

Remembering Howard Shevrin

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I

I met Howard Shevrin for the first time at the end of October 2010.¹ He had been assigned to teach a *Seminar on Research in Psychoanalysis* for the Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute program, and I was part of the small group of candidates attending it. My first impression was a combination of physical pleasure and intellectual delight. Professor Shevrin was a warm and strong presence and, at the same time, I felt something that I had experienced only once before while attending Borges' lectures: an almost surreal feeling of witnessing a rich and trained mind functioning in front of me, developing his reasoning just before my eyes, and reaching me through his words. In addition, and as Borges used to say "certainly, there is nothing in the universe that does not serve as a stimulus to thought", in Prof. Shevrin's seminar there was no small topic to talk about although he did not seem to like *small talk*. During the meetings, we commented the television series "In Treatment"; he recommended us to watch Mike Leigh's movie *Happy Go Lucky* with the actress Sally Hawkins, and he talked extensively about his love

¹ Dr Shevrin, and his wife Aliza, gave me a ride back and forth to the Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute in Farmington Hills in occasion of a talk, and dinner, with Dr. Harold Blum, a dear friend of the Shevrins, and also a recipient of the prestigious Sigourney Award. When I was pondering about being trained as a clinical analyst, Dr. Shevrin met with me twice at his University of Michigan's lab. His honest and wise advise was precious to me on those encounters.

for music and poetry.² Also, as in Borges, there was a lot of humor, not only in Shevrin's funny remarks in class but also in his writing. Although the ideas and arguments presented in our first reading assignment, "Is Psychoanalysis One Science, Two Sciences, or No Science at All? A Discourse Among Friendly Antagonists", were *well over my head*, I enjoyed the well-crafted essay in the form of *a literary salon* chaired by Dr. di Sapienza surrounded by Dr. Case, Dr. Sample and Dr. Link (Shevrin's self-acknowledged mask).³ All of them perfectly characterized by their names and whose beliefs will be made explicit during their individual presentations. Some statements, in *a sort of Samuel Beckett style*, made me laugh loudly.⁴ For example, Dr. Case's mention of Edelson's remark about "the turkey who comes to believe that 364 days of well-fed contentment is a guarantee of immortality" (966) or when Dr. Case, after Dr. Link's explanation, says "As I listened to your exposition of these experiments, and I know that you cannot do them full justice, I must confess I am reminded of those complicated Robe Goldberg devices for opening a door when all you have to do is turn the knob" (981).

II

While going through the materials for this article, I ran into "A Return of the Repressed from the Topeka Menninger Foundation Days" (2007), and it caught my attention, mainly because of its autobiographical references. Shevrin starts like this:

In looking through my papers and notes bearing on some of my early experiments on subliminal perception done at The Menninger Foundation when it was still in

² See references to him writing poetry in "A Discussion with Howard Shevrin", *Fondation AGALMA*, September 18, 2011 (UTube).

³ In "Amagansett Revisited", Shevrin writes "For this reason /.../ *I argued behind my Dr. Link mask...*" (1038).

⁴ Shevrin himself uses Samuel Beckett to describe, in the words of Di Sapienza, his own, and his group, work. She says, "What Dr. Link's basic psychoanalytic scientists will do is beyond me. I doubt whether they will have anyone to talk to, perhaps their fate is to talk to themselves and, *like Beckett's Krapp*, obsess over their pretty results with increasing despair" (983, my emphasis).

its original Topeka home, I came across a clinical-experimental study of a patient that marked the beginning of what would later become at Michigan a full-dress investigation of the brain processes involved in repression. At first, I treated the paper and notes I found as draft that had never been published. In fact, after writing the first draft of the present paper on the supposition that the experiment had never been published and as I was preparing the references, to my astonishment I discovered that it had been published in the *Menninger Bulletin* in 1971 not long after the experiment had been conducted. All of this I had forgotten. (241)

Three pages later, after recounting the experiment and his initial discoveries, Shevrin comes back to his “own repressive defenses” (249) and reflects on his *own psychopathology* by exploring “the relationship between a delayed, subterranean scientific insight and my own personal circumstances at the time” (250). After explaining those circumstances-- the end of his analysis and his plans of leaving Menninger-- Shevrin establishes a parallelism between his own, and his patient’s life, at that moment:

My subject and I were at different ends of the treatment process--she at the beginning, and I near the end-. She was struggling to restore her forgetting in the face of her own desire and her therapist’s invitation (implicit or explicit) to remember--to sort out what was real from what became ‘real’ once repressed /.../ I was struggling to sort out and close the psychic ledger on a difficult soul-wrenching, and helpful analysis, while trying to work through what it meant to end my analysis as well as many years at Menninger. In fact, I left Menninger in 1973, some three years after we brought the analysis to a close, ending a nineteen - year stay” (250).⁵

In this personal exploration of memories, losses, and forgetting Shevrin comes back to the present—2007—a year of new changes and losses in his life, dealing now with his retirement. “Again, my research activity may be serving to repress the full emotional impact of my profound sense of loss--then, in completing my analysis and now, in ceasing to see patients” (249). And he adds, in a more emotional tone: “Perhaps this new edition of an old conflict may have motivated my seeking out the notes of this insightful patient of many years ago so that I could once again

⁵ In the novel we will see echoes of this situation in the analysis of Emily by Paul Dreyfus.

experience the excitement and wonder at the fragile humanity in each of us that struggles with mind and heart to stay afloat, and perhaps even learn a little as a scientist at the same time”

(251).

III

A.B.: What in your mind fundamentally defines psychoanalysis?

H.S.: The first thing is Freud’s great creation of a new method. It was new in a very simple way: the patients had to say anything that came to their minds. As simple as that sounds, this opened the door to people telling analysts, starting with Freud, about things that they would not or almost never tell other people. Not simply about their sexual lives or their unhappiness, but also dreams, fantasies, memories, perceptions, feelings, there was nothing that the method said you can’t talk about. /.../

The only other field in human experience I can think of that does the same thing, only certainly not in the same way, is *good literature*. *When the novelist writes a novel, he’s telling you about his characters, dreams, fantasies, desires and wishes, and that’s part of the pleasure and entertainment and actually education in reading a great novel or seeing a great play*. Freud indeed clearly stated his indebtedness to artists, much more so than to psychiatrists or psychologists who ended up having tunnel vision.

“Conversation with Howard Shevrin (II), Ann Arbor, June 17th 2005” by Ariane Bazan (248, my emphasis).

The article quoted in the previous section, and the epigraph from Shevrin’s interview in this one, intend to make the transition between my recollection of his seminar, and my reading of his novel in verse, *The Dream Interpreters* (2003), that I will analyze next. As one of the reviewers stated, this is a novel composed by several layers. One is the *autobiographical layer* that has to do with Shevrin’s own experience at the *Menninger Foundation* in Topeka, Kansas, represented in the novel as “a large psychiatric institution located in an eastern Tennessee city during the sixties” (xix).⁶ The novel’s second layer, what another critic called a *roman à clef*, is the one in

⁶ In “Conversation I” with Bazan, Shevrin explains, “Mainly I was looking for a teaching job, but the fellowship [at Menninger] would pay me more money than I was earning then. It didn’t appeal to me to go out to Kansas, to live in the Midwest /.../And Aliza [his wife] wasn’t

which the reader finds an intriguing depiction of real life people, disguised as literary characters. In that sense, Richard M. Waugaman, in his review of the book, writes “Paul Dreyfus, who is one of the candidates in a training analysis, shares some similarities with Shevrin. Both do research. Both are masterful in their use of language” (1422). Shevrin himself, in “A Note to my Psychoanalytic Colleagues and My Patients”, anticipates some *detective search* on the part of the readers by saying,

In the unlikely event that some might think they catch a glimpse of themselves in these pages, let them think of it as looking into a fun house distorting mirror. The image belongs to the mirror and its inventor and not to the world of objective truth. But like all fictional creations, they are shaped as they are in order to carry forward the meaning and purpose of the work, that, like all fiction, seeks to bring into being its own version of truth. (xv)

The third layer of the novel (the *only one* that matters, according to its author) is *psychoanalysis*. In the *Foreword* Shevrin writes, “If there is a hero or heroine (some might say villain) in this novel, *it is psychoanalysis Itself*. This is not to say that this novel is not about people and their various plights. *Each of the characters is involved, as patient or analyst, in a psychoanalysis*”. And he continues “... the movement of the novel, as it progresses through a succession of hours and shifts from analysis to analysis, *is intended to reveal the inner pulse, the rising and falling tides of a psychoanalysis /.../ The true events of the novel are the psychoanalyses in progress*” (xi my emphasis). In this extremely helpful introduction to his novel, Shevrin also explains why he chose verse instead of prose: “Psychoanalytic discourse is like none other /.../ It is to ordinary

altogether excited about going out there, we were big city New York people” (234). But they ended there in 1954 and stayed until 1973, a period of time during which Shevrin did research, academic work and was trained as an analyst. He graduated in 1969 and moved four years later to University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. In the same conversation Shevrin briefly comments why he left the Menninger Foundation, “I was beginning to feel that the Menninger Foundation had a number of institutional problems mainly having to do that it was run by a family. The old people died, and the sons I didn’t think were of the same quality as the older generation. I didn’t think the place had a real future—at least not for me. I started looking around” (239).

discourse as metaphor is to prosaic speech. /.../ there is the beat itself, the pulse, the undercurrent of organic vitality stirring in us the mute recognition that a life is at stake, that this is a *living* theater in which a repetition of the same plot is the undesired yet inexorable outcome, like a refrain or a chorus in a song. Only verse can do this” (xii). Expanding on this analogy between a psychoanalytic session and a play (that reminds me of the ideas of the Canadian analyst Joyce McDougall), Shevrin mentions the Greek tragedy (as defined by Aristotle) with its three units of time, place and action (“Psychoanalysis religiously observes these unities in the form of a strict succession of hours, setting, and an economy of persons-just two and always the same” -xi).⁷ Last but not least, there is Shevrin’s statement about the *hybridity of psychoanalysis*, “art and science at the same time” (that goes back to the discussion between Dr. di Sapienza, Dr. Case, Dr. Sample and Dr. Link). In addition, as psychoanalysis is not an abstraction but something that takes place in relationship to people, and inside an institution, another layer of meaning to be considered is the *politics of the institution*. In a thought-provoking paper, “Psychoanalytic Power. Its Unique Character and Self-Destructive Effect” (2009), Shevrin explores the two interrelated problems experienced by psychoanalysis, as a practice and as a science.⁸ One consists in the difficulties to maintain standards of training and practice. The other is the lack of agreement to what constitutes the body of knowledge of psychoanalysis (1). Problems derived, according to him, from the way psychoanalysis is organized institutionally and that are connected to “the *unique nature of psychoanalytic power* in psychoanalytic organizations” (3). Shevrin distinguishes two kinds of power: official power and unofficial one, based upon the possession of ‘privileged information on the part of a special group (“training analysts”). He

⁷ In “Theaters of the psyche”, Joyce McDougall writes “...my choice of the theatre, with its plots and players as metaphor for the psychic reality...” (45). See also her book, *Theaters of the Mind*.

⁸ Interestingly enough, Shevrin makes a precision, “In this paper, I will address these two problems in the context of the *American Psychoanalytic Association*” (1, my emphasis).

considers that “this early combustible mixture of privileged information and official power”, starting with Freud, “has resulted in the constant need to reaffirm standards under attack, and to the failure to sustain the scientific evolution of knowledge” (3). On the other hand, those who lack psychoanalytic power are confronted with three alternatives: compliant identification, alienation and revolution. In connection to this, Shevrin points out that psychoanalytic education suffers of some kind of ‘syncretism’ by pursuing two incompatible goals simultaneously: “to both treat and educate the candidate” (5). I have introduced this brief commentary of Shevrin’s article as a necessary detour to understand the power struggles presented in *The Dream Interpreters*. I would like now to defer one more time to the author, and let him explain us what he calls The Argument:

The action in this novel takes place in a large psychiatric institution located in an eastern Tennessee city during the sixties. The place is undergoing an upheaval because a new director of research is being sought. There is a strong internal candidate, Dr. Victor Kleinman, who is a psychoanalyst and gifted theoretician. He is supported by most but not all the psychoanalysts and opposed by most researchers who see him as knowing nothing about research. *The politics surrounding this search weave in and out of the seven psychoanalyses that comprise the main action.* (xix, my emphasis)

IV

H.S.: I was recovering from a war injury in a military hospital in Oxford. I was once in the library, a very nice little hospital library. And I came across this book called *The Interpretation of Dreams* by Freud /.../ As I started to read it my reactions were extreme. I was fascinated and at the same time I was shocked. You might say disbelieving /.../.

A.B.: How old were you at the time?

H.S.: I had just turned 19. When after several months I recovered and it was time to return to my army unit, I went to the library and stole it. People don’t steal books from the library but I did. I felt this is what I’d like to hold on to. I still have it on the shelf of my library at home.

Conversations with Howard Shevrin I, Ann Arbor, December 8th, 2004 (230).

Shevrin's fascination with dreams leads us to the title of his novel, *The Dream Interpreters*. In the novel, divided into seven sections, each composed by seven sessions, patients provide plenty of dreams, interpreted by the analyst and enriched by associations from the dreamer.⁹ The novel starts with the dyad Paul Dreyfus (a candidate in training) and Emily (his first control case) and ends with a termination case, that of Donald Prescott and his analyst Paula Veroff. Just in the middle of the novel is Serey's analysis with Greta, Kurt's wife. The other dyads are Dreyfus' wife Francis and Victor Kleiman; Victor's wife Marlana in analysis with Dr. Freeman; the German doctors Kurt and Victor analyzing each other, and Paul Dreyfus in analysis with the French analyst Dr. Fouchault.¹⁰

In *Section One, Paul Dreyfus and Emily*, she brings this dream, "I had this dream last night. So many dreams since starting here! I was hiding in a tree, feeling the leaves tickle my face, looking down at a rabbit munching on lettuce. Then there were many rabbits, large and small, racing around. It became exciting. The tree started to shake like in a storm. Rain began whipping my cheeks, my body-and then I woke up all sweaty, frightened" (6). A distinctive characteristic of this section is the frequent references to popular culture: Emily associates her dream with the Spanish film *The Hunt* (1965) by Carlos Saura; her perfume makes Paul think of a line in a song "the sweet smell of hate" or, while waiting for her, Paul associates silence with John Wayne who 'made a career of that' (20). Later on, and after references to a park from the past where Emily saw, for the first time, a couple copulating, she brings a second dream that includes Paul.

⁹ "Why seven? Maybe the week of the Creation story, with no day of rest" (1420), Waugaman

¹⁰ "One wonders about Shevrin's inclusion of Foucault [sic] no first name, among these characters. One might speculate that Shevrin uses this device to draw attention to some metaphoric aspect of the novel. Perhaps by invoking the philosopher Michel Foucault Shevrin is pointing to the shifting nature of power within this small community of psychoanalysts or, more remotely, to the idea of shifting views about the nature of madness" 1026), Sandra Clement Walker.

Through it, he is able to detect her loneliness (Emily humming “Melancholy Baby” and Paul thinking about Robert Burns’ poem, “My heart in the Highlands wherever I go” -35) and, as her transference grows, she shouts, “Not Doctor Dreyfus, no, not Doctor Dreyfus. He’s such a powerful character, so righteous- A man of unassailable integrity. *I even started making up a song: Unassailable, Unavailable You. Didn’t get further than the title though...*” (37 my emphasis). Next, Emily starts reciting *Humpty Dumpty* and *Mother Goose* rhymes, remembering her father reading those books to her while both were sitting in her parents’ bed. Immediately after she confesses her current inability to reach sexual climax in her uncountable sexual encounters. Although there are only two persons in the room, the space is crowded with Emily’s parents, siblings, friends and lovers--even the kids she teaches at school. On Paul’s mind, he is constantly consulting with his analyst, his supervisor, his professor or comparing his analysis with Emily, with his own wife’s analysis. In addition, Paul is dealing with concerns about his current impotence, his tribulations as a candidate in training with aspirations to be a researcher, and his campaign against Victor Kleinman (“Why is he going after his wife’s analyst? Jealousy? Envy? Shame? All of the above” -- 49).

In *Part two, Frances Dreyfus and Victor Kleiman*, in a parallelism with the previous dyad, Frances says: “I am thinking about my husband and how he’s sitting now as you are, not far from here, listening to another woman talk. And she must love him as I love you. But why I should love you, God knows. You’re cruel” (59). A humorous difference resides in the fact that Kleinman is German and sometimes his command of English, not his native language, fails him and makes her laugh. He says: “You enjoy a small laugh at my expense. Such innocent triumphs are acceptable” and she responds: “You know, your English should be much better for an analyst” (89). Frances’ unrequited love to her father pops up early, associated with the need of

performing as a good girl/a good patient and the anxiety of being incompetent. In this section, struggles for power and control are evident, not only inside the analytic room but also in the institute at large, with its politics and conflicts that interfere with individual analysis, mutual trust and boundaries. In a first dream, Frances is hiding under a seat in a train and being stared by people around her. According to her analyst's interpretation, Frances is hiding herself and hiding things from him, even her excitement and running to her mother. Frances accepts the interpretation but corrects, "I would never turn to my mother" (66) and adds, "She was never good to me" (66). Another typical situation is when the analyst announces, at the end of the session, that he won't be there for the next one. When he comes back, Victor asks Frances her fantasies about his trip to California, that she has learned through Serey.¹¹ An image comes then to her mind: "He was the analyst. Not me. She started to laugh as an image floated past her eyes of a gorilla thumping his chest, booming. "Me, analyst! You, Fay Wray patient, small and inadequate!" (73). In opposition to the imagined experiences lived by her analyst during his absence, Frances mentions her horrible week-end (we will learn more about it in Paul's analysis), her rage and her husband's impotence. In a second dream, Frances appears under a more positive light.

I was a diving champion off the high board. Me! I barely know how to swim. It was so exhilarating to leap into space knowing I could fully control my body, shooting into the water like a dart, popping up again smiling like a dolphin. That's how I felt. A thoroughly nice dream for a change. Earlier that day I saw some Olympic highlights—gymnastics actually. This little teenager who wrapped herself around this bar as if she had no bones and I wasn't afraid of the height. And when I came up, breaking the surface, the applause was like a roar waiting for me. For me! I just recalled another part! The judges-They were holding up cards, giving their ratings. You were holding up a ten!" (78).

¹¹ This is the first time that Serey is mentioned, as an elegant, European woman ("all the traveling, her languages, she entertains beautifully" /.../ "She is sophisticated and can hold her own with you" 71)

His interpretation puts together her envy, admiration, identification, and hostility by positioning herself against men, looking down at them while denying her own ambition (86). At the same time a vision of three women (his wife Marlana, his sister Anna and his patient Francis) makes Victor think, “Neurosis is driven by an appalling engine with its own powerful gyroscope. From whatever direction you pushed it neurosis had a way of pushing back” (88). In another session Frances, feeling energetic and young again, compares Victor with Clark Gable whose photo she used to keep with her all the time; remembering that, when alone in the house, she went to her parents’ room where she excited herself to a climax: “It was utter ecstasy /.../Once I’d fall asleep exhausted, clutching the photo to my stomach. My mother once discovered me this way and awoke me” (96), making her feel utterly ashamed. After this memory, Victor mentions her mother again while debating between a triangular or dyadic interpretation (“was it not that mother owned father’s love? Not so, he argued with himself. Not love at all. Rather mother and daughter struggled over father’s manliness. The photo was a phallus attached to the stomach not a sought true image of a male whose love was sought” --97). Instead he tells Marlana: “It is not me or Gable you much want. Not the persons in themselves but what they represent for you-- power/.../ The power to have your own photo and use it to masturbate, to have your own orgasm in father’s bed -the source for you of power-that mother first claim to” (100).

In *Part three: Marlana Kleinman) and Bernard Freeman*, Freeman looking at the birds in the window infuriates his patient who says “My husband and my analyst both ignore my existence” (119). He points out her “bitter resentment hidden toward men sitting in the seat of power who are really unequal to their tasks” (120). She mentions her brother with his *phallic, voyeuristic, probing, powerful telescope* similar to Freeman self-absorption with his birds (121) and remembers “I leaned my head again his cheek, forgetting my wish to peer at the heavens. He was

marvelous” (121) and Freeman’s interpretation: “How nice of you to place my birds among your brother’s stars, yourself at my shoulder looking out the window when you saw me looking up at the cardinal you wanted me to invite you over, not to motion you toward the couch” (121/2). Marlina then falls into ‘pornography’ describing the different ways she makes love with her husband, compared with her analyst’s “quieter nights”. After this heavy sexual interlude, Marlina talks about her husband’s political ambition and her docility towards all the men in her life (father/brother/husband} and says “you are the only man who *listens* for a change” (127). She experiences his place as *an island of sanity for the insane*, “at times I think I am totally mad trying to do so much, so earnestly-papers, presentations, patients, teaching supervision, meetings, house, children, husband. Madness” (127). She then remembers, at 6 years old, her teacher inspecting her hands and saying “What nasty things have you been doing with them lately, Marlina? I wanted desperately to hide. ‘Nasty things! Nasty things kept shouting loud in my ear so that I thought everyone could hear it. What horrid humiliation. Often, I’d play sick in the morning and mother would let me stay in bed.” (131). In the next session: Marlina makes reference to a political gathering at her house the night before and her analyst is able to detect the transference related to the previous one. “He was the corrupting mother joining her in her war against that masculine world, that fake toy kingdom, only mother and she were real and mattered as they cuddled together in bed escaping school and father and brother” (136). More relaxed, Marlina remembers her last night dream. ‘I was swirling, swirling like on a huge carousel. I had to keep my balance. Everyone else was riding a horse or lion. I was trying to find mine but I couldn’t. Then as I almost fell off I lurched backward into a seat and there were you, knitting. I was so angry at you for knitting that I started to push you off the seat and you turned into a post! Which I grabbed” (137-8) and continues “I am full of childish things today-carousels. I can see

what I am doing. Can't you? I'm making you into my mother, Bon-bon" (137-8). And her mind now goes to Serey and how strange she was behaving after having been such a strong model:

In her way, Serey played a key role. She rallied the wives, especially the younger ones, behind Victor and Kurt, lauding them to the skies as their husbands' saviors—in their strong hands the future was strong for psychoanalysis and so were their husband's jobs. No small thing given the huge debts incurred for training in the Institute and for those treatments for wives and children. Like an Escher drawing in which fish turn into birds and back again—patient becomes analyst, analyst patient. And who knew what about whom, where and how provided a cloaked background of uncertainty" (146)¹²

At this point, Marlena explodes saying that she is fed up with all of them, would like to divorce her husband, quit training and treatment, and go to New York to her mother. In the last session Marlena, confused and close to panic, asks Freeman to be there only for her and confesses that her mind is blank. Immediately after she is furious "I might just do it! Suck you all up through my asshole, crush your bones in my gut, and then crack and crunch them into little bits in my mouth and spit—SPIT YOU ALL OUT OF MY DREARY LIFE, EVERY LAST MOTHERFUCKING ONE OF YOU" 165).

Part four: Serey Potmose/ Greta Denkman). Serey is married to Michael Potmose who just finished his training analysis with Kurt (Greta's husband) and is, according to his wife, "a prizewinning poet, a biographer of Keats all in Spanish" (177). The analyst says, "Are you so uncertain of yourself that you must always be selling me Michael?" while Serey "suddenly felt grim and resolute. Always, always one has to be on one's guard, especially with analysts who can't understand their own politics" (177). But she consents, "You sound so angry. I suppose it's me. You're right. Michael, Michael -my weaker self" (177) and adds "My uncertainty is solely about you. I sense a void at times, a no-thing-ness. *Le néant, vous savez?* I feel drawn into a dark

¹² There is here a clear connection to the commented article by Shevrin, "Psychoanalytic Power. Its Unique Character and Self-Destructive Effect".

vortex” (178) and remembers similar feelings, nightmares, *pavor nocturnus* as a child (178). Forced by Greta’s statement “Isn’t it that you also desire that I too stop asking worrisome questions about taboo subjects?”. Serey answers, “I felt your interpretation was...obvious. Who does want to be grilled on taboo subjects-Not I, not anyone” (179). Then she compares her silent husband with her father “a lively, witty man, certainly not as smart as Michael-no but quick, charming, his eyes always twinkling” (179). Her mother, on the contrary, was silent, mute, always mourning. Serey justifies her father’s affairs (“What an intriguer he was! I think he enjoyed the politics of love more than love itself. Once I helped him. I was already older-sixteen, seventeen. He could be so bored, my poor, bored father. So bored” --179) and, suddenly, thinks of her daughter Phoebe (whom she should be picking up at school), her husband terminating his training analysis with Kurt, her desire “to launch him into the senior analysts’ circles”, and her admiration for Kurt (“So European, a truly gifted conversationalist on art, literature, wines, politics...a *cognoscenti*” 180). Her analyst’ silence and her concerns about her daughter make Serey depressed. Greta says that nobody stops her to leave the session. Serey confirms “True, but then I’d be acting out-leaving an hour! Michael would be disgraced” “Always Michael! -said Greta. He is the bedpost of your life /.../ And I am mother, that mute figure, rejected by father” and adds, “How hard to be a woman with a child” (181-2). Serey’s answer is not kind “How do you know? You have no children-none” (182) but immediately, feeling bitter and ashamed, excuses herself, and starts to talk about the wives at the institute, forced to go into treatment following their husbands.

It’s pure self-defense. Your husband falls in love you don’t know with whom or what except he stares at you with blank eyes, eat too little or too much, loses interest in sex or suddenly becomes a Marquis de Sade arranging imaginary tableaux with you as a centerpiece. One day deciding to give up everything and the next smirking smugly at how marvelously well things are going. Unsettling. Inscrutable. Insufferable. Where is the fresh bright boy you married? Gone! Yes,

he was a bit of a bore, childish, self-important, caught up in business quite beyond you, but secretly you were convinced that really didn't matter. Grown up toys, no more. You bore the babies, rocked the cradle, ran the house, looked after his career so that he met the right people who liked him because they liked you, your cooking, and your way of leaning on their arm. And then: All that thrown into confusion. The rules changed. And no one forewarns you or cares how it affects you least of all your husband. He must be in love with someone else, you think, but his analyst is a man. No matter. They say he thinks of him as a woman and loves him or her. Perhaps there is a rival-A female colleague, snippy, twice-divorced, eager for a man who is her equal, who plays tough tennis and beats him at case conferences. And he feels delighted that he can let a woman show him up and he loves her for how good she makes him feel and you grow tired and frightened of these games (186-7).

Greta wonders if envy is what is all about ("envy of men, mainly of her own lumpish husband whom she had in fact successfully steered through medical school and residency and now through analytic training" -139) and feels sorry for her, forced to do analysis, and with no progress in in two years. In the next session Serey comes back to politics: the election of the research director, funding at the institute, and the need of showing that psychoanalysis works. Again, she wants to leave, feeling trapped and tortured in a *nonsense* situation. The session ends by Serey remembering her readings (Maupassant, Flaubert, Tolstoy) and her flirtatious father who knew French better than her. In the next session Serey gives Greta a piece of paper to read, Greta asks her to do it herself, Serey takes it back, complaining about the rejection of *her list*, and getting engulfed in *terrible ocean waves*. After some struggle Greta retrieves the list and reads aloud some sort of hierarchy that Serey has put together. Serey becomes very upset and, once again, Greta thinks that she is 'too fragile for analysis' (204). In the next session Serey arrives with a lot of make-up, looking like a Spanish flamenco dancer, talking about daily things at home. Greta remembers her husband Kurt's warnings about Serey while thinking about her own marriage- with Kurt chasing young girls and she taking vacations with her friend Frieda. Serey talks about suffocation at home and in session, mentioning again an episode of the past

with her friend Pia drowning in the sea and their mutual physical aggression when Serey was rescuing her. At that point she re-named herself as “La Seriosa”. from Hemingway, *From Whom the Bells Tolls* (208). Greta starts to feel the pressure of politics “No way to do analysis in this fishbowl of a place. She yearned to leave, to be in New York or Chicago where size alone guaranteed anonymity” (208). Serey refers again to her list and, when she leaves, Greta “realized that her patient was deluded.” (211). After this session, Serey misses two in a row without calling. During Serey’s absence, Greta questions her own ability to deal with her patient and remembers her husband’s statement about her fantasies of having Serey “for a daughter” (211). Then Serey’s husband calls informing her, in a rumbling way, that his wife is insomniac, tried to kill herself and keeps talking about *the General*. A second call, this time from the president of the Institute, who tells Greta that Serey is there, calling him the *General*, speaking in French and announcing him that his term is over (“*C’est fini, Mon General. La guerre est terminé, A nous la victoire*” 214). Finally, Serey arrives accompanied by her husband, hiding from Greta behind him until he leaves the room. Then, she goes to the couch giving her back to Greta who, noticing that Serey is wearing her coat on her pajamas, thinks “So this is how she paid a visit to the president?” (216), completely sure now that her patient needs to be hospitalized. The last part of this analytic dyad takes place at Greta’s office when Serey comes totally medicated (“Greta observed in Serey that sleepwalker calm produced by medication whose chemical powers defuse the explosive burst of manic energy and refill the sinkholes of depression” 220). Greta understands that Serey has been a ‘catalyst’, “a fuse that itself disappears in the explosion...this poor demented creature who would never be the same, A mistake, a big mistake to have her into analysis” (237). Serey is there mainly to ask for Greta’s permission to leave the hospital but, at

the same time, she lucidly states “Maybe you all want to keep me in the hospital for a while longer-keep me from interfering” (224).

Part V: Victor Kleinman and Kurt Denkman. Here the two German friend analysts get together to talk but Kurt convinces Victor to analyze each other. During the sessions there is an increasing acknowledgement on both parts that Victor’s election as Research Director is not going in the right direction. Regarding their personal lives, Kurt complains about his wife Greta, aging and growing ‘manly’ while mentioning his own affection for young women in spite of his back problems. He compares his wife with Victor’s Marlana, still young, vibrant, --although Victor says she is envious, vindictive, ambitious and probably looking to be a trained analyst herself. Then Victor thinks about his sister Anna (“My analysis failed me when it came to my sister and myself’ 231). In another session Victor has again the image of three women in front of him: his wife Marlana, his sister Anna, and Frances, Paul’s wife, and thinks “how truly unaware hysterical women are of the beauty they possess and how neurosis tarnishes this treasure” (243). His wish is to cure all of them and associates it with Hawthorne text, “The Birth Mark” about a great alchemist who weds a beautiful girl and, on their wedding night, discovers a blemish on her cheek that contrary to his efforts to make it disappear spreads until all her beauty is gone (“Negative therapeutic reactions, that’s the meaning of Hawthorne tale” 244). He also associates to the German legend of Lorelei (“all women are Loreleis-drawing us upon the rocks but we, Kurt, unlike those frightened sailors will not stuff our ears against their song, rather we strive to save them from their own hostility” --244), while emphasizing the danger that Serey’s condition represents in connection to the President--“who was always fed horror stories about analysis by the research and family people who either claimed it didn’t work at all or worked too well”—(248). Aware of Paul Dreyfus’ animosity towards him, Victor states “He hates me-a pure

projection of his own repressed ambition” (249), while his sadness increases, experiencing “a familiar aching and longing of something, someone eluding him still. Bernini knew it. All artists know it. Artist of fictional creations and artists like himself who created fact-necessary, mutative realities, analysts are artists in that same sense” (250). He then remembers a complicated dream about his sister Anna, as a child, playing hopscotch. With no intervention of Kurt’s part, Victor says, “Did you notice, Kurt, how often I said My Anna, and ‘little Anna’? Unusual, you see, Kurt, how in the dream I was treating her as my child not my older sister” (255) and explains

Anna, you know, always deeply resented my maleness /.../ My liveliest feelings for Anna were always hate, fear, and desire. Yes, a yearning for her approval. She made it hard to like her. Even now she dismisses my career as based on myth—that’s what psychoanalysis is to her. A myth masquerading as a science. I suppose I remain a child to her, as I was from the start. So, in the dream I make her the child (257-8).

In the last session Victor remembers how much he loved the storms at the sea when he was a kid, watching them from a cliff with a pair of binocular, able to see both worlds (the calm one before the storm, and the storm preparing itself) as he does now “I will be the storm to this banal backwater of a place, this Tennessee.!” (270). After, the session ends by Victor having a dreamlike sequence of a violent encounter with his sister. Kurt feels relieved (*La commedia e finita*. It was time to leave this closet drama for the real miserable world” 271) and, before leaving, Victor announces moving to California with his wife, and invites Kurt to join them. In *Part Six, Paul Dreyfus and Josef Fouchault*. Paul starts with a dream, “I had a funny dream last night. It was barren and dark—a strong wind howled, but I was sitting down playing with sand, unmindful of the storm. A man shouted at me. I kept on playing. That’s all I remember. What a rotten, empty dream” (277). He becomes silent, starts crying longing when he was a kid, ignoring everything and playing in the kitchen with the toy train his father had bought him, while everybody was still sleeping (“the whole world was mine 278). He then remembers a photo of

him playing in the sand and another with his mother before she died. Paul feels nobody listens to him, complains of having no memories of his mother, only photos, and one of Joyce's lines, "mutinous waves", comes to his mind. He says that he is "sick of thinking, associating, reflecting, talking" (280). Then he passes to complain about Victor, who knows nothing about research, his allies Kurt and Greta ("the only man and woman who have a homosexual relationship" --281), and about what he sees as an unfair world. Then he talks about his uneasiness, both with his patient Emily and with his analyst. He also remembers, as a kid, doing houses with cards and blowing them down 'the guilty cards'. His analyst asks: "Why guilty? How are the cards guilty?". And Paul, "Did I say guilty? If anyone was guilty it was I" (283). In the next session Paul refers to his horrible week-end ("last night I decided I was a zero, not a therapist, not a scientist" 286), his wife sad and angry with her therapist, all Saturday in bed doing nothing. They had a big fight, his wife threw scissors at him and he hit her back, she started packing decided to leave him, he restrained her and they finally fell asleep. While narrating this Paul feels cold, is sobbing, hiccupping and nauseous. Also, as the night before, he has an erection. He then shouts to his analyst, feeling his silence *like a sentence*, "I could kill you for your heartless silence-You bastard, you French, frog-legged bastard!" (289). After this eruption, Paul feels whole again ("Fighting against tough odd. That's what he has done all his life" 289) and the session ends with Paul enumerating losses: his wife leaving him, Victor leaving his wife, his mother leaving him. In the next session Paul refers to the politics of the institute, his meeting with the president talking against Victor as Research Director, and a long tirade against everybody else. He tells his analyst "Do you know I had the gift of prophecy? It is given mainly to the blind and halt as fair compensation for powerlessness" (293). His analyst brings him back to his difficulties with his patient Emily. He answers by saying that he is a

complete failure, as an analyst, as a patient, as a husband (“I engaged in devastating gestures like an operatic tenor. Like my visit to the president. What a joke” --294). He considers that he acts but he is ineffective, he sees but he can’t act right and nobody pays attention to him: “For them I’m the kid cousin, smart, a bit of a pain at times, but not to be taken seriously” (295). In the next session Paul keeps silent until he finally shouts “I am through with analysis. Doing it, undergoing it, studying it. I am sick of talk. I am sick of myself” (300). When his analyst asks what is going on Paul talks again about his impotence. He feels lifeless. In the next session he can’t talk although he acknowledges that his patient is doing better but not his relationship with his wife: He mentions a black knight in a black horse who appeared night after night at his bed when he was a boy. “No one must know of my black knight. He was my private apparition” (308). Fouchault’s interpretation is that he avoids excitement (with his patient, with his wife, in his session), and also avoids communication because it leads to death (like his black knight), like what happened when his mother died. In the next session Paul says he is torn apart between his patient going up and his wife going down while he continues being impotent and feeling alone (“He was so good at alienating people” 312). Paul then remembers being sick with pneumonia when a kid with high fevers and nightmares, suffering synesthesia. Fouchault’s interpretation is that Paul feels guilty because his mother died, and, in the last session all the rumors about Serey hospitalized and an impasse in the search are going in Paul’s head.

Who am I to talk. I’m as much an opportunist in my heart as they, only I don’t act. I nourish ambitions I disdain and counterfeit my passions as high-minded contempt-of you for letting this sorry affair go on without even a pee of protest, of them for their betrayal of their own professions, of this place for its casual acceptance, its passive letting itself get screwed by those who defile what they say they value most” (319-20).

Paul mentions a photo in the newspaper of an actress in a wedding gown shot by a stranger and six photos of her dead mother, one in her wedding gown “just like the actress” (322) and

remembers his father's second marriage ("I sat in front of the bride and groom my stepmother had a large head, circle by a lacy veil..." 322). Next, Paul thinks about his wife's face in peace in the coach and tense in their bed, curses his father and remembers once in his crib seeing his mother's breasts rising and falling as she slept, her lips parted in a dreamer smile and his father head beneath her right breast. He did not understand anything then, he doesn't understand anything now, "The same profound sense of an enigma I should know the answer to but never will" (323).

In *Part Seven Donald Prescott and Paula Veroff*, we have a 67 years old Jewish analyst, who had a difficult life escaping from Hitler, going from country to country, a heavy smoker with serious lung problems, and a with wanderer son. Paul is an Irish medical doctor terminating his analysis, the son of a young mother and a father's twenty years older than her. In the first session, as in the previous analysis, silence is a prominent, mostly ominous, presence. In this case, Donald talks about silence as communion, silence in the woods, silence in music and in his sister singing. The imminence of termination makes him angry with Paula because of her unusual harshness, not grasping that she is masking her affection for him and her own sadness for his termination. He thinks about his passion for Wagner again and Paul's dismissal of his music ("he had remembered Dreyfus's smiling dismissal of Wagner as so much music to masturbate by. It must be Paul's Jewishness that leads him to hate Wagner" --335). And then associates Wagner and antisemitism, Jews against Gentiles, Jung against Freud. He then moves to Serey and their talk about him ending his analysis, and the politics of the institute ("Paula Veroff felt her dander rise. Awful! This destructive invasion of treatment by all this feuding and politicking" 338). In another occasion, while waiting for her patient's arrival, Paula thinks about the training analysts meeting the day before in which Dreyfus was poorly evaluated and Paula

had said “Let’s leave politics outside and attend only to analysis in here” (341) realizing that the poor report had to do with Dreyfus opposition to Victor. Learning that Don’s is coming late because an emergency, Paula feels grateful with his delay because she is not feeling well, coughing all night. When Donald arrives, he looks at her (“He had the diagnostician’s calm eye which takes in and sorts out at the same time. He did not like her appearance today and when she started coughing his concern deepened” and says “you don’t look well to me” 343). After explaining his delay because of a phone call from Serey, he goes directly to his dream “It is so banal that it must be hiding something of great importance. A washboard-an old-fashioned washboard, corrugated. The kind old Irish washerwomen use in all the cartoons-bent over, perspiring, limp strands of hair falling over their face. Only this washboard was shining like a jewel, surrounded by a bright aura. It was new and dry as if never used” (344). While Donald remembers Erikson’s dream about the word Sein with its multiple meanings (river, breast sin, one), Paula verifies that his dreams come back to the beginning of his analysis, and his pain of termination. “She knew, she understood, the pain persisted. Yes, she had a spiritual son in Donald, as she had in other candidates. An analyst’s work is like creation itself. Not ex-nihilo but a tangible, palpable transformation of a living being” (345).¹³ Going back to Serey’s call, Donald admits he had “a vicious fantasy. I’d take her up. Conspire with her. Destroy Michael and then blow up this whole awful place. Run off with her and hate her for making such a fool of me” (347). Paula sees the old pattern of rescuing “an undeserving mother from a disappointing father and to end in despair-unrewarded and demeaned” (347). In addition, she thinks, he wants to rescue her from Kurt and Victor, save her only for himself and both expire in glory. In the

¹³ This is a recurrent topic in Shevrin, psychoanalysis as a creative act, the similarities between psychoanalysis and art. A gifted writer, and researcher, Shevrin seems to me constantly torned apart between psychoanalysis as an art and as a science, that takes us to the article I mentioned at the beginning of this paper.

next session, Donald talks about the turmoil Serey's has put in motion, mentions a hollow conversation with Serey's husband, and feels angry again. He then mentions a phone call from his mother the day before, who is senile and confuses him with his father, recognizing his fury at mortality, his mother, his analyst, and Serey. Paula gives him a blunt and lucid answer,

Furious and helpless, and furious because helpless. Endings are not diseases, Doctor Prescott, that can be cured by a physician's care or prevented by living right. They are endings and nothing more. That's what make them hard to us. Desires don't end. They live on and on like your mother's for her man or yours for her, and when the brain wearies, or the spirit flags, the old desires show how young they are" (352).

He answers by saying that he is not ready to finish his analysis. Paula gets then deep into her thoughts about her own life, before and after the war, and "the silence between them was of two worlds moving in their own orbits" (352-3). Realizing that she needs to come back to her patient, as his analyst and, also, as his old mother she says "Like your mother I live in my own time. But you want us both to live in yours" (354). In the next session, while Paula thinks about the recent bad news about her health, Donald mentions another wild call from Serey, their encounter—she with a Spanish Flamenco looks and calling herself 'La Seriosa' and him leaving swiftly after realizing that she is very disturbed. In the next session Donald comes directly from the hospital, interrupting Paula's thoughts about her life, her son, her illness, and reports about Serey, "she is psychotically depressed, maybe manic as well. Right now she simply sits, head thrown back, eyes rolled up, jaw slack, teeth bared. I've had her started-on medication" (364). Paula thinks about Greta's failing Serey, "And what of Greta? That poor woman. Of course, there are failures in any profession. She had had her share. But it was how it was all enmeshed, knotted-the personal, political, professional. Analysis was not meant to bear such added weight, to serve so many masters" (366). In the last session, before Donald arrives, Paula thinks he will be the last patient 'she would see him to the end' (371). He goes directing to the couch, without looking at

her, and mentions that Serey is feeling better, with a positive transference towards him but realizing that analysis is not for her. Before leaving for the last time, Donald thinks about silence, and about her voice now inside his head forever,

he heard her voice, but he knew she hadn't spoken, it was a voice he had often imagined in her absence, speaking to him, saying harsh things sometimes, soothing things other times. Strangely it was the quality only of her voice he now experienced, its timbre, like music, like a voice heard from afar that we can recognize before we can make the words" (375).

The whole novel is music with its silences and sounds, soft or harsh, soothing or sickening in the small micro-cosmos of an institution that is loved and hated by its member and where the entangled plot of analysis, personal lives, politics and dreams have the texture of a real-life experience that its author experienced, and suffered. Also, in that entanglement, there is a sacrifice. Serey, Michael's distinguished European wife, goes from the role of a leading and supportive wife to the subject of a psychotic crisis that makes her analyst, and the whole community, wonder if she should have been in analysis at all. Also, they somehow feel that Serey became the 'scape goat' of the political situation at the institute, both catalyst and victim.

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