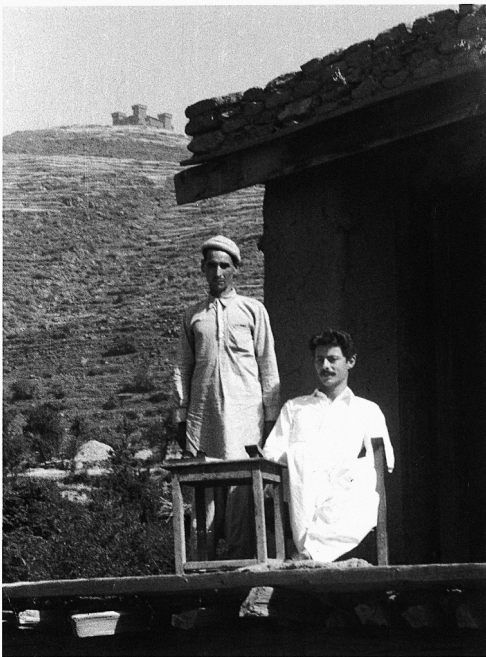




Did Sigmund Freud's couch become the equivalent of Giorgio Agamben's throne in *The kingdom and the glory* (2011)? *The couch is empty but the modern psyche reigns* (orig. the throne is empty but the king reigns).

One of the words that persons with a modern background is will have in their vocabulary is *syndrome*: bits and pieces of psychoanalytic vocabulary will be found in almost any modern setting. But here modernism and modernity depart from each other. For while modern popular culture developed own usage of words—e.g. the term 'syndrome' to determine a vicious circle—the modernist idea of syndrome was a bundle of related causation: a cluster of related cause/effect.

This was the use that anthropologist Fredrik Barth (no relation) established for ethnographic purposes: syndromes were forms—meshes of cause/effect that could be observed and described—and he was interested in the processes that generated them. Syndromes were simply *life-forms* that could be recorded by the ethnographer and were worthy of attention as they were replayed (with variations) in social life. It was a subject that could be studied by a *natural historian*.



Fredrik Barth (right) posing with his assistant Kashmali (left). Photo: 1954.

Here Sigmund Freud's beginnings as a neurologist therefore can be seen as a hatching ground for his psychoanalysis: namely, that humans are so wired that they will *learn* causal networks and appropriate them, into a repertoire of such. Because they have a learning *history*, in other words, all humans have a *neurosis*. To Freud, and his followers, it was normal—within certain bounds—to be neurotic. *Trauma* emerges when the *infatuation* with a syndrome, that begins to act in a *predatory* way.

There is a clear parallel between the usage developed for *fiction* and *neurosis*—in the present series of handouts and footprints—with the assumed psychoanalytic usage of neurosis and trauma. But if *trauma* is as widespread as *illusion* (which the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan appears to suggest) then the spectre of modernism will be revealed by its extant *libidinal* economy. That is, the movement of the pleasure principle from the wiring of its real sources—in complex cultural manufacture—to the infatuation with the wiring itself.

The resulting combination *between* infatuation *and* escape is similar to the modern *intellectual's* relation to *psychoanalysis*. As 'syndrome' became *synonymous* to

'vicious circle' in modern usage, 'psychoanalysis' became synonymous to *trauma*. Learn *some* of it

but *don't go there*, as a prevalent contract with the subject matter in academic milieus. Here one may also wonder whether psychoanalysis might have been vulnerable to such modern reaction and usage. That in response to attacks on it psychoanalysis became *complicated*.

By its concern for being *pedagogic*—showing the steps of analysis to explain its concepts—it complicated. Featuring the manifestation of neurosis in the *discursive* field: which, in turn, became the cause for infatuation—among some intellectuals—who adopted it to access the *cultural* milieu that appropriated psychoanalysis in this way (with its gatekeepers and rites of passage). Hence, the birth of impenetrable prose that came in the wake of modernism, and decorated its shelves.

That is, the *resistance* to psychoanalysis mirrored unto the resistance *from* psychoanalysis: that is *parcours* (syndrome) transposed to *discours* (trauma). When the modern track became *exhausted*—exhausting both *language* and *people*—the chase continued in France with post-structuralism (w/the Algerian war snapping at its heels), and what was called postmodernism in North America (starting with Lyotard's report to the Canadian government) became an *isolate-version* of this.

It would appear that there has been a steady *transfer* from neurosis to trauma all the way; the passage from post-structuralism to postmodernism is merely a dialect of this (and was e.g. discussed by Vincent Descombes in terms of 'crossing the Atlantic'). In my own practice I formulated the movement towards complication explicitly: I said to myself, that if I manage to play the most difficult of Rachmaninov's *Études tableaux*, I would manage to read Derrida's *Grammatologie*.

And I did. But by doing so, I had also *surreptitiously* formulated a path *from* trauma *to* neurosis, which appears to have been stable over the years, and with the work of time led me to the kind of exercises that I am doing here: in the handouts and footprints series. That is, an act of *restitution* of the pleasure principle to where it belongs, in an act of *repair* that also writes *re-pair*. It runs contrary to academic culture where the *cult* of intelligence and its hierarchies, generates complication.

With its sadly meagre output in the range of common knowledge and notions. Perhaps we are already seeing its end: since its demise appears exceedingly clear. It seeks clarity in hyphenated syntheses that become all the more popular, if they are unreliance on description and analysis.

They do not invite observation, on account of the cliché that observation is over and above the matters at hand (i.e. it lacks positioning and is unsituated). Hence a trauma of observation grafted unto another: the trauma of the *laboratory*.

*Clinical* observation and *field* observation are not part of this deal. And, generally put, this sort of critique is sealed by its lack of experience in *descriptive* and *analytic* practices. It fits the current *ethos* and *eidos* of infatuated states of selfhood: whether linked to the human *ego*, or to the *world*. The deconstruction of such infatuation is sought through *permutation*: in the *handouts and footprints* series, but also in *Trolling words*. A way of loosening up the libidinal energies of trauma and returning them to neurosis.

The GATE signature: a system of relationships that are permutable three ways: horizontal, vertical and with two other precisations than the specific one displayed here.