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"SO DELIGHTFUL A PLOT": LIES, GOSSIP, AND THE NARRATION OF SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT IN *THE EUSTACE DIAMONDS*

By Zubair S. Amir

> [T]he lies which Lizzie told were amazing to Miss Macnulty. To say that Lord Fawn was in the Cabinet, when all the world knew that he was an Under-Secretary! What good could a woman get from an assertion so plainly, so manifestly false?
>
> —— Anthony Trollope, *The Eustace Diamonds*

ONE OF THE MOST INVETERATE AND GIFTED LIARS in Victorian fiction, Lizzie Eustace, the heroine of Anthony Trollope's 1873 novel *The Eustace Diamonds*, is also one of the most enigmatic. Driven both by her social ambition and by her desire to retain the Eustace family diamonds – a necklace given to her by her late husband but claimed by his relatives as an heirloom – Lizzie depends on deceit to achieve her ends throughout the novel. Yet, her reliance on mendacity becomes perplexingly excessive, confusing not only her sycophantic companion, Julia Macnulty, but most of the story's other characters as well. "It's been uncommonly clever," Lord George de Bruce Carruthers later observes of Lizzie's schemes and lies, "but I don't see the use of it" (500; ch. 51), a sentiment echoed with greater exasperation by her cousin, Frank Greystock:

> Of course she had lied to him and to all the world. From the very commencement of his intimacy with her, he had known that she was a liar, and what else could he have expected but lies? As it happened, this particular lie had been very big, very efficacious, and the cause of boundless troubles. It had been wholly unnecessary, and, from the first, though injurious to many, more injurious to her than to any other. He himself had been injured, but it seemed to him now that she had absolutely ruined herself. (685–86; ch. 71)

Not simply undermotivated or ill-considered, Lizzie's apparently purposeless and often transparent lies begin to seem singularly counterproductive, threatening her reputation, her social gains, and even her claim to the Eustace family jewels.

Readers of *The Eustace Diamonds* have suggested that Lizzie's peculiarly aimless mendacity epitomizes Trollope's broader satirical vision of an essentially unproductive world,

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one in which individuals and cultural institutions alike lack any real meaning or agency.[1] But like Miss Macnulty's confused response to Lizzie's fibs, such accounts typically assume that the utility of deceit resides exclusively in its successful promulgation of alternatives to truth, an emphasis that obscures the ways in which *un*successful lying also acquires value and function. For in *The Eustace Diamonds*, such deceptions are routinely implicated in a broader pattern of imaginative play that aligns them with other, apparently unrelated discourses: lies allow Lizzie to engage other characters with her narrative resourcefulness, a practice that provokes a comparable form of ingenuity – gossip – in those whom she fascinates. In turn, these twin discourses powerfully articulate and advance the desires that subtend the narrative, as Lizzie's ongoing efforts to become "one of the great ladies of London" captivate characters, narrator, and reader alike (81; ch. 5). Lies and gossip disrupt preexisting class histories, catalyze new alliances, rearrange social relations, and in so doing, open a niche for the parvenu; but all these effects also result in more lies and gossip, revealing the social climber's success to be contingent on an ongoing play of dubious narrative. Yet, as I shall argue, Trollope's assignment of sociocultural agency to such traditionally marginalized, even vilified, forms of discourse ultimately unsettles novelistic form, exposing the limits of nineteenth-century realism's capacity to apprehend and represent plots of upward mobility. Miss Macnulty's bewilderment at Lizzie's mendacity thus reveals the novel's central thematic and narrative concerns: what precisely do those who trade in various fictions – social climbers, gossips, and authors alike – gain by making assertions "so plainly, so manifestly false"? For Lizzie and those who delightedly gossip about her, the answer may well be, practically everything. But for the novelist who constructs just such a plot of social mobility, all that may be gained is a narrative whose ending proves as elusive as the diamonds themselves.

It should come as no surprise that deceit would play a central role in the career of the parvenu, a figure whose ambitions often compel her to hide or deny a compromising prior class affiliation. Miriam Bailin's work on Victorian sentimentality as both an expression of and consolation for the pressures of social advancement illuminates how "the effort to rise was . . . haunted [in part] . . . by the discovery of origins best forgotten" (1018). Such discoveries recur throughout nineteenth-century fiction, from the comic revelation of Josiah Bounderby's respectable upbringing in *Hard Times* to the catastrophic exposure of Nicholas Bulstrode's dubious past in *Middlemarch*. Personal history thus emerges as potentially the greatest impediment to self-advancement, particularly in light of the belief that class status imperceptibly exceeded its most crucial markers, such as wealth and deportment. "[I]t was . . . felt that one's station was indelibly marked upon character, demeanor, and appearance," notes Bailin. "A rise in status, then, required dissociation not only from a prior set of circumstances and associations but from a prior self as well" (1018). Deceit offered one convenient, if not always reliable, solution to this difficulty, as the novels of Dickens, Braddon, and Eliot amply attest.[2]

Trollope's fiction evinces a similar preoccupation with the situation of the social climber, whose struggles to rise often highlight the increasing porosity of class boundaries.[3] In *The Prime Minister* (1876), for instance, Trollope focuses on the problematic disjunctions between past and present identity that trouble the careers of adventurers like Ferdinand Lopez:

> [W]hile the struggle is going on, with the conviction strong upon the struggler that he cannot be altogether successful unless he be esteemed a gentleman, not to be ashamed, not to conceal the old family circumstances, not at any rate to be silent, is difficult. . . . And yet it is difficult to be altogether

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> silent! It may not be necessary for any of us to be always talking of our own parentage. We may be generally reticent as to our uncles and aunts, and may drop even our brothers and sisters in our ordinary conversation. But if a man never mentions his belongings among those with whom he lives, he becomes mysterious, and almost open to suspicion. It begins to be known that nobody knows anything of such a man, and even friends become afraid. It is certainly convenient to be able to allude, if it be but once in a year, to some blood relation. (2; vol. 1, ch. 1)

Trollope here captures the double bind inevitably faced by the social climber: concealment helps to assimilate individuals into desired social circles but when discovered, causes them to be stigmatized for their falsehood and secrecy. Disclosure, on the other hand, simply reframes the basic dilemma: telling one's full story confirms (lower) class status, thereby excluding one from higher standing. This apparently irresolvable conflict undoubtedly provoked a significant amount of stress among upwardly mobile individuals, as Bailin has argued, but it also generated new, far more culturally diffuse anxieties. Such interlopers could not be reliably identified, let alone accurately placed within the social hierarchy, because there seemed little way to prevent them from disseminating false stories about themselves.

The potential efficacy of such narrative in(ter)ventions proved particularly troubling in an era when knowledge of others was growing ever more attenuated, rendering such deceptions increasingly impervious to detection. In *George Eliot and Blackmail*, Alexander Welsh describes how the relationship of self and community to knowledge became more complicated in the nineteenth century, in part because mobility – both social and physical – became more common. "[S]uch movement create[d] a greater preponderance of strangers," he notes, the effect of which was to increasingly alienate individuals from one another. As a result of these changes, the socially ambitious could "move away from an old 'situation' as well as toward a new one," a displacement that beneficially "divide[d] individual lives in time and conceal[ed] their past from view" (Welsh 75, 76). Personal history could thus become a *tabula rasa* of sorts, whether left blank or reinscribed with a more flattering version of one's past.[4]

For all its interest in the figure of the social climber, however, *The Eustace Diamonds* departs radically from much other fiction of the 1860s and 1870s (including, in some cases, Trollope's own), not only in its de-emphasis of personal history as the governing determinant of class transformation, but also in its recognition of alternative functions for deceit. As the daughter of an admiral and the niece of both a dean and a baroness, Lizzie certainly has no need to lie about her origins, a detail that disrupts the familiar association of lying with invention and concealment. John Kucich's work on dishonesty in Victorian culture offers one provocative model for understanding the implications of this shift. Locating a potentially productive "vitality" in acts of deceit, Kucich contends that strategic transgressions of honesty could "provide the symbolic volatility necessary to rearrange social and sexual boundaries upheld by honesty/dishonesty distinctions." The acquisition of social eminence, he argues, came to depend on deft manipulations of truth and falsehood that both signified sophistication and conferred prestige: "Imitating privileged groups that could negotiate the gray areas between clear-cut truth and falsehood, sometimes even inverting them, was fundamental to the pursuit of cultural power" (Kucich 33–34). In such a system, then, the specific fictional content of lies proved less important than the sheer fact of their deployment.

To be sure, the multiplicity of terms used to describe Lizzie's mendacity – she is described, by turns, as guilty of "falsehood" (46; ch. 1), "lies" (125; ch. 10), "fibs" (720; ch. 75),

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"perjury" (451; ch. 45), and "incorrect version[s] of facts" (682; ch. 71) – would seem to suggest that the novel trades in meaningfully distinct forms of deceit, ones differing in context (lies vs. perjury), intent (lies vs. untruths), significance (fibs vs. perjury), and so forth. But no matter the terminology, the novel's many "fibs" often end up metamorphosing into complex accounts of self and circumstance constituted from discrete but related elements of fact and invention. As lies thus modify and encompass more and more pieces of information, and as the consequent accretion of detail produces an increasingly intricate picture, the procedures of deceit begin to resemble the process by which narratives come into being. Not unlike the novelist who assembles the story in which she finds herself, Lizzie "could invent any form of words she pleased" to further her own interests (80; ch. 5); and yet, strict insistence on the truth value of those words often seems very much beside the point.

Lizzie's fictionalized accounts of how she came to possess the Eustace diamonds exemplify this unusual feature of the novel: her effort to re-narrate, and hence redefine, an originary scene of physical and social transmission depends much more on producing plausible stories than it does on persuading anyone that they are actually true. Acting as counternarratives – but only insofar as they unsettle rather than replace avowedly authentic ones – these stories seek to modify the apparent "truth" of the matter:

> Sir Florian, as he had handed to her the stones for the purpose of a special dinner party which had been given to them when passing through London, had told her that they were family jewels. 'That setting was done for my mother,' he said, 'but it is already old. When we are at home again they shall be reset.' Then he had added some little husband's joke as to a future daughter-in-law who should wear them. (79–80; ch. 5)

What Lizzie subsequently makes of this scene increases in complexity as her situation becomes more difficult. "My husband's diamonds were my diamonds," she confidently informs her aunt, who comes to see her with a view to averting the brewing scandal (89; ch. 6). But when challenged, Lizzie's explanations expand in scope: "I didn't steal them," she insists. "My husband gave them to me with his own hands" (91; ch. 6). The story blooms more fully when Lizzie's fiancé, Lord Fawn, calls upon her to clarify her conduct. "I'll tell you all about it, Frederic," she concedes, declaring the diamonds, "my own – altogether my own. Sir Florian gave them to me. When he put them into my hands, he said that they were to be my own for ever and ever. 'There,' said he – 'those are yours to do what you choose with them'" (128, 129; ch. 10). And when questioned about how she knows the value of the necklace, Lizzie offers an even more detailed account, explaining that a jeweler "had to come and see them – about some repairs – or something of that kind. Poor Sir Florian wished it. And he said" how much they were worth (130; ch. 10). Indeed, her short-lived marriage itself becomes fodder for sentimental narrative. "Sir Florian, who understood me – whom I idolized – who seemed to have been made for me – gave me a present," she tells the largely unsympathetic Lucy Morris. "It is not for their richness that I keep them, but because they are, for his sake, so inexpressibly dear to me" (176; ch. 15). Not only do Lizzie's protestations enrich the ever-growing mix of stories about herself, they do so by drawing on a culturally familiar tale of devoted widowhood modeled by Queen Victoria herself.

By the time these increasingly detailed narratives – whether taken individually or together – are outlined for the benefit of Frank Greystock, they have become so routine

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that their full repetition within Trollope's own narrative no longer seems necessary:

> The lie which she at first fabricated for the benefit of Mr Benjamin when she had the jewels valued, and which she had since told with different degrees of precision to various people – to Lady Linlithgow, to Mr Camperdown, to Lucy, and to Lord Fawn – she now repeated with increased precision to her cousin. Sir Florian, in putting the trinket into her hands, had explained to her that it was very valuable, and that she was to regard it as her own peculiar property. (181; ch. 16)

Whereas before Lizzie's account of herself was constructed piecemeal, as a local and seemingly impromptu response to specific, often immediate needs, her story about the diamonds now emerges in the text with greater stability, the narrator's more formal and distanced presentation of this scene of narration reflecting Lizzie's habitual, even calculated, use of narrative to achieve her ends. And as the dispute over the jewels becomes a matter of legal interpretation, the story grows in sophistication, no longer simply offering details of the circumstances under which she acquired them: "Lady Eustace explained the nature of her late husband's will, as far as it regarded chattels to be found in the Castle of Portray at the time of his death; and added the fiction, which had now become common to her, as to the necklace having been given to her in Scotland" (429; ch. 43). The dissemination of Lizzie's fictions – now responsive even to the vagaries of inheritance and testamentary law – surfaces as a "common," even automatic practice, so much so that it bears the potential to neutralize or efface the fictional status of the stories it circulates. As Mr. Camperdown worries, "[i]t seemed . . . as though the harpy, as he called her, would really make good her case against him – at any rate, would make it seem to be good for so long a time, that all the triumph of success would be hers" (289; ch. 28). Lizzie's progressive normalization of the fictive process not only underwrites the possibility of her story's authenticity – the more often the case is presented, the more likely it is to be good – but, even more perversely, results in a legal interpretation quite independent of whether or not her case actually is good: the diamonds cannot be considered family heirlooms, a conclusion which tends to support her assertion that they now belong exclusively to her.

In thus endeavoring to authorize her claim to the necklace, Lizzie implicitly disrupts another, far more complex narrative of transmission for which her own will substitute: family history, rooted in and signified by the transfer of material property, including heirlooms, from generation to generation.[5] In *The Belton Estate* (1866), another of Trollope's novels that turns on a problem of inheritance, the narrator clarifies the logic that underwrites this connection between history and the circulation of material goods:

> There is much in the glory of ownership, – of the ownership of land and houses, of beeves and woolly flocks, of wide fields and thick-growing woods, even when that ownership is of late date, when it conveys to the owner nothing but the realization of a property on the soil; but there is much more in it when it contains the memories of old years; when the glory is the glory of race as well as the glory of power and property. There had been Beltons of Belton living there for many centuries, and now he was the Belton of the day, standing on his own ground, – the descendant and representative of the Beltons of old, – Belton of Belton without a flaw in his pedigree! (*BE* 412; ch. 31)

The presence of a Belton "on his own ground" evokes memories of the family's unbroken ownership of the property and in so doing, connects him to a family history most immediately visible in the continuing existence of the estate itself; notably, "the glory of ownership" both

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derives from and amalgamates family, property, and power, a set of associations that cannily suggests that the power to dispose of land and material possessions articulates (or even constitutes) "race." William Belton's pedigree thus proves flawless precisely because the descent of the estate has itself been flawless.

The capacity of the Eustace diamonds to delineate the family's history similarly depends on an undisturbed line of inheritance connecting past and present. Sir Florian's grandfather bought the jewels "on the occasion of his marriage with the daughter of a certain duke – on which occasion old family jewels, which were said to have been heirlooms, were sold or given in exchange as part value for those then purchased" (184–85; ch. 16). The Eustace diamonds thus become the material emblem of a powerful set of prior class significations that combined to bring the necklace into existence in the first place. In its various movements, the necklace continues to write into being the narrative of lineage and origins constitutive of the Eustace baronetcy:

> This grandfather, who had also been Sir Florian in his time, had expressly stated in his will that these jewels were to be regarded as an heirloom in the family, and had as such left them to his eldest son, and to that son's eldest son, should such a child be born. His eldest son had possessed them, but not that son's son. There was such an Eustace born, but he had died before his father. The younger son of that old Sir Florian had then succeeded, as Sir Thomas, and he was the father of that Florian who had married Lizzie Eustace. That last Sir Florian had therefore been the fourth in succession from the old Sir Florian by whom the will had been made, and who had directed that these jewels should be regarded as heirlooms in the family. (185; ch. 16)

Inherited possessions like the necklace thus offer one important means by which to trace lines of descent, connecting Eustaces of the present moment to those of the past and in so doing, sustaining and even deepening what Eliot in *Middlemarch* puckishly terms "the aroma of rank" (156; bk. II, ch. 16).

Yet the persistent note of uncertainty surrounding the necklace's origins renders its status as an heirloom dubious, weakening its capacity to embody the Eustace lineage. Certainty gives way to conjecture as the seemingly factual account of the diamonds' history slides into a suspiciously gossipy register: the "old family jewels . . . *were said to have been* heirlooms" and "were sold *or* given in exchange as part value for those then purchased" (184–85; ch. 16, my emphasis). If the jewels are not, so to speak, a "descendant" of a prior heirloom, they seem less clearly part of a family tradition of inheritance – and still less a viable signifier of family lineage. Indeed, the very nature of the necklace undermines its ability to articulate family history, as Mr. Dove reminds Mr. Camperdown: "The setting of a necklace will probably be altered from generation to generation. . . . The land . . . can be traced. It is a thing fixed and known. A string of pearls is not only alterable, but constantly altered, and cannot easily be traced" (295; ch. 28). The diamonds are haunted, in other words, by the specter of changes and transfers not available to public view, their present manifestation (and ownership) potentially discontinuous with a supposedly stable, knowable past. The jewels thus unexpectedly figure forth the situation of the socially mobile subject; and in this light, the dispute over the necklace becomes less a conflict over material possessions than a battle over how class status is conveyed from one individual to another. For if the diamonds serve to illuminate what Trollope in *The Prime Minister* terms "those far-reaching fibres and roots by which . . . the solidity and stability of a human tree should be assured" (77; vol. 1, ch. 9), their misappropriation denies the Eustaces a powerful means of self-definition, leaving them

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without a story to be told.[6] And in the space thus created, Lizzie can be writ very large indeed.

As Lizzie's stories about herself and the diamonds thus problematize, revise, and even disrupt preexisting narratives, they themselves also come under pressure, affected by the absence of a stable, reliable locus of objective truth: Lizzie's version(s) of events may undermine the Eustaces' case, but those stories nonetheless remain unverifiable.[7] Her character and (narrative) machinations consequently grow ever more illegible, producing a pervasive sense of mystery that anticipates the novel's eventual turn towards a more fully articulated plot of detection. For instance, the Fawns know Lizzie's parentage and income but little else, a deficiency that prompts considerable investigation. And crucially, these mysteries prove irresistible to the majority of the novel's characters. After the apparent theft of the diamonds, Barrington Erle enthusiastically tells Lady Glencora that "[u]pon the whole, the little mystery is quite delightful. . . . Nobody now cares for anything except the Eustace diamonds" (470; ch. 47). Coming to terms with Lizzie and her schemes emerges as a complex, often pleasurable process involving the production – in the dual sense of creation and disclosure – of missing or otherwise unavailable information.

For Lady Fawn and her daughters, the announcement of Lord Fawn's engagement to Lizzie precipitates the exchange and assembly of the few fragments of information they possess: "they had not heard very much about Lizzie Eustace. But they had heard something" (118; ch. 9). Diana mentions "some story of her being terribly in debt when she married Sir Florian Eustace," while Mrs. Hittaway, the eldest daughter who "heard much more about things that were going on than did her mother," asserts that Lizzie

> 'is the greatest liar about London. . . . It's my belief that she is over head and ears in debt again. But I'll learn. And when I have found out, I shall not scruple to tell Frederic. Orlando will find out all about it.' Orlando was the Christian name of Mrs. Hittaway's husband. 'Mr Camperdown, I have no doubt, knows all the ins and outs of her story. The long and the short of it is this, mamma, that I've heard quite enough about Lady Eustace to feel certain that Frederic would live to repent [marrying her].' (118, 119, 120; ch. 9)

In proclaiming her certainty that her brother's fiancée is a liar, Mrs. Hittaway draws on and contributes to a complex network of information-sharing which not only cuts across class lines – Camperdown is the family lawyer – but undermines traditionally gendered notions about the circulation of knowledge. Information about Lizzie crosses freely between the female domain of informal, domestically-situated talk and the male domain of government and business. At the same time, this exchange, with its complex transactions across the divide between public and private, is envisioned as producing yet another moment of disclosure: "when I have found out, I shall not scruple to tell Frederic." Trollope foregrounds the close relationship between discovery, disclosure, and gossip in the narrator's claim that "Mrs Hittaway was conversant with the things of the world, and heard tidings daily which never found their way down to Fawn Court" (120; ch. 9). If Mrs. Hittaway is "conversant" with (knowledgeable about) worldly affairs, it is because she is quite literally "conversant" (in conversation) with a set of individuals who accumulate and pass on information by talking. Consisting of narratives formed piecemeal from discrete details, gossip emerges as a form tellingly analogous to Lizzie's progressive construction of an alternative story of transmission for the Eustace diamonds.

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Trollope evokes these unique features of gossip in a lengthy passage that not only describes what people know – or think they know – about Lizzie's property and finances, but also reveals the complicated forms of agency that give rise to such narratives:

> One of the lies about London this season was founded on the extent of Lady Eustace's jointure. Indeed, the lie went [on] to state that the jointure was more than a jointure. It was believed that the property in Ayrshire was her own, to do what she pleased with it. That the property in Ayrshire was taken at double its value was a matter of course. It had been declared, at the time of his marriage, that Sir Florian had been especially generous to his penniless wife, and the generosity was magnified in the ordinary way. No doubt Lizzie's own diligence had done much to propagate the story as to her positive ownership of Portray. Mr Camperdown had been very busy denying this. John Eustace had denied it whenever occasion offered. The bishop in his quiet way had denied it. Lady Linlithgow had denied it. But the lie had been set on foot and had thriven, and there was hardly a man about town who didn't know that Lady Eustace had eight or nine thousand a year, altogether at her own disposal, down in Scotland. (188–89; ch. 17)

In fact, this single "lie" about the Ayrshire property turns out to be composed of several circulating elements, each dealing with questions of inheritance and ownership and comprising part of a fuller, composite narrative. More significantly, the narrator intimates that gossip's amplifications are an "ordinary" feature of public discourse that occur as "a matter of course," a suggestion that points up the power of such conversation not only to establish alternative stories but to override available truths. The repeated denials of Mr. Camperdown, John Eustace, and the Bishop of Bobsborough fail to suppress the story of Lizzie's inheritance, owing both to the inherent pleasures of speculation and to her own efforts; as Cohen remarks, "Lizzie regularly employs the rumor machine to achieve her purposes" (180). But Trollope's peculiar characterization of gossip as a "general belief which often seizes upon the world in regard to some special falsehood" captures with greater precision the elusive forms of agency behind these stories of ownership (188; ch. 17). Lizzie's quiet, almost invisible encouragement suggests a powerful force of narrative compulsion, one in which a particular belief is made to take hold of ("seize") a passive community of gossips waiting to (re)produce it. This compulsion emerges in great part from powerful combinations of self-narration and secrecy; the precise nature of Lizzie's "diligence" in encouraging public talk, we might recall, remains tantalizingly unclear, an ambiguity that foregrounds the ways in which mystery is compounded of equal parts disclosure and withholding. If no one knows the exact details of her jointure, she is in no rush to tell them; and in such a scenario, the best possible explanation of the unknown (or unknowable) is not the most accurate story, but rather the one most interesting to tell and retell. "We may say, indeed, that perfect accuracy would be detrimental rather than otherwise," the narrator slyly remarks, "and would tend to disperse that feeling of mystery which is so gratifying" (474; ch. 48).

Uncertainty thus becomes a boon to the gossip, opening up space for "gratifying" imaginative play. Yet it can also endanger the reputation of a woman like Lizzie, who is inevitably suspected of being guilty of other, improper kinds of gratification precisely because she is being talked about. The narrator recounts, for instance, how

> there was a feeling that 'Lizzie,' as she was not uncommonly called by people who had hardly ever seen her – had something amiss with it all. 'I don't know where it is she's lame,' said that very clever

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> man, Captain Boodle, who had lately reappeared among his military friends at his club, 'but she don't go flat all around.'
>
> 'She has the devil of a temper, no doubt,' said Lieutenant Griggs.
>
> 'No mouth, I should say,' said Boodle. (189; ch. 17)

This innuendo-laden comparison of Lizzie to a horse foregrounds the ease with which public discussion of women can remake them as sexually scandalous subjects. What circularly makes her "amiss with it all" – and hence worth talking about – is the presumption of equivalence between speculation and sexual degradation: no virtuous woman would make herself so conversationally available. And in fact, such gossip does firmly implant Lizzie in an erotic triangle generative of homosocial bonds; the officers' discussion of her enables them to create (or renew) the ties between them.[8] Yet Lizzie fares better for having been made such a subject of conversation: "It was thus that Lizzie was talked about at the clubs; but she was asked to dinners and balls, and gave little dinners herself, and to a certain extent was the fashion" (189; ch. 17). Lizzie's social success may happen despite the potentially damaging gossip about her, but it also happens *because of* that gossip; such talk provides precisely the narrative interest that energizes conversation at social events. As the narrator remarks, "[t]here may be a question whether the possession of the necklace and the publicity of their history – which, however, like many other histories, was most inaccurately told – did not add something to her reputation as a lady of fashion" (208; ch. 19).

In thus making herself central to multiple circulating narratives, Lizzie raises her public profile, an effect highlighted by Patricia Meyer Spacks: if characters like her "can create social speculation, maintain themselves as centers of attention, they affirm identities which, however unstable, manifestly have meaning in the world" (193). Yet Lizzie's newly acquired standing as a "lady of fashion" proves especially a function of gossip's power to fascinate "people very high up in the world" (193; ch. 17). Lady Glencora's visit to Lady Chiltern, for instance, occasions exciting revelations little different in the pleasure they afford from the conversations between the Fawns or between Captain Boodle and Lieutenant Griggs:

> 'But have you heard of the diamonds?' asked Lady Glencora.
>
> 'What diamonds?' 'Whose diamonds?' Neither of the others had heard of the diamonds, and Lady Glencora was able to tell her story. Lady Eustace had found all the family jewels belonging to the Eustace family in the strong plate room at Portray Castle, and had take possession of them as property found in her own house. John Eustace and the bishop had combined in demanding them on behalf of the heir, and a lawsuit had been commenced! The diamonds were the most costly belonging to any commoner in England, and had been valued at twenty-four thousand pounds! Lord Fawn had retreated from his engagement the moment he heard that any doubt was thrown on Lady Eustace's right to their possession! Lady Eustace had declared her intention of bringing an action against Lord Fawn – and had also secreted the diamonds! (190–91; ch. 17)

The familiar desire to hear and transmit a new story, part truth and part invention, is here coupled with hyperbolically exclamatory punctuation that captures the energy of the telling, linking Lady Glencora's gossip with the sensational modes of self-narration more typical of Lizzie. And with the apparent theft of the diamonds, this conversational and speculative interest only increases. Except Plantagenet Palliser, "there was not one [at Matching Priory] who did not listen anxiously for news on the subject. As regarded the old duke, it had

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been found to be quite a godsend; and from post to post as the facts reached Matching they were communicated to him" (467; ch. 47). Much as modern-day audiences thrive on celebrity scandal, the members of the Palliser circle take a seemingly disproportionate interest in Lizzie's affairs. In both cases, the exchange and consumption of gossip afford diverting fantasies of access to private lives. More importantly, such conversation implicitly establishes imaginative social bonds: Lady Glencora and her friends speculate about Lizzie's adventures as if she were a member of their own circle. Though largely peripheral to the action of the novel, the Pallisers thus prove surprisingly central to Lizzie's success, their conversations about her establishing socially advantageous connections. Such ties are subsequently authenticated by Lady Glencora when she calls on Lizzie, who thereby gains both an important ally and an important social alliance: "Lady Glencora stood so high in the world, that her countenance would be almost as valuable as another lover. If . . . Lady Glencora would be her friend, might she not still be a successful woman?" (534; ch. 54). And in fact, Lady Glencora does champion Lizzie's cause with Lord Fawn, ironically refuting the gossip that has done so much for her new friend. "All manner of stories have been told about her, and, as I believe, without the slightest foundation," she asserts. "They tell me now that she had an undoubted right to keep the diamonds" (540; ch. 55).

In turn, Lizzie is quick to capitalize on her new connection to the Pallisers, "which thing alone was felt by [her] to alter her position altogether" (589; ch. 61). Strategic namedropping – she tells Lord Fawn that the Duke of Omnium himself has taken an interest in her affairs – allows Lizzie to reaffirm this new alliance. "This was very fine in Lizzie," the narrator subsequently comments. "The Duke of Omnium she had never seen; but his name had been mentioned to her by Lady Glencora, and she was quick to use it" (598; ch. 61). "Fine" certainly conveys ironic disdain – Lizzie's allusion to the duke is presumptuous – but perhaps also grudging admiration for her adept manipulation of what is, at best, a tenuous social tie. And in fact, that connection proves remarkably powerful: "Lady Glencora and the duke went for almost as much with Lord Fawn as they did with Lizzie" (599; ch. 61). Even Lord George – always cynical about aristocrats – concedes the power of her connections: "No doubt people who are rich, and are connected with rich people, and have great friends – who are what the world call swells – have great advantages. . . . Lady Glencora, no doubt, is a very swell among swells" (617; ch. 63). Lizzie thus finds herself making social headway despite the fact that the growing scandal over the Eustace diamonds has brought her to "the brink of social ruin" (601; ch. 61). Indeed, at the very moment that the proliferation of narratives about her has become most pervasive and most exorbitant, her purported status as a "pinchbeck lady" paradoxically becomes least visible and least meaningful (498; ch. 51). And even as the pleasure of gossip about her is waning, Lady Glencora continues to claim her as "my particular friend," decisively signaling the power of conversational speculation to forge social bonds (769; ch. 80).[9]

In thus concerning itself with the power of publicity (or, perhaps more to the point, the work performed by the discursive transactions constitutive of publicity), *The Eustace Diamonds* reveals problematic affinities between the fictive work of the gossip and the novelist. For as stories about Lizzie and the diamonds accumulate, both building on and contradicting one another, the "real" story of *The Eustace Diamonds* itself becomes harder to discern, virtually buried by the versions of truth put into circulation by the narrator's own representations of gossip. In fact, the authority of the narrator's perspective and narration

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increasingly comes under pressure as the story he tells challenges and ultimately overthrows the possibility of locating just such a stable source of authority.

Such internal conflicts have not always been recognized by Trollope critics. Walter Kendrick has asserted, for instance, that "[t]he reader is told very early how Lizzie really got possession of the diamonds" (145), a claim based on the circumstances of their transfer (quoted earlier).[10] But the tortuous final line of this apparently decisive passage – "she was not sure whether the fact of their being so handed to her did not make them her own" (80; ch. 5) – throws into some doubt the narrator's subsequent assertions that Lizzie "knew well enough that she was endeavouring to steal the Eustace Diamonds" and "that the thing was not really her own" (93; ch. 6). Indeed, the stories constructed about Lizzie *within* the novel further unsettle the ostensibly privileged status of the narrator, only confusing matters more. As the dispute over the diamonds becomes increasingly subject to legal consideration, Lizzie's appropriation of them seems less self-evidently a case of stealing. Noting that the "status of the 'theft' is open to question" in the first place, D. A. Miller points out that "Lizzie cannot clearly be said to 'steal' what is already in her possession" (11). And in fact, Mr. Camperdown's application for advice on the merits of the case to be made against Lizzie backfires when Mr. Dove's dry legal opinion turns out to strengthen Lizzie's position (262–64; ch. 25). By the time thieves first attempt to steal the diamonds at Carlisle, Lizzie's claim to them has thus perplexingly shifted, as we have already seen, from the realm of self-interested invention into that of potential legal validity.

As a result of these confusions, then, the reader increasingly experiences the text as a shifting play of narrative possibilities, where all stories seem equally unlikely to convey reliable information. We might say that in the case of *The Eustace Diamonds*, to read with the grain of the novel is to lose track of that grain. The effect thus produced is of narrative gone out of control, the novel not only representing the explosive potential of gossip but itself becoming the most visible sign of gossip's effects. Indeed, at the very moment the novel is at its most taut, bursting not only with plots and subplots but with a wide array of stories available to explain those plots, the narrator's interventions become most pronounced, as if aimed at retaking control of a narrative in danger of degenerating into incoherence. "He who recounts these details has scorned to have a secret between himself and his readers," the narrator pompously announces after the first attempted theft of the jewels. "The diamonds were at this moment locked up within Lizzie's desk. For the last three weeks they had been there" (476; ch. 48). In a novel so attentive to the possibilities of imaginative speculation, this unexpected moment of narrative control acts like a bucket of cold water, disrupting readerly conjecture by insisting on specific facts. And when the diamonds are later stolen from Lizzie, the narrator acts to clarify matters once again. "The chronicler . . . scorns to keep from his reader any secret that is known to himself," he avers, having revealed that the diamonds are "locked up in a small safe fixed into the wall at the back of a small cellar beneath the establishment of Messrs Harter and Benjamin, in Minto Lane, in the City" (514; ch. 52).[11]

This peculiar insistence on transparency typically translates into an implicit affirmation of the close bond between narrator and reader, as if they are in fact a pair of gossips: "every tittle of this story has been told without reserve, and every secret unfolded" to the reader (543; ch. 56). Like gossip, fiction bridges the gap between public (novels in circulation) and private (readerly consumption) in particularly complex ways, establishing a close relationship between author and reader that, as Spacks notes, is figured forth by the

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intimacies of conversation: "gossip . . . supplies a form analogizing the exchange between narrator and reader: the novel's basic economics" (21). Indeed, conversation and speculation fundamentally entail a making of stories, whether mutually undertaken by narrators and readers to produce a text,[12] or by gossips and rumormongers to yield a pleasurably intelligible account of other people's doings. And yet, unlike the relationship between gossips, the narrator's sharing of secrets with the reader seems to diminish rather than enhance the potential for imaginative play, foreclosing the pleasures and possibilities of mystery that it works so hard to depict. This seeming paradox makes a crucial question of narration compellingly manifest as the novel draws to a close: how does making a fiction *about* gossip's own fictional elaborations – unique, one might add, in their scope for endless elaboration – affect the structures of the novel that endeavors to contain them? More particularly, how does one end a narrative that deals with the potential endlessness of narration?

Of course, what finally brings the action of *The Eustace Diamonds* to a close is the theft of the jewels and the subsequent discovery that Lizzie has lied about the circumstances of their loss, events that crucially reframe the nature of the unfolding story. Miller has persuasively argued that the novel progressively transfers Lizzie's apparent misappropriation of the Eustace diamonds into "the circuit of the law. Subsequent thefts do not simply repeat the initial impropriety, but revise it as well, recasting it into what are legally more legible terms" (12). Not only do the grounds for uncertainty shift – the question of whether Lizzie has stolen her own diamonds replaces the question of whether or not she has inappropriately kept her late husband's diamonds – but in the aftermath of the first attempted theft, narrative itself becomes subject to legal consideration. Most notably, Lizzie's penchant for dishonesty is increasingly envisioned as a prosecutable crime, perjury, thus reclassifying the novel's preoccupation with (false) narrative as a judicial matter: "The police, of course, would find it out, and then horrid words would be used against her. She hardly knew what perjury was. It sounded like forgery and burglary. To stand up before a judge and be tried – and then to be locked up for five years in prison – !" (511; ch. 52). Trollope not only aligns perjury with forgery and burglary, crimes of misrepresentation and misappropriation, but suggests that its investigation and adjudication will take place through a use of language reminiscent of Lizzie's own: "words would be used against her," presumably both in the police station and in court.

This move towards disciplining Lizzie's manipulations and incitements of narrative alters the ways in which the plot's secrets and mysteries become available for narration, replacing gossip, storytelling, and lying with less open-ended forms linked to the novel's new emphasis on crime, detection, and law. In prophetically wishing that "some one would steal . . . [the necklace], so that we might hear no more of the thing," John Eustace not only implants the crisis over the diamonds in an increasingly legible discourse of criminality, but anticipates the ways in which this crisis will become subject to the narrativizing impulse inherent in the legal apparatus that would apprehend and adjudicate such crimes (270–71; ch. 26). At the same time, Trollope connects this move with the ultimate termination of discussion about the jewels. To "hear no more of the thing" implicitly necessitates that one speak no more of it, a situation possible only when there is nothing new or interesting left to say. The proliferation of narrative about Lizzie and the diamonds, both in the form of her lies and in the form of the gossip of those fascinated by her story, thus collapses in the face of a judicially sanctioned master narrative that exercises a presumptive claim to superior truth value. Detectives, barristers, and judges combine to make disclosure necessary and,

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indeed, inevitable once Lizzie and the diamonds are caught up in the novel's investigatory and juridical apparatus, a pattern mirrored in the narrator's subjection of his own story to the new standards of discipline we have already seen.

Lizzie's story is repeated again and again in the final sections of the book, at times by agents of the police and the courts. "I have told you the whole story, as it has been told to me by the woman Crabstick," Major Mackintosh informs Lizzie, shortly after the narrator has confirmed that "his surmises were in every respect right" (659, 657; ch. 68). This story is recounted in still greater detail by the defense counsel: "[n]ow, gentlemen of the jury, let me recapitulate to you the history of this lady as far as it relates to the diamonds as to which my client is now in jeopardy" (751; ch. 78). But just as often, representatives of these institutions seek to compel Lizzie to produce and reproduce her own narrative, a ritualistic set of recitals seemingly designed to discipline the imaginative and discursive excesses of which she has been guilty. After realizing that "she must go into court and confess the incorrectness of her own version" (682; ch. 71), Lizzie discovers that she must also come before Mr. Camperdown and "let him know *from her own lips*, facts of which nothing more than rumour had yet reached him" (693; ch. 72, my emphasis). Self-disclosure here explicitly preempts rumor as the primary means by which information about Lizzie circulates, foreclosing the possibility of further speculation about her infractions. More particularly, Lizzie's confrontation with Camperdown visibly stages the fundamental conflict between secrecy and a judicial apparatus that depends on bringing the hidden to light. "People ain't obliged to tell their secrets, and I wouldn't tell mine," she argues, to which the attorney responds, "The difference is this, Lady Eustace; – that if you give false evidence upon oath, you commit perjury" (697, 698; ch. 72). In attempting to preserve her secrets, she makes them far more available to investigation and adjudication, her acts of perjury paradoxically (though perhaps not surprisingly) leading to full disclosure. Telling tales to the police and in the courts, it turns out, inevitably results in one having to tell one's full tale.

And in turn, the disclosure and repetition of this master narrative systematically expunges from the novel the mysteries productive of both gossip and readerly interest. While the outcome of the police investigation remains uncertain, Lizzie hopes that "nothing more would ever be known about the diamonds, and they would simply be remembered as having added a peculiar and not injurious mystery to her life" (593; ch. 61). The questions about her connection to the stolen jewels are thus envisioned as potentially having an afterlife, sustaining interest and discussion despite passing into the realm of collective memory. But in yielding irrefutable stories about her, successful police investigation eliminates such valuable forms of uncertainty: "What she had feared – had feared till the dread had nearly overcome her – was *public exposure* at the hands of the police. If she could escape that, the world might still be bright before her" (593; ch. 61, my emphasis). Of course, as we have already seen, Lizzie's entire history is dominated by calculated acts of self-exposure, specifically undertaken to make her the subject of public discourse. But unlike previous moments of exposure, this one has been precipitated by forces beyond her control and, more particularly, threatens to resolve her self and history into a *single*, apprehensible story rather than multiple, circulating ones. Mr. Camperdown explains that "the matter could no longer be kept as a secret, and that her evidence would certainly appear in the papers" (661; ch. 68), a turn of events with which Lizzie struggles to come to terms: "She must be prepared to encounter a world accurately informed as to every detail of the business" (682; ch. 71). And as "accurate" information seeps slowly but surely into the public domain, tellingly

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embodied by "the fashionable evening paper," it dissipates the socially productive energy of uncertainty:

> The popular and well-informed organ of intelligence in question informed its readers, that the Eustace diamonds –, &c. &c. In fact, it told the whole story; and then expressed a hope that, as the matter had from the commencement been one of great interest to the public, who had sympathized with Lady Eustace deeply as to the loss of her diamonds, Lady Eustace would be able to explain that part of her conduct which certainly, at present, was quite unintelligible. (701; ch. 73)

In making "the whole story" available to a mass readership, the newspaper brings months of absorbing speculation to an end, leaving only the question of Lizzie's moral character to be mulled over and decided. "It was a most unworthy conclusion to such a plot," Mr. Bonteen subsequently objects, a complaint that not only underlines the extent of Lizzie's subjection to narration but foregrounds how crucial the satisfaction of gossip and reader alike have been all along (768; ch. 80). What specifically breeds discontent in newspaper readers, Mr. Bonteen, and all those who have watched and discussed Lizzie's story, however, is the failure of its anticlimactic conclusion to undo itself: her unspectacular end – she refuses to reappear in court, marries Mr. Emilius, and retreats to Scotland – simply isn't worth talking about anymore.

In simultaneously marking the immediate end of Lizzie's upward mobility and signaling the imminent ending of the novel itself, then, these developments peculiarly suggest that narrative closure is predicated upon the *premature* termination of the social climber's career. To be sure, the discourses that make possible the meteoric rise of a Lizzie Eustace would seem inherently finite in both reach and effect: Trollope's anti-heroine falls from social eminence not when she is discovered to lack authenticity or virtue – of course, everyone has known about these flaws all along – but rather when the absence of those qualities begins to fail as an imaginative catalyst. In this sense, the halting of a plot of social advancement seems a function of the means by which upward mobility is achieved in the first place.

As we have seen, however, this development is radically overdetermined in the novel. Gossip about Lizzie does not simply dissipate, but instead collapses in on itself, disabled by a narrative whose changing shape increasingly runs counter to the representation of unreliable discourses. The implications of this move are complex. Broadly speaking, the novel offered a fruitful venue for managing and defusing the tensions provoked by the unnerving social transformations of the Victorian period, tensions further problematized by questions of gender. Feminist critics have noted, for instance, how the endings of women's plots in the nineteenth century often served a disciplinary function: "Formal closure in fiction has generally dictated the end of a woman's 'ambitious' plot, while the end of a female 'erotic' plot in marriage bears an uncanny resemblance to death" (Booth 2). And in analogous work that implicitly takes up questions of narrative closure, Elizabeth Langland has argued that the nineteenth-century novel's engagement with domestic ideology rendered one particular plot of upward mobility – "[m]arriage between a working-class woman and a higher-class man" – effectively "non-narratable" (1).[13] In this light, Lizzie's eminently unsatisfactory marriage and the apparent collapse of her social career seem like forms of containment designed to curb her social and discursive transgressions; indeed, the novel's return to silence on its final page tellingly corresponds to Lizzie's own silencing – not to mention the silencing of those whose talk sustained her rise in the first place.

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Yet much as it evades the key question of whether or not Lizzie knows that she is stealing the necklace, *The Eustace Diamonds* never fully commits itself to the proposition, seemingly advanced by the design of the novel's close, that Lizzie's social prospects have been irretrievably ruined. Though not quite the "successful woman" she wished to be, Lizzie is by no means a total failure. She manages to retain her early gains, justifiably reflecting that "[t]he undoubted mistress of Portray Castle, and mother of the Sir Florian Eustace of the day, could still despise and look down upon Mrs Carbuncle, although she were known to have told fibs about the family diamonds" (719–20; ch. 75). And while even she recognizes that "[s]he had been maimed fearfully in her late contests with the world, and was now lame and soiled and impotent," she also takes what is perhaps a more realistic view of her long-term prospects: "The world would not continue to turn its back altogether upon a woman with four thousand pounds a year, because she had told a fib about her necklace. . . . Mr Emilius and Lady Eustace would, she thought, sound very well, and would surely make their way in society" (757, 758–59; ch. 79). Lizzie's naïveté about the social marketability of her new husband – earlier condemned by the narrator for being "a nasty, greasy, lying, squinting Jew preacher; an impostor, over forty years of age" (710; ch. 73) – belies her continuing savvy about the social value of wealth, rank, and, most importantly, fascination. Even if "Mr. Emilius and Lady Eustace" doesn't sound well, it may nonetheless sound in the ears of the curious. And as the novel itself winds down, Lizzie's story of social ambition proclaims its own incompleteness, a fact tacitly admitted by the narrator, who "declare[s] that the future fate of this lady shall not be left altogether in obscurity" (764; ch. 79), and confirmed by the novelist, who returns to her story in both *Phineas Redux* (1874) and *The Prime Minister*. In the end, *The Eustace Diamonds* emerges as another instance of Booth's observation that, rather than operating as "perfect patriarchal closed circuit[s]," "nineteenth-century narratives often spring a leak at the end (whatever the seepage throughout)" (4).

Far from simply offering troubling evidence of nineteenth-century fiction's ideological complicity with patriarchy, then, Trollope's "leaky" novel points us toward more fundamental questions about how the realist novel strives to reconcile the inherent gap between representation and the reality it seeks to depict.[14] For in positing the implication of essentially open-ended narrative forms – lies and gossip – in the career of the successful social climber, Trollope necessarily undermines the possibility of mapping an end to the trajectory of his novel. As George Levine notes, Trollope's "fictions sprawl toward the realist formlessness that none of the conventions of narrative or language can sustain" (187). Incomplete, even elusive, Lizzie's story ultimately precludes the possibility of full representation because the upward mobility it would depict depends on discourses that exceed the fictive structures available to contain them: gossip may continue indefinitely, but novels cannot. "For Trollope . . . reality failed to correspond to the sorts of resolutions and shapings that narrative conventions required," Levine argues. "Truthfulness, if it did not require the subversion of fiction, entailed a frank if not aggressive recognition that a story was a story" (186). Like Lizzie and those who would talk about her, the realist impulse that drives *The Eustace Diamonds* must itself be disciplined for the sake of a good story.

Yet, in highlighting the arbitrariness of those conventions that chasten both his and his heroine's narratives, Trollope implicitly gestures toward the expansiveness of the "real" world that lies beyond the pages of his novel, a world that can find its way into fiction *only* if carefully circumscribed.[15] And because that expansiveness is more particularly articulated in and through the complex matrix of lies and gossip that dominates *The Eustace Diamonds*,

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the novel's story of upward mobility begins to seem not so much disrupted or cut off as it does differently-signified. The silence of narrative closure marks out the bounds of realist representation, but paradoxically, it also speaks eloquently of the potentially limitless play of those unreliable discourses that sustain the career of a Lizzie Eustace. Like the novel's many lacunae, whose silences recurrently point to a broader, unspoken story – the newspaper that publishes Lizzie's transgressions is described, for instance, as "inform[ing] its readers, that the Eustace diamonds – &c., &c." (701; ch. 73) – its arbitrary ending reminds us that there is much more to be said here.[16] The realist impulse that seeks to reveal the role of dubious narrative in social mobility inevitably exposes the limitations of its own project; yet, in its realist commitments, *The Eustace Diamonds* opens up a clearer view towards those "delightful plots" that narrative can never fully apprehend.

Benedictine University

NOTES

I wish to thank James Eli Adams, Dorothy Mermin, Paul L. Sawyer, and Katherine Terrell for their feedback on earlier versions of this essay.

1. Characterizing the novel as "essentially static," Kincaid argues that "[t]here is no forward motion here, no discovery, no real villainy. No action is genuinely purposeful, and effects do not follow causes" (202). Polhemus offers a more scathing assessment of the novel, calling Lizzie "a brainwashed nullity blown about like a tumbleweed on the winds of public opinion" and asserting that "[t]he society of *The Eustace Diamonds* turns rotten with public-relations mentality. Posing falsely and ridiculously for the world, madly worrying about status, Lizzie Eustace and her circle live the demoralizingly empty lives of Lilliputians" (173, 172). Disputing such readings, however, Wall contends that Lizzie's "misbehaviour is not seen by Trollope . . . as symptomatic of some pervasive social malaise" (264).
2. The plots of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and *Aurora Floyd* (1863), for instance, specifically turn on the concealment, investigation, and disclosure of personal history.
3. *Doctor Thorne* (1858), *The Prime Minister*, and *The Duke's Children* (1880), for instance, all explore the increasing flexibility of the social category of the "gentleman." See also Gilmour 149–81.
4. The potential always existed, however, for the parvenu's apparently blank slate to reveal itself as a palimpsest instead. As the Raffles-Bulstrode subplot in *Middlemarch* reveals, traces of past identity routinely remain available for discovery and revelation: "The information is always there, waiting to be gathered up, and it is relevant information, incriminating information – that is, evidence" (Welsh 93).
5. As Cohen observes, Lizzie "disturbs patriarchal institutions both through her recognition of her function within that order – as a vehicle for the transfer of property between her husband and her son – and through her attempt to subvert that process" (170).
6. Tellingly, few Eustaces populate the novel that bears their name, foregrounding the extent to which Lizzie's story has displaced theirs. John Eustace, Sir Florian's brother, appears only infrequently, while the actual heir to the diamonds – the son of Lizzie and Sir Florian – plays no meaningful role in the story.
7. Such points of reference do exist in the novel, but are typically marginalized. Lucy Morris's outrage at Lizzie's plea that she be honest – "How dare you tell me to tell the truth? Of course, I tell the truth" (176; ch. 15) – identifies her as a powerful figure of authenticity, for whom fact and fiction remain unproblematically separate; however, characters and narrator alike regularly shuffle her out of the way. Similarly, when Alice Grey reminds her gossiping friends that "all they really knew of the unfortunate

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woman was, that her jewel-box had been stolen out of her bedroom at her hotel," her remarks are effectively overpowered by the tide of conversation (472; ch. 47).

8. See Girard and Sedgwick's refinement of Girard's schema of desire, especially 21–27.
9. See also Gluckman's "Gossip and Scandal," which offers an anthropologically-based account of the socially constitutive power of gossip.
10. Relying on fairly inflexible assumptions about the narrator's relationship to the facts and falsehoods of his narrative, Kendrick routinely asserts that, "[t]he narrator . . . always tells the truth" or "what the narrator writes is always true" (140, 141), readings that require reconsideration in light of some of the narrator's more disingenuous assertions, which I discuss below.
11. These seemingly perverse narrative interventions are common in Trollope's work; the narrator of *Barchester Towers* (1857), for instance, reassures readers early in the novel that Mrs. Bold will not marry the unctuous Mr. Slope. Such asides famously drew the ire of Henry James, who in "The Art of Fiction" lamented Trollope's tendency to "conced[e] to the reader that he and this trusting friend are only 'making believe.' He admits that the events he narrates have not really happened, and that he can give his narrative any turn the reader may like best. Such a betrayal of a sacred office seems to me, I confess, a terrible crime" (379). In *The Eustace Diamonds*, however, such gestures seem aimed at repudiating the appeal of sensation fiction by disrupting the reader's involvement in the plot, a view confirmed by Milley's reading of the novel as a satire of Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868). And as I argue below, these interventions are also crucially implicated in a pattern of increasing narrative discipline.
12. Drawing on Wolfgang Iser's theorization of the scene of reading, Spacks expands on this point: "fiction's 'dialogue' of narrator and reader involves not distinctly alternating but virtually simultaneous contributions – an oscillation so rapid as to be undiscernible. To think of it in relation to gossip calls attention not only to the intense intimacy of the narrator-reader relationship – an absolute privacy of two – but to their mutual contribution to an understanding generated by exchange" (22).
13. Langland argues that such plots become impossible because "a mid-Victorian man depended on his wife to perform the ideological work of managing the class question and displaying the signs of middle-class status," work which working-class women were ill-equipped to perform (9).
14. Levine's work on nineteenth-century realism reveals that Victorian realist authors – including Trollope – wrote self-consciously, not only recognizing the existence of this breach, but "the arbitrariness of the reconstructed order toward which [their work] point[ed]" (4).
15. Levine remarks that "nineteenth-century realism . . . typically indulges in the satisfaction of anticlimactic wisdom, pretending that life extends beyond its pages, that life is only partially reflected in the novel's multitudinous disregard" (21).
16. "Even as we watch the apparently confident assimilation of reality to comic patterns, we find fissures, and merely 'literary' conventions required to imply the reality of those patterns. The realistic novel persistently drives itself to question not only the nature of artificially imposed social relations, but the nature of nature, and the nature of the novel" (Levine 21).

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