

Reading for the Truth:

Rhetorical Constructions in Norwegian Fiction

By Jan Sjøvik

Through detailed discussion of central works in Norwegian fiction, *Reading for the Truth* illustrates and substantiates some important points in the theory of literary interpretation. Inspired by Donald Davidson's epistemological concept of triangulation, the author argues that intersubjective literary interpretation is an attractive alternative to critical practices that focus on authorial intention or on the ability of readers to impute to a text whatever meaning they like. For when the meaning of a text is arrived at intersubjectively by two or more readers it is much more likely to be an instance of critical truth than when its meaning is assigned by a single reader or critic.

On the basis of this view of literary interpretation, the author discusses such canonical works as Arne Garborg, *Peace* (1892), Knut Hamsun, *Pan* (1894), and Ole E. Rølvaag, *Giants in the Earth* (1924), as well as short stories by Maurits Hansen, Alexander L. Kielland, and Terje Stigen. Focusing on the role of rhetoric and irony in these texts, Sjøvik shows how an intersubjective approach is advantageous, if not indeed necessary, in any serious attempt to establish their meaning.

The Author

Jan Sjøvik grew up in a small fishing village in Northern Norway. After service in the Norwegian army, he emigrated to the United States in 1972, where he did graduate work at Harvard University. Since 1978 he has taught in the Department of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle, where he is currently an Associate Professor. He is also a member of the Program in Theory and Criticism in the Department of Comparative Literature. In addition to a book about the Norwegian writer Arne Garborg, published in Norway in 1985, he has written numerous articles in both English and Norwegian on topics in critical theory and Norwegian literature.

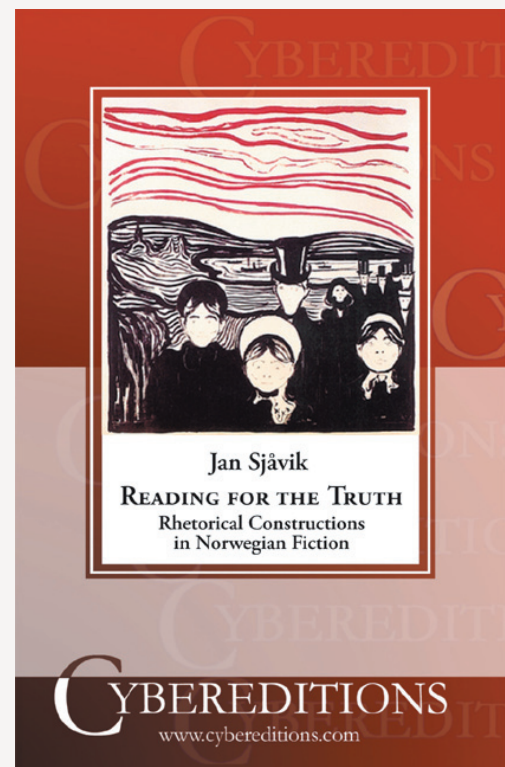
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