We are working on an important case.

John hands me a long scroll of photocopied documents.

As it unrolls in my hands, it becomes increasingly unwieldy.

It folds back on itself,

developing a long crease, threatening to tear…. 

I wake up.

I still dream of my work with John Forrester. This ‘scroll’ dream came six years after John’s untimely death in 2015, not long after I received the collected responses to Freud in Cambridge from Sarah Marks, editor of this book review symposium. It seems fitting to share as it probably connects to the call for me to respond in turn, necessarily without him. Our book takes a measure of the ways in which a set of Freudian ideas about the workings of the human mind, about the unconscious and sexuality, affected men and women in early 20th-century Cambridge, and shaped their thinking across a host of disciplines ranging from anthropology to education, biology to literature, geography to philosophy. Diverse ideas and practices arising in this fertile episode – participant observation, the Malting House experiment in
childhood education, the ecosystem concept, Practical Criticism, Therapeutic Positivism – all bear traces of psychoanalytic encounter. *Freud in Cambridge* also addresses how, in several instances, psychoanalysis did not travel or take hold in any lasting way. But, mainly, our book is about dreams. We conjure a time and a place when a dream could change the course of an academic’s life.

There was more to my dream. Before the scroll scene, the Cambridge historian and philosopher of science Simon Schaffer appears in a coffee line-up of academics and makes cordial introductions. A teenage version of my mother playfully grabs my arm, pulling me away from the queue and outside. Although Steve Pile’s commentary offers a beautiful model for free association in my response to the group, I’ll pretty much stop there, conscious of word limits, although the always-remarkable Schaffer, John’s friend and colleague, gets a cameo in what follows. My mother, Jody Cameron – a champion reader who provided a second pair of eyes when the proofs arrived – reminds me now of all the people who helped along the way.

Long after John’s passing, many people and things/beings associated with John continued to help with the book. I have written elsewhere about the support we received, the nature of our collaboration, and the dream-journey that started things,1 but here I extend my deep gratitude to the reviewers and the editor and especially to Felicity Callard, who organized the session on *Freud in Cambridge* at the 2018 Association of American Geographers meeting in New Orleans, where Felicity, Clive Barnett, Jessica Dubow, Paul Kingsbury, and Steve Pile gathered in person to first offer their responses. All prod, fold, crease, reinterpret, and extend the work in the most curious, mischievous, and generous of ways. Akin to the wonderful special issue dedicated to John Forrester’s work on the case (Millard and Callard, 2020), this collection of ‘geographical’ voices is more open celebration and active reworking than somber memorial and closed service. Although the reviewers might call themselves geographers, or even psychoanalytic geographers, this is in no way a particularly ‘geographical’ response. Interdisciplinary excitement, the unruly and surprising kind that John found compelling, is alive and well throughout.

For disciplines are always more than we know. As Schaffer (2013: 58) argues in the coffee line, ‘If, as the philosophers of the fin-de-siècle notoriously argued, truths are dead metaphors and scientific instruments are boxed experiments about which one has forgotten that this is what they are, then disciplines are interdisciplines about which the same kind of amnesia has occurred.’ Callard and Fitzgerald (2015: 8) concur and furthermore counsel that if we are ‘at all to make good on the current promise of interdisciplinarity’,

we must stop pinioning people, dead-butterfly-like, into particular slots within disciplinary taxonomies – slots, moreover, that depend on intensely misunderstood histories of (in the broadest sense) scientific inquiry itself, as well as the various intellectual practices, motivations, and affects that have only lately been distributed around the arrangements that today call themselves disciplines. Such pinioning also depends on a strikingly naive view of the actual things of the world; as if people had bits that were distinctively social, and bits that were distinctively natural – as if they were not, in fact, endlessly torqued concatenations of disposition and agency, both human and non-human, and vague, half glimpses of...
which we have only recently decided to encumber with the inadequate terms ‘biological’, ‘social’, ‘psychological’, and so on.

And yet … the responses, however ‘un-disciplined’, perhaps provide clues to why John chose to work with a geographer, albeit an historical one – stressing, as they do, issues like the active role of setting, the imaginative possibilities of different orientations, and self-critical restlessness and bold generosity not just in asking if this history matters but in suggesting new topologies where it might. As an historian who came late in my education to geography and the spatial turn, I was first attracted to precisely these geographical qualities and questions, and it is such an honour to witness these particular exemplary scholars in action.

The delay in publication involves COVID and illness itself, but also numerous other life issues for participants. It is a delay that seems perfectly appropriate for a response to a book whose own process was full of myriad delays, taking 20 years in total to materialize. John’s work on cases fed our book too. The botanical metaphor that begins John’s classic ‘If p, Then What?’ paper (Forrester, 1996), about his case study project with ‘large branching structures that threaten to get out of their author’s control’, could also be applied to the joint project that continued to proliferate in extraordinary ways and repeatedly outgrow updated outlines, word limits, and press deadlines.

As reviewers note politely, it is a big book. Yet, with our General Notes file of nearly a million words plus several boxes of undigitized hard-copy materials, it was always in danger of being much bigger. More unwieldy are the records of the emotional memory work with mostly elderly women and men in their homes and the items gifted from their attics. There remain the uncountable documents from the 18 years of emailed research discussions, including images, news, and revelations, that sustained the project and that we always had intended to go back through methodically for ‘slivers of garlic’, as John called them. We joked the subtitle might be ‘Too Much Garlic’, but there is of course so much not in the book, frequently and unsettlingly refound and re-forgotten, buried, or put aside for something else. One of John’s friends told me she wondered at one point if the book itself had become ‘code for something else’. In responding with approval to the appearance of the co-edited book Rethinking the Great White North: Race, Nature, and the Historical Geographies of Whiteness in Canada in 2011, John said he was very pleased I was busy ‘in all sorts of ways other than with our Great White Elephant’.2 And yet, the fever rarely abated, driven in part by a shared trust in Clifford Geertz’s (2000: xi) notion that the answers to our most general questions – ‘why? how? what? whither?’ – to the degree they have answers, are to be found in the fine detail of a lived life. Along with the compulsions, inundations, and disappointments associated with the ‘life’ that continued to multiply into evermore lives in our study, there was frequent joy and surprise. Many years before the project was over, John wrote: ‘The thing about our project, over all these years now, is that it keeps unfolding new vistas and connections. It continually amazes and delights me.’3

Climbing into the heads of Freudian enthusiasts (à la Thomas Kuhn as historical geographer) meant finding out what they read and talked about and (or, if possible, in) the spaces and places where they did so. What sorts of new thinking, practices, passions, experiments, powers, and relations did psychoanalysis engender? For whom? Where
did it travel? We explored networks of correspondence and psychoanalytic travel routes, reading spaces (bookshops, libraries – for a time I seriously steeped myself in the minutiae of Cambridge University Library book classification), and spaces of instruction and discussion, both formal and informal. We did a lot of imagining what these places of ‘becoming Freudian’ were, and some of the most memorable archival fieldwork involved retracing undergraduate steps in present-day Cambridge lecture theatres, in a former nursery school now owned by Darwin College, in a nearby Cambridge-managed nature reserve, and in Cambridge gardens, such as the one at St. John’s that figured in the ‘Presidency’ dream of W. H. R. Rivers, the dream that ignited his self-analysis. We sometimes went on these forays together by bicycle, an important and surprising seat of psychoanalytic revelation for a few of ‘our characters’, such as the ecologist Arthur Tansley, who, while riding a bike, interpreted his own dream, thus confirming for himself the truth of psychoanalysis. His ensuing detour from ecology to psychoanalysis staked out a path that became emblematic for his generation.

In enriching the history of psychoanalysis, the field methods we employed might productively be applied to other institutional sites well away from Cambridge. Paul Kingsbury recalls his own ‘becoming’ in Virginia Blum’s 1999 graduate seminar at the University of Kentucky. Cambridge psychoanalytic networks can be traced to my own institutional home of Queen’s University, where professor of psychology George Humphrey set his 1937 psychoanalytic thriller Men Are Like Animals in the limestone and lacustrine geographies of southern Ontario.4 In his most popular book, Humphrey earlier flagged The New Psychology and Its Relation to Life, the bestseller that Tansley wrote following his life-changing dream, as the best introduction to Freud (Humphrey, 1923). Although Tansley’s Grantchester house still stands, ‘going back there’ remains an impossible desire, as impossible as the desire to know what was removed from the archive, destroyed or left out, or never created in the first place: ‘The secret is the very ash of the archive’ (Derrida, 1995: 100).

And ‘back there’ undoubtedly was very different for John, a Cambridge ‘insider’ inevitably also exploring/remaking ‘Forrester in Cambridge’, than for me, an international student/research fellow with a young family. While ‘in Cambridge’, I tended to fantasize myself as a plant in the heart of empire, a science follower/agent on task to observe, engage with, report on, and expose a community of knowledge that was socially circumscribed and carefully guarded. Yet together John and I joked that we would dedicate the book to a certain gatekeeper of a key Cambridge archive who repeatedly denied access to each of us. I cannot speak to John’s own possible sense of ‘revenge’, but Steve Pile’s comparison of the book to a public inquiry resonates with my sense of mission at the time. Following my 1997 book Openings about settler-colonial lake drainage and Indigenous dispossession in British Columbia, Tansley’s Cambridge was fundamental to my research on the making of ecological concepts and their entanglements in topos, psyche, empire, and self.5 This was the Cambridge that might be served with a ‘final report’, a meticulous ‘laying out [of] events, actions, timelines, and pathologies’ (Pile, forthcoming).

Tansley was one of our first candidates for the model of Strachey’s ‘English man of science’, the voice for his Standard Edition, but we thought he had to be closer to Freud’s age, perhaps, as John suggested, in the cohort of scientists that included Karl
Pearson, Joseph Larmor, and Charles Sherrington. Although a classics scholar, Arthur Verrall was a strong contender, not just due to age but because Strachey himself noted similarities between Freud and his favourite Cambridge lecturer, as did Verrall’s niece, the psychoanalyst Joan Riviere. At one point our ‘man of science’ was an amalgam of Tansley, Rivers, and Verrall. I do not recall that we considered Pile’s candidate F. W. H. Myers (a founding member of the Society for Psychical Research), but Pile’s proposal and associated implications for this man as an ‘outsider’ whose occult leanings must be denied are compelling. They also suggest additional points to support the case for Verrall. He too was an SPS member, married to the famous medium Margaret Verrall. The SPS introduced many pre-war students to Freud’s writing for the first time, including Strachey himself (pp. 122, 232) and inevitably provides important connective tissue/ectoplasm for the story.

In the end we cannot name for certain the ‘man of science’, although, as Pile indicates, we learn a lot by following multiple possible lines of evidence and the Rivers stream was particularly productive. *Freud in Cambridge* was not, in the end, a public inquiry and did not try to assemble a definitive final report. The best we could do, as Jessica Dubow puts it so generously, was to offer ‘an alternative strain of intelligibility, recasting the scatterings concealed in full view of a history’ (Dubow, forthcoming). As in my ‘scroll’ dream, there would be no unfolding that could allow us or the readers a full view, a glimpse of a synoptic whole, or even, as with 19th-century ribbon maps, a continuous unspooling by hand crank as one travelled through the depicted terrain. Yet the discrete documents photocopied onto the scroll suited the medium because there were vital connections that existed between fragments, discernable mostly thanks to what Adam Phillips (in his preface to Forrester, 2017: xi) highlights as

Forrester’s eye (and ear) for unexpected links; to the spoken and unspoken connections made but not always made explicit. And psychoanalysis, of course, trades in. Forrester’s texts are strangely conducive to odd associations and questions, to associations as questions. He was increasingly interested in cases and collaborations, and always interested in teaching, and in the transmission of knowledge. He also seemed to have read everything.

John was a maverick who valued relationships, a scholar who celebrated unusual links and the marginal characters that allow for surprising connections: I likely would have shared that dream with John, as he sometimes shared his with me. Although the anxiety (that woke me up) was associated with the creasing, such actions also carry connotations of ‘use’, ‘wear’, and life beyond creation. I am deeply grateful for the imaginative ways the reviewers have engaged with the book and spun its materials in other directions: John, I think, would have revelled in their suggestions and insights. Dubow’s sinuous retelling of the story as ‘institutional romance’ indeed quickens the plot. In finding in Freud a ‘more desirable pedigree’, the Freudian enthusiasts at Cambridge were involved in a crisis of generations, demoting their primary disciplinary attachments to seek new ones. Yet this version suggests they don’t really change: Tansley returns to his old love, ecology. They end up, as Freud observed, not ‘getting rid of the father but exulting him’ (quoted by Dubow, forthcoming). In response to the university’s quarantining of psychoanalysis that we note, other psychoanalytic readings also are unsurprised that
psychoanalysis does not take hold. ‘For the analyst’, asks Oren Gozlan, ‘why wouldn’t a theory of conflict be anything other than conflicted and conflicting?’ (2019: 46) Why would the acceptance into a university of a discipline ‘grounded on uncertainty’ not be difficult? Furthermore, as Deborah Britzman (2021) writes, ‘It is still the case that ongoing debate cannot settle the question of whether psychoanalysis and education are compatible.’

While Kingsbury notes some unevenness in our interpretations, Dubow (forthcoming) finds we ‘don’t intrude on [our] subjects’ psychic states (even if this were possible). [Our] point is to reveal the looser – which are also the knottier – scenes behind the more purposive ideals of a science.’ We did tread lightly in dreams, and sometimes perhaps too quietly, especially when considering the ‘purposive ideals’ of science in its imperial context. After the first publication of Tansley’s dream in the History Workshop Journal in 1999 in consultation with his descendants, we revisited it at least once more but still hesitated to go much beyond speculating with Tansley’s own interpretation of his dream, which he bequeathed to the Freud Archive, now held at the Library of Congress. Kingsbury’s (forthcoming) homophony of ‘peers’ for ‘spears’ plays nicely with Tansley’s reading too. Pile’s (forthcoming) critical reflections on the ‘interchangeability of Zulu and savage’ and its ‘conjuring up the latent content of imperial fantasies about African people (of the kind that Frantz Fanon would easily recognise)’ make necessary and crucial linkages to true crimes of the era. Tansley’s student Harry Godwin also dreamt of Black male bodies, the dream image informing his choice of thesis supervisor (Cameron and Forrester, 2000: 228). Rivers had made some anti-racist or non-racist findings in his Torres Straits fieldwork (p. 91), but as Pile rightly argues, Rivers’ reframeings of his ideas about civilization are enmeshed in the Cambridge that is ‘an engine of race and sex and empire’, and the book thus contains material that can inform one’s understanding of how the institutionalization of white supremacy and sexism – backed by science – worked, at least in some sense, for a privileged few.

One of the findings of Freud in Cambridge is that ‘psychoanalysis was not in any sense subversive or external to the established social and professional order’ (p. 643). Yet it contains many stories of people attempting to change themselves. Tansley was one of many who had, as Clive Barnett puts it, ‘a personal disposition towards self-analysis’ (Barnett, forthcoming) Tansley had both absorbed and written about Freud’s third ‘blow’ to men’s self-love and, like the other Cambridge men prone to self-analysis, was aware he was not quite awake to himself. Barnett’s close engagement with John’s discussion of Wittgenstein’s relation with Freud tackles a question the book leaves hanging: ‘why, beyond a simple accounting of intellectual influences’, do connections between Wittgenstein and Freud actually matter? How does the correspondence illuminate the sorts of knowledge they offer? Barnett elucidates further how each of their writings helps us to identify difficulties that lie in the paths towards clarification, and how the purpose of analysis ‘is not so much to make problems disappear, but rather to help to put them into new perspective’ (ibid.). The radical potential, perhaps, is to realize that ‘analysis on its own has no transformative power’. The importance of the relationship of the ‘New Psychology’ to ‘Life’ so reframed is that analysis is no substitution for life: one has to enter the world and get involved in practical and messy struggles for social and ecological justice. And yet, as Daniel Pick (who has followed Freud in Cambridge with incisive feedback since its beginnings) writes, ‘Analysis has a valuable contribution to offer
in examining how we opt to avoid considering even the possibility of other ways of living, or facing square on, “an inconvenient truth” (Pick, 2015: 126). In this way it can be acknowledged that settler-colonial ignorance is symptom only: it is linked to problems that cannot be cured only by knowledge of Canada’s buried legacies of toxic mining and Indigenous genocide, however horrific, meticulous, and conclusive the evidence. Analysis offers not a cure but a nudge to ‘a possible process’ (Phillips, cited in Barnett, forthcoming) of change that, to truly address our deepest and most intractable problems, does not only involve listening to painful conflicts and the difficult making and sustaining of relations over time, but will ultimately entail living science, living life, differently.

_Freud in Cambridge_ is a reminder of a time and a place when it could be a marker of scientific identity to be psychoanalyzed. Cambridge was the science university in the early 20th century: the discovery of psychoanalytic geographies in this place of experiment does not contradict this profile. It fills it in. Yet, as reviewers note, this is more about men’s stories than women’s stories. To conclude, I’d like to address briefly this truth, which is one of the shared regrets that John and I talked about in the weeks before he passed.

Susan Isaacs, co-founder with Geoffrey Pyke of the Malting House School experiment (in which Cambridge took no interest), recalled of her time in Cambridge as an advanced student that ‘the problems of the world outside fall into an unreal distance… Women are essentially intruders there’ (A Manchester Girl, 1913: 173–4). Besides Isaacs, we also consider the psychoanalytic contributions of Alix Strachey, Karin Stephen, and Marie Battle Singer, as well as the ambivalent relations to psychoanalysis of Virginia Woolf and geophysicist Dorothy Wrinch. However, we had hoped to find many more Cambridge women who engaged with Freud, especially women scientists, although we recognized the constraints they would have experienced due to prejudicial policies. The book is filled with Fellows of the Royal Society, but a woman could not be elected a Fellow until 1945. That means we don’t have the detailed notes for women in this period that male members left for their future obituaries. And for other reasons – lack of interest, lack of relatives to keep archives – the records of women scientists in this period appear much harder to come by than those of men.

But we felt they had to be there. We wanted to find, for instance, the papers of Margot Hume, the beloved student that Tansley associated with his dream – the dream that changed the course of his life. What might she have been dreaming about associated with Tansley? Hume became an important vitamin scientist and was in Vienna helping to discover the cause and cure of rickets at the same time Tansley was in analysis with Freud. Her friend Lucy Wills – to whom she imparted her enthusiasm for psychoanalysis – was the first to realize that yeast extracts such as Marmite were effective in treating anaemia in pregnancy, and she discovered folic acid, for which the term _Wills’ factor_ remains a synonym (p. 50). No FRS for her, and no Cambridge degree either. She excelled in her Tripos exams, but women were not allowed to receive them during her time at Cambridge.

Virginia Woolf knew such women: in _A Room of One’s Own_ she writes, ‘Chloe liked Olivia. They shared a laboratory together’; they ‘were engaged in mincing liver … a cure for pernicious anaemia’; they had complex lives that have to be left out of the story, ‘and
thus’, writes Woolf, ‘the splendid portrait of the fictitious woman is much too simple and much too monotonous’ Woolf (2015[1929]: 83.) Margot Hume moved her residence to Cambridge when she retired but kept a ‘botanist’s cottage’ with Lucy Wills, who had become an ardent cyclist, anti-poverty activist, and nature lover. When Wills died, the reflections of ‘a friend’, certainly Hume, were quoted in a Lancet obituary:

Lucy Wills was by nature a scientist rather than a physician. She would probably never have studied medicine if the first world war had not impinged on her life just when her character was assimilating the Freudian doctrine. The objectivity, and honesty of mind, that loyalty to the Freudian doctrine demanded, suited her profoundly in the practice of scientific medicine. (‘Lucy Wills [Obituary]’, 1964: 1226)

Hume’s testament in her friend’s obituary, pruned from an early draft of the book, is also a clear declaration of faith and memory of the vision of Freudianism as being at the heart of what it meant to be a proper early 20th-century scientist. It perhaps tells as much about the cohort and their values as it does about the individuals and their trajectories. Her tribute also makes a nice allegory for our project, as John once remarked. We can’t understand this era of scientific Cambridge without understanding the role of psychoanalysis in people’s lives. And maybe, conversely, we can’t appreciate what psychoanalysis might have been if we don’t know more about this period of Cambridge dreamers, Freudian fieldworkers, occasional mavericks, and vitamin scientists.

Declaration of conflicting interests
The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding
The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Notes
1. Cameron (2001, 2020); see also Freud in Cambridge, Preface and Acknowledgements (pp. xi–xvi).
2. John Forrester, personal communication via email, 29 May 2011.
3. John Forrester, personal communication via email, 14 October 2005, cited in Cameron (2020: 9).
4. For more on this book, listen here: ‘Books@Queen’s: Laura J. Cameron’, Virtual Exhibits, Queen’s University Library, available at: https://virtual-exhibits.library.queensu.ca/books-at-queens/laura-j-cameron/index.html.
5. The resulting thesis, ‘Anthropogenic Natures: Wicken Fen and Histories of Disturbance’ (2000), recently had a small part in informing Steve Water’s project The Song of the Reeds, which led to the 2021 BBC radio drama Song of the Reed: Swallowtail.
6. Oren Gozlan’s paper was delivered to the Scientific Meeting of the Toronto Institute of Psychoanalysis, 16 October 2019. Deborah Britzman’s paper delivered in the same meeting appears as Chapter 12, ‘Even in Cambridge’, in her book Anticipating Education: Concepts for Imagining Pedagogy With Psychoanalysis (Britzman, 2021).

7. Considering the potential dangers of the over-institutionalization of psychoanalysis, Strachey tentatively asked the British Psycho-Analytical Society at its Jubilee Banquet in 1963: ‘Is it worth-while to leave a loophole for an occasional maverick? I don’t know. But I do know that if the curriculum vitae had existed forty years ago you wouldn’t have had to listen to these remarks tonight’ (quoted in Kahn, 1982: 100).

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