good opinion good people might have regarding his morality and virtue. (Kierkegaard 1983, 153).

The next site of experimentation is the theater, where the same play of the previous year is being performed. During a lengthy excursus on theatrical performance, the reader becomes aware of his favorite seats, his appreciation for the actors, and his anticipation of the reaction from the audience

(Kierkegaard 1983, 156-167). However, his favorite box and seats are not available, the actors' performances are disappointing instead of enthusiastic, and upon returning to the apartment, what had previously pleased him makes him feel even more out of tune. And he concludes: "My home had become dismal to me simply because it was a repetition of the wrong kind" (Kierkegaard 1983, 169). He decides to return to Copenhagen expecting to find everything as it was before; alas, his servant had decided to take advantage of his leave to do a general clean-up, and everything is upside down. Constantius eventually admits that he "perceived that there is no repetition" (Kierkegaard 1983, 171).

His experiment was doomed to failure. Had he recalled what he had said about 'new repetition' or had he read the last words of Johannes *de silentio* in *Fear and Trembling*, his experiment might have been different. Johannes' closing lines lament the fate of Heraclitus, who was misunderstood by his followers and include his famous quote—One cannot walk through the same river twice (Kierkegaard 1983, 123). Constantius wanted to enter the same river twice. Moreover, in most of the situations, what he wanted to repeat in every detail was not an action or an event in itself, but his recollection of it. Moreover, looking back at the chapter "*Stemning*," we know that two, three, or four recollections of the same idea or event may share similarities but remain singular.

Conclusion

During the last eighteen months, due to the pandemic and the global public health crisis with severe lockdowns, I found myself with more time to read. Novels, poetry or essays, however, required concentration not compatible with the suspended time we lived through. Possibly in an effort to compensate for what I was deprived of, I began a systematic reading of western travel literature (mainly from the 20th century), which I am still doing. Eventually, this reading has become not only a guarantee of gratification and very enjoyable but also a research field in progress. As time passed, I began to pile up some striking points quite common in travel literature, which eventually led me to what I find to be the most seminal and victorious of Kierkegaard's categories—repetition. I came across his recurrent use of the world of travel only to realize how helpful it was to gain insight into travel literature. I came across cases of writers who wrote extraordinary travel books after having lost at least part of their notebooks (e.g., Patrick Leigh Fermor in *A Time of Gifts* and Nicolas Bouvier in *L'usage du monde*), thus pointing out, at least,

that the act of recollecting, and, hence, the space that is given over to the work of imagination, is vital in the writing of travel literature. It is the traveler/narrator's own 'disposition' and 'attunement' that determines their profile (or ethos) and defines them as an observer who is not casual, but capable of grasping what lies beyond the surface of their object of contemplation. This became even more apparent because the style is commonly more concise and literary and constructed to report as objectively as possible in writings by journalists which were originally intended to be reports or appear as newspaper columns (for example, Enric González, Ryszard Kapuściński and Alexandra Lucas Coelho); or, conversely, of celebrated writers who authored books with the premise of travels in space but actually travel in time (Claudio Magris in *Danube* or Ohan Pamuk in *Istanbul*).

The kernel of the question is then not to tell truth from fiction in a travel book. We do not read travel literature to know what is factual about a place—in the present age, we easily get that type of information from other sources. We read to know what and how an author observed, and to learn about his recollection and repetition of his journeys. Furthermore, by so doing, we enter the world of their imaginary.

It is true that Kierkegaard's remarks on traveling or the various kinds of voyages of discovery, and his commentaries on the types of travelers he encountered, do not amount to any aesthetics of travel. Nevertheless, this is in line with his most common way of reflection in other domains of literary, theological and philosophical thought. Nevertheless, even if Kierkegaard did not put forward any systematized evaluation or classification that might be even remotely considered a theory of travel, he consistently explored the substratum of the contemporary practice of traveling of his time, reaching conclusions that today still prove to be effective when analyzing travel literature. He distinguished between what I call, in his own terms, an aesthete-traveler (the one whose contemplation of 'foreign' immediacy remains at the level of eye contact); and the ethical traveler (the one who successfully incorporates his traveling not only in the development of his *Bildung* but also in his process of *Ophygelse*, that is, the process of ethical-religious self-edification that implies renewal, by starting over whenever judged necessary). This distinction between two types of observer is essential to create the type of narrator that aspires to enter the subgenre of travel literature. There has to be literary quality, excellent description skills in particular, and the ability to induce in the diegesis the very pace of the travel in question—the text has to unfold according to a rhythm that accompanies the narrator's movemementing along. And, moreover, the role of reflection and the work of

the imaginary should follow that same pace. The more reflective and imaginative in their literary construct a narrator is, the more the reader becomes aware of the impact on the narrator/author of what they have seen and experienced, and consequently, the more curious they become about the travels narrated. A narrator/author of travels who does not succeed in balancing what they see with how they see it, in my view, fails to catch the reader's eye and their travel book tends to become a travel guide or a book of curiosities.

There is no travel literature without recollection of a previous travel experience, and the only possibility of repeating that travel experience is by writing down the recollection of it. Moreover, once that narrative or travel report is read by a succession of readers, and eventually, generations of them, the initial act of recollection and repetition of the author becomes the act of recollection and repetition of the reader of a third person's experience. Thus, the relation between the objective and subjective gains a new dimension which in turn is fueled by the role of the imaginary in the author and also in the reader. The here and now of a journey does not repeat itself. To undertake a second or third journey to the same places, even following the same route, is to embark on a new experience, be it external or internal, spiritual or physical, which will not repeat the first. The subject, then, is as contingent to the work of time as the object under contemplation, and the subject's recollection gains new contours once it takes place at distinct moments.

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