Knut Hamsun, *On Overgrown Paths* (1949)

1. IDEOLOGY AND LITERATURE: the Role of the Artist/Writer: 
   Considering the case of Knut Hamsun, ask “what is the role of the writer during wartime?”
   Many Scholars and readers have questioned whether there exists a direct line between Hamsun’s literary works and Hamsun’s (publicly professed) political ideology. Is there any evidence of the ideology of National Socialism/Nazism to be found in this text? Does Hamsun portray himself as a traitor or a patriot?

2. Self-Representation: SANE OR MAD? 
   Underlying the publication *On Overgrown Paths* is the judicial and medical system’s ruling which defined the author’s “illness” as senility or dementia, (“permanently mentally disabled”). In this work, Hamsun offers an entirely different conception of “madness:’ a representation of himself as the persecuted and misunderstood author, creative genius -- perhaps even prophet and visionary. Giving examples, show how Hamsun achieves this self-representation.
3. STRATEGIES: UNDERMINING THE MEDICAL AND LEGAL INSTITUTIONS:
Hamsun employs several strategies to undermine Dr. Langfeldt’s authority and his legitimacy as a psychiatrist. Hamsun also seeks to undermine the legitimacy of the legal system and the legal proceedings against him. Identify some of these strategies, using examples.

4. GENRE? MEMOIR, APOLOGIA, NECROLOGY?
Is *On Overgrown Paths* an “autobiographical novel,” “memoir,” apologia, or self-defense...? How might one interpret the title of the work which roughly translates “on overgrown paths”?
What do you make of the mini-narratives or parables embedded in the text? Do they have any unifying themes or purposes that illuminate the larger text?
The concept of death plays a major role in the work. (After the War, Hamsun referred to himself as “a dead man in Norway and the world”). Has Hamsun written his own obituary (necrology)? Despite his protestations to the contrary, is Hamsun pitching for his own literary immortality?