

Reviews: *Freud in Cambridge*. John Forrester and Laura Cameron. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 2017. 695pp. ISBN 978-0-521-86190-8.

***Psychoanalysis in Britain, 1893-1913: Histories and Historiography*. Philip Kuhn. Lexington Books: London and New York. 2017. 444pp. ISBN 978-1-498-50522-2.**

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This review is dedicated to the memory of John Forrester (1949 – 2015).

On February 10, 1958, Mervyn Jones visited his father Ernest Jones in University College Hospital London, for what would be the final time. Now aged 79, Jones was incurably ill with liver cancer, bed bound and delirious with pain. Occasionally lapsing into renditions of hymns he had not heard since his Sunday school days in Gowertown, Wales, he was otherwise dictating portions of his unfinished autobiography, *Free Associations*. As Mervyn recalled in his own memoir, *Chances*:

He was dictating a sentence to my mother, to the effect that he had been the first person outside Vienna to take up Freud's ideas. When the sentence was read over to him, he decided it was unfair to Jung. I suggested giving Jung a footnote: 'too important', my father said. I tried to work in an extra clause: 'makes the sentence clumsy', he objected. That was my last memory of him. Ernest Jones died the next day. (1987: 147)

So it was that Jones, on his deathbed, remained bothered by a pair of problems inherited from Freud – problems, largely under sway of mis-identification with the 'official' co-constructed Freud/Jones account of the early history of psychoanalysis, still seducing the majority seeking to tell the history of the 'psychoanalytic cause', as Freud liked to call it. Namely: how to guarantee priority of place for the truly converted, the loyal followers and, therefore, what to do about immunising 'Freudian' psychoanalysis from the part played by its various dissenters and defec-

tors, especially the ‘crown prince’ of traitors, Carl Jung.

Psychoanalysis has always been dubious of histories claiming auto-authorisation for themselves. Except, so it would seem, when it comes to the history of psychoanalysis itself. There’s just too much blatant wish-fulfilment about such projects. Life is always messier than that and the repressed, after all, always eventually shows up again sooner or later. Because what are such histories if not someone’s dream or fantasy stamped with approval, certified for shared belief? Like all dreams and fantasies such approved histories never stop speaking of the unofficial histories they serve to silence, the events they are supposed to suppress.

It should be no surprise then, that it is precisely a forgotten dream that provides a vital but overlooked clue for a radical reassessment of the formative years of psychoanalysis in Britain. Sometime in 1916, Arthur Tansley – botanist, ecologist and the man who introduced the notion of an ‘ecosystem’ into scientific discourse – had a dream that would change the course of his life. Its impact would eventually see him resign his post at Cambridge University, temporarily abandoning his ecological research to spend a year on Freud’s couch in Vienna. Despite never training as an analyst, Tansley’s dream sparked a lifelong study of and involvement with psychoanalysis. Long revered as one of the foremost natural scientists of his generation, esteemed for having professionally established ecological science in Britain, few if any now recall Tansley as the 1920 author of the first and bestselling book of its time on psychoanalysis: *The New Psychology and its Relation to Life*. Reprinted twice within eight months and translated into Swedish and German, it sold over 10,000 copies in Britain and 4,000 copies in the USA in under a year. Comparatively, *Psycho-Analysis*, written and published the same year by founder member of The British Psychoanalytical Society, Barbara Low, managed a little over 4,000 sales.

In many ways, Tansley is the hero of the late John Forrester’s and Laura Cameron’s ground-breaking and meticulously researched new history of the arrival of psychoanalysis in Britain, *Freud in Cambridge*. In conjunction with Philip Kuhn’s similarly painstakingly documented and evidenced *Psychoanalysis in Britain, 1893-1913: Histories and Historiog-*

raphies, 2017 will surely stand as the moment our knowledge and understanding of the earliest arrival of psychoanalysis in Britain was definitively revised. As Forrester and Cameron demonstrate, ‘by following the trail’ of Tansley and his dream, it is possible to ‘discover that the early history of psychoanalysis in England was by no means confined to the professional and institutional lines that Jones and even Freud, had in mind’ (2017: 8). Building on Forrester’s and Cameron’s foregrounding of Tansley’s dream, against the platitudes of authorised histories, I would suggest that it is precisely Tansley’s metaphor of an ecosystem – a non-stratified web without a centre, a community of mutually interdependent living and non-living organisms – that offers the best image for the development and growth of psychoanalysis, both in its early years and right up to the present day.

This is a history that recounts the enormous impact psychoanalysis had in almost all areas of British life, extending well beyond the remit of the official Freud/Jones narrative. In the intellectual and institutional sphere, it problematises the standardly accepted accounts of psychoanalysis’ lines of transmission and dissemination, reframing some of the most far reaching questions that can be raised concerning the relationship of psychoanalysis to literature, philosophy, the medical, empirical and human sciences. Outside the privileged sphere of academic interest and intellectual inquiry, it is also a history that casts the rapidly changing nature of popular culture, morals and sentiments in the first thirty years of twentieth century Britain, in a new light.

The question of how, exactly, psychoanalysis initially took root on British shores, has long been understudied, obscured and side-lined from scrutiny. The almost exclusively circulated and repeated version, puts the successful spread of British psychoanalysis down to the tireless organising, relentless agitating and advocating of Jones. And, despite his own personal mythologizing, there is no doubting Jones’ crucial and pivotal role in this history. However, the authorised version he first conceived in fidelity to Freud, focusing on the unfolding of psychoanalysis as centred in London and invariably tied to the activities of The Institute of Psychoanalysis, masks the far richer and broader context of the early

British reception, distorting and diminishing the nature and character of the extensive excitement and inquisitiveness surrounding psychoanalytic thinking, that went well beyond a handful of languid bohemians and pensive intellectuals.

In this ‘hidden’ history, psychoanalytic ideas were in wide circulation significantly before Jones’ standardly accepted claim to have been the first to grasp their importance and his aborted initial attempt to institutionalise them, fleeing London in professional disgrace to continue his proselytising in Toronto. Amongst ‘Mind Healers’, as Kuhn calls them, of all stripes – sexologists, asylum psychiatrists, hypnotists, experimental psychologists, progressive educationalists, spiritualists, Cambridge philosophers, anthropologists, economists, botanists and figures who would soon find fame as the Bloomsbury literati – early twentieth century Britain witnessed an extraordinary enthusiasm for the ‘new science’ of psychoanalysis. Specialist interest permeated into coverage and debate in the popular press, so that psychoanalytic idioms readily made themselves comfortable within the everyday speech of homespun-wisdom and folk-psychology, heard in conversations in shop queues and at bus stops, in towns and cities across the country. The phenomenal popularity of Tansley’s 1920 book, should alone attest to the appetite for all-things psychoanalytic in diverse circles of the period, extending far beyond the leisured curiosity of the upper-middle-classes.

Forrester and Cameron write of the ‘discovery’ of the early history of psychoanalysis in Britain, although they might better have written of its ‘rediscovery’, which is closer to the sense of what they are in fact at pains to convey. Because even if ‘the Jones Account’ – as Kuhn sarcastically refers to it – is still popularly accepted and widely repeated (for instance, it is referenced in the second sentence on Jones’ Wikipedia page) both studies make plain how much of the broad outlines of the ‘revisionist’ history, has long been available if only we had bothered to look for it and speak it up. Many of the major landmarks of this context, to which the Forrester and Cameron and Kuhn studies contribute new additions and supplement with rich detail, have been well known for at least the last twenty years.

Largely, this is thanks to Bob Hinshelwood's path-breaking 1995 article, 'Psychoanalysis in Britain: points of cultural access 1893-1918'. However, public record of the early history predates Hinshelwood by at least fifty years. For instance, already in 1945, in his memorial to David Eder – Zionist, socialist and, almost certainly no matter what Jones may have insisted upon, the actual first person in Britain to *practice* psychoanalysis in the narrow 'classical' sense of that term – Edward Glover would recall in vivid detail that:

The later course of psycho-analysis in England differed from that followed in other European countries. That it ultimately secured a large measure of acceptance and prestige in lay quarters was due to a considerable extent to the attitudes of certain young intellectual groups. In the early 'twenties, for example, an open-minded attitude to psychoanalysis was an essential part of the equipment of any young Cambridge post-graduate having pretensions to cultural development. Not, by the way, that this was true of his academic mentors, who remained as atrophic in imagination as any other habit-ridden animal. There were, of course, many other groups and many discerning individuals ready to offer intellectual hospitality to the new ideas. And so in the course of time Freudian theories percolated in a bowdlerised form, from the gardens of Hampstead and the squares of Bloomsbury, to the drawing-rooms of Kensington. Soon they were to find their way to the maid's pantry. Everywhere and everyday in bus, tube, and the editorial columns of popular daily newspapers a new jargon has come to life – 'wishful thinking', 'complexes', 'repressions', 'inhibitions', 'sublimations', 'inferiority feelings', etc. (Glover 1945: 92-93).

It is this psychoanalytic impulse, to insist upon a long overdue conversation around the unknown-known, that gives both the Kuhn and Forrester and Cameron studies their sense of urgency. In what, for both books, is otherwise a thicket of document and dusty detail, their narratives are brimming with sparkling little novelties, alive with anecdote and

animated by a compelling readability. Partly, this is due to the wealth of biographical material they offer, the delight the reader has in being plunged into the subterranean and eccentric lives of the famous and the long forgotten alike. But behind this is the real urgency, the quiet indignation as to why this history has been neglected for so long in the face of so much readily available and widely accessible evidence, both inside and outside the archives.

Kuhn, whose reconstruction focuses on the reception and integration of psychoanalysis into the lively activities of early twentieth century Britain's indigenous psychotherapeutic culture, places the overwhelming majority of blame at Jones' door. 'This book argues', Kuhn finger-wags at the start, 'that the entry of psychoanalysis into British medical culture was far more complex than the Jones Account long since bankrupt by its forger's counterfeit coin' (xiii). Kuhn's stern verdict is that it was his 'terror of subaltern obscurity', that 'impelled Jones to write the early history as a cover story for his absurdly implausible claim to have started practicing psychoanalysis in 1905 or 1906' (ibid).

I wonder, however, whether Kuhn ironically comes close to falling prey, in an inverted fashion, to what Forrester and Cameron identify as a consequence of the need by the early psychoanalysts for tales of frontiersmen heroics, a need that has since encouraged either sycophantism amongst followers or predictable ad hominem attacks from sceptics. This is what they identify as psychoanalytic histories having resulted in being 'overly influenced by two crude models' (2017: 2). Such models, when compared to the epistemologically sophisticated historiographies of other disciplines, are as frequently methodologically naïve as they are laughably self-congratulating or zealously character assassinating.

The first, is what Forrester and Cameron call the 'Great Man' model, 'in which specific individuals have decisive influence in turning history their way'. The second, is 'the bureaucratic transplant model, in which the oversight of the International Psycho-Analytic Association (IPA) and its sub-committee the International Training Committee determined the forms and procedures for establishing psychoanalysis throughout the world'. In Britain, the two accounts dovetail in the figure of Jones, 'as the

individual though his campaigning, through his writings and through his incessant organising, created the British Psycho-Analytical Society (BPAS) in 1919 and founded the Institute of Psycho-Analysis in London in 1926' (ibid). Both the Kuhn and Forrester and Cameron studies, reject such blunt models in favour of foregrounding what Kuhn describes as 'a series of interconnected and disconnected histories differently articulated from that monocular, teleological account of the early history of British psychoanalysis first laid down by Ernest Jones' (2017: xiii).

Much apparently therefore depends on Jones' stubborn determination to distort the sequence and scope of events, guaranteeing him a pioneering pole-position. Despite the detail that Kuhn brings to support his case against Jones, I personally finished his study feeling that the 'Jones as villain' cake was a little overegged. This does a disservice to Kuhn's exacting scholarship, leaving the reader with a sense that his suspicions and resentments occasionally taint his neutrality and balance as a researcher. There is also not much that is new here – on the Jones score, that is: Jones has long been derided for his many failings and the problems he brought to psychoanalysis, so that I kept longing for something of his personal story to manifest itself. This is the story of the poor-boy from Wales who needed to make a name for himself, to distinguish himself from all the other Ernest Jones' of Wales. In the end, Jones dragged himself to the top of the pile above the old-money Bloomsbury bohemians making up a rump of the first-generation British psychoanalysts, who had simply waltzed in and made themselves at home as if they already owned the place. Which, basically, they did: Melanie Klein's first lecture to a British audience was...in the drawing room of Karin and Adrian Stephen's town house...in Bloomsbury.

Even though psychoanalysis never became a formally established discipline within British universities – unlike many of the other 'new sciences' that emerged in the period, such as anthropology – and despite its increasing derision from the medical and psychiatric profession as the twentieth century wore on, its language and concepts have continually proven to be astonishingly vital and durable, well outliving their fashionable moment in the drawing rooms of WC1. Straddling both the ex-

clusive enclaves of intellectuals and finding expression in the folkloric wisdom of popular opinion, psychoanalysis has shown that it is not just a detached ‘Grand Theory’, in C. Wright Mills’ sense. Rather, it is something much closer to the psychological common-sense of an entire epoch, in the way that the language of liberalism – with its talk of freedom, democracy and equality – is so often taken to be something of shared political common-sense, even if we are living through an age that is considerably challenging that notion. Indeed, the ascent of liberalism and psychoanalysis at the same moment in time, are surely not unconnected. As Forrester explained in an interview with Eli Zaretsky in 2012:

In Cambridge in the 1920s, the upper-middle-class elites in the making were wide open to the appeal of a scientific ‘banner’, under which to advance a technocratic solution to social and epistemic problems: a new science to replace religion, a science based morality, like Darwinism, in the form of Darwinism, to answer the crises presented by the Great War – the collapse of Christian morality and capital, simultaneously. In the 1930s they were to look for answers in Marxism and the ideal of social planning; but in the 1920s it looked as if psychology would supply the answer. In addition, these were the elites that also often took on the liminal position of bohemian lifestyles and moral codes and outlook. (Forester & Zaretsky 2016: 141-2).

But Forrester’s stress upon a ‘history from above’ or a ‘history driven by elite tastes’ model in this interview, as indeed in much if not all of *Freud in Cambridge*, is really only a small part of the story, giving a select few far more significance and influence than they probably in fact had in the grand scheme of things. Instead, it is when Kuhn is not busy score settling with Jones, that his exhaustive research on long neglected early British ‘Mind Healers’, allows us to appreciate the multifarious ways in which psychoanalysis established itself in Britain. This was not only via elite intellectual life, but also through the long-forgotten practices of what might be called more modest women and men of medicine – those often

dismissed as ‘quacks’ – working at the margins of established medical culture. Whilst psychoanalysis was to remain something of a hoped-for ‘theoretical’ answer amongst the intellectual elites, it rapidly declined in ‘clinical’ popularity amongst more bread-and-butter practitioners seeking to practice large-scale psychotherapeutics amongst the less lavishly incomered, if in fact incomered at all. Mostly, this was because of the now-familiar reasons that psychoanalysis demanded daily sessions, long treatments and charged hefty fees, making it both clinically impractical and financially unaffordable to all but those with larger salaries and leisurely schedules. After a brief moment as the new *Weltanschauung* for British intellectuals and a possible new tool for the jobbing psychotherapist, psychoanalysis quickly faded from view again, its dream being kept alive by a handful of the more literary and artistically inclined even if many of its core sentiments continued to persist in everyday speech and wisdom.

The stories and wealth of information contained in these two, vast works of scholarship, will take at least a generation of further debate before they are even partially assimilated into psychoanalysis’s sense of itself. If there is one lesson I would like to see learned from them, it is that we finally have the hard evidence – at least in the British context – to definitively disrupt the snooty notion of the ‘purity’ and ‘exclusivity’ of psychoanalysis, its transmission and who has historical claim to its institutions and practices. Psychoanalysis has always been a hybrid entity, whose identity has been in permanent contestation since its inception. Its centres are many, and the sites that it operates in and from are multiple and diverse, so there can be no monopoly on the ‘right’ or ‘true’ version of psychoanalysis, although this insurgent counter-history has always had to struggle hard against the prevailing forces of ‘official’ psychoanalysis, that seek to erect a cordon sanitaire around it.

At long last, it is finally possible for the serious student of psychoanalytic history to zoom out and see psychoanalysis as being far from an exclusively (if mainly) London-centric phenomenon, tied to the activities of a few intrepid patrician types associated with the founding of the BPaS, waging a lonely campaign against a prevailing tide of intellectual cant, moral hypocrisy and social conservatism. In fact, psychoanalysis

met with a huge amount of enthusiasm and was widely debated and discussed amongst broad groups of people, indicating that its ascent had as much to do with real material, social, economic and cultural changes at the start of the twentieth century, as with the fleeting tastes of modernist intellectuals and the self-appointed stewards and custodians of high-culture. Perhaps this also helps to explain why, despite so much persistent hostility, psychoanalysis has managed to survive in both popular and ‘radical’ intellectual forms: within it, psychoanalysis contains something that resists the bourgeois milieu in which it was founded and to which its ‘official’ gatekeepers are continually seeking to (re)confine it.

Curiously, for two enormous works of history, I was left wondering less about the past and more than ever about the future of psychoanalysis. How much longer can psychoanalysis survive as both a theory and a therapeutic practice? If the rise of psychoanalysis was in fact bound to the rise of liberal social and political sentiments and institutions, as Forrester argues, and we in our own age are living through a sustained challenge to the great liberal shibboleths, we might surely wonder about the form the subsistence of psychoanalysis might take, if it subsists at all. I have a sense that the submerged histories of an age can only be written when there is no longer a need to keep them submerged – that is, when an age is waning or has already waned. Earlier, I suggested that borrowing from Tansley the de-centred metaphor of the ecosystem to describe the history and spread of psychoanalysis, was better suited than the standard top-down metaphor, we have become accustomed to. But the ecosystem was Tansley’s dream, as the top-down model was Jones’ life-long project and death-bed reverie. Do we not need our own dream about psychoanalysis? As the quintessentially hackneyed ‘postmodern’ metaphor, the idea of an ecosystem arrives to us as already quaintly dated, extensively well-worn in the postmodern ‘literature’. Perhaps, as some weary cynics say, we have exhausted all metaphors. Or perhaps, as other weary cynics say, metaphors only occur to us once they are already spent and past their sell-by-date.

Either way, it is time to take the risk of dreaming again. Neither Jones’ ‘egcosystem’ dream of unending fidelity to the proper name above,

which we hope will elevate us beyond ourselves, nor Tansley's 'ecosystem' dream of the web-of-life, where the periphery is the centre and all members are laterally arranged in mutual co-dependence. A new dream. A dream for our times. *Freud in Cambridge* and *Psychoanalysis in Britain* arrive not to set the past straight, but to jolt us out of the complacency of the present to ponder the uncertainty of the future. Because the authors have done their job right, they return us to the task of dreaming anew a fresh therapeutic theory and practice, embodied in institutions freed from structures belonging to the past. It is our task, in our moment, to dream institutions, practices and theories that speak to those forms of human suffering and disenfranchisement we see emerging in our consulting rooms, amidst the dark times dawning around us.

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