

Tveito, Finn. 2014. *Løgn og litteratur. Bruk av løgner i litteraturen*. Oslo: Novus forlag. 194 pages. ISBN: 978-82-7099-767-1.

In his book, *Løgn og litteratur. Bruk av løgner i litteraturen* [Lies and Literature: The Use of Lies in Literature], Finn Tveito explores lies in literature and how these literary lies impact our lived social lives. Tveito studies this theme's occurrence across a wide timespan in the widely defined Western canon. There are twenty-three works referenced—dramas, novels, and short stories—however, scattered throughout the book are also a variety of quotes from an assortment of Western texts. *Løgn og litteratur* is organized both thematically and chronologically, beginning with Plautus's *Løgnhalsen* [*Pseudolus*] (191 BCE), and includes quotes and examples as recent as the TV series *Breaking Bad* (2008–2013) and *Mad Men* (2007–2015). Despite this historical range, 19th- and 20th-century literature dominates Tveito's analysis. Authors of particular interest, especially for *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies*' audience, are Arne Gaborg, Henrik Ibsen, and Jan Kjærstad. It should be noted that Tveito does not isolate these authors in a Scandinavian context but instead analyzes them thematically alongside other Western authors.

In the Introduction, Tveito poses the questions “Kvifor lyg mennesket?” [Why do people lie?] (7); “Korleis skal me så handsama løgnene?” [How should we handle lies?] (9); and “Er det mogleg å analysere dei, når me veit kor vanskeleg det ofte er å skilja løgn frå sanning?” [Is it possible to analyze [lies], when we know how difficult it often is to distinguish a lie from truth?] (9). The chapters that follow use Western literary history and Western literature to answer these questions and to explore the different functions lies have had in a selection of works from the Western canon. The first chapter, “Løgnaren og det løgnaktige” [The Liar and the Lie], is Tveito's theory chapter. In it, he explores the theoretical discourse of “kvar er ei løgn” [what is a lie] (16), what constitutes a lie, and who is the liar. Using a variety of theorists (Augustine, Jankélévitch, Descartes, Kant, Koyré, Derrida, among others), he establishes the differences between damaging and innocent lies, as well as necessary and legitimate lies, and defines the problematic nature of truth. He then presents the troubled relationship that exists between lies and art, concluding that although lies and illusions are integral to narrative art (*forteljekunst*), literary texts also help us to understand the social and political reality in which we live. “Løgnaren som komediefigur” [The Liar as Comedic Figure], chapter two, focuses on the genre of comedy and analyzes works by Plautus (191 BCE), Pierre Corneille (1643–45), and Carlo Goldoni (1750). The cohesive theme in the four works analyzed in this chapter is, as their titles suggest, that the main character is a liar. Chapter three, titled “Løgner for å oppnå det ein vil, eller for å koma seg opp og fram” [Lies to Achieve What You Want, or to Get Ahead], looks at lies that are necessary and/or legitimate but that also aid a

character in their quest to succeed in life. Giovanni Boccaccio, Jane Austen, and Arne Garborg all provide examples of an individual who, in order to achieve in love, business, or family life, must rely on lies and trickery. Tveito points out that, despite the effectiveness of these lies, literature does not allow these characters to be free of guilt, as literature's audience will forever critique them. "Livsløgner" [Life-Lies], chapter four, takes on a type of lie found in theatre, as *livsløgner* are well suited for staged performance.

Ibsen is central to Tveito's third chapter, particularly *Et dukkehjem* (1879) [A Doll's House], *Gengangere* (1881) [Ghosts], and *Vildanden* (1884) [The Wild Duck] as these plays were groundbreaking works, in part because of their *livsløgner*. Instead of pairing Ibsen with other Modern Breakthrough or Modern Scandinavian playwrights, many of which take on this theme, chapter four pairs Ibsen with Tennessee Williams' play *Katt på heitt blikktak* [Cat on a Hot Tin Roof 1955], because "Det som er felles hos Ibsen og Williams, er at det som har skjedd i fortida, får store konsekvensar for det som kjer i notida" [What Ibsen and Williams have in common is that what occurred in the past has grave consequences for what is happening now] (111). The comparison reveals that there are consequences to hiding important information, particularly when the liar holds severe resentment to the family's father figure. Chapter five, "Ideologiske og politiske løgner" [Ideological and Political Lies], looks at three novels that have lies correlated to a type of societal group or sect. Tveito uses Fjodor Dostojevskij, George Orwell, and Jan Kjærstad to show in what ways literature can serve to highlight or represent, however not without problem, the truth hidden within collective lies. The final chapter, "Individets løgner" [Individual Lies], deals with the lies of a first-person narrator. Its focus is split into two parts. The first part explores the works of Marcel Proust, Richard Yates, and Henry James as their plots all focus on the theme of lies in a romantic love relationship. The second part considers the works of Albert Camus, Steve Tesich, and Martin A. Hansen as the first-person narrator in these novels blurs the line between truth and lie by withholding the whole truth. Tveito discovers that "eg-forteljarar ofte er *upålitelege*, fordi det har avgrensa synsfelt, og aldri kjem ut or den rustninga som eg-pronomenet er omgitt av" [the first-person narrator is often *unreliable* because they have a restricted vision and can't escape the armor surrounding the first-person pronoun] (177; italics in original).

Løgn og litteratur is an example of acceptance and liberal application of World Literature (*Verdenslitteratur*) theory. This is evidenced not only in the geographical breadth of works selected, but also in that Tveito uses Norwegian translations whenever possible and uses the English translations of any work not currently published in Norwegian. Using translation then serves as Tveito's open door to take these texts out of their national context and group them by a thematically human experience, lying. Positioning his argument in this way, Tveito enters the complex and impassioned debate surrounding World Literature. I do wonder why,

although many female characters are central to this investigation, only one female author, Jane Austen, is analyzed in *Løgn og litteratur*. Despite these concerns, it is refreshing to read Tveito's enthusiastic promotion in *Løgn og litteratur* of the relevance and utility literature has had, and continues to have, in society and lived social life.

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