Terrorizing Terrorism: A Comparative Study of The Dynamiter and The Secret Agent

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1 The terrorist era that hit Europe in the fin-de-siècle is the topic of two novels compared for this study on terrorism in literature, The Dynamiter and The Secret Agent. Both represent terrorism in two specific political causes: the Irish nationalistic movement for independence, and anarchism. As B.A. Melchiori notes, the Stevensons were influenced by the history of violence of the 1880s: the attempted assassination of Queen Victoria in 1882, Nobel’s invention of the dynamite (1883), the ‘great explosion’ at Victoria Station in London (1884), and ‘the Great London Explosions’ of 1885 “during which the Fenians blew up Westminster Hall, the Houses of Parliament, and the Tower of London." In this atmosphere of perpetual threat, the Stevensons found inspiration for their only novel written together, as husband and wife, and published in 1885. To those 1880s activist attempts, also referred to as ‘propaganda by deed’ in the anarchist circles, are added the terrorist acts of the 1890s and early 1900s as potential historical sources for Conrad’s novel The Secret Agent (1907). Although the most inspirational event for Conrad was the Greenwich Park bombing of 1894, the reader should not forget that in 1892 only, as Camus reminds us, “on compte plus d’un millier d’attentats à la dynamite en Europe, près de cinq cents en Amérique.” This wave of terrorism inevitably led to the development of a mainstream press overtly anti-anarchists, and to a flourishing literary market based on terrorist fiction. The Stevensons’ and Conrad’s interest for a contemporary topic, poignant with trauma and political manipulations, therefore answered the expectations of a certain readership while experimenting with the genre in order to puzzle readers and critics.

2 Neil Sinyard points out while summarizing The Dynamiter: "A terrorist compromised by his own strategy of terror, the endangering of an innocent child, the bizarre tone of irony and horror: is there not a strong foretaste here of an undisputed masterwork, Joseph Conrad’s The Secret Agent (1907)?" Although The Secret Agent was composed more than
twenty years after *The Dynamiter*, and although it is not certain whether Joseph Conrad ever read the terrorist tale written by the Stevensons, both works echo each other in their historical sources, plot and style. Moreover, as Michael Whitworth specifies, “Conrad conceived *The Secret Agent* in the 1890s, after the Greenwich Park bombing of 1894, and [...] the dedication identifies it as a tale of the XIX century”. Contextualizing the text will therefore help us find a way through the ambiguous readings of both texts. Indeed some critics have shown that these two novels contribute to labelling R.L. Stevenson and Conrad as conservatives, while many others, like B.A. Melchiori and G.G. Harpham, have noted the political ambiguity at stake in them. Their treatment of anarchy and terrorism, and especially the metaphors on bombs and detonators using chemistry and clock mechanism, can lead the reader to a pessimistic reevaluation of the authors’ morals. Hence, the scandal Conrad hints at in “The Author's Note”, published in 1920, proves that *The Secret Agent* was and is probably still read literally as a eulogy of terrorist acts.

The purpose of this article is to show that the Stevensons and Conrad experimented with the genre of terrorist literature, then fashionable, using polyphony, humour, and irony in the same way their terrorist activists, Zero and the Professor, are described playing with clockwork bombs, but to defuse the terror out of terrorism. Indeed, *The Dynamiter* and *The Secret Agent* can both be defined as anamorphic tales. Dealing mainly with anarchy, terrorism, and State secrets on the surface, their focus can yet be displaced on two heroines, Clara Luxmore and Winnie Verloc, who use language or its absence to cope with the patriarchal world surrounding them and to attempt to break free. Yet, their very presence in a male world – also seen as an ‘underworld’, where plotters, spies, policemen, diplomats, and bomb-makers evolve – is made possible by a chain of lies that an act of terrorism can ex/implode. Terrorism is then depicted as an unrepentant threat unlike anarchy and decadence, since it destroys the classical balance between horror and pity leading to catharsis. That is why I will show that only the authors’ use of polyphony and irony eventually relieves the reader from the spell of the absurd and the abject.

As shown in the Stevensons’ dedication to *The Dynamiter* and in Conrad’s “Author’s Note” to *The Secret Agent*, the authors explain that they chose humour, irony and polyphony to tell their terrorist tales. What I will show is that they also play with the figure of the anamorphosis to debunk the myth of terror. In the *Secret Agent*, the tendency would be to designate Mr Verloc as the character referred to in the title, not only because Conrad originally intended to entitle his book with his name, but also because he answers to its simplest definition as he is a spy sent by the Prussian regime to give accounts of anarchist meetings in London. Yet the polysemy of the term “secret agent” can also point at Stevie, despite the fact that he is the unfortunate scapegoat of his brother-in-law’s counter-terrorism act. Indeed, before he is taken away from his sister Winnie, he is confronted to anarchist thoughts, vivid with revolt against social injustice. In this apprenticeship into the dark side of society, Stevie abandons gradually his usual means of expression. Hence, as G.G. Harpham notes, he, whose “primitive moral judgments” summed up the world in a manicheist dichotomy, could have secretly been an agent for a broader scheme, as his thinking “represents a certain ‘secret’ dimension of agency”. Drawing less and less as he is more appalled by the horrors of everyday life, Stevie falls into Mr Verloc’s trap. He dies while carrying the bomb to explode the Greenwich meridian, artificially recognized as a global standard in 1884. Exchanging imaginary circles for abstract lines cutting through the globe, the explosion can be seen as meaningless, as the characters in the plot want us
to believe, and as Conrad in his “Author’s Note” invites us to think when he refers to the historical blowing up of Martial Bourdin in 1894. Indeed, while describing what inspired him into writing The Secret Agent, Conrad mentions a talk with Ford Madox Ford where

We recalled the already old story of the attempt to blow up the Greenwich Observatory; a blood-stained inanity of so fatuous a kind that it was impossible to fathom its origin by any reasonable or even unreasonable process of thought [...].

[O]ne remained faced by the fact of a man blown to bits for nothing even most remotely resembling an idea, anarchistic or other. As to the outer wall of the Observatory it did not show as much as the faintest crack.

In this extract, Conrad condemns “Bourdin’s folly” as being estranged from Reason as a possibility and as an impossibility. The emphasis placed on the absurd aspect of the act that looked more like a suicide than the Observatory’s destruction (i.e. ‘inanity’, ‘fatuous’, ‘for nothing’) shows that Conrad officially associates it, and consequently the explosion killing Stevie, with nihilism.

However, the explosion killing Stevie seems to reverberate onto his sister’s fate in the pure tradition of Gothic literature, transforming her into the final secret agent. If time according to the Greenwich meridian was not affected in appearance, literary time was shattered and mixed up to juxtapose unjuxtaposable chronotopes. Winnie, by murdering her husband in revenge, frees herself from social bondage. Not only does her sudden and ephemeral resemblance with her brother look uncanny to the reader, but she also acts for other historical strata taking their revenge through her from the very origins of humanity: “Into that plunging blow, delivered over the side of the couch, Mrs Verloc had put all the inheritance of her immemorial and obscure descent, the simple ferocity of the age of caverns, and the unbalanced nervous fury of the age of bar-rooms”. Although this quotation can be understood as corroborating Ossipon’s theory taken from Lombroso’s work on physiognomy, stating that Stevie’s whole family has inherited from a ‘degenerate’ mind, it is also possible to read it as a metatextual comment on the composition of the novel as a whole. As Alex Houen commented on Winnie’s transformation into the figure of the metaphor itself: “Winnie literally becomes a double-agent, possessed by the past at the same time as she embodies it, the very transference of energy devolving into a living metaphor (in Greek, metapherein means to transport)”. Transported by passion beyond her usual self, so discreet, mute, deaf and blind, Winnie experiences a revolution into her deeply rooted and repressed desire to put an end to her domestic oppression. She, who was almost petrified in her so-called “philosophy [which] consisted in not taking notice of the inside of things”, moves from the state of the passive witness/accomplice of anarchists’ activities to a state of utter rebellion, displacing terror from the streets to the family house. Ossipon’s reaction when he realizes that Verloc’s body is indeed dead is one of panic, the narrative voice repeats: “He was terrified” six times in the space of two pages and offers variations as well. His entire world is crumbling around him because of Winnie, “this savage woman who had brought him in there, and would probably saddle him with complicity, at least if he were not careful”. He is so frightened that he imagines her to be a serial killer, able to kill men without apparent reason. The accumulation of terror leads Ossipon to be the victim of his own terror: he rewrites the scene placing it in a biblical context. After silencing her fears of dying on the gallows – punishment in use against murderers at the time –,

He felt her now clinging round his legs, and his terror reached its culminating point, became a sort of intoxication, entertained delusions, acquired the characteristics of delirium tremens. He positively saw snakes now. He saw the
woman twined round him like a snake, not to be shaken off. She was not deadly. She was death itself – the companion of life\textsuperscript{15}.

Though he is sober, Ossipon is the victim of his frightened imagination working on him like strong alcohol. After comparing Winnie to a snake, reminiscence of the Evil in the Genesis, he equates her with death, dropping the comparing element. This hallucination makes Winnie the primeval fear of humanity. It transforms her once more into the figure of the metaphor itself, into a double agent. It is worth noticing too that Ossipon's hyperboles on Winnie disqualify him as a reliable witness in the eye of the reader, giving thus credit to Winnie, and debunking some of the terror she is told to have provoked.

In \textit{The Dynamiter}, similar questioning can occur concerning the title. If the dynamiter is indeed Zero, the mad bomb-maker, as the instigator of the explosions And if from this character originates the central digressive tale, then the Stevensons are denouncing the inefficiency of propaganda by deed. Indeed, Zero fails all his operations, and his very last fiasco – the accidental bombing of a newspaper stall – leads him to his own death. Like Stevie in \textit{The Secret Agent}, he kills himself accidentally, annihilating any underlying cause under the act, leaving the other characters, as well as the readers, to face horror and “inanity\textsuperscript{16}”. The destruction of the potential dynamiter and secret agent of the novels' titles creates a hole inside both texts, a linguistic blow up which leaves the spectator aghast: “no adequate remains were to be found!”\textsuperscript{17}, notes Stevenson in a euphemism to silence the fact that the remains look inhumane. This disappearance of the original shape of the body, transformed into “a heap of nameless fragments\textsuperscript{18}” triggers off unreadability. Both Conrad and Stevenson translate the bombing of a man in terms of semiotics: the signs being thus violently split and thrown elsewhere echo the construction of both texts in fragments and flashbacks, lies and deeply buried secrets, where the main character is nowhere found in the literal world – the signifier – and the central fact – the terrorist act – is decentred from its orbit, leaving an empty space where the signified should be.

The uncertainty surrounding the identity of the dynamiter therefore leads the reader to other hypotheses. M'Guire and Clara Luxmore, as Zero's accomplices and as Irish patriots, are also responsible for the planning and staging of terrorist acts. Yet, both experience horror when confronted with the deed. M'Guire, for instance, embodies the paradox at the heart of the terrorist resolution. He is terrified at the idea of exploding with the bomb he has to set on Shakespeare's statue. The terror is so overwhelming that it not only invades him as he felt “condemned, in one moment, to a cruel and revolting death by dynamite\textsuperscript{19}”, but this internal terror also spreads on his appearances and, like an epidemic, becomes contagious to people surrounding him: “the passers-by regarding him with eyes in which he read, as in a glass, an image of the terror and horror that dwelt within his own\textsuperscript{20}”. M'Guire, passed through the looking glass, treads in an inverted world dominated by fear. He is unable to face his own choice of representing the rights of Erin by all means, so he turns his back to ethics a second time, like a \textit{glorius miles}, embodying the paradox of terrorists: they are able to explode others, even children and pregnant women, but are unable to implode themselves.

The use of scapegoats for political reasons is once more depicted as ironic, as it shows the disparity between ideals and reality. Seduced by Clara's fantastic tales and looks, Challoner and Desborough are duped into participating in chivalric rescue, when they but give a hand to terrorists, the former as a messenger, and the latter as a dynamiter. Desborough who is described from the start as genuinely good ends up being the true
hero of the novel. His subsequent exploit at saving a children’s hospital from destruction can find its root in his love for Clara, whom he believes escaped from Cuba. This naive reading and trust in the Logos of a storyteller leads the latter to realize her errors of judgment concerning the value of terrorism. Her epiphany, born out of love and at seeing the pleasure produced by her text, allows her to redeem herself and find her way back home, reconciling with her mother, getting married with her saviour, and being accepted in Godall’s society. This happy ending formed out of terror shows that *The Dynamiter*, so imposing at first with the definite article “The”, is in fact hiding a fluid identity. It is as a mask covering multiple persons one after the other. That is why Clara Luxmore, alias Asenath Fonblanque, a Mormon from Utah, alias Miss Gould from Nevada, alias Miss Lake, alias Teresa Valdevia from Cuba and eventually Mrs Desborough after her redemption, manipulates her audience as much as she manipulates her identity. Her skills in storytelling, adapted from the legend of Scheherazade, also recall the powers of the Greek god, Proteus. Hiding her essence under lies, she is described by her accomplices as “a mad woman, who jests with the most deadly interest” by M’Guire, and as “a true enthusiast; nervous, perhaps in presence of the chemicals; but, in matters of intrigue, the very soul of skill and daring” by Zero. Using words as a weapon, and language as a game, she bewitches her spectators like a magician, when she in fact reinvents the anarchist definition of ‘propaganda by word’. Indeed, ill at ease with bombs, she devotes herself to the linguistic part of terrorism, though in a very unusual way! No press for her, no pamphlets against the British aggression towards Ireland. Derrida’s concept of “*différance*” can actually be found in Clara’s tales of oppression, where England is inevitably described as the land of freedom. This incoherence inside her patriotic discourse echoes the portrait her mother gives to Somerset: “Such whim about oppressed nationalities – Ireland, Poland, and the like – has turned her brain”. Mrs Luxmore sees her daughter as a victim of the nationalist press of the time, and therefore as a victim of the very instrument she uses to convince people to enrol for the Irish cause: propaganda by word. This vicious circle that turns the fleeing character into a victim of her own beliefs also gives her a possibility to escape. The Stevensons indeed by creating a flaw in Clara’s rhetoric hints at deficient terrorist propaganda: it does not endure the contact with the real world. Murderers are turned into victims, and propagandists’ unconscious slip-of-the-tongue delivers them from their imprisoning discourse.

11 *The Secret Agent* is not much about Mr Verloc’s story but about the liberation of his wife, in parallel *The Dynamiter* deals with the reconversion of its leading storyteller, Clara. The anamorphosis thus occurs in both novels on the levels of plot and of narration. Besides, from the opening of their books, the Stevensons and Conrad put an emphasis on their distance from the subject treated. They show their use of comedy and irony as a proof of the non-contagious aspect of their novels. And yet, we can wonder whether these poetic intentions have not been stated as a warning against their own linguistic ambiguities. Indeed, many critics have noted how terrorism still fascinates them despite their official denials. B.A. Melchiori, after a study on the manuscripts of *The Dynamiter* to define which parts and which sentences of the text had been written by Robert Louis Stevenson and which by Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson, comments on the difference of style and tone between both authors. According to her analysis, “his stories mock and demystify such terrorism while hers respectfully treat dynamite as a source of mysterious power.” Similarly, some critics have pointed out the similarities between Conrad’s description of his inspiration for *The Secret Agent* with the technique employed by the Professor, the mad bomb-maker who had already played a minor role in the short-story “An Informer”
(1905). This almost too overt identification of the author with a terrorist has shocked many, leading some to think Conrad was playing a double game in his own text, advocating some political means that are immoral and inhumane. Although these interpretations may reveal puzzling allegiances on the part of the writers, I am going to show that there are other elements in the text that can be analysed for the impressions they leave on the reader. Hence, the dialogical confrontation between Zero and the dandy Somerset, as well as a comparison between the Professor and Winnie will underline the linguistic means used by the authors to gouge terror out of terrorism.

In the second part of The Dynamiter, Zero enters Somerset’s life under the name of Mr Jones, when he moves in the ‘Superfluous House’ and transforms the upper floor into a bomb laboratory. Mystery surrounds this new tenant and louche people visiting him, which highly puzzles the dandy, as he finds himself in a similar situation as Winnie Verloc: a passive witness to a secret society. Quickly, Somerset starts regretting his pact with Mr Jones/the Devil as he will subsequently call him when aware of his creations. A Gothic atmosphere settles on his mind: “A sense of something evil, irregular, and underhand, haunted and depressed him.” When he finds out Zero’s identity and his implication in a failed terrorist attack publicized in the press, Somerset has to face his conscience and values. Although his ethics and financial situation urge him to denounce the wanted criminal to the police, he befriends with him! The terrorist and the dandy are indeed two sides of the same coin as they both compare themselves to poets and artists while using provocation to be noticed by society. Zero claims his acts are in favour of a noble cause: “I found the liberty and peace of a poor country desperately abused; the future smiles upon that land; yet, in the meantime, I lead the existence of a hunted brute, work towards appalling ends, and practice hell’s dexterities.” This discourse is highly controversial as it appeals to pity on the terrorist while describing the latter’s job as a direct application of Machiavelli’s political theories: the end justifies the means. Zero then adds up a new argument in favour of the terror of terrorism: “You might, perhaps, expect us to attack the Queen, the sinister Gladstone, the rigid Derby, or the dexterous Granville; but there you would be in error. Our appeal is to the body of the people; it is these that we would touch and interest.” Propaganda by deed is here shown in its ultimate paradox as it does not choose its victims amidst the political figures responsible for social injustice, but amidst innocent people. In that sense, terrorism can be regarded as petrifying, and yet it creates “disgust” and rebellion in Somerset. The more they argue on politics and ethics, and the more Somerset’s character and ideas get formed in the presence of alterity. With a malleable personality and his mind wandering over art, music, and detective work, he eventually discovers he is the opposite of what he thought to be. In his rebellion against terrorism he also puts an end to dandyism, too elastic and morally decadent to be a real frontier against terror. He formulates a new ethics that forbid the use of dynamite and turns Zero’s ethics onto him like a mirror: “You would blow up others? Well then, understand: I want, with every circumstance of infamy and agony, to blow you up!”. Somerset’s first instinct is that terror should be defeated on its own ground. However, quiproquos will end the tale showing that this terror had been elaborated for nothing as Zero’s “dynamite is no more dangerous than toffee!” The Stevensons therefore transform a Gothic terrorist tale into a farce where the terrorists are turned into clowns. The values of friendship, family, thus of community, are finally reinstated as Somerset tries to save Zero from his diabolical bombing of the house, and Clara is rescued from terrorist propaganda by Desborough.
Although The Secret Agent ends up valorising the same ideals, it does so as “écriture du désastre”. Etymologically, ‘dés-astre’ refers to a certain cosmic chaos (i.e. the prefix ‘des’ meaning ‘out of’). Blanchot explains: « Si le désastre signifie être séparé de l’étoile, […] il indique la chute sous la nécessité désastreuse ». “Le désastre” can be found from the start in the hollow title, whose signifier is scattered throughout the text. Indeed, although the title refers to the figure of the secret agent, a research of its definition and occurrences led us to name several characters with this function, as if the generic possibility implied had been lost, constantly displaced instead and found where it was most unsuspected. On a metatextual level, this literary device shows that Conrad offered through several characters’ double agency a space, a time, and a discourse open to oxymoron and juxtaposed antitheses. It creates a textual space and time open to equation of contraries, to polyphony, to comparison of different ideologies without the comparing element. It is up to each reader to recreate it or not, depending whether they accept a literary text to be a democratic space, allowing free speech, or, if needed, to compartmentalize it again. This equation of the text with a democratic state is all the more interesting when we compare the narrator’s comments on the Professor and on Winnie. As David Mulry has shown, the four anarchists described in The Secret Agent embody historical stages in the development of anarchist theories. In this disposition, the Professor finds his place in “the terroristic bogey men of the 1880s and 1890s, the even more liminal zealots of the anarchist movement like Ravachol, Vaillant, and Henry – notorious propagandists by deed”. His motto “madness and despair” and his fanatically religious commitment to the cause of terrorism make him a real threat to society. Inspector Heat, unlike Somerset, submits to his fears when confronting the Professor, as he knows that the other is carrying a detonator. However, at the end of the novel, the solitary Professor is described polyphonically in a mixture of free indirect speech and narrative comment as “frail, insignificant, shabby, miserable” and he is compared to “a pest in the street full of men”. The proximity of “insignificant” to qualify the Professor and the delusional idea that he works for “the regeneration of the world” shows that his dream of Apocalypse will be a mere destruction without any revelation. His further association with “a pest” shows that he is not part of human kind anymore and can therefore be destroyed by them whom he thinks he can explode. In the incipit, the narrator reminds us of History explaining that the plot of the novel is but a representation of a time “before the era of reconstruction dawned upon London”. The narrative voice sweeps this remark away; the Professor is indeed not responsible for this architectural renewal since his objective was the very opposite.

On the contrary, the portrait of Winnie can be developed beyond her status as a double agent. Conrad claims that she is at the core of his intrigue. “Telling Winnie Verloc’s story to its anarchistic end of utter desolation, madness, and despair, and telling it as I have told it here, I have not intended to commit a gratuitous outrage on the feelings of mankind”. The repetition of “madness and despair” echoing the Professor’s final motto makes Winnie officially enter the anarchist brotherhood as terrorist. In this case, it is possible to continue David Mulry’s evolutionary classification of Conrad’s anarchists, placing Winnie after the Professor on the historical chain. Though The Secret Agent is a tale of the nineteenth century, we may wonder how Conrad was influenced by the first years of the twentieth century while writing it. Albert Camus notes that the year 1905 is the acme of terrorist activism, calling it “l’âge des martyrs”, as it saw the development of
‘ethical’ terrorists, able to commit murder for society’s sake then kill themselves in the name of human justice:

Mais les hommes de 1905, justement, déchirés de contradictions, donnaient vie, par leur négation et leur mort même, à une valeur désormais impérieuse, qu’ils mettaient au jour, croyant en annoncer seulement l’avènement. Ils plaçaient ostensiblement au-dessus de leurs bourreaux et d’eux-mêmes ce bien suprême et douloureux que nous avons déjà trouvé aux origines de la révolte [...], l’esprit de compassion.

Winnie, who has sacrificed personal happiness to protect her family’s interests in marrying Mr Verloc, is all the more affected when she realizes her husband killed her brother. The more he tries to excuse the murder and pretends Stevie’s death was nothing more than an accident, the freer she feels. Not only this sense of liberation entices her to take revenge on the murderer, killing him in his turn, but she also experiences troubling visions. Still silent, she looks spellbound as shown in the metaphor of the white wall where no writing can be marked. This inversion of the biblical passage, Belshassar’s Feast, can be read as a rewriting of Rembrandt’s painting. Yet, when in Rembrandt’s the terror of the eaters originated from God’s Word, Conrad adapts the legend by emptying the terror from its form. The wall remains white and blank although writing should appear. At that point, Winnie and the reader realize that she is freed from her social bond towards her husband and from religious commitment it encompasses. The absence of God in this crucial moment when Winnie is expecting instructions gives more value to her discovery. Religion is but another “blankness to run at and dash your head against”.

Self-inflicted violence expressed here is to be linked with the limits of language experienced by Winnie. Without a written revelation, she sees speech as a vanity: “what were words to her now? What could words do to her for good or evil in the face of her fixed idea?” Placed beyond language, what she will then see in her mind is a rewriting of the killing of Joan-the-Baptist: “Mrs Verloc closed her eyes desperately, throwing upon that vision the night of her eyelids, where after a rainlike fall of mangled limbs the decapitated head of Stevie lingered suspended alone, and faded out slowly like the last star of a pyrotechnic display”. In this mythical rewriting, Winnie has played the part of a compassionate Saome, this time asking her undesired husband for the survival of the prophet, Stevie, but Verloc/Herod did not hear and sacrificed him as was written in the previous text. This recycling of a biblical story is further completed by a historical reference to French Terror and the guillotine, and by a poetic image comparing Stevie’s severed head to a star fallen out of its orbit: ‘le désastre’. Winnie, during this inspirational trance, kills her husband, the man who first brought unjustified terror in her home. It is worth noticing that once she understands the consequences of her act, she knows that she deserves punishment. “Abstract terror” then invades her because she punishes herself and kills herself rather than suffer public humiliation on the gallows. After several complications, she commits suicide, drowned in the sea, while crossing the Channel. All this energy taken to render justice, towards Stevie, and then to put an end to her own guilt and to the terror she created. Thus Winnie becomes one of these martyrs named by Camus.

The Stevensons and Conrad invite their readers towards higher values like sympathy and community to counteract the terror of terrorism.
BIBLIOGRAPHIE


NOTES


2. As Alex Houen notes, the Anarchist International Conference had decided in 1876 to distinguish the ‘propaganda by word ’ (the press, pamphlets, political rallies...) from the ‘propaganda by deed’ (a legitimization of terrorist acts), justifying the practice of both to persuade people of their just cause (p.995).


14. The fifth time his terror is mentioned, it is because “He would not have been surprised if she had suddenly produced another knife destined for his breast” (Ibid., p.253).
15. Ibid., p.254-255.
17. The Stevensons, Ibid., p.182.
20. Ibid., p.113.
21. Mr. Godall is the pseudonym taken by Prince Florizel, Stevenson’s protagonist in his collection of short-stories, New Arabian Nights (1883).
22. Ibid., p.57
23. Ibid., p.122.
24. Ibid., p.72.
27. Ibid., p.106.
29. Ibid., p.119.
30. Ibid., p.124.
31. Ibid., p.176.
35. Ibid., p.269.
36. Ibid., p.45.
37. Ibid., « Author’s Note », p.43.
40. Ibid., p.225.
41. Ibid., p.233.
42. Ibid., p.238.
RÉSUMÉS


The Stevensons and Conrad experiment with the genre of terrorist literature, using polyphony and irony to defuse terror out of terrorism. I will show that both novels are built on the figure of the anamorphosis, both novels displace and explode their original focal point, creating comic quiproquos or “une écriture du désastre” able to place communal values as a counterpoint to terrorism.

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