

## KIERKEGAARD ET LA CRITIQUE

### KIERKEGAARD ON THE NARRATOR AND HIS AUTHOR IN HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN'S *ONLY A FIDDLER*\*

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**Abstract.** Kierkegaard's literary debut was a lengthy and scathing review of Hans Christian Andersen's novel *Only a Fiddler* (1837), titled *From the Papers of One Still Living* (1838). This article focuses on Kierkegaard's treatment of the narrative mode in Andersen's novel, examining Kierkegaard's scrutiny of the novel's Er-narrator in particular. He deems the disembodied Er-narrator to be inappropriately subjectivized and severely lacking in authority. Kierkegaard's dissection of Andersen's narrator demonstrates his refined understanding of how the narrative mode impacts the reader. Furthermore, Kierkegaard's critique proves well in line with Lubomír Doležel's understanding of the authentication function in fiction. Lastly, the article briefly examines the narrative mode employed in Kierkegaard's own writings. It is important to note that his work predominantly favours the Ich-form over the Er-form, which is largely missing from his oeuvre. Kierkegaard's review can thus be interpreted as indirectly corroborating the intentionality of Kierkegaard's narrative strategy: a strategy that seems to consist of limiting the narrator's authentication authority.

**Keywords:** Søren Kierkegaard; Hans Christian Andersen; *From the Papers of One Still Living*; Er-narrator; Ich-form; Lubomír Doležel; authentication function.

## INTRODUCTION

On several occasions, Kierkegaard claimed he was merely a reader when it came to the meaning of his writings. Daniel Berthold emphasizes Kierkegaard's own description of his role as a reader in his *Afsluttendevidenskabelig Efterskrift* (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript*), in which Kierkegaard proclaims that he has “no

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knowledge of their meaning except as a reader”<sup>1</sup>. Berthold then suggests that when considering Kierkegaard’s indirect communication there is an affinity between the Kierkegaardian concept of authorship and the proclaimed death of the author as coined by Roland Barthes<sup>2</sup>.

This notion seems very modern or even modernist indeed. Joseph Westfall interprets Kierkegaard’s writings along the same lines and even criticizes prominent interpreters of Kierkegaard because they “read every word written by Søren Kierkegaard as if it were voiced by the same author, that is, as if every book and article constituting the Kierkegaardian authorship were authored by and articulating the same point of view”<sup>3</sup>. Westfall points out that such readings are committed to “bio-historical authorial literalism, according to which writers – nonfiction, philosophical/theological writers, at any rate – are to be read without any openness to or awareness of possible literary aspects of their writings”<sup>4</sup>.

Nevertheless, I do have one small reservation with regard to Westfall’s use of terminology in his otherwise plausible criticism. In Westfall’s description of authorship in Kierkegaard’s writings, the term *narrator* appears to be lacking. It seems self-evident that every word written by Søren Kierkegaard is “voiced by the same author”; the issue here then is that the voice is delegated to a variety of different *narrators*. In light of the above, this article is an attempt to read Kierkegaard with the exact “awareness of possible literary aspects” of his writings that Westfall calls for.

This text examines Kierkegaard as a reader and critic of another author’s work, namely focusing on his lengthy review and literary debut *Af En Endnu Levendes Papirer* (*From the Papers of One Still Living*, 1838), in which he reviews Hans Christian Andersen’s (1805-1875) novel *Kun en Spillemand* (*Only a Fiddler*, 1837). The review is noteworthy because it was written before Kierkegaard launched his own literary career and also provides ample evidence of his remarkable sensitivity when decoding the narrative mode of literary texts. In other words, Kierkegaard shows a profound understanding of the process of creating a fictional world and the role of the narrator in particular. A careful look at Kierkegaard’s reading of a fellow author’s text can thus bring us closer to understanding Kierkegaard’s own work with narrative modes.

Concerning the narrative mode, Andersen’s novel is actually the antithesis of Kierkegaard’s practice as a writer. Andersen’s novel features an omniscient Er-narrator – a type of narrator that is largely absent in Kierkegaard’s own writings. As for Kierke-

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Berthold, “A Desire to Be Understood: Authorship and Authority in Kierkegaard’s Work”, in *Authorship and Authority in Kierkegaard’s Writings*, ed. Joseph Westfall (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author”, in *Image, Music, Text*, transl. by Stephen Heath (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977), pp. 142–148.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Westfall, “Introduction: On Kierkegaard’s Work as an Author”, in *Authorship and Authority in Kierkegaard’s Writings*, ed. Joseph Westfall (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

gaard's analysis of the narrative agent in Andersen's novel, Lubomír Doležel's findings<sup>5</sup> on the different levels of authentication in fiction will serve as a fruitful point of reference.

The following text consists of three parts. The first focuses on the rather inadequate, presumptuous judgements made by Kierkegaard on Andersen's behalf. Due to the highly subjective nature of these comments, my treatment of them uses an equally subjective approach. The second part of the text explores the instances in which Kierkegaard's reading evidently comments on the narrator of the novel or – as Kierkegaard phrases it in the subheading of his review – on "*Andersen som roman forfatter*" ("Andersen as a Novelist"). The third part examines the potential implications of Kierkegaard's understanding of the narrator in Andersen's novel for his own writings.

### ON ANDERSEN AS A REAL AUTHOR

Kierkegaard's review of Andersen's novel is rather sophisticated and it enables him – at least to a certain degree – to address the real author while more or less remaining within the fictional world being analysed. It is, nonetheless, impossible to ignore the instances in which Kierkegaard transgresses the confines of the fictional world and comments on the real author. These personal attacks made by Kierkegaard are interesting for two reasons. First, they suggest an adherence to the concept of author that Barthes mocks in the essay "The Death of the Author"<sup>6</sup>. In other words, Kierkegaard actually accuses Andersen of failing to produce "a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God)"<sup>7</sup>, words used by Barthes to satirize the traditional notion of an author. Secondly, it shows that Kierkegaard was expressly aware of the public's tendency to use literature to extrapolate information about real authors – as he himself succumbed to this mechanism in his review of Andersen's work. In other words, Kierkegaard's own *argumentum ad hominem* serves as a prototypical reaction of the reading audience, a reaction that may actually have inspired Kierkegaard's later play with pseudonyms.

Nevertheless, Kierkegaard does something in his review that he himself would not approve of – he interprets a piece of literary fiction as a product fully shaped by the personal qualities of the real author; in the case of Andersen, he refers to his various shortcomings as an author.

By the same token, one could also claim that Kierkegaard wrote the review with the intention of connecting his name to someone considerably more famous. It is thus not entirely accidental that Kierkegaard chooses to describe the real author as "*den af en temmelig betydelig literair Virksomhed ikke fordeeltigt bekendte Digter Hr. H. C. An-*

<sup>5</sup> Lubomír Doležel, "Truth and Authenticity in Narrative", *Poetics Today*, Vol. 1/3 (1980): 7–25.

<sup>6</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", pp. 142–148.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

*dersen*”<sup>8</sup> [“the poet of a rather significant literary activity, the not unfavourably known poet Mr. H. C. Andersen”]<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, Kierkegaard associates Andersen’s frequent travels with shallowness and a lack of psychological insight:

*Vi erfare, at han [Christian, the protagonist] hører til de Hellige. At gjøre ham til Een af dem er ingen Kunst, dertil behøver Andersen blot Papir og Pen (...). At anskueliggjøre, hvorledes han kunde blive det, og det Symptom, som laa ham nærmest, har Andersen fritaget sig for, han er overhovedet bedre skikket til at fare afsted i en Diligence og beseje Europa, end til at skue ind i Hjerternes Historie.*<sup>10</sup>

[We learn that he belongs to the pietists. To make him one of those is not difficult; for this Andersen needs only paper and pen (...). From illustrating how he could become that and the most probable symptom of it, Andersen has exempted himself. On the whole, he is better suited to rushing off in a coach and seeing Europe than to looking into the history of hearts.]<sup>11</sup>

One plausible reason behind Kierkegaard’s harsh treatment of the novel is his jealousy towards his colleague who is already an accomplished writer and a passionate traveller – unlike Kierkegaard.

When criticizing Andersen for not being able to transition from the lyric stage to the epic – something which Kierkegaard considers an absolute prerequisite for any novelist – Kierkegaard attacks the reader with this slew of erudite jargon:

*Ville vi nu nærmere betragte, hvorledes for et Gemyt som det Andersenske Overgangen maatte være realiseret fra det Lyriske til det Episke (hvilket vi her forstaae om den poetiske Stemning, der fortjener dette Navn, og som er en nødvendig Betingelse for det derpaa følgende og i corresponderende Forhold dertil staaende Gjernings-Epos) – saa maatte dette enten være skeet derved, at han med pythagoræisk Taushed havde helliget et Tidsafsnit af sit Liv til et alvorligt Studium, og dette laa allerede Andersen fjernere; eller derved at Samtiden saa poetisk-malerisk grupperede sig om en enkelt Heros; eller den ved en colossal Forening af en Mængde hver for sig betydningsfulde Kræfter, midt i disses mest brogede Mangfoldighed, saa aldeles uden al Misviisning pegede hen paa et eneste Maal, og med en saadan Energie arbeidede derhen, at en saadan Stræben en Tid lang maatte gribe ham og afgive det for ham nødvendige Livs-Supplement.*<sup>12</sup>

[If we now take a closer look at how, for a temperament such as the Andersenian, the transition from the lyric to the epic would have to have been realized (here must be understood the poetic mood that merits this name and is a necessary condition for the following and corresponding epic action) – then we can see that either this must have been done by Andersen’s having dedicated, with Pythagorean silence, a period of his

<sup>8</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Af en endnu Levendes Papirer. Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter 1* (Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 1997), eds. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Joakim Garff, Jette Knudsen and Johnny Kondrup, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *From the Papers of One Still Living. Early Polemical Writings* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), ed. and transl. by Julia Watkin, p. 69.

<sup>10</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Af en endnu Levendes Papirer. Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter 1*, p. 55.

<sup>11</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *From the Papers of One Still Living. Early Polemical Writings*, pp. 100–101.

<sup>12</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Af en endnu Levendes Papirer. Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter 1*, p. 27.

life to a serious study, but already this would be rather unlike him, or it could have been done if the age had, poetically picturesque, gathered around a single hero, or if the age through a colossal union of a large number of forces, each significant in itself, amid the most motley profusion of these had pointed absolutely undeviatingly to a single goal and had worked with such energy toward it that such a striving must grip him for some time and yield the life-supplement necessary for him.<sup>13]</sup>

When reading this passage, it seems likely that Kierkegaard's overly academic style in the review stems from his excessive studying and reflection. A confrontation with Kierkegaard's biting criticism of the real author makes it rather difficult to agree with Eleanor Helms' conclusion that "Kierkegaard's criticisms, even those apparently directed at Andersen as a person, instead point to a problem with the novel (that is, its lack of higher-level reflection on the character's fates)"<sup>14</sup>. The above-mentioned quotations allow for a diametrically opposite reading of the review: the cited problems suggest that Andersen himself is problematic for having an underdeveloped personality. This reading can be substantiated with Kierkegaard's following attacks which maintain that the real problem with Andersen's novel is Andersen himself. According to Kierkegaard, Andersen is not "*den egentligtalentfulde Roman-Digter*"<sup>15</sup> ["(t)he really talented novelist"]<sup>16</sup>, Andersen "*aldeles mangler Livsanskuelse*"<sup>17</sup> ["totally lacks a life-view"<sup>18</sup>], he "*da hanover sprang sit Epos, også oversprang den til al Skildring absolut nødvendige Kontemplation*"<sup>19</sup> ["when he skipped over his epic stage, also skipped over the contemplation absolutely necessary for all description"<sup>20</sup>], he simply should have been "*betydningsfuldere Personlighed*"<sup>21</sup> ["a more significant personality"<sup>22</sup>].

The first conclusion to be made is thus the following: Kierkegaard's understanding of the author is closely connected to the romantic notion of the author who should be in full command of his work. In this respect, I agree with Helms in that "we can read *From the Papers* coherently as a call for a mature, holistic authorial presence, rather than a celebration of a work that must be composed into a novel by its readers [...]"<sup>23</sup>. Kierkegaard's remarks, indeed, in no way negate strong authorial intentionalism. On the contrary, Kierkegaard's notion of the real author as elucidated in *From the Papers* can be viewed in line with Barthes' description of the traditional institution of the "Author": "To give a text an Author," Barthes writes, "is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with

<sup>13</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *From the Papers of One Still Living. Early Polemical Writings*, p. 71.

<sup>14</sup> Eleanor Helms, "Kierkegaard on Andersen and the Art of Storytelling", in *Authorship and Authority in Kierkegaard's Writings*, ed. Joseph Westfall (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), p. 187.

<sup>15</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Afen endnu Levendes Papirer. Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter 1*, p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *From the Papers of One Still Living. Early Polemical Writings*, p. 90.

<sup>17</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Afen endnu Levendes Papirer. Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter 1*, p. 32.

<sup>18</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *From the Papers of One Still Living. Early Polemical Writings*, p. 76.

<sup>19</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Afen endnu Levendes Papirer. Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter 1*, p. 42.

<sup>20</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *From the Papers of One Still Living. Early Polemical Writings*, p. 87.

<sup>21</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Afen endnu Levendes Papirer. Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter 1*, p. 29.

<sup>22</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *From the Papers of One Still Living. Early Polemical Writings*, p. 73.

<sup>23</sup> Eleanor Helms, "Kierkegaard on Andersen and the Art of Storytelling", p. 187.

a final signified, to close the writing. Such a conception suits criticism very well, the latter then allotting itself the important task of discovering the Author (or its hypostases: society, history, psyché, liberty) beneath the work: when the Author has been found, the text is ‘explained’ – victory to the critic<sup>24</sup>. In his review, Kierkegaard victoriously identifies his Author and unequivocally proclaims that the novel is the failure of Andersen’s nihilism, his travelling, his poor studies, his underdeveloped personality – of course I am merely paraphrasing Barthes and his infamous mockery rooted in positivist criticism, according to which “Baudelaire’s work is the failure of Baudelaire the man, Van Gogh’s his madness, Tchaikovsky’s his vice”<sup>25</sup>.

The paradox of Kierkegaard’s approach in his role as reader and critic is obvious. He subjects Andersen to what he in his own texts, his pseudonymous writings in particular, obviously tries to avoid: to be visible to the reader as an author whose flesh and blood can be dissected using the text as evidence. Narratology thus provides some recourse in this regard. It will become apparent that Kierkegaard criticizes the novel’s Er-narrator in particular. He exposes the incoherence in the narrative mode and presents the Er-narrator as untrustworthy or to be more precise: inauthentic.

### “OM ANDERSEN SOM ROMANDIGTER”

Kierkegaard tries to make somewhat of a distinction between the flesh-and-blood author and the narrator. This can be evidenced in the subtitle of his review with the adverb *som* (as): *Andersen som Romandigter*. In the text itself, Kierkegaard explicitly mentions that his review is not of Andersen “*som Menneske*”<sup>26</sup> [“as a person”]<sup>27</sup> and ensures that he is not overstepping the bounds of his “*æstetiske Jurisdiction*”<sup>28</sup> [“aesthetic jurisdiction”]<sup>29</sup>. Indeed, Kierkegaard uses the proper noun “Andersen” interchangeably with the Er-form narrator upon several occasions in his review. Helms arrives at the very same conclusion. “We make,” Helms writes, “the best sense of Kierkegaard’s accusations here if we interpret them as aimed at the narrator, who has no name other than “Andersen”, rather than at Andersen as an empirical individual.”<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Helms adds that “even if we – as philosophers or literary critics – recognize the distinction, even for Kierkegaard the voice of such a well-known storyteller is likely to be associated in the minds of the readers with the novel’s narrator [...]”<sup>31</sup>. Helms considers this an innocuous strategy on Kierkegaard’s part; she claims that Kierkegaard resorts to commenting upon Andersen’s personal development and

<sup>24</sup> Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author”, p. 147.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>26</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Afen endnu Levendes Papirer. Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter 1*, p. 38.

<sup>27</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *From the Papers of One Still Living. Early Polemical Writings*, p. 83.

<sup>28</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Afen endnu Levendes Papirer. Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter 1*, p. 38.

<sup>29</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *From the Papers of One Still Living. Early Polemical Writings*, p. 83.

<sup>30</sup> Eleanor Helms, “Kierkegaard on Andersen and the Art of Storytelling”, p. 184.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 184–185.

internal life out of necessity due to the aesthetic flaws and shortcomings of the novel. However, this cursory remark made by Helms is problematic given that Kierkegaard's implicit equation of the narrator with the real author is so ubiquitous that it serves as one of the constitutive elements of his review. It must be noted that Kierkegaard's systematic equating of the Er-narrator with the real author might have significant consequences for his own literary production and his conception of storytelling.

In modern narratology, the distinction between the real author and the narrator is one of the few undisputed tenets. The fact that Kierkegaard was aware of the various narrative modes can scarcely be questioned considering the use of pseudonymous narrators in his writings; this clearly indicates a concerted effort to not be identified as the voice in the narrative. Kierkegaard's point of departure in his review, however, is that the Er-narrator and the real author form a unity. At the same time, the main problem with Andersen's Er-narrator, according to Kierkegaard, is his overly immediate engagement with the fictional world. Kierkegaard rightfully observes that the Er-narrator's voice is too close to that of a personalized narrative agent, bearing serious implications for the credibility of the fictional world.

According to Franz K. Stanzel's typological model of narrative modes, the Er-narrator, or authorial narrator as Stanzel defines it, is located outside the world of the characters; the author's world and the fictional world are divided by an ontological border<sup>32</sup>. It is then implied that the disembodied Er-narrator is not existentially involved in the fictional world—unlike for example the Ich-form narrator. The following examples demonstrate Kierkegaard's irritation with the lacking distance between the Er-narrator and the fictional world, which he finds overtly disgusting. The reader is confronted with Andersen's bloody limbs:

*jeg vil blot gjøre Andersen opmærksom paa, at dersom han paa en eller anden Maade skulde føle sig personligt (som bosiddende Mand i Kjøbenhavn) afficeret, Grunden da ikke ligger hos mig, men hos Andersen, hvis Romaner staae i et saa fysisk Forhold til ham selv, at deres Tilblivelse ikke er saa meget at ansee for en Produktion som for en Amputation af ham selv; og det veed man jo nok, at om det saaledes Amputerede end er langt borte, føler man stundom uvilkaarligt en reen fysisk Smerte deri<sup>33</sup>.*

[I shall merely point out to Andersen that if he should feel himself personally affected in any way (as a man resident in Copenhagen), the cause does not lie with me but with Andersen, whose novels stand in so physical a relation to him that their genesis is to be regarded more as an amputation than as a production from himself. And it is well enough known that even if what is amputated is far away, one sometimes involuntarily feels a purely physical pain in it.<sup>34</sup>]

<sup>32</sup> Franz K. Stanzel, *Theorie des Erzählens* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 122–123.

<sup>33</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Afen endnu Levendes Papirer. Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter 1*, pp. 39–40.

<sup>34</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *From the Papers of One Still Living. Early Polemical Writings*, p. 84.

Kierkegaard describes the reader's feeling of amputation and physical pain which is far from the disembodied narrative mode of an Er-narrator. In his *Theorie des Erzählens*, Stanzel posits that it is precisely the narrator's belonging or non-belonging to the fictional world that constitutes the primary difference between the Er-narrator and Ich-narrator. "Der Ich-Erzähler", Stanzel continues, "unterscheidet sich demnach vom auktorialen Er-Erzähler durch körperliche-existentielle Verankerung seiner Position in der fiktionalen Welt. Mit anderen Worten, der Ich-Erzähler verfügt über ein 'Ich mit Leib' in der Welt der Charaktere, der auktoriale Erzähler [...] verfügt dagegen weder innerhalb noch außerhalb der fiktionalen Welt der Charaktere über ein solches 'Ich mit Leib'."<sup>35</sup> In Stanzel's narrative typology, Kierkegaard's description is tantamount to a personalized narration in which the narrator's body is placed inside the fictional world.

Kierkegaard gives this concrete example of the Er-narrator's misplaced presence in the fictional world. The situation that Kierkegaard selects from the novel depicts the young protagonist Christian – whom the narrator repeatedly characterizes as a genius – when visiting a female character named Steffen-Karreet:

*Han besøger Steffen-Karreet, og idet han skal gaa bort "traadte et Par andre Jomfruer ind fra Sideværelset, de vare let klædte, som hun, og de hørte Historien og loe, og saae med dumme Øine paa Drengen." Jeg vil ikke tale om, at jeg er bange for, at vi alle komme til at see med ligesaa dumme Øine paa Christian, naar hele Historien er forbi, saafremt man ved dumme Øine forstaaer Øine, som ikke kan see, at Christian var et stort Genie, men jeg vilde blot spørge: hvo gjør den Bemærkning? Christian kan det umuligt være; thi saa uartig en Dreng troer jeg dog ikke, Christian var, at han i et Huus, hvor han havde nydt Opmærksomhed (cfr. I, 151), hvor jo ogsaa Steffen-Karreet havde leet af ham og gjort det godt igjen, hvor han i det høieste kunde blive vred, fordi de loe, skulde komme til den Betragtning, at de saae paa ham "med dumme Øine". Deterigjen Andersen, der erblevenvred<sup>36</sup>.*

[He visits Steffen-Karreet, and as he is going away "a couple of other young women came in from the adjoining room; they were scantily clad, as was she, and they heard the story and laughed, and looked at the boy with foolish eyes". I shall say nothing of my fear that when the whole story is over, we shall all come to look at Christian with just as foolish eyes, if by "foolish eyes" one understands eyes that cannot see that Christian was a great genius. I would merely ask: Who makes this comment? It cannot possibly be Christian, because I do not think Christian was such a naughty boy that, in a house where he had enjoyed attention (see I, p. 151), where also Steffen-Karreet had laughed at him and made amends, where at most he could be angry because they laughed, he would arrive at the thought that they looked at him with "foolish eyes". It is again Andersen who has become angry.<sup>37</sup>]

Kierkegaard's apt question "Who makes this comment?" enquires into to the narratological structure of the novel and presents Kierkegaard as an observant and

<sup>35</sup> Franz K. Stanzel, *Theorie des Erzählens*, pp. 122–123.

<sup>36</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Af en endnu Levendes Papirer. Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter 1*, p. 46.

<sup>37</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *From the Papers of One Still Living. Early Polemical Writings*, p. 91.



knowledgeable narratologist with a refined understanding of the principles of creating a fictional world. His sardonic answer to the question once again reveals that he deems the narrator to be located within the fictional world, rendering him inappropriately existentially involved in the protagonist's fictional fate. In other words: Kierkegaard correctly identifies the voice in the novel as the disembodied Er-narrator; however, the Er-narrator's failure lies in his excessive personal investment in the fictional world. From a narratological perspective, Kierkegaard's frustration is targeted towards the blending of two narrative modes: the narrative voiced by the Er-narrator on the one hand, and the narrative carried out by a personalised narrative agent (character) on the other.

Kierkegaard comments upon the erroneous practice of blending different narrative modes when he mentions how Andersen admonishes his own characters and argues with them:

*deels bliver han i høi Grad opbragt paa andre Personer, der forekomme i hans Romaner, taler saa djærvt imod dem, at man skulde troe, at det var ham om at gjøre at tilintetgjøre deres borgerlige Velvære i den Verden, hvor Andersen selv hører hjemme, men hvor de slet Intet have at bestille*<sup>38</sup>.

[he becomes extremely incensed with other characters appearing in his novels, and he is so outspoken against them that one would believe it was important to him to destroy their civic welfare in the world where Andersen himself belongs but where they have absolutely no business to be]<sup>39</sup>.

This outspoken voice called "Andersen" in Kierkegaard's review is seemingly identical with the narrator in the Er-form. This brings forth another conclusion: Kierkegaard is dissatisfied with the narrative mode because the Er-narrator does not embody the type of authority typically allotted to such narrators. What he criticizes in his review is the volatility of the narrator's ontological status; the narrator is – though he should not be – a part of the fictional world; he should be superior to the fictional world, yet he is not.

## THE AUTHENTICATION PROCESS IN LITERATURE

Marie-Laure Ryan summarizes the impact of the Er-narrator on our reading of the fictional world as follows:

The situation of the narrator is more ambiguous: on one hand, literary theory postulates a narrator in order to relieve the author of the responsibility of fulfilling the felicity conditions of the textual assertions: it is the narrator, not the author, who believes that "the marquise left the castle at 5 o'clock" and has evidence for saying so. Yet, when narrators are disembodied, omniscient creatures rather than possible human beings, the truth about the fictional world automatically comes out

<sup>38</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Afen endnu Levendes Papirer. Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter 1*, p. 47.

<sup>39</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *From the Papers of One Still Living. Early Polemical Writings*, pp. 91–92.

of their mouths (or pens, or minds), through what Lubomír Doležel calls the authority of the ER-narrator<sup>40</sup>.

Ryan is referring to Doležel's concept of a binary narrative which Doležel describes as "the simplest model of narrative text where the texture results from the operation of two kinds of speech act, the speech act of the anonymous Er-form narrator and the speech acts of the personalized narrative agents"<sup>41</sup>. As I have elucidated, it is exactly this type of traditional narrative that Andersen employed in his novel and which Kierkegaard astutely identified as the novel's weak point. Andersen's Er-narrator is so subjective and personalized that he transgresses his domain and becomes one of the characters. At the same time, this narratorial quality paves the way for Kierkegaard to systematically equate the narrator with the real author. The voice of the narrator is outwardly personal and the book bears the name Hans Christian Andersen on its cover. Kierkegaard considered this narratorial quality to pose serious implications for the narrator's authority, which is well in line with Doležel's postulation: "The speech act of the anonymous Er-form narrator carries the *authentication authority*, while the speech acts of the narrative agents lack this authority"<sup>42</sup>.

When the Er-narrator descends to the level of the characters in Andersen's novel, he loses the authentication aura immanent to any Er-narrator. Kierkegaard is actually preoccupied with one of the cornerstones of narration and storytelling in the context of Doležel's argument here: "The concept of authentication function is a necessary, maybe a central, concept of the theory of fictional existence in narrative worlds. What exists in a narrative world is determined by the authentication function"<sup>43</sup>.

Logically then, Andersen's narrator lacks the authority to make the reader/Kierkegaard believe in the truth of the fictional world he created. Kierkegaard explicitly identifies the narrator's lacking authority as the primary shortcoming of Andersen's novel:

*vi fordre ingenlunde i nogen større Betydning Forstandighed og Klarhed over Livet i ethvert enkelt af hans poetisk skabte Individuer, tværtimod ville vi indrømme ham fuld Magt til at lade dem, om galt skulde være, blive afsindige; kun maa det ikke skee saaledes, at en Galskab i 3die Person afløses af en i første, at Forfatteren selv overtager den Gales Partes*<sup>44</sup>.

[We by no means require, in any stricter understanding of the words, good sense and clarity about life in every single one of his poetically created individuals. On the contrary, if the worst comes to the worst, we shall grant him full authority to let them go out of their minds, only it must not happen in such a way that a madness in the third person is replaced by one in the first, that the himself takes the mad person's role.]<sup>45</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Marie-Laure Ryan, "Meaning, Intent, and the Implied Author", *Style*, No. 45/1 (2011): 33.

<sup>41</sup> Lubomír Doležel, "Truth and Authenticity in Narrative", p. 11.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>44</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Afen endnu Levendes Papirer. Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter 1*, p. 38.

<sup>45</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *From the Papers of One Still Living. Early Polemical Writings*, p. 83.

What Kierkegaard describes here is a narrative mode in which the Er-narrator and characters merge. This narrative mode would typologically fit in the category that Doležel calls the subjectivized Er-form:

Subjectivized Er-form as transitional zone can be roughly characterized as a narrative mode which displays the formal features of the Er-form narrative, but the semantic features of the characters' discourse [...]. Due to their semantics, sentences of the subjectivized Er-form introduce narrative motifs coupled with attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, etc. of narrative agents. At the same time, being incorporated through their formal features into the discourse of the Er-form narrator, the sentences receive a certain degree of authenticity bestowed on them by the authentication authority of the narrator<sup>46</sup>.

This means that the subjectivized Er-form retains a certain degree of authentication, albeit to a considerably lesser extent<sup>47</sup>. The narrator's authority is diminished, which is exactly what happens when Andersen's narrator invades the fictional world he narrates. However, Kierkegaard does acknowledge the narrator's authenticity in one particular instance: the novel's narrator is convincing when he operates within the lyrical genre<sup>48</sup>:

*hans egen Virkelighed, hans egen Person forflygtiger sig til Digt, saa at man virkelig i enkelte Øieblikke fristes til at troe, at Andersen er en Figur, der er løben bort fra en af en Digter componeret, endnu ikke færdig Gruppe; og unægteligt er det vistnok, at Andersen kunde blive en meget poetisk Person i et Digt, hvorved da netop hele hans Digten vilde blive opfattet i sin fragmentariske Sandhed<sup>49</sup>.*

[his own actuality, his own person, volatilizes itself into fiction, so that sometimes one is actually tempted to believe that Andersen is a character who has run away from an as yet unfinished group composed by a poet. And certainly, it is undeniable that Andersen could become a very poetic person in a poem, in which case all his poetry would be understood in its fragmentary truth.<sup>50</sup>]

The essence of Kierkegaard's point here is that Andersen's work is of a fundamentally fragmentary character. That is why his writings are perfectly compatible with the lyric, which is a mode characterized by personalized narration but utterly incongruous with a novel narrated in the Er-form. This observation of Kierkegaard's prompts something of a thought experiment: If the narrative mode in *Only a Fiddler* was in the Ich-form, then many of Kierkegaard's objections towards the novel would no longer hold true. If the protagonist, Christian, was instead an Ich-form narrator, the novel would become an authentic record of an unhappy mind and as such would serve

<sup>46</sup> Lubomír Doležel, "Truth and Authenticity in Narrative", p. 16.

<sup>47</sup> *Madame Bovary* serves Doležel as a prime example of this mode in which the Er-narrator is strikingly close to the perspective of Emma.

<sup>48</sup> See also the ending of the review in which Kierkegaard recalls his immediate impression as a reader and the force of the text to induce "nærvær" [a present], that is presence of mind in the reader.

<sup>49</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Af en endnu Levendes Papirer. Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter 1*, p. 31.

<sup>50</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *From the Papers of One Still Living. Early Polemical Writings*, pp. 75–76.

as one example of life, rather than the entire truth of life. Precisely such fragmented examples of life can be found in Kierkegaard's writings.

### **ER-FORM VERSUS ICH-FORM: EARNING AUTHENTICATION AUTHORITY**

Kierkegaard's treatment of the narrative mode in Andersen's novel implies an issue with the narrative modes in Kierkegaard's own writings. Kierkegaard's reading of the novel narrated in the Er-form exhibits a tendency towards perceiving the fictional world as a vessel of truth – which Andersen's novel does not live up to due to its incoherent narrative mode. Doležel describes this mechanism as the authentication process in literature, with the Er-narrator inherently possessing the highest degree of authority and authenticity. In this respect, it is worth noting that Kierkegaard largely favours the Ich-form over the Er-form in his writings. In terms of the difference between the ER-narrator and the Ich-form narrator, Doležel once again stresses the different intensity of authentication:

If we used the binary model, we would have to conclude that the narrator of the Ich-form has no authentication authority. However, we are aware that the Ich-form narrator has a privileged position within the set of acting characters. This privileged position is given by the fact that in the absence of the anonymous Er-form narrator, the Ich-form narrator assumes the role of constructing the narrative world. However, the theory of authentication should assign a lower degree of authentication authority to the Ich-form narrator than the absolute authority of the Er-form narrator. The world constructed by the Ich-form narrator is relatively authentic. It is not the world of absolute narrative facts, rather, to use our tentative term, an authentic belief-world of the Ich-narrator<sup>51</sup>.

Undoubtedly, the first-person narrator who calls himself *Udgiveren* (the publisher) of the preface of *Enten-Eller* [*Either/Or*, 1843] or the narrator of *Forførerens Dagbog* [*The Seducer's Diary*], possesses considerably weaker authentication authority than a traditional omniscient Er-narrator. As mentioned above, this type of narrator is rather non-existent in Kierkegaard's writings. One of the rare examples of this narrative mode in his work are sections I–IV at the beginning of *Frygt og Bæven* [*Fear and Trembling*, 1843], in which a disembodied Er-narrator reports on the morning when Abraham and Isaac underwent their fateful journey to Mount Moriah. In this short text, the authenticity of the Er-narrator is unquestionable and the fictional world is regarded as the truth by the reader. Nevertheless, even this text is embedded in a narrative told by an Ich-form narrator, which fundamentally problematizes the authentication process. It is actually striking how rarely the Er-form narrator appears in Kierkegaard's writings. One possible explanation might be that the authentication provided by an omniscient, disembodied Er-narrator would be incompatible with the impact Kierkegaard intended to have on his reader.

<sup>51</sup> Lubomír Doležel, "Truth and Authenticity in Narrative", p. 17.

According to Doležel, the authentication of the Er-narrator is static, it is a permanent state established from the beginning; authentication in the Ich-form narrative, on the other hand, happens as part of a process. “We can say somewhat metaphorically”, Doležel writes, “that the Ich-form narrator has to earn his authentication authority, while to the anonymous Er-form narrator this authority is given by convention”<sup>52</sup>. In this respect, it is conspicuous that the vast majority of Kierkegaard’s narrators are constructed in such a way that they have to earn their authentication authority first. The authority is not guaranteed through the narrative mode itself.

Berthold astutely remarks that “[i]ndirect communication is the central ethical principal of Kierkegaard’s authorship”<sup>53</sup>. He adds that “Kierkegaard seeks to write in such a way that the inherently deceptive nature of authorship – that it invites the common assumption that to understand the text is to understand the author’s inner intentions – is exacerbated to the point of absurdity: the author intentionally becomes unreliable, fantastic, mythological”<sup>54</sup>. In this respect, it is important to add that indirectly communicated pseudonymous writings are characterized by their exclusive use of the Ich-form.

Berthold’s plausible conclusions, anyway, seem to fall into the very trap he describes: he succumbs to “the common assumption that to understand the text is to understand the author’s inner intentions”. Here namely the intention to disrupt “the reader’s reliance on traditional expectations of the authority of the author”<sup>55</sup>, as Berthold ascribes to Kierkegaard. Yet Kierkegaard’s exact intentions still remain up for debate – despite all of his published and unpublished proclamations and pseudonyms. What Kierkegaard certainly does achieve, however, is efficacious play with the authority of his narrators.

## CONCLUSION

Objectively speaking, Kierkegaard exhibits a refined understanding of the authentication function of various types of narrators, evidenced in his debut as a critic of Andersen’s novel *Only a Fiddler*. In his review, Kierkegaard focuses on the Er-narrator of Andersen’s novel, equates him with the real author, condemns the real author’s presence in the fictional world as inappropriate and his mode of narration implausible and inauthentic. It must thus be stressed that Kierkegaard largely avoided the traditional disembodied Er-narrator who is not inherently deserving of authenticity but is still endowed with it. This is precisely what constitutes the Ich-form narrator who, moreover, is existentially engaged in the narrated world.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>53</sup> Daniel Berthold, “A Desire to Be Understood: Authorship and Authority in Kierkegaard’s Work”, p. 111.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

A close reading of Kierkegaard's review problematizes the claim that Kierkegaard intentionally tries to kill the author in the manner suggested by Barthes. Or in Berthold's words: "The author incapacitates himself so that the reader may exercise her own capacity for signification"<sup>56</sup>. I have demonstrated that Kierkegaard operates with the notion of strong individual authorship in his review of Andersen's novel. What is more, Kierkegaard's own repeated incapacitating proclamations are, in fact, indirect evidence of strong authorial intention – his resolute intention to disappear as the flesh-and-blood author behind his Ich-form narrators.

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.