

Knut Hamsun: Triumph and Tragedy

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ON FEBRUARY 19, 1952, one of the twentieth century's outstanding authors, the Norwegian novelist Knut Hamsun, died lonely and unmourned. In 1920 when he was awarded the much coveted Nobel prize in literature Hamsun's countrymen had praised him to the skies. Norway was immensely proud of her famous son. Her newspapers quoted at length the glowing tributes paid him by literary critics the world over, and called attention to the fact that his works were published in twenty-three languages. But when he died, the demise of Hamsun was barely mentioned in Oslo's newspapers. What had produced this radical change? Had he at 92 outlived his fame? Or had his novels become outmoded? To those last two questions the answer is an emphatic "No!" Norwegians are proud of their longevity; Hamsun's vitality was admired. And his remarkable prose epic, *Growth of the Soil*, has become one of the world's classics. The day after

his death the *New York Times* devoted a full column to the life and achievements of Knut Hamsun. He was called the literary giant of the north, "a writer of great depth and tremendous power."

Why then did Norway refuse to pay tribute to a son who had brought glory to her name? The answer lies in the sad and terrible fact that in April, 1940, when Norway strove desperately to stem the horde of German invaders who slaughtered her sons and burned her homes, Hamsun hailed the enemy as a deliverer, and praised Hitler, that foe of all Christian civilization. "Put down your arms" ("Nordmen! Kast börsa og gå hjem igjen"),¹ Hamsun shouted to his countrymen as they resisted the enemy. Throughout the occupation, despite the brutality and ghastly crimes committed, Hamsun steadfastly reiterated his original advice—"submit."

Learning of Hitler's death Hamsun

wrote: "I am unworthy to speak with resounding eloquence about Adolf Hitler. . . . He was a warrior, a fighter for humanity, a proclaimer of the gospel of justice for all nations. He was a supreme reformer, but it was his historical destiny to work in an age of unprecedented brutality. May the ordinary citizens of Central Europe view Hitler in that light; and meanwhile we, his devoted followers, bow our heads at his death."²

Two years later Hamsun disavowed these opinions. On May 22, 1947, writing to his friend Christian Gierlöff, Hamsun said; "Quite early I became aware of the fact that personally Hitler was a stinker."³ But in the same letter he praised Joseph Goebbels who, it is generally admitted, ran Hitler a close second as a "stinker." "Goebbels," Hamsun declared, "was a splendid man . . . a radiant human being quite the opposite of Hitler who had gained control over him."⁴ In like spirit Hamsun defended the malodorous Norwegian traitor, Vidkun Quisling, who, in December, 1939, had urged Hitler to attack Norway, and who during the occupation was a tool of the Germans.⁵

The enigma of Hamsun's behavior from 1940 to 1945 is the more baffling because in 1905, during the crisis attending the dissolution of the Norwegian-Swedish union, he had followed a strongly patriotic line, volunteered for military service, and even rebuked the revered nationalistic poet, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, for not being sufficiently enthusiastic in his country's cause.

Thirty-five years later Hamsun gave aid and comfort to the plunderers of his fatherland. Patriotic Norwegians reacted in sorrow and in anger against the author of whom they had long been proud. In the eyes of a vast majority of his countrymen Hamsun, during the greatest national crisis since 1814, had not only committed trea-

son, but had shown himself to be a *nothing* (a man false and without honor), the strongest derogatory term in the language of Norsemen.

As soon as the war ended, the arch-colaborator Vidkun Quisling and his bloodstained lieutenants were given short shrift. Quickly convicted, they suffered the usual fate of traitors. Against others the Norwegian government proceeded more slowly. This was especially true in the case of Knut Hamsun. He had been a giant among men, and he was past eighty when the German invasion occurred. He was first placed under house arrest, and later underwent a lengthy psychiatric examination. Though public feeling against him was bitter, two years passed before Knut Hamsun was brought to trial in 1947.

Despite his advanced age, his defective hearing and failing eyesight, Hamsun vigorously defended himself in court. He emphatically denied that he had ever betrayed Norway. On the contrary, he asserted that he had always sought to promote her welfare. He had done only what he thought was right. It had been his sincere belief that close association with Germany would foster the happiness and prosperity of Norway. To resist the Germans was, therefore, injurious to the best interests of his country. In his judgment it was tantamount to treason. Moreover, it was also a futile sacrifice of young lives. Untrained and ill-armed Norwegian recruits did not have the slightest chance against the invaders. Nor, in the opinion of Hamsun, could the Norwegian underground hope to achieve anything. With some justice, Hamsun claimed credit for having made earnest, though often futile, efforts to save from the firing squad men who unwisely had resisted the occupying authorities. Furthermore, he pointed out, he had not joined the Norwegian Nazi party (Nasjonal Samling).⁶

But it was on the basis of complete ignorance of any Nazi misdeeds that Hamsun made his strongest plea for acquittal. He was deaf and, he claimed, consequently isolated from the men and events of the Nazi period. "I did not know what was going on. Nobody told me," he cried over and over again.⁷

How specious was this plea is glaringly shown by the fact that in 1940 Hamsun had urged his countrymen to submit to the Germans on the grounds that his wide reading of newspapers, his extensive knowledge of Nazi principles, and his varied experiences in life had made him especially well qualified to speak. He was an authority on Nazism and its promoter, Adolf Hitler; he appreciated the benefits Norway would derive from German control. Another refutation of his plea that he was ignorant of Nazi misdeeds can be found in the fact that Hitler's blood purge of 1934 and his pogrom against the Jews in November, 1938, were widely publicized in Norway. Furthermore, Hamsun's wife and two sons were members of Nasjonal Samling. A daughter who lived in Germany, his younger son who served as correspondent on the Russian front in 1943, and his wife who spoke German well and visited Germany at least four times during the war, must all have kept Hamsun informed.

At his trial the accused steadfastly refused to apologize or to retract anything he had said or written about Nazism. He was furious over the psychiatrists' examination, and persistently uncooperative under their questioning. They therefore reported him senile. On the basis of their findings the treason charge against him was dropped because "the accused suffers from mental deficiencies brought about by old age."⁸

Hamsun fiercely resented the grounds for this verdict. In a long letter to the Norwegian state's attorney he lashed out

against the prosecuting attorney and the psychiatrists, and protested the treatment he had been subjected to during the trial.⁹ Then in his ninety-first year he published a book, *On Weed-choked Paths (Paa Gjengrodde Stier)*, which proves conclusively that his mental powers were unimpaired. Far from being an apology, the book teems with violent accusations. In masterfully blended passages of laconic simplicity and argumentation, Hamsun presents his story of ill-treatment and martyrdom. He portrays himself as the guileless, patriotic old man—a lamb hunted and torn by ravenous wolves. Though facts are distorted, the book, by presenting snatches of autobiography, becomes a "must" for all students of the life and work of Knut Hamsun. A man from the north, probably fictitious, is introduced, and with his aid the author conjures up word pictures of arctic Norway where he spent his childhood and youth. The story of hitherto unknown episodes from his life as a farm laborer in North Dakota add to the riches in this, the last of Hamsun's publications. In the words of an English reviewer, *Paa Gjengrodde Stier* "is a fascinating psychological document."¹⁰

In 1921 *The London Times Literary Supplement* had written: "In the art of depicting character Knut Hamsun has hardly an equal among living writers. [His books] deal with the soul and will of humanity."¹¹ The query naturally arises, how could this supremely gifted poet and novelist, this keen portrayer of "the soul and will of humanity," go so far astray as to praise the vicious psychopath Adolf Hitler, and accept without dismay Hitler's actions, including the ghastliest deeds of genocide in recorded history?

In considering this intricate question one must bear in mind world problems and the climate of opinion in the first half of the present century. One must also sub-

ject to scrutiny Hamsun the man as well as Hamsun the author. Rapidly changing economic, political, and social issues brought forth a plethora of nostrums for real and imaginary ills. Among these nostrums the theories of Karl Marx were most prominent. The period between the two world wars was an era of great bewilderment when the old moral order seemingly was collapsing and the peoples of the world were much attracted by the dictatorships in Moscow, Rome, and Berlin. In the so-called free world, voices decried discipline and inhibition. Such notions were exceedingly distasteful to Knut Hamsun, one who had achieved world fame by hard work and rigid self-discipline. To him Nazism seemed the way out of the morass of self-indulgence and social anarchy.

Despite his great gifts, Hamsun was strangely ambivalent in character. He was tyrannical and tender, careless and orderly, penny-pinching and generous.¹² While morbidly sensitive to adverse criticism of his own work, he often savagely attacked books by other writers and was extremely scornful of men of letters who mouthed platitudes with an air of profundity. Yet he gullibly accepted German philosophical jargon about racial superiority. A strong individualist, he subscribed to the Nazi creed which aimed at reducing the individual to a slave of the state. With good reason Mrs. Hamsun labels her husband's character "complex."¹³

Literary historians who have analyzed Hamsun's contradictory qualities usually interpret him in the light of the types that appear in his novels and plays. Laymen, on the other hand, are more inclined to seek explanations for his actions and opinions in his social background and his experiences in early life. No modern author of Hamsun's standing has undergone so many vicissitudes as he did in childhood,

youth, and early manhood. Let us consider Hamsun the man in that perspective.¹⁴

Before he was three years old Hamsun was transplanted from his birthplace in Gudbrandsdal, a valley in south central Norway, to the parish of Hamarøy well within the arctic circle. His childhood was spent in a region of majestic natural grandeur. Here he acquired a deep appreciation of nature and its mystery. The magic of the arctic summer with mornings without beginning and evenings without end, the awesomeness of winter storms, and the arctic nights when the sudden outbursts of the varicolored aurora shot and flickered across the sky—all these made a lasting impression on the sensitive mind of the gifted boy. The descriptions of nature in her shifting moods lend vividness to many of Hamsun's novels and poems. His lyricism stands forth with special clarity in the bewitchingly lovely poem, "The Isle on the Coastal Barrier."¹⁵

An isle in the ocean
With luxuriant strand,
Here blossom flowers,
Not seen by humans.
They watch like strangers
And see me land.
My heart becomes
A mystic garden
With flowers like those
Of the island.

Impressions of the economic and social life of northern Norway, especially from the province of Nordland, also play an important part in the writings of Knut Hamsun. This is particularly true of the series which centers around Segelfos Town and the trilogy in which August, the wanderer, is the leading character. Idioms of the north profoundly colored Hamsun's remarkable and highly personalized style of writing. But for all his numerous contacts with and his admiration of arctic Norway, Hamsun never became a true son of the

north, "*en Nordlending.*" Neither in the Segelfos nor in the August novels does he show love and understanding of the native people of that region. Nor has he a real appreciation of their struggles and achievements.

The fact is that both the bitterness and dislike of the common people which became so evident in the closing decades of the author's life, and the haunting sense of inferiority which pursued him through all his years originated in his early experience. His father was a tailor, an occupation which for some unknown reason was considered ludicrous by the fishermen and farmers of northern Norway. Young Knut doubtless heard the derogatory ditty which was often chanted in that region:

Fifteen tailors weigh a pound
With their needle
And their thread,
And their iron thrown in.

Moreover, his family circle which included parents, uncles, and grandparents neither mixed with the local inhabitants nor participated in the major occupations of the area—fishing and seafaring. In Hamarøy, as in other places in the north where a considerable number of migrants had come in the 1860's from Gudbrandsdal, the newcomers remained mere landlubbers. In self-defense the Hamsun clan drew close together, became a self-contained group, and tried to bolster their ego with the notion that they were socially superior to their neighbors.

At the age of nine Knut was "farmed out" to his mother's brother, financially the most successful member of the family. This uncle, who was the local postmaster, farmed a part of the extensive glebe belonging to the parish of Hamarøy. He was a tyrant who exploited Knut mercilessly, fed him scantily, and beat him often. But here Hamsun received the only formal ed-

ucation that ever fell to his lot. Here he also benefited by his association with the children of the local rector.

Whether to escape the uncle's tyranny or because he still felt himself to be a stranger in the parish of Hamarøy, Knut Pedersen (as he was then named)¹⁶ secured assistance from an uncle in Gudbrandsdal, and at the age of fourteen went there for his confirmation.

But a year later he was back in Hamarøy. According to the custom of this northern area in those days, the age of fifteen marked the date of transition from childhood to early manhood. That was the year when a lad would go for the first time as a half-share fisherman to Lofoten. At sixteen he was reckoned a full-fledged fisherman and received his full share. But young Knut did not conform to the customs of the region. Between fifteen and twenty he served as a shoemaker's apprentice, clerk in a country store, pack peddler, bailiff's deputy, and itinerant school teacher. None of these occupations advanced him economically or socially, but he learned about the people, their racy unaffected language, and life in general. He also found time to read widely, and decided he would become an author. Although the novelettes which he published in these years failed to attract attention,¹⁷ Knut Pedersen was unshaken in his belief that eventually success would come his way. The personality and aplomb of the twenty-year-old youth so impressed a maecenas of the north, E. B. Kjerschow Zahl of Kjerringøy, that this wealthy merchant gave the aspiring poet a thousand crowns, a large sum in those days. Hamsun, thus assured of the needed leisure, retired to a quiet place in western Norway to write a novel.

His work finished, the young author took the manuscript to the most famous publishing firm in Scandinavia, Gyldendal

in Copenhagen, who rejected it. Still undaunted, Knut sought the advice of his great hero, Björnstjerne Björnson. Again discouragement. Björnson suggested that the handsome and personable young man might try his luck on the stage. Although not really interested in the theater he took a brief drama course only to experience another failure. This period in Oslo (then called Kristiania) subjected him to the soul-searing trials which Hamsun later immortalized in his first successful novel, *Hunger*.¹⁸

These frustrations might have crushed many aspiring writers, but the future Nobel prize winner was not an ordinary person. To keep body and soul together Knut Pedersen finally took employment as a roadbuilder. He thus became a navy (*slusk*) which is the lowest of the low among Norwegian manual laborers.¹⁹

Knut Pedersen then decided, like thousands of others at the time, to try his luck in America. Though he never intended to become an American, he hoped to win a place as a man of letters among the growing Norwegian population in the United States. Again he failed. During his two sojourns in America, 1882-1884, and 1886-1888, he clerked in a small town store, worked in a lumberyard, labored as a harvest hand on a North Dakota farm, was a streetcar conductor in Chicago, served as secretary to Kristofer Janson, a Norwegian Unitarian minister in Minneapolis, and held sundry other odd jobs. It was in Minneapolis that Pedersen adopted Hamsun as his name. There he found a congenial literary coterie none of whom, however, enjoyed much distinction.

Small in number and torn by factions, the Norwegian element in the United States did not develop any significant literary movement. The vast majority of the immigrants from Norway were so fully occupied trying to establish themselves eco-

nomically that their only important intellectual efforts were related to the church and theology. Most were Lutherans to whom Unitarianism was distasteful. The literary group with which Hamsun associated was neither representative of the bulk of Norwegian-Americans nor was it well assimilated with American cultural life.²⁰

After four years in the United States Knut Hamsun decided that the New World did not offer him the needed opportunity. In 1888, following a decade of frustration, he made another assault on the Scandinavian cultural citadel of Copenhagen. Here he finally met with success. The gifted Edward Brandes, brother of Georg Brandes then the literary arbiter of the North, read Hamsun's manuscript of *Hunger* and told the author, "You have a great future!"²¹

Soon sections of the novel appeared serially in a Danish magazine, *Ny Jord*. It was an instant success. Reviewers in Copenhagen and Kristiania vied with one another in hailing its anonymous author as a writer of genius. In the spring of 1890 *Hunger* appeared in book form, and it was then revealed that the author was Knut Hamsun.²²

His name had first become known a year earlier when his book on intellectual life in America (*Fra det Moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*) was published. It was a bitter satirical arraignment of the culture of that vast country. Years later Hamsun admitted that "I as a common laborer never had a glimpse of the world of the [American] upper classes."²³ But in 1889 this lack of knowledge did not prevent the thirty-year-old author from ridiculing and writing pontifically about a subject quite unknown to him.

The reasons for Hamsun's rashness may be considered from several angles. At the time when Hamsun was in the United States, Scandinavian immigrants were often treated with condescension and even

derision by the "Yankees" (Americans of colonial stock). Terms like "Scandihoo-vians" and Norwegian or Swedish "square-heads" were commonly used in the Middle West. These expressions naturally aroused keen resentment and later influenced Hamsun when he sought to portray American culture. Furthermore, because the 1880's witnessed a period of very heavy Norwegian emigration to the United States, people in Norway were concerned over the effects of "the America fever" upon their country. They welcomed efforts to denigrate a land which drew off tens of thousands of Norway's young men and women. They accepted without question the opinion that although "America was well advanced technologically [she] was quite behindhand culturally."²⁴ To have this impression confirmed by one who presumably knew America and who wrote wittily and persuasively about that country was pleasing not only to Norwegians but to many other Scandinavians as well. The book was both praised and criticized, but whether lauded or attacked, it gained for the author his main objective—publicity. And with the publication of *Hunger* Hamsun's many years of compulsive writing at last bore real fruit. Victory had come through endurance.

But the financial returns on his books were small. Years of practice in Norway and in America had given Hamsun an excellent technique as a public speaker. Lecture tours proved profitable now, and since he attacked such literary giants as Ibsen and Tolstoy, the lectures also brought him prominently before the public.²⁵

By the end of the 1890's Hamsun ranked among the foremost of the younger Scandinavian authors, and he had been discovered by the outside world as well, especially by Germany and Russia. The slowness with which America and Britain afforded Hamsun recognition rankled in his mind.

He was always sensitive on points touching his fame, so this slowness intensified his dislike of the English-speaking countries. His anglophobia made him sympathetic toward the idea of a greater Germany whether that of Emperor William II or of Adolf Hitler.

Fame did not alter Hamsun's habit of attacking the great men of his day. On the contrary he enlarged his sphere to include men in fields where his competence to judge was nil. W. E. Gladstone, the English Liberal leader who was described by his political opponent, Lord Salisbury, as "possessing the most brilliant intellect ever devoted to the State since Parliamentary Government began" was labeled by Hamsun "the century's greatest cow."²⁶ Hamsun extended his warfare even to the Deity. The play, *Vendt the Monk* (1902), lashes out against the Almighty for His enslavement of mankind, and for man's misery and degradation.

In his forties Hamsun extolled the young. "Honor youth" was then one of his favorite slogans.²⁷ He described fifty as a climacteric beyond which man's judgment and creative power gradually waned. But after Hamsun himself had passed the fateful half-century mark, this axiom was forgotten. And, indeed, he provided a devastating refutation of the theory by publishing his greatest novel, *Growth of the Soil*, when he was fifty-eight.

Throughout his adult life anglophobia was one of Hamsun's obsessions. Among the evidences of British misdeeds which he steadfastly cherished were the British bombardment of Copenhagen, 1807, the blockade of Norway, 1807-1814, and the so-called Bodö Affair, 1818-1820. Hamsun knew by heart and often recited Ibsen's poem, *Terje Viken*, which relates the story of the capture of a Norwegian pilot as he sought to break through the British blockade and bring food from Denmark for his

starving family. The Bodö Affair was an unsavory story about British smuggling activities in northern Norway, the arrest of the smugglers and their breaking out of the Bodö jail, their flight to England, and their securing by false testimony the aid of the British government to collect a heavy indemnity for alleged injuries.²⁸ The recollection of this episode was green in the mind of many at the time Hamsun was a shoemaker's apprentice at Bodö, and it was later used in the debates over a separate Norwegian foreign service which brought about the dissolution of the Norwegian-Swedish union, debates in which Hamsun took an active part.

His stay in America strengthened the author's antipathy toward Britain. In the 1880's dislike of that country was widespread in the United States. Moreover, in Minnesota where the majority of the "Yankees" were of English descent, their disdain of Scandinavians caused the offended immigrants, by some curious inversion of reasoning, to be hostile to England, the ancestral home of the Yankees.

During the Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902) Norwegian sympathy—shared by Hamsun—was with the Boers. Though he had fewer Norwegian supporters, he was even more violently anti-British during World War I. Viewing the extent of the British Empire he compared it with "a rat sitting on the bacon." Germany, on the other hand, was to him a tree rich with luscious fruit. It is therefore not surprising that he considered the Versailles Treaty a crime and a disgrace to humanity.²⁹

In addition to Hamsun's hostility toward the happenings in world affairs, developments in his own country also created in his mind a deep animosity to events and ideas. The province of Nordland underwent a rapid transformation in 1911-1917, years when Hamsun was a landowner in

Hamarøy. The changes were not to his liking. Hamsun, the successful author who years earlier had been a mere proletarian, admired the local aristocracy which had been prominent in his youth. In *Segelfos Town* it is the newly-rich Theodore and the bishop who had risen from the ranks of the common man of whom Hamsun is most scornful. As the twentieth century advanced he found the new democratic developments and the prevailing climate of opinion more and more distasteful. In his greatest novel he preached that industrialization was an evil, and that people should go "back to the soil." Near the town of Grimstad in southern Norway he strove to develop a landed estate. He was especially distressed by what he conceived to be the spread of indiscipline. The desire to reverse the tendency was one factor in his support of Nazi ideology.

But basically the most potent element in persuading Hamsun to accept Hitler's nihilistic doctrines was his deep-seated feeling of inadequacy which his success as an author never dispelled. Jealous throughout his life of those who had obtained academic training, he was especially bitter toward teachers educated in the state normal schools.³⁰

In common with many people in Germany and elsewhere who were disturbed by feelings of their own inferiority, Knut Hamsun sought refuge in racist theories which emphasized the special virtues of their own racial group. With enthusiasm he embraced the cult of pan-Germanism. The incomprehensible blather of Alfred Rosenberg about the superior qualities of the Germans, Hamsun accepted as scientific fact, and he believed firmly that by close association with the Germans, Norwegian culture and intellectual life would be much benefited. All this led him to welcome the German occupation of Norway.

During World War II the anglophobia

of Knut Hamsun reached its height. In 1941 he wrote to his daughter, Cecilia: "Next year the war will be over and light will dominate everywhere. This will be a joy! England will be crushed, and then my soul will rejoice. Europe will be properly organized—my God, how welcome this will be!"³¹

To his distress it was Germany, not Britain, which was crushed. Knut Hamsun was called to account for what he had said and written while his country was under German domination. He was tried for treason, and it was then that an unrepentant Hamsun sought to create a myth about himself in his autobiographical memoir, *Paa Gjengrodde Stier*. In this he had a famous if not quite parallel precedent. Napoleon I had done the same thing while a prisoner at St. Helena. A generation after his death millions of Frenchmen accepted the Napoleonic legend as historical fact. Will something of the same kind

happen to the myth Hamsun invented?

One last point should however not be forgotten. Famous men of literature have often been far off the beam when they sought to guide their compatriots in the fields of politics and statesmanship. Witness the Britons Carlyle, Swinburne, and Tennyson. Goethe, the greatest among German writers, "welcomed the genius and saluted the conquests of Napoleon," regarded by others as the arch enemy of his country. And of the Holy Alliance Goethe said that "nothing greater or more useful for mankind has been invented."³² But these fatuous remarks have long been ignored in the assessment of the famous German author.

Something of the same kind may happen in Knut Hamsun's case—his political vagaries overlooked, the novels and poems of a truly creative author, "a giant among men," remembered.

³¹Sigurd Hoel, "Knut Hamsun," in *Vinduet*, VI, 1952, p. 33.

³²Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 34.

³Christian Gierløff, *Knut Hamsun's Egen Röst* (Oslo, 1961), p. 115.

⁴*Ibid.* In his letter Hamsun asserts that Hitler was the father of Mrs. Goebbels' sixth child, a boy.

⁵Hamsun called Quisling a man of integrity, "The character trait Knut valued the most, whether in man or woman." Marie Hamsun, *Under Gullregnen* (Oslo, 1959), p. 64. See also Sverre Hartman, "Quislings Konferanse med den Tyske Overkommando," in *Samtiden*, LVI, 1956, pp. 317-23.

⁶The validity of this point is questionable because Knut Hamsun was not a "joiner." He even refused to be a member of the society of Norwegian authors. Gierløff, p. 81.

⁷Gierløff, p. 141.

⁸Quoted, *New York Times*, June 26, 1948.

⁹Gierløff, 133-38. For a defense of the psychiatrists' reports see Gabriel Langfeldt, "Dommen over Knut Hamsun," in *Vinduet*, VI, 1952, pp. 175-77.

¹⁰*The London Times Literary Supplement*, April 14, 1950.

¹¹*Ibid.*, Feb. 10, 1921.

¹²Tore Hamsun, *Knut Hamsun* (Oslo, 1959), *passim*. In 1947 when Knut Hamsun's wife was interviewed about her husband, Hamsun was so angered that she had talked with the psychiatrists about him that he broke off all relations with her for three years. Marie Hamsun, pp. 81-82, 109-11.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁴The childhood and youth of the writer of this paper were spent near Bodö in Nordland. He knew well the shop where Hamsun served as a shoemaker's apprentice and the hotel where in 1915 he wrote *Segelfjos Town*. Both shop and hotel were destroyed by the Germans in 1940. For pictures of them see Einar Skavlan, *Knut Hamsun*, 2nd ed. (Oslo, 1934), pp. 40-41, 249. Emigrating to the United States in 1906 the writer met some of Hamsun's American friends. He also learned about the attitude of Yankees toward Scandinavian immigrants in the 1880's. The writer's father, born in

1832, was thoroughly familiar with conditions in Nordland in Hamsun's youth and with the views on migrants from Gudbrandsdal.

¹⁵For original see Skavlan, p. 201. The isle is doubtless "Utröst" (Outer Röst), a blessed island traditionally located somewhere near the westernmost of the Lofoten island chain.

¹⁶Hamsun's father was Peder Pedersen. The novelist was known successively as Knut Pedersen, Knut Pederson, Knut Hamsund, and finally Knut Hamsun. Hamsund was the name of the parental farm in Hamarøy.

¹⁷Skavlan, pp. 41-55.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 61-65. The novel, *Frida*, was never published.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 68-78.

²⁰For Hamsun in America see *ibid.*, pp. 79-106; Rasmus B. Anderson, *Life Story* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1915), pp. 304-10; Carl G. O. Hansen, *My Minneapolis* (Minneapolis, 1956), pp. 99-109; and Kristofer Janson, *Hvad Jeg Har Oplevet* (Kristiania, 1913), pp. 219-26.

²¹Skavlan, p. 108.

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 109-12.

²³Knut Hamsun, *Artikler*, selected by Francis Bull (Oslo, 1939), p. 226. In 1929 he repudiated the opinions on America presented in his first book. *Ibid.*, pp. 222-27.

²⁴Chr. Collins in introduction to H. Tambs Lyche, *Lysstreif over Livsproblemer* (Kristiania, 1903), p. x.

²⁵Sten Sparre Nilson, "Hamsun På Turné og i Paris," in *Samtiden*, LXIX, 1960, pp. 533-38.

²⁶Quoted, Gierlöff, p. 43.

²⁷Knut Hamsun, *Artikler*, pp. 72-109.

²⁸Gierlöff, pp. 35, 52; Tore Hamsun, p. 120.

²⁹Marie Hamsun, pp. 34-35.

³⁰Arild Haaland, "Knut Hamsun," in *Hamsun og Hoel* (Bergen, 1957), p. 49. A Norwegian training school for teachers is called *seminarium*, and its graduates *seminarister*. Even in old age Hamsun raved against them saying "A seminarist is a swine" (En seminarist er et svin). Quoted, Gierlöff, p. 17.

³¹Quoted, Marie Hamsun, p. 35.

³²Quoted, H. A. L. Fisher, *A History of Europe* (Boston, 1939), p. 901.