

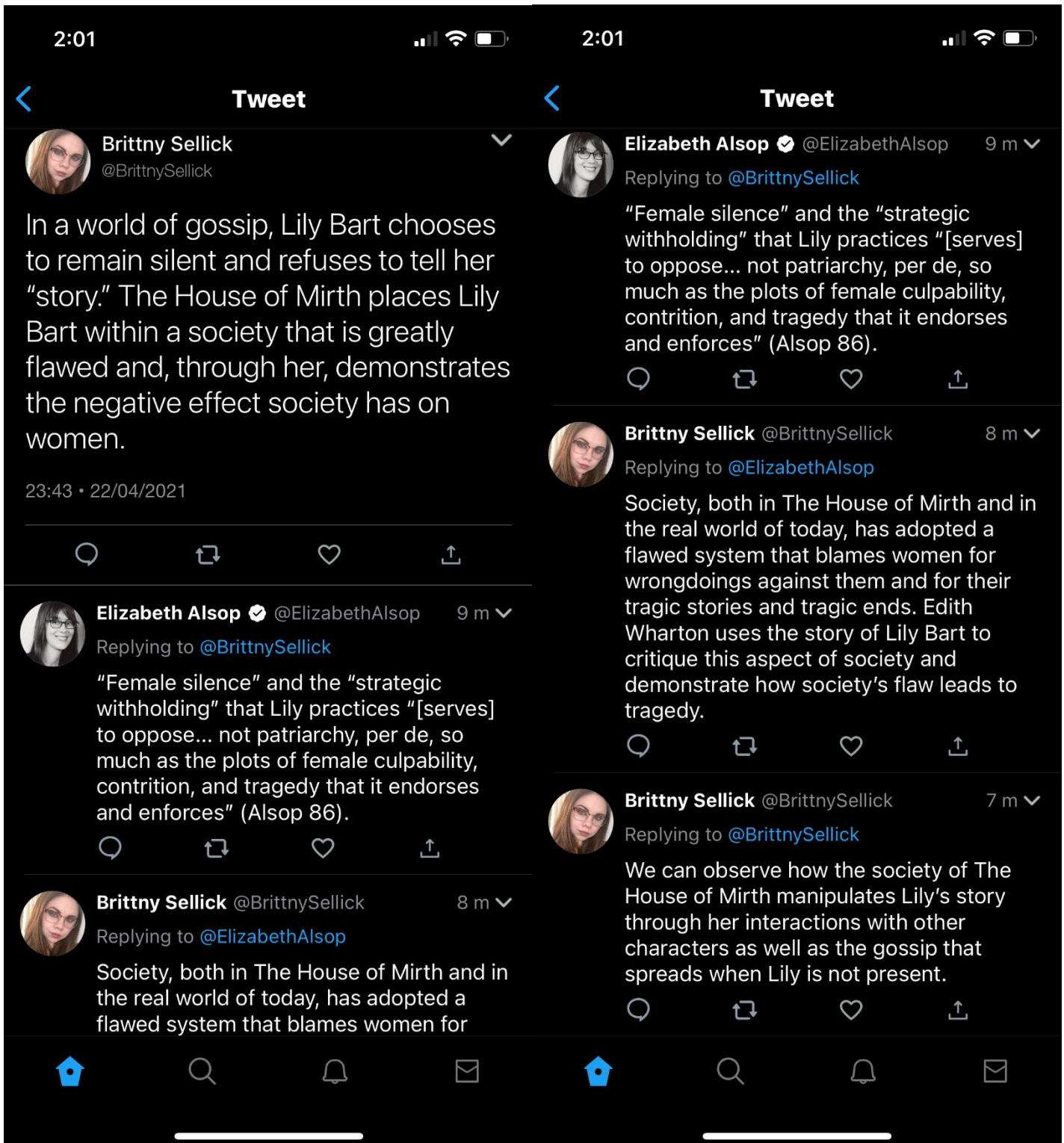
Brittney Sellick

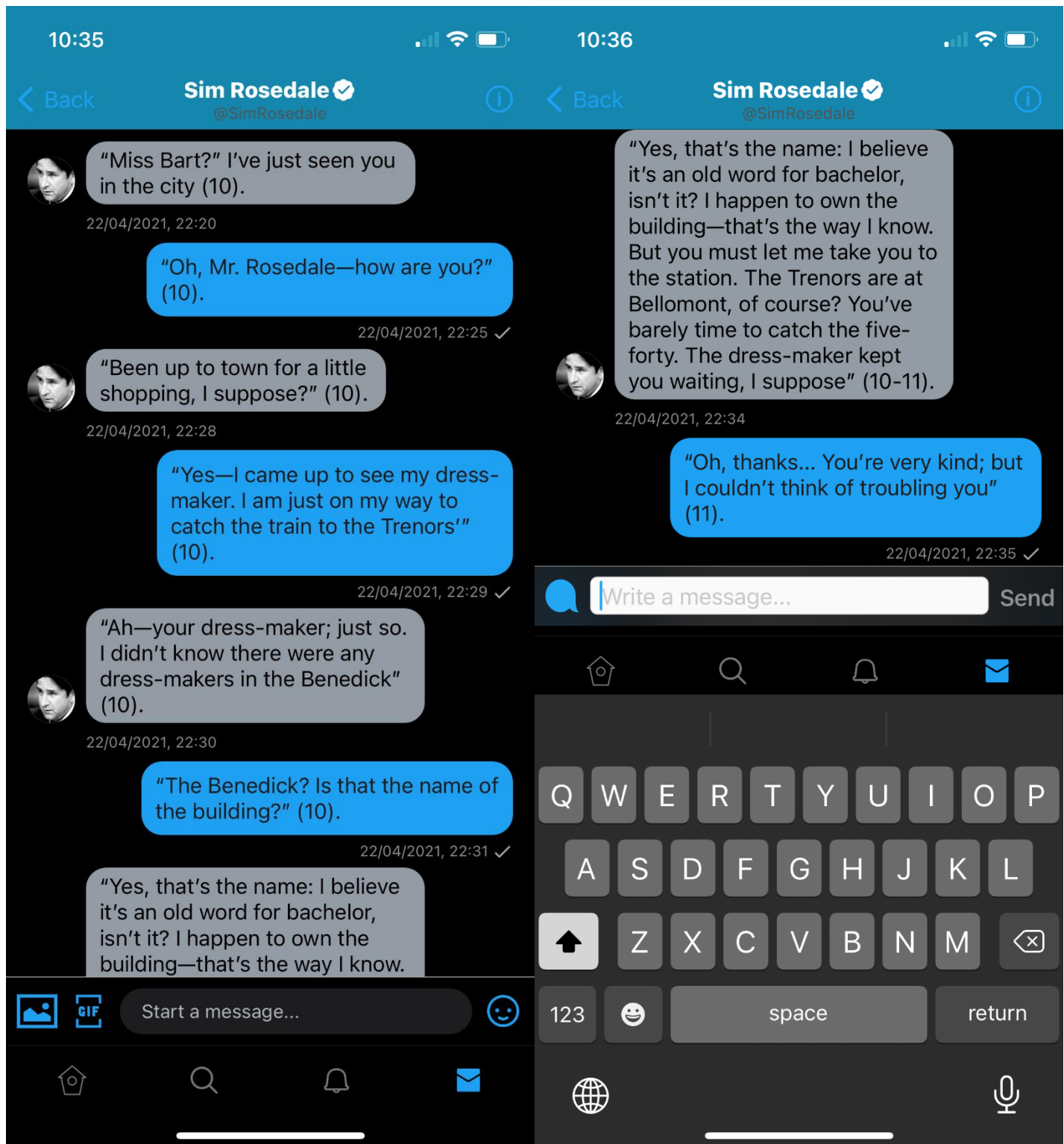
ENGL 331

Professor Oster

23 March 2021

Behind a Screen: The Flaw of Society in *The House of Mirth* in a Modern Space







11:16



11:31

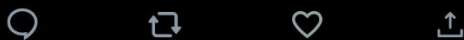


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Replying to @BrittnySellick

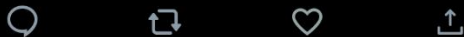
In addition to this scene allowing us a view of the narrator's perspective, it grants us a moment into Lily's thoughts on the matter. After Lily's exchange with Rosedale, she laments it and her inability to avoid her blunders, for it could "cost her" greatly (11).

**Brittney Sellick** @BrittnySellick

5 m ▼

Replying to @BrittnySellick

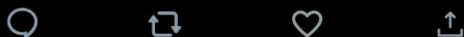
She also laments that she did not take his offer to escort her, for "Lily knew... how easy it would have been to silence him on the spot, and how difficult it might be to do so afterward" (11). In other words, Lily is aware that he would gossip about her suspicious visit to the Benedick.

**Brittney Sellick** @BrittnySellick

4 m ▼

Replying to @BrittnySellick

This is where we see how aware Lily is of the flaws of society. She knows that her society is keen to gossip about scandals, even if there is no evidence of one. It is clear that Lily knows that society's tragic flaw is the view that even in the case of a woman being the victim, she is at fault.



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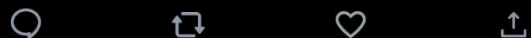
**Brittney Sellick**

@BrittnySellick



Unfortunately for Lily, gossip and rumors appear to snowball quickly within her society. This gossip eventually reaches a character whose choice later in the novel acts as a catalyst for Lily's demise: Mrs. Peniston.

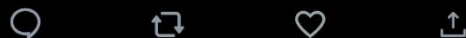
23:28 • 22/04/2021

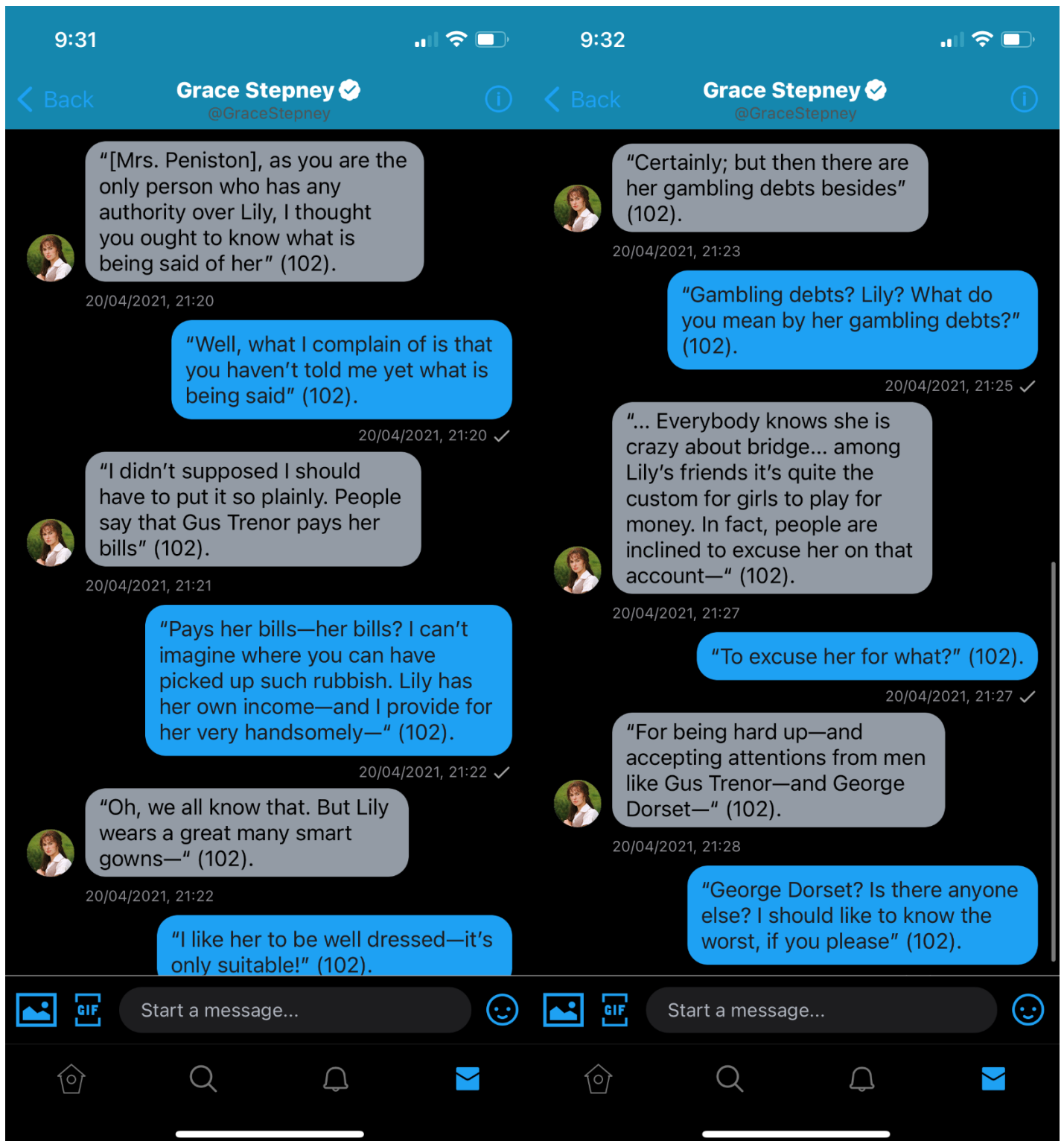
**Brittney Sellick** @BrittnySellick

9 m ▼

Replying to @BrittnySellick

Mrs. Peniston's response to the rumors not only affirms the critique of the narrator that occurs after the interaction with Rosedale, but also explains why Lily chooses to stay silent.





9:34

Grace Stepney 
@GraceStepney

Back

worst, if you please" (102).

20/04/2021, 21:29 ✓


 "... Lately Lily has been a good deal with the Dorsets, and he seems to admire her... And I'm sure there is no truth in the horrid things people say" (102).
 20/04/2021, 21:32


 "[But] people say that Judy Trenor has quarreled with her on account of Gus; but I'm sure I'm sorry I spoke, though I only meant it as a kindness..." (103).
 20/04/2021, 21:34

Write a message... Send






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9:56

Tweet


Mrs. Peniston 
 @Mrs.Peniston

In my opinion, it is horrible of a young girl to let herself be talked about... (103)

21:35 · 20/04/2021







Mrs. Peniston  @Mrs.Peniston 9 m ✓
 However unfounded the charges against her, she must be to blame for their having been made (103).






Elizabeth Alsop  @ElizabethAlsop 8 m ✓
 Replying to @Mrs.Peniston
 Mrs. Peniston's perspective is evidence that Lily's lack of speech may not be "self-imposed" (93). As "Johnson explains, 'any speech at all appears as guilty speech' (1998, 137)," so Lily's reluctance is "a symptom of her frustration with... gendered economics of speech" (Alsop 93).






Brittney Sellick @BrittneySellick 7 m ✓
 Replying to @ElizabethAlsop






10:21

Back
Gerty Farish
@GertyFarish



"I don't want a version prepared in advance—but I want you to tell me exactly what happened from the beginning" (183).

20/04/2021, 22:19

"From the beginning? Dear Gerty, how little imagination you good people have!... You asked me just now for the truth—well, the truth about any girl is that once she's talked about she's done for; and the more she explains her case the worse it looks..." (183).

20/04/2021, 22:20 ✓

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10:45

Tweet



Elizabeth Alsop
@ElizabethAlsop

Lily's last comment directly echoes the perspective the narrator provides after Mrs. Peniston learns of the rumors surrounding Lily, showing that this "paradoxical" logic is not at all uncommon (Alsop 93).

22:27 · 20/04/2021



Brittney Sellick @BrittneySellick 9 m ✓

Replying to @ElizabethAlsop

Not only is this logic "not uncommon," it seems to be the trend that Wharton is setting up as the tragic flaw of the plot. Alsop addresses that Showalter sees Lily's flaw as being "deficient storyteller" and refutes it, but she does not expound upon what the tragic flaw of the story actually is (Alsop 91).



Brittney Sellick @BrittneySellick 8 m ✓

Replying to @BrittneySellick

The tragic flaw does not lie with Lily, for she is truly calculating and makes

12:12



Tweet

**Brittney Sellick** @BrittneySellick

8 m ▼

Replying to @BrittneySellick

The tragic flaw does not lie with Lily, for she is truly calculating and makes decisions out of self-preservation. Instead, the tragic flaw is in society, for as I stated before, Lily's society believes that a woman who is the victim is the one who holds the blame.

**Brittney Sellick** @BrittneySellick

7 m ▼

Replying to @BrittneySellick

Lily is indeed aware of this tragic flaw, as is evident in her acknowledgement that the more she talks, "the worse it looks"

**Elizabeth Alsop** @ElizabethAlsop

6 m ▼

Replying to @BrittneySellick

This leads directly into my conclusion where I argue, "Through [her withholding, Lily succeeds] in refuting the plots of female crime and punishment into which they would otherwise have been coerced" (Alsop 102).

**Brittney Sellick** @BrittneySellick

5 m ▼



10:45



Tweet

the gossip and the perspective of society.

**Elizabeth Alsop** @ElizabethAlsop

6 m ▼

Replying to @BrittneySellick

This leads directly into my conclusion where I argue, "Through [her withholding, Lily succeeds] in refuting the plots of female crime and punishment into which they would otherwise have been coerced" (Alsop 102).

**Brittney Sellick** @BrittneySellick

5 m ▼

Replying to @ElizabethAlsop

In other words, Lily's choice not to speak is an active denial of the story that others are telling about her. She is actively rejecting society through her refusal to play into society's tragic flaw. She should not have to tell her story in the first place, but especially not when it would lead to further persecution.

**Elizabeth Alsop** @ElizabethAlsop

4 m ▼

Replying to @BrittneySellick

With her reluctance to tell in mind, it is important to recognize the one person that Lily DOES tell: Sim Rosedale.



12:54    1:01   

Tweet < Back **Sim Rosedale**  
@SimRosedale

 **Brittney Sellick**
@BrittneySellick

When Lily is conversing with Rosedale, she feels "an uncontrollable impulse... to put her case to this man, from whose curiosity she had always so fiercely defended herself" (236). So, she tells him a bit of her story...

00:53 • 23/04/2021

 "I got ten thousand dollars; but the legacy is not to be paid till next summer" (237).
23/04/2021, 00:55 ✓

 "Well, but—look here: you could [BORROW] on it any time you wanted" (237).
23/04/2021, 00:56

"No; for I owe it already" (237).
23/04/2021, 00:57 ✓

 "Owe it? The whole ten thousand?" (237).
23/04/2021, 00:57

"Every penny... I think Gus Trenor spoke to you once about having made some money for me in stocks" (237).
23/04/2021, 00:57 ✓

 I remember something of the kind... (237).
23/04/2021, 00:58

"He made about nine thousand dollars... At the time, I understood that he was speculating with my own money: it was incredibly stupid of me. but I knew nothing of

  Start a message... 

1:01

[Back](#)

Sim Rosedale

@SimRosedale

I remember something of the kind... (237).

23/04/2021, 00:58

"He made about nine thousand dollars... At the time, I understood that he was speculating with my own money: it was incredibly stupid of me, but I knew nothing of business... Unfortunately I had spent the money before I discovered my mistake; and so my legacy will have to go to pay it back. That is the reason why I am trying to learn a trade" (237).

23/04/2021, 01:00 ✓

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1:22

[Tweet](#)

Elizabeth Alsop

@ElizabethAlsop
9 m ✓

Replied to @BrittanySellick

Here, Lily has been "seized by an 'eager communicativeness,' and by the conviction that [Rosedale] would be 'the fitting person to receive and transmit her version of the facts' (Wharton 1985, 292)" (Alsop 92).

Brittany Sellick
@BrittanySellick
8 m ✓

Replied to @ElizabethAlsop

I would like to expand upon WHY Lily sees him as the "fitting person" (Wharton 237). She has been extremely reluctant to tell her story, even to Gerty, who has been her friend without any regard to her status. So why does she speak now and to Rosedale?

Brittany Sellick
@BrittanySellick
7 m ✓

Replied to @BrittanySellick

It is established that Rosedale is not from

Brittany Sellick
@BrittanySellick
6 m ✓

Replied to @BrittanySellick

High society is not all that Rosedale knows. Like Lily, he is both inside and outside that high society, though their

1:22



1:55



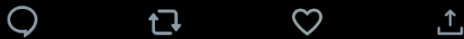
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**Brittany Sellick** @BrittanySellick

6 m ▼

Replying to @BrittanySellick

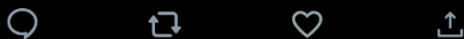
High society is not all that Rosedale knows. Like Lily, he is both inside and outside that high society, though their trajectories are inverses of each other. Lily recognizes that Rosedale can sympathize with her more easily because of his

**Brittany Sellick** @BrittanySellick

5 m ▼

Replying to @BrittanySellick

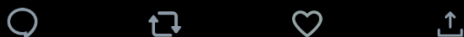
This explains why Lily does not tell Gerty what has happened. Gerty is flummoxed at the idea that Lily's "friends" could be so awful to her, which is a sign to Lily that Gerty could not begin to understand her silence (182).

**Brittany Sellick** @BrittanySellick

4 m ▼

Replying to @BrittanySellick

But Rosedale? He can understand.



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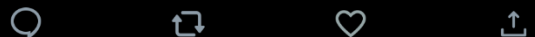
**Brittany Sellick**

@BrittanySellick



Though Lily does tell her story, she is still met with a tragedy. Near the end of the novel, Lily forms a dependence on chloral to help her sleep at night, something that is difficult for her now that she has lost her status. Her demise comes through an overdose (Wharton 263).

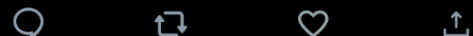
01:34 · 23/04/2021

**Brittany Sellick** @BrittanySellick

9 m ▼

Replying to @BrittanySellick

With her death, Lily is finally able to be silent, without having to tell her story. Though her story ends in tragedy, her death provides symbolism that Selden appears to touch on as he is beside her lifeless body.

**Lawrence Selden** @LawrenceSelden

8 m ▼

Replying to @BrittanySellick

We had never been at peace together. us



