I first met Sigmund Freud in Lexington, Kentucky early on in the spring semester of 1999. Virginia Blum introduced him to me in a graduate seminar on psychoanalysis, which counted towards the Social Theory Graduate Certificate, at the University of Kentucky. Not the 5-foot 6-inch Austrian male, of course, but what John Forrester and Laura Cameron call the ‘Absent Great Man’ (p. 2), who is activated by various ‘loose networks’ (ibid.) and ‘paths of transmission’ (p. 614). While my encounter with this latter type of Freud took place seven decades or so after the historical setting of the late John Forrester and Laura Cameron’s monumental yet painstakingly rigorous 700-page and 1971-footnote study, there is a great similarity in terms of the transformative effects that the absent Freud had on the many figures at Cambridge University and on students, including myself during that transformative seminar in Lexington. As Forrester and Cameron deftly show us, an absent though well-known and connected figure who never quite made it to Cambridge can have real, profound, and lasting effects. As a concrete void or ‘vanishing mediator’ (Jameson, 1973), Freud prompted Cambridge undergraduate John Desmond Bernal to write in 1920, ‘I find myself more of a Freudian than any of the others, though I never read a word he wrote’ (quoted on p. 161). Similarly, we learn about Ernest Jones, who in 1922, ‘was clearly … fretting over the prospect of Freud’s arrival in Cambridge’ (p. 196).

Forrester and Cameron’s book also explores the effects Freud had on Cambridge as the result of a surprising number of Cambridge scholars who travelled to Vienna for analysis with Freud himself. On this point, the book provides rich and nuanced insights into what it was like to be analyzed by Freud. Exemplary here is James Strachey’s description:
During the early part of the hour all is vague – a dark hint there, a mystery there –; then it gradually seems to get thicker; you feel dreadful things going on inside you, and can’t make out what they can possibly be; then he begins to give you a slight lead; you suddenly get a clear glimpse of one thing; then you see another; at last a whole series of lights break in on you. (quoted on p. 528)

If the book is all about the ‘non-arrival’ (p. 2) of Freud in Cambridge, then we can usefully consider the effects of this non-event in three ways: places, people and events, and names and naming. Before turning to these themes, which structure my review, it is worth considering another important thesis in the book: that “Freud” and psychoanalysis were inherently a multi-faceted movement and that Cambridge was ‘not a unified university with coherent policies directed from its centre or centres. If initiatives failed in one corner they might find a suitable base somewhere else’ (p. 269). Another related concern of Forrester and Cameron is to understand how the ‘peculiar receptivity of Cambridge intellectual life to psychoanalysis might be attributed to a number of factors … the tradition of psychical research established in the last two decades of the nineteenth century [see also Steve Pile’s review] … and the unique Cambridge configuration of the moral sciences’ (p. 362). It is the collision and mixing of this wider historical backdrop and the particular locale of Cambridge that animates the book’s places, people and events, and names and naming.

**Places in Cambridge**

Illustrating how and why Cambridge played an active and crucial role in the ‘history and geography of psychoanalysis’ (p. 1) and the ‘dissemination’ (p. 5) of Freud’s ideas is arguably the book’s main goal, and indeed contribution. To achieve this, Forrester and Cameron tell us in the introduction that they seek to ‘develop a prosopological method: a collective study of the lives of a group, a population, a cohort … [and their] multiple “life-lines”’ (p. 5). One of the striking features of the book is the importance of not only people’s lives, but also the active role of the many university settings, which are displayed on a handy frontispiece map. Here, Forrester and Cameron show us the dynamic coral reef-like complexity of the ‘academic groves’ (p. 362) of Cambridge, including its societies, lodging houses, college rooms, dons’ living quarters, and very English clubs. Other key contexts include the institutional space of the Malting House Garden School nursery, which is the focus of Chapter 7 and was jokingly described as the ‘pre-genital brothel’ (p. 23). There is also A. G. Tansley’s family home, with (according to James Strachey) its ‘blazing fire in the bedroom, perfect bed, five-course dinner, excellent cooking, claret and port at dinner’ (quoted on p. 47). And so, the book neatly illustrates what it means for someone or something to be in a place like Cambridge. To be in Cambridge means to be enlaced within its inner dramas, but also stretched towards and affected by its outer points of contact and influence (note the topological structure), exemplified by Freud’s clinic in Vienna. The Malting House is again exemplary here, with its ‘inner and outer geographies’ (p. 449) that sought to be truly ‘Freudian in avoiding inhibitions in the scholars [the children] through interference by their teachers. Geoffrey also interpreted Freud as warning against anything
interfering with his son eating old orange peel lying in the middle of any main road and I
can still see him signalling buses, lorries, and cars to stop while his son crouched in the
puddles eating’ (quoted on p. 436).

_Freud in Cambridge_ also documents the powerful role of place in terms of magazines,
diaries, letters, paintings, unpublished manuscripts, journals, and books such as _Die
Traumdeutung_ that circuit through individuals’ libraries in Cambridge and Vienna. It
is also worth noting that there are 45 photographs (many of them alluring, such as one
showing Bertrand Russell with a pram) scattered across the book’s 10 chapters. We
also get insight into how these objects, documents, and scenes comprise the inner
places of Cambridge, including A. A. Milne’s books and verses that propelled
Tansley’s ‘repeated attempt to reveal to Freud the autonomy of English culture with
respect to psychoanalysis – its autonomy in the quest for self-revelation … [and] knowl-
edge of the inner world of the child’ (p. 43). Exemplifying these enlacements of psychical
and material space, we read about the internal censorship of the Cambridge University
Library, ‘which required a special procedure for borrowing…. _Sex and Character_ was
in the notorious S3 category, “S” meaning special. Over the years, “S” developed
other associations for both library workers and users: “S” for Sex and “S” for Sin-bin
… stored up in the phallic tower, enhancing their reputation and mystique’ (p. 143).

**People and events in Cambridge**

The second key contribution of the book is to show the ways in which people’s curios-
ties, passions, and, crucially, personalities – for example, James Strachey’s ‘familiar
mode of character-assassination with rapier wit’ (p. 198) – comprise the history and geog-
raphy of psychoanalysis in Cambridge. The book documents not only many renowned
people closely associated with the psychoanalytic project – such as James Strachey,
‘who would leave the room if a Christian started to hold forth’ (p. 106), or W. H. R.
Rivers, ‘the English Freud’ (the focus of Chapter 3) – but also figures not directly asso-
ciated with psychoanalysis such as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Bertrand Russell, John
Maynard Keynes, and Virginia Woolf, who feature in Chapter 9, titled ‘Bloomsbury
Analysts’. It is interesting to learn how these people are clustered into clubs (‘inevitably
– this is England’ [p. 111]) with their dinners of ‘nine courses and ten speeches’ (ibid.),
and societies with their various meetings and talks, such as the Heretics, ‘which spon-
sored two kinds of meetings’: restricted private ones and public meetings strategically
‘scheduled to clash with Sunday evening chapel’ (p. 108) in order to address ‘above
all … the fundamental irrationality of human beings’ (p. 119). Forrester and Cameron
also illustrate the importance of cohorts, especially how they are divided into pre- and
post-war groups, renowned psychoanalytic organizers, and ‘backroom’ (p. 369) psycho-
analytic organizers (such as John Rickman), as well as the role of their socio-economic
backgrounds before their arrival in Cambridge.

Now, understanding how such people are transformed by Freud’s ideas, flagged in part
of Chapter 4’s title (‘Becoming Freudian’), is another valuable contribution of the book.
Specifically, this process is about the transformation of undergraduate students ‘who
arrived in Cambridge in the wake of the Great War’ (p. 104) and were educated via
‘Discipline Formation – Psychology, English, Philosophy’ (the title of Chapter 5). We
also gain insight into the emergence or the becoming of the modern university, wherein Cambridge University is transformed by and through ‘three sources of change: science, women, and religion’ (p. 104). The intervention of the First World War cannot be underestimated. As Forrester and Cameron write, ‘Virtually every figure in this book … had the direction both of their lives and of their intellectual work dramatically changed by the war’ (p. 138). In terms of falling away from Freudianism or becoming a lapsed Freudian, we also have the influence of the events of ‘the Great Crash, the Depression, the rise of fascism, the politicization of intellectual culture of the 1930s’ (p. 183). Here, we read about the fading of ‘Freudian passion’ (p. 186) for figures like John Desmond Bernal, who, echoing a wider trend, did not get involved in ‘the forming of a new discipline in Cambridge … no Department of Psychoanalysis’ (p. 202). The lack of a new discipline or department of psychoanalysis at a ‘university where so many influential figures were marked by an experience of Freud’ (ibid.) is central to the overlooked story about why psychoanalysis in Cambridge ‘came to an abrupt end’ (p. 6; emphasis in original). Unlike ‘historians committed to a continuist methodology’ (ibid.), Forrester and Cameron tackle this conundrum head-on.

Part of the story involves the eventual professionalization of psychoanalysis with the training of analysts. Forrester and Cameron usefully ask, ‘Did the rise of “official” psychoanalysis put an end to such promiscuous pursuing of knowledge? Did its rise exclude the youthful and restless, fine and inquiring minds, so prominent in Tansley’s network, so central to the ethos of Cambridge, from the circles of psychoanalysis?’ (p. 430). What we do know is that the professionalization of psychoanalysis, that is, the formalization of training and the theoretical and methodological aspects of analytic praxis, gave rise to the well-documented controversies between the Kleinians and the Anna Freudians. While the book provides new insight into these well-known debates, a key contribution is to show the overlooked influence on the professionalization of psychoanalysis exerted by the publication of the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Here, we learn about how various geographies comprised the *Standard Edition’s* production and eventual publication. For example, in the summer of 1945, having handed over editorship of the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* to Adrian Stephen, ‘Strachey was now more ready to take on the task. Jones worked hard to ensure that the project did not escape across the Atlantic to be run by the “one American and six refugees” on the Americans’ Committee’ (p. 593).

**Naming names in Cambridge**

Another important theme of the book is the significance of names and naming. How the name of *Freud* incites people’s desires and fears is central to the issue of Freud being in Cambridge, and England more generally. For Edgar Douglas Adrian, ‘the name “Freud” marked a loss of innocence, both personal and for English culture as a whole. “Freud” marked the end of the golden Edwardian years, the end of honest virtue. The end of illusions about humanity and about oneself’ (p. 102). Obviously, there remains today a certain aura or vibration (as Oscar Wilde’s Lady Bracknell might have put it) to the name *Freud* within and beyond the academy. And so, I enjoyed how the book provided insights into the well-worn complaints lodged against or lobbed at the signifier *Freud*,...
such as his biological reductionism. But Forrester and Cameron sometimes challenge these assumptions, for example, showing us Freud’s take on his *Three Essays on Sexuality*, which are ‘deliberately independent of the findings of biology….. My aim has rather been to discover how far psychological investigation can throw light upon the biology of the sexual life of man’ (quoted on p. 20). Relatedly, we have Ernest Jones ‘worrying to Freud about biology that he longs for Tansley to be able to take over’ (p. 21). Desire and the moniker of *Freud* also get activated through the networks of metaphors and metonymies in dreams that are themselves active agents. Notable here is Tansley’s dream (the title of Chapter 2). When Tansley was ‘asked about Freud’s influence upon him, he replied by saying that influence was minimal, and offered as proof the dream he had had long before meeting or even reading Freud’ (p. 31). The tropes and threads of dreams continue soon after in the sections about ‘Rivers the dreamer’ (pp. 65–78) and about Ernest Pickworth Farrow’s interest in psychoanalysis, which was ‘rekindled by a dream provoked by business worries’ (p. 129).

**Conclusions**

My review nears its end, and so let me pose a few questions and critiques. It should be noted that Forrester and Cameron do not shy away from a Freudian interpretation, that is to say, a psychoanalysis of the Freudian followers in the book. For example, the decided lack of “splitting” (p. 53; emphasis in original) in Tansley’s botany, or Tansley’s writing of a book as an ‘attempt to master … emotions’ (p. 54). Forrester and Cameron’s use of psychoanalytic theories to understand the historical figures, though interesting, is somewhat uneven (the tactic appears here and there in the book) and tentative insofar as it evinces a certain distanciation from psychoanalytic concepts by the use of the inverted commas. I think it would have been useful, or at least interesting, if Forrester and Cameron had spent more time on these maneuvers and attempted to link these interpretations to the wider arguments of the book. For example, when I read about the ‘spears’ in Tansley’s dream, I couldn’t help but wonder if this was also a homophone for his ‘peers’. Also, what about the role of voyeurism in the Malting House School’s ‘observation gallery, rather akin to a bird hide for ornithological fieldwork, from which visitors and teachers could watch children without disturbing them’ (p. 450)? That said, we do get good insight into excessive uses of psychoanalysis to understand history. For example, Rivers’ proposition that ‘France’s exaggerated nervous fear of Germany is partly due to the sexual institution in France of “coitus interruptus”, which produces excitement and nervous fear and therefore aggression for the individual…. As for Russia, she has found a fixation in the oral stage’ (quoted on p. 152).

As may be obvious in this review, the sheer amount of diligent archival research drives the arguments, and indeed the contributions, of this book. There is an incredible amount of detail that doesn’t just tell us more about the history and geography of psychoanalysis; Forrester and Cameron’s archival research even corrects our accepted understandings of the reception of Freud, and of psychoanalysis more generally. For example, Forrester and Cameron alert us to the failure of the editors of a Wittgenstein book to note their sources (see p. 339, n. 385). There’s also footnote 85 on page 32, which provides unique insights into the date, copying process, and meaning of stamped words on the cover sheet for
Tansley’s ‘THE DREAM’. I do wonder, however, about the massive amount of archival work in those 26 archive sources in four different countries. Were there any significant methodological stumbling blocks? Did the authors catch what Jacques Derrida (1995: 19) called ‘archive fever’ by becoming ensnared in the ‘archive drive’ that is caught up in the fear of forgetfulness and threat of destruction? I must confess, at times, I felt myself under the sway and sweat of archive fever as a result of the overwhelming proliferation of historical names, and how these famous names referenced other less famous names: names naming names! We read about the influences on Bertrand Russell, who ‘is in the grips of the explanatory machine that Paul Ricoeur would later describe as the “hermeneutics of suspicion” derived from Marx, Freud and Nietzsche and which would be so tempting to intellectuals and theorists in the period from 1920 on’ (p. 321). And we learn about Wittgenstein’s critiques of psychoanalysis, which seem to echo the binary debates in the history of the discipline of geography, concerning reasons versus causes, explanation versus description, experiments versus mythology (pp. 340–1). By the time I reached Chapter 6, ‘The 1925 Group’, tracking all the names and their naming became quite the task. And then later in Chapter 10, we encounter roll calls such as ‘Wittgenstein, Malinowski, Namier, Popper, Berlin, Gombrich, Eysenck, Klein, Deutscher’ (p. 629).

Wittgenstein is a precursor to much of the 21st-century skepticism towards Freud. Much like Wittgenstein writing in a 1945 letter to Norman Malcolm, today, there are many researchers who regard Freud’s work as ‘full of fishy thinking & his charm & the charm of his subject is so great that you may easily be fooled. He always stresses what great forces in the mind, what strong prejudices work against the idea of psychoanalysis. But he never says what an enormous charm that idea has for people, just as it has for Freud himself’ (quoted on p. 339). Such a statement highlights a question, which was first introduced to me by Virginia Blum, about the extent to which psychoanalysis is capable of psychoanalyzing itself. If the idea that the past, present, and future are never completely separate from one another is a central tenet of psychoanalysis, then *Freud in Cambridge* is truly a royal road to an understanding of a pivotal historical and geographical juncture in the project of psychoanalysis. Such a project is riven not only with lively ruptures, alliances, and detours, but also with unexpected limits and non-events that continue to define psychoanalysis today. As Cameron and Forrester conclude, ‘Freud’s psychoanalysis never quite arrived in Cambridge’ and the ‘promising disciplinary alliances – with psychology, English, anthropology – ultimately failed to materialize’ (p. 613).

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