

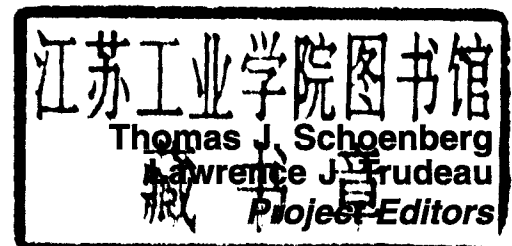
Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC 203

Volume 203

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**



**Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism, Vol.
203**

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Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)* has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. *TCLC* has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *TCLC*. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” *TCLC* “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

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TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, *TCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *TCLC* presents a comprehensive survey on an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

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- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

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A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *TCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

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An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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Pan

Knut Hamsun

The following entry presents criticism of Hamsun's novel *Pan, af Løitnant Thomas Glahns papirer* (1894; *Pan*). For additional information on Hamsun's career, see *TCLC*, Volumes 2, 14, and 49; for discussion of the novel *Sult* (*Hunger*), see *TCLC*, Volume 151.

INTRODUCTION

Pan, af Løitnant Thomas Glahns papirer (*Pan*), published in 1894, is regarded by critics as an important early example of the psychological novel in Western literature. Although not the best known of Norwegian writer Knut Hamsun's works, *Pan* nonetheless occupies a pivotal place in his canon, written during a time when he developed his theory regarding the preeminence of human consciousness and psychology in literature, as opposed to the intricacies of plot or dramatic action. Many scholars argue that *Pan*, as well as Hamsun's other novels written during the 1890s, helped shape the direction of the novel at the beginning of the twentieth century, employing techniques, such as stream-of-consciousness and interior monologue, traditionally associated with later writers of the modernist movement. In this work, Hamsun explored a number of favorite themes, such as passion, destruction, jealousy, and death, as well as the beauty of nature and the isolation of the wanderer. Hamsun claimed that he wrote *Pan* as carefully as he would have constructed a poem, striving to give the novel the beauty and weight of poetry. In 1984, critic Harald Næss affirmed his technique, saying that "*Pan* is indeed Hamsun's most beautiful book." Concerning the novel's importance as an early example of psychological realism, Jan Sjøvik wrote in 1983 that in *Pan* Hamsun "not only set out to create a new psychological literature in which communication with the reader took place through the use of previously unfamiliar literary conventions, but that he also attempted to create a new public capable of appreciating his art by teaching these new conventions through his text."

PLOT AND MAJOR CHARACTERS

Pan is told from the retrospective point of view of Thomas Glahn, a retired lieutenant, who is inspired to record the story in a hunting diary after he receives a

letter that contains two green feathers. Edvarda, a young woman in the northern forests of Norway, has sent the letter, along with the feathers, which were given to her by Glahn two summers ago as a token of his love. In his diary, Glahn explains that he had rented a cottage in the forest from a merchant named Ferdinand Mack and quickly fell in love with Edvarda, Mack's young daughter, experiencing a brief but intense period of happiness with her. In the story, the love between Edvarda and Glahn, though initially intense, begins to deteriorate soon after they come together. While Glahn comes from a cultured family, he has left the city to commune with nature and unlearn his city manners. Edvarda, on the other hand, is socially ambitious and proud, but, despite her wish to rise above her modest upbringing, lacks grace and refinement. As a result of the differences in their backgrounds and expectations, their early passion withers, eventually deteriorating into a mutual love-hate relationship. As Edvarda becomes increasingly cold towards Glahn, his behavior becomes more erratic. Frustrated by her attitude at a picnic, Glahn throws Edvarda's shoe into the ocean. At a ball, when Edvarda favors another suitor, Glahn humiliates the rival by forcing him to jump over the barrel of his gun. While Edvarda occupies herself by flirting with other suitors, including an older Finnish baron, Glahn initiates a sexual affair with Eva, the blacksmith's wife, who is also Mack's mistress. Eva decides to leave Mack for Glahn, and Mack retaliates by burning down Glahn's cottage in the woods. Despite Eva's devotion, Glahn is still primarily affected by Edvarda, and he shows his jealousy in increasingly bizarre ways. At another ball, Glahn pretends to whisper something to the baron, Edvarda's lover, but instead spits in his ear. When Edvarda learns of Glahn's affair with Eva, she tries to win him back, but Glahn refuses her.

The tension between Edvarda and Glahn continues to escalate. When the baron leaves to return to Finland, Glahn plans to blast a cliff wall with dynamite so that boulders will crash into the ocean as his ship passes. Mack learns of Glahn's plan, however, and arranges to have Eva working on the beach below. Even though Glahn sees Eva at the base of the mountain, he decides not to warn her and carries out his plan. As a result, she is killed by the falling rocks. When autumn arrives, Glahn prepares to vacate the forest. Edvarda requests that Glahn leave his dog, Aesop, with her so that she

will have something to remember him by. Glahn suspects that she will torture the dog, however, and shoots him instead, sending her the dead body. In the end, Edvarda marries the Finnish baron and Glahn leaves the northern forests. Before he wrote and published *Pan*, Hamsun published a story titled "Glahns Død" ("Glahn's Death") in the journal *Samtiden*, which he attached to the end of his novel as an epilogue. The narrative is purportedly written by a hunting companion of Glahn's in India. In it, the unnamed narrator reports that Edvarda sent Glahn the letter with the two feathers because she now is a widow and free to marry him. After reading the letter, Glahn dresses in his wedding attire and provokes his hunting companion, whose girlfriend he had stolen, to shoot him as an act of revenge. The epilogue has generated considerable debate among critics as to its meaning and its impact, both positive and negative, on the main story of *Pan*.

MAJOR THEMES

The doomed romantic love affair between Glahn and Edvarda is the most recognizable theme in *Pan*. Most of the action and tension in the novel derives from the tumultuous relationship of these two characters, which is both passionate and acrimonious. Their romance flourishes very soon after they meet, but it quickly decays into bitterness, jealousy, and resentment. Most of Glahn's erratic behavior—spitting in the Baron's ear, blasting the cliff and killing Eva, shooting his dog Aesop, and arranging his own death—is prompted by his feelings of love and jealousy for Edvarda. Some critics have noted parallels between the love triangle in the novel and the one presented in the epilogue, featuring Glahn, his hunting companion, and his companion's girlfriend. Critic J. W. McFarlane, writing in 1956, argued that "*Pan* is the story of what happens to love when it ceases to be a simple coming together between man and woman, ceases to be even an animal desire for sexual satisfaction and becomes very largely a desire to be loved by somebody else as a matter of personal pride; and when it is made, even unconsciously, the object of calculation or an ideal." McFarlane maintained that *Pan* presents a view of love "that strikes the present-day reader as having a strangely existentialist flavour, reminding him of Sartre's claim that 'love is self-frustration,' something that thrives on frustration and discord and has as its object its own defeat."

A love and reverence for the natural world is another predominant theme in *Pan*. As Harald Næss remarked, the novel "owes its Norwegian popularity less to its tale of passion than to Glahn's eloquent declaration of his love of nature—in a manner closer to Nietzsche's than to Rousseau's. Glahn is not so much botanizing on the Île de Saint Pierre as singing his wild incantations in

the style of Zarathustra." Glahn first moves to the Norwegian forest because he longs to escape city life and its constraints, hoping to find peace in a natural setting. In the final line of the novel, he proclaims, "I belong to the forests and the solitude." The depiction of Glahn's relationship with the natural world has prompted some critics to describe the novel as pantheistic, an interpretation supported by the title of the book. Rhythms borrowed from nature inform the structure of *Pan*, as well. The shape of the novel, and the progress of the love affair between Glahn and Edvarda, are influenced by the change of seasons—from spring, through the killing frost, or "Iron Nights," of autumn, and into winter with the arrival of the northern lights. Critics have also noted that Hamsun's descriptions of nature in the narrative often assume a different tone from the rest of the work, achieving a rhythm and style similar to that found in biblical scriptures. Næss remarked that "Glahn is always roused by nature, and his language assumes its rhythms accordingly," adding that "this kind of prose" is "reminiscent of the Bible's, particularly in such poetic books as the Song of Solomon."

Some critics have noted that *Pan*, like several of Hamsun's other works, is most directly concerned with the theme of the wanderer. Glahn is a stranger, an outsider, who settles in the forest and interacts with local forest dwellers, effecting change in their lives and, in some cases, causing destruction. As the wanderer, he does not stay in the forest but is driven to roam once again. Death as a means of vengeance is another recurring theme in the novel. Here Hamsun portrays death as a process of violent orchestration, usually to enact revenge, rather than as a natural or peaceful event. In the case of Eva, both Mack and Glahn act as conspirators in her death, the former by arranging to have her at the bottom of the cliffs, as Glahn dynamites the rocks above, the latter by neglecting to save her life. When Glahn shoots and kills Aesop, delivering his body to Edvarda, his motives are more ambiguous than Mack's in the case of Eva's death. Glahn, through his act, could be saving his dog from torture by Edvarda, but his choice to send her his dead body suggests that he also intends to inflict psychological damage on her. Glahn's orchestrated death at the hands of his hunting companion, which is the subject of much debate, has been interpreted by some critics as a sort of parallel narrative that echoes Hamsun's broader concern with the theme of death by revenge enacted repeatedly in the main story.

For some scholars, however, the most important theme of *Pan* concerns the matter of art and, in particular, the artist's willingness to sacrifice for his or her work. Hamsun's decision to present the novel in diary form necessarily situates the protagonist, Glahn, as the "author" of the story and the "creator" of his fictional world. Some critics have thus suggested that within the narrative it-

self, Glahn is writing a fictional account of his life, rather than a true autobiography. In this vein, Jan Sjøvik asserted that "Glahn should be regarded as an artist," and the main theme of the novel "is the price which the artist has to pay for his art." He theorized that the epilogue detailing Glahn's death is in fact written by Glahn, not the unnamed hunter. Sjøvik proposed that the tumultuous, yet unconsummated, relationship between Glahn and Edvarda was a necessary part of Glahn's artistic process, which would culminate in his "death" at the end of the work, adding that through this meta-fictional device Hamsun "shows that art is antithetical to life and that the artist can achieve success only at the cost of cutting himself off from normal happiness."

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Pan was well received after its publication in 1894. It was admired in academic circles for its innovative literary techniques and focus on the interior life of the individual, while popular audiences enjoyed the novel for its idealistic depiction of nature and the Norwegian landscape. Although Hamsun was popular in his own country early in his literary career, it was not until after he won the Nobel Prize in 1920 that his works, including *Pan*, reached English-speaking audiences. At this point, scholars began studying his early novels from the 1890s, and establishing their significance as milestones in the development of the modern novel, foreshadowing the work of such modernist masters as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Although interest in *Pan* and all of Hamsun's work waned during World War II, as a result of the author's political sympathies with Hitler and the German Nazi party, in the years following the war his books were republished, and once again *Pan* became the subject of critical interest and study.

Since that time, critics have offered various interpretations of *Pan*, raising questions about the novel's formal construction, its characterization, and its reliance on symbolism and mythology. For many critics, formal concerns have been a primary focus, particularly with regard to the epilogue Hamsun appended to his novel. While some have argued that the epilogue is unnecessary, and that it structurally undermines the narrative voice and point of view of the novel, others, such as Yair Mazor, claim that it echoes themes and events in the main story, and thus provides a fitting conclusion to Hamsun's work. In Mazor's words, "the gap between the two parts of the novel, on the one hand, and the analogy between the two parts, on the other hand, function together to integrate the novel in a well balanced way." Recent scholars have also explored the connection between the novel and its title, examining the significance of the allusion to the mythological figure, Pan.

While some have dismissed the importance of the title's allusion altogether, others have suggested that the reference to Pan is meant to inform the text, albeit in a limited way. In 1974, Henning K. Sehmsdorf argued that "the Pan image must be understood as symbolizing a timeless psychological reality, not as an attempt at reviving the ancient 'panic' religion. It would be a mistake simply to transpose the meanings of the tradition of Pan in antiquity to Hamsun's novel." Questions concerning the character of Glahn have also been the subject of several critical inquiries. Some scholars have uncovered homoerotic overtones in the novel, and homosexual tendencies in Glahn, citing both his aggressive, or passionate, interactions with other male characters and his reluctance to consummate his relationship with Edvarda. Other critics have focused on the events surrounding Glahn's death. Many interpretations of the epilogue suggest that Glahn intentionally provoked his hunter companion to shoot him, thus committing suicide. Yet, other readings have emphasized the vengeful nature of the event, from both the hunter's and Glahn's perspectives. Still other critics have suggested that Glahn fakes his own death in the epilogue, thereby assuming the role of the martyred protagonist, to transform his diary into a work of art, and himself into an artist. Despite such broadly divergent assessments of *Pan*, scholars generally agree that the novel is an important early experiment in psychological realism and a work worthy of critical inquiry. In 2001, Stefanie von Schnurbein, who praised the elusive qualities of the novel, asserted that the "the seductive force" of *Pan* "lies in the ambiguity which causes readers to reduce the undecidability and fill the voids of this complex text."

PRINCIPAL WORKS

- Den Gaadefulde* [as Knut Pedersen] (novella) 1877
- Fra det moderne Amerikas aandsliv* [*The Cultural Life of Modern America*] (essays) 1889
- Sult* [*Hunger*] (novel) 1890
- Mysterier* [*Mysteries*] (novel) 1892
- Ny Jord* [*Shallow Soil*] (novel) 1893
- Redaktør Lynge* (novel) 1893
- Pan, af Løjtnant Thomas Glahns papirer* [*Pan*] (novel) 1894
- Ved Rigets Port* (play) 1895
- Livets spil* (play) 1896
- Siesta* (short stories) 1897
- Aftenrøde* (play) 1898
- Victoria: En kaerlighedshistorie* [*Victoria: A Love Story*] (novel) 1898
- Munken Vendt* (play) 1902
- Dronning Tamara* (play) 1903

- I aeventyrland* [*In Wonderland*] (novel) 1903
Svaermere [*Dreamers*] (novel) 1904
Under høstsjaernen [*Under the Autumn Star*] (novel) 1906
Benoni (novel) 1908
Rosa: Af student Parelius' papirer [*Rosa*] (novel) 1908
En vandrer spiller med sordin [*A Wanderer Plays on Muted Strings*] (novel) 1909
Livet ivold [*In the Grip of Life*] (play) 1910
Den sidste glæde [*Look Back on Happiness*] (novel) 1912
Børn av tiden [*Children of the Age*] (novel) 1913
Segelfoss by [*Segelfoss Town*] (novel) 1915
Markens grøde [*Growth of the Soil*] (novel) 1917
Konerne ved vandposten [*The Women at the Pump*] (novel) 1920
Siste kapitel [*Chapter the Last*] (novel) 1923
Landstrykere [*Vagabonds*] (novel) 1927
August (novel) 1930
Men livet lever [*The Road Leads On*] (novel) 1933
Ringens sluttet [*The Ring Is Closed*] (novel) 1936
Paa gjengrodede stier [*On Overgrown Paths*] (memoirs) 1949
Livsfragmenter [*Night Roamers and Other Stories*] (short stories) 1988
Tales of Love and Loss (short stories) 1997
Knut Hamsun Remembers America: Essays and Stories, 1885-1949 (essays and short stories) 2003

CRITICISM

J. W. McFarlane (essay date September 1956)

SOURCE: McFarlane, J. W. "The Whisper of the Blood: A Study of Knut Hamsun's Early Novels." *PMLA* 71, no. 4, Part 1 (September 1956): 563-94.

[In the following excerpt McFarlane argues that all of Hamsun's early works deal with the unconscious.]

'With that little stump of prose, twenty-nine magazine pages long, Knut Hamsun had laid the foundation of a new literature in the North.' This assessment, so near in time to the event and yet so farsighted, was that of Carl Nærup writing in 1895;¹ the 'stump of prose' was the fragment of Hamsun's first novel *Hunger*, which appeared anonymously in the Danish periodical *Ny Jord* in 1888, two years before the publication of the completed work. At that time it took vision to see the real achievement behind the extravagance; the eye was too easily caught by the uninhibited exuberance of Hamsun's literary debut to perceive the high seriousness behind it, his vehemence was misinterpreted as the antics

and posturings of one whose chief object was self-advertisement; even the sympathetic Bjørnson, who acknowledged the greatness of some of Hamsun's early work, could not suppress an attitude of tolerant amusement: 'In the field of literature,' he wrote in 1896, 'Hamsun began by committing just about all the stupidities that it is possible for a gifted madcap to get away with in a civilized society. . . . It seems the belief that no young author can any longer win his place without first trying to sweep away all the others is something that must be called typically Norwegian.'²

Time has corrected Bjørnson's assessment and amended Nærup's. Hamsun's early novels and the essays that accompanied them were not merely modish, not merely a counterblast to the style of a Kielland or a Lie, not merely a Scandinavian novelty, but an influential contribution—mainly by way of their German and Russian translations—to the process of re-orientation to which the European novel was at that time being subjected. It is from this perspective that Hamsun's early novels today merit inspection.

Although *Hunger* burst upon the world of Scandinavian literature with an explosive novelty, it was—as we can see more clearly today—merely the release in a new form of a body of thought that had been building up for the better part of a century; it was the expression in the literary mode of that same thing to which Freud was soon to give scientific formulation: speculation about the ways of the unconscious mind. It is natural to see the source of the tradition, if not the immediate and direct inspiration of these two men, in the work of Schopenhauer. The Hamsun biographies written by his wife and his son both bear witness to his fondness for referring them to Schopenhauer if they wished for true enlightenment about life and its ways;³ influence, of some kind and at some time, there must have been. Although the same cannot be said of Freud, who read Schopenhauer very late in life, nevertheless he was quick to acknowledge that Schopenhauer had been one of the forerunners of his own ideas and he remarked on 'the far reaching agreement between psycho-analysis and Schopenhauer's philosophy.' Both men, Hamsun and Freud, represent in their different ways a culmination of that interest in the ways of unconscious mental processes which might be said to have begun with Schelling, which had in the work of Schopenhauer and Carus and Eduard von Hartmann been systematically widened and deepened, and which was further exploited by the imaginative insight of Dostoevski, and Nietzsche, and Strindberg.

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'If you haven't, for fiction, the root of the matter in you,' wrote Henry James in the preface to *The Princess Casamassima*, 'haven't the sense of life and the penetrating imagination, you are a fool in the very presence

of the revealed and assured; but if you are so armed, you are not really helpless, even before mysteries abysmal.' Faced with the abysmal mysteries of *Mysteries* (1892), or even the disturbing strangeness of *Hunger* (1890) and *Pan* (1894) and *Victoria* (1898),⁴ criticism has rarely shown impressive assurance. Whilst it would be impertinent as well as untrue to dismiss all criticism of the early Hamsun as unimaginative or helpless, nevertheless there may be detected even today remnants of a critical attitude to these works that is surely misconceived.

Henry James himself is in fact unexpectedly relevant to a discussion of these things; and between, for instance, *The Princess Casamassima* (1886) and Hamsun's novels of the 1890's, between the kinds of criticism they at times attracted, between the sorts of interpretation they properly deserved, and between the narrative strategies that determined their mode of composition there are similarities so striking as well as differences so fundamental that a comparison of them is a source of much profit. Both James and Hamsun drew the same reproach: that they were in their work too contrived, too fantastic even, to be 'true.' Finding in *The Princess Casamassima* a far from plausible story of conspiracy and assassination, of secret aristocratic paternity, for what—even as late as 1916—seemed to be grossly improbable social change, even reputable criticism (as Lionel Trilling has pointed out) found it 'wild' and 'distracted,' discovered traces of 'perversities' and characterized it as a 'bad dream.' Faced with a hero who shoots himself in the foot merely because his rival in love is also lame, or who carries a poison bottle in his waistcoat pocket ready for use at all times, or who gives his last coppers to a stranger whilst himself starving to death, who invents and enacts the most intricate and meaningless schemes of bluff and deceit, Hamsun's critics claimed to find there a strange species of pathological creature, some perversely mysterious invention which, by all commonsense standards, is beyond normal comprehension.

It is to this 'typical Hamsunesque hero' that attention has in the main been addressed, and the chief aim of criticism the compilation of a morbid case history. In one place, judgment is passed by the standards of the social sciences, the conduct of the hero in *Hunger* being described as 'such as to make the trained social worker throw up his hands in holy horror and disgust';⁵ in another, authority is borrowed from medical science in order to explain that the hero behaves as he does 'because the brain gets too little blood when the body does not receive sufficient nourishment';⁶ the unspoken assumption all along being that to find a commonsense and worldly excuse for these characters' behaviour is to 'explain' them, and when there is no obvious excuse there is no explanation, only bewilderment. Nagel's conduct in *Mysteries* is, according to one Norwegian critic, preposterous because 'he has not—like the young

man in Hamsun's first book—any hunger to blame for all his absurdities; he is like that by nature . . . ' And, almost as an abdication of criticism, we read a point of view expressed in England: 'Tossed between all sorts of contradictions, he [Nagel] can strike one as a genius manqué, a monomaniac, a romantic misanthrope, a posing charlatan, a lunatic—until the reader seems to lose all reliable clue to him . . . ' ⁸

It is almost beside the point to claim that just as events in Russia might be said to have 'justified' James's high-pressure plot, so Freud and the whole science of psychoanalysis has legitimized Hamsun's 'absurd' heroes. The view that sees little in *Hunger* but the story of a man of 'queer mental vagaries,' or explains away Glahn in *Pan* as a man of 'strange erratic behaviour,' or Nagel as somebody with a 'hopelessly unbalanced mind' is objectionable not because its conclusions, basing themselves as they do on the standards of ordinary, everyday practicality, are wholly untrue; but because any interpretation of these novels from naturalistic premises must necessarily overlook their true significance.

A valid reading requires us to look not so much at the hero as with him, in much the same way as a valid reading of *The Princess Casamassima* requires us to look not at the plot but through it.' 'The value I wished most to render and the effect I wished most to produce,' wrote Henry James of his novel, 'were precisely those of our not knowing, of society's not knowing, but only guessing and suspecting and trying to ignore what "goes on," irreconcilably, subversively, beneath the vast smug surface.' The difference between James and Hamsun is then seen to be one of territory and not of purpose; for instead of concerning himself with what goes on—and our attitudes to what goes on—behind the façade of society, Hamsun explores and shocks the reader into recognizing what goes on behind the mask of the individual. We look with the hero equally when he examines the secret areas within himself and when he looks at the world about him, a world in which the things of greatest significance are precisely those other secret mental lives of his fellows. It is this arrangement above all else that has given the richness to Hamsun's early work; and to realize this is to shift the search for the cause of its strange and arresting quality away from questions of character analysis and on to the more technical problems of narrative perspective. What we find in these novels is the secret history of a number of unsuccessful personal campaigns; they feature the intelligence work, the collection and collation of secret information, and the suppositions made from it; theirs is a record of espionage and counter-espionage. What if the campaigns themselves end in defeat and disaster: in flight, as in *Hunger*; in suicide, as in *Mysteries*; in despair and death, as in *Pan*; in a broken heart, as in *Victoria*? What though the agent strikes some as being a bit odd? The real business of these novels is not with character