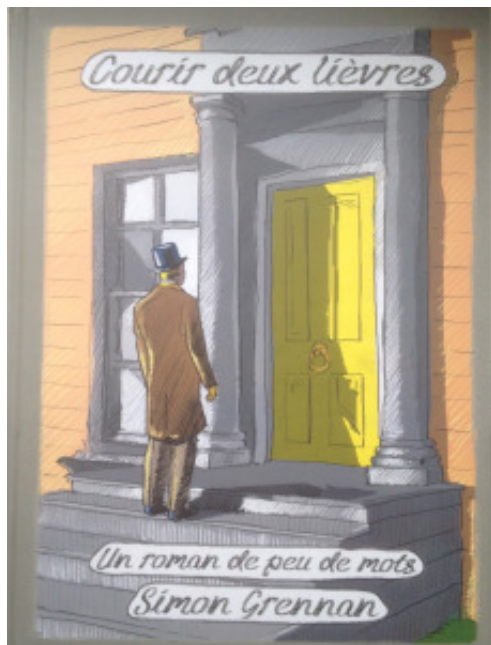


the trollope jupiter

APRIL 13, 2015 · 7:08 AM

Trollope Graphic Novel



I received for my birthday a copy of the French language edition of Simon Grennan's graphic novel adaptation of Trollope's **John Caldigate**. The English title, when it is published later this year, will be **Dispossession**, but the French language edition opts for the colloquial, and to my mind, very apt title, "Running Two Hares".

This version does not show John Caldigate in a very flattering light. His flirtation with Mrs Smith is inexcusable behaviour both towards her, if his intentions towards her are not strictly honourable and, in retrospect, towards Hester when he returns to England and proposes to her as if nothing untoward has happened while he was abroad that might compromise her.

This version also brings out very clearly the dilemma of Hester after it emerges that Caldigate may have married her bigamously. As a woman of that period she is in effect the property of her father until married and thereupon becomes the property of her husband. If the marriage is not legal then she is still the property of her father and, therefore, subject to his will. When tricked into returning to her father's house, Hester, is held there against her will. This becomes a trial of strength of will between her and her father. He is attempting to exert what he asserts is his continuing authority over his now assumed to be unmarried daughter. She is refusing to accept his authority on the grounds that she is the wife of Caldigate and therefore subject to Caldigate's authority alone. This is brilliantly conveyed in a sequence of half a dozen pictures which capture the essence of this dilemma that was so eloquently described in detail by Trollope in the original novel.

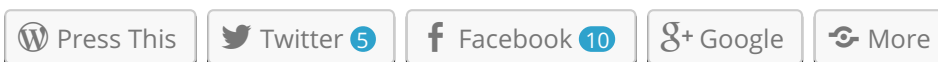
Ultimately, the claims of the earlier marriage are shown to be perjured statements whose falseness is established by the fraudulent misuse of a stamp on an envelope that was not available at the supposed date of posting. This leads Hester's mother to lament that her daughter's social status is only retrieved by virtue of a stamp.



In my view Grennan has done a remarkable job in condensing a substantial novel into only 100 pages of illustrations. He has even found space to add in a sub-plot of aborigines and the kidnap of a woman by another tribe which is not found in the original novel. This plays out in parallel with actions involving Caldigate that took place in Australia and sheds a critical perspective on those events, adding to the effectiveness of the graphic novel.

The book also includes an essay by Belgian literary critic Jan Baetens which considers the issues reworking a classic in a new format. I found this thought provoking and will expand on this in future posts.

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