



Victoria : Een liefdesgeschiedenis

Knut Hamsun , Cora Polet (translator) , Amy van Marken (contributor)

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Victoria vertelt de liefdesgeschiedenis van molenaarszoon Johannes en jonkvrouw Victoria, die al vanaf hun jeugd sterke gevoelens voor elkaar koesteren. Door het klasseverschil hebben ze hier nooit aan kunnen toegeven, ondanks de status die Johannes verwerft met het schrijven van gedichten. Victoria wordt uiteindelijk gedwongen om zich met een ander te verloven.

Knut Hamsun brak in 1890 door met zijn roman *Honger*. Het was het begin van een lange, productieve literaire carrière, die in 1920 bekroond werd met de Nobelprijs voor Literatuur. Hamsun wordt beschouwd als een van de grootste schrijvers van Noorwegen. Hij heeft veel invloed gehad op de Europese en Amerikaanse literatuur: hij inspireerde auteurs als Ernest Hemingway, Henry Miller, Thomas Mann en Isaac Bashevis Singer.

Victoria : Een liefdesgeschiedenis Details

Date : Published 1976 by De Arbeiderspers (first published 1898)

ISBN :

Author : Knut Hamsun , Cora Polet (translator) , Amy van Marken (contributor)

Format : Paperback 150 pages

Genre : Classics, Fiction, European Literature, Scandinavian Literature, Romance

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Manny says

Suppose you met someone when you were young, and something happened that convinced you beyond reasonable doubt that they loved you, and you loved them. And then, suppose that there were all sorts of practical problems, and that, on the rare occasions when you did meet them, you said the wrong thing, or they said the wrong thing, and people were hurt, or lost their tempers, and you started to wonder if you'd just hallucinated it all. And that this continued for your whole life.

Well, if you've ever had that kind of experience, you might like *Victoria*, a long, elegantly written prose-poem which pretty much does for hopeless love what *Hunger* does for being hungry. Wrap it up with a red bow, and give it to a carefully selected person as an unusual Valentine...

mai ahmd says

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Afkham says

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Paradoxe says

Νομίζω πως δε μου ταιριάζει ο Χαμσοφ. Η πρότη απειρία ήταν πριν απ' 2,5 χρόνια περίπου με τον Παν που πληξά θανσίμα κι σπασα κ'θε χρόνο αν'γνωσης, δαπανώντας 3 μ'νες και τελικ' δεν το τελέωσα. Φοβ'μαι τι συνεχ'ς τον ιχνογραφ', να αντιγρ'φει κ'ποιο άλλο συγγραφ'α, χι σε λ'ξεις, ? ιδ'ες, ε'ναι λεπτ'τερο: σε εικ'νες και ατμ'σφαιρα. Επ'σης, δε μου ξεσηκ'νει καν'να π'θος κι ελ'χιστες σκ'ψεις συγκροτο'νται. Δι'βαζα παρ'λληλα να βιβλ'ο του Μπαλζ'κ που 'ταν δ'σκολο να εισχωρ'σεις και η εναλλακτικ' μου 'ταν αυτ' το μικρ' συρταρωτ' αφ'γημα, του

Χαμσο?ν. Στην ?δια ?κταση, ο Τσβ??χ, συν?γραψε το Ταξ?δι στο παρελθ?ν, που ε?ναι επ?σης μια ερωτικ? ιστορ?α, αλλ? ?χει αποφ?γει ?λα τα διακοσμητικ? στοιχε?α που βαρ?νουν, χωρ?ς να προσφ?ρουν και που εδ? καταλαμβ?νουν κ?ποιο μ?ρος. Το μ?νο που ?σως αξ?ζει αναφορ?ς ε?ναι οι ονειροπολ?σεις του Γιοχ?νες. Δεν προσφ?ρει παρηγορι?, δε δ?νει απαντ?σεις, ο?τε θ?τει ερωτ?ματα. Ε?ναι μια ιστορ?α ?ρωτος, χωρ?ς τ?ποτε ?λλο.

Cheryl says

Imagine love in its complicated state, love as a psychological battle: dreamlike and disappointing; love that never materializes into a relationship, never fully processed; love poured into the literary art as a parallel to love that cannot be. For this isn't simply air-brushed romance, this has melancholy imbued.

Oh Johannes, he who initially exists in his semi-delirious happy frame of mind, in his dream world of love proclamation. *She loves him? She loves him not?* Victoria lives in a castle and he is the neighborhood kid who helps with errands. She must marry someone who can provide for her, who can buy and maintain her father's castle. But he doesn't know this. Or maybe he does and chooses to ignore this major hurdle - dreamer he is and all. *She love me? She loves me not?*

What was love? A wind whispering among the roses, no, a yellow phosphorescence in the blood. Love was a hot devil's music that set even the hearts of old men dancing. It was like the marguerite, which opens wide as night comes on, and it was like the anemone, which closes at a breath and dies at a touch.

Johannes writes at night, when the world is asleep and the train's whistle is his alarm clock. He could not become a part of Victoria's world based on his lineage, but he could infuse himself and his thoughts into that world through the written word. Soon, he becomes the poet to be celebrated. The man who once ran errands soon becomes a guest at the elaborate dinner parties. But what happens when your heart's desire is simply unattainable?

A love for the style Hamsun employs in this piece is one that could be debatable. Before he wrote *Victoria* and after he wrote *Pan*, Hamsun expressed in a letter how he was tired of the novel and wanted to write verse. This book, some argue, was his attempt to do just that:

Alas, love turns the human heart into a mildewed garden, a lush and shameless garden in which grow mysterious, obscene toadstools.

I wonder if I should have been introduced to Hamsun through his breakthrough novel, *Hunger* instead. Yet there is something to be said about starting with a writer's body of work that is somewhat an elegy on love. *Victoria* at times is a muddle of past and present tense, those slight parallelism annoyances that occur in the midst of sentences and paragraphs, but its best moments are when it captures love through a meandering mosaic, albeit clipped at times. The streets are alive through Johannes's observations, when those minute details the average observer misses suddenly become lucid. Hamsun's scholar makes a good point about this read when he writes: "The point here is...to show, by indirection, the phases of Johannes's consciousness as

he struggles to recover from his grievous disappointment."

PGR Nair says

I read this novel in the Eighties. Victoria is one of the most beautiful short novels in Literature.

Though titled Victoria, the protagonist is Johannes, the miller's son. He is a boy who wants to work in a match factory because, "he could get sulphur on his hands so that nobody would dare to shake hands with him". Later, as a man, he spends his nights writing epic poetry, capping a productive session with loud singing that wakes his neighbours. Johannes is proud to know the stones and the streams; he looks after birds and trees and scares himself into believing there is an ogre in a nearby cave. As a child he befriends Ditlef and Victoria, son and daughter of the socially aristocratic but economically destitute Lord of the village. He loves Victoria the way a tree loves the sun – eternally, its branches outstretched not to touch but to bask in the radiance of the light. Victoria, however, is forced into marriage with Otto, an upstart aristocrat with a poorer lineage but a great deal of money.

Johannes loves from afar, and Victoria – does she love him at all? Early on, as Johannes stretches his poetic wings, he muses that love is "like the anemone which closes at a breath and dies at a touch". The novel utilises this concept again and again as first Johannes, and then Victoria, engage in a series of miscommunications, missed opportunities, and harsh words. When Johannes love is in the ascendancy, Victoria brushes him off. Later, she is contrite and declares her affection, but he is hurt and acts cold. The characters are of such a piece that they could love no other, but their equally vast capacity for stubborn indignation ensures they will remain apart.

For Hamsun, love – or even the true essence of a character's personality – is something that exists in bursting spasms of exertion and then fades to cold metal. A character may go months, or even years, being sullen and vindictive, only to suddenly shine with frenzied emotion. What is more, the psychology of a character is something personal and private – their rich inner life is shown to others as a series of grunts and rejection. Johannes and Victoria both share these qualities, and are drawn to the other because of this. To the outside world both seem aloof and cold. Emotion lies dormant until it flares into life, but even then these flares are often hidden from everyone except the individual themselves. Johannes, for example, gloats that he has written Victoria's name on the ceiling of his room, so that he can stare at it and love her from afar. But, he is quick to tell her, he wrote the name so small that not even the cleaning lady can tell it is there. For Johannes it is enough that he knows, his secret a bludgeon to strike the outside world with, only they do not know it. Victoria is much the same, revealing to Johannes when they are much older that she used to walk home the long way every day simply because she knew it was the way he liked to walk, only she never told anyone, not even him. What can we make of these acts of devotion that are hidden from everyone?

Hamsun asks that we make everything of it, but that we keep it to ourselves. Toward the end of this short work, a story is told in miniature of a couple that have loved one another their entire lives. When the husband is struck ill and becomes sickly, he demands his wife leave him, because he has become hideous. In response she hacks away at her 'golden' hair, making herself as ugly as he. Later, when she is sick, she demands the same, but he instead goes to the bathroom and splashes acid on his face, ruining his features so that they can remain together, uniquely one. This short story is the larger work written again, as Victoria and Johannes hurt first the other, and then themselves, again and again throughout their lives. They can never be happy, but their happiness comes from the secret love they – not share, because sharing would ruin it – but possess.

Victoria is a short novel, but its themes are large. As much as the novel is a story of obsession and possession thwarted, it also manages to include much on the then-relevant issue of love between different classes. Johannes, though he becomes a celebrated poet, will never be the social equal of Victoria, and both know it. This adds poignancy to their love, and a valuable (to the characters) sense that they will never truly be together. The characters are written sharply, which renders their love quarrels painful to the reader. It is clear from the first few pages that happiness is not possible for either of them. Victoria muses at one stage that Johannes must be doing alright because he mentions that he is dealing with only 'the small sorrows'. That she expects a person must always live with any sorrow at all suggests much about her character, and that Johannes is, in his way, content with these 'small' sorrows suggests just as much about his. They are lovers in a sense, but lovers who can never consummate physically what they so fervently express in secret to themselves.

Greg says

Who am I to say that a Nobel prize winning author is just phoning it in? Especially since I've yet to find real enjoyment in Hamsun's writing? If I had just picked this book up and read it I wouldn't have enjoyed it too much, it's a tad bit too melodramatic with a bit of the coldness of say Strindberg and the inexplicable manly rage of DH Lawrence's male characters (but not their latent gayness, which maybe I'll share my theory on this at some other time in a DH Lawrence review). Can I say that the book reads as being like a too German imitator of certain German writers like Von Kleist, but in an extreme Germanity that is kind of off-putting? Has anything I've said so far made any sense at all?

I feel like I should like Hamsun, putting aside his doddering sept(or maybe oct)agaurian support of the Nazi's (we don't crucify Yeats for this kind of thing, but I have a feeling it's a language thing, Norwegian being more German to us all (and I mean us English speakers) than well English), he's all about the kind of themes I'm normally all for in literature. I just haven't had a good experience with him yet, but one day I will have to go back and re-read some of the books I read earlier, at the time I was wanting him to be Henry Miller, which he's not, but which Henry Miller had exuberated over so highly in one of his books that I just had to give Hamsun a chance myself (we'll overlook the two of three month fascination with Henry Miller I went through in 1997).

But, reading this book because of it's importance to Jan Kjaerstad's trilogy of excellent novels I find it to be quite interesting, but only in light of the overlaps that Kjaerstad created in *The Discoverer*. What portion of the whole trilogy is a retelling of *Victoria*? Probably only a small part, but there is something going on *Victoria* that is more interesting than the tragic love story, with it's 19th century ridiculousness, that Kjaerstad is picking up on and turning it from a minor literary device that almost seems out of place in Hamsun's work to being insanely effective. Maybe this book (*Victoria*) would have been more enjoyable to me if it had made more use of certain literary devices that intruded at times. Maybe if they had been more welcomed into the overall work of the novel this would have been something more interesting than it turned out to be for me.

This review has been deliberately obscure. Sorry. The parts I want to talk about would wreck havoc, or work as spoilers, on the enjoyment of one's reading of the Kjaerstad trilogy, which once again I recommend everyone read. You'll either thank me for it, or hate me for wasting your time.

(after writing this I realized that the book was written in 1898, making it actually a 19th century book, not a 20th century book, and some of the Modernism expectations I might have been expecting from literary devices that Hamsun flirts with would have no real possibility of ever being used by a writer at this time, who is writing in this style. I apologize for my ignorance, but let the review stand as is.)

Jorge says

Llegué a este libro debido a mi lectura inmediata anterior que fue la novela “Hambre” de este mismo autor, la cual me impactó bastante y por esta razón y también debido a que encontré una edición muy bonita de la novela “Victoria” del mismo autor, pensé que era una buena idea hacer algo que nunca había hecho: leer dos obras seguidas de un mismo autor.

Sin embargo considero que la obra llamada “Hambre” ha dejado el listón muy alto y las expectativas que me formé en torno a toda la obra de Hamsun (Premio Nobel de Literatura en 1920), fueron nos sólo altas en cuanto a calidad de la obra sino en cuanto a temática. No cabe duda que las expectativas positivas continuamente nos juegan en contra de nuestras percepciones concretas o reales al predisponernos a esperar cierto grado de satisfacción. Éste es un típico caso.

Definitivamente la novela no me ha decepcionado pero sí esperaba más de este autor de “Hambre” y no lo atribuyó a que no sea un buen trabajo sino a mi falta de adaptación o a mi falta de capacidad para asimilar rápidamente un cambio de estilo, de temática, de contexto, o de graduar mis expectativas.

La presente narración se desarrolla en un ambiente absolutamente bucólico y destaca el cariño y apego que siente el autor por la naturaleza. La acción se desarrolla en torno al amor de Victoria y Johannes y Hamsun desarrolla esta relación con una narración a base de frases cortas, de ideas puntuales; aunque también desarrolla frases y construcciones más elaboradas. Eso sí: su prosa es bella y clara y a veces salpicada de frases e ideas muy poéticas.

Se trata de una novela corta cuya acción se encuentra bien hilvanada, aunque de vez en vez el autor inserta pasajes que cortan la dimensión lineal del tiempo que envuelve a la narración. Considero que debido a que esta novela no fue de los primeros trabajos de Hamsun, aunque todavía le faltaban 50 años para escribir la obra que le dio el Premio Nobel, ya había hecho acopio de muchos recursos literarios y de una gran sutilidad de lenguaje que le hicieron evolucionar a este estilo para dar a luz “Victoria”.

Termino esta breve reseña con una frase que ilustra el tono general de la novela:

“...el amor fue el origen y el señor del mundo, pero todos sus caminos están llenos de flores y de sangre, de flores y sangre...”

s.penkevich says

‘Love became the world’s beginning and the world’s ruler; but all its ways are full of flowers and blood, flowers and blood.’

The passions and desires of young love, and the frustration of love torn apart by society, is a source of

considerable energy that has been harnessed by writers through all of history. Nobel laureate Knut Hamsun's 1898 novella, *Victoria*, draws on this energy to fuel his unextinguishable prose and return to the theme of doomed love, a theme characteristic of his impressive oeuvre. Although this theme was the heart of *Pan*, *Victoria* takes a different approach stylistically, poetically, and most of all, in the behavior of the protagonist. Within this tragic tale of two star-crossed lovers, Hamsun explores the complexities, hopes and inevitable destruction of love in a world ordered through social class as he weaves a multi-layered metafictional prose that marks the dawn of a bright new era for his novels.

Published only 4 years after *Pan*, a tragic tale of failed love set in the northern wilderness, *Victoria* evinced a period of major artistic growth and maturity in Hamsun's already potent literary pen. According to the excellent introduction provided by translator Sverre Lyngstad, Hamsun wrote in a letter during this period between novels that he had '*tired of the novel, [and] always despised the drama,*' so he had taken up writing verse, which he considered '*the only literature that is not both pretentious and insignificant, but only insignificant*'. The time spent harnessing the power of poetry is immediately apparent from the first page. Having become tighter and slimmed down to near-poetic verse, the prose simply blossoms upon the page. The striking variance in style between his early, gritty, psychologically intense works including *Hunger* and *Mysteries*, and later novels such as *Growth of the Soil* (a crucial work that, as well as being heralded as his 'masterpiece', was cited by the Nobel committee as a primary impetus for awarding him their prestigious prize) seems to meet up and pivot upon this novella. *Victoria* retained his early themes of doomed love, obsession and focal character with manic dispositions - which still continued throughout his body of work, becoming used more for the traits of supporting characters and secondary plotlines - while striking out into different narrative styles and the more streamlined storytelling that shone best in *Growth*. Hamsun began to keep dialogue to the bare minimum, a strong departure from the loquacious ravings of Nagel in *Mysteries*, choosing to supply the gist of conversations and leaving the particulars to be filled in through the creative impulses of the reader. Hamsun was a master of revealing only what was absolutely necessary, which helped to drive his novels forward and give him total narrative control. Even a good deal of the action is revealed after the fact, recounted by the characters in a way that gives rise to suspicions of absolute validity.

'Asked what love is, some will say it is nothing but a wind whispering among the roses and then dying down. But often it is like an unbreakable seal that holds for a lifetime, until death. God created it in so many different kinds and has seen it endure or perish'. Doomed love was a favorite theme of Hamsun's and appears in some form in almost every one of his books and short stories (the short stories in particular show Hamsun sharpening his skills and insight into this topic). In *Victoria*, the reader watches the doomed dance of two lovers as they waltz through a series of ups and downs. The novella bounces gracefully between intense amorous excitement and disheartened grief and sorrow, as both the imagery and Johannes' mood is victim to the whims of his beloved. When love is on his side, love is compared to '*a summer night with stars in the sky and fragrance on earth*' and Johannes harnesses his joy into frantic writing and singing to the heavens, the latter much to the chagrin of his neighbors, creating an opportunity for Hamsun to allow Johannes to tell of his off-stage escapades in artistically expressive and exaggerative language. In these manic, feverish states, he can live, eat and drink off the feasts of love, '*coatless, he looks out on the world like a half-clothed madman who has gotten drunk on happiness during the night*'. However, when love is withheld, the world around him is bleak and love is only as pleasant as '*ugly toadstools*'. When *Victoria* implies that social class and social expectations make any union of their hearts impossible, revoking any possibilities of a future between them after days before having pledged her love to him, Hamsun sets Johannes off down a dingy street lined with impoverishment to highlight these social conditions.

Unlike the protagonists in Hamsun's previous novels, Johannes has a steadier grip of his faculties and does not lash out irrationally despite dipping, or elevating, himself into feverish moods. In fact, the central scene of the novel displays Johannes in a calm, sociable demeanor during a party, a scene in other novels where

disaster and outlandish behavior was certain to erupt. Johannes takes compliments and aggression with class and dignity, being the one who comes out smelling of roses. Perhaps this reflects upon the character of Hamsun. There is a strong autobiographical aspect to many of his novels, and his early works which document the rise and fall of irrational moods and behavior may have been a method through which Hamsun was able to step back and observe himself from an outsider's vantage point in an attempt to gain some insight into his own character. Having aged in experience and wisdom, such irregular nuances may have dulled leading to a more composed and collected protagonist.

Little hope for a sustainable happiness is to be found from the story of Johannes and Victoria as Hamsun further emphasizes his jaded desire to watch love burn in flames than shine with the stars. *'That's the way things are,'* lectures an old poet, *'naturally, you don't get the women you should have'*. Yet, somewhere in this bitter fate, there is a bittersweet sense of beauty. In the burden of never obtaining the one we really love, we can forever desire them and remain in the emotionally intense and radiant infatuation stage forever. However, true love is only reached through accepting and wholly embracing the good and bad of a person, making the 'love' more obsession than actual love. Either way, this book is a great example of how many of our problems are of our own doing. So many times does the object of desire lay itself at a characters doorstep, only to be turned away to satisfy some inner angst and pride that will be regretted later. When two individuals become a pair, one inevitably seeks the affections of another, newer infatuation. Hamsun displays quite a bit of pessimism towards young love. The author was quite the wanderer in the younger half of his life, much like most of his protagonists, and was very popular with women. As this was how he understood life, his protagonists are always graced with the same attractive force, even when they are as famished and foul as *Hunger's* narrator. The brief and many affairs he may have encountered or observed in his travels must have given him this outlook, and the apparent heart-breaker status of his that can be read between the lines of his books may be the driving force of creating so many characters just to watch their hearts crumble. The passion and the devastation of his tragic romances are sure to ring true in the hearts of an empathetic reader.

Through the use of what James Wood describes as 'free indirect narration' in *How Fiction Works*, Hamsun skillfully threads the non-participatory narration with Johannes participatory observations and opinions, dipping in and out of his head with a clever word choice, exclamatory phrase within the larger sentence or brief interjection of perspective. Take, for example:

'The starlings were chattering from the branches above their head. Well and good. God grant them a long life... He had made a speech for her at dinner and torn his heart out; it had cost him dearly to correct and cover up her impertinent interruption, and she hadn't even thanked him. She had picked up picked up her glass and taken a draft. Skoal! Look at me, see how prettily I drink... [sic]'

Johannes and the narrative voice are threaded so tightly you can pass over the seams without even noticing Hamsun has gone back and forth between third and first person perspectives. It is especially difficult to readily deduce as Johannes is a poet and author, and what the reader may first attribute to Hamsun as a poetic turn of phrase or choice of word really belongs to Johannes. This affords the novella its vast prose and poetical form and allows lenience and forgiveness for turning to such exaggerated flowery language. The metafictional duality of the novel is served through the technique as well. We have Hamsun, a writer creating a novel with traces of autobiography about a writer with similar traits who takes the loves and losses from his own life and molds it into his own poetry and novels. Through the small but exquisite samples of Johannes own work, we see Hamsun writing poetry in full-fledged Norwegian romantic-style that retells the recent events of Johannes life, contained within a novel that serves as a poetical literary concoction of events from

Hamsun's life. The meta-language of *Victoria* comes in many, many layers.

Sverre Lyngstad seems to be one of the better, if not the best, english translators of Hamsun's work. After sampling a few other translations through reading several other Hamsun novels, Lyngstad seems to enact the best balance of flow, prose, and accessible syntax. As an added bonus, his introductions are always stuffed with excellent biographical knowledge and viewpoints on the novel. However, the reader should be warned that the 'introduction' would better serve as an 'afterword' as they are rampant with spoilers and other various plot points that could really ruin the book.

While this book did not strike me quite as powerfully as his others, notably *Pan*, with which is it best compared to, *Victoria* shows the Norwegian novelist at a crucial turning point in his career and is a short, sharp and intense work that highlights and amplifies many of the themes from its predecessors. While *Pan* offered more of the emotionally charged and ambiguous behavior that bound Hamsun's novels forever to my heart, mind and soul, *Victoria* provides an impressive poetic depiction of the emptiness felt when love, which had previously swelled and burst free from the heart, is denied, covered up, or gift-wrapped and given to someone detestable. This book invokes true, uncomfortable feelings, yet delivers them so exquisitely that we can only be comforted and left desiring more.

3.75/5

I would recommend starting with *Hunger*

Anastasia Fitzgerald-Beaumont says

There are some books that have a lasting impact on one's life, books that leave an indelible mark on one's deepest emotions. For me there are a number, but *Victoria* by Knut Hamsun occupies a special place as the most captivating and heart-breaking love story ever written. I read it in my mid-teens, in the full flood of my most romantic period.

It's a short novel; I finished it in less than two hours in a single sitting, overwhelmed by the poetic intensity of the prose, overwhelmed by the story of Victoria and Johannes, two people put on earth to love one another. They do, but there is no happy ending; events, social class, expectations, a sense of duty and circumstances all get in the way. It's a story of love only fully declared in death, only fully revealed in an ending that absolutely numbed me, reduced me to uncontrollable tears.

I've now read it again, though I never thought I would; the first time was painful enough. But it came up in a discussion recently, so I decided to take the risk, if risk is the right word, with the aim of refreshing my memory and adding this appreciation.

I did not recapture the same raw emotions, knowing what was to happen, knowing the course planned by fate and the writer. Besides, I'm older, a little more controlled, not quite so ready to give over to same teenage passions. Well...that's not entirely true. There may not have been the same quantity of tears, but there were tears, terrible sadness over beautiful and frustrated love.

If you know Hamsun's work you will know just how wonderfully he writes, how lyrical and poetic his prose. There are some passages that just leap out, memorable and brief. Here are a few of my favourites;

The days came and went: mild, lovely days filled with the bliss of solitude and with sweet memories of childhood – a renewed call to the earth and the sky, the air and the hills.

If she only knew that all his poems had been written to her and no one else, every single one, even the one to Night, even the one to the Spirit of the Swamp. But that was something she would never know.

What, then, is love? A wind whispering among the roses – no, a yellow phosphorescence in the blood. A danse macabre in which even the oldest and frailest hearts are obliged to join. It is like the marguerite which opens wide as night draws on, and like the anemone which closes at a breath and dies at a touch. Such is love.

...it is strange to think that all I've ever managed to do was to come in to the world and love you and now say goodbye to life.

Their days came and went; they came close, but they never managed to blend; there is too much misunderstanding, too many things left unsaid. So, yes, you've probably been here before, you will know the mood – it's a story of unrequited love, Norwegian echoes of Romeo and Juliet, of Heathcliff and Cathy. In its directness and simplicity *Victoria* is a peerless story of an imperfectly perfect love, one that will remain with me forever.

Anastasja Kostic says

"Postoji legenda o ?oveku ?ije je molitve bog uslišio, pa je dobio svoju prvu i jedinu ljubav. Ali to je bila jedina radost koju je dobio."

Ümit Mutlu says

Höff. Madam Bovary tad?nda illetlik verici bir a?k hikâyesi. A??r? s?k?c?. Neyse, olur öyle.

Behçet Necatigil de çeviride co?mu?. Victoria'y? 'Allaha hamd-ü sena' ettiriyor... Deh?et Necatigil.

Dolors says

“*Victoria*” is many things at once. A deceptively simple fairy-tale of star-crossed lovers separated by class and circumstance, but also an introspective journey into the making of a poet, a nuanced psychological portrait of the effects of young love, obsession and loss, and a lyrical rendering of alternating idyllic images and the harrowing consequences of pride, fear and jealousy.

As it happened in “*Hunger*”, the narrative line appears fragmented by dreamy recreations of events lived by the young poet and protagonist of the story, exalting the ecstasy of reciprocated love and magnifying the agony of separation. These allegoric passages provide a pattern of repetition where joy and misery are always inexorably bonded; accentuating the idea that love can be as rapturous as it can be a torment, a double-edged sword that eventually corners its preys. The process of literary creation echoes the ups and

downs of the lovesick poet, providing a double entendre for the main theme of Hamsun's novella.

The evolution of the narrative style is admirable; from a pastoral tale to a dramatic climax reminiscent of the best operas without fracturing the storyline. Hamsun culminates this initially classic romantic story with an unflinching exploration of the human soul, its exceptional inclination towards self-sacrifice and the dark nooks and crannies where vile detachment is fueled by thirst for revenge that anticipates themes and motifs of modern literature.

A prose poem that is more than the sum of its thoroughly crafted sentences, a tale of woe where love beats painfully. *Flowers and blood, flowers and blood.*

Fionnuala says

The odds were that I wouldn't like this book. It had many of the features I found fault with in the contemporary bestseller "One Day" by David Nicholls: a frustrating main character who falls deeply and irrevocably in love with someone clearly unsuitable who doesn't initially return his regard; many occasions when the pair might have come together but were prevented by misunderstandings and other frustrating circumstances; in short, too much melodrama right up to the very end. So why did I like it so much? The simplicity of the style, the poetic quality of the writing and the intensity of the hero's emotional life. I will definitely read more of Hamsun's work.

A small share in my positive response must go to the fine presentation of this Condor Book, the full colour reproduction of 'Moonlight' by Edvard Munch on the cover, the high quality paper, the bold font and the broad margins which reduce the words per page and make the reading experience very pleasant indeed.

Algernon says

When he grew up he wanted to be a diver. That was a sure thing. Then he would go down into the ocean from the deck a ship and come to strange lands, to kingdoms with swaying forests, vast and mysterious, and with a coral palace on the ocean floor. And the princess waves to him from a window and says, Come in!

Johannes is a bright young boy with a vivid imagination growing up in a poor household near the sea. His dreams alternate between adventure and romance, fueled by the passing ships and by the beautiful daughter of the local gentry, living in the 'Castle' as the fishermen and peasants call the town manor.

At the end of the nineteenth century social norms ensued the two young people could not even think about the possibility of love between so wide apart backgrounds. Yet love is ruled by emotion and not logic.

Victoria. Victoria! If she just knew how completely, beyond words, he was hers every minute of his life! He would be her servant and slave, sweeping a path before her with his shoulders. And he would kiss her tiny shoes and pull her carriage and lay the fire for her on cold days. He would lay her fire with gilded wood. Ah, Victoria!

Nineteen years old Johannes is so eloquent in his internal monologues, and so shy when it comes to actually woo his young princess. The years pass and Victoria remains as inaccessible as the mermaid princess of his childhood dreams. Yet Johannes escapes the confines of century old hard work and goes to study in the

capital, becoming a poet and novelist, his sensibility and imagination breaking the social barriers that held him down in the past. But can he put his popularity and his skill with the written word in the service of his quest for Victoria?

What was love? A wind whispering among the roses, no, a yellow phosphorescence in the blood. Love was a hot devil's music that set even the hearts of old men dancing. It was like the marguerite, which opens wide as night comes on, and it was like the anemone, which closes at a breath and dies at a touch. Such was love.

Past misunderstandings, family pressure and their own timidity drive the passion of these two young people over the cliff and into tragedy. Love is pain, seems to be the major theme of Knut Hamsun's delicate and moving evocation of young love, yet for me this first foray into his work was a thing of beauty, a gem of a story that I would gladly add to my growing list of romantic novellas about youth and love (Dostoyevsky's "White Nights", Turgheniev's "First Love", Conrad's "Youth", Mishima's "Sound of the Waves" and so on)

His heart is full, and his brain is like an unharvested wild garden in which vapors are rising from the earth. In some mysterious way he has come to a deep, deserted valley where no living thing can be found. In the distance, alone and abandoned, an organ is playing. He walks closer, he examines it; the organ is bleeding, blood flows from its sides as it plays.

Edward says

Introduction

Suggestions for Further Reading

--Victoria

??????? ????? says

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Agir(???) says

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karen says

you would think i would have sopped this thing up with a hunk of bread: doomed lovers, the impossibility of communication, the way we hurt the ones we love? that should have karen's stamp of approval all over it.

but it's like hamsun took a great idea for literary exploration and then constructed this wooden fence all around the emotional appeal and said "you are not coming in!" and i'm like, "dude, come on - just let me care about the characters a little bit". and hamsun's all "no way, jose". so i shrugged and went away.

i only read this because it is used in one of the most emotionally wrenching scenes in the kjaerstad trilogy, so you would think this would also drip with melancholy goo. not so.

it's good, it is just more restrained in its writing than what i usually go for in this type of narrative. and i have read two other books by him, it's not like i was expecting heaving bosoms and passionate speeches, but i just couldn't find anything to grab onto. they all kind of act like bratty teenagers, whose emotions flail up and down and then end in eye-pokings. it would be comical if it wasn't also so sad.

but the bottom line, and this is the bottom line in many books by my beloved thomas hardy as well: why don't you just talk to each other? without lying?? it would just make everyone happier in the end.

that is my lesson to characters everywhere, and it is my advice to you on the internet. go forth.
