

# THE SÁMI IN *GROWTH OF THE SOIL*: DEPICTIONS, DESIRE, DENIAL

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...a true analysis does not remain within its object, paraphrasing what has already been said; analysis confronts the silences, the denials and the resistance in the object,- not that compliant implied discourse which offers itself to discovery, but that condition which makes the work possible, which precedes the work so absolutely that it cannot be found in the work.

Pierre Macherey

The writings of Hamsun include the Sámi as a people. There were many Sámi on the island Hamarøy where Hamsun grew up, and one could say that the closeness to another people has influenced his writings. In particular, Sámi are present in *Growth of the Soil*, which was to bring Hamsun the Nobel prize in 1920, three years after the novel was published.

With the aid of postcolonial theory, one can easily read *Growth of the Soil* from a Sámi viewpoint. The book concerns a colonist, a settler in a borderland. Isac of Sellanaa comes to a place described as desolate. None the less there are people present, Sámi who stop by the farm for a chat. This Sámi presence is central to the text and the Sámi are highly present in the first part of the novel, and they take part in the decline, when Inger has a child with a cleft lip, and becomes a murderer. The connections between the mistress of Sellanaa and the Sámi, especially through her relative the maid Oline, make up one main tension of the text. The Sámi represent hindrances on the way to the prosperity sought by the protagonist Isac. Even though the Sámi are depicted in a negative fashion in *Growth of the Soil*, they are *there*, as an oppressed element; darkness and disaster, a force of nature.

To confuse author with narrator becomes inevitable, almost essential if one is to approach Hamsun *the enigma*; this seeming contradiction between artistic quality and political standpoint. If treated as a colonial writer - with a pronounced colonial discourse from a line of authors like Kipling - one can highlight issues in Hamsun's writing that otherwise would have been difficult to point out. In light of the system (the nation) one might understand the person (the writer).

The Norwegian state has still a somewhat unsettled relation with Hamsun due to his nazi sympathies; the issue arises in the space

between the artistic quality of his works and his unpalatable political standpoint, as seen from our time. Some wish to dismiss his flirt with nazism by pointing out that there are few direct racist utterings on Sámi or Jews in his books, that Hamsun praised the Sámi author Turi's book *An account of the Sámi* or spent time with Sámi and paid respect to their knowledge of nature etc. What one tend to forget is that Hamsun was a child of his time; racism was put into system and the young Norwegian nation was partially racist in its constitution. Althought the constitutional prohibition of Jews had been abolished in 1851, anti-Semitic waves were latent and one was to bloom in the mid-war period, when Norwegian authorities created a rather rigid immigration policy, seeking to avoid a "Jewish problem" in Norway. The land-owner law of 1902 made sure that only Norwegian-speaking subjects with Norwegian names could buy property in Finnmark (the main Sámi region). This law was not to be abolished until 1965. What today may seem like racist dregs was the norm of Hamsun's days; only WW II and later would the opposite become the politically correct view. One has to recognize Hamsun as part of the social climate prior to WW II, and admit to the fact that there was followed a policy which was partly related to that of apartheid in the young Norwegian state, something which may be too hard a diet for the self-image of the nation, even today.

The Sámi were accustomed to racially based imperialism already before WW II; now one kind of colonial discourse was to replace another. Nazism was in its essence nothing new to the Sámi, as it was to the Norwegians, who had their guts frightened out by its inhumanity. During the war one could witness the results of the train of thinking that presupposed prohibition of jews and the land law; values ordinary for that day and age would be mirrored and shown in their extreme consequences: a horror show, a holocaust. In post war Norway 'everybody' would reject nazism, though everyday racism would still be alive, as it is today. (Hamsun was more of a man of principals, one could say, as he kept his conviction even when it became politically uncorrect, and he was charged with treason.)

### **'To govern is to populate'**

Doris Sommer presents in her article "Irresistible romance: the foundational fictions of Latin America" (1990) a reading of Latin

American romances as national allegories, with love between the parties representing the relation between peoples. The man usually symbolizes the ruling class, the woman being of the people; she *is* the people as well as the land. When united in matrimony, the nation is united, a nation of different ethnic groups. The time frame is crucial, this is about *foundational fiction*; nation-building literature. We are witnessing the birth of nations, the building of a homogenous (monocultural) nation being the essential task.

Sommer argues for the role of politics in literature, and the influence of literature on politics. What is thought-provoking is the line Sommer draws between fictional love and the legitimacy of the ruling class/race - whites over natives, rich over poor: The ruling class needs legitimacy in order to rule the nation. Legitimacy is given by the relation to the subaltern class/race through love, through literature, which had a broad public appeal. Literature arouses harmony between the different groupings within a society, and by so doing, strengthens the building of a nation.

The love affairs of Latin American foundational fiction were not built on equality. The fictive romance was to strengthen the unity within the nation, not to equalize lovers. The rulers (who were in minority) needed the people's approval in order to reign, by this governing the masses in a less expensive way than by armies and genocide. Thus: The ruling class must 'win' the masses as the man must 'win' a wife and family (in fairy tales: the princess and half the kingdom). The woman (the land and/or the subalterns) must be owned so that the man may achieve harmony and legitimacy. Mixed marriages reflected the washing-white of 'primitive races' (in opposition perhaps to how the 'problem' was met with in apartheid regimes or imperialist states influenced by social Darwinism, where the colour bar was effectuated). They thus secured growth and unity, which were the 'children' of the mixed marriages in these narrativers; their primary objective, at the same time the reason why the rulers had to have the consensus of the masses in order to rule: The fathers can't afford to eliminate the mothers.

The nation-building aspect of *Growth of the Soil* is obvious, but hardly explicitly stressed. The novel is said to be about the cultivation of land, farming, settlement. The thesis here is that *Growth of the Soil* is about cultivation and settlement, certainly, but also on an existential

level, as an abstraction. Man, men must cultivate the female (land/people) if he is to *settle her*: He must cultivate her, see her as his, his own. He must settle the soil to make it solid for him to stand on; press it down, and with it its unwanted activity. Read as a national allegory the woman is the same as the people and the north country, she must be assimilated; he must make her his. *Growth of the Soil* is about *settle-ment* in the outskirts of the world, in the periphery, in Marginalia. The land must be built on, the earth owned. If he, the man, is to make civilized fields - fields which are to bear his fruits, his children - the land must be ploughed and harrowed, tilled and trimmed, and it must be sown - fertilized.

The use of allegories in literature had real political offspring, as Sommer points out: 'this helped to solve the problem of establishing the white man's legitimacy in the New World, now that the illegitimate conquerors had been ousted'. The major challenge in Latin America in the period 1850-1900 was essentially internal – not external – conquest. 'To govern is to populate' was the slogan. The same words could count for Scandinavia, where the keeping of borders in seemingly desolate areas depended mainly on loyal subjects. Nomads roaming across state borders with the seasons had no such loyalty, nor did they pay respect to borders.

### **Inger**

Reading *Growth of the soil* with Sommer in the back of one's head, it seems legitimate to claim that the novel operates on (at least) two levels. It can be read as a story about individuals, and as an allegory of the relation between the peoples of the North. Regarding the latter, one could say that the novel is 'theorizing the family as a microcosm of the state'. Woman and land become one, woman and the subalterns become one. Sommer states, on the woman of the foundational fiction, that she is 'the object of desire. Whether she becomes rhetorically synonymous with the land, as she often does, or with the 'naturally' submissive and loving races and classes that the hero will elevate through his affection, woman is that which he must possess in order to achieve harmony and legitimacy'.

Here, one may recognize Isac's Inger. One day she comes walking across the mountains and she stays, to Isac's satisfaction. He has long awaited some womenfolk's help, it is hard to manage without.

She comes, after he has given the word to the Lapps roaming by, and in the hamlet. She comes, and it is good, the work is too much for one single man. And Inger pulls the load with him, but she is too much of the land she is of: She gossips with the Lapps and lets them into the kitchen, like them she is superstitious, and is soon to be the victim of sorcery. She has a child with a cleft lip, whom she kills and lays in the field.

Inger's relation to the 'primitive' is problematic to Isac. Like the Sámi she is 'naturally submissive and loving', she is accomodating and peaceable, like the land itself. But she has her ways, a certain understanding of life that develops over time, and over the pages. In her universe there is sorcery and witchcraft. Through affection and tenderness, in the sweat of his face, Isac seeks to elevate her from this land of lurking terror. He seeks to elevate the standard of the land itself, cultivate it. And with it, her. He must own her/the land, in order to achieve harmony and legitimacy, but she is not easily owned. She is naturally submissive and loving, but how to change the way of thinking, cosmology? How can he *own* her in such a way, so that she is his even in thought? This colonizing of the mind is the greatest challenge when settling this far north, there is much work to be done: Ploughing and harrowing before the sowing.

If *Growth of the Soil* is read as a national chronicle, an abstract historic epic, the thesis 'to govern is to populate' is applicable. *Growth of the Soil* is about populating: to populate an area, to cultivate the land. Imperialism would legitimize the populating by claiming that the territories were empty, desolate (*terra nullius*), or inhabited by 'submissive races' in accordance with a social Darwinistic approach (acquisition by settlement). In *Growth of the Soil*, both of these operate: Isac settles in the wilderness; the fact that there are people present is dismissed - they are only Lapps, sniffing their way from mountain to mountain, they are in line with animals, and as such the land is empty. We know for a fact that Sápmi, Sámi Land, was 'the object of desire', that her neighbours fought over her (as in the Calmar War), they fought over the right to call her their own, to mark her as their territory, we know they taxed her and impoverished her, as they and others did in great parts of what today is called 'the third world'.

Sommer applied to *Growth of the soil* involves reading the denial of the Sámi as a crucial part of the text. By drawing Sommer's

territorial form of feminism further and highlighting it using Pateman's thorough analysis of the foundation of liberalism, the formalized oppression of the 'ism' becomes recognizable. In acknowledging only freeborn men of nobility with citizenship and civil rights, the subjection of women, workers and children makes up the foundation stones of what we know and cherish as democracy today. The Nordic states rest on such a foundation, and there is a parallel to this in *Growth of the Soil*, in the denial of the Sámi as rightful 'citizens' or inhabitants of the novel's universe, as part of its world. This is obvious in the novel's first passage, where 'Man, a human being' trod the path into being first of all. He was 'the first that came here. There was no path before he came. Afterward, some beast or other, following the faint tracks over marsh and moorland, wearing them deeper; after these again some Lapp gained scent of the path, and took that way from fjeld to fjeld, looking to his reindeer.' The Sámi is a sniffing creature, something between animal and man, and the land is empty.

And Inger, this mother, this hybrid - her genealogy somewhat unknown, Inger the bastard, the creole, unpolished, raw, she must be loved, elevated, cleansed for flaws. By serving her penalty she rids herself of the nonsense. Inger is the North-Norwegian soul, the people of the north: childlike, naive, cruel, hard-working, unsteady, lazy. Over the Sámi, under Isac is Inger. She belongs to an abstract cross-breed, in a way she is already white-washed, her background being forgotten, hidden in the text, almost a taboo. Looking beyond the phobias of the text and the period, one might say Inger has blood relations to the Sámi: The children resemble her; they have brown eyes and oval cheeks. Inger wears gápmagat (Sámi moccasins), but the narrator hastens to emphasize that she is *not* a Sámi. Inger talks with the Sámi passing by, she is related to Oline, who is even closer related to the Sámi of the area. Both women originate from another hamlet, they are poor and not sophisticated. We know that they share the time, values and company of Sámi passing by. They talk the same language (in contrast to Isac, who only hears begging and flattery from the Sámis' mouths): They share their discourse. The women and the people and the land are one.

## The dark continent

Love between the parties in *Growth of the Soil* consists largely of Isac's sturdy forgiveness and Inger's swings: She starts out a maid, then a mistress, mother, wife, she is a murderer put away in gaol, when let loose she is educated and arrogant, she is bored in the wilderness and flirts with the workers, she has religious seizures. This inconstancy is typically 'feminine' in the perspective of a patriarchal society. Inger steals more than her share and is by so doing related to Strindberg's women: She reflects the misogyny of men who seem to fear women. Woman is the dark continent in a colonial cosmos, the 'feminine' is a feature of the 'primitive races'. This is apparent in *Growth of the soil*: the Sámi beg, they are sly and lazy, they sit in the kitchen drinking other men's coffee, jabbering, gossiping with the women. The Sámi is the Other of the text, as is woman. Sticking with de Beauvoir: Man projects his fear onto the feminine as 'otherness'. He is the subject, he is the Absolute, she is the Other. The main female characters of the novel - Oline and Inger - represent the closest we get towards a humanizing of the Lapp, considering their evasive relation with Sámi. Here lies a buried taboo, a taboo which connects women to the dark and unknown.

The narrator's bias is evident from the novel's first passage onwards. The Sámi are established as the 'Other', and in such a projection the depiction of the Other as human is lost; How can one wholly depict something which is half: one's own darker side. The Sámi are strangers within the novel's universe, the fact that the settler is the true stranger to the land is dismissed in the intoxication of nation-building, in settlement fever. Instead, values and ideas (language and customs) are to be brought from other places to be invested in this land, to be sown in this soil, forming this land into something new. The Lapp didn't form it, chisel it with tools - it can't surely be his? Is it not in human nature to shape their surroundings? In a Western view, humans are above animals, they are created to shape the land, till it, 'fill the earth and subdue it'. The imperial discourse refers to the Genesis - which is part of its superstructure - and interprets it to apply even to places already inhabited by people. The world is perceived from one's own viewpoint; in ethnocentrism the West is the entrance gate. The Western 'I', whose central values are seldom questioned, is mirrored in the 'Other'. That which is negative in

one self is projected onto the 'Other', and one sees nothing but one's own inverted image, mirrored and shown in its extreme consequence: the horror.

With Sommer, we regard the woman as people and/or land, they intertwine into something which the man, the colonist, must subdue; also, something which he has to cooperate with, in order to settle down and start a life in the 'wilderness'. The presupposition that the land he takes is wilderness, is what grounds his theft, it is enclosed in colonial discourse. And if the land is wilderness, its people are part of it, they are the primeval force, the original: the indigenous people. They represent nature; frightening, unwilling, hostile. A remainder of this untamed nature, this pariah caste, surrounds Isac's woman, she must be shaped into civil ground, she must be tilled, trimmed and sown. Superstition is something which must be trimmed, as is sorcery, which makes woman go against her nature and murder her children, the fruits - strangling the growth. The roaming Lapps are ghosts in a landscape of occult forces, the women reflect them, confirm them by letting them into the house (and in so doing, opposing the text's desire to deny them). As long as Inger and Oline are in the kitchen, gossiping with the Lapps, things are not working out, things disappear and children are born with cleft lips, as if were they bewitched. Superstition and fear/respect of Lapps are seen in the kitchen, and outside: Isac would never let them in.

Also, the prospects of growth are opposed by death, present in the soil: Its ghosts. These rest in the silences of the novel, its pauses and empty spaces. The silences of *Growth of the Soil* are in the time-space continuum: Time is a vacuum and space, the place, is inhabited by ghosts - something is missing and it is roaming restlessly about. The time is out of joint; dislocated. The presence of ghosts is evident in things unsaid, in caricatures replacing characters.

### **Mediation = love**

As Sommer points out, the foundational fictions of Latin America aimed for reconciliation: The bringing-together of various ethnic and social groups, the uniting of nations. There is a love grounding such mediation, a love shared by the Hamsun approach to human nature: One is affected by his characters, be as they may strange, weird. Grounded with love, the effect is that of reconciling past social layers,

ethnic oppositions, personal prejudice; to get to know and see leads us beyond our old biases, as if we were guided by the wise Sheheradze. This is the essence of literature, it enables us to see, it grants us the opportunity to internalize unknown knowledge and cosmology, it readies us so that we may understand people whom we would otherwise have no relation with. They may be fictive, but they carry nations, they are markings of something more, something greater than themselves. Thus, literature is mediation; mediation is the essence of literature: It brings the distant close, makes the unknown known. Literature reveals, it includes, it shuts no doors.

As the Other of the text, the Lapps in *Growth of the Soil* make up a ghostly presence, disturbing the time and space of the novel, at the same time constituting a major part of it. *Growth of the Soil* might not be a mediating text, it might work up opposition rather than ease it, erase it. One could claim that the narrator seems an (involuntary?) medium of the subalterns. Even though the narrator in *Growth of the Soil* is an extradiegetic third person, he is not omniscient to the point that he sees through his own biases, something which would be both unusual and impossible. The imperial discourse is a monologue: inaccessible to the response of Others; it does not await it and grants it no major impact. A parallel is found in *Growth of the Soil*, as carrying the same, seemingly culturally bound biases which still appear to thrive in Norway the nation state, biases which seem part of the nation's precondition, its foundation and superstructure: That it carries the right to be the master of anOther people, and deny them civil rights (land rights).

Hamsun included Sámi in his writings in a way hardly matched by other Norwegian writers of the time. The Sámi are mentioned in Olav Duun's books and indirectly in Ibsen's Finnmark complex, in plays like 'The lady from the sea', 'Rosmersholm' and 'Hedda Gabler'. Jonas Lie's Sámi connection is subtle and mystic, focusing on the black magic powers of nature and earth itself, closely connected to Sámi beliefs: Like Hamsun, Lie's writing situates itself close to the bewitched landscapes of his childhood. In *Growth of the Soil*, Sámi are actually present, although caricatured, ridiculed. We are not given much opportunity to familiarize with the Lapps in the novel, we might not even see them except as types; still they are there, *on location*. Like ghosts enforcing their presence onto the novel, more closely

connected to the land than the narrator seems willing to admit. In *seeing*, there is acknowledgement, albeit of the detesting kind. The Lapps become (possibly for this reason) types, so-called flat characters, all of them the same, something which corresponds badly with what is so often stressed: the contradictions and psychological depth of Hamsun's characters.

### **A Sámi counter-discourse**

It may seem as though there rarely were reactions to the imperial mastery, an impression enforced by the fact that practically nothing is said about Sámi history in school or elsewhere in the abundant stream of information surrounding us. There never was a settlement; the Sámi never settled for agreements to give up the land in exchange for compensations. And there were responses. In order to discover them, one has to go inside, past the gates of biases, past the schools' (non)image of how it was, past monopolizing; ethnocentric reality-production. Gaski points at such resistance in his writings on the double level of connotation in yoik (Sámi traditional music). These texts (lyrics) are mediation with a political twist and can be interpreted two ways: Firstly and most conspicuously, aimed at the imperial masters, a 'compliant implied discourse which offers itself to discovery', as Macherey says. Secondly and more subtlety, hidden in the text, a message of which the decoding relies on internal cultural knowledge, like for instance, irony. Gaski's example is unique and shows a Sámi counter-discourse where one expected none. (Or is this what missionaries first, governors later recognized as 'pagan' and 'the works of the devil' when they branded the yoik as sinful and banished the use of it in boarding schools...) In the yoik '*Suola ja noaidi*' ('The thief and the shaman'), the noaidi-shaman is ridiculed; at the same time he represents the Sámi in calling the thief by his real name. The discourse is as if taken from Bhabha's term *sly civility*: It is *civil*, polite, scratching the backs of the masters by saying what they want to hear: that they are the masters of this territory, that the shaman is worthless. It is *sly*, concealing the message to avoid punishment for rebelliousness, subtle; opposing the imperial masters by the use of an irony inconceivable to them. Again, it is *civil*, relating to what happens within Sámi society: It is political and cultivates the self-confidence of the nation. Sly civility is to be understood as such: An evasive counter-

discourse which 'politely', at the same time satirically, resists the mechanisms of oppression.

Focusing on the national, two different worldviews emerge in *Growth of the Soil*: a Sámi view versus a Norwegian one. Or rather, a colonial discourse versus the counter-discourse of the oppressed. The discourse of the novel is close to the colonial, at the same time it opens up to the voices of the marginalised. There are several examples of this in *Growth of the Soil*, it makes a point of the flattering speech of the Sámi, also, they are civil. This simultaneously civil and ironic discourse is partly recognized by the narrator, who calls it scheming, slick. Here, we recognize Bhabha. Also, Bakhtin's principle of dialogue sneaks in: The discourse of the colonized, characterized by its evasiveness, opposes the text's central values, its arrogance, its self-confident manliness. The land itself is part of this discourse; it speaks through the presence of its delegates.

When Isac comes and takes the land, he is met like this: A wandering Lapp comes by and says: - You going to live here for good? Directly, straight to the matter. You going to live here for good? An economy of words, every word expressing something. Does Isac ask if he has settled onto someone's route? Does he ask if this is someone's campground, such a good spot with water near by, sheltered under the mountain's shoulder? He can see it is pastureland - does he ask who fertilized the fields for him in generations passed, who drank from the river before him? He is happy, in the sweat of his face he seems to earn this his new ground, carrying back and forth, tenaciously toiling. Have others not toiled these fields before him? Have others not watched their children die here, their joys be born here? A grouse hisses wildly at him when he first enters the valley, it 'starts up at his feet with an angry hiss, and he nods again: feathered game and fur - a good spot this'. Does he see nothing but that which is to his own advantage; does he not know how to interpret a hissing grouse? A grouse hissing like that is a delegate of the dead; it can bewitch and paralyze you. And silence is inhabited by ghosts, articulate in their muteness.

And later, when Inger, when pregnant Inger sees the hare, is this the grouse again? The land and the people there wanting to scare the settler and all that is his, scare them off? Has Inger's envious cousin sent her the hare, is it the people, the land and its animals, its grouses

and hares and Lapps, who gather now and wish to see the settlers off, gone? Is the family to be scared off by sorcery and superstition now that they are settling, settling here for good?

### **An economy of sharing**

The land is shared by settler and Sámi, although they have a somewhat different attitude towards it. The nature and the land make up a substantial part of the novel's motif. We see the settler's relation to the ground, his Old Testament ownership of land: He is put to manage it. From the beginning of the novel there is a parallel development concerning the presence of law (or lack of such) in relation to land: Isac enters an 'empty' land, he takes it, settles and has a wife. Neither the land nor the wife is 'given' him by the law: they are not married, he has no paper saying he owns the land. Two cases develop simultaneously in the novel, one concerning land ownership, one concerning child murder and its aftermath. The ground is transferred to Isac, he pays for it and makes it his, at the same time Inger buries her child in (sacrifices it to) the ground. We see two different ways of relating to land, one that is to do with getting a paper saying you own it and pay for it in the sweat of your face, the other is to do with superstition and sacrifice. The first applies to Western culture, the latter to non-Western, 'uncivilized' cultures, seemingly. The norm of the novel is clear: While the former brings prosperity and growth, the latter leads to nothing but wretchedness and cultural corruption.

Rather, one could read this as different ways of payment. And one could say Inger pays doubly: She relates to the local ecology by sacrificing a child; this is payment as we know it in Christianity, where sacrifice is the gist of the matter. Like Medea, Inger kills her children (later to be followed in this by Barbro). Could she have, as de Beauvoir suggests, achieved a dangerous advantage through the bond that ties the mother to her child? Not to say: ties her to the ground. We sense a mighty constellation behind the woman and the child murder, a power women may enhance when giving in to land, its forces. Later, another kind of economy intervenes and makes its claims: Inger must pay for the child murder by serving time.

- 'Tis the land that keeps us, Isac says when the engineer asks him to supervise the telegraph poles; he has no time for making

money on such, the earth makes its claims. In opposition to this is the Lapps' roaming about in the mountains, one does not quite understand what they live by: it must be begging. They obviously beg every time they go by Sellanraa. Isac has no means of understanding that the Sámi relation to land comes into view in exactly such things as the begging. Oline claims such anOther view regarding the growth of the soil when defending herself against Isac accusations concerning the loss of some sheep:

- 'Here you've all you could wish for every sort, and a heavenly host of sheep and goats and all in your own shed, and you've not enough. How should I know what sheep, and what two lambs, you're trying to get out of me now? You should be thanking the Lord for His mercies from generation to generation, that you should. 'Tis but this summer and a bit of a way to next winter, and you've the lambing season once more, and three times as many again.'

This is the law of the land, the mentality that kept people alive. In times of trial people have shared with each other, and it is otherwise also a presupposition that people help each other out. Organised around the principle of sharing, the Sámi economy has continued in many places since the dissolving of the Siida society. The Siida society is paralleled in the West in the world of ideas, in anarchy as presented by Godwin, with the core principle of decentralizing (siidas were small communities consisting of seldom more than 200 people), as well as the absence of a central authority and class bars. Within the siida, the right to the land, and to the growth of the soil, was mostly common, divided amongst families. The rules of distribution were inherited and certain measures secured those who were unable to support themselves. The Siida economy was as such basically grounded on sharing; one could say it was matriarchal.

### **The spiritual growth of the soil**

One should be thankful and modest, Oline claims. One should give thanks to the Lord and be modest in such a way that one does not claim more from the growth of the soil than what is actually needed; modest enough to share the surplus. Isac seems unaffected by such wisdom, he only has eyes for what he, in the sweat of his face, can achieve. He does not give much thanks to God, he does not relate to the ground by connecting to its people. Isac is a 'self-made' man.

Geissler's help is the only help Isac is willing to accept in 'the wild'. (The exception obviously being Oline, from whom help is received rather reluctantly.) Geissler seems attached to the area by nothing other than his plans of extracting minerals, he is not popular in the hamlet. Geissler settles businesses and roams about, a positive opposite to Oline and the Lapps. But it is fine with him, he, too, is a 'self-made' man.

Modern society is grounded on the individualism of the 'self-made man'. Inger has learnt from this while in town: She comes home and takes no more the same interest in people around her, she has become less considerate, more shallow it seems, frivolous. She comes home after serving time, her lip no longer cleft, she has served with murderers and is trained in skills, she no longer holds it to be a bad thing, what she did - why should there be a penalty for killing children, even healthy ones? They were no more than lumps of meat! This Inger learned in the town, such a view on humans, on nature. Inger has sacrificed a child to the ground and the river, she is restless and finds no peace here, no contemplation.

To begin with, Isac lives in an earthen hut, together with the beasts. He lives the way the Sámi live; to begin with, people lived like this. With growing wealth, he has a decent house, and no longer talks with Lapps. Such is development, that's how it was. *Growth of the Soil* is a chronicle, a national epic of the North; it is about the subduing of the country, the control of the wilderness and the people in it, it is about the strenuous life of the North, beasts and beauty. It is about how people came to stay, had offspring, lived their lives. How those who leave this reality become restless and hungry for wealth, external wealth. And he who stays and trusts his own strength and the growth of the soil, shall have plenty, shall be safe and settle; not roam about, wishing to be somewhere else, like Inger sometimes does, like their son does. In this lies the potential spiritual growth of the soil: To trust that which the earth gives.

### **The land is active, the earth alive**

Is this what Isac does, does he bond with the land? He does not know the stories to go with it, his ancestors do not lie buried in the ground, he does not listen to the earth for other reasons than agricultural ones. If he senses that the earth is alive, he shuts it off, he will not let it in.

Like Oline would, like Inger would. They let it in, and disaster with it, sorcery, witchcraft. Sorcery and witchcraft is let into the text as well, in the same manner that the Sámi are let into the kitchen: concealed, without the master's knowledge and approval. For the child really *is* cleft-lipped from Inger's encounter with the hare in the kitchen: Sorcery works! It is present in the world, in *this* world anyway, in this place. If Oline is the one sending her the hare, as Inger thinks, if her nasty cousin is to blame, is secondary. The sorcery is not denied. Its potential is present in the world and our only defense against it (if we want one) is not to see it, like Isac. Not to believe in it, not to acknowledge it. Whoever stays and doesn't let sorcery and witchcraft into the kitchen, is safe. When Inger lets the Lapp into the kitchen, when she listens to his flattery - that is when disasters strikes. He praises the children, how pretty they are, and out of the rucksack comes the hare and Inger sees it, the dog barking and whimpering, why doesn't he beg, Os-Anders, like he always does, why does he ask about the grounds, not bought yet? - 'Tis common land', Inger says, 'and sweat of his brow to every spade of it!' - 'Why, they say 'tis the State owns all the land.' And Isac has to start buying the grounds he has worked so hard on, and Geissler enters and settles it. Os-Anders is a walking disaster, he is the land wanting them gone. He blames the dog who killed the hare which he showed the boy so Inger saw it and the child in the belly was cleft-lipped. Like in an old children's jingle events are chained and the land is active in *Growth of the Soil* through its delegates: Grouse, hare, Lapp, dog. The land is active and time ineffective, it hangs over the fields like fog, time is idle, resting rather than passing, there seems to be eternity above Isac's soils, he carries and carries and the furios pace of progress is not to be heard even in the distance. Inger is the one eventually bringing progress closer, Inger in gaol in town, Inger learning skills and wanting the same for her children, Inger learning sewing, a craft! Inger who is discontent in the wild and with the growth that comes from it. Inger who flirts with the workers, flirts? - she does more than flirt. Inger who sells out cheap believing she is young, chic, alive.

This is how the narrator in *Growth of the Soil* depicts the land; in the name of progress: reactionary, romanticizing; certainly - loyal, dearly; indeed. It is love of land, it is envy. Isac, toiling in the fields, the love makes this land his, in the sweat of his face he loves her. And the

narrator shares the love. But does the land love back? Uncertainty makes envy and in envy he drives away those others who love her, who share the love and cherish her. In envy he draws them, like lice in her hair, vermin in their bed.

### **The displacing power of the Other's cosmology**

The tensions of the text does not necessarily lie in its oppositions. In deconstruction, Derrida focuses on binary oppositions as the grounds of Western mentality, and tries to break up locked patterns of thoughts by forming counterbalance through displacement:: *différance*. In Derrida's displacement, dualisms are blown up and turned upside down, to the point where they are put off and meaning displaced.

Hamsun's writing has elements of displacement in its approach to human character and life. There is something very real in the complex, at the same time simple people in *Growth of the Soil*; like life itself they hold colossal contrasts in themselves. The opposite poles erode, erased by narrated time. Language is hybrid; it mediates between antagonists and shapes a third space (this is where Derrida ends and Bhabha begins). The place, the wild speaks and in so doing shapes an alternative to Western cosmology, built upon oppositions, and in this recognition there is displacement. With the opening towards the Other the borders of logocentrism burst and logocentrism itself becomes invalid.

As the author endorses elements of a culture he fails to comprehend, the colonial text *Growth of the Soil* carries the discourse of the colonized. One cannot conceive of Hamsun without Hamarøy, this island of mountains and valleys, Lapps and sorcery, just as one cannot discuss the North Norwegian in a postcolonial setting without focusing on the Sámi presence. Precisely the denial of the Sámi is typically North-Norwegian, and this is evident in *Growth of the soil*. Behind denial is the enigma, an attraction taking you past the opposite poles of this world and into that which is human, life. Magic is lurking within man, in its superstition, its dark depths and fanaticisms. Hamsun's world is a hybrid place, a land inhabited by various creatures, alive in stories and peoples' beliefs. In all of the Other and in hybridity lies the range of the 'word magician' and the 'enemy of humanity'. Hamsun simultaneously represents the colonizing and the colonized. He writes within hybrid space, based on experiences in a

marginalized land. In this lies the range and the knowledge of human nature, in this lies the poetic genius.

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