

# Kitabkhana

A Discussion with Rajbir Singh Judge, William Mazzarella, Anghi Mukherjee, Milad Odabaei, Katherine Pratt Ewing, and Tarek El-Ariss

***The Arabic Freud: Psychoanalysis and Islam in Modern Egypt***

By Omnia El Shakry  
Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017  
224 pp., \$35.00

***The Doctor and Mrs. A.: Ethics and Counter-Ethics in an Indian Dream Analysis***

By Sarah Pinto  
New York: Fordham University Press, 2019  
256 pp., \$95.00; \$28.00

**LED AROUND BY THE NOSE**

*Tracking and Trailing Psychoanalysis*

Rajbir Singh Judge

No absurdity is impossible for psychoanalysis. I should like to discuss all these things, particularly with you, but it is impossible to write about them.

—Sigmund Freud, March 20, 1922, in Torok, “Illness of Mourning”

The two books reviewed in this *Kitabkhana*, Omnia El Shakry’s *The Arabic Freud: Psychoanalysis and Islam in Modern Egypt* and Sarah Pinto’s *The Doctor and Mrs. A.: Ethics and Counter-Ethics in an Indian Dream Analysis*, provide an opportunity to think about the vexed relationship between psychoanalysis and colonialism—a relationship our reviewers explore admirably. In this introduction, I want to grapple within this troubled problem-space and the stakes of El Shakry’s and Pinto’s works in relation to the questions that both form and arise from that space.<sup>1</sup>

Even though Sigmund Freud’s breakthroughs instituted a Copernican revolution, reorienting key understandings of the modern self, these discoveries were tied to colonialism; for example, Freud infamously referred to women’s sexuality as a “dark continent,” drawing on Henry Morton Stanley’s metaphor for Africa.<sup>2</sup> Situating Freud in his historical location, as scholars have done, makes clear how Freud’s insights normalized a Eurocentric, masculine, and bourgeois location for psychoanalysis while occluding women, the poor, and racial others.<sup>3</sup> But this location was not secure. Questions of gender came to the fore early on as psychoanalysis provided a crucial terrain for analysts to tackle the problem of sexual and gendered difference.<sup>4</sup>

Race, on the other hand, rarely received such standing. While psychoanalysis, Jean Walton writes, “seemed to thrive on the ‘eternal problem’ of how to extend and modify Freud’s male-centered theories of sexual development

so that they would be equally as applicable to women, it shrank from the charge it was focused too narrowly on the subjectivity of white, European patients who provided the clinical material from which it was elaborated.<sup>5</sup> The ethnocentrism of psychoanalysis then was “relegated to the ‘outside’ of what was becoming a powerful and influential institution.”<sup>6</sup> Diagnoses of pathology in a clinical setting were indeed crucial within colonial practice as the clinic became a key disciplinary institution to correct the native who was perceived as anterior to the time of the normative psychoanalytic subject.<sup>7</sup>

And yet, scholars have argued psychoanalysis cannot be reduced to its colonial setting. For Kris Manjappa, psychoanalysis created a “dialogic arena” as it “emerged out of the interactions between different centers of intellectual power in different parts of the world”; it was, he claims, “co-constituted by a worldwide group of scholars who felt themselves to be exiles, castaways, or critics from the nineteenth-century vision of a progressive enlightened European universalism.”<sup>8</sup> Non-Western analysts, then, did not simply imitate understandings derived from the West, because psychoanalysis undid the idea of a unitary West itself. Psychoanalysis thus provided analysts like Girindrasekhar Bose (1887–1953), the founder of the Indian Psychoanalytic Society in 1921 who communicated with Freud directly, a method to consider the psyche in a way that “trespassed the constraints of British colonial science.”<sup>9</sup> Psychoanalysis was conducive to this trespass since, as the argument goes, it created an enchanted world that challenged different forms of social domination for Freud and his interlocutors. In this enchanted world, we learn how the colonized did not appropriate European thought in their engagement with psychoanalysis; rather psychoanalysis expanded the “scope for intellectual action and social interaction.”<sup>10</sup>

Trouble remains, however. Even if we rethink the encounter between Bose and Freud as one irreducible to a European setting or an instance of “bad faith” to a European copy, are there “structural factors within psychoanalytic theory that may act to exclude non-Western theorists,” factors such as race?<sup>11</sup> Enchantment might be differentiated. Freud’s experiences as a Jew in Vienna, for example, might not create the same world as the polytheist in Calcutta; limits, not dialogue, come to the fore. We then have to contend with how, Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks perceptively writes, “the exclusion of the non-Western analyst is largely founded on Freud’s (tenuous) theories of culture and his delineation of

the civilized man as a monotheistic subject progressing toward secularism.”<sup>12</sup> Rather than occupying an enchanted world together, we learn that Freud evaded Bose’s speech, because, Seshadri-Crooks continues, “it was too anomalous, and his theory could not accommodate a mother worshipping polytheist as an analyst or subject.”<sup>13</sup>

This insight does not require a rejection of psychoanalysis;<sup>14</sup> rather, scholars have dwelled within the limits and contradictions that arise with psychoanalysis that can be neither historized nor theorized away. For Ashis Nandy, this encounter did not occur in a shared world, but a contradictory one that splintered. The encounter, he writes, “fractured self-definitions not only of Bose but of many others involved in similar enterprises.”<sup>15</sup> How do we dwell in these fractures? Well, for one, these fractures are not analogical across time and space, but are situated within different historical contexts. Recall Frantz Fanon’s encounter with the white child and the child’s constituting gaze that “sealed [Fanon] into that crushing objecthood.”<sup>16</sup> We learn how beneath the “burden of that corporeal malediction” operates a “historico-racial schema.”<sup>17</sup> Fanon then “intrudes upon an idealism of the Lacanian apparently ‘color-free’ model”—the imaginary identification of the self in the mirror stage—because the mirror state is also, for Fanon, a matter that was historically and materially constituted in his reinscription of psychoanalysis.<sup>18</sup>

One could still argue that psychoanalysis adequately conceptualizes the “fractured self-definitions” that Nandy foregrounds, making the history of psychoanalysis richer and compatible with its theoretical discoveries. Fanon’s understanding, then, would be precipitated by psychoanalytic history and theory in Europe. But perhaps the history of psychoanalysis cannot be rendered consistent with its theory since limits return.<sup>19</sup> A focus on reinscription refuses to mollify contradiction by referring to an earlier theoretical revelation always already present in psychoanalysis. Instead, to reinscribe psychoanalysis is to grapple with the arising contradictions in their particularities in order to elucidate them, not to settle them.<sup>20</sup> Psychoanalysis might provide resources that make it attuned to reinscription because it is not an explanatory discipline or simply a historical one. It is instead a mode to create within what is a vertigo. As Joan Copjec writes, “Psychoanalysis maintains that we do not really know what values we hold or why we hold them. Our task is thus not to divest them of their particularity, but to cre-

ate particular forms in which they can be recognized, by ourselves and by others.”<sup>21</sup>

Psychoanalysis, therefore, cannot be, to follow Ranjana Khanna, “a contextless theory,” but neither can it be reduced to a historicism.<sup>22</sup> We have to think of the ‘worlding’ of psychoanalysis in its use, but one that does not merely augment the history of psychoanalysis.<sup>23</sup> Psychoanalysis is then rethought.<sup>24</sup> It is, Maria Torok observed, “neither dogmatic nor the art of mindless application.”<sup>25</sup> Instead, Torok argues, “making use of its rigorous methods, psychoanalysis can progress on the path of theory as well as practice as a living and constantly renewable science.”<sup>26</sup> Practice is crucial since in its attempt to transform the normative bourgeois subject, there is not merely theory, but analysis. Analysis is an attunement that is only possible, Katherine Ewing has shown, within an attitude of play.<sup>27</sup> Analysis is a “form of play, a trial run, or an illusory *mimesis* of reality” to follow John Forrester.<sup>28</sup> In its mimicry of reality in the clinic, the world as such becomes unstable as it becomes “almost the same, but not quite” as representational authority splits and a vertigo ensues.<sup>29</sup> Fanon taught us this lesson he learned in the clinic during the Algerian War. Fanon comes to understand, David Marriott writes, that the dissymmetry between me and not-me opens “onto a more vertiginous absence between the *I* and the *it*, and this absence cannot simply be represented by disalienation, nor is it simply linked to colonial racism.”<sup>30</sup> The goal, in other words, is not simply corrective self-seeing historically, but “to engage the vertigo of existence” as we learn from Stefania Pandolfo. This vertigo becomes an “ethical site of vision” to make a leap beyond.<sup>31</sup> Some call this *decolonization*.

Omnia El Shakry’s *The Arabic Freud* grapples within this vertigo in the travel of Freud to postwar Egypt—in both its philosophical and pragmatic components—in relation to the modern self. To do so, El Shakry centers the creative encounter between psychoanalysis and Islam. This encounter is not a site of epistemic violence or duplication, but one that attunes us to how a tradition is subject to continuous reinterpretation within a given form.<sup>32</sup> El Shakry importantly argues that her goal is not to collapse distinctions between the two traditions, but “to allow each to view the other as an aperture within which a certain form of lucidity becomes possible” (11). In so doing, El Shakry exerts pressure on psychoanalytic thought and, therefore, renews it in Torok’s sense. For example, we learn how Yusuf Murad (1902–66) revised psychoanalysis while also exceeding the limitations of psychoanalytic theory. This is clear

in Murad’s attempt to hold the possibility of unity in a multiplicity even while acknowledging the constitutive alienation of the subject (33). We can only understand these theoretical maneuverings, El Shakry maintains, if we pay attention to how Murad relied on earlier prepsychoanalytic traditions, notably the work of Ibn ‘Arabi. And these interests are reflected more broadly in the journal Murad coedited from 1945 to 1953, *Majallat ‘Ilm al-Nafs*. To give one example of these interests: the relation between self and other took on a radically different meaning as social life became crucial against the self. Indeed, Egyptian writers preferred those who “lauded the collective nature of self-hood” and critiqued the position of egocentricity (36–37).

El Shakry then does not simply provincialize psychoanalysis’s European provenance. Rather, she demonstrates how it was rethought by showing the importance of Islam in reinscribing psychoanalysis in Egypt. In this reinscription, we cannot, she writes, “presuppose originals and bad copies of the modern subject” since it is constitutively marked by a vertigo (11). Still, we have to attend to the different “ontological and epistemological stakes” of this vertigo even though there are elective affinities between, for example, Sufism and Lacanian psychoanalysis (59). But we also learn how psychological theories could be reinscribed to serve disciplinary projects and prescriptive visions of the postcolonial subject; criminal psychology is but one example. Though there was, El Shakry notes, a “translatibility between the political programs of the postcolonial state and Murad’s psychological theories,” this was so because the Free Officers who led Egypt’s 1952 revolution lifted parts of Murad’s project while discarding and disarticulating others such as “the revival of hermeneutics and ethics as well as the critique of instrumental rationality, positivism, and progressivism” (39).

We return to El Shakry’s initial question, How do traditions encounter each other? For El Shakry, this requires we “open ourselves to an ethical encounter with the Other” that does not simply incorporate that Other; beware the “phantasmatic lure of the ‘I’” (114). El Shakry’s work in this sense is more than simply an intellectual history. It focuses on an encounter between two traditions in order to model how learning can take place ethically—a learning that refuses to harmonize the world as it remains unruly. But learning, too, could be circumvented; renewal is not to be necessarily celebrated.

Sarah Pinto’s *The Doctor and Mrs. A.* takes a different route, even though Pinto, too, stages an encounter between psychoanalysis and Hindu epics, the *Mahab-*

*harata* and *Ramayana*, in colonial Panjab.<sup>33</sup> Crucially, Pinto reorients our entry into the problem-space by turning our attention to the analysand, Mrs. A., while largely eschewing Satya Nand, the analyst, and his Objective Method.<sup>34</sup> Mrs. A.'s contribution takes center stage, notably her foregrounding of Hindu mythopoeics into her stories, especially women such as Draupadi, Shakuntala, and Ahalya. Whereas the analyst sought to interpret Mrs. A.'s invocations of the epics, particularly as Hindu socialism, Pinto cautions against this move; the stories cannot be restricted by the analytic setting. Satya Nand, for example, would become caught up in the thrill of the "analytic potential of epic heroines" and lose sight of the counter-ethical moments that emerged from Mrs. A.'s reflections, especially upon marriage. Counter-ethics then is crucial because it is "where a new or different idea about what is right, or good, or just, or livable came into view, often when Mrs. A. remade or revalued the terms that defined the ethic in question" (27).

It is not a tradition or a place that offers this opening, but gender.<sup>35</sup> As Pinto writes, "Gender offers a persistent framing of existence for counter-ethical imagining, as people disproportionately bear ethical stakes and create responses that offer a rhythm for wondering, making something new and funny and angry and beautiful of it all" (29). For example, to the ethic of marital emplacement which claimed to provide certainty, Mrs. A. professed a counter-ethic of singularity. Singularity was the threat to emplacement and, therefore, became the counter-ethic. If marriage ensured certainty, singularity would reevaluate uncertainty. This was not cultural difference; Mrs. A. was not positioning "an Indian model of selfhood juxtaposed with an insufficient or imposed Western one, or a constraining Indian model of womanhood rejected for a liberating cosmopolitan one" (75). Instead, singularity arose in the opposition to a specific social arrangement and position that made it possible to imagine an alternative. What we learn is that demarcations between, say, Indian and feminism, are not there, as Mrs. A. read self-determination and independence into the Hindu epics. We could say that ontological and epistemological stakes themselves are undone as the limits of horizons take hold in a counter-ethic (120–21). It is this restlessness, this constant line of flight that an analytic session cannot enclose, that interests Pinto. What we find is Pinto denies psychoanalysis a place as a tradition—refusing both co-constitution and reinscription—as it fragments in the counter-ethical moves of the analysand, which are but "temporary

places we might stand" in a moment of unconstrained creativity (192).

William Mazzarella's essay brings El Shakry and Pinto together by noting that they "share a signature move: a staunch resistance to the kind of culturalist contextualization that deals in entities like *Indian* or *Egyptian* psychoanalysis" when thinking about the question of encounter. Mazzarella rightly homes in on the question of the hybridity paradox, "namely, the way that talking about how two entities are always already in hybrid relation with each other ends up re-reifying them as, precisely, two entities." Why not think from elsewhere without limits? Mazzarella pushes this question by reading El Shakry and Pinto together with psychoanalysis to go beyond accurate accounts, culturalism, and historicism. Here, Mazzarella asks about *jouissance*—"that elated attachment that goes beyond economy, beyond pleasure and pain, beyond good and evil, that compulsion to repeat that makes a mockery of any clear distinction between life and death drives"—in order to consider affective and libidinal investments.

Ankhi Mukherjee too questions the encounters that Pinto and El Shakry stage, observing that "both works move beyond their initial 'psychoanalysis and religion X' formulation to imagine creative acts of ethical engagement and counter-ethics." Yet Mukherjee finds El Shakry does not go far enough, maintaining psychoanalysis as "pristinely itself" since Egyptian psychoanalytic thinking does not "lead to a robust revision of the monolith of psychoanalysis itself in the aftermath of foreign translations and extrapolations." Gender and sexuality are at the fore in this rethinking. Though Pinto is able to consider the ambivalence and moral complexity through counter-ethic notably in the tale of Ahalya, Mukherjee contends that El Shakry's rendering of Murad is unable to do so. Sexuality, once again, becomes critical to thinking about the travels and inscriptions of psychoanalysis. Conversely, she argues, centering Islamic forms of attunement, as El Shakry does, are a ploy to absolve Murad.

For Milad Odabaei, in contrast, El Shakry is able to rethink the questions of encounter by establishing the "significance of formal comparison with, and semantic expansion of, prepsychoanalytic Islamic discourses for the genesis of the psychoanalytic self in relation to representations of ethics, sexuality and law in modern Arab discourses." It is Islamic discourses that provide coherence to analytic, sexual, and juridical subjects as they become knotted together. Yet this is an open-ended effort since it is tied to a positive relation to the

drive as Mazzarella, too, emphasizes—one that does not absolve, but reckons with the emerging contradictions of the time and the limits of inherited discourses. This Lacanian reading, however, Odabaei finds, rests uneasily with Pinto's theorization of counter-ethic. This uneasiness has to do with the place of the analyst and scholar who helps navigate “the times and topographies of the unconscious and imagination” in the analytic setting. To forgo the analyst, Odabaei argues, “risks conceptually erasing the scholar and the ethical guide in the room (Satya Nand) and replacing him with a virtuous anthropologist.” How does one then write speculatively “without taking for granted the discursive organization of human sciences including ethnography and psychoanalysis?” What possibilities exist for encounter with the other that do not reify the rationality of one when exploring the other? Odabaei offers a tantalizing answer as he grapples with the writing of Javed Tabatabai on Ibn Khaldun alongside the work of El Shakry and Pinto.

This question of the analyst also animates Katherine Ewing's evocative interrogations. She considers the space between the two texts to foreground how they “offer a fruitful path for psychoanalytically informed ethnographic research in the postcolony that does not rest on the violence that accompanied both colonial psychoanalysis and anthropology.” Ewing emphasizes that El Shakry rethinks this violence by giving ethnographic life to a different form of psychoanalysis that rejected the secularizing tendencies in Freud's theory. Psychoanalysis is no longer a universal theory, but an ethical project crucial to the postcolony. In contrast, Ewing is troubled by Pinto's dismissal of the analytic setting. Analysis is only a backdrop to Mrs. A.'s creative lines of thought rather than a crucial practice. Ewing interrogates this rejection of the psychoanalytic method, asking us to consider transference in Lacanian psychoanalysis in particular. Lacan's theorization of transference, Ewing insists, offers a practice that does not require an “interpretive imposition” or a resolution. Instead, Ewing claims the psychoanalytic method requires listening for the other's truth and desire while being attentive to one's own as well. In this process, Ewing teaches us to become attentive to unresolved conflicts and tensions and the fantasies that are provoked by them.

Finally, in the last essay, we return to the vertigo. Is there a way “to read Freud's text and our relation to it not in order to uncover Freud's truth or express loyalty to his theses and legacy”? For Tarek El-Ariss, there is a way to read in this manner especially when encountering psychoanalytic texts. Freud, for example, allowed

himself, El-Ariss writes, “to free associate as he recalls and then interprets Irma's dream.” There is vulnerability in this reading practice as connections are exposed and comparative frameworks activated. Freud's work of theory turns into “a work of imagining.” El-Ariss locates this practice in the work of El Shakry and Pinto. Freud is no longer self-contained, but “becomes irretrievable or absorbed consciously and unconsciously by psychological, national, and literary projects that connect Egypt to India and beyond.” The very temporal movements demanded by modernity that locate origins and influence become untenable. Yet how they rethink the linear reading of influence and resistance is different. In Pinto's work, this happens through multiple and uneven ways of reading that break through location and tradition. El Shakry, on the other hand, El-Ariss writes, “allows us to sit with concepts and traditions and engage their development on their own terms.” The modern is not a negation or an epistemic rupture, but multiple discourses continue to operate within it. And, therefore, multiple readings remain possible; El-Ariss points to his own reading of madness as *junun*, which doubles as queerness and possession—a resonance he sees in El Shakry's work. These connections are crucial because as they proliferate we are forced to engage that vertigo again as we wonder, as El-Ariss does, “are we in Freud or in Ibn 'Arabi?”

If we return again to our initial line of inquiry—the relationship between psychoanalysis and colonialism—the point might be not to directly solve the relationship. The task might be instead “to track and trail the unconscious through thick and thin, and allow [ourselves] to be led around by the nose by it.”<sup>36</sup> This tracking requires a certain respect, a deference, as one engages this inaccessible space. But inquiry can also desecrate, enclosing, which can explain the anxiety that emerges as the answers themselves become monstrous. This is what we learn from El Shakry and Pinto: different ways to track and trail the unconscious while maintaining that respect with a certain patience attuned to accretions that are irreducible.

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#### Notes

1. I borrow *problem-space* from David Scott. See Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 4.
2. Khanna, *Dark Continents*, ix, 48–52.

3. Seshadri-Crooks, "Primitive as Analyst," 194.
4. The literature is vast. For example, see Klein, *Selected Melanie Klein*; Riviere, "Womanliness as a Masquerade"; Horney, *New Ways in Psychoanalysis*; Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*.
5. Walton, *Fair Sex, Savage Dreams*, 2.
6. Walton, *Fair Sex, Savage Dreams*, 4.
7. The literature on madness and the clinic in the colony is vast. See Vaughn, *Curing Their Ills*; Sadowsky, *Imperial Bedlam*; Anderson, Henson, and Keller, *Unconscious Dominions*; and Linstrum, *Ruling Minds*.
8. Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement*, 211.
9. Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement*, 213. For more on psychoanalysis and India, also see Hartnack, "British Psychoanalysts in Colonial India," "Vishnu on Freud's Desk"; Kapila, "'Godless' Freud and His Indian Friends."
10. Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement*, 221.
11. Seshadri-Crooks, "Primitive as Analyst," 187.
12. Seshadri-Crooks, "Primitive as Analyst," 178. For the philosophical assumptions that undergird Freud's work, see ffytche, *Foundation of the Unconscious*, 23.
13. Seshadri-Crooks, "Primitive as Analyst," 199.
14. Khanna, *Dark Continents*, 179.
15. Nandy, "Savage Freud," 83.
16. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 109.
17. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 111. Spillers, likewise, centers the question of the historico-racial schema thinking with the *African Oedipus*. She writes, "The riddle of origin that the Oedipus myth is supposed to constitute, first, as a crisis, then as a resolution of order and degree, was essentially canceled by the Atlantic trade, as the 'crisis,' for all intents and purposes, has continued on the other side, the vantage from which I am writing" (732). See Spillers, "Psychoanalysis and Race."
18. Khanna, *Dark Continents*, 174. See Fanon's footnote on Lacan in *Black Skin, White Masks*, 124–26n25. Also see Marriott, *Whither Fanon?*, 67–68.
19. I borrow from Seshadri-Crooks, "Primitive as Analyst."
20. Pandolfo, *Knot of the Soul*, 174.
21. Copjec, cited in El Shakry, Pursley, and McKusick, "Introduction," 273.
22. Khanna, *Dark Continents*, 64. For more on psychoanalysis and historicism, see Copjec, *Read My Desire*.
23. Khanna, *Dark Continent*, 64. To think against augmenting the history of psychoanalysis, I am thinking of the importance of the "act" or "leap" in Lacanian theory and in the work of Fanon. See Pluth, *Signifiers and Acts*; and Pandolfo, *Knot of the Soul*, 243.
24. El Shakry, Pursley, McKusick, "Introduction," 271.
25. Torok, "Story of Fear," 186.
26. Torok, "Story of Fear," 186.
27. Ewing, *Arguing Sainthood*, 196–97.
28. Forrester, *Seductions of Psychoanalysis*, 154.
29. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Men," 92.
30. Marriott, *Whither Fanon?*, 64.
31. Pandolfo, *Knot of the Soul*, 243.
32. This would be a discursive tradition as Talal Asad has importantly theorized. El Shakry notes this debt; see El Shakry, *Arabic Freud*, 117n6; hereafter cited in the text.
33. Encounter, however, might not be the right word since, for Pinto, to speak of encounter ignores "cross-fertilization," and "intertwined pre-histories mediated by roving ideas and narratives." Pinto, *Doctor and Mrs. A.*, 22; hereafter cited in the text.
34. This does not mean Pinto dismisses Satya Nand. Still, Pinto is ambivalent toward Satya Nand, writing his sections can "easily dominate the case and they are certainly where we are meant to look." But against this analysis, "there are also moments when it feels as if a door flies open and the wind blows those papers to the floor, when I am startled into looking elsewhere, looking outside" (87).
35. Pinto does admit "that there is something about Hindu mythopoeics (to stand in a place) that makes this form of engagement possible" (30). There are, moreover, historical reasons including "revolutionary Bhagat Singh's ethic unifying death and hope" (25).
36. Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XXI: Les non-dupes errent*, cited in Fink, *Lacan on Love*, 206.

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## AGAINST CONTEXTUALIZATION: AN ETHICS OF ENCOUNTER

William Mazzarella

It’s curious how persistent the most tedious questions about the lives of psychoanalysis outside Euro-American contexts have been. Questions like Is the Oedipal complex really universal? or, Does Sigmund Freud’s

scheme of ego, id, and superego make sense in societies with very different understandings of what a person is? It’s not that these questions are irrelevant or entirely pointless; rather, they are middling, ethno-sociological questions, stopping at the level of cultural categories. They pose as guarantors of the cultural integrity of worlds in other times and places. But in fact, they tend both to reify those other worlds as other and to naturalize the bogus neutrality of the institutional locations from which the questions are asked and adjudicated.

One of the great virtues of the two books I’ll be discussing here—Sarah Pinto’s *The Doctor and Mrs. A.* and Omnia El Shakry’s *The Arabic Freud*, both of them books about psychoanalysis in non-Western worlds—is that they pose much more interesting, twinned questions. These are eminently psychoanalytic questions. They are also important metatheoretical questions for social inquiry of the sort that anthropologists and historians do: the question of the ethics of encounter, which is also the question of the ethics of interpretation.

*The Doctor and Mrs. A.* grows out of just a few pages of an obscure book by a crankily creative Indian psychoanalyst, Dev Satya Nand. These pages describe a case that Pinto estimates as having taken place in the early 1940s in Lahore, when a young well-born woman, recently married although, at twenty-one, already troubled and disillusioned, enters into therapy with Dr. Satya Nand. Mrs. A. has dreams of awakening the masses of India’s sleeping villages, although it quickly becomes clear that *the village* stands, in Mrs. A.’s inner world, both for innocence and for other, more uneasily sexual kinds of awakenings. “Her marriage was sliding into unhappiness, there were suspicions of infidelity, she was childless and concerned about what this meant to her in-laws. Moreover, marriage constricted what had once been a world wide open with possibility.”<sup>1</sup>

*The Arabic Freud*, in turn, tracks the travels of Freudian thought in mid-1950s Egypt. From the beginning, it is preoccupied with that particular practice of encounter that we call translation, such that, for example, a concept from medieval Sufi thought, *al-la-shu’ur*, may both express and rework the Freudian *unconscious*. El Shakry’s task is the reconstruction of a “philosophical encounter”<sup>2</sup> between, to put it as baldly as some others might, medieval and modern discourses of ethics and eros. In language partly resonant with Pinto’s, El Shakry intends this reconstruction to refute such persistent binaries as “modern or traditional, Western or non-Western, autonomous or heteronomous” (2), as