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# The characterization of Thomas Jefferson Durgin (The Landlord at Lion's Head: William Dean Howells)

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THE CHARACTERIZATION OF THOMAS JEFFERSON DURGIN  
(THE LANDLORD AT LION'S HEAD: WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS)

by  
John B. Piston

A THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Committee

of Lehigh University

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Jan. 4, 1969  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the characterization of Thomas Jefferson Durgin, the protagonist of The Landlord at Lion's Head by William Dean Howells. As a character study rather than an evaluation of the novel itself, its objective is to examine and establish Durgin as the aesthetic success which Howells considered him. This is accomplished by studying Durgin as he is seen by the critics, by Howells himself, by the other major characters, and by this writer.

The first chapter serves as an introduction and explains the choice of topic and methods employed in dealing with the topic in this thesis.

The second chapter is a survey of the critical literature dealing with the characterization, which has been only superficially probed; the conclusions put forth are by no means unanimous. The critics of Jeff Durgin outnumber his admirers and supporters, and the majority opinion sees him as Howells's warning against eroding American values.

The third chapter discusses Durgin's relationships with seven other major characters in the novel, whose evaluations of the protagonist are for the most part adverse.

The fourth chapter is my own analysis of Durgin. Although I do not attempt to present an entirely favorable

portrait, I do challenge the school of thought that presents him as an utterly selfish and self-centered scoundrel, partly by demonstrating that critics infer perhaps too much authorial criticism of this character who is remarkably representative of the modern American young male. Similarly, I do not allow Jere Westover, Durgin's most unrelenting critic, to stand as the disciple of righteousness that some scholars try to make him.

I

Like Henry James, William Dean Howells seems to be an American author of "limited" appeal. He is, for instance, considered either too difficult or too obscure for inclusion in high-school literature anthologies. He receives scant attention in most college undergraduate survey courses, which purport to emphasize "major" American authors. His novels have not become a part of Americana as have those of, say, Mark Twain and Nathaniel Hawthorne. He is, for that matter, unknown to the "average" American reader, who would be hard-pressed to name even one of Howells's works.

As is the case with Henry James, it takes a particular kind of reader to "tolerate" and appreciate Howells. Popular with the female readers of his era, Howells was severely castigated, primarily for his gentility, in the '20's and '30's. Only in recent years has he enjoyed what amounts to a "revival"; he is being re-evaluated not only in terms of his relation to his era and his contributions to American literary realism in both theory and practice, but also in terms of what he says about life and people (and his observations are significantly accurate even today).

My first in-depth study of Howells occurred in the spring of 1966 in a graduate course dealing with the beginnings

of realism in American literature; I had not previously read anything by Howells other than "Editha," a short story which appears in many undergraduate literature survey anthologies.<sup>1</sup> In that graduate course I read The Rise of Silas Lapham<sup>2</sup> and prepared an evaluation of that novel in light of Howells's critical theories as presented in Criticism and Fiction.<sup>3</sup> I was impressed by the novel: I found its characters believable, its plot carefully constructed, and its theme significant. At that time I earmarked Howells as one of a number of authors suitable as material for a master's thesis.

The name of Howells recurred again and again in my search for a suitable topic; the difficulty lay in selecting a particular novel for intensive treatment. Preliminary reading led me to The Landlord at Lion's Head, the novel which many critics consider his best, superior even to The Rise of Silas Lapham.

In reading the novel, I identified with Thomas Jefferson Durgin, the protagonist: I found him a most interesting character. Since Howells had written in Criticism and Fiction that "The fatuity of the story merely as a story is something that must early impress the story-teller who does not live in the stone age of fiction and criticism,"<sup>4</sup> I believe that there is ample justification in assuming that he meant the characterization of Jeff Durgin to outweigh the plot in The Landlord at Lion's Head. My decision to deal with the characterization was confirmed when I discovered that Howells himself regarded



Durgin as an "aesthetic success."<sup>5</sup> My objective became to present a thorough study of the characterization by examining Durgin as he is seen by the critics, by Howells himself, and by the other major characters in the novel.

I consider the amount of published criticism dealing with the novel and, in particular, with Durgin himself, suitable to sustain a one-chapter survey of it. That survey is presented as Chapter Two of this thesis.

Chapter Three discusses Jeff Durgin's relationships with seven other major characters in the novel, on all of whom Howells said he had "a very good grip."<sup>6</sup> I consider it essential that Durgin be studied in the light of what the other characters consider him to be, for, as Durgin himself thinks, " ...A good many other people had come in and taken a hand in making his own life what it had been; and if he had meddled with theirs more than he was wanted, it was about an even thing."<sup>7</sup>

Chapter Four is my own analysis of Durgin. It should be noted here that, although I do not attempt to present an entirely favorable portrait in my analysis of him, I do challenge the school of thought that presents him as an utterly selfish and self-centered scoundrel. Similarly, I do not allow Jere Westover, the effeminate artist, to stand as the disciple of righteousness that some critics try to make him.

If my opinion of Durgin is not, indeed, identical with William Dean Howells's, it is at least my own, based on

my understanding of the author and my careful reading of his novel, which is no more or no less than the published critics can realistically claim. Howells himself offers us what is possibly the best explanation for the contradictions in interpretation of the novel and the protagonist: "The characters in an American novel," he wrote in Criticism and Fiction, "are ~~never~~ unapproachable to the reader.... The naturalness, with the every-day atmosphere which surrounds it, is one great charm of the American novel. It is throughout examinative, discursive, even more--quizzical. Its characters are undergoing, at the hands of the author, calm, interested observation.... He is never caught identifying himself with them; he must preserve impartiality at all costs...."<sup>8</sup>

In "The Editor's Study," Howells once wrote that the writer should make men "know one another better, that they may all be humbled and strengthened by a sense of their fraternity."<sup>9</sup> I try to demonstrate in this thesis that Howells did, indeed, accomplish this objective in The Landlord at Lion's Head by leading us to know better Jeff Durgin's type of person and the characteristics of Durgin in ourselves and in our fellow man.

Howells also wrote, "I find every man interesting, whether he thinks or unthinks, whether he is savage or civilized; for this reason I ...thank the novelist who teaches us ...to know ...our kind."<sup>10</sup> As a particular kind of man, Durgin is not always wholly admirable in his actions, but neither is any

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man. As a particular kind of man, he is occasionally evil, but so is any man. As a particular kind of man, he is occasionally "savage," but, alas, so are all men. He is, however, always interesting and realistic.

Howells also said that "Good art is never anything but the reflection of life."<sup>11</sup> Flattered rather than insulted when romanticism-oriented critics attacked Silas Lapham as "commonplace,"<sup>12</sup> Howells offers us yet another "commonplace" character in Jeff Durgin, who distinctly counters the "romantic" kind of hero that Howells so despised. One could logically deduce that Howells was perhaps suggesting that there is more of Jeff Durgin in us, and in the American way of life, than we might realize or than we might wish.

## II

Owen Wister once related that when he visited Henry James in 1896, James fell to praising The Landlord at Lion's Head, the most recent work of William Dean Howells, published that same year.<sup>1</sup>

"It's--it's--it's, [he began,] Well, I think it's possible--yes, I'll go as far as possible--that--that six-and-a-half Americans know how good it is."

"Counting me?"

"Yes, my dear Owen, you're the half!"<sup>2</sup>

Yet in a review of the novel, a contemporary of Howells's remarked that "I do not know that it [The Landlord at Lion's Head] has any obvious purpose, except to show that an ignoble boy will become an ignoble man."<sup>3</sup> Such misunderstanding of the theme of this novel is refuted by modern critics, such as Edwin H. Cady, who claims that around Jeff Durgin, the major character, "Howells organized his research into the plight of civilization in modern American life into its most solid pattern."<sup>4</sup>

Olov W. Fryckstedt adds that Durgin is allowed to challenge in word and action "the notion, so dear to Howells, that you cannot do a wrong thing and prosper on it."<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Mary Petrus Sullivan writes that this novel was Howells's

"strongest effort toward showing that just as spiritual goodness does not necessarily receive material reward in this life, so spiritual badness does not inevitably reap chastisement on this side of death."<sup>6</sup> One final quotation here, that of Delmar Gross Cooke, will further illustrate the profundity which modern critics see in the theme:

Opposing as ... [Howells] did the persistence in our fiction of a morality that bestows upon spirituality rewards anything but spiritual, he was bound to show us in his most significant instance ... the sad insufficiency of the success which our world commonly allots to those mean enough to aim at individual happiness and strong enough to achieve it, this very national phenomenon of the successful failure.<sup>7</sup>

In the character of Jeff Durgin (specific aspects of which will be dealt with following this discussion of theme, if, in actuality, the two can be separated in this instance), Howells studied the moral character of the materially successful American. William McMurray sees Durgin's story in terms of conflicting moral values in a changing society.<sup>8</sup> And, writes Lloyd Morris, in Durgin the old American moral sense had given way to a view of affairs uncolored by any ethical preconceptions. "Was not Durgin's psychology that of the eminent models of American success--the Carnegies, Hills, Schwabs, and their like?"<sup>9</sup>

There is also, Cady points out, the question here of whether Durgin is the man of the American future. A generation of middle-class Americans were (and still are, for that matter) invited to consider why their ambitions and their means

of realizing these ambitions should be the same as Durgin's.<sup>10</sup>

Cooke declares that Durgin, Howells's "supreme artistic creation, ...is a study without parallel in our literature, of the tragedy of worldly success which meets no effective opposition, of the insidious selfishness which has its way with a nature too strong to be tempted into crime and too unfortunate to be called to a reckoning with itself in any large moral crisis, ...of a sheer incapacity for good."<sup>11</sup>

Because he "submerged the natural moral faculty and could not understand the aristocratic sense of obligation," Robert W. Schneider writes, "Durgin was morally lost."<sup>12</sup> Yet according to George C. Carrington, Jr., the reader himself is left in a moral dilemma, unable to condemn Durgin or absolve him; for by leaving Durgin's real achievements to the future, "Howells creates a sense of overhanging doom, more terrible in effect than a Dreiserian recital of actual accomplishments."<sup>13</sup>

It is typical of Howells's method of characterization, Alexander Cowie points out, that he steadfastly refused to "star" one or two persons at the expense of the rest of the "cast." One of the few exceptions to this rule is Jeff Durgin: "The Landlord at Lion's Head may be said to exist mainly as a character study of the hero."<sup>14</sup> C. Hartley Grattan agrees that the Howells novel which comes closest to supplying an outstanding portrait of an individual is Landlord and adds that, in

spite of the fact that qualifications must be made, Durgin is the best character in Howells.<sup>15</sup> And in the words of Oscar W. Firkins, Landlord is "more definitely the study of a single character than any other novel of Mr. Howells...", and the portrayal of Durgin should end "the notion, if the notion still persists, that Howells is a mere cabinetmaker or silversmith in the guild of novelists."<sup>16</sup>

Research turns up little disagreement that Jeff Durgin is a masterpiece of characterization. Other platitudes abound. Cooke: "It was a triumph of an unusual kind for Howells to make a character of Jeff's stamp so appealing; but it might well have been predicted that the greatest of his novels would teach the lesson of such a life."<sup>17</sup> Sullivan: "Durgin is Howells's most fully-rounded and scrupulously realistic creation. The novel is wholly his, a sympathetic but unsparing unveiling of his true character."<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, the aim of Durgin's maker has been subtle, Firkins believes: "Howells wished to draw a scoundrel, but a scoundrel incognito, so to speak, without the particular deeds which attract that unseemly label; the stigmata were to be excluded"<sup>19</sup> in favor of what Cooke calls the "imponderable elements which we can observe in ourselves and our brothers making for callousness of soul and insufficient living."<sup>20</sup>

But Howells was "not merely interested in showing Jeff Durgin; he wanted to understand him."<sup>21</sup> And as much as he disapproved of him, McMurray writes, "Howells did not fall

into the easy simplification of portraying a blackguard."<sup>22</sup>

Durgin, rather, is what Cowie terms a "formidable embodiment of anti-social principles that are all the more perturbing because of his plausible manners and comparatively harmless conduct." And this "full measure of reality," Cowie continues, is what chiefly makes Landlord the most robust of all Howells's novels.<sup>23</sup>

More specifically, Grattan sees predatory cupidity as the central strength of Durgin's character and "the axis on which his life turns...—it gives him substance and reality"; but Howells equally emphasized Durgin's other faults (including selfishness, boorishness, and caddishness), "which are more the product of the lack of social education than of anything else."<sup>24</sup> Continuing in this vein, Carrington writes that Durgin is "ruthless in pursuing his aims of expansion, genially contemptuous of Brahmin society, and happily ignorant of morals, good manners, and culture."<sup>25</sup> He is a selfish calculator, Firkins adds, "with controllable passions, and with the inactive moral sense replaced, and, in its way, efficiently replaced, by a cool estimate of the degree to which good is useful and evil practicable in a society tethered to laws and usages. Durgin is, in a sense, the unprejudiced eye; what it sees is actuality extricated from moral preconceptions."<sup>26</sup> Sullivan sums up Durgin's "philosophy" as "a cool pragmatism..., practical concern for his own personal welfare and success."<sup>27</sup> Thus, "Even from the page Durgin inspires fear," Firkins insists.<sup>28</sup>



But Durgin is not all evil; he cannot be and is not thoroughly condemned. Carrington notes that Durgin has many admirable qualities--energy, charisma, social smoothness, candor, humor, intelligence, self-control, and flawless powers of perception; and "this remarkable creation is handled with elaborate care by Howells."<sup>29</sup> Laurence Hutton agrees: Durgin's is a complex nature, to the portrayal of which "Mr. Howells has given much care and thought. He is a curious admixture of good and evil, following evil ways for no particular reason, and not always responsible for his strange thoughts and deeds."<sup>30</sup>

Sullivan disagrees with those critics who claim that it is obvious that Durgin's intentions and motives are always bad: the merit of his characterization is precisely that one cannot infallibly judge Durgin's actions or intentions, for "despite all the qualities which render Durgin despicable, Howells has managed to maintain a sympathetic characterization." The secret to his perfect balance of judgment, Sullivan feels, is the "aura of uncertainty which shields and protects the character of Durgin."<sup>31</sup> Going even further, Fryckstedt maintains that Durgin's complex personality is presented in such a way that we struggle to decide to what extent he is evil. "We even wonder if he is evil at all,"<sup>32</sup> because, in Cooke's words, Durgin's character is "delineated in view of his intentions or potentialities, and this is the rare and peculiar capacity in which the art of Howells, with its scorn of crimes and climaxes, can touch deeply."<sup>33</sup>

Durgin has, according to Carrington, some clear reasons, even some socially recognized reasons, for his attitudes and actions. He knows his own strength and ruthlessness, and "he knows us, the nice and not-so-nice city people, and holds us in contempt."<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Tilton writes, "Durgin's rebellion against his mother's unrealistic hopes for him, against his brother's watered-down religion, against Westover's assumption that gentlemanly decency works in a harshly competitive world, against society's callous patronage, against Cynthia's stringent puritanism--these rebellions are understandable."<sup>35</sup>

But in similarly defending Durgin, Grattan finds it necessary to protect him from William Dean Howells's moral beliefs and rather condemns the author himself:

Howells's conception of Durgin must be derived from his comment more than it is from the man's actions. That fact marks the outstanding weakness of his character drawing, here and elsewhere. For the actions he instances as evidence of a character's goodness or badness never seem to warrant either evaluation. [For instance] Durgin is put down as selfish because he places his own comfort of mind above loyalty to the uninformed ideas of his mother; that is, because he fails to fall in with the mother-worship convention of American society. He is boorish because he does not make a fraternity at Harvard and is awkward in Boston society. He is a cad because he gets ... [Alan Lynde] drunk and makes amiable love to the sister with no serious intent; he is amusing himself. His cupidity is exemplified by the fact that he places the attaining of his ends above the accidents of the means of their attainment.

When Howells attempts to prove Durgin is not quite all that he should be by instancing frequent attendance at Boston theatres, and by revealing that Durgin

spent a night in jail under false accusation of breaking a street light, one is moved to laugh. The trouble here is that to Howells it was as much a moral error of the first order to use the wrong fork at dinner as to run off with a million dollars. He was beset by the middle-class horror of doing the wrong thing, no matter on what level.<sup>36</sup>

Cady alone calls attention to the background and conditions which produced such a complex character as Jeff Durgin, dealing specifically with the aspects of home life and heredity important to the reader's understanding of Durgin:<sup>37</sup> "At home, Durgin has only the futile remnants of the Puritan tradition, dryrotted into the decadence of spiritualism, the decadence of women's inherited but unphilosophical scrupulosities. From boyhood he has known that he could vanquish these with contemptuous force of will." Cady continues that Durgin was a born anti-puritan, who inherits from his maternal grandfather three characteristics: "(1) to be the comical devil, (2) to know how to keep hotel, and (3) to return evil for good by retaliating whenever anyone tried to guide or discipline him toward goodness."<sup>38</sup>

Expanding from Durgin's home life to his contact with the "outside world," Arnold B. Fox sees the development of Durgin as the logical result of his contact with "a world which seeks constantly to relegate him to an inferior social position."<sup>39</sup> Beginning with Jere Westover (a key character

who, because of his primary function in the novel--that of observing Durgin, is discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis), Jeff finds the outside world puzzling. "The easy integrity of Westover's civilization baffles Durgin," writes Cady; "he respects and admires yet profoundly resents it." Durgin finds the same qualities in the "better" guests at the hotel, and it is through them that he begins to learn that "the society which pretends to be civilized is just as savage as any of his own blackguardly impulses."<sup>40</sup> Likewise, in both Harvard and in Boston society, Durgin finds that the "Law of Society" is really "that of the savage tribe,"<sup>41</sup> and "his coming to worldly wisdom, his belief in the wickedness of the 'beau monde,'" in the opinion of Cooke, are beautifully done.<sup>42</sup>

Howells's idea, according to William M. Gibson, was to bring a true New England rustic type into conflict with Cambridge and Harvard society.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, Durgin's encounter with Boston gives Howells a chance to undermine moral authority and to account for this character's contempt of it, while keeping Durgin's badness well in mind.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, Cady maintains, "the touchstone of his barbarity eventually finds its response in the plutocracy": Durgin wins Genevieve Vostrand, but then loses her temporarily to the social ambitions of her parents. He exposes the superficiality of Boston society in Bessie Lynde, who has an affair of sorts with him "for the same decadent reasons which make her brother Alan an alcoholic."<sup>45</sup> Gibson calls attention to Howells's words that through all

three of the girls in his life--Cynthia Whitwell, Genevieve Vostrand, and especially Bessie Lynde--Durgin gets a "dark glimpse into the innate enmity between the sexes in the game of courtship and passion."<sup>46</sup>

Yet this "anti-puritan prospers mightily as the man of the present": he turns Lion's Head into a success, wins back Genevieve, and joins the international set himself.<sup>47</sup> At the end of the novel, Gibson therefore reasons, Durgin is thoroughly successful on his own terms; his career has borne him out.<sup>48</sup> "You pay or you don't pay," Durgin says to Westover. Thus, as Cooke puts it, Durgin is "singularly qualified to get on without paying."<sup>49</sup>

Although Grattan deprecatingly says that since Durgin is the best character in Howells--and not a very interesting one at that--nothing need be said of the rest of them because "the same inadequacy characterizes them all,"<sup>50</sup> the vast majority of critics disagree. Indeed, there is considerable discussion of Durgin's relation to at least two other characters in the novel--Jere Westover and Whitwell (whose first name is never given), for they are considered essential in understanding the portrait of Durgin which Howells presents in the novel.

Since Howells wanted to present a careful exposition of Durgin, he deputed a second person--Westover--to formulate authorial convictions and hesitations, according to Firkins.<sup>51</sup>

(One will see very shortly that Firkins has overlooked at least one other key observer in the cast.<sup>52</sup>) Westover is, to use Cooke's phrase, the "Howells young man--the insipid and somewhat feminized creation that Howells employed to typify the Boston culture, the nice young man"<sup>53</sup> with whom, McMurray writes, "the majority of us" are more comfortable than with Durgin's type.<sup>54</sup> Westover is seen by a number of critics as representing civilization; indeed, Westover stands at the end of the novel as the one character who can "incarnate values which really call Durgin's success into doubt,"<sup>55</sup> for Durgin's "failure," according to Cooke, is "distinctly perceptible only to [this] ...observer of finer qualities than he...."<sup>56</sup> In fact, innumerable times this "voice of morality and civilization tries to teach Durgin what a savage he is."<sup>57</sup> But it is significant for the purposes of this thesis to note that Westover, as Carrington points out, cannot comprehend Durgin, despite his (Westover's) talents and opportunities.<sup>58</sup>

Essentially conservative, one who "cherishes the old order," Westover, according to McMurray, is "sensitive to all that threatens life's conventional decencies as he sees them."<sup>59</sup> And Durgin certainly has an articulate philosophy which distresses that part of Westover which is in reality, Cowie writes, Howells himself.<sup>60</sup>

But Westover's view of Jeff Durgin is not the only possible one, as Howells must have been well aware.<sup>61</sup> McMurray claims that by depicting Durgin from at least one other "unbiased" view, that of the "philosopher" Whitwell, Cynthia's

father, and by thus demonstrating that the act of seeing (and judging) is relative to the person who does the seeing (and judging), Howells is suggesting that no perception of all of Jeff Durgin is humanly possible.<sup>62</sup> Whitwell's "larger view" of Durgin balances Westover's more closed one and "keeps intact Howells's attempt to get his picture of Durgin in the fullness of his mixed reality."<sup>63</sup> The author's principle behind using Whitwell's liberal and open view toward Durgin in opposition to Westover's is nicely illustrated in an incident which McMurray cites, involving Westover's many attempts to paint a satisfactory (to himself) portrait of Lion's Head Mountain. Obviously not impressed by one of these attempts in particular, Whitwell generously (but ironically, for our purposes as well as for those of Howells) says of it, "'You ... [can't] always get ... [things] right the first time; you have to keep trying....'"<sup>64</sup>

In showing Durgin's "reality" and that of the other characters as "mixed and made by the characters themselves in their experience," Howells, in the opinion of McMurray, reveals himself as an artist who does not attempt to justify his characters or to pass judgment on them.<sup>65</sup> What he does do, however, to paraphrase McMurray, is to insist that one can see and judge only in the context of his own situation, and Carrington provides this chapter's final example of that tenet-- that of Mrs. Vostrand and Westover's letter. In what Westover considered his distinctly unfavorable written reference about

Jeff Durgin, the mother of Genevieve Vostrand curiously reads a favorable recommendation simply because she wants to, and thus approves of the marriage of her daughter to Durgin.<sup>66</sup>

The characterization of Jeff Durgin, which Sullivan calls "the outstanding success" of The Landlord at Lion's Head, has been only superficially probed, and the conclusions put forth are by no means unanimous.<sup>67</sup> As Hutton suggests, the answers to the questions of whether or not Durgin deserved the success which he reaped and of how far "being good" has anything to do with success or with happiness, the reader must think out for himself.<sup>68</sup>

Yet in the "thinking out" that I do in the remainder of this thesis, I shall remember the two critical comments with which I close this chapter:

With subtlest realism, Howells creates a character who is humanly unknowable. Between Durgin and Howells, and between Durgin and the reader there exists a gap of incommunicability that Howells does not cross and that he does not allow the reader to bridge by any simplistic estimate of Durgin's moral worth. The same mystery surrounds Durgin's character as surrounds that sacrosanct something which is in all human beings.<sup>69</sup>

And--

To Howells, the art of making art meant being true to life, true to the lives of his characters made in their fictional experience. In this pragmatic realism there could be no finished portrait of Durgin. He had to remain both realized and unrealized. Indeed, this was the condition of his "reality."<sup>70</sup>



### III

"...It is not the prosperous or adverse fortune of the characters that affects one," William Dean Howells wrote in Criticism and Fiction, "but the good or bad faith of the novelist in dealing with them. ...He must be true to what life has taught" him about people.<sup>1</sup> Nearly sixty years of age when he wrote The Landlord at Lion's Head, Howells does reflect in his novel what life had taught him about people, and, as this chapter attempts to reveal, he does deal with his characters in good faith.

Since Howells did indeed have, to use his own words, "a very good grip" on his other major characters as well as on Jeff Durgin,<sup>2</sup> they, too, spring alive and become significant as character studies in themselves as well as for their relationship to the protagonist, the latter being the primary reason why seven of them are discussed at length in this chapter. The first two, Jeff's mother and brother, constitute his "'folks'" (to use Bessie Lynde's appellation for them)<sup>3</sup>; the next two are Jere Westover and Whitwell (whose first name is never given), two figures whom Howells inserts primarily to serve as observers and critics of Jeff Durgin; the final three are those three women--Cynthia Whitwell, Bessie Lynde, and Genevieve Vostrand--to whom Durgin is romantically attached at

one time or another.

The wife of James Monroe Durgin (neither her first nor her maiden name is ever given) bore ten children: four of them had died before the story begins; the only two girls die early in the story; two boys go West to salvage their health; and Andrew Jackson Durgin dies toward the end of the novel. The daughter of a tavernkeeper who "always drank some" (30), according to Whitwell, she had married Durgin against her father's wishes. Although Whitwell had thought ill of her father, he says of Jeff's mother "There ain't anything against Mis' Durgin. She's done her part, and she's had more than her share of hard knocks. If she was tough to sta't with, she's had blows enough to meller her" (30), and she's "got a will of her own" (115).

Thomas Jefferson Durgin, the last-born, is the only sturdy child of this sturdy woman: "The youngest boy alone, of all her brood, seemed to have inherited her health and strength" (11). Yet, as Jackson tells Westover, "They're a good deal alike" (134) in more respects than this. Both mother and youngest son know what they want from life and pursue it in a manner which those who may be pushed aside in the process might justifiably call ruthless. They both strike back at what they might consider unjust treatment at the hands of others. They are both strong of constitution. Both are prac-

tical, shrewd, and fearless.

Perhaps it is these very similarities which hamper their relationship and lead Jeff to say that he cannot "talk" to his mother: "She thinks I don't know my mind. And I don't like the way we differ when we differ. We differ more than we mean to" (106).

Mrs. Durgin treats this son with a curious mixture of parental ambition and parental scorn. She believes him capable of taking a law degree from Harvard, and she is willing to finance his education. Yet she very reluctantly accepts his decision to give up law and take over the hotel which she had made of her house following her husband's death, feeling that in his charming yet callous pragmatism he is too much like her father was and may therefore be too "successful" for his own good. Yet "when it finally appeared that her ambition for her son was not his ambition for himself and would never be, she abandoned it. Perhaps it was the easier for her to forego her hopes of his distinction in the world, because she had learned before that she must forego her hopes of him in other ways" (127). One begins to see that Jeff is not the kind of son who can be molded.

She wants him to enter the kind of society in whose company she had always felt ill at ease and encourages him in this direction.

At the bottom of her heart she had both fear and contempt of all townspeople, whom she generalized from her experience of them as

summer folks of a greater or lesser silliness. She often found herself unable to cope with them, even when she felt that she had twice their sense; she perceived that they had something from their training that with all her undisciplined force she could never hope to win from her own environment. But she believed that her son would have the advantages which baffled her in them, for he would have their environment.... (127)

Yet she scorns him for the sophistication which he acquires and resents what she considers his patronizing manner toward her. She followed " ...darkling and stumbling his course in society as far as he would report it to her, and when he would not suffer her to glory in it, she believed that he was forbidding her from a pride that would not recognize anything out of the common in it. She exulted in his pride, and she took all his snubbing reserves tenderly, as so many proofs of his success" (127).

She wants him to marry well and encourages him to find a wife who will facilitate his entry into high society. "She had vaguely fancied that with the acquaintance his career at Harvard would open to him Jeff would make a splendid marriage.... She had wished him to rivet his hold upon those advantages [he would acquire in higher society] by taking a wife from among ... [these people] and by living the life of their world" (127).

Yet she ridicules women like Genevieve Vostrand and Bessie Lynde and reluctantly urges his marriage to Cynthia Whitwell, his childhood friend.

There had been times when the fitness of ... [Cynthia's] marriage with Jeff had moved the mother's heart to a jealousy that she always

kept silent, while she hoped for the accident or the providence which should annul the danger. But Genevieve Vostrand had not been the kind of accident or providence that she would have invoked, and when she saw Jeff's fancy turning towards her, Mrs. Durgin had veered around to Cynthia. All the same she kept a keen eye upon the young ladies among the summer folks who came to Lion's Head, and tacitly canvassed their merits and inclinations with respect to Jeff in the often-imagined event of his caring for any one of them. (128)

Although "something of the insensate pride that mothers have in their children's faults, as their quick tempers or their wastefulness or their revengefulness, expressed itself in her tone..." (129) when Cynthia forced her fiance to tell his mother of his plans to drop law study and to keep hotel, and although "The mother of the bold, vigorous boy that Jeff had been stirred in Mrs. Durgin's heart, and she looked at him with the eyes that used to condone his mischief" (125), she says to him "Whatever you are, Cynthy made you. You was a lazy, disobedient, worthless boy, and it was her carin' for you from the first that put any spirit and any principle into you'" (243).

There is little doubt as the story develops that Mrs. Durgin favors Jackson over Jeff, apparently seeing in the older son the conservative bent and quiet consideration for others lacking in the younger. "If Jackson only had Jeff's health and opportunities," she tells Westover "with a suppressed passion in her regret" (199).

She makes little attempt to conceal her frequent disappointment with Jeff and, indeed, joins the other characters

in her pious passing of judgment on many of his actions. One is tempted to say that she does not sufficiently exhibit the love, frustrated though it might have been, that would be expected of a mother dealing with a capricious son with whom she has so much in common, and in this respect perhaps Howells's characterization of her is weak. He is too quick to employ her as yet another critic of Jeff Durgin. For instance, she suspects Jeff's concern about Jackson's health is not his but Cynthia's. Likewise, when Jeff tells his mother of his affair with Bessie Lynde while he was engaged to Cynthia, "...He thought it pretty rough that his mother should take part so decidedly against her own son in what he might very well consider an unnatural way" (252-3). Yet, in analyzing her apparent disinterest in his life, "He could not deny that he had grievously disappointed her in several ways" (253).

Nevertheless, one finds it difficult to believe that this mother, who had risked alienating other boarders when, like a lioness protecting her young, she had rebuked and evicted Mrs. Marven, the socialite who had relegated her son to eating with the horses at a hotel picnic, could, on the whole, later apparently think so little of him.

Similarly, Jackson Durgin, whom Whitwell calls "the best o' the lot" (50), holds a low opinion of his brother, remarking early in the book that Jeff is "'spoiled'" (46). Later, upon hearing of Jeff's engagement to Cynthia, Jackson

regards Jeff as much more the benefactor of the match than the girl herself. "It's better for Jeff.... She'll know how to manage him" (121), implying that his brother needs management.

In truth, the relationship of Jeff with this brother sixteen years his senior was never a benevolent nor an ideal one. "Jeff had always been a turbulent, rebellious younger brother, resentful of Jackson's control, too much his junior to have the associations of an equal companionship in the past, and yet too near him in age to have anything like a filial regard for him" (261).

Following Jackson's death, Jeff appears to regret the lack of closeness which had characterized their relationship: "...He experienced a tenderness for his memory which he had not known before.... Something like grief for his brother came upon him..., a regret for not having shown Jackson during his life that he could appreciate his unselfishness, though he could not see the reason or the meaning of it..." (277). In other similar remarks, Howells carefully establishes Jeff's confusion about "the incentives and the objectives" of such men as Jackson (277). "He wondered if in the course of time he should get to be something like him. He imagined trying" (277).

It is Jere Westover who most harshly passes judgment on Jeff Durgin. But I find him not at all the objective observer that most critics see. I feel that he is distinctly motivated by what is most certainly the ironic implication by Howells

(with which I have seen no critic deal) that Westover's opinions are influenced by an almost perversely envious resentment similar to that of Claggart toward Billy Budd, and to a not unimportant degree of jealousy regarding the relationship between Jeff and Cynthia Whitwell, the girl for whom Westover's attraction grows from affection for her as a child, through a carefully presaged development, to love by the end of the novel. I offer as evidence the following excerpts, bearing in mind these lines from Criticism and Fiction--"Let fiction cease to lie about life; let it portray men and women as they are, actuated by the motives and the passions in the measure we all know...":

As the painter climbed the hill to the hotel he saw two figures.... Such an appearance might mark the earliest stages of love-making,... and Westover felt a vague distaste for it, which, as it related itself to a more serious possibility, deepened to something like pain. It was probable that it should come to this between ...[Jeff and Cynthia], but Westover rebelled against the event.... (76)

When he leaves for his first year at Harvard, Jeff says of his mother,

"She's in good hands. Jackson's well--for him--and she's got Cynthia." The easy security of tone with which Jeff pronounced the name vexed Westover.... He could not help a sort of blind resentment in the situation. If he could not feel that Jeff was the best that could be for Cynthia, he had certainly no reason to regret that his thoughts could be so lightly turned from her. But the fact anomalously incensed him as a slight to the girl, who might have been still more sacrificed by Jeff's constancy. (85)

When Mrs. Durgin asked Westover's opinion on the engagement of Jeff and Cynthia,



"She's a girl in a thousand," Westover returned evasively.

"Then you think he's shown sense in choosin' of her?" pursued Jeff's mother, resolute to find some praise of him in Westover's words.

"He's a very fortunate man," said the painter. (129)

And in speaking with Jeff of the engagement,

Westover had a difficulty in congratulating Jeff which he could scarcely define to himself, but which was like that obscure resentment we feel towards people whom we think unequal to their good fortune. He was ashamed of his grudge, whatever it was, and this may have made him overdo his expressions of pleasure. He was sensible of a false cordiality in them.... (131)

[Cynthia] ...might be as good and as fine as ... [Westover] saw her and yet be insensible to the spiritual toughness of Jeff, because of her love for him. Her very goodness might make his badness unimaginable to her, and if her refinement were from the conscience merely, and not from the tastes and experiences too, there was not so much to dread for her in her marriage with such a man. (211)

In asking Westover's opinion whether she and Mrs. Durgin should attend Class Day at Harvard, Cynthia says,

"I think it would be better for us to leave all that part of his life alone. It's no use in pretending that we're like the kind of people he knows, or that we know their ways, and I don't believe--"

Westover felt his heart rise in indignant sympathy. "There isn't anyone ... [Jeff] knows to compare with you.... You're worth a thousand--If I were--if he's half a man he would be proud--I beg your pardon! I don't mean--but you understand--." (213)

If I am not misreading Howells in the preceding excerpts and elsewhere in the novel, it would seem that Westover, if he is not fully a deviate who enviously resents Jeff Durgin and who would settle for the woman whom Jeff once claimed, at least shows more than a passing interest in Cynthia Whitwell. The

engagement is broken midway in the novel, and Westover is then free to begin his courtship of the girl.

A ten-year age difference separates these two when Westover first meets the thirteen-year-old Jeff. From their very first encounter on the porch of the Durgin home, when Westover insists that the boy ask his mother to step outside, the artist confuses Jeff: the boy "heard these strange terms of command with a face of vague envy" (15). Later, "If it could not be said that ... [Jeff] shared the affection which began to grow up in Westover from their companionship, there could be no doubt of the interest he took in him, though it often seemed the same critical curiosity which appeared in the eye of his dog when it dwelt upon the painter" (27). The analogy is a valid one, because Durgin's respect for Westover in these early years is induced partly by the same combination of fear, curiosity, and loyalty which ties a dog to its master. It should also be noted that just as Westover kicks Jeff's dog when annoyed with it, his usual solution when annoyed with the boy is to "kick" him, although not, of course, physically.

Likewise, Jeff's behavior in these first few meetings hardly makes a favorable impression upon the artist. That is, Jeff's intention of turning away the artist when he applies for room and board at the Durgin home is hardly hospitable. Later Westover finds Jeff intimidating Cynthia and her little brother with his crazed dog, and, still later, the rebuked boy pelts the artist with apples in retaliation for the rebuke.

At least two occasions come to mind in illustration

of the reader's suspicion that Westover early harbors a grudge toward the boy. Westover is not, for instance, willing to give Jeff the benefit of a doubt when he falsely assumes that it was the boy and not Whitwell who informed Mrs. Durgin of the Mrs. Marven picnic incident. Upon learning the truth, Westover suffers "a revulsion of good feeling toward him" (60). Similarly, when, as a Harvard freshman, Jeff fails to call very often upon the artist, "Westover tried to consider his whole duty to him fulfilled and not to trouble himself further. Now and then, however, Jeff disappointed the expectation Westover had formed of him, by coming to see him and being apparently glad of the privilege" (62).

It is no wonder that early in the novel Jeff senses Westover's dislike for him as a person. As he tells Cynthia, "I'm not sure he likes me; but Mr. Westover is a man that could be your friend if he didn't like you.... I've done a lot of things to make him despise me from the start. But if you like a person yourself, you want him to like you whether you deserve it or not" (108). Contrary to what Jeff says, Westover neither likes the boy nor considers him a friend.

And when Mrs. Vostrand tells Westover of the suspicion Jeff had related to her that the artist did not care for him, Westover tells her "He's wrong" (94). But I think not. Westover constantly maligns Jeff (who, at one point, unintentionally but interestingly enough implies that the artist is a "woman" [131]) by his insistence on judging the boy by measuring his actions against the incredibly high and naive standards

which had created a Westover at the age of thirty-five who is, in Howells's words, "at heart ...bourgeois and phillistine" (305).

During Durgin's first year at Harvard, he and Westover have "long walks and long talks together," and Jeff opens "his mind, if not his heart" to the artist (102). Westover manages somehow to sympathize when Jeff is continually excluded from any voice in the management of the affairs of the hotel he hopes someday to inherit. Yet Westover is not pleased at all he observes: "It occurred to Westover, and not for the first time, that the frankest thing in Jeff Durgin was his disposition to use his friends. It seemed to him that Jeff was always asking something of him..." (105).

Their first serious falling-out hinges on Jeff's alleged attempts to get Alan Lynde, an habitual drunkard, intoxicated during a party. Later, Westover severely admonished the boy; yet, in the course of this particular conversation, "What puzzled ...[Westover] most and pleased him least was the fellow's patience under his severity, which he seemed either not to feel or not to mind. It was of a piece with the behavior of the rascally boy whom he had cuffed for frightening Cynthia and her little brother long ago, and he wondered what final malevolence it portended" (190). At the close of the novel, he thinks he knows.

Westover's reaction to Jeff, however, like Howells's, is tempered often by his "illogical liking" for the boy.

"Westover was aware of liking Durgin ...much more than he ought and of liking him helplessly" (192).

By the time of the Jeff-Bessie Lynde-Cynthia Whitwell triangle, however, Westover's "illogical liking" has been tempered by considerable disgust. "Why should I care what you do?" he piously asks Durgin. "I don't suppose you know what a savage you are, and I don't suppose that I could teach you. I shan't try, at any rate" (233). Perhaps Westover's disgust is all the more painful because he has often tried to teach Durgin "what a savage" he is and has failed.

Yet another of Howells's major spokesmen on the life and character of Jeff Durgin is Whitwell, described as a "kind of philosopher to the lady boarders" of the hotel by Mrs. Durgin (44) and as a "character" by Jeff (77). Whitwell is most often willing to give Jeff the benefit of a doubt and is less critical than is Westover, despite the fact that he is of a more simplistic nature than the artist and the fact (which Howells employs to establish all the more the greater objectivity and wisdom of Whitwell's evaluations over Westover's) that he is the father of the girl whom Durgin "wrongs." Perhaps the very fact that he is a parent, as Westover is not, tempers Whitwell's judgment of the actions and behavior of the boy. For these reasons I believe that he is a much more reliable judge of Durgin than is Westover.

"I don't suppose a fellow's so much to blame, if he's got the devil in him, as what the devil is," he tells Westover of Jeff as a boy (29). But, realistically, "He's such a pest

to the whole neighborhood that he'd have the most pop'lar  
 fune'l...'" (30). (Apparently Whitwell does not underestimate  
 the neighborhood's dislike for Durgin. As Mrs. Durgin tells  
 Westover of Jeff's suspension from Harvard for joining in a  
 gang which broke a streetlight, "'Some dirty, sneakin' thing  
 here wrote a letter to the paper and told a passel o' lies  
 about Jeff, and all of us; and the paper printed Jeff's pic-  
 ture with it...'" [66].)

Whitwell remains a more constant observer of Jeff than  
 does Westover as the years pass. Present at the picnic at  
 which Mrs. Marven relegated Jeff to eating with the horses,  
 it is this "resident philosopher" who drives home to Mrs.  
 Marven the seriousness of her social error when he, too, re-  
 fuses food. "'I don't seem to care much for anything in the  
 middle of the day; breakfast's my best meal,' and he followed  
 Jeff off into the woods" (56) where he had gone to lick his  
 wounds.

When his daughter Cynthia asks his opinion following  
 Jeff's proposal of marriage, Whitwell replies, "'I have some-  
 times believed that Jeff Durgin was goin' to turn out bad.  
 He's got it in him'" (115), in an obvious allusion to Durgin's  
 grandfather. Later, although annoyed at the Bessie Lynde af-  
 fair, Whitwell offers sound advice to Cynthia in what is very  
 much a paraphrase of what Jeff, too, tells her; Whitwell says:

"I don't believe 't any man, I don't care how  
 old he is or how much experience he's had, knows  
 exactly how a girl feels about a thing like this  
 or has got any call to advise her.... I pre-  
 sume a woman's got rather of a chore to get  
 along with a man, anyway. We an't any of us  
 much to brag on. It's out o' sight, out o'

mind, with the best of us....<sup>5</sup> The way I look at it is this: you took Jeff when you knowed what a comical devil he was, and I presume you han't got quite the same right to be disappointed in what he done as if you hadn't knowed." (240)

But when fatherly concern prevails, he continues, "Any way you look at him, he's been a dumn fool; that's what he's been. You're a million times too good for him..." (240).

In comparing notes on Jeff with Westover, Whitwell says, "He's a good deal of a mixture, if you want to know how he strikes me. I don't mean I don't like him; I do; the fellow's got a way with him that makes me kind of like him when I see him. He's good-natured and clever; and he's willing to take any amount of trouble for you; but you can't tell where to have him!" (201). And later, "He may have a knife in your ribs the whole while, but so long's he don't turn it, you don't seem to know it, and you can't help likin' him!" (299-300). In short, Whitwell, too, is the victim of what Westover had called an "illogical liking" for the boy. Thus it is that Howells makes it very difficult for the reader to condemn Jeff Durgin.

Durgin wends his way through no less than three serious romances in the novel. Each girl is distinctly different and, for Durgin, serves a distinctly different purpose. First is Cynthia Whitwell, his childhood sweetheart. A naively innocent thing who judges Jeff by female standards and who apparently cannot understand the male mind as her father and Jeff try to explain it to her, she deserves the man who eventually

wins her--Westover, whose mind she apparently does understand. Durgin is better off without her puritanical morality and narrowly simplistic conception of marital life. Second is Bessie Lynde, rapidly withering Boston socialite-bitch who, to paraphrase Westover's words, amused herself with Jeff as with any other man who would let her play with him (231). Yet Durgin "uses" her to soothe his wounded social ego, and, in his own words, she makes more a fool of herself than of him, for she falls in love with him. Of the character type which Bessie represents, Howells said in Criticism and Fiction: "Truth ... paints these victims [of society] as they are, and bids the world consider them not because they are beautiful and virtuous, but because they are ugly and vicious... with nothing real but the misery that comes of insincerity and selfishness."<sup>6</sup> Third is Genevieve Vostrand, apparently the only girl Durgin ever "loved" and the one whom he marries. She is probably the most level-headed of the three, and the apparent perfection of the marriage further frustrates the prude Westover, for Durgin achieves success in marriage as he does in his vocation. Durgin's relationship with each of these three women constitutes the following portion of this chapter.

Howells paraphrases what Westover offers as a succinct description of the childhood friend to whom Durgin first became engaged: "He easily found in her ... a shy, proud manner.... She made him think of a wild sweet brier, of a hermit thrush,



but if there were this sort of poetic suggestion in Cynthia's looks, her acts were of plain and honest prose..." (48).

Cynthia is a severe critic of Jeff, not at all naive about what she perceptively considers his faults.

"Why are you so hard on me, Cynthy?" asked Jeff. "You didn't used to be."

"People change."

"Do I?"

"Not for the better." (109)

And when he says of his brother Jackson, "He's a good man, and he's a good son. I wish I'd always been half as good," Cynthia "did not protest against his self-reproach as [much as] he possibly hoped she would" (110).

Balancing such criticism is her loyalty. If it's "I ...some trouble you've got into, ... I shall stand by you," she tells Jeff before he tells her of the Bessie Lynde affair (238). She is less loyal upon learning of the affair.

In breaking off the engagement, Cynthia says to Jeff, "It wouldn't be hard for me to forgive you anything you've done against me—or against yourself; I should care for you the same—if you were the same person; but you're not the same..." (248). The change which she notes in Jeff is not so easily noted by the reader, who is tempted to say that she, like Westover, allows personal frustration to influence her judgment. Also, like Westover, she tells Jeff that she doesn't want to make him do what he "knows" is right, for "sometime you would make me suffer for it..." (248).

Yet Jeff remains attracted to Cynthia: "He had a longing to make atonement and to win forgiveness. His heart was humbled towards Cynthia, ..." and he wondered how he would

"regain the girl's trust; he had no doubt of her love" (245).  
 Indeed, he reveals maturity of self-judgment when he says of  
 Cynthia to Westover, "She understands me, and she don't over-  
 rate me either. She knew just how much I was worth, and she  
 took me at her own valuation.... If anybody can keep me level  
 and make the best of me, she can..." (233).

Howells tells us that "It struck Jeff as a very curi-  
 ous fact that Cynthia must always have known him better than  
 he knew himself in some ways.... He gave her mind credit for  
 the penetration due her heart; he did not understand that it is  
 through their love women divine the souls of men. What other  
 witnesses of his character had slowly and carefully reasoned  
 out from their experience of him she had known from the begin-  
 ning, because he was dear to her" (248).

Cynthia gives Jeff several opportunities to redeem  
 himself with her, all of which he fails to seize. The fact  
 is that Durgin is not unhappy that the engagement is broken.  
 "He knew now that he had never cared for her as he had once  
 thought, and on her account, if not his own, he was glad their  
 engagement was broken. A soft melancholy for his own disappoint-  
 ment imparted itself to his thoughts of Cynthia. He felt truly  
 sorry for her, and he truly admired and respected her" (276).  
 But he did not then love her, as he never had.

"Men were mostly afraid of her," Howells remarks of  
 Bessie Lynde,

... and it has been observed of girls of this kind that the men who are not afraid of them are such as they would do well to be afraid of. Whether that was quite the case with Bessie Lynde or not, it was certain that she who was always the cleverest girl in the room, and if not the prettiest, then the most effective, had not the best men about her.... The other girls wondered what she could see in them; but perhaps it was not necessary that she should see anything in them, if they could see all she wished them to see, and no more, in her. (155)

Thus it is that Jeff Durgin becomes involved with Bessie Lynde. First seeing him at a party, Bessie, whose first impulse was to laugh at the massiveness of Jeff's presence, nevertheless "stood shrinking with a trepidation which she could not conceal at the sight..." (142).

"He's a riddle, and I'm all the time guessing at him" (217), she tells a friend. Obviously, Bessie Lynde likes riddles. Her fascination with Jeff is prompted by a morbid mixture of social experimentation and sexuality. Although eventually mellowed by love, her initial opinions of him are hardly complimentary: "Mr. Durgin ...is no more like one of us than a--bear is; and his attitude towards us is that of a bear who's gone so much with human beings that he thinks he's a human being. He's delightful that way" (217). Furthermore, speaking of the party where she met him, Bessie says that "Whenever I looked around and found that prehistoric man at my elbow, it gave me the creeps, a little, as if he were really carrying me off to his cave" (158-9).

She is attracted to him also by the fact that he doesn't show her much respect; it is as if she realizes that he respects

her no more than she respects him. She even tells her friend that if he did respect her, she would care even less for him. As a huntress pursuing game, she enjoys "'...prowling about in the great unknown where he has his weird being...'" (216).

But respect and love can be distinctly separable, as Bessie often fails to realize. "'I don't believe I care for him the least,'" she tells her friend; "'but mind, I'm not certain, for I've never cared for anyone, and I don't know what it's like'" (217). Reflecting on such a comment, one is tempted to say that just as Jeff Durgin often seems incapable of the human emotion of love, so does Bessie Lynde.

Of Bessie's evaluation of herself and her affair with Jeff, Howells tells us "What she thought of herself she hardly knew, or made believe she hardly knew.... She wondered now whether this jay [social outcast] was really more interesting than the other men one met, or only different; whether he was original... or merely novel and would soon wear down to the tiresomeness that seemed to underlie them all and made one wish to do something dreadful" (175). But, in Jeff's presence, she had no desire to do anything dreadful, and she wondered whether it was because "he was dreadful enough for both" (175). Yet after he forcibly kissed her (if, indeed, Howells would lead us to believe it went no further than a kiss—he later tells his mother that he "'made love to her'" [243]), it appeared to her that she must be in love with this man since she did not resent what he had done. Thus she had fallen under his spell.

To Durgin, on the other hand, Bessie was very near to

his early ideal of fashion and high life which Westover had tried to snub out of him. "You've got brains," he tells her, "and you're the only girl that has--here [in Boston].... You've got more sense--and nonsense--than all the women here put together!" (227). This admiration and "the will to dominate her" (162) lead Jeff into the affair which, to him, is little more than a game.

"I don't care for her," he tells Westover after he breaks off the affair. "I told her I cared because she provoked me to.... It's been a game from the beginning, and a question which should win. I won. She meant to throw me over, if the time came for her, but it came for me first..." (231). And it should be noted that here as in other instances Durgin's mind prevails over his heart. For instance, he realized that Bessie could not be integrated into his plans to take over the management of Lion's Head Hotel. "We couldn't make it go for any time at all. She wants excitement, and ...this planet hasn't got excitement enough in it for that girl..." (233).

In telling Cynthia of the affair, he likewise offers this "excitement" as his major excuse: "She thought she could have fun with me and then throw me over; but I guess she found her match..." (236-7). Indeed, she did, for she fooled herself more than she fooled Jeff; that is, her social experiment backfired.

Cynthia appears, quite perceptively, to understand Jeff's motivation in the Bessie Lynde affair. As she tells her father, "We've got to be just to his disposition as well

as his actions. I can see it in one light that can excuse it some. He can't bear to be put down, and I know he's been left out a good deal among the students, and it's made him bitter.... He saw other young men made much of, when he didn't get any notice; and when he had the chance to pay them back with a girl of their own set that was trying to make a fool of him--" (240), he did so. I believe that she is correct in her analysis of the affair.

Jeff Durgin first noticed the girl that he was later to marry on a return sailing from England, although they did not meet at that time. Mrs. James W. (Medora) Vostrand and her daughter Genevieve, who had been acquaintances of Westover when in his youth he had spent some time in Italy and frequented their house often, obviously have mixed emotions when they discover that Jeff is a "son of the hotel" (77) to which, coincidentally, they sojourned: "He seems very gentlemanly, and I am sure he is very kind," says Mrs. Vostrand to her daughter. Yet "I don't quite know what to do about it..." (80).

Jeff sees the girl frequently in Boston during his second year at Harvard. But his apparent interest in her is squelched when he learns of her engagement to an Italian army officer, a match much encouraged by her mother.

The engagements with Cynthia and Bessie Lynde intrude between this break and his resumption several years later of the courtship of Genevieve Vostrand, now the widowed mother of

a two-year-old daughter. It appears that she is the only girl Jeff had ever loved: "I've cared for just one woman in this world," he had told Jackson before his brother's death, "...but she's gone..." (263), or so he thought at that time. Nevertheless, the feeling was apparently mutual, as Mrs. Vostrand points out in a letter to Westover, and Genevieve had married the Italian army officer only to please her mother. The conviction that she had made a mistake "grew upon her more and more after she had married..." (287).

Westover is, as usual, frustrated by the fact that Durgin is occasionally straightforward in explaining his actions--in this case, in explaining his past romances to Genevieve. And Mrs. Vostrand's letters to Westover, which nicely summarize what Jeff had told them of Cynthia and Bessie, offer adequate excerpts to close this discussion of Durgin's romantic involvements. In reference to his broken engagement to Cynthia, "...At one time he persuaded himself that he cared for another because he felt that ... [Genevieve] was lost to him forever and it was no use. He really did care for ... [Cynthia] and had a true affection for her, which he mistook for a warmer feeling. He says that she was worthy of any man's love and of the highest respect.... With Miss L. we cannot feel that he was to blame..." (288, 294).

Of Jeff's marriage to Genevieve, Cynthia curtly writes to Westover, "Perhaps if he cares for her he will be good to her" (293). Apparently he does, for later, after Jeff marries Genevieve and they settle at Lion's Head Hotel, Whitwell tells

Westover that everything has "worked out for the best....  
Jeff's the gentleman now, and his wife's about the nicest  
lady I ever saw.... He seems full as fond of ... [Genevieve's  
daughter] as her own mother does, and that devil, that couldn't  
seem to get enough of tormentin' little children when he was a  
boy, is as good and gentle with that little thing as--pie!" (302).  
Westover is not impressed.

Having presented the evaluations of Jeff Durgin--each  
different but for the most part adverse--offered by these seven  
major characters with whom he is intimately involved, I close  
this chapter by paraphrasing the words of Laurence Hutton: the  
answers to the questions of whether or not Durgin deserved the  
success which he reaped and how far "being good" has anything  
to do with success or with happiness, the reader must think out  
for himself.<sup>7</sup> This is what I do in the following chapter.



#### IV

Thomas Jefferson Durgin was the last of ten children born to the James Monroe Durgins and the strongest of the brood. His "strong, rough surname," according to the author, "had been waiting ... [for a strong, rough personality such as Jeff's] ever since I had got it off the side of an ice cart many years before."<sup>1</sup> Howells saw Jeff Durgin as "...a true rustic New England type [who, in the course of the twenty-three years which the novel spans, comes] in contact with urban life under entirely modern conditions." What Howells says he most "prizes" in this character "...is the realization of that anti-Puritan quality which was always vexing the heart of Puritanism, and which I had constantly felt one of the most interesting facts in my observation of New England."<sup>2</sup>

In the beginning of his novel, Howells tells us that even at the age of three Jeff Durgin "cut defiant capers" and had the "mocking blue eyes" that Jere Westover later says express "his inner hardihood."<sup>3</sup> But not until the artist Westover meets Jeff as a young adolescent does the reader receive sufficient description of the boy to begin formulating a character analysis. What the reader sees through Westover is a fairly typical boy, one who can be defiantly intolerant of strangers, vaguely contemptuous of parental discipline, and bewilderingly

devilish toward little girls. Such characteristics carry over into Durgin the mature adolescent.

Like many boys, Jeff Durgin finds that his own plans for his future differ from those of his parents (in this case, of his mother). Mrs. Durgin wanted him to go to college and become a lawyer, but Jeff preferred to be the landlord of Lion's Head Hotel, which he believed he could make the best hotel in the mountains of New England. "If I was left to choose between hotelkeeping and any other life that I know of, I'd choose it every time," he tells Westover. One begins to realize that Jeff's independent streak is very much attracted by the concept of being one's own boss as he continues:

"I like a hotel. You can be your own man from the start.... All you've got to do is to have common sense in the hotel business, and you're sure to succeed. I believe that I've got common sense, and I believe that I can work up into a great success....<sup>4</sup> I've thought a good many things out; my mind runs on it all the time.... I'd rather stick here in the country, year in and year out, and run Lion's Head, than to be a lawyer and hang around trying to get a case for nine or ten years." (102-4)

Thus he hopes that he can talk his mother out of his being a lawyer. "As nearly as he could guess, she wanted him to be a lawyer because she did not want him to be a hotelkeeper, and her prejudice against that was because she believed that selling liquor made her father a drunkard" (103). "She thinks I can go right into court and begin distinguishing myself, if I can fight the people off from sending me to Congress.... She thinks that if I was a lawyer in Boston I should be at the top of the heap," Jeff tells Westover, adding astutely that his

mother fails to realize that it usually takes family, money, and a lot of influence to succeed (105).

It is not, therefore, until he breaks his engagement to Cynthia Whitwell and forsakes the plans they had made for their future that Jeff breaks completely from his mother's vocational ambition for him: he renounced at that time "all notion of ...attempting to take a degree. That was part of a thing that was past, and was no part of anything to come, so far as Jeff now forecast his future" (251).

Coupled to her vocational desires for her son are Mrs. Durgin's social ambitions for him. Perceiving that townspeople, especially those with social status, "...had something from their training that with all her undisciplined force she could never hope to win from her own environment," she believed that her son would have the advantages which baffled her in them, for he would have their environment (127).

She ought to have realized that Jeff's unfortunate introduction to the social order, which occurred when he was relegated by Mrs. Marven to eating with the horses at a hotel picnic, forbode the future. (The incident has a lasting effect on Jeff and colors his later evaluations of the society life he encounters in Boston. Westover, for instance, knew "...how such an experience ...rankles in the heart of youth and will not cease to smart till some triumph in kind brings it ease..." [64].)

For that matter, Jeff himself eventually becomes even more fully aware of the social distinctions between himself and the kind of woman his mother wants him to marry. He does

not delude himself when he tells her, "You thought I'd see somebody in Boston—some swell girl. Well, they wouldn't any of them look at me, and if they would, they wouldn't look at you.... You don't understand about these things, and I do. They marry their own kind, and I'm not their kind.... You think that because I've been at Harvard—Oh, can't I make you see it? I'm what they call a "jay" at Harvard, and Harvard don't count if you're a jay!" (120). His evaluation of the social system in Boston (as Howells presents it in this novel) and of his chances of earning the success which his mother hopes for is not inaccurate.

Jeff never did achieve the kind of social equality with the "better" hotel guests which Mrs. Durgin hoped for: "It became a convention with them to treat his attentions somewhat like those of a powerful but faithful vassal.... They agreed that he was very handsome, and some thought him very talented; but they questioned whether he was quite what you would call a gentleman. It is true that this misgiving attacked them mostly in the mass; singly, they were little or not at all troubled by it, and they severally behaved in an unprincipled indifference to it" (128), seeming to enjoy, for instance, the privilege of going riding with Jeff on summer afternoons.

This attitude of the guests is further exemplified in the remarks which those women present during Mrs. Durgin's rebuke and eviction of Mrs. Marven for her tactless act at the picnic offer: " ...What could Mrs. Marven have done?... He wasn't asked to the picnic [other than to deliver the food], and

I don't see why," one of them said, "he should have been treated as a guest.... If there is anything in distinctions, in differences, if we are to choose who is to associate with us—or our daughters—" "That is true," the ladies said, in one form or another, with the tone of conviction..." (58).

Though Jeff's years at Harvard were not especially happy ones, they were at least educational in that they taught him more about himself and about other people.<sup>5</sup> To Westover, who, in his position as a Boston painter, could observe Jeff occasionally, "He seemed painfully out of his element and unamiably aware of it" while nevertheless in a "sort of vague rebellion against his new life" (61). "He did not make the painter think [at that time] that he was growing in grace or wisdom, though he apparently felt an increasing confidence in his own knowledge of life" (62). (Later, Westover would become "...sensible of the growth Jeff had made intellectually. He had not been at Harvard nearly four years for nothing.... In whatever obscure or perverse fashion, he had profited by his opportunities" [192].)

Jeff made the wrong kind of friends at the beginning of his college years. Westover, as a matter of fact, "...did not know how much Jeff had been with a set that was fast without being fine" (64). Westover did know, however, that

some quality of ...[Jeff's] nature neutralized other qualities that would have made him a leader in college, and he remained one of the least forward men in it. Other jays won favor and liking and ceased to be jays; Jeff continued a jay. He was not chosen into any of the nicer societies.... It appeared to ...[Westover] that the fellow had gone wrong more through ignorance than perversity, and that it was a

stubbornness of spirit rather than a badness of heart that kept him from going right. (64)

Westover was painfully amused by Jeff's grotesque misconceptions of the "world where he had not yet begun to right himself. Jeff believed lurid things of the society wholly unknown to him" (63). Westover tried to make Jeff see how distorted his ideas were, but he perceived that the boy thought him either "willfully ignorant or helplessly innocent" (64).

What disgusted the painter most was that, with all Jeff's belief in the wickedness of such a world, he would have willingly been part of it; and Westover suspected that if Jeff had any strong aspirations they were for society and for social acceptance. "He sometimes wondered whether it was not more a baffled wish to be justified in his own esteem than anything else that made ... [Jeff] overvalue the things he missed" (64).

It is only through his affair with Bessie Lynde that Jeff gains genuine recognition in Boston society. And Durgin's most symbolic act toward breaking down the social barriers occurs when he makes a conquest of Bessie. For instance, after he forcibly kissed her (if, indeed, this was the true extent of their activity), "She, for her part, realized that she had been kissed as once she had happened to see one of the maids kissed by the grocer's boy at the basement door. In an instant this man had abolished all her defenses of family, of society, of personality, and put himself on a level with her in the most sacred things of life" (228). Thus, through this conquest, Jeff possibly "eases" (subconsciously, at least) the pain that

he had suffered from the Mrs. Marven incident.

It is Westover who refutes the philosophy of the Jeff Durgins, when, in confrontation after confrontation, Durgin and the artist match philosophies. If, indeed, Howells's philosophy was that of Westover, the author nevertheless managed to present a case for Durgin's. For instance, in regard to the achievement of success, Westover tells Jeff,

"You can't do a wrong thing and prosper on it--."

"Oh, yes you can," Jeff interrupted with a sneering laugh. "How do you suppose all the big fortunes were made? By keeping the commandments?"

"No. But you're an unlucky man if life hasn't taught you that you must pay in suffering of some kind, sooner or later, for every wrong thing you do...."

"Now that's one of your old-fashioned superstitions, Mr. Westover," said Jeff.... "If you're a strong man, you get there, and if you're a weak man, all the righteousness in the universe won't help you.... I shall be blessed if I look out for myself; and if I don't, I shall suffer for my want of foresight. But I shan't suffer for anything else." (233-4)

Ironically, it is the non-puritan Westover, cosmopolitan, well-travelled, and supposedly creative and intelligent, who defends the puritan viewpoint which the born-puritan Durgin refutes and mocks. Each of these apparently extreme viewpoints is debatable. The experienced realist that Westover should be could not realistically believe in such a strict system of retribution that, to paraphrase the artist, makes you pay for every wrong thing you do. Likewise, Durgin, though only in the process of formulating a life philosophy, should have at least

some evidence at this point in his young life that strong men do not always "get there." For these reasons, I believe, contrary to the opinion held by some critics, that Howells accepted, if he did not wholly advocate, a balance between these two extremes.

Similarly, in discussing motivation with Westover, Jeff asserts that most things in this world "are not thought about, and not intended. They happen, just as much as the other things that we call accidents" (189). Likewise he believes, to paraphrase and refute Westover's words, wrong things often occur from the actions of people who are in the habit of doing right things, and, "as far as the grand result is concerned you might as well think them and intend them as not" (189). In illustration, Jeff offers the occasion when, according to Westover, he helped to get Bessie Lynde's brother Alan drunk: "I saw him getting worse without meaning to make him so.... But it seems to me that you're trying to have me judge of the effect from a motive I didn't have. As far as I can make out, I hadn't any motive at all." He laughed, and all that Westover could say was, "Then you're still responsible for the result." But this no longer appeared so true to him" (192). And no wonder: here it could also be said that Howells raps, if he does not indeed mock, both philosophies.

At this point in their relationship, Westover is apparently still willing to give Jeff the benefit of a doubt, for he shortly thereafter admits to Whitwell of this incident



regarding Alan Lynde that maybe it was just something that happened and that wasn't meant (202). (In regard to this incident, it should be noted that Westover fails to credit Jeff with the act of kindness which led him to set out to find Alan Lynde, who, drunk and companionless, had jumped from his carriage en route to his home. If, indeed, Jeff had baited Alan into his drunken state, he at least had the decency to find Alan and see him home safely.)

Another confrontation occurs when Jeff seeks Westover's advice on the triangle he had involved himself in with Bessie and Cynthia: "I look at this thing as if someone else had done it; I believe that's the practical way; and I shouldn't go in for punishing anyone else for such a thing very severely" (191). Once again Jeff succeeds in tempering Westover's condemnation: "The acceptance of the moral fact as it was, without the unconscious effort to better it or to hold himself strictly to account for it, was the secret of the power in the man which would bring about the material results he desired; and this simplicity of the motive involved had its charm..." and Westover began to review the situation from Jeff's viewpoint. It should also be noted here that one of what might be called Jeff's redeeming qualities is his reluctance to judge others severely without knowing the circumstances involved.

Yet Westover's final remarks on Jeff Durgin's personal philosophy, which appear in a conversation with Whitwell late in the novel, succinctly reveal that he has ceased to vacillate

and has solidified his position:

"As a man sows, he reaps. It's dead sure, pitilessly sure. Jeff Durgin sowed success, in a certain way, and he's reaping it. He once said to me, when I tried to waken his conscience, that he should get where he was trying to go if he was strong enough, and being good had nothing to do with it. I believe now he was right. But he was wrong too, as such a man always is. That kind of tree bears Dead Sea apples, after all. He sowed evil and he must reap evil. He may never know it, but he will reap what he has sown. The dreadful thing is that others must share in his harvest." (303)

A legitimate question springs from Westover's remarks, namely— if Durgin will never know that he is reaping evil, reaping what he has sown (unless he has Westover around to tell him about it), then to what extent is it truly evil? Or by whose standards is it evil? By Westover's? Certainly not by Durgin's. Similarly, it is difficult to see that the harvest which Genevieve Vostrand, her mother and her daughter share with Jeff Durgin is "dreadful" in the least. Certainly the author who can present so forceful and objective a case for Jeff Durgin cannot wholly condemn his philosophy in preference of Westover's.

Furthermore, I believe that Westover fails to understand the conditions which produced Durgin's philosophy. As Cady writes, "At home, Durgin has only the futile remnants of the Puritan tradition, dryrotted into the decadence of spiritualism, the decadence of eccentric though salable 'character,' or the decadence of women's inherited but unphilosophical scrupulosity. From boyhood he has known that he could vanquish these with contemptuous force of will."<sup>7</sup> In short, I would add

that, just as many a child rebels against a narrow way of life into which he is forced, Jeff is a born anti-puritan. Furthermore, Fox sees the development of Durgin and his philosophy as the logical result of his contact with "a world which seeks constantly to relegate him to an inferior social position."<sup>8</sup>

To this I add that it is understandably difficult for Jeff to see the shortcomings of his own philosophy when the philosophies of those about him, particularly that of Boston society, are little "better."

It is curious to note that although Howells may indeed use Westover to expose the shortcomings of Jeff's philosophy, the author also, and most significantly, carefully establishes the artist as an agnostic (68, 134), possibly to weaken even his rebuttals in the reader's mind; after all, note that when Westover confesses this agnosticism to Jackson Durgin, Whitwell, and Jombateeste (the handy man), he feels "a reproach, almost an abhorrence, in all of them" (68), which may very well be the same reaction to Westover that Howells sought to elicit in his conventionally religious reader. In any event, such a philosophy as Westover's obviously baffles Jeff, for, to his brother Jackson, he says "'I've never pretended to be like some men--like Mr. Westover, for example--always looking out for the right and the wrong, and all that. I didn't make myself, and I guess if the Almighty don't make me go right it's because He don't want me to'" (263). It is not easy to refute this point.

A ramification of Durgin's philosophy leads us to his

beliefs--which could hardly be called sentimental--about love and women, whom he treats with a "jovial bluntness" (77).

"Any man's fit for any woman if he wants her bad enough," he tells Jackson (263). (This belief calls to mind Bessie's likening of Jeff to a caveman, who would simply carry off the woman of his choice.) And since he himself is apparently never very deeply affected by his love affairs, he assumes that the same is true of the women involved. For instance, failing to understand the impact which his disclosure of the Bessie Lynde affair would have on Cynthia, he simply shrugs at her appalled response. Then he went home and got a good night's rest, which, we are to surmise, is more than Cynthia got (242). And happy to be rid of what he calls the "disagreeable sense of disloyalty" to Cynthia he felt while courting Bessie, he is happy also to be "...rid of the stress of living up to her conscience in various ways" (253). Likewise, we are told that "after he parted with Bessie Lynde, "...on terms of humiliation for her which must have been anguish for him if he had ever loved her, or loved anything but his power over her, he had remained in absolute ignorance of her" (253).

In reviewing his life late in the novel in a passage which it would be senseless to paraphrase, Jeff finds that

Life had, so far, not been what he meant it, and just now it occurred to him that he might not have wholly made it what it had been. It seemed to him that a good many other people had come in and taken a hand in making his own life what it had been; and if he had meddled with theirs more than he was wanted, it was about an even thing. As far as he could

make out, he was a sort of ingredient in the general mixture. He had probably done his share of flavoring, but he had had very little to do with the mixing.... He had no complaints to make. Things had fallen out very much to his mind (275),

as, indeed, they had. He had married Genevieve Vostrand, the only girl he had apparently ever loved, and he had become, at last, the landlord at Lion's Head.

William Dean Howells wrote in his preface to The Landlord at Lion's Head, "I myself liked the hero of the tale more than I have liked worthier men.... What seemed to me my aesthetic success in him possibly softened me to his ethical shortcomings...."<sup>9</sup> It is therefore somewhat surprising when Howells continues, "I do not expect others to share my weakness for Jeff Durgin...."<sup>10</sup> for I believe that the author has underestimated the wide appeal of the character.

Howells had written in Criticism and Fiction that realism was "a truthful treatment of material" and a "fidelity to experience and probability of motive."<sup>11</sup> There is little doubt, then, that he portrayed Jeff Durgin as truthfully as he could and with a "fidelity to experience."

Thus Cady believes that Howells was asking his readers through this novel whether Jeff Durgin was the man of the American future.<sup>12</sup> If Howells was appalled at the direction in which the youth of his time were moving (and I suspect that critics infer too much authorial criticism of the character),

then he would be considerably more disturbed today at the extent to which Durgin may be considered representative of the modern American young male, whose actions, personality, and philosophy to some extent reflect those of Jeff Durgin. It is significant (and maybe revealing of the future--the future of Howells's era, he may have been suggesting) that although Westover reflects the older generation's customary revulsion toward the younger in his criticism of Jeff, Bessie Lynde (Durgin's age-group peer) finds Durgin's philosophy (as summarized by Westover and related to her in turn by Jeff himself) "perfectly fascinating":

"He had come to the conclusion that I was **very** selfish and unworthy; that I used other people for my own advantage or let them use themselves; that I was treacherous and vindictive, and if I didn't betray a man I couldn't be happy till I had beaten him. He said that if I ever behaved well, it came after I had been successful one way or the other." (223)

I am tempted to say that society today very often encourages men to be "selfish and unworthy," to "use other people for ...[their] own advantage or let them use themselves," to be "treacherous and vindictive," and to beat the man they cannot "betray." Such a philosophy is, to a considerable extent, the result of the changes in the morality of American society itself and the conditions which society imposes upon youth today in an era considerably more complex and demanding than that of William Dean Howells.

## NOTES

## I

<sup>1</sup>For instance, in American Poetry and Prose, ed. Norman Foerster (Boston, 1957), pp. 1092-1099.

<sup>2</sup>(Boston: Riverside, 1957).

<sup>3</sup>(New York, 1891). Criticism and Fiction, according to Robert Lee Hough, is still the central document in nineteenth-century American realism. ("William Dean Howells: The Rise of Silas Lapham," in The American Novel, from James Fenimore Cooper to William Faulkner, ed. Wallace Stegner, [New York, 1965], p. 75.) According to my research, Criticism and Fiction offers the most valuable source of information relevant to the matter of characterization in Howells's work. It is his most famous critical study.

<sup>4</sup>p. 118.

<sup>5</sup>"Bibliographical" (Howells's heading for the prefatory note written for the 1909 edition), The Landlord at Lion's Head (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. vi.

<sup>6</sup>"Bibliographical," p. vi.

<sup>7</sup>The Landlord at Lion's Head (New York: New American

Library, 1964), p. 275.

<sup>8</sup>p. 131. It is thus curious to note that Howells had also written that "No conscientious man can now set about painting an image of life without perpetual question of the verity of his work, and without feeling bound to distinguish so clearly that no reader of his may be misled, between what is right and what is wrong, what is noble and what is base ...in the actions and the characters he portrays" (p. 97 in Criticism and Fiction).

<sup>9</sup>Harper's, LXXV (September, 1887), 639.

<sup>10</sup>Criticism and Fiction, p. 112.

<sup>11</sup>Criticism and Fiction, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup>Hough, in Stegner, pp. 77-8.

## II

<sup>1</sup>The novel was first serialized in Harper's Weekly and in The London Illustrated News in 1896; this much is certain. The publication date of the first edition of the novel, however, is apparently not, judging from the discrepancies in the critical studies. It is curious to note that although nine of the nineteen entries in the bibliography of this thesis which deal specifically with The Landlord at Lion's Head note the specific date of original publication of the first edition



as 1897, Sullivan places it at 1896, the editors of the New American Library paperback edition at both 1896 and 1897, Firkins at 1898, and Grattan, mysteriously enough, at 1889. The two reviews in Harper's make vague reference to the date (although it could not have been, obviously, later than the 1897 date of publication of the two magazine issues), and Morris, Fox, Tilton, and Cady (to the best of my research) avoid the matter completely. Howells himself recollected the date as 1896 in the introduction which he added to the novel in 1909. The Library of Congress listing gives the date as 1896.

<sup>2</sup>Edwin H. Cady, The Realist at War (Syracuse, 1958), p. 229. Eleanor M. Tilton speaks for many when she remarks that "perhaps one can [now] hope for more than six and a half." ("Afterword," The Landlord at Lion's Head, [New York: New American Library, 1964], p. 316.) It is, indeed, one of the purposes of this thesis to demonstrate that in 1969 The Landlord at Lion's Head merits the praise of more than a small number of readers.

<sup>3</sup>"The Editor's Study," Harper's, XCV (November, 1897), 962.

<sup>4</sup>Cady, p. 225.

<sup>5</sup>In Quest of America: A Study of Howells' Early Development as a Novelist (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1958), p. 269.

And Fryckstedt cites the following passage as evidence. Durgin:

"Oh yes you can.... How do you suppose all the big fortunes were made? By keeping the commandments? ...Prosperity and adversity, they've got nothing to do with conduct. If you're a strong man, you get there, and if you're a weak man, all the righteousness in the universe won't help you...." (The Landlord at Lion's Head [New York: New American Library, 1964], pp. 233-4. Subsequent citations from the novel refer to this edition.)

<sup>6</sup>"The Function of Setting in Howells's The Landlord at Lion's Head," AL, XXXV (March, 1963), 39.

<sup>7</sup>William Dean Howells: A Critical Study (New York, 1922), p. 251.

<sup>8</sup>The Literary Realism of William Dean Howells (Carbondale, Illinois, 1967), p. 99.

<sup>9</sup>"Conscience in the Parlor: William Dean Howells," in Howells: A Century of Criticism, ed. Kenneth E. Eble (Dallas, 1962), p. 226. (This collection will hereafter be referred to as "Eble" in references to this essay and others appearing therein.)

<sup>10</sup>Cady, p. 229. Cooke asserts that it is Howells's intention to "terrify us in the truest sense with what we are" (p. 251).

<sup>11</sup>Cooke, pp. 102, 250.

<sup>12</sup>Five Novelists of the Progressive Era (New York, 1965), p. 39.

<sup>13</sup>The Immense Complex Drama: The World and Art of the Howells Novel (Columbus, 1966), p. 123. In maintaining that there are elements in Howells which recur in Theodore Dreiser, Edward Wagenknecht cites the "frank amorality of Durgin" (Cavalcade of the American Novel [New York, 1952], p. 133). And, Tilton asks, "What is Durgin but the brutal and unscrupulous [Frank] Cowperwood [of The Financier] with pseudoscientific justifications and false valuations left out?" (p. 312)

<sup>14</sup>The Rise of the American Novel (New York, 1948), p. 690.

<sup>15</sup>"Howells, Ten Years After," in Eble, p. 114.

<sup>16</sup>William Dean Howells: A Study (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1924), p. 184.

<sup>17</sup>Cooke, p. 251.

<sup>18</sup>Sullivan, 45.

<sup>19</sup>Firkins, p. 185.

<sup>20</sup>Cooke, p. 102.

<sup>21</sup>William McMurray, "Point of View in Howells's The Landlord at Lion's Head," AL, XXXIV (December, 1962), 208. In spite of his "broad sympathies," Howells often "recoiled from the brutality and the loose morals of this new generation." Thus, Jeff Durgin is studied with "a mixture of horror and fascination" (Fryckstedt, p. 270), a fear "not aroused by contem-

plation of Durgin's final outcome, but rather by prediction of the heartache and pain he will cause those who have anything to do with him" (Sullivan, 43).

<sup>22</sup>McMurray in AL, 208. Durgin is a blackguard, Firkins counters, but "after all, a blackguard in Howells's world, and this means that about half of the time he is a gentleman" (p. 183).

<sup>23</sup>Cowie, p. 692.

<sup>24</sup>Grattan, p. 115.

<sup>25</sup>Carrington, p. 45.

<sup>26</sup>Firkins, p. 185. "It is a proof of great insight that Howells, without relinquishing his own preconceptions, can imagine with perfect clearness the world as it appears to a mind denuded of those aids."

<sup>27</sup>Sullivan, 45.

<sup>28</sup>Firkins, p. 185. Quite the contrary may be true, Tilton suggests: "The modern reader, habituated to sins more spectacular than those of a Jeff Durgin is ...surely to be disappointed" (p. 311).

<sup>29</sup>Carrington, p. 121.

<sup>30</sup>"Literary Notes," Harper's, XCV (June, 1897), 3 in the attached June supplement.

<sup>31</sup>Sullivan, 45-6.

<sup>32</sup>Fryckstedt, p. 245.

<sup>33</sup>Cooke, p. 252.

<sup>34</sup>Carrington, pp. 122-3.

<sup>35</sup>Tilton, p. 312.

<sup>36</sup>Grattan, p. 115.

<sup>37</sup>Though admitting that there is some discussion of hereditary influences, Schneider judges it vague and unclear, "as is customary in Howells's comments on heredity" (p. 38).

<sup>38</sup>Cady, pp. 116-7.

<sup>39</sup>"Howells' Doctrine of Complicity," in Eble, p. 198.

<sup>40</sup>Cady, p. 227. As illustration, Cady cites the incident in which Durgin is relegated, through a tactless error on the part of a well-meaning but bumbling society picnicker, to eating with the horses rather than with the hotel guests.

<sup>41</sup>Cady, p. 228.

<sup>42</sup>Cooke, p. 250.

<sup>43</sup>William D. Howells (Minneapolis, 1967), p. 36.

<sup>44</sup>Carrington, p. 122. Whereas the character's full name is Thomas Jefferson Durgin, McMurray suggests that he "may be

taken to represent a thrust toward freedom over and against the conventions of Harvard and Boston and society generally" (p. 96 in The Literary Realism).

<sup>45</sup>Cady, p. 228.

<sup>46</sup>Landlord, p. 231. Gibson, p. 36.

<sup>47</sup>Cady, p. 228.

<sup>48</sup>Gibson, p. 36.

<sup>49</sup>Landlord, p. 234. Cooke, p. 251.

<sup>50</sup>Gratten, p. 116.

<sup>51</sup>Firkins, p. 184.

<sup>52</sup>Howells's use of observers and narrators in a number of his novels focuses the reader's attention on problems of perception and interpretation, according to Carrington, and the handling of such characters creates "the typical Howells sense of puzzled concern" (p. 101).

<sup>53</sup>Cooke, p. 250.

<sup>54</sup>McMurray in The Literary Realism, p. 91.

<sup>55</sup>Cady, p. 226.

<sup>56</sup>Cooke, p. 250.

<sup>57</sup>Cady, p. 228.

58 Carrington, p. 121.

59 McMurray in The Literary Realism, p. 98.

60 Cowie, p. 692.

61 Tilton, p. 313.

62 McMurray in AL, 209.

63 McMurray in The Literary Realism, p. 98.

64 Landlord, p. 32. McMurray in The Literary Realism, pp. 93-4.

65 McMurray in The Literary Realism, p. 99. Tilton agrees: "Judgment of Durgin is finally left to the reader, who is obliged to do without the author's meddlesome assistance" (p. 313).

66 Carrington, p. 141.

67 Sullivan, 38.

68 Hutton, 3.

69 Sullivan, 45.

70 McMurray in The Literary Realism, p. 99.

III

<sup>1</sup>(New York, 1891), p. 85.

<sup>2</sup>"Bibliographical," The Landlord at Lion's Head (New

York: New American Library, 1964), p. vi.

<sup>3</sup>The Landlord at Lion's Head (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 225. (Page numbers hereafter cited in text in parentheses.)

<sup>4</sup>p. 95.

<sup>5</sup>Jeff had told her, "I might carry on with half a dozen girls and yet never forget you or think less of you, although I could see all the time how pretty and bright every one of 'em was. That's the way a man's mind is built. It's curious, but it's true!" (247).

<sup>6</sup>p. 185.

<sup>7</sup>"Literary Notes," Harper's, XCV (June, 1897), 3 in the attached June supplement.

#### IV

<sup>1</sup>William Dean Howells, "Bibliographical" [Howells's heading for the prefatory note written for the 1909 edition], The Landlord at Lion's Head (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. vi.

<sup>2</sup>Howells, "Bibliographical," p. vii.

<sup>3</sup>The Landlord at Lion's Head (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 13. (Page numbers hereafter cited in text in parentheses.)



<sup>4</sup>Cynthia Whitwell agrees: "Jeff would make a good landlord; he's got ideas about a hotel, and I can see that they're the right ones. He's been out in the world, and he's kept his eyes open. He will make Lion's Head the best hotel in the mountains'" (117).

<sup>5</sup>Of his portrayal of Harvard Howells wrote,

At the time the story was imagined Harvard had been for four years much in the direct knowledge of the author, and I pleased myself in realizing the hero's experience there from ...intimacy with the university moods and manners.... I had not lived twelve years in Cambridge without acquaintance such as even an elder man must make with the undergraduate life.... ("Bibliographical," p. vi)

<sup>6</sup>Morris had asked, "Was not Durgin's psychology that of the eminent models of American success—the Carnegies, Hills, Schwabs, and their like?" ("Conscience in the Parlor: William Dean Howells," in Howells: A Century of Criticism, ed. Kenneth E. Eble, [Dallas, 1962], p. 226.)

<sup>7</sup>The Realist at War (Syracuse, 1958), pp. 226-7.

<sup>8</sup>"Howells' Doctrine of Complicity," in Howells: A Century of Criticism, ed. Kenneth E. Eble (Dallas, 1962), p. 198.

<sup>9</sup>Howells, "Bibliographical," p. vi.

<sup>10</sup>Howells, "Bibliographical," p. vi.

<sup>11</sup>(New York, 1891), p. 14.

<sup>12</sup>Cady, p. 229.

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