Rumor Has It: Gossip & Hearsay in Anthony Trollope's *The Eustace Diamonds*

Kalervo A. Sinervo
December 2011
@kalervideo
kalervo.sinervo@gmail.com

"It was admitted by all her friends, and also by her enemies,—who were in truth the more numerous and active body of the two,—that Lizzie Greystock had done very well with herself." (Trollope *Eustace* 1) So begins Anthony Trollope's 1871 serialized novel *The Eustace Diamonds*, a black comedy centered on the young, beautiful, and amoral Lizzie Greystock. With this simple introductory sentence, Trollope's narrator subtly—but effectively—sets the tone for all 700-some pages that will follow by presenting the reader not with a statement of fact, but with a social consensus; and even more importantly, a social consensus established with no small amount of vitriol. *The Eustace Diamonds* is a novel full of inadvertent deceptions where facts are built by committee, true intentions stand behind façades of friendship, and things are never as they seem. Trollope weaves an intricate and convoluted plot with a unique style, and in so doing offers the reader a narrative powered by deceit, a story that hangs heavy on the grapevine. The *real* truth is that gossip is the lifeblood of *The Eustace Diamonds*, the common theme that runs through its many chapters and always sits in the background: it serves as a key element in building the identities of the major characters, who create and are created by one another through discursive relationships; it is embedded in the twists and turns of the narrative itself, leaving the title commodity and central character's fates decidedly open-ended; and perhaps most importantly, it exists at

play in Trollope's writing style, most clearly apparent in his narrator's voice—perhaps the most manipulative speaker in the entire book. By making a close reading of these elements of the novel through critical lenses carved from structuralist and historical methodologies, gossip, rumor, and hearsay come into focus as the moving force behind *The Eustace Diamonds*.

A gentleman, wrote John Newman in 1852, "has no ears for slander or gossip, is scrupulous in imputing motives to those who interfere with him, and interprets everything for the best. He is never mean or little in his disputes, never takes unfair advantage, never mistakes personalities or sharp sayings for arguments, or insinuates evil which he dare not say out." (Newman 189) Gendering aside, one needs not read far into *The Eustace Diamonds* to see that though terms may have been clearly defined, adherence to standards in Trollope's view of British high society was somewhat lax. Of course, the word "gossip" did not always have negative connotations, though the notion as it is commonly understood always has. In early modern England, the word actually characterized close, fiercely loyal friendship between women. A woman's dearest companions were known as her gossips (*OED* "Gossip" def. 2). By the 19th Century, however, the term had evolved to refer to refer to "A person, mostly a woman, of light and trifling character, esp. one who delights in idle talk" and the conversation engaged in by such an individual (*OED* "Gossip" defs. 3 & 4). This is also around the time that the word developed its verb form and a consistently negative implication: it was generally considered a low but inevitable quality in a lady, and proper

gentlemen, as indicated in the Newman excerpt above, weren't meant to take part in such frivolous activities at all. In spite of normative customs, it seems that some examinations of *The Eustace Diamonds* found realism in its shallowness. In its October 1872 review of *The Eustace Diamonds*, London newspaper *The Times* called Trollope's novel a "literary achievement," first praising the credibility of its characters:

> It is possible to give an idea of the plot of the story, but for its carefully filled in details, its ideal characters, who become to us as real acquaintances, nay, even friends, before we close the last volume—for all this and much more, the would-be readers must be referred to the book itself. (*Times* 4)

Ironically, this piece tantalizes its readers to become readers of the book it describes in much the same way that the book's characters talk each other into existence. However, apparently not all literary critics contemporary to Trollope agreed with the view of Trollope's characters expressed in *The Times*' review. The *Spectator*, for example, complained of a lack of "*inward* portraiture of character" (*Spectator* 1365), and Edward Fitzgerald wrote in a letter that he often found the motivations of Trollope's characters unbelievable (Fitzgerald 159). Criticism about depth of character in Trollope was often divided, as David Skilton comments in his essay "'Depth of Portraiture': What Should Distinguish a Victorian Man from a Victorian Woman?" "One of the assumptions that I found shared by a good number of critics," Skilton writes, "concerned the portrayal of fictional personages in works that they characterized as displaying what was then called 'truth to life.' The test that was applied was whether authors presented an 'inside' to their

characters as well as a social, visible 'outside.'" (Skilton *Portraiture* 207) In another of his works, Skilton cites one of these critics as saying that Trollope's characters were "very often much distorted from their most natural selves." (Hutton cited in Skilton *Contemporaries* 117) However, it may be that Trollope's characters are not so much distorted from their most natural selves as constructed by discursive social practice. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault explains the ways in which the notion of "knowledge" or "fact" is built by practices of description. Any kind of unity, Foucault maintains, is in actuality a fiction constructed by the discourse that supposedly arises from that unity:

> [I]s not the material unity of the volume a weak, accessory unity in relation to the discursive unity of which it is the support?...the unity of the book, even in the case of a group of relations, cannot be regarded as identical in each case. The book is not simply the object that one holds in one's hands; and it cannot remain within the little parallelepiped that contains it: its unity is variable and relative. As soon as one questions that unity, it loses its self-evidence; it indicates itself, constructs itself, only on the basis of a complex field of discourse. (Foucault 23)

Applied to characterization, what this means is something along the lines of "I am whatever you say I am." Interiority is mutable in the face of discourse. In any event, the question of the interiority of characters is one vital to a study of gossip *The Eustace Diamonds,* where to a certain degree, the players in the novel create one another as much as they are fabricated by the possible realism of their personalities or the "carefully filled in details" of their actions. An entire contingent of characters in the book appear out of the mist of their preceding reputations, and often eventually fade back into the same fog of small talk. Lizzie's mid-story pseudo-suitor Lord George de Bruce Carruthers, for example, is a man

described by the text as "always mysterious"—while his own introduction is based primarily on what was "declared" or "considered" of him:

> He was a young man—so considered—about forty-five years of age, who had never done anything in the manner of other people. He hunted a great deal, but he did not fraternize with hunting men, and would appear now in this country and now in that, with an utmost disregard of grass, fences, friendships, or foxes. Leicester, Essex, Ayrshire, or the Baron had equal delights for him; and in all countries he was quite at home. He had never owned a fortune, and had never been known to earn a shilling…Perhaps he played a little and made a few bets. He generally lived with men of means; — or perhaps with one man of means at a time; but they, who knew him well, declared that he had never borrowed a shilling from a friend, and never owed a guinea to a tradesman. (Trollope *Eustace* 369-370)

Here we are presented with the very first descriptive paragraph of Lord George offered by the novel. What it offers of interest is that the narrator—arguably a third-person limited omniscient voice—gives few opinions of its own. By and large, Lord George is framed by the thoughts and assertions of his peers, though who his peers are meant to be seems conveniently, and perhaps intentionally, obfuscated. He is framed for the reader as a story several times passed down: the sources at the heart of the matter are said to "know him well" but are never named; some gaps of knowledge are acknowledged in the way that Lord George only *perhaps* plays a little; and he is generally presented romantically and rhetorically, as with his "utmost disregard of grass, fences, friendships, or foxes." All in all, Lord George is presented to the reader as a confidential whisper. The narrator is careful to offer next to nothing in actual substantiated facts. This may have something to do with the authorial flexibility desired when writing a serial story (Trollope certainly wouldn't want to paint himself into a corner with what he could do with Lord George's back story), but the effect produced is one where Lord

George's background is that much more mysterious for having been concocted by other fictional characters.

Lord George is not alone in having a history built up out of discourse rather than by authoritative facts delivered to us by the narrator (the text's highest authority). Lucinda Roanoke, for example, is introduced in much the same way as Lord George, carried into the narrative by vague assertions and hushed public opinion:

> There was some difficulty about her—as to who she was. That she was an American was the received opinion. Her mother, as well as Mrs Carbuncle, has certainly been in New York. Carbuncle was a London man; but it was supposed the Mr Roanoke was, or had been, an American. The received opinion was correct. Lucinda had been born in New York, had been educated there till she was sixteen, had then been taken to Paris for nine months, and from Paris had been brought to London by her aunt. Mrs Carbuncle always spoke of Lucinda's education of having been thoroughly Parisian. Of her own education and antecedents, Lucinda never spoke at all. 'I'll tell you what it is,' said a young scamp from Eton to his elder sister, when her character and position were once being discussed. 'She's a heroine, and would shoot a fellow as soon as look at him.' In that scamp's family, Lucinda was ever afterwards called the heroine. (Trollope *Eustace* 369)

Here Lucinda is introduced in much the same way as Lord George. Trollope's narrator shrouds Lucinda in some mystery, one or two facts, and a great deal of speculation. First the "received opinion" is offered, which details mysteries of both her birthplace and hinting questions about her parentage. Then the narrator confirms her geographical history, subtly ignoring the question of parentage, but noting that Lucinda "never spoke at all" of her "antecedents." What is most interesting about Lucinda's introduction is the presence of the unnamed "scamp from Eton." This character rates no name, and his relation to Lucinda is never

explained at all (there is not even any suggestion that the two have met outside of the fact that he is talking about her), and yet his opinion is not only good enough for his entire family (indicating that she was to be discussed much further in his home), but the reader as well. In this novel, gossip is not only acceptable, but given priority and rendered essential. The thematic significance of gossip is palpable here, as the scamp and his family are given as much authority in influencing our views and inflecting our knowledge of a character as the narrator himself, and even more authority than any of the novel's named characters. This point is complimented well by characterization in Trollope's novels in general. In his article "Mister Trollope, Lady Credit, and *The Way We Live Now*," Nathan K. Hensley notes that Trollope's "moral-economic analysis" stratifies identity into levels. Financially stable men have "proper identity, while most women, feminized men, and finance capital are problematically ungrounded." (Hensley 156) Though Hensley here is mainly commenting on gender politics and economic status, his observation reiterates what we have thus far observed: in Trollope's fiction, identity must be constituted by economic and social standing, rather than by the validity of actual presence and deed. This consideration is especially pertinent to a novel like *The Eustace Diamonds*, where nearly all of the primary male characters are on shaky ground fiscally speaking, and though Lizzie Greystock is well secure, her gender status renders her identity less valid. Lucinda Roanoke is not only near destitute, relegating her to the margins of validity, but also exhibits a problematic interiority (one of the concerns mentioned earlier by Skilton), as evidenced by her

reported eventual mental instability. Apparently pushed to the limit by her calculating aunt and malicious fiancée, Lucinda locks herself in her room on her wedding day and refuses to come out for days. It's important to observe that the reader in fact *never* watches her emerge from her self-imposed imprisonment. The narrative eye shifts elsewhere, and Lucinda is never seen or heard from again—at least, not directly: the last words she utters are delivered to Lizzie as a whisper, as she is mentioned to have confided she would "kiss [Sir Griffin] with a vengeance" should she ever see him again. A few lines further down, we are given as close to a concrete conclusion of Lucinda's story as will become available:

> On the Tuesday, Lizzie recommended to Mrs Carbuncle to get medical advice—and at last they sent for Mr Emilius that they might ask counsel of him. Mr Emilius was full of smiles and consolation, and still allowed his golden hopes as to some Elysian future to crop out;—but he did acknowledge at last, in a whispered conference with Lady Eustace, that somebody ought to see Miss Roanoke. Somebody did see Miss Roanoke—and the doctor who was thus appealed to shook his head. Perhaps Miss Roanoke had better be taken into the country for a little while. (Trollope *Eustace* 680)

Lucinda is indeed taken away somewhere by Mrs Carbuncle, but where is never confirmed. She is never actually seen again in the novel, and only really mentioned once or twice more. This time, her name comes up in a conversation between Frank Greystock and Miss Macnulty. The latter of the pair has for some time been confined to Portray Castle, and is eager for news of the London social scene:

> She then went on the marriage—the marriage that was no marriage. Was not that very dreadful? Was it true that Miss Roanoke was really—out of her mind? Frank acknowledged that it was dreadful, but thought that the marriage had it been completed would have been more so. As for the

> young lady, he only knew that she had been taken somewhere out of the way. (Trollope *Eustace* 734)

This unconfirmed exposition from a character shows that Lucinda's identity is little constituted by Lucinda herself. Rather, her character and even her fate are built up discursively by other characters—even her "insanity" is spoken of as fact by characters and critics of the novel alike when all that we really have to go on is three days spent locked in her own room and the shake of a doctor's head. The very last word on Lucinda comes in relation to the trial when the narrator mentions, "It was rumoured that Mrs Carbuncle, with her niece, had gone to join her husband at New York." (Trollope *Eustace* 754) So we see that Lucinda's past is talked into reality by sources like the 'Scamp from Eton,' and once she departs from the foreground of the tale, her ghost lingers in the stories told about what *may* have become of her. Consequently, the characters' perceptions of one another must often be our perceptions of them, by virtue of their not necessarily being present. In the case of Lucinda's fate, with nothing more to go on than what is said by other characters *about* her, she ceases to be a subject with agency and readers are left frustrated for now being cut off from any privileged insight into either her mindset (doubly problematized by her economic status and apparent mental troubles) or circumstances.

No character, however, is more discursively established and sustained than Mr Emilius. Trollope's novel takes its time concluding its tales, a feature necessary with a book that has so many moving parts and so many well-fleshed out characters. Arguably, the most important of these endings is Lizzie's, as she has

largely served as the most featured personality in the book, and the catalyst for much of the novel's action. It's interesting then that the other player to feature prominently in Lizzie's final chapter is Mr. Emilius, who is arguably one of the *least* fleshed-out characters in the book. A commonly-held critical view is that Emilius is a fitting just dessert for Lizzie because of his status as a "greasy Jew" (Lane 72, Psomiades 112), but it may be the case that it actually has more to do with everything that he is not: Corsair, peer, or upstanding gentleman. Though Lizzie convinces herself of Emilus's attractiveness, and is drawn to his duplicitousness, it is helpful to keep in mind that she has spent the bulk of the novel oscillating between several fantasies of the kind of lover she actually desires, embodied by Frank Greystock (the gentleman), Lord Fawn (the peer), and Lord George (the Corsair). It is also helpful to take note of the fact that Emilius represents a void of verifiable personality traits or facts. In truth, Mr. Emilius is the perfect mate for the protagonist of *The Eustace Diamonds* because what he truly epitomizes is the novel's main theme—i.e. gossip. When the character is first introduced, the reader is met by hearsay and public impressions:

> And [Lizzie] got a clergyman down from London, the Rev. Joseph Emilius, of whom it was said that he was born a Jew in Hungary, and that his name in his own country was Mealyus. At the present time he was among the most eloquent of London preachers, and was reputed by some to have reached such a standard of pulpit-oratory, as to have no equal within the memory of living hearers. In regard to his reading it was acknowledged that no one since Mrs Siddons had touched him. But he did not get on very well with any particular bishop, and there was doubt in the minds of some people whether there was or was not any—Mrs Emilius. He had come up quite suddenly within the last season… (Trollope *Eustace* 365)

Here we're met with a plethora of unsubstantiated rumors. Nothing is yet proven about Emilius and anything presented as more than public opinion consists only of arguments that he may be engaged in and qualitative value judgments. Furthermore, it is more than 600 pages into the novel before the reader is given any insight into his mindset, in the chapter aptly titled "The Aspirations of Mr Emilius." Some of his thought processes are revealed in this chapter (for instance, his ambitions of having Portray Castle), but nothing about his origins. In fact, the reverend's backstory is even further obfuscated by a tale he tells Mrs Carbuncle to assuage her anxieties about the rumors circulating in regards to his alleged bigamy:

> Carbuncle was led to her conclusion not simply by the wedding present, but in part also by the diligence displayed by Mr Emilius in removing the doubts which had got abroad respecting his condition in life. He assured Mrs Carbuncle that he had never been married. Shortly after his ordination, which had been effected under the hands of that great and good man the late Bishop of Jerusalem, he had taken to live with him a lady who was—Mrs Carbuncle did not quite recollect who the lady was, but remembered that she was connected in some way with a step-mother of Mr Emilius who lived in Bohemia. This lady had for awhile kept house for Mr Emilius; but ill-natured things had been said, and Mr Emilius, having respect to his cloth, had sent the poor lady back to Bohemia. (Trollope *Eustace* 636)

The way this is pieced together—several notes that it is what Mr Emilius has *said*, not necessarily *done*, Mrs Carbuncle's inability to remember details—only casts further doubt on the man's backstory. All that this chapter really gives the readers is what Emilius knows *about Lizzie*, and a certain predatory or parasitic mindset as to how he intends to use that information. The reader also gets a few instances of Lizzie ridiculing Emilius, and ridiculing especially the idea of him as a suitor,

thinking she can still do better than Emilius even in the face of all her troubles. Further, we get a list of things Lizzie counts against Emilius: his income, his profession, his rumored status as a "renegade Jew"; and a list of things she does not count against him: he's a "greasy, fawning, pawing, creeping, black-browed rascal, who could not look her full in the face, and whose every word sounded like a lie." (Trollope *Eustace* 639) A list of the "admirable" qualities Lizzie sees in Emilius in absent in this chapter, saved instead for the very moment before she accepts his proposal. Instantly, he is good enough for her. All of this points towards how discursively constructed Emilius is in this novel. The author is almost careful in never taking a firm stance on the reverend, instead building confidence in the reader by presenting Emilius in the context of the low opinions of him held by various characters and the general public.

Towards the end of the chapter in which Lizzie accepts Emilius, the narrator adds that Emilius would later turn the tables on Lizzie as a way of letting the reader know that Lizzie has rationalized the reverend's potential as a suitable candidate for marriage. Curiously, both Lizzie and Emilius return in Trollope's following novel *Phineas Redux*, and at the moment of their reintroduction the narrator wastes no time in presenting a very firm and factual update on what the characters have been up to in since the reader last encountered them:

> They were married, and for some few months Mr. Emilius enjoyed a halcyon existence, the delights of which were, perhaps, not materially marred by the necessity which he felt of subjecting his young wife to marital authority. "My dear," he would say, "you will know me better soon, and then things will be smooth." In the meantime he drew more largely upon her money than was pleasing to her and to her friends, and appeared

> to have requirements for cash which were both secret and unlimited. At the end of twelve months Lady Eustace had run away from him, and Mr. Emilius had made overtures, by accepting which his wife would be enabled to purchase his absence at the cost of half her income. (Trollope *Redux* 332)

The language here should be contrasted with that of the last few preceding excerpts from *The Eustace Diamonds*. Here, the narrator makes no bones about what has occurred. The only indecisive inflection in this passage is the use of the word "perhaps." In *Phineas Redux*, Emilius is far from an underused or over-obscured character. In fact, a great deal of the book involves the quest to prove his status as a bigamist, the end result of which yields a truth given verifiably and unequivocally by the narrator:

> He, a foreigner and a Jew, by name Yosef Mealyus,—as every one was now very careful to call him,—had come to England, had got himself to be ordained as a clergyman, had called himself Emilius, and had married a rich wife with a title, although he had a former wife still living in his own country. Had he called himself Jones it would have been better for him, but there was something in the name of Emilius which added a peculiar sting to his iniquities. It was now known that the bigamy could be certainly proved, and that his last victim,—our old friend, poor little Lizzie Eustace,—would be rescued from his clutches. (Trollope *Redux* 536)

This straightforwardness of this narrative revelation is highly contrasted again the narrative style of *The Eustace Diamonds*. In the first of the two, Emilius is a cipher, a palpably seedy mystery man brought into the narrative to help wrap up Lizzie's story suitably. He has neither a valid history nor any kind of present identity built up out of his actions, because frankly, he actually *does* very little in the book. In the subsequent novel, on the other hand, Emilius is an established con man, and he enters the story with both documented behavioral patterns (not surprisingly, deplorable ones—it seems the narrator's previous characterization of the man was

apt), and, by story's end, a documented history. In *The Eustace Diamonds*, Emilius embodies gossip as a character with an identity constructed by other characters' perceptions. In *Phineas Redux*, Emilius serves a more sinister purpose—he's the villain. This character expansion, coupled with the slight shifts in narrative style observed in the above passages, further reveal the thematic importance of gossip in *The Eustace Diamonds* by the *absence* of the concept's maintenance in *Phineas Redux*. In the former novel, it is important for reality to be as flimsy as careless discourse, while in the latter, it is more essential for pasts to be demystified, facts to come to light, and evidence to be brought forward. Perhaps this is due to the fact that in *Phineas Redux*, Trollope had other thematic concerns on his mind, since gossip had already expended its usefulness as a dominant motif in *The Eustace Diamonds*.

As mentioned earlier, Trollope takes his time wrapping up *The Eustace Diamonds*—fitting, considering the fact that all other elements of the narrative are equally drawn out, and the book is above all character-driven. Nonetheless, special consideration is given the novel's titular commodity—the Eustace diamonds themselves. While Lizzie's necklace continues to be the subject of talk and debate throughout the remainder of the novel, once it is stolen it takes on an almost legendary quality, and the narrator refuses to give the reader any more information than is had by present characters. However, none of the characters ever confirm the fate of the diamonds or manage to set eyes on them:

> Mr Camperdown had resolved to have the diamonds, still with a hope that they might be restored to the keeping of Messrs. Garnett, there to lie

> hidden and unused at any rate for the next twenty years. The diamonds had been traced first to Hamburg, and then to Vienna;—and it was to be proved that they were now adorning the bosom of a certain enormously rich Russian princess. From the grasp of the Russian princess it was found impossible to rescue them… (Trollope *Eustace* 749)

At this point, it is still *yet* to be proved that the diamonds now adorn "the bosom of a certain Russian princess." At this point in the novel the narrative eye is focused upon Mr Camperdown and other matters legal, so the question of what can or cannot be proved is extremely important. However, in the space of two breaths the narrator acknowledges that the diamonds have not yet been proven to be in the hands of the Russian princess, and then immediately notes that it was "impossible to rescue" them from her. This attitude of treating tentative proof as fact by way of speaking with confidence is typical to the British gossip column, as discussed by John Gardiner in his article "Gladstone, gossip and the post-war generation." "Such as it existed," writes Gardiner, popular gossip "inevitably showed the imprint of Intellectual fashion less markedly" (Gardiner 412) than extended writing. Here, Trollope's narrator builds upon the reader's confidence by first appearing to speak only of that which has or has not been verified, and then switches over to treating all rumor as fact speedily enough to go unobserved. Because Camperdown (the source) firmly believes that the diamonds to be in a certain place, the narrator treats his view as unequivocal reality, even though the lawyer "altogether fail[s]" in his attempt to buy the alleged stones back from the Russian princess (Trollope *Eustace* 753). At this point, the diamonds are so far

removed from reality as to become mythical, a point driven home by Mr Dove's comments on the subject:

> "There is no longer any material question as to the property, which seems to be gone irrecoverably. It is, upon the whole, well for the world, that property so fictitious as diamonds should be subject to the risk of such annihilation. As far as we are concerned, the property is annihilated, and I would not harass the poor, ignorant young creature." (Trollope *Eustace* 695)

Even the existence of the diamonds themselves is doubtful to Mr Dove, who is exceptional in this story for never believing anything before it can be proven. As contested, absent property, the diamonds cannot be either claimed (as they lack the proper paper trail), or verified as having *been* in the first place. It is suitable then that this book should be named after an item that everyone talks about, but few have ever laid eyes upon.

And it is on just such a note of idle small talk that *The Eustace Diamonds* concludes. The book's final chapter, "What Was Said About It All At Matching," focuses on the Palliser characters rather than on any of the key players of the book. Lady Glencora and Madame Max sit with the elderly Duke and tell him of Lizzie's marriage to Mr Emilius. For every question the Duke asks, either Glencora or Max deliver to him some sort of definite answer, and for every answer, the Duke repeats the same phrase again and again:

> 'Married tomorrow—down in Scotland. Dear, dear! what is he?' The profession to which Mr Emilius belonged had been mentioned to the duke more than once before.
>
> 'He's some sort of clergyman, duke…a clergyman of our church.'
>
> 'A clergyman of our church;—dear, dear. and married in Scotland! That makes it stranger. I wonder what made a clergyman marry her?'
>
> 'Money, duke,' said Lady Glencora, speaking very loud.
>
> 'Oh, ah, yes; money. So he'd got money; had he?'

> 'Not a penny, duke; but she had.'
> 'Oh, ah, yes. I forgot. She was very well left; wasn't she? And so she has married a clergyman without a penny. Dear, dear!...You know him very well; do you? Dear, dear, dear!'
> 'I don't know him at all, duke, but I once went to hear him preach. He's one of those men who string words together, and do a good deal of work with a cambric pocket-handkerchief.'
> 'A gentleman?' asked the duke.
> 'About as like a gentleman as you're like an archbishop,' said Lady Glencora.
> This tickled the duke amazingly. (Trollope *Eustace* 766-767)

It is of course significant that Lady Glencora admits that she doesn't know Mr Emilius at all, and then a moment later indicates towards his sleaziness. This closely echoes the style of gossip exercised by the narrator earlier. Glencora first confesses that she does not "at all" know Emilius, and then almost immediately says that he's as much like a gentleman as a duke is like an archbishop (that is, not very much at all). More significant, however, is the placement of this scene at the end of the book, and the exact characters involved. Nothing could be more demonstrative of a plot moved by rumor than to close it out with a group of peripheral characters gossiping about the book's events, and this scene is more or less a group of tertiary characters in a sewing circle. Furthermore, that the gossip is engaged in largely for the entertainment of an elderly member of the high nobility seems to point towards a social commentary on how gossip operated in English society. This excerpt, when considered with Newman's writing on the gentleman and the OED's gendering of gossip in the 19th century, appears to say that gossip is expected from women, and though it is denounced in gentlemen, it is actually indulged in an elderly gentleman. The duke does nothing to hide his delight in gossip, and the setting of this scene allows the reader to infer that high-

society scandal is almost a hobby of his. This suggests that Trollope has a very specific view of the value of gossip in Victorian society—specifically, that while it may be regarded as functionless and worthless, it is the guilty pleasure of everyone who can afford to be in the know, and even those who just pretend to be in the know. The truthfulness or falsehood of a statement in Trollopian society matters less than the making of the statement itself, and even the narrator is a hypocrite when it comes to speaking out of school. Finally, the rehashing of the plot that takes place in this scene makes it easy to infer that in *The Eustace Diamonds* it is more important that the characters offer information to one another than it is that information be offered to the reader.

Running throughout all the arguments of this paper has been a close exploration of Trollope's narrative style, and how the narrator's voice in *The Eustace Diamonds* builds confidence in the reader in order to subvert the book's characters. This confidential voice, however, demands its own separate examination, as at times it swerves away from the plot and characters to pontificate on Victorian morality and propriety, most notably in Chapter XXXV, "Too Bad for Sympathy." By taking a close look at this chapter and parsing out the narrator's attitudes and syntax patterns, it's not difficult to come to the conclusion that the biggest gossip in *The Eustace Diamonds* is the voice with the privileged knowledge, the voice that only shares that privileged knowledge with the reader at its own convenience.

In his article "The Truth of Trollope's Fiction," Walter Kendrick makes a point of repeating the fact that the narrator of *The Eustace Diamonds* does not much care for Lizzie Eustace. "The narrator," Kendrick writes, "constantly abuses" Lizzie (Kendrick 136), but in so doing Trollope is only trying to expand his horizons by creating a specifically "un-Trollopian" character (Kendrick 137). While Kendrick's point is arguably astute, what is of main interest here is the word "abuse." Trollope's narrator does indeed abuse Lizzie, along with many other characters, but the bullying is all to serve the interest of ingratiating the narrative voice to the reader's good graces. Trollope cleverly gives his narrator a cheaply manipulative voice, allowing even the third person omniscient view the qualities of a catty high-class socialite, a view that time and again attaches attitude and knowledge to the reader: "That Lizzie Eustace had stolen the diamonds, as a pickpocket steals a watch, was a fact as to which Mr Camperdown had in his mind no shadow of a doubt. And, as the reader knows, he was right." (Trollope *Eustace* 289) Here, the narrator asserts that the *reader* knows Lizzie stole the diamonds "as a pickpocket steals a watch," while the reader knows no such thing. Lizzie may have lied about when she got the diamonds, but they *were* given to her to Sir Florian and the question of their proper ownership is never resolved. The construction of this passage is designed to lower the reader's opinion of Lizzie by validating that low opinion not only as empirical fact, but also as a fact preexisting in the reader's mind. This is not the last time the narrator creates fact by a committee that the reader is unknowingly drawn into: "[Lucy] had told [Frank]

that she could make herself supremely happy in the simple knowledge that he loved her. But we all know how few such declarations should be taken as true." (Trollope *Eustace* 337) While this assertion is less mild than the preceding example, it exhibits the same stylistic trait. The narrator says "we all know" as if the reader must necessarily be in agreement before *what* we all know is even revealed. The narrator gets the reader thinking about a subject by bringing it to the reader's attention, but not without attempting to *influence* that thinking. It's clear the narrator is interested in forming an alliance with the reader, far from impartial about the story.

This ideological coupling between narrator and reader is never more evident than in "Too Bad for Sympathy." Situated mid-way through the novel, the narrator takes a break to speculate on Frank Greystock's prospects: either fulfill his commitment to Lucy and live out his life in debt, or choose Lizzie and follow all of his high-society aspirations. To Frank's complex ethical dilemma, the narrator brings a tone of clean-cut judgment, but presents the opinion's as those belonging to the reader:

> How was he sail his bark through the rocks by which his present voyage was rendered so dangerous? Of course, to the reader, the way to do so seems to be clear enough. To work hard at his profession; to explain to his cousin that she had altogether mistaken his feelings; and to be true to Lucy Morris was so manifestly his duty, that to no reader will it appear possible that to any gentleman there could be a doubt. Instead of the existence of a difficulty, there was a flood of light upon his path—so the reader will think;—a flood so clear that not to see his was impossible. (Trollope *Eustace* 354)

The narrator presents all of these observations as observation made by the reader, assuming that having the same privileged information as the narrator will leave

the reader with a stark, transparent view of the situation. This is only the case, however, if the reader assumes that the narrator has shared *all* of the privileged information—something hard to do in a novel with such a clearly biased voice.

There are also other points on which the narrator is unreliable. When introducing Lucy Morris to the reader, the storyteller makes a special point of saying that Lucy is *not* the novel's heroine, but that one *is* forthcoming:

> Nor does the chronicler dare to put forward Lucy Morris as a heroine. The real heroine, if it be found possible to arrange her drapery for her becomingly, and to put that part which she enacted into properly heroic words, shall stalk in among us at some considerably later period of the narrative, when the writer shall have accustomed himself to the flow of words, and have worked himself up to a state of mind fit for the reception of noble acting and noble speaking. (Trollope *Eustace* 57)

This passage also precludes the possibility of Lizzie being the heroine of the novel (as she is introduced well before Lucy), which leaves only Lucinda Roanoke as a possibility (this would seem to be in keeping with Lucinda's introduction and the moniker given to her by the Scamp from Eton's family). However, the narrator never *directly* refers to Lucinda as a heroine, and eventually does use the word in reference to Lizzie in the novel's final chapter, saying, "The affairs of our heroine were again discussed that evening in another part of the priory." (Trollope *Eustace* 768). These narrative inconsistencies could be attributed to the serialized nature of the text. As Trollope himself noted in his autobiography:

> The plot of the diamond necklace is, I think, well arranged, though it produced itself without any forethought. I had no idea of setting thieves after the bauble till I had got my heroine to bed in the inn at Carlisle; nor of the disappointment of the thieves, till Lizzie had been wakened in the morning with the news that her door had been broken open. (Trollope *Autobiography* 286)

Here, Trollope not only refers to Lizzie as the heroine of *The Eustace Diamonds*, but also offers some insight into his writing process. Whether or not the discrepancies in the storytelling of the *Eustace Diamonds* are typical to the necessarily improvisational nature of serialized storytelling, the result is an unreliable narrator. And it's not hard for lack of reliability to come across as dishonesty…especially when couple with pandering to the reader.

Early on in the novel, the narrator wonders at the speed with which gossip is capable of traveling. "The general belief which often seizes upon to the world in regard to some special falsehood is very surprising. Everybody on a sudden adopts an idea that some particular man is head over heels in debt, so that he can hardly leave his house for fear of the bailiffs;—or that some ill-fated woman is cruelly ill-used by her husband;—or that some eldest son has ruined his father; whereas the man doesn't owe a shilling, the woman never hears a harsh word from her lord, and the eldest son in question has never succeeded in obtaining a shilling beyond his allowance." (Trollope *Eustace* 188) Regardless of the veracity of this statement, the speed and power of gossip within this novel isn't overly surprising. The characters are constructed discursively, facts are established by committee, plot details go unverified, and the narrator is biased and unreliable. Whether Trollope's narrator is a satire of the very type of moralizing hypocrite he purports to criticize, the book is written in such a way because of the ins and outs of serialized storytelling, or the entire novel is simply a dark comedy on greed and lies in English high society, gossip moves the plot, the characters, and the style as

the dominant motif of the narrative. It is almost as if this novel was written to echo the sentiment of Lady Glencora on the novel's final pages: "If people only spoke of what they attended to, how very little there would be to say."

Works Cited

Fitzgerald, Edward. *Letters of Edward Fitzgerald*. Ed. William Aldis Wright. New York: Macmillan and Co., 1907. Print.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Vintage Books, 1972. Print.

Gardiner, John P. "Gladstone, gossip and the post-war generation." *Historical Research* 74.186 (2001): 409-424. Print.

"Gossip." *The Oxford English Dictionary*. September 2011. Oxford University Press. 10 December 2011. <http://dictionary.oed.com/>.

Hensley, Nathan K. "Mister Trollope, Lady Credit, and *The Way We Live Now*." *The Politics of Gender in Anthony Trollope's Novels: New Readings for the Twenty-First Century*. Ed. Margaret Marwick, Deborah Denenholz Morse,

and Regenia Gagnier. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009. 147-160. Print.

Hutton, Richard Holt. Cited in David Skilton, *Anthony Trollope and His Contemporaries: A Study in the Theory and Conventions of Mid-Victorian Fiction*. London: Longman, 1972. Print.

Kendrick, Walter M. "The Eustace Diamonds: The Truth of Trollope's Fiction." *ELH* 46.1 (1979): 136-157. Print.

Lane, Carol M. *Demonstrations of Power in the Marriage Plots of* Daniel Deronda*,* The Eustace Diamonds*, and* Phoebe Junior. Master's thesis. California State University, Chico, 2010. Print.

Newman, John Henry. *The Idea of a University*. Washington: Regnery Publishing Inc., 1999.

Psomiades, Kathy Alexis. "Heterosexual Exchange and Other Victorian Fictions: *The Eustace Diamonds* and Victorian Anthropology." *Novel* 33.1 (Fall 1999): 93-118. Print.

Review of *The Eustace Diamonds*, by Anthony Trollope. *Spectator* 26 Oct. 1872: 1366. Print.

Review of *The Eustace Diamonds*, by Anthony Trollope. *The Times* 30 Oct. 1872: 4. Print.

Skilton, David. "'Depth of Portraiture': What Should Distinguish a Victorian Man from a Victorian Woman?" *The Politics of Gender in Anthony Trollope's Novels: New Readings for the Twenty-First Century*. Ed. Margaret Marwick, Deborah Denenholz Morse, and Regenia Gagnier. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009. 147-160. Print.

Trollope, Anthony. *The Eustace Diamonds*. London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2004. Print.

---. *Phineas Redux*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1876. Print.

---. *An Autobiography*. Ed Bradford Allen Booth. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1947. Print.