

Characterisation and Narrative Structure in Olav Duun

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Characterisation was an element of fiction to which Olav Duun attached considerable importance. In 1916 Duun was complaining in a letter to his publisher, Olaf Nordli, that his characters did not 'live' and that therefore his books were 'fusk i kunst' (1). In the following year, in a letter to his old Norwegian teacher, Vetle Vislie, Duun gives a short psychological sketch of Martin Brudalen, the main character in his new novel *På Lyngsøya*, and laments over his lack of success in incorporating these psychological observations into the compositional structure of the novel(2). The idea that his characters should 'live'. That they should, as it were, grow 'naturally' out of the fictive action and structure of the novel, was a main concern of Duun's around this time, and a problem which he eventually seemed to solve – even to his own satisfaction – during the next years, particularly in the creation of the character Odin Setran.

To solve the problem, Duun had to turn to history, in *Det gode samvet* and then the *Juvikfolke*-cycle, in order to explore how social and economic change was to be translated in fiction into human fates and altered psychology(3). Empirically observed psychological features are incorporated into the structure of the novels in such a way that they emerge as the logical and necessary consequence of the portrayed action. The formation of the characters in Duun's mature works develops, as if it were bound by laws of nature, out of fictive action, which in turn rooted in historical social reality. Martin Brudalen, as an example of Duun's pre-mature work, was certainly a product of observed social reality, but his character was not shown to be a necessary development of the portrayed action. Characterisation in Duun's work is the fictional treatment of actual social-historical development, and not by any means the product of the free fancy of the author. Indeed, Duun frequently expressed a certain envy at the freedom of style of his teacher, Vetle Vislie, a freedom which he seemed unable to allow himself in his novels. The collection of short stories *Vegar og villstig*, which Duun himself called 'eit skulearbeid', seems to have been directly inspired by Vetle Vislie's *Vintervegen* (4).

Character and fate in Duun's work are never arbitrary determined. First and foremost, the fictive action which pre-determines character and fate unfolds consistently with actual historical development. The characters develop in accordance with the possibilities and limitations determined by historical reality and the particular social relations portrayed in the fiction. The better this is worked into the structure of the novel, the more the observed and analysed psychological characteristics 'come to life' and the more the character 'live'.

This view of characterisation in Duun's work contradicts a traditional view, best presented by Rolv Thesen, which implies that character is determined irrationally, by blood or by inheritance, by self-will or by the whim of the author. According to this model, the

'lykkemann' – a Per Anders, Blind-Anders or Odin – cannot help but act correctly and well, while the 'nidning' – a Jens, Petter or Lauris – is condemned to behave badly and wrong. Characters is, in any case, not dependent on social circumstance or on actual historical development and is expressed as a product of Duun's free creative genius (5).

An important source for Thesen's interpretation of Odin is a letter Duun wrote to Vislie as he was starting work on the second half of the *Juvikfolke* novel-cycle, the 'Odin*-trilogy. In it, he writes:

No blir det ein strid å skape den mannen som det er 'oppreising' i, - som i sitt eine liv skal fara gjennom alt dei gamle stava seg framgjenom og så vinne seg eit hönefött lenger. Eg har han gåande på gras, og han ser meg bar levande ut: men det er verst å få han til å lystre. Folk nektar å gå den veg eg har rudd for dem; same kor lenge eg levar i lag med dem, når det ber til så ser eg dei var ansles enn eg trudde.(6)

And because Duun finally seemed to be satisfied with his creation Odin Setran, Thesen and many others have assumed that the author indeed got his character to obey, to go the way he had cleared for him. The idea that a character who 'lives' – of such importance to Duun – who as it were leads a life of his own, would have to be something more than a straightforward reflection of Duun's own desires and ambitions: this is not clearly considered by the mainstream of Duun criticism.

It is of course an elementary rule of literary criticism that the statements, views and intensions of an author should not be 'read into' his work, the work must 'speak for itself'. Terry Eagleton describes realist fiction as an attempt to achieve an 'intensive incorporation of life into seamless, symmetrical wholes', wholes which 'must be achieved without damage to the empirical specificity of experience' (7). The ability to mould lived and observed experience into harmonic artistic totality will be dependent on the author's immerse on into the dominant ideology of his or her day. The more difficulty encountered in personally absorbing the prevalent outlook and ideas of society, the more difficulty there will be in re-working experience into a consistent artistic whole. Therefore, the socialist literary historian and critic is less interested in the success of the author in achieving this artistic synthesis than in the process of seamlessness and symmetry, and rather in the way it goes about trying to harmonise lived experience ('the empirical specificity of experience') and artistic form (the greater or lesser perfection of 'seamless, symmetrical wholes').

There is no doubt that Duun set about creating a harmonious character who comes at least 'eit hönefött' further along the path of human development than his predecessors and contemporaries. There is equally no doubt that Duun felt he had, in a typically modest way, achieved this end, as the following quotation indicates. It comes from a reply, which was never completed, to a series of questions sent to him near the end of his life by the Tønsberg 'gymnasiesamfund'. He writes:

Odin. Han har berga med seg noko for seg sjöl, noko verdfullt. Det kunde vera verdfullt for andre? Han vil mellom anna vera i jamhögd med lagnaen sin, helst litt i overkanten. Eit mönster er så firkanta eit omgrep Men -?Önskedraum av meg? Vel så har eg dikta eitkvart eg med. (8)

The creation of this character had to be painstakingly worked for. It required an extensive and intensive analysis, partly intuitive but mainly conscious, of the social-historical conditions which could have formed Odin's character. Out of the fictive portrayal of these conditions, the character Odin had to evolve 'naturally', without doing violence either to the empirically observed reality or to the artistic structure of the novel. The very fact that Duun here writes that if Odin is wish-fulfilment, then he, too, has 'made something up', is proof that the bulk of what he wrote was not meant to be 'made up', but 'true to life'.

In contrast to Rolv Thesen and many other Duun critics, this present study turns the attention towards the gap between Duun's intention and the character which he actually created, a character which 'did not obey': which went its own way. It went its own way precisely because Duun's lived and observed experience was not fully compatible with the 'seamless' artistic totality towards which he strived. The lack of success on Duun's part in this respect is not of course synonymous with lack of artistic success. As we have said, seamlessness and symmetry is – at least in *realist* fiction – dependent on the author's being able to take on, without it causing too much friction, the dominant ideology of the day. Such symmetry is, for us, in itself not so interesting. What is interesting is the whole process of reworking experience into artistic form, for the cracks in class ideology resist the formation of seamless artistic wholes in realist arts.

For many Duun critics, the artistic merit of *Juvikfolke* seems to stand and fall with the ability to demonstrate that Odin's heroic self-sacrifice on the boat-hull resolves, in an artistically harmonious and satisfying way, all the social and spiritual conflict portrayed in the novel-cycle (9). We turn our attention now to the process of reworking empirical experience – the 'giving life' to his analyses and observations – which made a harmonic solution for Duun problematic, if not yet (in 1923) impossible.

Odin's successful career coincided with the long continuing economic boom, 'den nye arbeidsdag', from 1905 to 1916. His ambitions were frustrated by the recession which followed, His fortune and his fate where determined, in a parallel way to Blind-Anders', by the workings of world economy. Blind-Anders enjoyed the new social possibilities offered by the economic expansion of the 1840s and 1850', only to be thwarted by the crisis of 1859-60. Blind-Anders' son, Ola, was by contrast socially active (or inactive) at a time when Norwegian agriculture was in a long period of stagnation or decline. (10) In each case, social activity – and thereby formation of character – was broadly determined by actual historical reality.

In *I stormen*, social relations are dominated by the factory. Odin's factory was part of a process, in which Norway developed from being a producer of raw and semi-manufactured materials for the developed capitalist countries to being itself a producer of manufactured goods. Between 1909 and 1913, the number of canning factories doubled. (11) Odin's factory was probably built at this time. In the years of economic expansion, the factory provided profits for the shareholding farmers – Odin has seen to it that all the farmers of the parish have shares, so that there is no conflict of interest – as well as work for the rural surplus population. At the same time, the work force provided a market for agricultural produce for the farmers. In the episode about the herring catch, Odin contrives to satisfy

everyone: the fishermen were offered a good price for their catch; the workers get a wage increase, with which they can consume more of the farmers' products. As long as there is a demand on the world market for the factory's products, Odin has success with his Keynesian-like economic policy.

Recognition of the changed economic climate at the end of the long boom leads to the rebellion against Odin's management at the shareholders' extraordinary general meeting. It is the outsider, the new 'Vennestadmenn', who is best situated to define the problem: the factory is under-capitalised and uncompetitive on a shrinking market; its only chance of survival lies in the infusion of outside capital and know-how. The farmers, however, do not like the idea of 'utabygds folk' and 'forretningsfolk' coming and taking over their factory. Now the factory is there, they are in its power. They are dependent on its profits to pay off the debts they have incurred in going over to mechanised agricultural production. To make matters worse, the higher wages the better-organised factory workers are forcing out of them are attracting labourers away from their own farm.

For all Odin's good will and intentions in wanting to break down political and class divisions in the local society, the factory asserts itself as the dominant factor in the social life of the parish. It is his reflection to it that determine his actions and his character, and not just his relations to past generations of Juvikings. His relation to the factory is not clear-cut. As Arnesen points out, he would have been more successful if his running of the factory had been in accordance with straightforward capitalist principles of profit and loss. (12) However, if Odin had been the sole owner and run the factory only for himself that would have cut him off from the parish community, which is a source of social motivation for him. The factory dictates the social life of the parish equally regardless of the wishes of the farmers its joint owners, who would have liked to close it at the first sign of economic recession. However, a temporary recovery in the faltering economy creates a new demand. The decline in world economic activity at the outbreak of the 1914-18 War had left Norwegian capitalists with a lack of wealth-creating undertakings in which to invest their profits. This led to a high level of speculating in banking and shipping shares and in dubious overseas ventures, which in turn set off an inflationary spiral, during which wages failed to keep up with rising prices. (13) In order to take advantage of the economic recovery, instead of closing the factory, the share-holding farmers agree to give way to the demands of the workers, overtime is encouraged, and a construction committee is established actually to *expand* the factory!

In the inflationary situation, the workers promptly threaten a new strike, which Odin tries to divert with an offer of profit sharing to the floor workers and a bonus scheme for the construction workers. Both manoeuvres are thwarted by Engelbert, who has good reason to be suspicious of Odin's motives. (14) The management, with Odin's approval, retaliates by sacking the workers' foreman, but the plan to divide the workers, despite Odin's strenuous efforts, misfires until the management finds the excuse they need to break the workers' solidarity, when Engelbert and some other workers in a bout of drunkenness pull down the scaffolding on the construction site. They are dismissed, apart from a handful of workers whose skills are indispensable. Odin then hires blackleg labour, and when they show signs of hesitation, he urges them through the picket lines.

Odin's desire to champion the cause of 'småmannen' proves impossible when class conflict becomes irreconcilable, and he is forced back into defence of his own interest, ultimately defined by his dependence on and his commitment to capital. He cannot maintain his political neutrality and his refusal to take sides in political strife. Odin's strikebreaking activity marks a decisive turning point in his attitude to the masses and to the external world at large. The process of change had begun with his defeat at the share-holder' meeting. Then he had begun to feel that the ordinary people of the parish, who he wanted to serve, weighed him down, instead of, as they had previously done, buoying him up. When, for the first time in his life, he is faced with a determined social opposition, his attitude to the masses changes rapidly and radically. 'Men de e drepanes' he breaks out. 'At folk kann bli slik da?' (15) Breaking the strike Odin considers the justification of his action for a moment:

- Urett? Tenkte han. Kva er urett? Eg veit det ikkje. Ein demokrat, ein småmann, kva ar det? Veit ikkje det helelr nei. Og kva er det, det, ein veit? Kva skal ein med det? Det blir ikkje det ein går etter, når ein gjer det einaste rette ein gong. Har eg dikta dem som står der, eller er dei slik? (16)

Faced with irreconcilable class antagonisms, Odin is no longer prepared to recognise the rights and interest of others, but gives himself over to the naked self-interest, which is to say class interest, within himself. Whether the masses are really as they seem to be to him, or whether his view is the product of his particular consciousness, shaped by material interest, this is a question Odin no longer wishes to answer.

Yet following blindly his own class interests is not compatible with his desire for a broad community of the parish, which embraces all classes. This projected community had been the basis of Odin's social purpose, and when he abandons it, he feels the loss within himself. He becomes withdrawn and show signs of estrangement from the outside world, which both his sons, Anders, and his wife, Ingri, notice. (17)

Odin's crisis of consciousness coincides with the death of his father, who's Tolstoyan' philosophy of life is at this stage of the novel restated. This philosophy had played an important part in the formation of Odin's character. Based on the recognition that in the modern society conflicts of interest, self-assertion and oppression, right and wrong, all have to be considered in terms of social relations, it concludes that from one man's right and self-assertion could be as wrong and oppressive from another's point of view. The only humanistic solution, according to Otte, was to refrain from the assertion of one's own interests and to yield to others'.

While accepting the doctrine of the equal value of all individuals' right in society from his father's teaching, Odin rejects the necessity of withdrawal from social conflict and directs his energies towards advancing the interests of all people in society, the community at large. Putting these ideas into practise, Odin discovers that he has to make compromises, which remove his social activity further and further from the idealist philosophy which had prompted it. At his father's deathbed, Odin swears that he will give up the self-assertive social practice that is now showing signs of becoming destructive and counter-productive. Duun makes it clear that it is unlikely Odin will be able to keep his promise. (18) Odin's crisis makes him re-appraise his social activity and motivation. The re-orientation he finds is

determined by his economic class interests. It means the abandonment of respect for the right of others, a more strenuous assertion of his own will, and the destruction of the opposition he is encountering through the actions of the workers. It is significantly Luther, the embodiment of the bourgeois protestant ethic, who provides Odin with the ideological weaponry for the changed situation:

'Æ veit ikkj om d e ovafor oss eller attom oss, det som skuva på å styri oss; - æ trur det e inni mæ sjöl. Men der æ stár, det má æ stá – I det var visst Luther som sa det först!' (19)

The rights of the workers, the rights of the masses are irrelevant in the face of the intensity with which Odin experience his own needs and desires.

After breaking the strike, Odin's view of the world improves slightly once again with the recovery of the economic fortunes of the factory. But the division between himself and the masses is established, even if it has not yet broken out into people at the prayer meeting which he disrupts. At the same time, he recognises that he, too, has manipulated the masses in a similar way as the evangelical preacher. Unfortunately, the only alternative he can see is a return to the harsh, inhuman, ruthless struggle of the old society, and not a democratically organised society where the masses determine their own fate. At this point, Odin comes close to finding a basis for a real identity of interest with the masses. To Iver Vennestad, the first ever to be influenced by Otte's humanist message, he says:

Eg har aldri set det så brennklart som no: Det dein andre vantar det vantar eg òg. Det er berre det, at eg veit det kunde ha vore ansles. For visst det ikkje var så, da kunde ein snu seg ifrå det og gå sin veg, slik han far gjorde; dei kan gjerne kalla det å döy. (20)

Odin's distance from the masses is already too great for him to be able to take advantage of this insight and to seek ways of developing this solidarity.

The possibility of any such development vanishes entirely with the attack on the myth of Ingri's purity. Domestic life for Odin represents a small enclave that offer refuge form the conflict and competitiveness of social life. Here Odin seeks the personal satisfaction that the problematic running of the factory or the tedious routine of his work as parish chairman cannot offer. In this domestic framework, Ingri represent an untainted and unworldly purity. It is not by chance that Odin has chosen an outsider as his wife. Karen-Anna, for example, the first mermaid-candidate, was not able to conceal the worldly impurity of her harsh social circumstances and was rejected. His need to believe in Ingri's absolute purity, in order to compensate for compromises in his social activity and his envy of Lauris's sexuality, which had always been a part of the rivalry between the two, explain the exaggerated violence of Odin's response to Engelbert's drunken insinuation of intimacy between Lauris and Ingri.

Odin shows no sign of compassion and no recognition of his own responsibility when Engelbert is apparently lost in the river's current. As Odin's understanding of the world begins to reveal its limitations, instead of facing up to and correcting these limitations as Åsel, in particular, had so often had to do in the course of her life, he retreats more and

more to the shelter of his illusory world of a pure domestic haven in a corrupt and inferior external world.

Her skulde ha vore *kosta* i bygda! Småfolk, sier dei. Eg har sagt det mange gonger: Eg hatar det orde. Det er eit stygt ord. Men no har det snudd seg, no må eg til å bruke det. Alt samem har snudd seg, og eg er på andre sida. Ho Astri og 'n Lauris, dei ser eg på swmåmanns-sida, eg trur snart eg ser heile bygda der. Men da vil eg heller rømme. Dei skulde settas i tjør eller båas. Eg ser det no: det er slik over heile lande. Det er slik no ei tid. At det skulde komma til å sjå ut slik for *meg* da. (21)

Odin becomes obsessive about protecting Ingri's purity and cleansing the parish of all evil, whose source he locates in his rival, Lauris, oblivious as he is now to the complexity of the chain of cause and effect in social relations. Odin gives up trying to understand the world in rational terms and gives himself over to mysticism fatalism. He reverts to the egocentricity of a primitive Juviking, seeing in the external world only that which he needs to confirm his own prejudices and desires. In doing so, he rejects the experience of successive generations of Juvikings, whose control over their environment depended on the adequacy of their rational understanding of that environment in which they were active and not on their blind energy. Odin rejects this experience and reverts to the spontaneity, which the Juvikings had struggled to free themselves from, it having served them so badly in the emerging complexity of modern society.

Odin interprets his father's death as a legitimisation for the course of actions he has decided on. Instead of striving to see and take account of the point of view of others, he will rely blindly on the «*inste i seg*». But even this is not the pure moral force he would like to think it to be, for that, too, has been shaped, and ultimately determined, by social conflict and the external world. Rather than try to discover the interrelation between his innermost desires and the external world, Odin prefers now to let himself be driven by natural forces, whose authority he accepts fatalistically:

Lagnadan kallar dei det, har eg hørt. Ein blind ein på ei blind merr, men det ber så tålig rett av stad like vel, dit det skal, elelr dit det må, eg veit det ikkje, så nöye. Bonde, sier folk. Men bonde, det var ein som levde i mørkre det, i det lodne, logne mørkre; no har han visstgnudd sömnen utor auga, den siste tå dem, og da er han ikkje bonder lenger. De trur meg ikkje, ser eg. Nein, nei, mamne får dei ha. Men tru om det er derfor det seglar så krokut her i lande, all ting mest, for det at det vakna *da* og *da* borti heimane? (22)

Odin has in fact given up the struggle to be the master of his own destiny – the aspect of Odin's character that, according to Duun in his letter to the Tønsberg '*gymnasiensamfund*', gave Odin his literary value – as he faces the storm: 'Nei, æ lit på stormen æ!' (23)

Both Ola and Odin die by drowning, albeit in different circumstances. The similarities and contrasts between the two man's social situation and activity and the circumstances of their deaths are extensive. During their lives, both are made aware of the constraints placed upon them by the limitations of the local society and seek ways to break these constraints. Social change makes it impossible for either of them to accept uncritically the conservative

traditions and beliefs of their environment, and they have to reach a rational, conscious understanding of their social situation. In the process of reaching such an understanding they both find an ultimate solidarity, intellectual rather than instinctive, with the community they were born into; Ola with the farm at Håberg, Odin with the whole parish. Both of them see the local community as enshrining certain human values, which are threatened by the whole society. Odin, whose mature life coincided with 'den nye arbeidsdag', was able to play an active role with a dynamic sense of social purpose in defending and promoting the values he believed in, unlike Ola, who lived during a long period of rural decline and social stagnation and spent his time watching for the new Messiah.

Both of them are finally forced to recognise the inadequacy of their intellectually constructed sense of community, which is wrenched apart by social change and the intensity of class struggle. With the loss of community, life becomes intolerable and they lose the will to live. Ola's suicide fits Emile Durkheim's description of egoistic suicide, in that his subjectivity was rarely checked or tested against social experience, owing to his non-participation in social life. He was cut off from society, a cynical observer. His link to the community hung by a thread from the time he contemplated suicide in *Storbrylløppe*.(24)

Odin's suicide, or self-sacrifice, was by comparison rather a generous action, but it makes no sense to classify it as what Durkheim calls an altruistic suicide. In this case, the suicide subordinates his own will to that of the community. The bond tying him to his individuality is a weak one.(25) Odin was anything but tied to his individuality by a weak bond, and he cannot be said to have subordinated his own will to that of society. His suicide is more like Durkheim's 'anomic suicide', in many ways similar to the egoistic suicide.

Both spring from society's insufficient presence in individuals. But the sphere of its absence is not the same in both cases. In egoistic suicide, it is deficient in truly collective activity, thus depriving the latter of object and meaning. In anomic suicide, society's influence is lacking in the basically individual passions, thus leaving them without a check-rein. (26)

This is Odin's situation. In spite of his willingness to serve society, his solidarity with the community is too tenuous for him to be able to control his powerful subjective desires - the 'inste i seg' - which in the end becomes an anti-social destructive force.

Given that loss of community is the underlying cause of suicide, Durkheim notes the tendency of non-marriage to increase feelings of isolation, and hence suicide. (27) In this respect, the failure of Odin's marriage to provide the community he lacked in public life is significant. Odin neglects his wife and children for the sake of his social activity in the parish, and consequently the family community is too weak in Odin to compensate, when he becomes estranged from the parish community. Another relevant factor mentioned by Durkheim is the tendency for suicide to diminish as the burdens of life increase. (28) Hardship and adversity, in themselves, tend to increase solidarity with the community, and Juvikings of all generations welcomed burdens, which gave them a sense of responsibility and purpose, whereby they felt they were of use to the community. Adversity is only destructive when it at the same time reveals that the true nature of the community and of the social environment has been misunderstood. Indeed, prosperity and social success work

against community feeling because they give the individual an exaggerated belief in his or her own capacities and potential. Then reversal of fortune is harder to bear, as was the case of Blind-Anders as well as for Odin. (29)

Durkheim goes on to describe a particular kind of anomic suicide, where the suicide is 'preceded by a murder; a man kills himself after having killed someone else whom he accuses of having ruined his life.' This kind of suicide is characterised by irritation and exasperated weariness. (30) Technically it is true what Odin says: 'Mordar vart æ no ikkj da'. (31) Nevertheless, the description does fit the circumstances of Odin's death. Apart from scheming to murder Lauris, Odin comes close to killing Engelbert in an uncontrolled rage. Believing him to be dead, Odin shows no regret, but precisely a resigned exasperation. In a similar spirit, he plans to murder Lauris, rationalising it as justice, a due punishment for the oral damage Lauris, in Odin's warped view, has inflicted. Finally, faced with the struggle for survival on the boat-hull, Odin's initial reaction is, again, an exasperated weariness:

- Slik er det ja, tann imot tann all vegen, ranns det gjennom Odin, det var sviande vondt så han gav eit stönn ifra seg. (32)

In the end, Odin does briefly regain control over his passions and faces the situation on the boat-hull with sober senses in order to master it, instead of continuing to react with Juviking blindness. He yields to Lauris, an accordance with the philosophy inherited from his father, but he does not resign and give himself over passively to his own death; he struggles for survival. It is this solution that most critics find satisfying and harmonious, and so it is to a certain extent. But what is more interesting is that this boat-hull situation which Odin has to master is entirely of his own making, brought about through his deterioration in the face of heightened social conflict. If Odin had not acted so badly, the situation would have never arisen.

Astri describes Odin's self-sacrifice as a supremely noble act, reasserting the family's honour; 'det skulde vera *ein* seierherre i slekta var igjen'. This old-society heroic view is immediately modified by the more sober observation:

Kanskje live såg ut slik for 'n, siste stunda, at det var ikkj' så kostbart å gi det ifra sæ. Det ser både smått og svart ut, synes æ somtid – slik mått det vera han såg det. At vi va bærre småfolk omkring 'n? (33)

Indeed, as we have seen, Odin did see the world in this way after the attack on Ingri's purity. Odin goes into the storm with an attitude of indifference and resignation, rather than of conscious determination. He considers it a strange coincidence that the steamer is going in the wrong direction when the doctor has to be fetched. 'Det e stormen som avgjer heile spelle, ska æ sei dæ', he says, absolving himself of responsibility for what is to happen. When confronted by the doctor with the insanity of the fjord crossing, Odin has no sensible answer. (34)

Even though Odin denies responsibility, the circumstances in which Odin meets his death are nevertheless very much of his own making. He uses Astri's illness to contrive the final confrontation with Lauris. He insists that it is Lauris who accompanies him and becomes

nearly hysterical when Lauris shows reluctance to meet the fate Odin is engineering for him. (35) As far as Astri is concerned, the journey was in any case unnecessary, as the doctor was to come the following day by steamer and could have been summoned by telephone. For Odin's regressive purpose, however, 'sekstringen', with its solid-society associations, was ideal. Finally, Odin sees to it that Lauris is at the helm at the time of the capsizing, although it is unlikely they would have fared any better if the boat had been under Odin's control.

The boat-hull solution, then, simply redresses a state of affairs that is of Odin's own making. The 'hönefött' of progress that Odin makes is that in the end he refrains from going through with his murderous and irrational scheme of getting rid of Lauris. Apart from that, Odin's achievements do not amount to much. His social activity is primarily self-assertive, seldom guided by any insight into the rights and interests of others. He gains little clarity over his own complicity in the social struggle and conflict in the parish. Therefore, Duun has to stage this boat-hull confrontation; a step removed from the portrayed suggests itself in the course of the fictive action. The literary solution that arises from the structure of the novel is precisely this problematic one, in terms of the actual social issues portrayed, of the self-sacrifice on the boat-hull.

If the literary solution in *Juvikfolke* is ultimately optimistic, this lies rather in the potential of further progress displayed in Odin's son Anders, in the comradeship between him and Lauris's boys, for example in the way he 'klemte seg ned ved nedre borenden breidd med Per, bror sin, og Lauris-gutane'. (36) This contrasts particularly with the way Blind-Anders, as a boy, had readily taken on his inherited authoritative and oppressive role in the social hierarchy at his father's funeral; 'Det var vaksen kar til gut ja. Han tok romme sitt, og han fylte i det'. (37) Also significant in this respect is the very fact that Odin's funeral is held in 'ungdomshuse' and not at Håberg.

And all in all the literary solution in *Juvikfolke* is harmonious, in that Duun achieves an artistic whole with relatively few distortions and at the same time remains faithful to 'the empirical specificity of experience'. Duun could achieve this synthesis because he had at the time no too great difficulty in absorbing the dominant ideology of his society. During the next fifteen years, however, the dominant ideology lost more and more of its hold over Duun, as social conflict intensified and the ruling class showed itself to be incapable of finding any democratic solution. Symmetry and seamlessness could then only be sustained by making compromises in the portrayal of empirical experience. *Straumen og evja*, for example, is an 'unharmonic' book, according to the judgement of numerous critics (38), whereas the harmony of the *Ragnhild*-trilogy depends on a retreat from social activity to the enclave at Solstranden. (Odin's parallel option of withdrawal to Kjelvik is mentioned in passing, but is never seriously considered. (39))

To conclude, then, the value or the interest of *Juvikfolke* and of the character Odin Setran lies less in the harmony or disharmony of the literary solution to the novel than in the way the solution is arrived at. Of particular interest, here is Odin's refusal to 'obey' his author, the way his character disintegrates in the face of the portrayed social conflict and takes on a form determined by this conflict. Odin was to have been the character to resolve social conflict and to unite the people and the classes of the parish. Whereas his death can generate a small orgy of class harmony, in life Odin inevitably contributed to social conflict.

In fact, Duun's method precludes the solution being sought. For character must develop naturally out of the fictive action and the structure of the novel, which in turn are rooted in empirically observed psychological features and social phenomena. Empirical observation simply did not allow for the emergence of Odin as a perfectly harmonious character in the period of sharpening class conflict, which Duun portrayed, and in which he lived. Fidelity to empirical experience triumphed over subjective desire and steered Odin on his course, which culminated in the storm on the boat-hull, where the satisfactoriness of *any* solution had to be, even by Duun's standards, extremely modest.

Notes

1. Olav Dalgard (ed.), *Olav Duun. Ei bok til 100-årsjubileet* (Oslo, 1976) p. 186
2. Dalgard, p. 187
3. Compare: George Lucács, *The historical novel* (London, 1962), esp. pp. 58-73
4. Dalgard, pp. 179, 197 and 198
5. See: Rolv Thesen, *Mennesket og maktene* (Oslo, 1945), esp. pp. 156-182. This is still the basic view of: Bjerte Birkeland, *Norges litteraturhistorie, vol. 4* (Oslo, 1975) pp. 523-533
6. Dalgard, p. 191
7. Terry Eagleton, 'Ideology and Literary Form', *New Left Review*, 90 (London, 1975)
8. Dalgard, pp. 203-5
9. Compare: Rolv Thesen (ed), *Seks unge om Olav Duun* (esp. bente Hammerich Heltoft, 'Psykologiske utviklingsstadier hos hovedsikkelsene I Olav Duuns 'Juvvikfolke'') (Oslo, 1950), p.100 and footnote 10
10. See: Simon Andrewes 'Fosnes and the World Economy. A Marxist study of Olav Duuns 'Juvvikfolk''. MPhil thesis, University of London, 1979.
11. See: Berg Furre, *Norsk historie 1905-1945* (Oslo, 1972), p. 19
12. Olav Duun, *Skrifter I samling* (Oslo, 1969) Volume 7, p. 204
13. Furre, op. cit., pp. 85-6 and 94
14. See: Duun, vol. 7, pp.196-7 and 217
15. Duun, vol 7., p.221
16. Duun, Vol. 7, p.223
17. Duun, Vol. 7, 224
18. Duun, Vol. 7, p.227
19. Duun, Vol.7, p.227
20. Duun, Vol.7, p.239
21. Duun, Vol. 7, p.257
22. Duun, Vol. 7, pp.227-28
23. Duun, Vol. 7, p.280
24. Compare: Duun, Vol.6, p.61
25. Emile Durkheim, *Suicide* (Illinois, 1951), p.234
26. Durkheim, p. 258
27. Durkheim, p.173
28. Durkheim, p.201
29. Durkheim, p.254
30. Durkheim, p.285
31. Duun, Vol.7, p.290
32. Duun, Vol.7, p.289
33. Duun, Vol.7, p.299
34. Duun, Vol.7, pp.284, 286
35. Duun, Vol.7, p.287
36. Duun, Vol.7, p.305
37. Duun, Vol.5, p.135
38. Compare; Andrewes, op.cit, pp.405-408
39. See: Duun, Vol.7, p.151