

“Negation, Annihilation and Nothingness”: Risks and Recovery from Parental Loss and Abandonment in Nancy Huston’s Instruments of Darkness

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Number 45-46, 2012

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1009917ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1009917ar>

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Publisher(s)

Conseil international d'études canadiennes

ISSN

1180-3991 (print)

1923-5291 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Schaub, D. (2012). “Negation, Annihilation and Nothingness”: Risks and Recovery from Parental Loss and Abandonment in Nancy Huston’s Instruments of Darkness. *International Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue internationale d'études canadiennes*, (45-46), 509–530.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1009917ar>

Article abstract

Nancy Huston’s *Instruments of Darkness* illustrates how the narration of trauma has at once potentially redeeming and devouring powers. A joint literary-psychoanalytic exploration of the main characters’ childhood experiences and subsequent severed and severing links/bonds highlights how the text bears the mark of past traumas, reflecting the theories of LaCapra, Bion, D. W. Winnicott, Laub, Poland, and André Green. Following the multiple processes through which the protagonist of the framing narrative fights against her past while recording the loops of the protagonist’s life in the framed narrative, the novel engages in a therapeutic process counteracting the traumatic impact of a dead mother, whether physically or psychically.

“Negation, Annihilation and Nothingness”: Risks and Recovery from Parental Loss and Abandonment in Nancy Huston’s Instruments of Darkness¹

Abstract

Nancy Huston’s Instruments of Darkness illustrates how the narration of trauma has at once potentially redeeming and devouring powers. A joint literary-psychoanalytic exploration of the main characters’ childhood experiences and subsequent severed and severing links/bonds highlights how the text bears the mark of past traumas, reflecting the theories of LaCapra, Bion, D. W. Winnicott, Laub, Poland, and André Green. Following the multiple processes through which the protagonist of the framing narrative fights against her past while recording the loops of the protagonist’s life in the framed narrative, the novel engages in a therapeutic process counteracting the traumatic impact of a dead mother, whether physically or psychically.

Résumé

Le roman Instruments des ténèbres de Nancy Huston montre que les forces libérées par le récit d’un traumatisme peuvent être à la fois rédemptrices et dévoratrices. À l’aide d’une grille de lecture littéraire et psychanalytique et s’inspirant des théories de LaCapra, Bion, D. W. Winnicott, Laub, Poland et André Green, l’auteure analyse les expériences vécues dans l’enfance par les deux personnages principaux ainsi que leurs liens et leurs attachements ultérieurs, marqués par la rupture et la séparation, afin de mettre en relief la manière dont le texte porte l’empreinte de blessures anciennes. Le roman suit les multiples mécanismes par lesquels la protagoniste du récit-cadre affronte son passé en enregistrant les méandres de son existence dans le récit-cadre : il participe ainsi à un processus thérapeutique qui contrebalance les effets traumatiques, sur le plan physique ou psychique, de la mort de la mère.

In his various writings on trauma, which largely focus on Holocaust memory, Dominick LaCapra explains that the victims of trauma suffer from a fragmented identity formation, becoming possessed by the traumatic past event and repeating it compulsively. He argues that they see the signs of the original trauma elsewhere when representations trigger it, collapsing past and present and entrapping the self within a kind of zero time. They may not even have experienced the traumatic event directly, but culturally, so that the children of Holocaust survivors and the present generations of minority groups once enslaved, for example, both bear the burdens of distorted memory and endure an inability to remember and recollect historical trauma directly in order to move on. In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, LaCapra focuses on the healing process, noting that events remain imbued with traumatic power when individuals cannot

represent the harrowing moment to themselves, when they cannot integrate the event into their narratives. An experience becomes momentous when it seems to fissure one's rationale of identity, relationships, and existence, attaining catastrophic proportions when it disintegrates the stories through which one narrates oneself into being, functioning like a black hole into which meaning collapses. The disorientation can cause an anaesthetizing numbing, so that even if the historical event is recalled, it is revived in an emotionally deadened manner that belies the explosive emotions relocated—mislocated—elsewhere.

LaCapra holds that healing can only take place through a process of storytelling, through representing, and thus, at a distance, re-enacting, the traumatic experience of emotions, bodily sensations, and images in words. Language, and particularly the writing of narratives, helps relocate the experience from something acted out uncontrollably, to a story that can be worked through, organized, externalized. Yet LaCapra comments on the extreme difficulty in handling directly experienced traumatic memory, or empathy and revived cultural memory of trauma without becoming excessively and disempoweringly identified with the victims and victimizing circumstances. Writers can therefore place themselves at risk whenever they reconstruct a literary past in order to understand inherited trauma. In melding the broken experiences of catastrophe, they may succeed in exposing horror in a way that allows a vital expression of the experience, thereby rescuing calamity from the snares of trauma with its partial impressions and compulsive, fractional repetitions. However, the strong degree of empathy and cultural memory required may prove so overwhelming that they confusingly suffuse the writing with trauma and tragedy, and/or leave the author in emotional suffocation. A female author, for example, may find relief from her own trauma through constructing a narrative that recollects the factual historical and imagined experiential repression of women in the past. Yet the empathy that could enable her healing may threaten to consume her if she becomes possessed by the ghosts she has set out to exorcize and name.

Nancy Huston's *Instruments of Darkness* illustrates how the narration of trauma has at once potentially redeeming and devouring powers.² The book imagines Nadia, a twentieth-century woman writer doing research for a novel on the life of Barbe Durand, a French woman who lived in late seventeenth/early eighteenth century rural France. Abandoned at birth with her twin brother as her mother dies in labour, placed under the supervision of different caregivers and employers with varying degrees of commitment or devotion, and eventually sentenced to death for murdering the baby resulting from rape by an abusive master, Barbe undergoes her predicaments with equanimity. While examining the tortuous meanders of Barbe Durand's life, the woman writer confronts her own anguished upbringing resulting from her father's alcoholism and her mother's depression, originating from her giving up the love of her life and her vocation in music. Huston's novel illustrates how one trauma informs another, causing a complex network of inheritance. The narrative evidences

that no individual can fully remember trauma from direct self-experience but must seek recourse in the realm of the empathetic imaginary. Researching and writing the trauma of another woman allows the contemporary protagonist to recollect empathetically the fragmented parts of her own traumatic background. The writing process, however, entails serious risks of identity displacement that threaten to engulf her. Yet this confrontation with past trauma through narrative and imagined experience survives near self-dissolution, enabling the protagonist to experience self-healing and self-recognition by the novel's end.

Instruments of Darkness highlights the meanders of traumatic experience through two narratives. The framing narrative, "The Scordatura Notebook," functions as working diary that the American writer keeps while researching the life and deeds of Barbe Durand. In it, she records not only her findings but also her reflections on her own past and present life, her hatred of humanity and disinterest in nature, as well as the emergent enlightenment afforded by her interest in a historical figure whose traumas mirror her own. She punctuates her text with snippets of conversation with her muse, a daemon with whom she has made a deal for inspiration, not unlike Faust or Dorian Gray though she does not quite share their hedonistic aspirations. In the complex enlightening process, the muse plays an odd part, as he seems to lure her into darkness rather than positive stimulation. When, at the onset of the book, he questions Nadia's need to write this specific novel, her answer points to mid-life crisis and the need to look into herself if only to sort out her problems: "I need, now, at the age I have reached, more than 'midway on life's journey,' to come to terms with the death at birth of my twin brother, and the disaster of my parents' marriage" (ID 27). His answer shows his lack of interest in alleviating her pain: "The last thing I'm interested in [he says] is diminishing madness and suffering, you know" (ID 27). The muse functions as the opposite of God, but his inspiration suits Nadia, for the hatred resulting from her predicament has led her to negate "the miracle of life" (ID 11), to "put little stock in truth" (ID 13), to revel in falsehoods, to refuse procreation, the perfect ground for collaboration with the daemon.

However, at the end of the novel, the daemon loses its powers. After having addressed, indeed internalized, her own traumas by reconstructing Barbe Durand's, Nadia can envisage different options. Disregarding the daemon's forceful reaction against her historical licence, she invents a new ending to Barbe Durand's story from which life may emerge. By changing the course of history and securing the help of Barbe's blind and death-wishing twin to swap places with her, Nadia allows her character to survive her death sentence, have a fresh start, and witness numerous events until almost the end of the eighteenth century. She herself emerges with a different sense of self that does not negate life, but rather embraces it, agreeing to take an interest in nature and human relations. Her changed perception emerges as she agrees to embrace life. She engages with the child of neighbours in town, agreeing to play with her, and

with her old neighbour in the country, sharing his passion for hydrangea—a loathsome subject to her at the beginning of the novel—for the variegated colours of the flower, from its fresh bloom to its dried leftovers, reminiscent of the rainbow's colours, somehow signalling serenity, the end of traumatic suffering; she obviously no longer associates the flowers with their symbolic “remembrance” of “heartlessness” (de Vries 265).

Nadia's exploration of Barbe's life and her own inscribes the depth of childhood loss and its engendered patterns of behaviour. In discussing the traumatic childhood and subsequent life experiences of the protagonist in each of the narratives—the framing and the framed—with their severed and severing links/bonds, the theories of Bion, D. W. Winnicott, Laub, Poland and André Green help to explain Nadia and Barbe's behaviour, attitudes, and thoughts, which the narrative illustrates through its imagery, diction, structure, and style. Reflecting the multiple processes through which Nadia fights against her past and records the loops of Barbe's life, the text of both framing and framed narratives exploits patterns that reveal the impact of the dead mother, whether physically or psychically.

Relevant Psychoanalytic Theories

With its focus on the crucial impact of the maternal gaze on a child, Donald W. Winnicott's “Mirror Role of Mother and Family in Child Development” applies to both the framing and the framed narrative in *Instruments of Darkness*. Winnicott contends that to benefit from a maximizing emotional development, a child needs “holding, handling and object-presenting” (111); if the object, namely the mother, does not respond, the child will not gain from her reflection, believe in his/her omnipotence, gain self-perception, nor feel real. Neither Nadia nor Barbe had the proper facial output in their first interactions with their mothers to develop interpersonal skills and constructive object-relating. Nadia's mother suffered from depression because motherhood ended her musical vocation and she closed in on herself, not reacting to her daughter. As a result, Nadia could not develop a sense of herself nor of her self-worth. She could not feel omnipotent and looked for other responses from the environment. By looking after her younger siblings, she alleviated her mother's task, securing some appreciation for her help, but not for herself per se, and certainly not unconditional love. This helps explain why as an adult she considers herself a “blank space” and a “non-entity” (ID 135), so that she changes her name to Nada, marking her non-existence. Barbe too did not awaken a loving response, since her mother died in labour and the surrogate mother who breastfed her took a dislike to her; as a result, she never had a sense of her existence as a worthy being nor even of herself as a potentially beautiful child. Like Nadia, her first interactions did not enable her to share human passion in her mother's mirroring her own experiences, let alone feel omnipotent. Invisible to all, at no stage in childhood or adolescence does she look at mirrors to see a reflection of

herself, for without a mother to reflect her she has not learnt the advantages of self-reflexive vision. She feels obliterated, even in her own eyes, particularly after having lost her friend Jeanne, a sister of sorts whose mother had given her a warm abode and employment, the only people who have actually seen her as a person.

D. W. Winnicott also argues that children who cannot engage in a dual exchange with their mothers may turn to other sources for mirroring. Both Nadia and Barbe need to find sources of self-reflection from the environment to compensate for the lack of meaningful interaction with their mothers. To seek meaning to her existence elsewhere than in the relations with her depressive mother, Nadia must have started examining the world around her for mirroring, thereby deriving her talents as a writer. For some time she even believes her readers can serve as her "Witness" (ID 183), somehow playing the mirror-role of the mother, and she senses them as "benevolent, attentive and sensitive, forgiving and loving" of her (ID 183), as one would expect a mother to react. Her search for a witness recalls Laub's study of testimony in "Traumatic Shutdown of Narrative and Symbolization" and the dialogic benefits of companionship that bears witness to traumas incurred, containing them, and helping towards reconciliation with life ahead. As for Barbe, she develops a keen sense of observation, picking up cues for survival from the environment, whether human or animal. Examining the world around her, she looks for other ways of coping, becoming shrewd and apt at decoding facial expressions for her survival. "Everyone's scapegoat" (ID 37), she develops a power of alertness that helps her shun danger and blows, literally and figuratively. Leading a programmed life, Barbe distances herself from infancy object deprivation, reflecting on neither the principles of life nor its justice, contrary to Nadia, who uses her writing to fathom her own traumatic experiences.

In her attempts at understanding what has shaped her, Nadia often tries to offset loss by denying it in such a way that she illustrates Freud's negation theory. Freud posits two forms of negation, the one rejecting a thought, the other acknowledging disappointment. While the former functions as a first step towards recognition because it names the repressed, though negatively, the latter relates to an unsatisfied desire and asserts something absent in the outer world. Negative formulas signal "unconscious repressed material" (Freud 235) linked with loss and mourning, in other words, by resorting to negation, the mind represses the source of psychic wounds. Nadia's recurrent use of negations and insistence on her nothingness marks her disengagement from human relations and selection of empty mental frames of mind to protect herself against the black hole of traumatic experiences and the fear of reliving them. Akin to the destructive drives that distance her from procreation and human interaction, that is, from experiences generating life and a feeling of liveliness, negative formulas participate in formulations of unconscious wishes or unsatisfied expectations that originate in parental failure.

Because no one has ever protected either Nadia or Barbe in infancy, lack of trust causes both to refuse ties with anyone. In this respect, Bion's "Attacks on Linking" highlights the patterns adopted by both women. Having had no experience of holding or containing relationships, or of a mother acting as a repository and positive processor of feelings unbearable for the child, both tend not to connect with others and to live a solitary life. Repeating patterns witnessed in both her mother and father—her mother aborted numerous times at home and her father feared the dependence of children—Nadia stays away from bonds. She has internalized her mother's catastrophe, namely the duties of marriage and motherhood, and starts basking in hatred and destructiveness, undergoing abortion after abortion as if life meant nothing to her. Owing to her mother's depressive temperament, Nadia refuses to bond with her mother even after she has helped her dispose of her first unwanted fetus. Not to go under, she needs to cut ties from her family. Even subsequent feelings of guilt do not make her reconnect. Environmental failure caused by her mother's inability to hold her and reflect her emotions has led to her endless capacity for hatred as well as to her inability to engage in durable emotional relations. Apart from her marriage and the odd long-term extramarital relationship, all of which she terminates, Nadia tends to get involved with men in a loose manner. For fear of suffering from personal involvement, she picks up men and throws them away, as if they were disposable, keeping track of their characteristics as a libertine would. When these encounters impregnate her, she disposes of the fetuses without much ado, thinking of them as Tom Thumb.³ She ends up living almost like a recluse, not relating to her neighbours in town nor even in the country. In the same way, she disconnects from any sign of life, such as growth in nature or lively children. In short, she perpetually breaks bonds with others and even within herself. Barbe too does not connect with anyone, with the exception of Hélène, a strong-willed, benevolent innkeeper, and her daughter Jeanne, the only two beings who truly see her in her early adolescence. Apart from the period when she lives with them, Barbe hardly speaks to those around her and goes about her assigned tasks with as little interaction with others as possible.

Nadia's and Barbe's severance of ties exemplifies D. W. Winnicott's "Fear of Breakdown." Not having benefited from a facilitating environment providing "holding, handling and object-presenting" (111), or rather having faced failures of the facilitating environment at a time when the ego organization could not integrate the experience, both fear breakdown as a future happening, not realizing that their lives have already confronted them with that breakdown. They both disconnect from life for fear of death, not realizing that by doing so they connect with an experience that remained un-experienced when it happened because of disconnection, and they both create defences around their unavoidable fear, the void they suffered from not experiencing the original breakdown. Fearfully expecting breakdown ahead, they both recreate the void

they underwent at the time of the traumatic experience, the void containing the original agony and pain.

D. W. Winnicott also relates past experience to the present "compulsion to look for death" ("Fear" 106), corroborated and elaborated on by André Green's "The Dead Mother." Green contends that a mother, or primary caregiver, who shows no interest in her child, either out of bereavement or intense involvement elsewhere, inflicts a narcissistic wound on the child who will then embrace the mother's psychic deadness and decathect by nourishing hatred. Creation and intellectualization often compensate for the traumatic wound, though they do not always prevent feelings of failure from arising, feelings that may lead to generalized dissatisfaction and excessive sexual interactions of short duration, which certainly applies to Nadia. Competition with the dead mother causes the need to repeat the traumatic experience by engendering death and disconnection from those about to inflict disappointment. In both Nadia's and Barbe's case, the primary caregiver proves "psychically dead in the eyes of the child" to use Green's phrasing (170); they face the primary caregiver as providing no affective stimulus, owing to depression or to antagonism, both in a context where death predominates. Staying aloof, they both court depression and experience anxiety, perhaps better marked in Nadia's case as she has more time to reflect than Barbe whose survival rests on functioning. The novel expands on Nadia's marked hatred of life, inability to love, and dissatisfaction with her achievements, which Green would relate to narcissistic traumatism yielding loss of meaning and identification with the dead mother. Identifying with the psychic deadness of the primary caregiver, Nadia and Barbe have pronounced death-seeking inclinations, the former forever aborting, the latter hiding her pregnancy and then delivering a stillborn baby on her own and making a bed for it in the frozen soil on Christmas Eve, deluding herself that her boy still lives.

Given the non-existent constructive maternal gaze, both Nadia and Barbe attach enormous importance to their twins, whether dead or alive and absent. Their need for a twin recalls Clare Winnicott's illustration of D. W. Winnicott's "Fear of Breakdown" and her comment to her patient with respect to "the other person" (352), namely the being whose appreciative gaze grants the recognition not conferred in early childhood. Laub's discussion of non-existent empathic dyads for traumatized beings (in "Truth" and "Traumatic Shutdown") applies pertinently to both Nadia and Barbe, whose desolate landscape devoid of meaningful interpersonal interactions compromises the sense of the self's continuity. Laub posits that the traumatized lose the connection with their inner witness; to palliate the loss and overwhelming aloneness, they need an external witness capable of dialogic empathy. Somewhat similarly, Poland argues for the need of a witness to contribute to "self-other differentiation" (18) as well as to insights that holding and interpreting alone cannot yield; he adds that by strengthening the self, "witnessing enriches growth" (22), securing

autonomy. Seeking a twin-like being to replace her deceased twin brother and give meaning to her life, Nadia turns to her lover Juan, who transforms her and her life, throwing a different light on all she does. Looking back on her relationship with him, Nadia remarks that “[t]he idea of Juan *truly* transformed [her] existence, just as the idea of Barnabé *truly* protected Barbe” (ID 185), showing that her research for, and writing of, her novel contribute to her understanding of her life strategies. Similarly, the discovery that Barnabé is alive transfigures Barbe, somehow lessening her predicament. Though she hardly ever sees him, Barbe finds in the thought of her twin’s existence the unconditional love her mother might have given her had she lived. Apart from that secret bond and the short-lived closeness with Hélène and Jeanne, Barbe does not sense her existence as worthy of notice, erasing herself until one of her employers rapes her. From then on, even though her employer throws himself at her bestially, she becomes conscious of herself and the presence of others as well as perceiving the chaos of her childhood. She realises that she is “Barbe instead of nothing at all,” that “Barbe [is] something” and has “something someone else want[s]” (ID 175). Witnessing in biblio-therapeutic fashion how Barbe comes into her own existence, Nadia begins to fight against her own erasure. She rebels against the daemon, which drags her into the underworld rather than granting her autonomy by acting as a true witness, so that she eventually rejects her nothingness and changes her name from Nada back to Nadia, suggesting that her work on Barbe has stimulated hope in her for a better life.

Stylistic and Structural Reflection of Trauma

Unlike *The Story of Omya* and *Losing North*, *Instruments of Darkness* has a double plot with a narrative offering “mirror scenes” (Boisclair 99; translation mine) that approximate D. W. Winnicott’s mirroring role of the mother. While “The Scordatura Notebook” consists of a writing diary recording seemingly haphazardly thoughts linking Nadia’s personal life experience and the novel-within-the-novel, “The Resurrection Sonata” follows a more structured plot that paradoxically gives a frame to Nadia in that it feeds her self-reflection and working through of her own predicament. However, like serials with broken up episodes, neither narrative follows through, as if to prove that Nadia will not maintain any strand for long because of a need to attack links, as Bion (1959) might have argued. Each link intersects the other so that some splitting occurs, but the intersections promote the plot of each so that continuity eventually emerges on a psychic level from the “weave of relations” (Arroyas 89; translation mine) as Nadia “projects her identity features onto her character” (Boisclair 99; translation mine) in her attempt to find the origin of her own traumatic perception and create an empathic dialogue in Laubian terms. The oscillation between framing and framed narratives evokes the elaboration on thematic and harmonic patterns of the sonata form, each text advancing the overall exploration of the argument, namely the search for the origin of Nadia’s life

music. Even the names Nadia gives to each text prove that she begins from her anguished music and wishes to end up with a more tempered, classic form of music. This somehow reflects the impact that revelations à la D. W. Winnicott’s “Fear of Breakdown” could make, namely the realization that one may live peacefully once the original trauma related to inappropriate mirroring, or to a Greenian emotionally absent mother, for instance, has been integrated as past.

Amply discussed by Nadia, the qualifier of the notebook refers to a musical style—“*scordatura* means mistuning, discordance” and “facilitate[s] the playing of unwieldy intervals” that can even prove “uncanny” (ID 27). The notebook thus records the dissonant incidents that have marked not only her character’s life, but also her parents’ and her own, calling to mind generational trauma. Her protagonist’s and her own mistuning obviously relates to the psychically dead or absent mother. Besides mistuning, the verb *scordare* also means “to forget” so that the framing narrative evokes the traumas the author has attempted to doom to oblivion, though rehearsing them repeatedly in her own life. As she witnesses her character’s traumas and predicament, she slowly unearths her own, allowing them to emerge from oblivion and to touch her, thus proving D. W. Winnicott’s theory that the breakdown has already happened. Reflecting and feeding “The Scordatura Notebook,” the second narrative, Nadia’s novel entitled “The Resurrection Sonata,” evokes Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber’s *Resurrection Sonata*, “the most unearthly, the most inhuman *scordatura* in the history of the violin” (ID 28). As such, the framed narrative serves, by reversed role, as the master score for the dissonant music that “The Scordatura Notebook” attempts to recall. The novel Nadia writes indeed brings into play a historical figure whose life music sounded so discordant that replaying it through rewriting enables Nadia to appraise her own mistuned life score, long repressed for want of a second self, an other, to witness her life and weep the death at birth of her twin brother Nathan. Revisiting her dissonant past through her writing and her reflections, Nadia reveals both the compulsion to court death and fear of it while needing mirroring or witnessing.

Reflecting the protagonists’ problematics in both framing and framed narratives, the names afford symbolic meanings that cannot be overlooked. Rather than a positive muse, the daemon drags Nadia into darkness, encouraging her to change her name from Nadia—after the Russian *Nadezhda* that means “hope” (Hanks and Hodges 245)—to Nada—the Spanish word for “nothing.” By changing her name to Nada, Nadia shifts her perspective from hope to nihilism under the encouragement of her compulsion to death, suiting Green’s theory of the dead mother’s impact or Freud’s theory of the death instinct, as Laub understands it.⁴ This modification stems from Nadia’s depression over the death at birth of her twin brother Nathan, whose name in Hebrew means “God has given.” As religious ceremonies governing Jewish burials start with “God has given; God has taken” to mark the beginning and end of life, Nadia’s change of name alludes to the second parameter, announcing that without her brother

as witness to her life she amounts to nothing, owing to non-existent mirroring or dialogic context. In that respect, God might well have taken her too and reduced her to nothing. Likewise, Barbe, a feminine name going back to the Greek *barbaros*, which means “foreign,” refers to a “foreign woman” (Brewer 49), an appropriate counterpart to Nada. As a foreign element wherever she lived, Barbe amounts to nothing because no one has taken her in, no one has granted her the right to be/long⁵; not nurtured by loving eyes empowering her, she too remains unconnected as the etymology of the word “foreign” asserts. In addition, her brother Barnabé dons a name that signifies “son of consolation” (Hanks and Hodges 35). The twin that grants comfort, the way Nadia wishes her twin could have done had he not died at birth, he plays the part of Clare’s Winnicott’s “other,” or Laub’s and Poland’s witness. Had he lived, Nathan could have granted Nadia reality by witnessing her life and mirroring it in Winnicottian or Laubian fashion. Interestingly enough, when she has spent enough time binding her wounds up by reflecting Barbe’s traumas against hers, Nadia marks her willingness not to attack links in a Bionian sense any longer through her name. She signals her altered perception by reinserting the “i” in her name. The “i” of course refers to double agency: I, first-person pronoun, actually exists, and as an “eye” beholding scenes, the “I” no longer negates life, but participates in it actively and by virtue of the other letters around it turns to the future with evident hope. Having sublimated her need for a brother as a witness to her own life, she can be both herself and the other, or benefit from a Laubian internal witness, reuniting the positive and negative visions of herself. As in any Bildungsroman, where the Doppelgänger must die in order to let the protagonist live, Nadia can exist as one and the other, complete, so that she musters the courage to tell off her daemon and regain her independence.

The novel’s onset typifies Nadia’s approach in that it illustrates more than one psychoanalytical theory:

Late this summer. I note this.

But add—I’ve never given a flying fuck about nature, never collected leaves, not even as a child, not even pebbles. I don’t care whether it’s spring or winter; the miracle of life doesn’t touch me—life budding, evolving, exploding, changing, buds swelling sexily and bursting into bloom—all of this leaves me cold (though I’m not a cold woman—not frigid—not at all). (ID 11)

From the beginning, Nadia attacks links with an entry that consists of a fragment juxtaposed with a simple sentence “I note this” that alerts the readers to an unusual instance of observation. The paragraph break after the non-referential demonstrative contributes to Bionian disconnection, amplified by the absent subject and contrastive coordinator “but.” The text announces an addition

cut off with a dash preceding a marked, not to say violent, disinterest in nature and its wealth enhanced with the repeated adverbs "never" and "not even." By virtue of the parallel structures, the narrator draws a parallel between "child" and "pebbles," marking an inaptitude for bonding, an association between the human and the hard or cold, as if to illustrate the theories of Green. Even the use of polysyndetic coordination in "spring *or* fall *or* winter" reinforced by the negation of the verb "care" stresses the absence of "summer," the fire of life. This absence relates to the Bionian lack of human connection prevalent in the phrase "the miracle of life doesn't touch me" that shouts the original hurt through the Freudian negation caused by the lack of holding in infancy, signalling distrust of life, which the subsequent enumeration between dashes highlights.⁶ The gerund used for all the characteristics of natural life (budding, evolving, exploding...) marks intellectual awareness of the action in process rather than emotional perception of it prevented by the environmental failure in infancy, therefore highlighting the intellectualizing defences witnessed by D. W. Winnicott and Green. Confirming their theories, the phrase "all of this leaves me cold" shows how Nadia favours freezing emotions to letting nature rekindle her. The bracketed subclause that follows, like other bracketed passages in the novel, contains a striking pronouncement. The association of the idiom "this leaves me cold" with frigidity or rather its reverse raises a question with respect to Nadia's ability to experience profound emotions rather than physical sensations, the more so as in a further parenthesis she revels in megalomaniac fantasy of witnessing all the male organs she has encountered.

Allegedly relegated to a secondary position by virtue of their typographical presentation, parenthetical statements in *Instruments of Darkness* weigh more by inverted power, gesturing towards the core of the problem, towards some truth related to Laubian blanks in experience. Shortly after this first parenthetical subclause, Nadia relishes in her hatred of nature and notes that "Hatred is one of my sweet pulsating inner specialties, in my heart is an entire university that teaches nothing but hatred, offers graduate seminars in hatred, distributes Ph.D.'s in hatred" (ID 11). The comma splice in the sentence evidences the blur of boundaries caused by a lack of holding in infancy, preventing slow assimilation of the barrier between the self and the environment, itself amplified with the violent asyndetic succession of actions related to hatred. A striking occurrence of parenthetical information appears again after a one-sentence paragraph made up of four words of omnipotent delusion, namely, "I am the namer" (ID 12). Far from negligible, the information of the parenthetical paragraph deals with Nadia's paradoxical courting omnipotence and annihilation:

(Myself also I have named, or renamed. My parents called me Nadia and when it became clear to me that "I" did not exist, I cut it out. Now my name, pen name, pet name, only remaining name, is Nada. Nothingness. The initial N delights me. A nineteenth-century French author once wrote that this phoneme was particularly apt for expressing ideas of

negation, annihilation and nothingness, and I tend to think—*Nil Nul Nix Niet*—that he was right. His own name was Nodier.) (ID 12)

Like the previous four-word paragraph, this one starts with a focus on the omnipotent “I” as both subject and object; in addition, with its deviation from the normal syntactic order, the first anastrophe imbues the object with as much importance as the omnipotent naming subject.⁷ Implicitly the emphasis summons D. W. Winnicott’s theory of the mirror role by inversion; as if trying to compensate for the omnipotence she could not feel as an infant, owing to her mother’s disconnection from her, she plays the part of both subject and object in her narcissistic relational mode. In her fight for survival, she marks her response to her parents’ non-mirroring role by using the ambiguous verb “to call” to refer to their naming her but also to their luring her towards their relational mode that erased her. She plunges into what she has internalized from their lack of holding and their death-courting incentive by taking out the “I” in her name, a symbolic obliteration also recalling severance of links, in this case with her own self. Since the daughter of a psychically dead mother reproduces the affectionless, depleting relational pattern learnt from the mother (Green) that voids the internal witness (Laub), she erases herself, or excludes herself from life. The result affects all aspects of herself—objective, professional, emotional, foundational—as signalled by the enumeration of sorts of names conveying her sense of estrangement and dissolution, reflected by the quintessential negation of existence in Spanish, “Nada,” followed by the equally nullifying one-word fragment translating its reality.⁸ In its separated reality proving that she courts death, the fragment isolates her in Bionian fashion or merely reproduces the deprivation of vitality generated by the mother’s tonelessness, thereby acknowledging a disappointment by virtue of the negation. Her reflection regarding the pleasure in her name’s initial letter raises questions, for though lost among the alphabet soup, it presides over nouns, producers of meanings, namers of beings, objects, substances, ideas and actions.⁹ Even the protagonist’s lengthy rationalization based on Charles Nodier’s comment with her quick succession of contracted, colloquial, emphatic negations in Latin, English, German, French and Dutch evokes grandiloquence, rather than the negation evoking obliteration. Besides, as Freud argues, negations distance the subject from a reality difficult to stomach. With an inanimate mother reflecting her own lack of life in her mirror role, Nadia fears embracing life, courts either the void, or the black of depression. Green’s discussion of the black and white destructive anxiety originating in a mother/daughter relationship that brings about object loss calls to mind the pre-digital photographic process in which the positive print inverts the negative. In addition the letter N evokes depression as Green’s original French phrasing—“le noir sinistre de la dépression” (“La mère morte” 252)—associates the letter and the psychic state.

Nadia’s erasure of her “I” belies her desire for omnipotence that she seeks through the pact she makes with the daemon. It however signals the avoidance of emotional entanglement resulting from her mother’s relationship to her. Green and Laub would posit that the pact with the daemon replicates the alliance with the “dead mother,” that is, an object relation that denies her life by not attributing any meaning to her. As non-existence consists of the most vivid experience, the ego searches for it in all object relations (as Green claims). Exemplifying that relational mode in all her dealings with other beings, Nadia multiplies sexual encounters yielding sterile pleasure, if not libertine pursuits; in case of pregnancy, she cuts ties in a Bionian fashion before they can even infiltrate her mind by aborting immediately, with a lack of emotion echoing Green’s syndrome of the dead mother or Laub’s use of Freud’s death instinct. Indeed double fragments—“A tiny distress; finished” (ID 14)—characterize both the severance and the minimal emotional impact of abortion resulting from Nadia’s need to avoid establishing bonds with others and to court death. Connection can only exist with the daemon, “the disincarnate voice who gives [her] access to the beyond, the otherworld, the underworld” (ID 14), another substitute for the dead mother with whom she can flow without resistance across the boundaries of time and space, the source of superiority that cancels out the obliterated self from infancy neglect.

In an attempt to come to terms with her own losses (the death of her twin brother and parental neglect), she confronts the experiences at a remove by using the powers of the daemon to visit the site of a past infancy trauma, thereby engaging in scripto-therapeutic (Henke xiii) practice. Her description of the traumatic birth of Barbe and Barnabé Durand consists in a juxtaposition of whirling images and feelings (ID 17–18), showing how at times of crisis, boundaries blur. Paragraph-long sentences of twenty lines convey the chaotic perception of time and space in a stream of consciousness whose focalizer remains undetermined but allows the readers, and therefore the fictional writer, to experience the trauma as if on the spot by biblio- or scripto-therapeutic involvement. When the priest woken up in the middle of a sexual dream starts sprinkling holy water while presiding over the death of the mother, the narrative typographically and contextually evidences such disconnection as to warrant relational development of the sort discussed by Bion, D. W. Winnicott and Green:

...he [the priest] absent-mindedly begins to sprinkle water on the fetus the old-woman has withdrawn from the cadaver, *In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti*—when, suddenly and in unison, the women utter a cry of surprise

it is not a child, no:

it is *two* children! Two of them, embraced, entwined, their limbs affectionately mingled in a tight hug—this is why the mother had been unable to expel them through the natural passage, this is why their mother is dead. (ID 20)

With the attendant women shocked by the death of a friend and the priest still engrossed in sexual imagery, the birth of the twins takes place in an internalized world, cut off from all else, just as the dislocation of the internalized and disembodied voice/s on the page visually signify. The description of the twins' intermingled limbs presented in opposition to the mother and the syntactic overflow connecting their entanglement to her death evoke the feelings of guilt that Nadia may have experienced as the surviving twin delivered by a psychically dead mother as well as her desire for a symbiotic relationship with a twin and her courting destruction. The layout of the text alludes to the traumatic impact of death-bringing delivery, a literal transposition of the psychic maternal death experienced by Nadia. The internalized phrase "it is not a child, no" somehow deobjectifies the child/ren by negation, the more so as the priest's missing his target in the first section of the quotation physically signals the emotional death of the fetus. The sentence "it is *two* children" grammatically announces the singularity of the twosome and the doubleness of the singular; both unique (it) and double (two), the children undergo identity confusion affecting perceptions of alterity, causing an oscillating play between engagement and indifference, desire for connection and rejection, deriving from the psychically dead mother. Negation, absence, and its representation whirl in the mind of a "dead mother's" daughter forever struggling to define her existence or non-existence.

Visualizing the disentanglement of the twins and the caul on the girl's head to write her novel must have helped Nadia internalize her own survival. Unsurprisingly, in the chapter that follows the birth of Barbe and Barnabé, Nadia reflects on "the other," her need for doubleness, her mistuning, her desire to understand her mother and most particularly her mother's near-death in one of her multiple abortions, which she witnessed from the adjoining room. Proof that her researching for, and writing, the novel partakes of scripto-therapy, Nadia subsequently wonders about her existential approach: "But *why* is it that everything is always fading, withering, dying, falling away from me, away from me—*why* all this loss, this perpetual relentless, incontrovertible-despite-all-evidence-to-the-contrary loss?" (ID 51). Rendered particularly poignant through the emphatic wording and typography, the question and its rephrasing clarify Nadia's psychic state. Though a successful writer, Nadia fears breakdown and links it to death. In particular, the piled gerunds semantically signalling death and underscored by the use of the adverb *always* convey the overwhelming attraction to death as do the juxtaposed adjectives in the balanced rephrasing of the question. Summing up her tendency to gloom life

by repeatedly looking for signs of impending deterioration or downfall in any situation, the questions evidence the death-bringing pull of the past that constantly causes her to feel death in life while fearing it as a future challenge though it belongs to the past.

Nadia expresses her fear of dissolution with statements that impart the analytical process. “I don’t know how to write about this. It’s only now that it has started swelling like floodwater inside of me, threatening my defences” (ID 30), she writes when thinking of her mother’s past abortions and present disconnection, both death inducing. Negated knowledge corresponds to rejection of it. However, though she fears regression, she seeks it, as her writing project evidences, calling to mind Laub’s theory. Her tackling, or rather imagining, with Marthe Durand’s deterioration and death allows her to recall her mother’s screams and gasping sighs in the middle of the abortions witnessed from the adjacent room, while understanding the death wish in the love songs her mother used to rehearse. Even though she tries to comfort herself as an adult would do with a child—“It’s over now, over, over, finished, there is nothing more to fear. I am a fearless woman now” (ID 31)—her wording proves that ahead lies a long process; the negation with *nothing*—her synonym—shows that she has barely started her engagement with the past, that she has not resolved her issues, that she has not yet deepened her awareness and still lives in fear.

Nadia’s script indeed evidences that she still disconnects from others because the pull of death engendered by the poor mirroring effected by her psychically lifeless mother makes her live in fear of what she has already experienced as if it lies ahead. Her reflections on the need of a double clarify her approach:

How live without a Witness?

Not only Per my once-husband, but Sol, Jonas, Juan, every man with whom I have lived or been in love, to say nothing of all my “best friends” in school and college and young adulthood, my men and women soulmates over nearly half a century of existence—each of these people in turn has been my Witness, as I have been theirs...

But there was always some little thing. Some shortcoming, blind spot, failing in the other person that disqualified him or her for absolute Witness status. Always a *soupçon* of reserve, of withholding. (ID 128–29)

Nadia’s desire for an “other” to witness her life evokes the need for self-definition and self-strengthening, for the combination of intra-psychic and inter-subjective interaction while the destructive tendency causes the connection

to break. The combination of asyndetic and polysyndetic juxtaposition shows her need of disconnection and connection at once, the former to repeat the parental attacks on links, the latter to compensate for the lack of infancy mirroring. Though a lifelong pattern, as the polysyndeton stresses forcefully, the presence of an individual witness at any one time in Nadia's life shows how she needs to establish a meaningful connection with one being at a time as an infant does with the mother. The source of disqualification semantically implies by the conjunction *but* introduces a contrast that goes back to death as a source of dissatisfaction with respect to the desire for an absolute source of reflection, itself leading to withdrawing from connection as the two final fragments allude to both syntactically and semantically. The fear of breakdown probably underlies the cyclical pattern that the passage informs.

In retracing the source of her existential malaise through both self-examination and research for the novel that re-enacts her own life at a remove in body, time, and place, Nadia substantiates her fear of death and breakdown as well as the grounds for her distancing from others. While outlining the reasons for her parents' deficient rearing, for instance, she voices her psychic exhaustion and the threat posed by solicitude:

Oh I'm so tired of it all, so tired of understanding.

I *cannot* care, there is no logical reasonable way to care, I have to say nothing matters because if I allow one tiny speck of human reality to matter it drags with it the endless litany of suffering, bodies tortured, blasted, raped, stabbed, electrocuted, gnawed to the bone by illness, minds devouring themselves alive, newborn babies with AIDS left lying naked on their backs in the icy void of the outside world ... (ID 157–58)

The emotional phrasing of exhaustion attests to the burden of functioning as a surrogate mother for siblings in search of parental approval as well as to the emotional strain growing from the constant fear of collapse. Interestingly, the use of *understanding* addresses Nadia's defence mechanism, for it translates an emotional disposition—tolerant acceptance—into an intellectual pursuit. The emphasis on the negated modal thereafter harps on Freud's comments on negation. Semantically notifying inability though purporting unwillingness, the modal in its negated form speaks of the desire to excise consideration from the ego, for it depletes energy due to lack of reciprocation rather than allowing perception of the self and other. The intransitive use of the verb *to care* places the statement on the affective level, enhanced by the syntactic overflow that the comma splices mark. Switching between the emotional, the intellectual, and the obligatory in a manner informing defensive modes spilling out to all levels, the succession of negated statements alerts the readers to rejection, though they also signal a lifelong affliction drawing towards death to court, and identify

with, the psychically dead mother. The use of the word *litany* also reinforces the idea of courting, because apart from the prolonged tedious enumeration of suffering, it also conjures up invocation or supplication, proving that in spite of her striving after liveliness, part of her longs for death, for the near-death in which her mother dwelt.

Thanks to the alternation of the two narratives, Nadia can advance in her own life story and understand the predicaments that have shaped her. At one stage, she starts reacting to the daemon and asking him “Why are you forcing me to write about lives smothered in mud and blood and viscerae, blind violence, bloody orbs?” (ID 217). Showing an awareness of her death-courting approach, the question gestures towards relinquishing it. The question’s phrasing with its opposing forms of juxtaposition highlights the impact of trauma, all invasive and weighty as marked by the polysyndeton (mud *and* blood *and* viscerae) and brutal as marked by the asyndeton (lives smothered, blind violence, bloody orbs). The obstacles paving the process emerge through dreams in which, she explains, “I’m always trying to leave and something is always stopping me” (ID 231). The repeated adverb *always* signifies the constant and repetitive impact of traumatic experience, while the present continuous reveals the ongoing, ever-present character of the attempts and their failure. Part of her blockage appears as she raises the issue of her first aborted fetus, whose power lies in his absence, as Sabbatini notes. Addressing her aborted fetuses as dead beetles, Nadia denies the loss. The analogy with an element of nature, for which she reiterates her hatred at various stages in the narrative, forces reflection on defence mechanisms that cause her to minimize what hurts her. Yet the novel shows her willingness to address her *angle mort* (blind spot),¹⁰ her black hole precisely because she chooses to write the life story of a woman inscribed in death from the start. She even comments on the connection by wondering, “How can I care about Barbe’s dead baby if I don’t care about my own?” (ID 237). Slowly she relives her own story through the silent dialogue she has entertained with Barbe by witnessing her life also informed by death; when visualizing Barbe’s delivery of a stillborn infant in excruciating pain, she faces her psychic suffering at repeated losses, recreating her own inner witness. Eventually, thanks to the alternation between the distancing inscription of Barbe’s predicament and her own reflections on life that allow her to differentiate between herself and others, she draws towards the resolution of her blockage regarding procreation, both her mother’s and her own, and manages to mourn her dead fetus by inscribing “Words I have never committed to paper before, outside of novels. My son” (ID 239).

The dream Nadia remembers at that stage and agrees to engage with leads to the unmistakably heart-wrenching admission of the loss:

It’s been so long since you came to see me. You used to come, my darling, my tiny baby boy, my Tom Thumb. You would come and visit

me at night, it would be raining in my dreams, always pouring rain, and you would be at the window, shivering, tiny boy, drenched to the bone, knocking desperately on the glass, "Mother! Mother! Let me in! Please! I'm freezing to death! Mother, please let me in!" Over and over. I could hear you but I could not go to you. *Could not allow you to enter my life, enter human history, have a story of your own.* Darling. Your words are chiselled into my heart. I'd wake up with a shout, the blood pounding into my heart. ...

I've never stopped hearing these words. I'm trembling as I write this. And yet, secretly, I yearned for the nightmare to return, because at least it let me see you... (ID 239)

Inscribing the wound indirectly, the first statement with its emphatic adverb *so long* substantiates the importance of the repression, for even when the unconscious can play in total freedom, the mind refuses to retain her dreams. The piling up of endearing terms in the second sentence underscores not only the importance of the connection albeit to a dead fetus, but also the double access into the unconscious, for both dreams and fairy tales work towards the relaxation of inhibitions. The reference to "Tom Thumb" shows how Nadia has navigated the moral conflict and loss incurred when aborting. Disguising the dilemma of abortion through fairy tale analogy, Nadia reflects on Tom Thumb and its related figures as "the popular symbolization of all the little fetuses peasant women rid themselves of before they were ripe, and who returned to haunt them, taking up lodging in their pockets and following them everywhere they went" (ID 281). The imagery of the night visits has a Romantic quality as the weather evokes the turmoil caused by the loss, somehow reiterated by the deadly temperature of the body. The fragment in "Over and over" shows the obsessive nature of traumatic re-experiencing relegated to the unconscious. The italicized fragment reflects both disconnection from the self and inability to face and mourn the loss; refusing to give it substance through naming and scripting, the self-denied recognition of its own wound, evidencing distancing strategies pertaining to survivors of trauma. The next endearing apostrophe shows the centrality of erased emotions, evoking the paradox between wanting and not wanting to witness the truth. Entering the pockets of the psyche, obsessive recall hounds and haunts, leaves an indelible imprint, as the use of the words *chiselled* and *pounding* prove, just as the passive and intransitive verbs address the trauma-induced loss of agency. The last quoted paragraph reiterates the ever-present disquiet and discord. The tremor of recognition and the admission of the desire to face the secret pave their way in syntax not fearing to name either subject or object, in short taking all the terms of the traumatic equation and exposing its reality as well as the distinction between self and other.

No longer fearing the secret, Nadia reflects that "All these imaginary entities thrive and throb within us, act upon us, influence our moods and our behaviour ... *Les morts sont les invisibles, mais ils ne sont pas les absents* ..." (ID 266; original ellipses and French quotation from Victor Hugo). Integrating that psychoanalytic truth, she adds, "One need not *be* matter to matter. You matter a great deal to me, my darling. And I apologize for calling you a beetle" (ID 266), acknowledging the possibility of negotiating recognition. At last, Nadia owns up to the weight of absence. In writing, she not only reviews her research, her thoughts on her book, memories, and dreams but she evokes through her reflections the surprising turns of analysis:

Writing this—much like orgasm—the sensation that something is spilling out of one—and yet just the opposite of loss, depletion—the more it spills, the richer one feels...

Advancing blindly. Such a strange, elusive process. Extreme heat and extreme cold in alternation. The book a bronze statue gradually emerging from writhing garbage. And, in advance, one has only the vaguest notion of the statue's ultimate shape. (ID 203)

Her discussion illustrates both the intensity and the tentativeness of the process, its approach courting death yet awarding life. Syntactic interruptions convey the need to explore, deepen, discover the multifarious, contradictory, and paradoxical facets of the self in the midst of psychoanalytical work towards redemption while fragmentary syntax evokes the tentativeness and choppiness of its recovery. The oscillation of emotions and sensations result from overcoming the fear of collapse and the pull of death, while owning up to the impact of traumatic experience. Interestingly the passage at best defines the human agent as *one*, as if to indicate that the *I* still needs consolidating to recover from the "clean slate" it created decades before for "everything from the past to die" (ID 285), which erased her into the nothingness that named her.

Conclusion

At the time of recognition of past obliteration, Nadia signals to the daemon that she can resist the pull of death: "I sensed that the worst was over, for Barbe and for myself, and that I could handle things from here on" (ID 282). In other words, she manifests her ability to function unaided, without daemonic intervention once she has integrated the damage caused by the absent object's shadow. She even rebels against it, tampering with history to lengthen Barbe's life towards happier ends, therefore granting herself a more balanced future. Contrary to Sardin's conviction that Huston "subverts the historical fact in the name of the freedom of fantasy" (305), the subversion serves the specific purpose of allowing Nadia to play with the "instruments of darkness" and go against them so that her own life can find a less gloomy frame. At the very

end of the novel, she both acknowledges the beauty of children and nature as well as her ability to counteract dissonance by creating her own harmony, by opening her heart to others and looking forward to the future. Thus, thanks to its double narrative that enables reflection and comprehension of destructive psychic habits, *Instruments of Darkness* manages to negotiate recovery from traumas in a rewarding manner thanks to subtle witnessing that encourages autonomy as well as recognition and acceptance of the distinction between self and other. As the historical narrative echoes experiences of the contemporary protagonist, it enables cathectic resolution while the research notes and diary-like entries function as sources of insight that somehow illustrate the theories of D. W. Winnicott, Bion, Freud, Green, Laub and Poland. The mirroring of both scripts and the insights gained from their semantic, syntactic, and structural patterns in the end allows the engulfing, disintegrative experience of nothingness and emptiness resulting from the mother's inability to create meaning in the child-cum-adult by offering proper mirroring and allowing continuity of being to evolve into a containing nothingness that anticipates "positive future fulfilment" (Grotstein 7).

With the insight gained through the alternation of texts, Nadia realizes that she need not give in to the pull of death in response to environmental failure in infancy. Proof of her decision to relinquish her death-courting habit, her change of name from the catastrophic Nada back to the hopeful Nadia shows the ability to look at traumatic experience as a past upon which to build in a more fertile fashion. Nadia conveys the switch by "learning to catch laughter like glittering fish in the running water of language, the flowing river of language" (ID 312), feeling and accepting her twin brother's death rather than perpetrating emotional void. Consigning her creation of the daemon to the text of her past, she reclaims the music of her life, conscious that just as it lapsed "from harmony into dissonance" (ID 314) it may lapse back into harmony. Nadia no longer responds to the threats of the daemon, finally aware that "the truth is neither permanent blazing light nor eternal gloom and doom but flashes of love, beauty and laughter on a seething background of shadow" (ID 315). Integrating both poles of emotions, Nadia benefits from redemptive resilience after having overcome adversity by gaining an inner witness and an aptitude to care for others, fully conscious that "hell and heaven are both here on earth" (ID 314) and that she can tip the scales in one direction or the other. As long as she feels replete, she will create meaning for herself, reject the forces of annihilation, and embrace the forces of redemption.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Emanuel Berman and Dana Amir for their insightful suggestions.
2. Hereafter cited within the text as ID.
3. Incidentally, allusions to fairy tales abound in *Instruments of Darkness*, throwing light on the depth of unconscious relations.

4. In this respect, the daemon vocally represents the compulsion to death linked to the theories of Green or Laub (“Truth” and “Traumatic Shutdown”) rather than functioning as a fantastic being or, referring to Jackson’s discussion of subversive fantasy, as the product of unconscious fear or rejected qualities and feelings (in Brownlie’s “Translation and the Fantastic”).
5. Intended dual meaning.
6. As Freud would contend, the negative statement actually implies the reverse that the speaker cannot face, for as an alien experience to the daughter of a “dead mother” it poses the threat of not reproducing the maternal deadness she seeks.
7. An anastrophe characterizes a turn of phrase that deviates from the natural order, laying emphasis on the displaced. In this case, the displacement amplifies the feeling of omnipotence.
8. Grotstein opposes nothingness and meaninglessness, the former linked to the black hole of experience, the latter to the loss of meaning generated by lack of maternal projective identification or lack of attachment.
9. This very analogy emanates from the French “nom” designating both a “name” and “noun.”
10. The French idiom for a blind spot proves particularly adequate in that its reference to the lethal dangers of defective vision characterizes Nadia’s inability to see what kills her psyche.

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