

EROS IN THE HAMSUNIAN MALE FIGURE: FANTASY WOMEN IN KNUT HAMSUN'S 1890S LITERATURE

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Abstract

Using a psychoanalytic perspective, I explore Knut Hamsun's novels, Sult (1890), Mysterier (1892), Pan (1894), and Victoria (1898) and focus on the power that the women in fantasy have over the different male protagonists, whom I term the Hamsunian male. Within each fantasy, the women either dominate or exert supernatural power over the Hamsunian male. By undertaking such an investigation, I examine how the desired women in fantasy differ from the main female characters, in so far as they portray the Hamsunian male's desire that ranges from intense eroticism to fear and death. While my focus on the female characters in the Hamsunian male differs from the discussions concerning the main female characters, I note that such women comment on the depiction of the masculine gender in Hamsun's work. Furthermore, the discussion shows the power of women in fantasy, thus questioning whether they should continue to be disregarded as only superficially feminine.

Keywords

Hamsunian male, desire, woman in fantasy, gender, Lacan

When thinking about Knut Hamsun's portrayals of love in his 1890s novels, readers often consider the depiction of the strained relationships and miscommunication between the male protagonists and the women they love. Much attention is focused on the human relationships and depictions of the main female character. The nature of the different male fantasies, however, captures the significance of the fantasy women when mapping out the desires in the Hamsunian male figure, a term I use to describe the typical male artistic protagonist by examining four of Hamsun's male protagonists. In addition to understanding the Hamsunian male figure as a prototype collectively described as a nature-seeking wanderer and a self-conscious writer, a reader gains better understanding of him by examining his position in fantasy. By investigating the 1890s Hamsunian male protagonists' particular fantasies of idealized women, I show how the fantasy women partially transgress traditional femininity despite their display of certain traditional traits; this transgression changes the assumptions of these women as simple figures and attributes power to them. These fantasy women reveal the Hamsunian male's narcissistic tendency to use love for narrative construction, and the pain within the fantasy itself in order to show that women are the origin of their creativity. By looking at certain fantasies and dreams from Hamsun's 1890s novels collectively in relation to one another, I argue that the power from different women in fantasies shapes the Eros of the early Hamsunian male figure.

In regards to previous literature on the subject of sexuality in Hamsun's 1890s novels, some scholars make valid assessments of his early novels that I extend to *Sult* (1890),

Mysterier (1892), *Pan* (1894), and *Victoria* (1898). In reference to *Pan*, Stefanie von Schnurbein (2001) asserts that Thomas Glahn projects himself onto other people, nature, and mythological figures, such as the god, Pan (von Schnurbein 2001, 157). In *Luft, Vind, Ingenting*, Atle Kittang's influential analysis of Hamsun's literature ranging from *Sult* to *Ringen Sluttet*, he states a similar estimation of the *Sult* hero and Johan Nilsen Nagel in *Mysterier*. By framing the desires of both men as narcissistic, Kittang aptly mentions Jacques Lacan's Mirror Stage as the origin of the narcissistic object choice, which is then followed through secondary narcissism, the subject's integration into social life (Kittang 1984, 45). In other words, the subject fixates on himself in the mirror when he is about a year old during the Mirror Stage, a phenomenon that involves a narcissistic fascination with himself and others in relation to himself. Once the subject begins interaction with social peers in school, he interprets his surroundings based on his notion of himself, thus attributing a secondary layer of narcissism. I agree that the Hamsunian male reflects the aforementioned narcissism as seen through his fantasies of the women, and I further this idea by explaining that part of these fantasies show that these women regard the Hamsunian male with desire. In Stefanie von Schnurbein's essay, "Knut Hamsun's Narrative Fetishism" she discusses how Glahn and Nagel never completely see the women they admired; rather, they only focused on specific parts of them such as their dark eyes, lips, hands, feet, and shoes (von Schnurbein 2011, 50). Implied in von Schnurbein's apt assessment is the strong look that the women give him.

In particular, I focus on the way the fantasy women gaze at the male protagonists. Dolores Buttry discusses the gaze in relation to Hamsun's short stories particularly concerning the erotic pursuit and the pursuit between the protagonist's creativity and reason (Buttry 1998). Although her analysis focuses on scenes where mortal women and men interact with each other by the gaze, she notes how the gaze disarms the male characters. In my analysis of the women in the fantasies and dreams, I contribute to this discussion by referring to it as a quality that empowers the women in order to make the men submit to them. Ingar Sletten Kolloen notes that Hamsun's male characters, Nagel, Glahn, and the *Sult* hero, only "dream of fulfillment" instead of attaining satisfaction through love (Kolloen, 2009, 91). In contrast, he asserts that *Victoria*'s Johannes Møller uses love and fantasy as fuel for his artistic prose (Kolloen, 2009, 91). Although Hamsun's male characters differ from one another, they share a common feature: a fascination with an idea of a feminine woman with an overpowering gaze that compels them to create artful narrative through spoken words or in writing.

When discussing Eros in the fantasies of the Hamsunian male, it is helpful to examine the relationship between desire and fantasy. In regards to this, Kittang (1984) asserts that desire entails pressure to succumb to the preferences of the other person. In doing so, the coveted person must transform into an attractive person yet present challenges to the subject in order to maintain allure. Thus, fantasy becomes a game in which those in love partake in order to develop the picture of desire (Kittang 1984, 60). This formulation sounds similar to Lacan's definition of fantasy in relation to desire. In his lecture on the *Four Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan describes the fantasy as the "support of desire," as desire entails "an ever more complex signifying ensemble, (Lacan 1998, 185), thus showing how a fantasy reveals only a few aspects of a subject's desire. The fantasy cuts into the subject's view of a coveted person and shapes the way that the subject acts around this person, resulting in the subject's inability to present himself as he truly is to

the other person. According to Lacan, the fantasy only supports amorous feelings, but it does not necessarily expose what the subject desires (Lacan 2006, 120).

In terms of desire, subject accommodates his personality around a person he desires. Although Lacan specifically indicates a “signifier” or “something spoken” (217), it could also be an image and a particular characteristic that the subject incorporates into his identity (Lacan 2006, 217). When he perceives the desired person, the subject unknowingly puts up the fantasy and “vanishes,” thus making desire an elusive and unknowable part of his existence. While Lacan’s definition of the fantasy suggests an ironic turn away from the revelation of desire, I think it is crucial to look at the fantasy as a way to look at the ways that the protagonist is unaware of the deeper implications of that fantasy. By looking at the implications, it reveals the desire beyond the fantasy. In my investigation, I pose a challenge that involves closer examination of such fantasies might reveal aspects of the Hamsunian male’s desires; hence I examine and analyze the following fantasies to locate the progression of Eros within the Hamsunian male.

In *Sult*, Hamsun exemplifies the way that the *Sult* hero projects his fantasy of a woman he perceives in such a way that interrupts his real experience of her. Throughout the novel, the *Sult* hero is a journalist whose hunger interrupts his abilities to write, despite his decision to pursue this goal. While he struggles with finding enough money to sustain his lifestyle, he sees a woman and begins to fixate on her. By giving her a name instead of asking for her true name, the *Sult* hero imagines her in sunlight as if the light itself elicits feelings of her. Hamsun writes:

Så med en gang husker jeg Ylajali...Og lyset trenger Ganske svakt ind i mit sind igjen, en liten stråle sol, som gjør mig så velsignet varmt. Og det blir mere sol, et mildt, fint silkelys, som streifer mig så bedøvende deilig [Then right away I remember Ylajali... And the light penetrates quite a bit into my mind again, a small ray of sun, which makes me so blessedly warm. And more sun comes, a gentle, fine silk light that strikes me so stunningly delicious] (Hamsun 1954c, 96).¹

In his connection of the view of a woman with the radiating power of the sunlight, Hamsun reveals the way that the *Sult* hero views his fantasy woman as light, extrapolating Ylajali from other parts of the landscape in order to fixate on his desire for her. By showing her association with nature, Hamsun imbues her with the traditional notions of femininity as defined by some characteristics including “sweetness, modesty, subservience, humility,” (Moi 1989, 123) and “passivity, moon, nature, night, heart, palpable, and pathos,” (Cixious 1997, 231). Yet, it is curious that Ylajali’s association with the sun connects to the masculine side of Cixious’ sun/moon dichotomy, thus showing how his desire for her entails a transgression in gender roles. Along with her association with the sun, the *Sult* hero shows how the light regards him, fills him with warmth, as if it acknowledged his existence. This agency affirms Ylajali’s independent will, as a curious connection to the fantasy of her, evident in her watchful gaze over him in the attempt to consummate their attraction. Thus, this power functions as the *Sult* hero’s desire for recognition of a starving artist, though he is also self-conscious of his enervated state.

¹ Translations are mine.

During the scene where she invites the *Sult* hero into her house, Ylajali rejects him due to fear, an act that refers to his inability to satiate his hunger. She initially watches him with “hendes spillende øine” [“her playing eyes”] and exposes herself to him (Hamsun 1954c, 144), as the unnamed protagonist states that her look “hang...ved meg,” [“hung on me”] (Hamsun 1954c, 104). After she judges him through his actions and his loose chunks of hair, she asks him to be honest about his alcoholism and strange behavior. Furthermore, when she confronts him, she states, “men bare sandhet, forstår de, ikke nogen utfluger! Jeg skal nok foresten se det på dem om de vil skjule noget,” [“but only truth, they understand, no excursions! I’ll probably see it on them if they want to hide something”] (Hamsun 1954c, 108). Both the *Sult* hero’s fantasy of Ylajali and his actual interaction with her reveal Ylajali’s sharp inspection, thus showing a darker side of recognition. Unbeknownst to him, he desires Ylajali’s acknowledgement even if it means she seeks his weakness, his inability to consummate with her. Thus, Ylajali functions as a reminder of how hunger, or a deficiency in satisfying his sexual appetite, defines him. In a similar way, the fantasy version of Ylajali hinders the *Sult* hero’s success as a focused writer. In Eveliina Pulkki’s article, “Failing Authorship in Knut Hamsun’s *Sult* (1890), her contention is his constant interruptions in his bloated goal of authorship. Some sources of such interruptions include anxiety, an inflated ego, perfectionism, and feelings of judgment from the inhabitants in Kristiana. Ylajali, both an inhabitant of the city and source of anxiety for the unnamed protagonist’s confidence, functions as an interruption from his authorship goals, despite the fact that her presence makes him imagine vivid scenes (Pulkki 2018). Nonetheless, he does not write these scenes down, but rather quickly thinks about other matters, showing a parallel between the reality of artistry and the fantasy of it. His fantasy of Ylajali keeps him desiring a strong female presence, despite the ensuing suffering of realizing that his desire for her acknowledgement of him necessitates her refusal due to his eccentricities.

Another aspect of desire in Hamsun’s use of fantasies is the confrontation of fear, even if the Hamsunian male protagonist is unaware of it. In a similar way that the *Sult* hero’s fantasy revealed a desire for acknowledgement, Johannes Møller faces his fears concerning his desire for Victoria and writing through the manifestation of his nightmare. In *Victoria* (1898), Hamsun depicts the failed romance between the miller’s son, Johannes, and the lord of the manor’s daughter, Victoria. Despite their interest for each other that started during their childhood, Victoria and Johannes repeatedly miss opportunities to pursue their feelings, thus resulting in feelings of disappointment, heartbreak, and Victoria’s death. Through Johannes’ development into a successful writer, Hamsun reveals the connection between the writer’s success and heartbreak from a loss of romantic love. When Victoria refuses to acknowledge him in the theater, Johannes spends nine months finishing his book; afterwards he dreams and internalizes his isolation, as seen in the images of deserted valley and a vacant town square only filled with the last words spoken. In his nightmare, Johannes turns away from them, and they transform into dancing blind men. While a reader might consider such imagery a manifestation of loneliness, the words/dancing men coincide with a detail from Johannes’ poetic voice, Munken Vendt². Earlier in the novel, Johannes, through the voice of Munken

² In Even Arntzen’s article, “Munken Vendt—på sporet av Knut Hamsuns ytske estetik”, Arntzen describes the way that Munken Vendt functions as Johannes’ poetic voice who narrates a story of Iselin and Diderik that symbolize Victoria and Johannes. It is crucial here to note that Johannes’ poetic voice as Munken Vendt appears in his dream through the allusion of the words and imagery of the dancing men.

Vendt, questions the definition of love and uses the imagery of hot music that makes the hearts of old men dance. The echo of the old dancing men in the dream refers to Johannes' poetic voice, thus making the allusion of Johannes' recently written book as the last words spoken in the town square. In the nightmare, regarding the men's lack of interaction with him, Johannes notes, "de ser ham ikke, de er blinde, og da han roper til dem hører de ham ikke, de er døde, ["they do not see him, they are blind, and when he calls to them they do not hear him, they are dead"] (Hamsun 1935, 81). Shortly after, Johannes sees a head rolling past him and a naked Victoria walking towards him. In Johannes' nightmare, the blind men personify Johannes' writing, and their inability to perceive him symbolizes a disconnection between Johannes and his art. Despite Johannes' success as a writer, his nightmare reflects his loss of Victoria, showing his inability to save her life.

When Lacan (1998) describes the connection of dreams and desire, he states, "Desire manifests itself in the dream by the loss expressed in an image at the most cruel point of the object" (59). Captured in a stream-of-consciousness manner, Johannes' nightmare depicts desire as a cruel form of loss of both an acknowledgement of writing and romantic love, reflecting a rupture between Johannes and his two interconnected desires. His love for Victoria inspires his verse, yet his success in writing entails a loss of romantic love as the subject matter in his writing includes heartbreak and disappointment in romantic love. Despite the success in public recognition as a writer, his words fail to convince Victoria to pursue their romantic bond regardless of the challenges. Victoria serves as his motivation to write; she also functions as the reminder of his failure in successfully marrying her. The dream reflects this failed attempt and Johannes' unconscious, since the words reflect an agency of people who do not wish to see him.

When looking at the relevance of Victoria's presence in his dream, however, one perceives that she saves him from the ways that his words, or his art, backfire from his intended motivations. In other words, through his unconscious, Johannes shows how Victoria saves him from his own fears of not being seen or acknowledged. When she reaches out to him, she exhibits a sense of longing. Initially, a reader might suggest that Victoria reflects a passive demeanor like the fantasy version of Ylajali, since both women do not speak. Given the symbolic nature of Victoria's gesture of reaching out to him, Victoria asserts agency in the way that she perceives him and attempts to save him, thus alluding to the power that Johannes gives to her. Coincidentally, Victoria's power in the nightmare parallels the way that Victoria's writing, her last letter to Johannes, affirms her love for Johannes, despite that it did not save her life. It is ironic that Johannes frames his desire through loss in order to intensify his struggle in his affections for Victoria. Furthermore, the implications of Victoria's gesture of reaching out to Johannes alludes to his desire for a woman to save him from his doubts in his romantic feelings, which her letter suffices in doing.

So far, I have presented the way that the Hamsunian male figure bases his fantasy of a mortal female by infusing her with strength through her gaze and gesture. Hamsun develops a more complex relationship between a fantasy female and the narrative as a means of seduction in *Pan* (1894). In this novel, Hamsun presents Lieutenant Thomas Glahn, a man who seeks his solitude and rapturous experience with nature, despite his feelings for strong Edvarda, the merchant's daughter. In his interactions with Edvarda,

Arntzen, Even. 1996. "Munken Vendt—På Sporet av Knut Hamsuns Mytiske Esteikk." Hamsun i Tromsø. 11 Foredrag fra Hamsun-konferansen i Tromsø 1995. Tromsø: Hamsun-Selskapet, 94-105.

Glahn exposes his social awkwardness and loses himself in the forest to find a nature spirit, Iselin, with traits reminiscent of the sights and sounds of the forest. In one of Glahn's excursions into the forest, he finds Iselin who tells him her narrative of her first time she consummates her bond with her lover, Dundras. Iselin's narrative about her first love makes Glahn realize his fondness for the experience of longing developed in the craft of storytelling as she shows erotic power and femininity. Glahn walks in a forest and explores his love dream of nature spirit, Iselin, who constructs a story of her identity as an amorous spirit and inspires success in hunters. Glahn frames his narrative of Iselin with the mention of the sky, Iselin's eyes, and the difference in self-perception. He starts to discuss the red sun in the night sky: "Luende rød himmel, solen står og stamper foran mine øine, natten, horisonten dønner av lys," ["Burning red sky, the sun is shining in front of my eyes, the night, the horizon is fading with light"] (Hamsun 1954b, 70).

Later in the scene, he mentions how some hunters see Iselin's eyes, while others hear her voice or feel her breath. In the narrative of her first lover, she awaits the 1am hour, when Dundras comes to visit her. After the consummation of their lust, Iselin observes that she doesn't recognize her room or her shoes. In other words, her eyesight deceives her. She mentions that she feels a "ripple" go through her. She says, "Hvad kan det være som risler gjennom mig?" ["What can it be that ripples through me?"] (Hamsun 1954b, 73). After her second encounter, she awakens and finds this similar ripple through her heart, a multifaceted sensation that marks the effect of her arduous consummation. Iselin comments that she never regarded herself with such amorous look, again focusing on the eyes. She expresses: "Jeg stillet mig foran speilet og to forelskede øine så like mot mig, det rørte sig noget i mig ved mit blik og det rislet og rislet rundt omkring mit hjærte," ["I stood in front of the mirror and two eyes fell in love with me, something touched my eyes and it rippled and rippled around my heart"] (Hamsun 1954b, 73). In this love dream, Hamsun presents how Iselin's awakening reflects a change from within her, a change in the way she perceives herself. By indicating that two eyes are looking at her are her own in so far as she is looking in a mirror, she shows a similar shift in subjectivity as she perceives herself from Dundras' gaze. Instead of being the object perceived, she becomes the perceiving subject, thus also showing awareness that she conveys a narrative and reflects it to Glahn. In so far as Iselin's narrative involves reflective surfaces and objects, such as a mirror and eyes, Hamsun uses her narrative as a symbolic device that shows not only Glahn's desire but also further pushes how Glahn wishes to be captured.

Similar to the fantasy versions of Ylajali and Victoria, Iselin demonstrates a similar type of femininity, as she shows pathos and passion in her abilities to love to the extent that she supersedes Glahn's affection for the mortal women, Edvarda, Henriette³, and Eva. Furthermore, her ability to perceive herself outside of the position of a desired woman empowers her, since she removes herself from a passive position to an active one. Her numerous lovers and her freedom in her amorous pursuits evince her agency, and her strength functions as the struggle that Glahn requires in order to consummate with her. In addition to the desire for narrative, Glahn's fantasy demonstrates that part of his Eros includes his fascination with being desired as evident in the way that he mirrors Iselin's

³ Some scholars assert that Henriette functions as a fantasy woman and a mortal woman, yet I categorize her as a mortal woman, as Glahn only considers her after his first excursion with Iselin. She is a fantasy woman in so far as she is a shepherd girl and reminiscent of nature through her profession and in her passiveness. Yet, she lacks the mythical nature that Iselin displays through the way Iselin encompasses the forest and her origin as being from a distant time in the past.

actions. Glahn likes her gaze as seen in his ability to use his eyes in a comparable way to Iselin. Furthermore, her abilities to use narrative as a means to seduce Glahn mirrors Glahn's later actions when he tells the reader of the myth of the woman in the tower who longs for her lover who does not reciprocate her love.

Hamsun uses Iselin's narrative as a shift in the story itself in order to position Glahn as the desirable object of desire who mirrors Iselin's actions. In regards to gender identity, von Schnurbein (2001) asserts that Hamsun reveals Glahn's loss of masculinity in the face of Edvarda's display of sexual awakening, thus putting Glahn in the feminine position (von Schnurbein 2001, 157). Indeed she posits that the dream-like fantasies "repeat the erotic, fetishistic, and sadomasochistic constellations of the main text" (von Schnurbein 2001, 159), an assessment that serves to show how the fantasies further illustrate the psychological motives towards the women desired. I consider that the fantasies depict a desire in how the male figure attempts to find self-expression through the creative act. Though Thomas Seiler establishes the idea of Pan as a creation myth that asserts itself through Glahn's death (von Schnurbein 2001, 160), I extend the idea of the creation myth to infer that the men require the introduction of the woman in fantasy in order to learn the language of Eros, a term I give to refer to the ability to use language in narrative construction with the intent of seduction. Iselin's narrative entails seduction to lure Glahn into acknowledging her erotic strength, as seen in her numerous lovers, and in showing him how he wishes to be desired. His fantasy of her as a mythical woman who lived in the past refers to his desire to be recognized in a similar way, a myth. von Schnurbein aptly (2001) assesses that *Pan* concerns a man's denial of feminization due to his fear, and I consider the possibility that Glahn requires some knowledge of how express his feelings, thus showing how Iselin's narrative not only shifts the reader's understanding of Glahn's desire but also the rest of the novel. By being passive to Iselin's narrative, Glahn learns the way to construct a narrative and hints at the idea of narrative as myth.

In reference to *Mysterier* (1892), Kittang (1984) describes the fairy tale as Nagel's form of seduction to lure Dagny, but it also holds her at a distance as it moves past eroticism (Kittang 1984, 99). In this novel, Hamsun portrays a mysterious stranger who travels to a small northern Norwegian town only to spend his days attempting to lure two women prior to ending his life. The manifestation of erotic love in *Mysterier* refers to Nagel's conflict with his erotic experience with nature and his difficulty in social settings as seen through his long polemic monologues and his declaration of being sincere followed by his quick confession of lying to get a response from others. Rather than perceiving the nature eroticism as Nagel's true identity, Kittang asserts that his ecstatic experience with nature is a narcissistic dream defined by inner conflict and death (Kittang 1984, 92). Given the nature of Eros and Death in the fantasy as told through the fairy tale, Kittang indicates that the danger of death marks Nagel's consciousness. In his story that Nagel tells Dagny, he describes a dark octagonal tower filled with tiny beautiful angels, a strange Lyktemann and his striking daughter. He places much emphasis on the gaze that the Lyktemann gives him, while also exposing that the angels are blind. This fantasy reveals Nagel's fears of destruction and the danger imposed on his desired woman. By infusing the narration of his fantasy with danger and fears, Nagel reveals how his desire entails the danger of full surrender, an aspect that I consider an addition to Kittang's assessment. I do consider, however, that in addition to describing Nagel's narcissism, the fantasy displays his love for myth construction.

When Lacan discusses the difference between the enunciated and the enunciation, or the act of speaking and the statement itself, he frames the phenomenon as a disappearance of the subject. The narrator loses agency, as the statement becomes the signifier that communicates without the speaker's will. Through an analysis of the use of symbols, desire speaks without the subject's will (Lacan 1998, 211). I agree with Kittang that death is a factor in Nagel's narration through the split between the speaker and the statement, and the desire's agency reveals how the speaker's statement has its own determination due to the power of the signifier. Nagel's Eros pertains to his storytelling abilities and the details he conveys through his narrative of his fairy tale, a process that coincides with to his mythical construction of his new identity and consequent erasure of his true identity.

In one scene, Nagel tells a story to a small party of people but particularly targeted toward Dagny, the first woman he admires in this town. As he describes his fantasy, he presents it in a dream-like manner, as a memory of an experience he had one night when he left his home to walk to the forest due to the Lyktemann's beckoning. Distinguishing the Lyktemann's gaze "fulde av mange gruelige ting som disse øine hadde set i livet," ["full of many horrible things that these eyes had seen in life"] (Hamsun 1954a, 89) Hamsun depicts the harsh gaze imposed on Nagel, one that lures him to his beloved but also shows him a darker side of Nagel's imagination. In contrast to the horrifying way that he describes the Lyktemann, Nagel frames his description of the beloved woman as accompanied with beautiful imagery: "Solen skinner på hendes gyldne hår og hendes sorte øine var herlige" ["The sun shone on her golden hair and her black eyes were glorious"] (Hamsun 1954a, 93). Before she leaves him and takes him to the edge of the forest--the liminal position between the supernatural and real-- he realizes that she is blind. He notes that she looks at him "med store øine," ["with big eyes"] (Hamsun 1954a, 93), sensing him and her surroundings rather than the manipulating him with a look.

Hamsun's use of symbols in Nagel's fairy-tale myth shows how Nagel uses the other surrounding characters to create a narrative and give into his desire for myth. The Lyktemann's gaze terrifies Nagel, yet it brings him to the forest with the octagonal tower. Despite the darkness of the night, the Lyktemann's gaze presents to Nagel a limit to his selfhood, symbolized through the imaginary supernatural realm that stands in contrast to his reality. Yet, his gaze presents an uncanny world of desire, one that Nagel is aware that he loves but also one that strikes fear in his being. In contrast to the Lyktemann's direct gaze, the blind woman's gaze appears strongly and guides Nagel through the outskirts of the forest. Ironically, her blindness reflects her love for Nagel and functions as a way to direct him home, an aspect that shows her role in bringing the resolution to Nagel's narrative. While evident that the Lyktemann's daughter's blindness infers a lack of sight, she possesses an ability to sense her way to the edge of the forest, the boundary of her world and Nagel's real world. Such knowledge makes her synonymous to the role of one's unconsciousness in dreams. She represents Nagel's desire for the beauty in the forest and fairy tales, one that he uses to project onto Dagny. The only difference, however, is that the Lyktemann's daughter displays supernatural power through her abilities to save Nagel's life as seen in her offer of a black ribbon. Taken with the view of the story as a symbolic representation of his fears and desire, one can see that part of erotic experience entails the narration of the story itself.

In this case, regardless of which view one might take—Nagel's fairy-tale as a real account of the Lyktemann's daughter or a story that reflects his emotions—the role of the Lyktemann's daughter portrays a powerful view of Nagel. On the one hand, her blind

knowledge of the area shows Nagel's limitations in his abilities to care for himself, yet her role as a character in Nagel's tale functions his personified hope. Through Nagel's telling of her death, he foreshadows his own loss of hope that he discards through his own death. Through this sequence, it also displays a desire for myth and a restructuring of mortal characters such as Dagny and Minutten, but to the point where Nagel's reconceptualization of these characters is infused with more otherworldly power. This narrative becomes a myth, thus making Nagel a narcissistic godlike creator in so far as Nagel uses words to recreate his identity and purpose. Since he creates the fairy tale, he assumes the role of a creator, similar to that of a god who creates worlds. Nagel's beauty arises in his ability to weave words. When a reader incorporates Lacan's notion of the disappearance of the speaker through the act of enunciation, they perceive how Nagel plays with the idea of death beyond the death imagery. Since Lacan infers a disappearance of the speaker as he gives a narrative, it helps explain Nagel's preoccupation with death as he gives his narrative. His narrative, therefore, shows his desire to create a myth, but also have a mythical identity.

The women in fantasy contribute to the Hamsunian male and the exploration of his narcissistic split-identity as he traverses fear in his pursuit of a fantasy, a function that only propels his desire for women and writing. While it might seem as if the discussion shifts to the identity of the Hamsunian male, my interpretation of Hamsun's female figure gains significance when perceived as an origin of creativity through the progression of different male fantasies in Hamsun's 1890s novels. Even though the women reveal traditionally feminine traits, their powerful gaze disarms the Hamsunian male figure. These women in fantasy display power in their abilities to mold the Hamsunian male's ability to show mimicry; they willingly turn the narratives into myth just as the women themselves display mythological traits in so far as they are origins of creative thought. I do not deny that Hamsun's use of women as influential in creativity demonstrates a traditional notion of femininity, yet an investigation of the Hamsunian male's position in relation to these women within his mind reveals the power he attributes to them as having an ability to peer into him, shift his narrative, and inspire him to shift in his identity. By examining the fantasies and dreams in relation to what they reveal and conceal about desire within the Hamsunian male, I show a better understanding of the role that these women play in his Eros. The sequence of fantasies presented follow a different sequence than the order of the publication of Hamsun's 1890s novels, yet the sequence displays a progression of influence the women have on the men: the Hamsunian male progresses from a male character whose fantasies detract from the writing process to one who enchants through his narrative as a means of seduction.

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