

LOST DETECTIVES PODCAST

EPISODE 2

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Hosted by

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and

Carol Adlam

Featuring a guest interview with

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Lost Detectives Podcast

Episode 2: Transcript

CW: Welcome back everyone to Episode 2 of our podcast series entitled ‘Lost Detectives: Adapting Old Texts for New Media.’ This is Claire Whitehead from the University of St Andrews Russian Department, and I’m joined once again by Carol Adlam, our author and illustrator and adaptor. I hope many of you will have enjoyed Episode 1 — and if any of you’ve missed it’s still available for you. It’s been a few months since we recorded episode 1, and in that time obviously we’ve been through, we’re still going through — the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, so we hope that you’ve been coping as well as you can during lockdown. Carol and I have been keeping in regular contact with each other and helping to keep each other sane and entertained with work and more personal interactions as well. So I wanted to start today by giving Carol an opportunity to give a quick update on the work that’s been continuing on our Lost Detectives project — so, Carol, do you want to say a few things about what you’ve been up to, before we introduce the main body of the episode?

CA: Yes, sure. Hi Claire, hi everyone. It’s lovely to be back, and I’ll fill you in a little bit on what I’ve been doing. So since we last met I’ve been working on Stage 2 of the project, which is a series of adaptations into scripts of three stories — three crime stories from the same body of work. So the first one which we talked about in the last episode, my adaptation called *Today in 1864* is a radio play adaptation, and I was also working on a libretto as an alternative version [both are adaptations of *Notes of An Investigator* by Nikolai Timofeev, 1871]. The libretto is still in production and I’m now working on a second text, which is by Shkliarevskii, called *A Secret Investigation*. That’s a more straightforward detective story, and we’ll come to the details of that later on in Episode 3. So I’m currently engaged in writing.

And the other piece of information is that we had some good news. We had a breakthrough with the publication of the graphic novel adaptation of Panov. My adaptation is called *The Bobrov Affair*, and it’s based on Panov’s *Three Courts, or Murder During the Ball*. The the

good news is that the publisher Jonathan Cape is interested in publishing that. Now I had talks with Jonathan Cape quite literally a couple of days before the lockdown, so we're waiting to see what will happen with that. But yes, it's positive news. So, that's the roundup.

CW: Brilliant, I would like to say now that that meeting you had with Jonathan Cape was probably beyond our wildest dreams when we started the project fifteen months ago. We had an idea that we would pitch your work to a publisher, but I suspect little thinking that we would ever secure the possibility of publishing with a publisher like Jonathan Cape. So we should thank them for their interest in the project and the University of St Andrews for agreeing to fund the preparation of that work, and we'll obviously keep you updated with how that progresses as the UK exits lockdown.

We'll move into what we've got in store for you in this second episode. We're very proud to present an interview that Carol conducted with Simon Grennan. We're very grateful to him for giving up his time to Carol to speak about his work. So for those of you who don't know, Simon Grennan is the author of many books on drawing and re-mediation, and known in particular for his graphic novel *Dispossession: A Novel of Few Words*, that was published in 2015, an adaptation of the 1871 novel by Antony Trollope *John Caldigate*. Grennan's *Dispossession* was a Guardian's Book of the Year in 2015. Grennan is an established visual artist specializing in the word/image and narrative drawing, and he had particular expertise in the histories of drawing, comics, remediation, and inter-media. When we were pitching this podcast series to the U of St A for funding, Simon is someone that Carol had identified right from the outset who would be a really interesting interlocutor, and somebody who would bring a very insightful perspective to the work that we're both doing. So do you want to say a couple of words, Carol, before we go to the interview?

CA: Yes, sure. It was a pleasure to talk to Simon, and I think the interview is packed full of insights that we'll have a discussion about afterwards as well. It was a real honour to talk about him and to talk about his work that covers more years than we were able to talk about in the interview. So without further ado we should go to the interview and you and I can have a chat at the end and talk about some of the issues that have come up.

Carol Adlam interviews Simon Grennan
(22 February 2020)

CA: I'm very pleased to be talking this morning to Simon Grennan, a renowned artist and graphic novelist who has been working in the field for over twenty years. His recent work includes *A Theory of Narrative Drawing*, which presents a framework for thinking about comics, an online archive, and two books about the nineteenth-century cartoonist Marie Duval, and *Parables of Care: Creative Responses to Dementia Care*. He's perhaps best known for *Dispossession: A Novel of Few Words*, his extraordinary graphic novel adaptation of Antony Trollope's *John Caldigate*, published by Jonathan Cape in 2015. So, welcome Simon — it's great to be talking to you.

SG: Hi.

CA: I thought we could start with a general question about your career — how did you come to adapt Trollope, and what brought you to graphic novels?

SG: I started my career as a fine artist. I run a visual art studio in collaboration with another artist called Christopher Sperandio, and we've been running the studio transatlantically — it's a virtual studio — for 30 years in fact since 1990. So Sperandio is an associate professor at Rice University in Houston, Texas, so fine art, and I am the leading Research Fellow at the University of Chester and I'm in the Department of Art and Design. And so as fine artists we've always drawn comics. We started to draw comics in the early mid 90s. We started to draw comics partly because Sperandio grew up with comics because he's from West Virginia — he's American — whereas as I hadn't grown up with comics so much. But we were drawn to comics partly because we were interested in collaborative and participatory projects and forms. Really, that's where we began.

So the thing about a comic is that it has multiple originals, readers expect lots of different people to be working on it. All of those storytelling aspects too meant that it was a kind of form which had expectations attached to it which were which were not the forms are fine art. You didn't go to gallery and see some unique production and etc., etc. So comics were really a way for us to formalize our position relative to collaborators. We did a lot of work with storytellers and so we must have published about 40-odd, maybe more, books. 25 of those

would be comics in the last 30 years which were made with other people, to tell other people's stories. So when I started to think that I'd be interested in comics from maybe an academic point of view —so comic studies rather than the practice of comics —then I had a lot of practice in comics. I'd made a lot of comics and I wasn't a kind of fan in the way as we came from a fine art background. So the focus of my academic study started to become really about drawing and storytelling, and you can't get away from comics if you think about drawing and storytelling.

I did a number of drawing experiments as part of a big written PhD where I ventriloquise the style of existing artists, and so I was drawing other people's styles. And my external Examiner was a guy called Jan Baetens — he's a professor of contemporary literature or media at the University of Leuven, at KE Leuven in Belgium, one of the foremost francophone comic scholars, and he'd been my external examiner. And this opportunity arose where 2015 was the bicentenary of Trollope's birth of Anthony Trump's birth. There was a big connection between Leuven and Trollope, and as part of a raft of celebrations of the bicentenary of Trollope's birth they wanted to commission a graphic adaptation of the work of Anthony Trollope. And one never been made before so there was there was no graphic adaptation existing. So Jan thought, oh hang on Simon can do things with style — drawing style — from an academic point of view, so let's see if he wants to do it so it, and so that's why I was commissioned to make the work. And then it grew and grew, and we got a lot of partners involved and publishers and things like that. And so we went through a process where we were thinking about what to adapt, and I had a free rein to rationalize from an academic point of view why and how I've made the adaptation, which is something we're going to talk about a little bit. And so the opportunity was really about ramping up to celebrate Trollope and to use the occasion to look at the relationship between nineteenth-century literature and readers —visual readers —in the 21st century, and that's what we did.

CA: Fantastic, thank you. So before we talk more generally about the process you use maybe we could just talk a bit more about Trollope and the original, the source text —*John Caldigate* —which is a very long novel, 600-odd pages in the original, and a little bit about the themes as well because obviously you changed the name to *Dispossession*, which is polyvalent, has lots of different meanings. And I wondered if we could talk a bit about the idea of colonization and Empire in your work, and if that flows through, and how it did.

SG: So interestingly enough when we were reviewing which Trollope novel to adapt, there were a number of adaptations in other media —not graphic adaptations but really quite famous ones, particularly television adaptations involving famous actors and actresses, particularly in the 70s, which hold a place in the hearts of British audiences of a certain age. So quite a lot of work had been done with radio adaptations and moving image —movie adaptations and TV adaptations — so the Palliser series and the Barchester series, which are Trollope’s two most famous series, were kind of already colonized by adaptors. And so we were looking for one of the novels which was less well-known, and we were drawn to *John Caldigate* partly because of the period in which it was set. So it’s published in the late 1870s and about the early 1870s, so it was a novel of recent times. But the key thing is that it has a mystery in it which is unresolved, which is not very Trollopian —he doesn’t really do the explained, the unshown, he usually tells you what’s going on.

So there’s a mystery, there’s crime, and also there’s a big section of the novel where Trollope treats Australia, the experience of Australia, from the point of view of a 19th-century reader of his novel. And of course Trollope had travelled a lot, he’s probably the most well-travelled 19th century novelist, because he was in the postal service. And so he made I think two trips to Australia, his son set up a business in Australia, so he had a really intimate knowledge of Australia. So there’s a lot to go at and in the novel Australia’s this interesting thing where Australia is a place which is described as upside down, where the normal rules of social life and morality are upended. So that was interesting to us and then also there’s this notion of how you bloody well got there, because getting to Australia in the 1870s was not like getting to Australia now, and then there’s the colonial history of Australia which is a very peculiar history in terms of crime. And then there’s the horror of the colonial experience of Australia which is to do with expansion from the coast by Europeans essentially.

And all of that is really interesting in the context of a Trollope novel, because the thing about the Barchester Chronicles and the Pallisers is that they are essentially novels of English country manners or English politics or political manners about the church. They really are about contemporary English life middle-class life too, whereas you’ve got this odd rupture in *John Caldigate*, which is about what’s meant to have happened in Australia. And so the drama is to do with what can’t be brought home in the Trollope novel —what can’t be seen, what can’t be known for sure — and that was to us something that we thought there’s a lot to

go at here if we're making a visual adaptation in terms of describing things which the reader can't know, isn't meant to know, or about which Trollope is equivocal.

So for instance, John the hero — who is actually really quite unpleasant, selfish — he runs up debts and decides he's going to go and sort himself out in Australia because that's where you fix your problems for good or ill. And so off he goes, and he meets this woman on board ships and he promises to marry her. She is not his class: she's a divorced actress called Mrs Smith. And then he goes out into the goldfields. This doesn't last very long. He enters into a business in the mines, he strikes gold, makes his fortune, there's a big strike, he comes home and marries his childhood sweetheart — and the problem is that Mrs Smith turns up and says you're a bigamist because we were married already in Australia, and half of what's yours is mine. So the Australian question for Trollope is — did they or didn't they get married.

So there's that, and then on the other hand in Trollope there are no Chinese people, very few soldiers, very few convicts and certainly no aboriginals. So that's just really interesting because Trollope knew Australia — so it's not like he didn't know Australia, so that's very interesting and that's why we were drawn to *John Caldigate*.

CA: Interesting, and of course the goldfields of Australia would have been full of Chinese at this time —

SG: Absolutely, all sorts of nationalities, and all sorts of non-European nationalities but particularly Chinese miners, and of course hundreds of Aboriginal nations —

CA: Yes and one of the things you've done in *Dispossession* is you've shown us indigenous Australians speaking Wiradjuri — one of the languages — and obviously that wasn't in the original as you've just said to us. So, generally speaking did you have certain criteria for developing new parts of that story? Were there formal aspects that you had in mind when doing this?

SG: So there were a couple of things — let's get to the Wiradjuri subplot in a bit it because that's completely added in in a way and that's to do with the story, changing Trollope's story. But before that there was this notion of how the adaptation was to be made, which in a sense is a formal question. It's not about the story so much, although of course the form affects how

you read the story. We undertook this kind of analysis where we decided we would try to replace Trollope's literary voice with a drawing style. So we had to undertake a stylistic analysis of Trollope's voice, of his writing style in *John Caldigate*, and then produce correspondences which we could rationalise, that were visual. And so that's a task in itself. But this was proper method, it's an analytical method, where you think well, ok, if we identify A, B, and C as stylistic traits that form some kind of system in Trollope, then how do you produce a set of visual correspondences in those relationships that are maintained, but in an entirely different medium? That was the question —how do we do it?

And that was one of the reasons why they were interested in having me do it because of my history of ventriloquizing other artists' styles, because there was an expectation that there's an artist as a cartoonist I didn't arrive with "Grennan style" — in order to start from the ground up and say how does a Trollope adaptation look if you want the reader to feel when they're reading it how they feel when they hear Trollope? So his voice and my voice had to have these correspondences. And you can test that. You can say, well does it feel like that? And the answer is yes, no, maybe, a little more of that, and then suddenly you find that what you have is a system for drawing which guides the way in which everything from colour palette to *mise-en-page* to *mise-en-scene*, to how the rhythm of the thing works, what line you're using, what media you're using — absolutely everything has to correspond in this way.

CA: So you have a very clear structure on the page: a grid format and a middle distance that you maintain throughout the book, where the characters are represented at the middle distance. So you avoid the usual clichés of zoom and the close-up and so forth —

SG: yeah so I think you're interested in my radical statement about movie —

CA: Yes, so you've been talking about movie time — that we're habituated in our culture to a particular form of representing time and that's become normalised, and that's a movie time where images exist in a sequence or we presume when we see one image that is in fact part of a sequence of images that are paratactically related to each other, that flow in a certain way. And I think you're doing something quite different with that distancing in your work and with that selection of gesture and moment of time in each grid or in each frame. So yes, could you tell a little more about that?

SG: Well, the interesting thing about movie is that it's a set of set of conventions about where the viewer is placed in relation to the action in the story that's being told. And so as always if we can see something on screen as a particular moment —so there's this great couple of examples —I'm a big fan of *Die Hard* movies and they're absolutely typical in terms of the way in which they're made. So one second you see Bruce Willis and you are right above him in the sky and you see him sliding down a building, and then literally cut, and a split second later the next image you see is a massive close-up of his face sweating and his terror. And that kind of long-shot, close-up cutaway sequence, which is taught in movie schools, is a series of conventions. But they're not conventions for arranging the image, they're conventions for placing the viewer. That's the big deal.

So the interesting thing about movie, one of the reasons it's so exciting, is that the viewer — one moment you're in the sky, the next moment you're under the table, the next moment you're absolutely nose to nose with Bruce —and these changes, as much as they're about telling the story, they're effective changes because you, literally, have been moved. You haven't moved in your seat, but you literally have moved in relation to the action in the sequence in this incredibly dramatic and dynamic way. Now, until movie was invented that wasn't the way in which the viewer was placed relative to visualisations of action. So obviously there was the theatre tradition of placing the viewer, which is to do with what the viewers are allowed to or can't see —and these conventions are quite different to movie conventions today. You've got movies that are thought of as art movies in that they use different conventions — I'm thinking in particular of the movies of the Japanese filmmaker Ozu from the 60s and 70s. And Ozu made films that employed the very notorious 'tatami' shot that describes the location of the camera lens, where the lens is maintained at the height it would be if it was the eye of somebody if they were kneeling on a tatami mat. So we're talking about 3 and a half feet high off the ground. Ozu made films where the whole film was from that point of view. And so this whole thing about very long shots — this very classic, massive long dolly shot at the opening of *A Touch Of Evil* for instance —these things that unconventionalise the film, that make it 'artwork' — of course these are just different types of convention. They're no big deal. So in Ozu's tatami shot the idea is that the viewer is viewing everything as though they were kneeling on a tatami mat. And they're often domestic dramas, where folks get up and walk off, and the lens doesn't follow them. They literally become legs and so off they go... and this creates his dynamic.

And of course the whole point is to get to create affect, to get feeling in the viewer, and so that's the point. You get a sense of claustrophobia, of immobility, of even being locked in, which is all part of his plan and you start too long for the camera to just look up a little bit or look down a little bit and it never does! So, that type of thing was entirely in our mind when we were thinking about *Dispossession*: so how do we create a regime, how do we lock the reader in to a series of affective situations that are the same types of affective situations that you get when you read Trollope? That was the question.

CA: Ok, and while we're on that issue of affect how would you characterize the affect of Trollope, or the affects produced by reading Trollope?

SG: Well, interestingly enough in *John Caldigate* it's quite easy to describe, and we did a lot of work on it and we're at the end of it. It wasn't easy to start with because when you undertake a stylistic analysis you don't know what you're doing — you're looking for a frequency and all sorts of formal things and of course you're trying to categorise how he brings about types of sensation and then you understand that those sensations are attached to particular types of formal device, which then obviously can be complicated or contradicted. So having done all of this the sense of *John Caldigate* can be summed up in his use of equivocation. So that's the big deal in *John Caldigate*. He never really tells you what's going on — so the first word of *John Caldigate* is 'perhaps'. I can't imagine any French or Russian 19th century novelist beginning with the word 'perhaps' — and so it's a particularly English manoeuvre on Trollope's part and he maintains it throughout and so he says stuff like 'it was said of', 'it might have been thought that so and so did this or thought that but it could have been that on the other hand Mrs Jones down the post Office said that she'd heard' — this extraordinary unpinning of surety. There's always a sense in *John Caldigate* that you don't quite know who's thinking what, and this ties up really neatly with the notion that Australia is a place that's unknown, or where you leave things unsaid and unshown because if you did show them and say them everyone back home would be so appalled and horrified at their own behaviour that it would cause a crisis. So there's this notion of things that there is equivocation, and that equivocation has a moral and a sensational aspect, that there are things that you don't say because if you do say them it's going to cause this crisis. So there's a repressive sense to that. But also the interesting thing about Trollope is it's one of the things that produces his realism. Unlike Dickens who describes the hell out of everything, there's

often very little description in Trollope, so the engine of what's going on happens, and the reader fills in from what they know, and of course what they know is true... so Trollope borrows verisimilitude from the reader —

CA: — yes, so the reader is engaged in that process of actively building —

SG: —in a very explicit and stylistic way. So if you start to put these things together—the equivocation, the realism, the sense of a kind of machine that is driving the plot which can be both reassuring and kind of claustrophobic and repressive—you've got a description of what the graphic adaptation needs to feel like and then you can start to extrapolate and say, well, how do we do that?

CA: So, going back to that question of the visual analogues of these textual or narrative features, you've spoken about that positioning of the reader —

SG: Well, we developed series of rules, of constraints for drawing. Of course occasionally they're broken, but the breaking of them proves that they are there. And before I tell you what they are it's interesting that when *Dispossession* was reviewed in the media, when it came out, there was a kind of split in English and French and about half of the people who read the book really liked it and half of them really didn't like it—but the interesting thing was that all of the francophone commentators were able to describe what had gone on. So all of the francophone commentators recognised the drawing constraints and were able to describe them just by reading, whereas the anglophone critics, they knew they felt something was happening, but they had no idea, they didn't recognise it. Which is a really interesting set of commentaries about where we're at with comics.

So what we got is that you never get closer than 25 feet to the action—20 feet—so there's no close-ups and your feet are firmly planted on the ground at all times. And then the big deal is that every action, every scene was shown from three different points of view, in a waltz, sequentially. So there's an invariable grid, six panels a page invariably, and within that you look through those windows, as it were past all of the drawing into the world and you'll see these actions — one, two, three, one, two, three — from three different points of view in each scene. And that's maintained throughout the book. So you are literally pushed around. And if you combine that with the distance where you're never quite sure of people's expressions —

there are no facial expressions in the book, there aren't any — it's all body! It's all body gestures, it's all balletic groups of bodies. So the emotional life is all there, wound up like this mechanical toy, and whatever happens that's maintained throughout. So that's the big structure to give you a sense of, I'm not quite sure, but at the same time I can't get out...

CA: It's that idea as you say of being locked in, but also as you say the idea of the machinery of the novel being replicated through this dance —

SG: Very much so, absolutely, and so then we have a couple of other things going on and one is that this could be either boring as a read — and Trollope's not boring — or it could go too far, you push the reader away because they'd feel so constrained that the only response is to shut the book. So one of the things we decided to do is to make every detail historically accurate for 1871. Every detail was heavily researched as well: what they're wearing, how they do stuff, and then we've got other stuff where we've got the atmosphere — you know, what was the air like in Cambridgeshire in 1871 inside, in a big middle-class house? What colour was the air? What did it smell like? So in the book the rhythm of the story is made explicit through colour, the details of things, the colour palette is really important, and so you know what time of year it is because you can see whether the trees are in or out of bud, the palette of June is not the palette of November, although if you're in Australia the colour palette is completely different because Australia really doesn't look like Cambridgeshire! And there's repetition of colourways and scenes, and then you think, so hang on, we must be in Cambridgeshire because Cambridge has that particular green...

CA: So it's structured in that way as well, and that guides the reader —

SG: but also it to be had to be lush, so it's overwhelming. So it's very jewel-like and so that's part of the visual pleasure in the book. So the colour palette also gave us inroads into other historical sources i.e. other artists. So you think, well, how's Daumier making drawings and, there are a number of other artists —

CA: yes I was going to ask you about contemporaneous art and visual culture — what was going on at that time? And in the world of technological innovations as well?

SG: Absolutely, so the two historic key notes for me in terms of producing the colour palette and light —light, atmosphere — you know, how heavy is the air, does the air smell bad, how does it smell, what's going on —are Daumier and but also Robert Braithwaite Martineau. Everyone goes well, who the hell's Martineau? He painted [The Last Day in the Old Home](#), which is a really famous painting —

CA: Could you describe that?

SG: The Last Day in the Old Home was painted in 1862 and it's very *John Caldigate* in the sense that it shows a family in their small drawing room in a country mansion and what's obviously happening is that they have sold the house. So there's the father and he's got his hand on the son's shoulder and he's looking at a nice glass of sherry, the mother is appealing to him, there's another baby, and there's a lawyer, there's paintings on the floor. The idea is that the father's lost the house. And so it's a morality tale about how great life is in 1862 for the English middle class —but if you gamble or speculate or you step slightly off the path, then you're damned, your family will be destroyed, your moral fibre's gone, you're worthless, you're not a Christian man. Now the way it's painted is so overwhelmingly gorgeous and at the same time as a slightly unpleasant cast of colour —

CA: So it's that extraordinary combination then in your own work of the idea of verisimilitude and morality together —

SG: —absolutely, and that's the whole point of Trollope in which real life rubs up against ideals. And that's why Trollope's always writing about money and about power relationships where folks are trying to behave in particular ways which are either prescribed or they believe in, and it's more tragic when they believe but they need to be trying to do something and they can't do it.

So that brings us to Australia, because the chapters that deal with Australia are very brief and so they literally devolve to: John goes out to speculate, the mate that he's gone with falls by the wayside because he drinks; it's not working because they've literally going into the outback and they're digging holes in the ground speculatively, so that doesn't work, and they're doing that with hundreds if not thousands of other Europeans. They've not joined a mine, they're not Chinese miners who are well organised, they're just these upper middle-

class guys who go out there and start digging. And of course that doesn't really work, and then they join the mine and then he buys the mine, he buys his partners out of the mine, the mine hits it really big, and he comes back with sixty thousand pounds. And that's all treated in a handful of chapters. And so there's none of this description about what's actually really gone on. And for me, for us —the team —because we're in the 21st century and we're writing a graphic novel, you've got to think particularly about the verisimilitude. But of course it does have this moral, ethical aspect.

So we couldn't have episodes in Australia that didn't show in some way with the same levels of verisimilitude what was going on in Australia in the same way that he was showing what's going on in Cambridgeshire or London. This isn't some kind of political correctness; this is an opportunity. And it's an opportunity which Trollope definitely doesn't take —he shuts it down. And he shuts it down because it's simply not of interest to his readers, and Trollope is very commercial. They're not interested in that kind of story, it's simply a McGuffin, that's all. Australia is a McGuffin in *John Caldigate*. It's a place where you go and come back a rich man by magic. That's it.

So we let's take this opportunity really full on and let's have an Australian subplot which is just about other types of folks who were there when John was in Australia. And where John was, fortunately for us —because Australia is a big place and there were hundreds and hundreds of Aboriginal nations in Australia in the 1870s (and when I say nations —they're self-identified group of folks who are often tied to dominant languages but not entirely). And so the Wiradjuri nation would be the nation of Wiradjuri speakers. And so fortunately for me the Wiradjuri in 1870 really populated the area of New South Wales; in fact they overlapped heavily, almost exclusively, with where John Caldigate travelled in Australia. And so we thought, thank goodness for that. This idea emerged that in parallel we'd have a story which would mirror the whole plot, which would be a bigamy plot, which would tell a little story about the movement of folks who are aboriginal at that time in parallel to the plot that we had. So we were able to use the Wiradjuri subplot to distance the reader even further from what's going on in the European Australia.

CA: To bring us to the question more generally about adaptation, we've been talking about what you've added what the 21st century viewpoint permits us to add — I don't mean to presume that there's sort of teleological superiority, but we've been talking about patterns of

consumption really when we're talking about readership and what people are fundamentally interested in at any given point —so I wonder if there's also any loss involved in the adaptation process for you as well?

SG Yes, to shift a term that belongs to Jan Baetens — he's described Adaptation 2.0. So in Adaptation 1.0 —classical adaptation—the notion is that the source is perfect, the ultimate guide. So the source is this thing which then has something done to it or with it, and that's not what's going on here at all. So my view is that adaptations are always about accumulation. So there is no loss, because the source always still exists. The relationship between the adaptation of the target from a translation point of view is that the adaptation itself accumulates ideas and sensations that are in part about the source, and that's why adaptation can be such a great research tool because it states that there have been certain levels of scrutiny of the source. So in making changes there's never a notion of loss, because nothing has been lost — it's all gain.

But then questions arise about the rationale, and you think, well, why would you make an adaptation at all? That's a great question and that might be to do with readers and uses and plagiarism. So for instance in a very basic way you've got something like Classics Illustrated comics —so the notion is you introduce children who are comics readers to great literature, which is adult, hard, grown-up, involves the great moral questions of our age, all of that stuff. So you use comics instrumentally to get children into literature. There's a lack of self-examination, where for instance Classics Illustrated don't pay any attention to the stylistics, and so they treat the adaptation of a Dickens like they treat the adaptation of Shakespeare, in the same way. So that's that kind of notion that all of that doesn't matter as long as you get the great plot. So there's that notion of I've how that works — instrumental, educational — but actually what we're looking at here is two different works of art. And so we're looking at one work, the adaptation, that accumulates and builds on and refers to — not exclusively — the original, the source work of art. And so if you do that at all, there's an homage to Trollope, in adaptations of Trollope, there's an homage. Because why would you do it if you thought that Trollope was not worth reading?

CA: I particularly like the fact that it's really undoing that presumption of a hierarchy of text and adaptation, that's inherent in the idea of Adaptation 1.0. And that's very exciting to me because I think that graphic novel adaptations have been neglected as a form, and as you say

there really is huge potential for them as a tool of —well that sounds rather instrumental — but of a means of reflecting and understanding processes.

SG: Yes I agree, because we're still so in a sense so elementary in our thinking about the relationships between word and image, that in other artistic fields the kinds of adaptation relationships that we're talking about now are absolutely unremarkable. So I'm thinking particularly of music in general. So if you think of the way in which sampling works so everything from what you'd describe as story in music, i.e. its melodies and harmonies all the way through to stylistic changes —so you'll have folks covering someone else's song. And this is all completely commonplace, back into the mists of time. So I think those commonplaces that are in the tradition of making music — we have a lot of opportunity to introduce those things.

CA: And this goes back to what you were saying earlier about the French critics understanding something immediately about your work even if they didn't like it, and the anglophone ones really struggling to articulate what you're doing here. Because there is a kind of rigidity in in the literary field, in the neighbouring fields if you like, of the graphic novel and so on about hierarchy and a kind of obeisance to the canonical texts. And it's stultifying and can be deadening, and that's where the classic library adaptations are really starting from the wrong end and don't help us to understand what adaptation can actually do in visual terms ...

SG: I agree. It isn't simply status either, in disciplines where folks are not used to doing it. So folks aren't trained to think like that because that's not how the learning takes place and that's from the earliest times. And so you go and do your A-level — so you're 16,18 and you have a trajectory where you're deeply in love with English literature, say, and you want to make the research of that your life's work. And actually the whole system of training means that you're simply not trained to look across boundaries, or it isn't even across boundaries — you're not trained to look at what was what was current in the theatre when somebody was reading *Martin Chuzzlewit*. And this is just how folks learn to do things. And in music that's really, really not the case. it might be a little bit if you're classically trained and actually training doesn't really encourage you to look at look at Stormzy or Kylie or world music — i.e. everything that isn't the Western Canon , ha ha ha — so that kind of series of relationships there's so much to do. Persuading people it's valuable can be difficult actually

but if you can demonstrate how it can reveal things then it actually starts to make its own case, I think.

CA: That's what your work is doing and not just the graphic novels that you've done but your theorisation of this is immensely important in the graphic novel field. So your book on the theory of narrative drawing for instance and your interviews and your very articulate accounts of what you're doing here will I hope gain even more currency.

SG: Thanks very much, that's most heartening indeed. But also it is out there and the work that I've done with the folks in Leuven and the work I've done on theorisation and also the history work the work I've done on Marie Duval all connects up for me. And so I am kind of energized by those types of overlaps and what you might call boundary crossings, but for me there's a continuum. So I do feel that stuff is getting out there and I feel that the community of comics scholars, for instance, is much more robust, it has its foundational texts which it's now superseding, and it's following a kind of path to thinking about what is the least to be studied. And 10 years ago that wasn't true so much, and certainly 20 years ago it was much more precarious. So I think that all of that is just about, as ever, doing the work and facilitating scholarship.

CA Yes, absolutely. So just on the last note, Simon, I wonder if you could say a little bit about your current work. You mentioned your Marie Duval project and you're also working on Robert Louis Stevenson —

SG: The Stevenson work is very speculative, we're at a very early stage, but that's exciting. So I've come to the end of a period where I've been working since 2014 on the work of Marie Duval [Isabelle Émilie de Tessier; 1847-1890], who was a London cartoonist and actress in the 1870s and 80s. And we put together — me and two other scholars — Professor Roger Sabin from Central St Martins and Julian Waite who was at Chester and now studying at Vancouver — we put together an archive online, a free image archive of all of the extant work of Marie Duval that we can find and of course we keep finding more which is always a problem, which is marieduval.org. But also we published a picture book call *Marie Duval* in 2018 and we're just about to publish an academic book about aspects of her work with Manchester University Press, which comes out later this year. And then to tie things up to where we were in the beginning, in the autumn of 2018 I found some of her illustrations in a

novel which nobody has seen since it was published. In fact nobody had identified it as her work. She had a relationship with the editor of *Judy* magazine called Charles Ross and he was also a cheap novelist who wrote a story called *The Honeymoon* which is probably in the early 1870s. And she illustrated it under a male pseudonym, under the name of ‘Ambrose Clarke’. Pseudonym was really commonplace in Victorian journalism, written and drawn. but Miss Duval’s pseudonyms that we knew of were all women — so she drew under the name ‘Marie Duval’ (Marie Duval wasn’t her name); she drew under the name *noir* —French for black —and she drew fashion illustrations which are really quite unfashionable! She was also a comic. She drew under the name ‘The Princess Hesse Schawrzbourg’ when she published a children’s book and she drew under ‘Ambrose Clarke’. So I got the opportunity to work with a London publisher, Bookworks, to draw a revival, drawing *as* Marie Duval. So I drew a book which was published in late 2018 which was called *Drawing in Drag by Marie Duval*, where I set myself the problem: what would she draw if she was revived today in central Manchester (which was where I discovered the book)? So the book *Drawing in Drag by Marie Duval* is an album of drawings about city life in 2019, 2018, drawn as though Miss Duval were making those drawings. So I become Miss Duval — hence drawing in drag. I put on the stylistics and the topic guise of Miss Duval and draw as her. There you go!

CA: Sounds very exciting, indeed, thank you!

Sg: All available online!

CA: Absolutely, we will rush off and look at it now —

SG: Ok!

CA: Thank you very much indeed, Simon, for such an interesting and wonderful talk about your work, and we very much look forward to seeing more from you in the future.

SG: Thanks very much, it’s been a delight, great questions and thanks for the opportunity.

CA You’re very welcome.

CW: So I hope that you enjoyed that fabulously interesting interview between Simon and Carol, and we are grateful to Simon for his time and the generosity of sharing his ideas with us.

So, having conducted that interview, Carol, are there things that Simon says in that interview that have made you think differently about your work on the Lost Detectives project?

CA: Yes, definitely. So there are things in common that Simon and I have — both of us come from backgrounds that aren't comics, strictly speaking — his background is in fine art and mine is in literature, and so I think that gives us both a slightly different perspective on the process of visual adaptation. So like him, we built in a sub-plot in the graphic novel, and I was very conscious when doing that that I wanted that to mirror the structure of the original text. What Simon's done is to conduct a discourse analysis of the text, so in a more finely grained way, he's looked at the texture of the novel and its discourse. I don't think I did that particularly with the Panov, but it's something I could do later on and we could come back to - thinking about the language.

So the thing that made me wonder why I hadn't thought of this myself— as the best ideas do—is when he was talking about using the contemporaneous in his work. So if you're looking at a novel set in the 1870s you might want to look at what people were also watching in the theatre or what sort of music they were listening to — so what was contemporaneous with the point of production? And in the case of Panov and the 1870s, in terms of visual art, this was a really interesting time. It was the point where there'd been a revolt in 1863 against the Academy tradition in Russian visual art and there was the so-called 'Revolt of the 13' – or was it the 14, I forget now – however, the revolt of the student academicians who said that they would no longer do the classical themed paintings. And out of that there emerged a very important Russian nativist tradition, with the Itinerants, the *Peredvzhniki*. So you get artists like Repin and Kramskoi and Savitsky, and Vereshchagin a little bit later on – all really important artists, whose work I could usefully incorporate into my own visual aesthetic. So I'm quite excited about that. They were all very concerned about using Realism to comment on social change – and it was a period of great change as we've talked about before, and they

also used traditional folk art. So early on I was using motifs of mummering costumes in the ball scene for instance, so that traditional folk art is there in my work, but I would like use some of these artists to develop some of these motifs. And an artist I've been thinking about is Vrubel', who was an extraordinary artist, and who really bridged the period between the Itinerants and European symbolism and even *Art nouveau*. So these are the strands I'm probably going to develop, having gone away from the interview and thought about it — in the graphic novel adaptation for *Cape*, and that will, I hope, also pin the work down in its originating period. So it was a very fruitful interview for me, and I'm very grateful to Simon for that, and it had made me go back to my work and think of some aspects of it that I could work on. So, watch this space!

CW: Thanks, Carol. It's so interesting that every time we speak or one of us speaks to someone else about this project that there are interconnections that make us go back to our own work. And the same goes for my work on literary analysis as well. And I hope that some of the conversations that we have had have the same effect on our listeners!

CA: Let's hope so. That just reminded me, Claire – you had an article published recently didn't you? And I've got one that's just coming up –

CW: Yes, so we can do a verbal plug here and a written plug when we publish the episode! So the Panov story, *Murder During the Ball* – I've just had an article about it published in January 2020 in the *Journals of Victorian Popular Fiction*. It's entitled 'Sources of Mystery, Truth and Justice' and it's about the exploitation of space in the original short novel. Very much of the material in that article derives from the conversations that Carol and I have had about the process of adaptation and the layout of the space in that work, particularly the Ruslanov mansion that we are both so fascinated about, but also extending into the layout of the criminal courtroom that the trial takes place in, and how those spaces supplement the thematics of the novel. So I'll put a link to that on the website to that article. And you have just had published - ?

CA; No, not yet published, but I hope it will be coming out in 2021 – an article in a collection with Palgrave Macmillan. I think provisionally the collection will be called something like 'Illustration and Adaptation', and it's being put together by the team of people who run

ILLUSTR4TIO, which is an annual gathering and conference about adaptation and illustration. So I'm hoping that will appear fairly soon.

CW: So – onwards and upwards.

CA: Onwards and upwards, that's right!

CW: So, thanks for your time, and thanks again to Simon Grennan for his time. We will be back as the *Lost Detectives* team for Episode 3 of this podcast series later in the summer – plans are afoot for our next victim. So we hope you've enjoyed this episode, and we hope that you're all well and safe wherever you are.