Religious Lightness in Infinite Vortex: Dancing with Kierkegaard

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Abstract: Dance is intimately connected to both Kierkegaard's personal life and his life in writing, as exemplified in his famous nightly attendance at the dance-filled theater, and his invitation to the readers of "A First and Last Explanation" to (in his words) "dance with" his pseudonyms. The present article's acceptance of that dance invitation proceeds as follows: the first section surveys the limited secondary literature on dance in Kierkegaard, focusing on the work of M. Ferreira and Edward Mooney. The second section explores the hidden dancing dimensions of Kierkegaard's "leap" and "shadow-dance" (*Schattenspiel*). And the third section reinterprets the pseudonymous works richest in dance, *Repetition* and *Postscript*, concluding that the religious for him is the lighthearted dance of a comic actor through the everyday theater of the world.

Part of Kierkegaard's perennial appeal is the way his philosophy intersected with his life. Although the most famous part of that life, in our era, is his broken engagement to Regina Olson, during his own lifetime he was equally famous for spending his days walking the streets of his hometown of Copenhagen and conversing with strangers (like his hero Socrates), and spending his nights at the theater.[1] Both of these activities, theater and walking (the latter in light of contemporary postmodern dance) are intimately connected to dance. Also intimately connected to dance, surprisingly, is Kierkegaard's work. More precisely, both his pseudonymous and signed works and writings refer frequently to dancing in general, to specific dances, and even to precise moves and dancers.

Moreover, if one broadens one's view from dance proper to dance's historical home in the theater, Kierkegaard's dancing theatricality is the most famous thing—not just about his life—but about his philosophy. More precisely, there is something inherently theatrical and performative about Kierkegaard's method of pseudonymous authorship, an intricate dance of multiple veiled masks and

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identities. In fact, Kierkegaard himself makes something very much like this invitation to dance, in the addendum to *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (hereafter *CUP*), entitled "A First and Last Explanation." Here, in his own name, Kierkegaard references the reader who "has fooled himself, by being encumbered with my personal actuality instead of having the light, doubly reflected ideality of a poetically actual author to dance with" (*CUP* 628). This invitation to dance is central to the analyses below, beginning with a cataloguing of the surprising number of references to dance in his life and work. The latter provide considerable supporting evidence for this invitation's importance, namely to guide the reader's attention to a marginalized dimension of Kierkegaard's thought. To wit, the ways that Kierkegaard deploys dance suggest that the religious shares dance's attribute of "lightness," in the dual senses of "floating" and "playful" (and recalling the "light ideality" of the invitation). Put negatively, to ignore the role of dance in Kierkegaard is to risk misconstruing his concept of the religious as intrinsically and necessarily dull, burdensome, and humorless (as the knight of faith is indeed sometimes portrayed, as toiling through a dreary lifeworld).

My acceptance of Kierkegaard's invitation, the series of dances on my "dance card," is as follows. In my first section, I explore the limited secondary literature on dance in Kierkegaard, with a focus on M. Ferreira's notion of the leap as quasi-volitional imagination, and on Edward F. Mooney's dance-resonant, aesthetically-emphatic reading of *CUP* and *Repetition*. In my second section, I then analyze the hidden dancing dimensions of the leap and the *Schattenspiel* (literally, "shadow-dance"), which have been mostly neglected in Kierkegaard scholarship.[2] In my third section, I turn to the two pseudonymous works in which dance figures most prominently, namely *Repetition* and *CUP*. And in my concluding section, I offer a brief imaginative scenario to dramatize my conclusion, namely that the religious for Kierkegaard is a lighthearted dance, modeled by Socrates and the pseudonyms, in which one moves, qua comedic actor, through the world-as-theater.

Before I turn to the secondary literature, I wish to briefly enumerate the direct references to dance in Kierkegaard's life and writings, since there is insufficient space here for me to provide a close reading of them. It is my hope, however, that even this cursory consideration will help persuade readers that the invitation to dance in "A First and Last Explanation" is not merely an isolated, insignificant metaphor. Quite the contrary, dance is a pervasive presence, and in way which suggests that Kierkegaard carefully choregraphed various kinds of dance—and especially a dance-like structure—into the performances of his life, signed writings, and pseudonymous works. Though I will restage the choreography specific to *Repetition* and *CUP* in detail in a later section, for now I will enumerate its appearances throughout Kierkegaard's life and work.

Beginning with his life and signed writings, examples of dance include the following: (a) Kierkegaard's melancholy contrast between himself and normal young men who "fall in love" and "dance" (PV 78), (b) the related admission—"Unfortunately, I cannot dance"—in regard to a party where a young woman invited him to do so (*CUP* II 31); (c) his scorn for the *Corsair* (a Danish newspaper with which he feuded) serving "ironical brandy" in "the dance halls of contemptibleness" (*CUP* II, 119); (d) the claim that the "poetized author has his own definite life-view to dance with" (*CUP* II, 94); and the following strange passage from his papers:

> The best thing at a dance is all the small advantages the dancers enjoy. The conventional freedoms do not signify much because they are conventional and because a male dancer ordinarily does not have anything special in his favor, and ordinarily it is a very ambiguous compliment to a man when a girl says he is a good dancer. (*EO* 1 563)

Although much of this is unclear and ambiguous (including the nature of the "small advantages" and the "conventional freedoms"), if one links together the previous claims in sequence one gets a clearer sense of Kierkegaard's apparent resentment of those able to partake of the aesthetic joys from which he felt barred (ballet pun intended). In other words, these instances suggest that even though Kierkegaard did not often engage in dancing himself, that does not mean that he did not recognize its importance in the everyday world, nor that he did not feel its absence from his own life keenly—perhaps even to the point of incorporating a kind of figurative dance into other aspects of his life.

Turning from Kierkegaard's life to his work (insofar as they are separate enough to permit any such turn) one finds the following references to dance, in chronological order of the pseudonymous works' publication: (a) from *Either/Or*, volume 1, A's quote to the effect that "dance deadens good intentions," Johannes the Seducer's admission that he learned to dance for the sake of his first victim, and his comparison of his current relationship to a duet that he is nevertheless dancing as a solo (and thus, like Socrates, dancing for the god) (*EO* 1 73, 346, 380); (b) from *Either/Or*, volume 2, Judge William's use of dance to describe ethical fulfilment in marital domesticity (*EO* 2, 252–3); (c) from *Fear and Trembling* (*FT*), Johannes de Silentio's descriptions of himself, of the knights of faith and of resignation, and of Socrates as dancers, and Johannes's references to a dance called the quadrille, and to a ballet master (*FT* 36, 41, 46, 94); (d) from *Repetition*, Constantin Constantius's observations regarding the apparently superb dance style of Friedrich Beckmann (1803–1866, a famous German comedian), and the Young Man's description of his "dance in the vortex of the infinite" (*R* 367, 62n, 222); (e) from *The Concept of Anxiety*, Vigilius Haufniensis's references to the "tightrope dancer" (a figure that Nietzsche later made famous in *Thus Spoke*

Zarathustra), to the waltz, to dancing masters and "beating time" "out of step," and to the "shadowdance" toy, as well his famous closing line: "whoever has truly learned how to be anxious will dance when the anxieties of finitude strike up the music" (54, 105, 141, 159, 161); (f) from *Stages on Life's Way*, Quidam's reference to Quaedam finding a new "dance partner" for life in her new betrothed (SLW 392); (g) from *Philosophical Crumbs*, Johannes Climacus's comparison of himself to a dancer (PF 7); and (h) most prominent of all, from *CUP*, Climacus's eleven additional references to dance. The main point of these collected instances of dance for the present investigation is that the omissions of dance from previous considerations of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous writings cannot be attributed to those writings themselves, given their frequent invocations of dance.

I. Dancing with Pseudo-Partners

Despite these omissions, however, there are nevertheless several moments in the secondary literature that lead, albeit tentatively and shyly, in a dancing direction. To elevate the latter trope to an interpretive method, I propose to treat the scholars in the secondary literature on Kierkegaard as fellow dancers, from whom I can "steal" a few new moves with which to dance more beautifully with my main partners in this article, Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms. First, I will note the one helpful exception to the general dance-neglect in Kierkegaard scholarship in English, found in an article by S. Montgomery Ewegen, subtitled "Kierkegaard's Poetic Life." Second, I will consider several essays from the *Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, focusing on those by M. Jamie Ferreira and Edward F. Mooney. Third, I will turn to another Cambridge anthology, *Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript: A Critical Guide*, focusing again on the interpretive performances by Ferreira and Mooney, along with a chapter from Clare Carlisle. Fourth, I will consider several other essays, including another from Carlisle, in an attempt to choreograph together the most promising moves from the anthologies.

Ewegen's "Apotheosis of Actuality: Kierkegaard's Poetic Life" (Ewegen 2010), which focuses on *Repetition* along with the journals and papers, treats everything religious, and everything about Kierkegaard as a person, as mere aesthetics—a performance on the stage of a kind of dance. "Kierkegaard's life," Ewegen writes, "was a *repetition*, a *script*" (Ewegen 2010: 510). In other words, "his authentic 'self' consists of nothing other than earnest attempts to escape the self, to escape life as we normally conceive it" (Ewegen 2010: 511).

Ewegen's dance-resonant language begins as he imagines Kierkegaard writing at his desk, where "the memories *dance* above him, casting their shadows about" (Ewegen 2010: 511; emphasis added), in which shadows Kierkegaard's imagination eventually sees new forms and shapes, in order to create in his writings what Ewegen calls "the shadows that dance about Kierkegaard's works" (Ewegen

2010: 520). Ewegen compares this phenomenon to a "shadow-graph," "an image produced by casting a shadow on a screen" (Ewegen 2010: 512). It is this phrase, *Schattenspiel* in German, that I have translated in the present investigation more literally as "shadow-dance," and which I will explore in my next section (in terms of its frequent appearances in both the pseudonymous works and also Kierkegaard's *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*). Ewegen then goes on to describe Kierkegaard himself as a human shadow-dance, "the *poetically*-actual" possibility of the pseudonyms, supporting his claim by referencing a dance-rich passage in *Repetition* to which I will return below (Ewegen 2010: 513).

Also dance-resonant in Ewegen's article is his observation that the definition of "repetition" includes "recital" and "rehearsal," such as those in a dance studio and performance. Here, in the theater of Kierkegaard's life, according to Ewegen, Kierkegaard the actor "dances about with his own shadows on a sparsely-decorated stage," and "the real repetition—the movement of the actual into the poetic" (Ewegen 2010: 518). Kierkegaard even dancingly leaps over his own childhood and youth, as he himself notes in *The Point of View*; while Regine, Ewegen adds, is "always poetized *around*, as though the poetry dances around her without ever touching her" (Ewegen 2010: 517n49). "Only a repetition" remains, and in the form of a "movement forward," Ewegen writes, when "actuality has been leaped over" in these ways (Ewegen 2010: 519). "Leaping out into the absurd," Ewegen concludes, "through a vessel of words: This was his ballet" (Ewegen 2010: 522).

With these insights in mind, I now turn to the 1998 Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard, beginning with a little warm-up from Andrew Cross's chapter, "Neither Either Nor Or: The Perils of Reflexive Irony." Focusing on Kierkegaard's dissertation entitled *On the Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates*, Cross helpfully interprets irony for Kierkegaard as a kind of Socratic "playing along," "lifting above," being "suspended above," and as having "risen above," in which the ironist is understood as one who "plays at being" (Cross 1998: 133–5). Keeping in mind the play/dance dichotomy in the meanings of the German *spiel*, along with the centrality of lifts and leaps in dance (including for Kierkegaard), the dance connection here seems strong. In short, Socrates as ironist is a playful leaping dancer.

M. Jamie Ferreira's chapter in the Kierkegaard companion, entitled "Faith and the Kierkegaardian Leap" (Ferreira 1998), is emphatic that the leap is a non-volitional free transition of Aristotelian enthymematic pathos. To elaborate, the Kierkegaardian leap for Ferreira involves an imaginative seeing of something *as* something else, of judging it to be that something else, in the methodological form of a "leap of induction"—or in the form of an "inference" to the conclusion of a rhetorical syllogism, the dynamic factor facilitating which leap is pathos/suffering (Ferreira 1998: 222). Insofar as (a) dance is an art, and (b) art inherently involves imagination and suffering, then (c) this interpretation of the leap makes

it much more dance-like than it might otherwise appear. Also dance-resonant in Ferreira's conception of leaping is that, when making room for its volitional aspect, she locates that aspect—not in the moment of the leap—but rather in what she terms the "coaching," or practice sessions, leading up to the leap (217). This is suggestive of formal dance instruction from teachers, choreographers, and often actual coaches, with whom one must train in the choreography of a leap before imaginatively achieving it. And in a third dance-resonant moment in her chapter, Ferreira refers to the leap as a "gestalt switch," another example of which is Wittgenstein's duck/rabbit image (217). The two terms of gestalt analysis are figure and ground, which makes them particularly appropriate for a dance, since the dancer is always a figure who occupies the foreground against a background of stage or floor.

In a helpful supplement to Ferreira's interpretation of the leap, Ronald M. Green's chapter (largely influenced by Ferreira and Mooney) offers a genealogy of the concept of the leap in Kierkegaard's total oeuvre. Its first occurrence, Green observes, is found in Kierkegaard's Aristotelian logical critique of Hegel's notion of *aufheben* (Green 1998: 159). Specifically, Kierkegaard focuses on the *Posterior Analytics*, more precisely in the latter's claim that the basic truths which found demonstration are themselves the product of inductive inferences. Aristotle's metaphor for this, Kierkegaard notes (as Green notes), is a retreating army in which, one by one, individual soldiers turn and stand their ground, until a critical threshold is reached, thus constituting a "fighting formation" (Green 1998: 160). The analogy in logic consists of individual memories that (like soldiers) collectively constitute "an immediate insight" (like an army in fighting formation) (Green 1998: 160). For Kierkegaard, Green concludes, the reaching of this critical threshold is the leap that founds logic, and it is this same leap that also constitutes Hegel's *aufheben* (though Hegel denies its leap-nature) (Green 1998: 161).[3]

Edward F. Mooney, the other biggest influence on Green (along with Ferreira), also makes seven distinct, dance-resonant moves in his chapter of the Cambridge *Companion* to Kierkegaard, entitled "*Repetition*: Getting the World Back" (Mooney 1998). First, Mooney's chapter intersects significantly Ferreira's chapter in the *Companion*, in Mooney's description of "strands" of particulars that "crystallized to form a habitable world" (while Ferreira writes of "the crystallizing activity of attending" that reveals "we are decided, that we already cling") (Mooney 1998: 302; Ferreira 1998: 227). In both thinkers, therefore, there is a kind of high repetition that choreographs us into a passionate world-embrace, which also serves as a fitting description of the best liminal experiences of dance. In a second move, Mooney uses the phrase "dance of the dialectic," which (as I will discuss below) one encounters repeatedly in Hegel scholarship (Mooney 1998: 286).[4] Third, Mooney capitalizes Job's "Whirlwind," which recalls the aforementioned "infinite vortex" in which *Repetition*'s Young Man "dances" with god as a dance of winds

(Mooney 1998: 287). Fourth, and similarly, Mooney discusses a journal entry where Kierkegaard defines the concept of repetition as "a religious movement by the virtue of the absurd, which commences when a person has come to the border of the wondrous" (Mooney 1998: 298).[5] Moreover, Mooney later refers to this "wondrous" in terms of its being "wondrously embodied," and I can imagine few better epithets for dance than wondrous embodiment (Mooney 1998: 299). Fifth, Mooney emphasizes the "theatricality" of Constantius and the Young Man, and theater is historically virtually inseparable from dance (Mooney 1998: 292). Sixth, and also in this vein of dance's sister-arts, Mooney contrasts "musicians *taking* a repeat (playing a section again with appropriate variation)" and "the attentive *hearing*, the 'reception' of that repeat by an awakened audience" (Mooney 1998: 294). The same can easily be applied, not only to improvising dance performers and their audience, but also to a dancer and their partner in improvisatory jazz dances such as salsa. Seventh, and finally from Mooney's chapter, he claims that repetition evinces a need for an "enigmatic, value-saturated world" (Mooney 1998: 302). This is exactly the world of dance, including the dance of religion, that I am attempting to bring to life here.

Turning to the more recent (2012) Cambridge companion to *CUP*, I return to Ferreira, with her chapter entitled, "Kierkegaard's Socratic Pseudonym: A Profile of Johannes Climacus" (Ferreira 2012). There, she makes the move of thinking Religiousness A/Socrates and Religiousness B/Christian together, in a "both-and" relationship (Ferreira 2012: 22). Following Sylvia Walsh, I would argue for applying something like this structure to the Aesthetic and Religious stages—by claiming that one can be both aesthetic and religious, and that the aesthetic is—as Ferreira claims of Religiousness A for B—a "sine qua non" of the religious (Ferreira 2012: 19) (Walsh 1994). Put in dialectical terms, it is the Ethical that is simply negative toward the Aesthetic (which is appropriate given that the Ethical is the antithetical negation to the Aesthetic's positive thesis), whereas the Religious transubstantiates something of that Aesthetic positing it in its synthetical, partial negation of the Ethical.

Having revisited Ferreira in the *CUP* anthology, I now revisit Mooney there, via his additional chapter, entitled "From the Garden of the Dead: Climacus on Interpersonal Inwardness" (Mooney 2012). This chapter features several subtle dance movements worthy of imitation by the present investigation. First, Mooney suggests that the graveyard scene involves a "tryst" with the breeze, which I would fan into the dancing wind of *Repetition* (to which I will return below) (Mooney 2012: 65). Second, Mooney's concept of a "tremulous gentle sublime" suggests to me the oft-gentle sublimity of dance (Mooney 2012: 65). Third, he argues for an "interpersonal" conception of inwardness, which plays well in the inwardly-rich interpersonal engagements of dance, especially partner dance (Mooney 2012: 64). And finally, his description of what I would call a "meta-Stoic practice"—

namely, transforming grief from outward expression to inwardly modified behavior—suggests a similar way of understanding dance—namely as burying and transforming emotions (including grief) into the disciplined new gestures of the dancing body (Mooney 2012: 85).

Finally from the guide to *CUP*, Clare Carlisle's chapter makes several connections that vivify the intimacy of dance and this text. First, she emphasizes the "room to move" within existence, as afforded by existence's emptiness/negativity, and one can easily extend this to thinking of room to move in dance (Carlisle 2012: 177). Second, she points out that Kierkegaard's papers use the term "leap" to describe his joy at hearing Schelling's lectures, which thus connects the dance-laden term "leap" with the god-intoxicated theme of Schelling's work, and thereby buttresses my suggestion of stealing Ferreira's concept of "both-and" for the aesthetic-religious (Carlisle 2012: 150). Third, Carlisle names the concept of kinesis as a form of repetition, which according to Constantius is a movement of the religious/faith, and dance is linked to kinesis via kinesiology (Carlisle 2012: 170). Finally, she notes a "coincidence of activity and passivity" in the process of becoming a Christian, and describes passion as both "love and power" (Carlisle 2012: 186, 188). Similarly, dance requires/involves both action and passion, and yet this passion is also a form of dancing power.

In a separate article, "Kierkegaard's *Repetition*: The Possibility of Motion," Carlisle offers an analysis that is even more dance-resonant, insofar as it focuses on movement as *kinesis*, with an attending emphasis on power. First, Carlisle here interprets Kierkegaard, in a Spinozist-Deleuzian vein, as seeing repetition as a form of power/intensity (Carlisle 2005: 528). Telescoped, repetition in *Repetition* for Carlisle "is a movement associated with truth, with the future, and with transcendence," "an inward movement, an intensification," and "an actualizing movement, expressing a power of becoming" (Carlisle 2005: 529). This emphasis on powerful becoming, and on Spinoza and Deleuze as preeminent philosophers of the body, further intertwines Kierkegaard's thought with dance. Second, Carlisle privileges here the "dramatized conflict" between Constantius and the Young Man, and this interpersonal dynamic is helpful for (especially) partner dance (Carlisle 2005: 529). And finally from this second article, Carlisle refers to the hero of *Repetition*, not as "Young Man" (as most scholars in English have done), but as "the fiancé." The significance here is that the etymology of the word fiancé reveals it to be linked to faith, thus nudging even fiancés (like Kierkegaard himself, at one point, with Regina) as in some sense knights of faith.

It is in these sequence of moves—an interpretation of repetition as *an intensifying, empowering practice of those already promised*—that I find the most promising way to interpret Ferreira's imaginative conception of the leap, and to further entwine the thought from *Repetition* and *CUP*. But before getting into those details, I will first use my own conception of the leap, informed by Ferreira and

my other pseudo-partners, to illuminate two invisibly dance-resonant concepts in those two pseudonymous works: dancing leaps and shadow-dances.

II. Dancing Leaps and Shadow-Dances

I begin my own interpretation of the Kierkegaardian leap, in sympathy with the Hegelian connection noted by Green and others, on an etymological note. Although no Kierkegaard scholars to my knowledge have yet addressed this fact, in many languages (including Latin, which Kierkegaard read and inserted in his writings) the verb for "to leap" is also the word for "to dance," in the case of Latin, *saltare*. In this connection, it is interesting that Kierkegaard's erstwhile friend, editor, and newspaper-owner, Meier Goldschmidt, remarked upon first meeting Kierkegaard that Søren would perform "a singular leap" (*R* 367n57). The primary textual indication that Kierkegaard considered the leap a kind of dance concerns a connection to Hegel. As I have elaborated elsewhere, the leap-as-dance is of central importance in Hegel, specifically as a figure/metaphor for his dialectical system as a whole. For this reason, in fact, numerous Hegel scholars use the phrase "dance of the dialectic."[6]

As for Kierkegaard, his attitude toward Hegel's dialectical dance, like his attitude toward Hegel in general, is decidedly ambivalent. On the one hand (or foot), Kierkegaard appears to find something elegantly beautiful in the dialectic. For example, there is Kierkegaard's famous quip that, had the entire system been a joke, then Hegel would have been the greatest philosopher of all time. Additionally, as noted by Merold Westphal, the *CUP* offers Hegel what is for Kierkegaard the high praise (albeit wrapped in an insult) that he was a dialectical dancer—the highest-leaping systematizer in the history of philosophy (Westphal 1998). Thus, the central importance of the dancing leap of the dialectic transfers largely to Kierkegaard as well. But on the other foot, Kierkegaard's entire aesthetic-ethical-religious series of books appears to satirize Hegel's dialectic—as justified, for Kierkegaard, by the claim that Hegel himself has no sense of humor about his dialectic. For Kierkegaard, by contrast, humor is absolutely vital—so much so that it even bridges the gap between his ethical and religious stages of existence—which means that, for him, one does not go from morality to the divine without the gravity-defying lightness of laughter. And this suggests that, though the "leap of faith" is indeed a gracefully perfect circle (like Hegel's dialectic), it is a lighthearted and comical circle of graceful perfection, like fouetté turns in a comic opera.

Choreographing these two steps—one away from Hegel, and the other towards him—into one combination, it could be said that the leaping knight of faith is like the theater which Kierkegaard attended so religiously, complete with the gravity-defying lightness of the *corps de ballet*. In fact, Kierkegaard explicitly

connects dance to the two most important "leaps" in his philosophy, namely the qualitative leap into sin, from *The Concept of Anxiety* (hereafter *CA*), and the leap of faith, from *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition*.

In the former case, one leaps into the aesthetic (from, perhaps, the merely childlike or merely animal, what Kierkegaard calls "innocence"). The connection to dance here is found in the ballet master Bournonville's choreography for the character of Mephistopheles in *Faust*. More precisely, the pseudonym (Vigilius Haufniensis) describes his "horror" at watching the devil "leap in through the window and remain stationary in the position of the leap!", and of the "spring in the leap, reminding one of the leap of the bird of prey and of the wild beast" which "has an infinite effect" (*CA* 131, 132). Even more intensely, Haufniensis claims that the Devil "cannot be described more strongly than by saying that he stands there in a leap," which Haufniensis connects to "the tendency of the demonic toward mime, not in the sense of the beautiful but in the sense of the sudden" (*CA* 132).

In *Fear and Trembling*, the leap first appears as a "mighty trampoline leap" of the dialectic. This leap, Johannes notes, he is unable to make, because his "back is like a tightrope dancer's, twisted in childhood" (36). Most important for dance in Kierkegaard, though, is Johannes's claim, largely neglected and ignored in Kierkegaard scholarship, that "The knights of infinity are ballet dancers and have elevation" (41). Johannes then elaborates that "the most difficult feat for a ballet dancer," humanly speaking, is "to leap into a specific posture in such a way that he never once strains for the posture but in the very leap assumes the posture" (41). In addition to being able to duplicate this feat of the dancing knight of infinite resignation (and the devil, according to Haufniensis), the dancing knight of faith is capable of another "marvel," namely "to be able to come down in such a way that instantaneously one seems to stand and walk, to change the leap of life into walking, absolutely to express the sublime in the pedestrian" (41). Herein lies the difference between the knight of infinite resignation and the knight of faith. While both can leap suddenly and instantly into the perfect posture, the former remains frozen there, whereas the latter ends—in continuous temporality—in an invisible transition to walking and everyday life. In short, the difference between the next-best and the best, between the ethical and the religious, and between resignation and faith—comes down to dancing ability.

On this note of everyday lightness, I now turn from the leap to the shadow-dance (*Schattenspiel*). My source for the spiel-dance connection here is Gadamer, who in his *Truth and Method* observes that "the word 'Spiel' originally meant 'dance,' and is still found in many word forms" (Gadamer 2004). Helpfully for the present investigation, given its consideration below of *Repetition*, Gadamer continues by noting that dance's playing movement "renews itself in constant repetition" (Gadamer 2004: 102). Gadamer also references dance in three other places in his magnum opus, including his claim that dance (and related perform-

ing arts) "confirm[s] itself as art in the repetition" (Gadamer 2004: 161, 494, 580). With this point in mind, the shadow-dance is a toy/game in which a performer uses objects to cast shadows on a screen, on the other side of which the audience views the shadows' movements. In this structure, the shadow-dance also calls to mind the dance of shadows in the "Allegory of the Cave." This is likely deliberate on Kierkegaard's part, given his hero-worship of Plato's Socrates, whom he also elevates, along with the knights of faith and resignation, to the status of a dancer.

III. Dancing *Repetition* and *Postscript*

With the connections between the leap and the shadow-dance thus illuminated, I am now in a position to uncover, for the first time, the previously-hidden dance-work in Kierkegaard, specifically in *Repetition* and *CUP*. The first place that dance appears in the former text is in the "Report by Constantin Constantius." The context of dance's appearance is Constantius's describing his attempt to capture repetition by reenacting a visit to Berlin, including by returning to its famous Königstädter Theater. Thus, Constantius's discussion concerns the privileged role, institution, and event for repetition in Western history, namely the actor on stage in the theater. Claiming that "the magic of the theater" causes an imaginative young person to "split himself up into every possible variation of himself," Constantius offers the analogy of a personified mountain wind, which gradually finds its "melody" after exploring various variations of itself, one variation being a "gay, lyrical *waltz*" (*R* 154, 155; emphasis added). Thus, both the wind and, by analogy, the young audience member, engage in a dance.

Constantius acknowledges, however, that the wind/audience analogy fall short, insofar as each of the individual's possibilities constitutes "an audible shadow" (*R* 156). This synesthetic wonder then leads, on the next page, to a discussion of the "*shadow-dance* of the hidden individual" (*R* 156; emphasis added). Here, therefore, the implication from the wind analogy becomes explicit, as the individual audience member, too, dances. From role to role, from part to part, the individual dances (for example, dancing the role of a "robber captain") (*R* 156). In this way, the audience member is able to "have the world in a nutshell," with the significant qualifier that this nutshell is "a nutshell larger than the whole world and yet not too large for one individual" (*R* 157). Though Constantius initially describes this dance of the audience as merely an adolescent phase, he continues by claiming that it "is nevertheless reproduced later at a more mature age, when the soul has integrated itself in earnest" (*R* 157). Thus, the audience-dance in question is not merely that of a child or youth, to be outgrown with (religious?) maturity.

Moreover, Constantius's description of this process as a dance is not, as one might suspect, a mere offhand image, or casual metaphor. On the contrary, the

next page contains the following startling passage, which makes it clear that Constantius is concerned with literal (as well as figurative) dance:

> There is probably no person who has not gone through a period when no richness of language, no gesture sufficed, since nothing satisfied him other than breaking into the strangest leaps and somersaults. Perhaps the same individual learned to dance. Perhaps he went frequently to the ballet and admired the art of the dancer. Perhaps there came a time when ballet no longer stirred him, and yet he had moments when he could return to his room and, indulging himself, find indescribably humorous relief in standing on one leg in a picturesque pose or, not giving a damn for the world, settle everything with an entrechat.[7] (*R* 158)

In short, it is sometimes the case, when one needs some sort of communicative expression, that nothing is good enough except dance. Perhaps this is the reason for Kierkegaard's own signature introductory leap, as remembered by his friend Goldschmidt, and even for Kierkegaard's apparent love of the theater. At the very least, when a celebrated theorist such as Constantius (who as such is a master of words and linguistic communication) makes such a large and counterintuitive concession to nonverbal language, one must pause and note the significance. And on this note of philosophical deference to dancing gesture (particularly since this passage takes place within a narrative explicitly set in Germany), this passage is also reminiscent of Nietzsche's quip about German thinkers (from *The Gay Science*): "their cramps are often just indications that they would like to dance; these poor bears in which hidden nymphs and sylvan gods are at work—and perhaps higher deities!" (Nietzsche 2001: Aphorism 105, page 103).

Constantius's dancing discourse on the Königstädter Theater then continues with his analysis of the art of farce, which was practiced there to great acclaim. Here, he follows his previous trajectory (i.e. from dance as abstract image to concrete practice), in this case going so far as naming actual historical dancers who performed at that Theater. Constantius introduces these actors as "generative geniuses" and "*dancers* of whimsy," praising them as "lyricists" who have "the courage to do what the individual makes bold to do only when alone" and "what the genius knows how to do with the authority of genius" (*R* 161; emphasis added).

The dancer on whom Constantius focuses here is Friedrich Beckmann, the most important actor at Königstädter Theater for the entire nineteenth century (see Medin 2010: 84). Beckmann's genius, according to Constantius, is most vividly expressed in his mastery of the ability to "*come walking*" onto the stage "in such a way that one experiences everything" intended for the scene (*R* 163). That is, Beckmann appears in such full swing that it seems entirely believable to the audience that he has just been walking through a town (rather than having just stepped from the wings as an actor onto the stage as a role). His every movement is so imaginatively precisely inflected that one can almost, as it were, see the dust

on his shoes, the rain drying on his overcoat, and the smile still lingering from greeting a neighbor five minutes earlier in the walk.

In this way, Beckmann offers the other side, surprisingly, of the dancing leap of faith—in which the knight lands into the everyday crowd and blends in perfectly, with everyone oblivious to the knight's singular relationship. In the knight's case, this relationship is faith to God, and in Beckmann's case, the relationship is the professional one of comedic dancer to the theater audience. In support of this counterintuitive linking of farcical dancers to knights of faith, Constantius then employs a term that Kierkegaard invokes elsewhere to describe the religious in general, and the knight of faith in particular. Beckmann, Constantius writes, is an "incognito" (*R* 164). Moreover, the comedic dancer is an incognito in whom, in Constantius's words, "dwells the lunatic demon comedy" (*R* 164). As I noted above, humor occupies the "confinium" or borderland between the ethical and the religious (just as irony, which can include humorous aspects, occupies the confinium between the aesthetic and the ethical). To help capture the humor of Beckmann's dancing, Constantius then launches into a direct description of it—a "neck-breaking" affair, in which Beckmann is "completely beside himself" (*R* 164). This marks one of the rare moments in the history of philosophy where a canonical philosopher engages in dance criticism.

The final reference to dance in Constantius's "Report" further buttresses my linkage between the theatrical dancer's leap and the knight of faith's leap. Constantius, having returned on a separate night (of his return trip to Berlin) to the Königstädter Theater, notes in dismay how a "little dancer," who "last time had enchanted me with her gracefulness, and who "so to speak, was on the verge of a leap"—by the time of his second visit to the Theater—"had already made the leap" (*R* 170). In other words, as with the knight of faith's dancing leap, and as with Beckmann's comically genius dancing leaps, the ballerina in her own dancing leap also achieved repetition. But note that Constantius was not present for this lattermost repetition, which involved a dancer in whom he was existentially invested. In an apparent intimation of the significance of this fact, Constantius then admits that (having already "almost smashed" his armchair "to pieces," after a young woman he loved was absent on a consecutive night) he was so upset over the ballerina that he was "furious" and decided to "return home" (*R* 171).

It would appear, therefore, that scholars of Kierkegaard are mistaken in interpreting Constantius as cold, apathetic and merely cerebral in his search for repetition (see, for example, Mooney 1998: 285, and Carlisle 2005: 530). In this moment at least, Constantius is extremely passionate, and even makes major changes in his life in response to this passionate experience, including ending his return trip to Berlin, and giving up on finding repetition for the rest of his life. In fact, just after declaring the latter resignation, Constantius slips into a remembrance of the most dance-like moment of his own life, a time when he

was "very close to complete satisfaction," and "had a presentiment of the dizzy maximum found on no gauge of well-being" (*R* 173). It is important to note, in this connection, that Haufniensis explicitly connects dizziness to dance, via the qualitative leap in to sin, in *The Concept of Anxiety* (*CA* 32). Moreover, Constantius claims that his "walk was a floating, like the undulating of the wind over a field of grain" (*R* 173). Recall here that Constantius has already linked dance to both walking (via Beckmann) and to the wind (via the mountain wind's "gay, lyrical waltz"). Finally, Constantius admits that it was his own dancing walk that caused him to "become excited about the idea of repetition" in the first place. In short, having danced, however briefly, our author wanted nothing more to dance again. But just as he could not make the leap of faith, nor could he—like Kierkegaard himself—make the leap of dance.

To summarize these dancing moments from Part I of *Repetition*, they are as follows: (a) dance as inanimate metaphor (i.e., the mountain wind) introducing repetition on Constantius's repetition of his trip to Berlin, (b) dance as animate metaphor (the imaginative youth in infinite variations) sharpening repetition to a point of existential intensity in general, (c) the comedic dance of Beckmann concretizing the power of repetition in general, (d) and the dancing leap of the young ballerina concretizing the power of repetition to a point of existential intensity for Constantius, in the aftermath of which (e) he abandons the dances, the Königstädter Theater, Berlin, and foreswears the concept of repetition entirely, only to (f) immediately repeat his love for it in a dance-like recollection of his own most dance-like experience, which (g) experience was the sole catalyst for his original interest in repetition per se. In short, dance choreographs all of the repetition, not only in Constantius's opening "Report," but also for the entirety of Part I of *Repetition*. Counterintuitively, dance is thus the privileged figure of the religious phenomenon of repetition.

In this way Part I comes to a close. Part II—which is confusingly, and repetitively, also entitled "Repetition"—begins with another, unhappy walking dance, Constantius describing how he, "with measured pace walked up and down the floor" (*R* 179). He also references, in this section, the Roman satirist Lucian, famous in dance studies for his dialogue *De Saltione*, "The Dance."[8] Again despairing of his ability to dance in this way, Constantius then introduces the letters of another who struggled toward dance, the "Young Man," which constitute a separate titled subsection of Part II.

Dance is intimated already in the first of these "Letters from a Young Man," in the following metaphor: "[setting] the spindle in motion—I spin. But when I come to put the spinning wheel away in the evening, nothing is there" (*R* 195). One famous connection between dance and spinning, which Kierkegaard would doubtless have known, is that of the "whirling dervishes," practitioners of Islamic mysticism (called Sufism) who intentionally make themselves dizzy to achieve

ecstatic union with God. A second dance/spinning connection, as I explore in detail elsewhere, is the Stoic metaphor of the spinning top, linked to the Ancient Roman practice in which an enslaved person was ceremoniously freed by being spun in one complete circle before their former master.[9] Anticipating what follows in the Youth's letters, one can see in this a metaphor for the Youth's dancing practice, the rehearsals that will prepare him for his own dancing leap into repetition. The second intimation of dance in the "Letters" is found in the third letter, regarding the Youth's claim that "the idea is constantly in motion" in the biblical character of Job (204). In response to this idea-motion, the Youth describes how his soul "rush[es] into his thought, into his outcry," and then, "more swiftly than lightning seeks the conductor does my soul glide therein and remain there" (*R* 205). In the third intimation of dance in the "Letters," from the penultimate letter, the Youth motionlessly awaits the repetition symbolized for him by a thunderstorm. When this thunderstorm later produces a bolt of lightning that strikes the Youth, he will call it a dance. (I will return to this point below).

But before the Youth's repetition is explicitly recounted in the text of *Repetition*, before the Youth has the opportunity to dance, a Constantius in despair interrupts the "Letters," noting that this anticipation of repetition has inspired movement again in Constantius. It has, in the latter's words, "set me off my pendulum beat somewhat" (*R* 216). In other words, the Youth has disrupted Constantius's obsessive, compulsive and empty reiterations (short of repetition) by modeling absolute stillness. This disruption then prompts Constantius to reflect in horror at the thought of a woman who would be eternally faithful to him, and to explain his horror as follows: "If she remained on that ideal pinnacle" of faithfulness, Constantius "would have to accept my life as being *in pausa* [in a state of rest] instead of going forward" (*R* 217). In effect, Constantius cannot achieve repetition because he cannot stop the one and only movement, continuous and pointless, that he has ever made, namely the back-and-forth pendular movement of the metronome. And one cannot start a second movement, cannot repeat the first, if the first never stops. Constantius's life lacks the aesthetics of the caesura. And therein, perhaps, lies the true meaning of Constantin Constantius's pseudo-name: "the one in constant motion." Here, then, one observes Constantius again on the brink of repetition, muscles tensed for a dancing leap, though again unable to achieve it.

The Youth, by contrast, pauses and waits. And in so doing—with Constantius's interruption of the "Letters" at an end—the Youth then finds himself delivered, by grace, from his ordeal. In what he terms the "generosity" of his beloved, she marries another man, and thereby precipitates his aforementioned "thunderstorm" of repetition (*R* 220). Thus, the Youth writes, "the machinery has been set in motion" for a repetition of his prior self, over which he exults as follows:

> Three cheers for the flight of thought, three cheers for the perils of life in service to the idea, three cheers for the hardships of battle, three cheers for the festive

> jubilation of victory, three cheers for *the dance in the vortex of the infinite*, three cheers for the cresting waves that hide me in the abyss, three cheers for the cresting waves that fling me above the stars! (*R* 221, 222; emphasis added)

Repetition thus ends, as it began and continued in Constantius's "Report," with empowering religious dance.

In support of this dance and religion connection, and finally from *Repetition*, Constantius's concluding letter valorizes dance three more times. He refers to (a) the "movement of the book," to (b) "imitating the movement," and finally (c) to the "dithyrambic joy" in the above block quote from the Youth. The connections to dance here are that (a) dance is arguably the art of movement per se; (b) dance revolved around imitation for most of its history, as a dependent art form inseparable from the art of theater (prior to dance's emancipation therefrom in the twentieth century); and (c) the dithyramb is a hymn sung and danced in worship of Dionysius, the Greek god of dance (and the favorite god of Nietzsche, that most dance-intoxicated philosopher) (*R* 226, 228).

To conclude this penultimate section of the present investigation, I will briefly enumerate (for reasons of space) the many dancing moments in *CUP*, pausing only to comment on the patterns there that I have not already noted above from other texts in Kierkegaard's oeuvre. The main point of this enumeration is that dance is not confined to what Kierkegaard later dismisses as the "merely aesthetic" book *Repetition*. On the contrary, dance is even more prominent in the borderline/transitioning-to-the-ethical work of the "higher" pseudonym Johannes Climacus.

First, Climacus invokes the aforementioned "shadow-dance" five times, including as a metaphor for Hegel's dialectic (*CUP* 139, 154, 226, 328, 465).[10] Read in conjunction with the references to dance in Kierkegaard's work already noted, the implication appears to be that though both Hegel and Kierkegaard dance in their own ways, Hegel's "shadow" dance is a thin substitute for the living, concrete richness of Kierkegaard's "body" dance. Second, Climacus frequently uses the phrase "full swing" to describe the "dance" of world history, and uses the phrase "road swings off" to describe the divergence between the "dances" of Hegelian dialectic and (Kierkegaard's conception of) faith (*CUP* 42, 154, 160, 181, 200, 203, 205, 210, 264, 428). The connection to dance here is further augmented, moreover, by the fact that these two phrases sometimes appear in close textual proximity to the word "dance" (and to related words such as "ballet" and "waltz") (for example, *CUP* 264). Thus, it is not only bodies and shadows that dance in Kierkegaard's corpus. The surfaces or paths on which those bodies and shadows dance can also themselves dance, in a kind of meta- or bilateral dance of dancing paths for dancing bodies. Third, Climacus explicitly describes himself as a dancer, which he also does in *Philosophical Crumbs*. Moreover, he explicitly links Socrates to the subject of dance as well, specifically in terms of Socrates's not possessing

the "small feet of a dance director" (such as those who served at the Friendship Society) (*CUP* 89, 248, 353n).

This adds an entirely new level to the dance of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous texts, in that both *Philosophical Crumbs* and *CUP* should now be recognized as authored by a self-described dancer—and Kierkegaard himself claims that *CUP* is the turning point of the entire authorship. It is also worth remembering that, in *Fear and Trembling*, Johannes de Silentio also describes himself as a dancer, along with Socrates, and the knight of faith. This begs the question: how exactly does a dancer write, as compared to a non-dancer? What makes the book of a dancer different from the book of a non-dancer (if there are any such)? These questions and issues seem especially pressing in the case of someone like Kierkegaard, who obviously invests so much in the identity of authors.

Another pattern that emerges in these numerous dance references in *CUP* is the specific dance of the waltz, namely a "free-and-easy, old-fashioned waltz," and the comedic imaginary scenario in which an organist in church, while playing hymns, suddenly plays a "waltz" instead (*CUP* 452, 568). The waltz, the appearance of which in *Repetition* I noted above, was initially quite controversial in high European society, as a cultural appropriation of the lower-class folk dances of Eastern Europe. In addition to these humble origins, part of the controversy was due to the waltz's rapid pace (with the ensuing physiological arousal and excitement), along with the fact that one remains in constant physical contact with one's partner for the entire dance (as opposed to traditional upper-class dances, which interspersed periods of brief contact and separation, and which forced each dancer to switch among multiple partners for each dance). In short, the waltz involves more passion, and perhaps also inwardness.

There are also numerous other references to dance in *CUP*. As with the previous enumerations, the point here is to anticipate the possible objection that dance is confined to one or two offhand references in this text, and thus cannot be meaningful for *CUP* as a whole. The references are as follows: (a) the "dance of cranes" (*CUP* 142); (b) a dance with a "maid" at her wedding (*CUP* 180); (c) a dancing philosopher performing the aforementioned "entrechat" move in ballet (*CUP* 264); (d) walking described as being "as light as dancing on a meadow" (*CUP* 403); (e) being at a "dance with the poet" (*CUP* 438); (f) a "dance manager at a club" (*CUP* 542); and (g) a "higher hop-dance" (*Hop-sasa*) (*CUP* 568). But the last reference to dance in the book, and perhaps most important, comes—paradoxically—just after the book is (almost?) over.

Finally, as I noted in my introductory section, in his appendix to *CUP*, entitled "A First and Last Understanding with the Reader," Kierkegaard in his own name invites the reader to "dance" with his pseudonyms (*CUP* [628]). With this final dancing move, the central and transitional text of the pseudonymous authorship, Kierkegaard choreographs dance both backwards and forwards. Backwards into

the already-written pseudonymous book, beginning with *Either/Or*, and forward into the books that had not yet been published at that time of *CUP*, extending ultimately all the way to *Practice in Christianity*. In short, according to Kierkegaard himself, dance constitutes the basis, not just of *CUP*, but of his entire pseudonymous corpus, and beyond that, into his signed writings as well.

To summarize this importance, and in a way that respects Kierkegaard's invitation, I conclude with the following scenario. Imagine, if you will, a theatrical stage in your own hometown, on which are standing a crowd of Kierkegaard's pretend-authors, including "Victor Eremita," "Judge William," "A," and "Johannes the Seducer" (to name the authors of just one of his many pseudonymous books). Curious, you step onto the stage yourself, and begin moving from one pretend-author to the other, listening as they spar, in a semicircle on the stage, over the best way for us to move through our world. Perhaps you even feel friendly enough to shake hands with each of them as you introduce yourself. Then, when you get to the last one, "John the Silent," he gestures to you, inviting you in his silent way to take the leap of faith yourself. Surprised, but in a moment of courage (or madness?), you bend a supporting knee, and launch into the air in a glorious *grand jeté*.

And then you land, suddenly anonymous, in an empty seat, just off center in the main orchestra section of the audience. Though initially flustered, after you begin to get your bearings, you notice that there is a man in the seat next to you. He has large features, set beneath an almost-comically large sweep of hair, and he smiles knowingly. Then he hands you a copy of a book, titled *Works of Love*, which he wrote under his own name, and invites you to join him outside. There, on a fresh spring evening full of jasmine, you promenade together down the streets of your hometown, enjoying a different dance this time, with Kierkegaard himself.

Notes

1. Kierkegaard claims, however, in *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, that he only stayed at the theater for five to ten minutes each night, and that he did so merely in order to give the impression that he was an aesthetic loafer (PV 61).
2. The issue of gender in the leap (of "masculine" versus "feminine" leaps) is an important one, but unfortunately beyond the scope of the present article. For more, see Berry 1998. See also de Lacoste 2002.
3. In a departure from Ferreira, however, Green insists that the leap of faith is an existential leap, of a different category altogether. In Green's terms, the leap is "the commitment of oneself to a particular conception of life, not only intellectually, but in practice" (Green 1998: 167). It is within this commitment that Green finds the willful/volitional aspect that he argues is inappropriately excised from Ferreira's account.

4. For more, see Joshua M. Hall "St. Vitus' Women of Color: Dancing with Hegel," *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* 9(1) (2017): 43–61.
5. As I have explored in detail elsewhere, dance is essentially (if it is essentially *anything*) a kind of borderlander or boundary-dweller, since it straddles the alleged dividing line between art and religion, between humans and nonhuman animals, and between sports and entertainment (among other divides). That is, dance can be both religious and artistic at the same time (as in the temple dance of the devadasis in Hinduism), both human and pre-human (as in the similarities between human social dances and birds' mating dances), and both a sport and a form of entertainment (such as the Olympic event called ice dancing). See Joshua M. Hall, "Choreographing the Borderline: Dancing with Kristeva," *Philosophy Today* 56(1) (2012): 49–58.
6. See Hall, "St. Vitus' Women of Color.".
7. An "entrechat" is a technical term in ballet, denoting a jump from a position in which one leg is crossed over the other, and then landing with the first leg crossed behind the other.
8. This title also further buttresses the *saltare*/dance connection I made above. See Lucian, *The Dance*, in *Lucian in Eight Volumes*, trans. A. M. Harmon, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1936).
9. See Joshua M. Hall, "A Divinely-Tolerant Political Ethics: Dancing with Aurelius," *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 20(2) (2016): 327–48.
10. Another example of "shadow-dance" in the pseudonymous authorship takes the form of a description of a trail of smoke, on the part of the pseudonym "A." See Kierkegaard 1987: 277.

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