



Photo Eric Fultén, courtesy of Tansley Collection.

**A. G. Tansley in 1949 holding a fen orchid, Newbridge Fen, Co. Wicklow, Ireland, during meeting of the International Phytogeographic Excursion, 1949.**

## ‘A nice type of the English scientist’: Tansley and Freud *by Laura Cameron and John Forrester*

I dreamed that I was in a sub-tropical country, separated from my friends, standing alone in a small shack or shed which was open on one side so that I looked out on a wide open space surrounded by bush or scrub. In the edge of the bush I could see a number of savages armed with spears and the long pointed shields used by some South African native tribes. They occupied the whole extent of the bush-edge abutting on the open space, but they showed no sign of active hostility. I myself had a loaded rifle, but realized that I was quite unable to escape in face of the number of armed savages who blocked the way.

Then my wife appeared in the open space, dressed entirely in white, and advanced towards me quite unhindered by the savages, of whom she seemed unaware. Before she reached me the dream, which up to then had been singularly clear and vivid, became confused, and though there was some suggestion that I fired the rifle, but with no knowledge of who or what I fired at, I awoke.

Sir Arthur Tansley, F. R. S., ‘The Dream’

Arthur Tansley had this dream some time during the First World War, when he was working at the Ministry of Munitions in London.<sup>1</sup> It was, he later made very clear, one of the major turning points in his life. From this dream came his interest in psychoanalysis.

On 6 April 1922, Sigmund Freud wrote to Ernest Jones in London:

'Tansley has started analysis last Saturday. I find a charming man in him, a nice type of the English scientist. It might be a gain to win him over to our science at the loss of botany'.<sup>2</sup> Such information was the staple of the correspondence between Jones and Freud that comprised some 671 letters over a thirty-year period to Freud's death. Implicit in such exchanges was the sustaining of the joint project that kept these two men, never soul mates, bound together – the fate and future of psychoanalysis – as a theory, a therapy and an institutional movement.

By following the trail revealed by this little snippet about an analysis begun in Vienna in the spring of 1922, we will 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. And then, by focusing on Tansley, we will gain a more balanced and more intriguing sense of the intellectual vitality and novelty of the set of ideas and practices spawned by Freud. In addition, we will be drawn into speculating about the historical significance of dreams and their interpretation, which, following Freud, many in the twentieth century have come to regard as 'the royal road to the unconscious'.<sup>3</sup>

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It is the very implausibility of Tansley's involvement in psychoanalysis that, oddly enough, makes him so representative. He was, as Freud endearingly described him in his eccentric but precise English, 'a nice type of the English scientist' – and a distinguished one at that. Born in central London on 15 August 1871, Arthur George Tansley was the second child and only son of Amelia Lawrence and George Tansley – the 'exceptional people' to whom, at the end of his life, he would attribute the fact that his own Oedipus complex was 'almost negligible'.<sup>4</sup> George had a good business, organizing society functions; he also taught at the Working Man's College, where his real heart and enthusiasm lay. Arthur was educated at Highgate School; he went on to University College, London (UCL), to study the sciences; then in 1890 entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where he obtained a double first in the Natural Sciences Tripos in 1893–4. During his final year, he assisted his first teacher, the botanist F. W. Oliver, in teaching and research at UCL. Oliver aroused Tansley's interest in fern-like plants and shared Tansley's interests in the new subject of ecology. Tansley taught and researched at UCL for the next twelve years with Oliver and other colleagues, such as F. F. Blackman and Marie Stopes, with whom he would form long-lived associations. While at UCL, Tansley taught himself German and thus could read the 1896 German translation of Warming's *Plantensamfund* and Schimper's 1898 *Pflanzen Geographie auf Physiologischer Grundlage*. Tansley felt these books laid the foundations for plant ecology as they developed concepts of plant communities and described the relations between plants, soils and climates. In 1903, he married his former student, Edith Chick, F. F. Blackman's sister-in-law, Stopes's classmate and

daughter of a lace merchant, Samuel Chick. They were to have three daughters, who were to become a physiologist, an architect and an economist. In 1906, he returned to Cambridge on his appointment to a University Lectureship in Botany.

Tansley had by this time already demonstrated two of his most salient characteristics: his willingness to assist an admired intellectual figure in a seemingly subordinate position without loss of dignity or standing and his gift for organizing and leading scientific projects as one of a group of like-minded enthusiasts. An admirer of Herbert Spencer's scientific philosophy, Tansley had overseen the sections on plant morphology and physiology in the 1899 revised edition of his *The Principles of Biology*.

Already a Fellow of the Linnean Society, Tansley was pivotal in yoking the concerns of professional botanists to the activities of naturalist societies in the national survey projects of the British Vegetation Committee which he co-founded in 1904. As the scope of these necessarily collaborative survey activities was broadened to include botanists from outside Britain, Tansley founded the International Phytogeographical Excursion (IPE), hosted first by the British botanists and subsequently by the Americans in 1913. To acquaint the non-British scientists with local vegetation, of which they knew virtually nothing, Tansley edited and wrote *Types of British Vegetation* (1911) for the IPE. This was the first systematic account of British vegetation, and immediately found a large home market besides the foreign botanists. The IPE, an organization perhaps rather similar to the International Psycho-Analytical Association in the latter's early years, became a permanent institution (still in existence), meeting every two or three years in a different country, with its headquarters at the Institut Rubel in Zurich.

Also in 1911, the British Vegetation Committee became the British Ecological Society, the world's first ecological organization. Tansley was its first president. Already editor of a botanical journal, *The New Phytologist*, begun in 1902 and funded by his private income and (with shades of things to come) entirely independent of universities and the scholarly presses,<sup>5</sup> Tansley also acted as editor of the new Society's *Journal of Ecology* from 1917 to 1938. In 1915, he was elected Fellow of the Royal Society; in later years, affirming that this was the recognition that counted, he would always add the letters 'F. R. S.' to his signature.

Concerned with effective teaching of the new ecology, Tansley used his editorial authority to advocate a new curriculum. The key term for early proponents of self-conscious ecology like Tansley and the American plant ecologist, F. E. Clements was 'dynamic'.<sup>6</sup> This was a departure from static morphology and biogeography, the prevailing focus on structure over function, and what ecologists derided as mere 'descriptive' botany with its emphasis on species lists. The 1917 so-called 'encyclical' in *The New Phytologist* (signed by Tansley, Oliver, Blackman and two others) pleaded for a vitalized and practical curriculum, to be based on plant physiology and ecology alongside, rather than subordinate to, the currently dominant (and

in their opinion, static and dull) morphology.<sup>7</sup> Tansley's ideas for reform, denounced as 'Botanical Bolshevism' by Frederick Bower, Regius Professor of Botany at Glasgow, received a similarly chilly response in the Cambridge Botany School. They may have been a significant factor in his not being elected to the Sherardian Chair of Botany at Oxford, for which he was a candidate in the autumn of 1918<sup>8</sup> – a professional setback that may have had profound inner consequences, with reverberations to which his conversation with Freud in 1928 (see below) may have been alluding. As he complained to Frederic Clements in 1918,

I've been getting some experience in the 'Gentle art of making enemies' lately. . . . Reactionary forces are pretty strong here, and it will be a hard struggle to get anything progressive done. But I am going to have a good try.<sup>9</sup>

However, by 1918 Tansley was looking elsewhere than the Cambridge Botany School or even the international ecology movement for his intellectual direction forward. A key influence since the early years of the century was his own former student Bernard Hart. Hart, working as a doctor in asylums near London, would often entertain Tansley, who thus came to have an unbookish and hands-on experience of mental disturbances. Hart's interests were in the psychology of insanity – the title of his very influential short book published in 1912. Hart was eclectic – absorbed first by Janet's ideas, then by Freud's, and in turn by Jung's – and he impressed Freud as well as Tansley. Writing to Jones in 1910, Freud called Hart's essay on the subconscious 'the first clever word upon the matter'.<sup>10</sup> Jones, always alert to any danger to his position as first among English Freudians, replied:

He was one of my best pupils in England, although I had at first some difficulty in getting him to take up your work. Ultimately he said 'Freudism is strictly speaking a religion; you can't *prove* it, but you have to accept it because "it works"', which was quite clever.<sup>11</sup>

Hart played a considerable role in the integration of Freudian and non-Freudian psychotherapeutic practitioners during the Second World War, when he was in charge of psychotherapy co-ordination for the Emergency Medical Services first in London, and then throughout Britain.

Tansley was clearly intrigued by the new theories in psychopathology before the war, but, by his own account, his knowledge owed more to conversation than study or research. What then happened to him was curious and was, according to him, the reason why the second half of his professional life became intertwined with the early history of psychoanalysis in England. In around 1916, aged forty-five, married with three daughters, secure (though restless) in his profession and having recently attained the pinnacle of a scientist in early twentieth-century Britain and with further successes and achievements in his chosen field undoubtedly ahead of him, he had the dream quoted

at the opening of this paper. In 1953, when setting down for Kurt Eissler of the Sigmund Freud Archives, later held at the Library of Congress, his memories of involvement with Freud and psychoanalysis, he wrote:

[The dream and my analysis of it] impressed me very deeply and led to a resolve to read Freud's work. This I did in the months that followed, beginning with the *Traumdeutung*, and following with the *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexual Theorie*, and some others. The latter – the *Sexualtheorie* – interested and excited me immensely. I felt that it was an extraordinarily able and illuminating work, and, after having read far more widely in Freud since then, I still think that in some respects it is his most outstanding contribution – a daring and successful synthesis clearly and admirably expounded. My interest in the whole subject was now thoroughly aroused, and after a good deal of thought I determined to write my own picture of it as it shaped itself in my mind.

This 'picture' was Tansley's book, *The New Psychology and its Relation to Life*, completed in January 1920 and published in June. Reprinted twice within eight months, ten times in four years, in the first three years it sold over 10,000 copies in the UK, over 4,000 in the USA,<sup>12</sup> and was translated into Swedish and German. Tansley had caught the postwar wave of enthusiasm and fascination with Freudianism and with depth psychology (as it was often called) in general. The book was an attempt, he said, to capture for the general reader the 'biological' view of the mind with the concepts taken from the work of 'the great modern psychopathologists, Professor Freud and Dr. Jung'.<sup>13</sup> Modestly, Tansley assured his reader that it was neither a treatment of 'psychopathology proper' nor a comprehensive review of the literature – the book is simply 'an outline picture of the subject as it shapes itself in the mind of the author'. (This, we might note, is exactly how Tansley had allowed his own dream to 'interpret itself' – almost 'automatically', as he put it to Eissler.)

According to Tansley, he was disconcerted by the response to his book. Not only did he have a best-seller on his hands, but he received 'a good many letters from strangers asking all sorts of questions, many of which I did not feel I could answer adequately without a much more extensive knowledge of psycho-analysis'.<sup>14</sup> Like his old friend and colleague, Marie Stopes, whose *Married Love* (1918) was an even bigger seller than *The New Psychology*, and like both Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis before them, whose writings on sexual idiosyncrasy expanded enormously in later editions from the weight of private confession and testimony, Tansley clearly found himself addressed as an expert by numerous individuals in need.<sup>15</sup>

Accordingly in 1921 I asked Dr Ernest Jones to give me an introduction to Freud, to whom I then wrote asking if he could receive me for an analysis. On his consenting to do so I arranged to spend three months in Vienna, from March to June, 1922.<sup>16</sup>

This account of Tansley's journey to Freud's couch is, we will speculate later, not the whole story. What happened next surely makes this more certain: in the spring of 1923, Tansley resigned his position at Cambridge. Undoubtedly, from earlier on than this decisive step, Freud, Jones and others had begun to follow Tansley's psychoanalytic progress with some interest.<sup>17</sup> Freud found a place for Tansley on the last day of March 1922. Beginning his analysis in German, Tansley was soon obliged by the difficulties of communicating his innermost thoughts to switch to English.

From the beginning of the decade, Americans and English were making the pilgrimage to Vienna to be analysed by Freud. In the American cohort of – roughly – 1920–22 were Albert Polan, Clarence Oberndorf, Leonard Blumgart, Monroe Meyer, and Abram Kardiner; the British contingent consisted of the two Stracheys and John Rickman, who were joined by Joan Riviere in early 1922.<sup>18</sup> John Rickman had been at King's College, Cambridge from 1910 to 1913, taking the Natural Sciences Tripos in which Tansley was lecturing, but his lasting interest in psychoanalysis was sparked by W. H. R. Rivers in 1919 when Rickman was working at Fulbourn Hospital near Cambridge after returning from wartime hospital work for the Quakers in Russia. At his request, the 'indefatigable' Rickman, as Freud called him,<sup>19</sup> found suitable – extremely suitable, given the symbolism – lodgings in Vienna for Tansley in the house of the recently-deceased famous botanist, Wiesner (whose lectures on Plant Physiology Freud himself had attended as a student in 1876):<sup>20</sup> Freud was pleased Tansley would be able to make use of Wiesner's library. Obviously well informed on Tansley's journey to Vienna, Jones enquired almost too eagerly, the day after Tansley's analysis began: 'Has Tansley started yet? I think he is a very able and careful thinker, and shall be glad to hear your impressions of him'.<sup>21</sup> Freud's opinion of Tansley chimed with Jones's, and their joint effort to catch this big fish is palpable.

It is plausible that, with Tansley's resistances now mobilized, both Freud and Tansley agreed that the three-months analysis that ended in June 1922 was woefully incomplete. Tansley was obviously intent on returning to Freud, but it is probable that his duties in Cambridge kept him from Vienna in the academic year 1922–3. But by the late spring of 1923, he had made his decision and resigned. However, his increasing involvement with psychology did not stop him from publishing substantial works in botany;<sup>22</sup> in addition, he was President of the Botanical Section, British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1923, and spent part of the summer months doing research at Wicken Fen near Cambridge, a site of special interest for Tansley and his botanical co-workers.<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, his colleagues, particularly his American rival and friend, the plant ecologist F. E. Clements, expressed some consternation – and understanding – about his resignation and the career and intellectual cross-roads it represented. They were obviously aware of the profound shift in Tansley's vision of his future. Clements even voiced an ambiguous fear: 'I

am not at all sure that your new field may not have greater opportunities for distinct and distinguished services'.<sup>24</sup> Tansley's course now seemed set:

Probably I shall cease to be a professional botanist after the [University] term, though for the present, at least, I shall continue to edit the two journals . . . Adamson is going to the Cape and will be a terrible loss to me – I need a good 'florist' at my elbow. Together with the 'conservatives in authority' his departure will help make me spend more time at psychology and less at ecology. The last year or two I have been pursuing both, and though my power of work is much better than it was, largely I think to the release of powers through emotional clarification – the double pull is a considerable strain.<sup>25</sup>

In May, having resigned from Cambridge, he told Clements of his plan to have more months of analysis with Freud in October – 'but for the present, at least, I shall continue to edit the two journals. It is likely that I shall take my whole family with me to Vienna'.<sup>26</sup>

Move they did. But Freud was not ready to restart the analysis; he was undergoing the first of his many major operations for cancer in the autumn of 1923. Tansley waited in Vienna, and Freud was recovered sufficiently to start work again at the end of December. This second slice of analysis lasted a further six months.

Tansley having made his decision, Freud galvanized other analysts into welcoming him to his new profession. On 14 March 1924, he wrote to Karl Abraham, then Secretary of the International Psycho-Analytical Association and convenor of the Congress to be held at Salzburg in April 1924, describing Tansley's book as having:

done a great deal for the spread of psychoanalysis, although it shows him still in a phase of development before being completely an adherent. He is now in analysis with me for the second time, and I hope to make considerable progress with his convictions. He is a distinguished, correct person, a clear, critical mind, well-meaning and highly educated.<sup>27</sup>

Tansley was obviously welcomed with open arms by the analysts, just as Ernest Jones's somewhat diffident review of *The New Psychology* in late 1920 did not miss the opportunity to emphasize how distinguished Tansley was.<sup>28</sup> From Jones's point of view, Tansley appeared to be a godsend, who would help secure the biological flank of psychoanalysis and, if need be, stem the biological speculation to which so many analysts, including Freud, were prone. Thus, on 19 October 1920, Jones announced in the Rundbrief to the Committee that:

A. G. Tansley, Professor [sic] of Botany at Cambridge University, who has just written a good book called *The New Psychology*, read a paper

on Oct. 13th on Freud's Theory of Sex from a Biological Point of View, before the British Soc. for the Study of Sex Psychology. He regretted the *Ablehnung* of biology in the preface to the *Drei Abhandlungen*, and asked me the meaning of the passage, which I should be glad to hear from Professor himself. T. was enthusiastically in favour of the theory, which he declared to be throughout essentially sound from a biological point of view and supported by much evidence from that science.<sup>29</sup>

Tansley and Jones were referring to the following passage from the Preface to the 1915 edition of Freud's *Three Essays*:

[These essays 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 . . . there was no need for me to be diverted from my course if the psycho-analytic method led in a number of important respects to opinions and findings which differed largely from those based on biological considerations.<sup>30</sup>

To the 'modern, deterministic, empiric and dynamic' minds of Jones and Tansley, such a disdain for or even distancing from biology might not be the way in which to develop a truly scientific psychoanalysis. Two years later, there are hints in Jones's worrying to Freud about biology that he longs for Tansley to be able to take over the biological side completely, and to correct some of the errors to which Freud was inclined:

I am not happy about our recapitulation theory and wish we could enlist the services of a good modern biologist. If Tansley were more advanced or experienced I would discuss it with him, but he is not yet sure of the ontogenetic side of the Oedipus complex, let alone the phylogenetic or prehistoric.<sup>31</sup>

Jones's perception was correct: Tansley was to remain resolutely agnostic on the question of the universality of the Oedipus complex and to employ lofty irony for attempts to employ a theory of use-inheritance to underpin psycho-analytic findings.<sup>32</sup> But Jones continued to use Tansley as a secret weapon against the more speculative biological theorists, especially Ferenczi. Writing to Freud in September 1924, he adopted an almost threatening tone:

I do not trace any suspicion of anti-analytic tendency in [Ferenczi's] work, but cannot refrain from the diagnosis of narcissism combined with poor judgement. No doubt you saw Tansley's review of his work in the *British Journal of Medical Psychology*.<sup>33</sup>

Coinciding roughly with the end of Tansley's analysis, back in London on 22 May 1924 John Rickman nominated him as an Associate Member of the



British Psycho-Analytical Society, which approved the motion.<sup>34</sup> Freud had recommended that Tansley take on a psychoanalytic case, to acquaint himself fully with the technique and the findings of the discipline. At some point, probably starting in late 1924 or 1925, Tansley did so – ‘an experimental analysis, lasting nearly two years, on an obsessional neurotic’.<sup>35</sup> On 7 October 1925, he was elected to full membership of the Society, and for a year, until 17 November 1926, attended meetings frequently.<sup>36</sup> Even before his membership, Tansley was sought out as a powerful ally for psychoanalysis. At the Salzburg IPA Congress in April 1924, which he attended, it was agreed to hold the next Congress in Cambridge, a decision possibly connected with the curious fact that, by 1924, the British Psycho-Analytical Society had become the largest in the world, with forty-nine members. (The Viennese Society had forty-two; the Swiss, forty; the American, thirty-one; the Berlin, twenty-seven; and the New York, twenty-six.) It would have been very much in character for Jones to wish to carry on building his empire by holding the International Congress on British soil, in a city as welcoming of intellectual endeavour as was Cambridge, not to speak of the respectability that might as a result be conferred on psychoanalysis in English eyes. Once Tansley had become an Associate Member of the British Society and completed his nine months of analysis with Freud, he was the obvious person to turn to as organizer of some kind of the Cambridge Congress. This Jones certainly did. But in November he found himself obliged to write a letter to Abraham, the newly elected President of the IPA:

Although Tansley promised me verbally to investigate the situation in Cambridge and I have written to him since reminding him, there is as yet no answer. I think that the delay is more likely to be due to personal inhibitions than to outward circumstances, but I will of course write to you the moment I hear anything.<sup>37</sup>

Newly freed from his teaching and academic responsibilities, Tansley may have felt somewhat uneasy about taking on similar responsibilities on behalf of his new psychoanalytic colleagues and institutions. Not being a Fellow of a Cambridge College – an increasingly common fate for practitioners of the burgeoning new disciplines, particularly in the sciences – he may not have had the base for organizing the beds, dinners and rooms that conferences require.<sup>38</sup> Or there may have been other, more personal inhibitions – his father, after all, had, although he despised them, spent his life organizing social functions for high society. Certainly Tansley seems to have been the only plausible Cambridge-based person for such organization – the two other British Society members resident in Cambridge were Susan Isaacs, newly arrived as head of the Maltings House nursery school, (scurrilously known as the ‘pre-genital brothel’),<sup>39</sup> and Dr C. R. A. Thacker, physiologist and specialist on nervous diseases and shell shock, Fellow of Sidney

Sussex College, who by this time was already suffering from the illness that was to kill him in 1929.

Whatever Tansley's ambivalences about specific involvement with the psychoanalytic movement, he was an intensely social being, a born scientific networker. Free of those commitments at Cambridge which had become a burden and an incessant source of unprofitable struggle, he made links in at least two different directions: both informal, one within Cambridge and one within the field sciences milieu. We have sketched the network of Tansley's psychoanalytic colleagues and contact in a separate paper.<sup>40</sup> Some of these links acquired that characteristic of being in large part hidden from history that necessarily accompanies the duty of clinical confidentiality. But, interestingly enough, Tansley's work to galvanize support for psychoanalysis was not confined to informal and private contacts. Throughout the summer of 1925, Tansley was engaged in IPE ecological activities in Europe and at the same time in a public polemic defending psychoanalysis in the correspondence column of the *The Nation and The Athenæum*. Perhaps the quirky manner in which he rounded off his robust defence pointed to the next step in his career: 'may I beg your correspondents' attention to the fact that I am not, and never have been, a professor? Nor do I hold a doctor's degree'.<sup>41</sup> Plain Mr Tansley he certainly was at that time, neither academic nor doctor, whether of philosophy or medicine. But not for much longer.

At some point in 1926–7, Tansley's younger colleague Harry Godwin did some behind-the-scenes work in the botany world.<sup>42</sup> In Godwin's later judgement, the years 1923–7 had been for Tansley years 'in the wilderness so far at least as his relations to botanical science were concerned and especially those with British botanists'.<sup>43</sup> Through Godwin's encouragement, Tansley accepted an invitation to apply for the Sherardian Chair of Botany at Oxford. In an authoritative tone that betrays familiarity with Tansley's relations with Freud and psychoanalysis, Godwin later wrote:

Not until the end of 1926 did he complete what Freud had forecast for him, 'the return to the mother subject', . . . He was elected in January 1927. Indecision was abandoned.<sup>44</sup>

He took up the post in October 1927, together with a Fellowship at Magdalen College. His lectures from then on were on more conventional botanical subjects; he obviously felt the need to devote himself to reforming teaching and research in botany at Oxford. Nor do we know if he included discussion of psychoanalysis in those lectures, as he had done in Cambridge, where, as Joseph Needham, the Cambridge biochemist and sinologist later recalled, it had been Tansley who helped to generate an interest in Freud among students during the 1920s by mentioning him in his lectures.<sup>45</sup> But once at Oxford, he did not leave psychoanalysis entirely behind him. In 1928, he himself initiated a further polemic in *The Nation and The Athenæum*, seemingly stung by Vera Brittain's charge – which he must have read as a covert

attack on psychoanalysis – that ‘certain men of science have bestowed upon sexual gluttony a blessing which they would withhold in horror from any other form of immoderation’. Having pointed out to Brittain that the views of such ‘men of science’ on sexuality involved recommending moderation instead of abstinence – quite the opposite of advocating licensed gluttony, as in her image of little boys let loose on an unlimited quantity of jam – he moved on to his psychoanalytic point, declaring that a statement such as Brittain’s ‘that there is a danger of “over-estimating the importance of the part which sex plays in life” is a contention only ever, in my experience, made by those who seriously under-estimate that importance’.<sup>46</sup>

Although he contemplated writing a history of the early development of Freudian psychology,<sup>47</sup> and drafted chapters for it, Tansley’s main work of the 1930s was in the ‘mother subject’ of botany – and productive of a concept of great significance for the future development of the discipline: the ‘ecosystem’.<sup>48</sup> Nonetheless, there is substantial evidence of his continued interest and commitment to ‘psychology’, in particular manuscript materials relating to the project Godwin mentioned, a history of the development of Freudian psychology. Towards the end of 1932, Tansley wrote at least two papers on the early development of Freud’s theories, which he intended to submit to the *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, focusing on the relation between psychoanalysis and biology; and he left an incomplete manuscript entitled ‘The Historical Foundations of Psychoanalysis’, which may have incorporated those papers. Tansley was sufficiently immersed in this work to write asking Freud what became of the first patient of psychoanalysis, Anna O.<sup>49</sup> In addition, there is a manuscript preface to ‘a series of essays on various topics that have interested me specially in what I call the New Psychology’; the book, obviously a follow-up to his 1920 best-seller, was never completed.

Thus, even though Tansley published little work in psychology after 1927 until his final book, *Mind and Life*, an overarching synthesis of the twin pre-occupations of his professional career, his interest in psychoanalysis did not diminish, nor did he lose his contacts with the British Psycho-Analytical Society.<sup>50</sup> In 1941, he provided the Royal Society with an obituary for Sigmund Freud.<sup>51</sup> Botany did, quite clearly, however, dominate his life. During the 1930s he worked on revising his 1911 *Types*. Eventually completed after his retirement from Oxford in 1937, *The British Islands and their Vegetation* (1939), his *magnum opus*, was a vast survey of over 900 pages, the culmination of the phase of ecology which he had initiated. It was the first major book to employ the ecosystem concept: vegetational communities are shown to be the result of the interacting processes of plants, climates and soils in a dynamic landscape lively with human and animal activities. In 1931, he handed over ownership and editorship of *The New Phytologist*. In 1938, he finally gave up editing the *Journal of Ecology*. The fifteen years following his retirement were very productive of publications.<sup>52</sup> In 1941 he took a guiding role in the planning of government postwar nature conservation which led to

the foundation of the Nature Conservancy in 1949, of which he was the first Chairman, retiring in 1953.

He was also heavily involved (as President from 1947–53) in the Council for the Promotion of Field Studies (later the Field Studies Council), a voluntary organization which created and maintained resident field centres in various locations of ecological and geological interest (such as Flatford Mill in Suffolk) where students could explore natural history interests and painting. Such an interest in decentralized education and the nurturing of ‘scientific curiosity’<sup>53</sup> resonated with his active joint leadership (with John Baker and Michael Polanyi) of the Society for Freedom in Science (SFS), an organization which, from 1940, fought strongly against the central planning of scientific research being introduced as orthodoxy with the new bureaucratic forms and quasi-socialist ideals of the postwar settlement. Perhaps in part due to Tansley’s recruiting activities, ecologists made up more than a quarter of the SFS membership.<sup>54</sup> In this, yet another of the new and extra-academic institutions which he had helped to found over some fifty years, Tansley felt free to express his views on psychology in a pamphlet, ‘The psychological connexion of two basic principles of the SFS’. And, being now a distinguished knight and longstanding member of the British Psycho-Analytical Society, Tansley was one of the signatories for an Appeal for £100,000 for an Institute and Clinic of Psycho-Analysis, along with Dr J. C. Flugel, Dr William Gillispie (its Chairman), Dr Ernest Jones, Professor L. S. Penrose, and Professor F. R. Winton.<sup>55</sup> Tansley died on the 25 November 1955, aged eighty-four, in the house in Grantchester just outside Cambridge where he had lived since 1907.

### TANSLEY’S DREAM

But the dream itself, the patent, the obvious content of it, is entirely harmless. Nobody outside the psychoanalytically trained could possibly tell what it meant, that it meant hell, deep . . .

Prof. Sir A. G. Tansley, F. R. S., 1953

Looking at Tansley’s life from the outside, we have located him as an intriguing and symptomatic character in the development of psychoanalysis in England. Coming from the non-medical sciences, inspired by his friends and colleagues in psychiatry to immerse himself in Freud’s work, he unexpectedly wrote a book – as much for his own satisfaction, it appears, as for any other reason – that caught the spirit of the times and led him, dissatisfied with his academic position and future, to engage seriously in psychoanalysis with Freud and other like-minded colleagues in Cambridge and within his informal scientific community. As he himself put it, writing in 1932, in 1926 ‘it was touch and go whether I became a professional psychoanalyst’ or took the Chair in Botany in Oxford. Oxford won out and psychoanalysis suffered the loss of the ‘nice type of an English scientist’. In

reconstructing this story, we have been able to shift significantly the accepted view of how psychoanalysis was received in England, in particular, we have been forced to emphasize the extent to which elite cultural and, in particular, scientific circles could be drawn to psychoanalysis and on to the couch, could even pass without difficulty into the ranks of the practising analysts, without medical background, interests in academic psychology or formal training. Frank Ramsey, C. C. Fagg, Tansley, Sir Harold Jeffreys, Lionel Penrose – respectively a Cambridge prodigy in philosophy of mathematics, a Customs Officer who was a vigorous organizer of field sciences, a bastion of scientific ecology, a polymathic geophysicist and a geneticist turned psychologist and critic of eugenics – this is not the usual cast of characters found in histories of psychoanalysis, yet they are some of the actors in the network Tansley created in the 1910s and 1920s, based in Cambridge, who were committed to psychoanalysis.

However, we also have a number of pieces of evidence that make it possible to undertake a speculative reconstruction of Tansley's life from within. First and foremost, he himself transcribed a dream which he regarded as a crucial turning-point in his life. In addition, he left a number of autobiographical works in which he tried to explain how and why his life took the shape it did. So, with these materials, and with the benefit of hindsight, we might also venture a psychoanalytic reading in order to make clearer how his influential and, it would seem, fulfilling life came to have that shape rather than another.

Before attempting this, it is advisable to make some historiographical remarks about using dreams as historical sources. After all, on the face of it, a dream is a source unlike any other. By definition, it does not pertain to reality. What its dreamer or any other commentator says about it will be liable, more purely so than with any other 'event', to retrospective distortion and self-interested reinterpretation. One might argue that, at its most extreme, a dream (its textual rendition or its trace as memory) will function as a Rorschach ink-blot, ready for projection and elaboration according to the needs, desires and interests of the remembering or interpreting subject at the moment the dream is called upon to bear witness to or reveal a historical truth.

Similar sceptical remarks have informed much discussion concerning the topic of creativity and dreams in the history and sociology of science. An older tradition, attempting to analyse the sources of intellectual creativity, pointed to dreams as one such source among several others. More recent sociologically-oriented accounts emphasize less the inner creativity, the 'frenzy' as Max Weber called it, of creative intellectual discovery or production than the community for which this act is a discovery, an achievement – something comprehensible to privileged others. Without wishing to decide one way or the other between these readings, we can note that the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* and the subsequent development of a Freudian-style discourse on dreams – on their meaning, their

interpretability, their significance as giving access to the unconscious – complicated without undercutting the contrast between the private inner psychological act and the publicly scrutinizable community of ‘dream-discourers’. What is certain – and is well illustrated by the case of Tansley – is that, after Freud, a dream could become a resource for inner knowledge and an acceptable code or key for self-description. It is this resource and code that Tansley drew upon, in different ways no doubt, at different points in his life.

The archival source of this dream is the Sigmund Freud Archives at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. In the summer of 1953, when interviewed by Dr Kurt Eissler, founder of the Sigmund Freud Archives, Tansley’s account of why and how he became involved with psychoanalysis centred entirely around the dream. He found the interview procedure uncongenial for recalling the events which Eissler was interested in, and instead promised to send Eissler a written account, which he did. Eissler, for his part, sent a transcript of the interview to Tansley, who returned it together with two other documents he had prepared. Thus the complete holding of the Tansley Section of the Freud Archives in the Library of Congress consists of three documents: the first, a seven-page account prepared by Tansley and entitled by him: ‘(1) The impact of Freud’s work and personality on a non-medical biologist’. The second is a two-page typewritten document he entitled ‘THE DREAM’. The third is the Eissler transcript. Before returning the documents to Eissler, Tansley added in pen a new title to the package: ‘Three Contributions by Sir Arthur Tansley, F. R. S.’

All three of these ‘contributions’ centre on Tansley’s dream. In the first, his written account of Freud’s impact, he notes:

At that time [the first decade of the present century] I had read none of Freud’s publications, and although I was intrigued by what I heard from Hart and his colleagues my interest was only vividly aroused as the result of a dream which I had some years later, after I had moved to Cambridge. This dream and my ‘automatic’ analysis of its content are described in another contribution to the Archives (Ref. 2). I was so deeply impressed by this experience that I began to read Freud’s works, notably the *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* and Brill’s translation of *Die Traumdeutung*, as well as Jung’s study of *Dementia praecox* and his *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*. The *Sexualtheorie* I found particularly impressive and illuminating. . . .

The third document, the transcribed interview, gives a similar, though less focused account of his initial serious interest in psychoanalysis as a result of the dream, which, as ‘Ref. 2’, thus forms the centre-piece of this triptych.

It is Tansley’s whimsical afterthought for his submission that makes one pause, in Freudian style, for thought. To call these three documents, each centred primarily on Tansley’s own dream, his ‘Three contributions’ is to allow them to mirror the work of Freud’s that Tansley most admired, the

*Drei Abhandlungen* – ‘one of his most penetrating fundamental works, those *Three contributions*, as they have been called in translation’.<sup>56</sup> Yet the overall message of these three documents is: he learned little from Freud that he had not already discovered in this dream. To put it crudely: 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.

We have already quoted in full the dream text he submitted to the Sigmund Freud Archives. Tansley also included the following comments, associations and a page he entitled ‘Interpretation’:

The dream was so vivid and dramatic and had made such a strong impression on me that I recounted it at breakfast with no notion that it had a hidden meaning. I was aware at the time of Freud’s work, which had been described to me by a friend who was a psychiatrist, so that I knew roughly the nature of the technique of free association in the interpretation of dreams. At that time, however, I had read none of Freud’s writings.

Very shortly afterwards (I think the day following the night of the dream) I began to analyze this dream by seeking associations to the general picture and to the various dream images and sensations. This I did without conscious intention – my mind wandered, as it were, without conscious volition, while I was riding a bicycle, around the dream images and sensations. Gradually, but surprisingly quickly, with no notable resistance, the interpretation took shape and gained my complete conviction of its correctness.

These occurrences impressed me very deeply and led to a resolve to read Freud’s work. This I did in the months that followed, beginning with the *Traumdeutung*, and following with the *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexual Theorie*, and some others. The latter – the *Sexualtheorie* – interested and excited me immensely. I felt that it was an extraordinarily able and illuminating work, and, after having read far more widely in Freud since then, I still think that in some respects it is his most outstanding contribution – a daring and successful synthesis clearly and admirably expounded. My interest in the whole subject was now thoroughly aroused, and after a good deal of thought I determined to write my own picture of it as it shaped itself in my mind.

*The New Psychology and its Relation to Life* was published in 1920, and in 1922 I spent 3 months with Freud in Vienna, and in 1923–4 another six months.

#### *Free associations to the setting, images and sensations of the dream*

*The sub-tropical scene* – South Africa. Several of my old pupils had gone to that country, including a girl with whom I had fallen in love.

*'Separated from my friends'* – My old pupils, who were dispersed owing to the war of 1914–18, and especially the girl.

*The savages.* Pictures of Zulus on the warpath.

*Their numbers and spears – my rifle* – Overwhelming strength against me in spite of my superior weapon.

*My wife's white clothing* – 'Purity' in the sexual sense.

### *Interpretation*

I was separated from my beloved and unable to take any active steps towards union with her because I was married and public opinion (of the 'herd'<sup>57</sup> in Wilfred Trotter's sense) symbolized by the savages would be unanimously against me. (Note that the 'herd' in this case was not of my own race and was regarded by me as intrinsically inferior.) Since I had a good reputation in 'my' world, this opposition was quiescent, only potential – there was no active hostility. I was in no danger where I was provided I remained there. But the barrier was impregnable, in spite of the fact that my mental equipment, symbolized by the rifle, was much superior to that of herd in quality, symbolized by the spears. The numbers and unanimity of the potential opposition made a successful escape impossible and my superior weapon useless. But the savages made no attempt to attack my wife or stop her coming to me – that she could legitimately be with me was a matter of course.

The end of the dream in confusion meant that my problem was insoluble. The suggestion of firing the rifle – quite vague and uncertain – I could not interpret. It occurred to me that the rifle might be thought to symbolize the male genital organ and the firing, orgasm. But this would not fit in with the rest, and I concluded that the only reason I thought of it was because any offensive weapon, especially an elongated one, is well known as a symbol of the penis, not because it had any such significance in the dream. A possible alternative is that I shot at my wife, but I cannot confirm this, perhaps because it was as impossible in the dream as it would be in real life.

This document highlights the principle of interpretative charity that historians will, when pushed, usually agree to: namely, that if a historical actor claims an event was important for them, unless there is substantial evidence to the contrary, the historian takes that actor at his or her word. We therefore should, whatever our inclinations when it comes to dreams and their meaning, accept in all seriousness Tansley's view. In particular, we should give great weight to that uncertainty or doubt or even blankness that surrounds the issue of the rifle and whether it fired; we should, thus, give considerable weight to our own misgivings concerning the temptation to offer 'symbolic' interpretations of Tansley's rifle.

What are the principal elements of Tansley's interpretation of his dream?



He interpreted his dream as being a representation of an insoluble conflict between his desire to be with his 'beloved' and the overwhelming barrier of public opinion. It appears to be a dream in which the familiar themes of purity and pollution, the wife and the beloved other woman, are placed in the context of a struggle of conscience between 'civilized' sexual morality, as Freud called it, and the desires of the individual.

Yet, in a sense, the dream and Tansley's comments (written some forty years afterward) carry no sense of this struggle. Everything in the dream appears already decided: it is inconceivable for the dreamer to shoot his wife, in the dream as in real life; it is inconceivable for a single individual, no matter how gifted, to stand against public opinion, no matter how inferior. The game is lost before it has begun. There is an atmosphere of resignation to the inevitable in the dream. (It is possible that this atmosphere stems in part from the tragedy unfolding in France, the victory of the 'herd' of public opinion over the intelligence of superior men. Certainly at the time of his dream Tansley had a striking example of that defeat close to hand, in the destiny of his close Cambridge friend Bertrand Russell, deprived of his Trinity Fellowship and imprisoned in 1916 for his protests against the war. But we have no evidence that there is such a network of associations to the dream.) One doubt does remain: the question of the firing of the rifle. Tansley could not interpret this element, but asserted quite definitively that it had neither a sexual, phallic meaning nor a murderously aggressive one. This curious gesture, of leaving the rifle neither sexual nor aggressive, makes the dream more mysterious than it appears.

And without some mystery, we would not be able to sense the importance of this dream. After all, Tansley's life, and his account of the dream, lead us to believe that his life was transformed by the experience of this dream. We thus seek in the dream a mystery, a significance, which is worthy of such a thing as the transformation of a man's life. We must, therefore, go somewhat slowly in discussing it.

The first thing to note is that Tansley's discussion of his own dream is divided into four parts: the exposition of the dream, followed by a context for the dream – his prior knowledge of psychoanalysis, the circumstances surrounding the dream, including his initial complete lack of awareness of its meaning, the almost involuntary process of interpretation and its effect on him – his reading of Freud, his writing of *The New Psychology*, followed by his analysis with Freud. The third part is the set of associations, followed immediately by the fourth, the interpretation.<sup>58</sup> One would expect the content of the dream, and its interpretation, to throw some light on the connection between the preamble and the effect of the dream on his life. Yet we are immediately confronted with a mismatch. The centre of the dream appears to be about a moral conflict whose resolution is never in doubt, yet its effect on Tansley is in an entirely different sphere: in his relation to Freud and to the development of psychoanalytic ideas.

To put it crudely: where the dream appears to be about whether he

should remain faithful to his sexually pure wife or disappear into the sub-tropical bush with his 'beloved', his account of its effect on him has him disappearing into the bush of the new psychology with another new beloved, Freud. The mapping of the interpretation of his dream concerning his 'beloved' on to his new absorption in and by psychoanalysis is very close. Yet this is clearly a retrospective analysis of the dream, because on his bike-ride when he interpreted the dream, Tansley could not know that Freud and psychoanalysis would become his new beloved, a new affront to public opinion. In other words, his interpretation is not an interpretation in a Freudian sense, which recognizes dream-wishes as moulded into a 'perfect likeness [*Ebenbild*] of the past',<sup>59</sup> but rather more akin to a perfect likeness of the future. In interpretative terms, we smell a rat.

But let us go over this ground again, more slowly. Tansley's narrative of the dream and its immediate after-effect tells us that he recounted the dream over breakfast 'with no notion that it had a hidden meaning'. That is, even though he knew through Bernard Hart of some of Freud's views on dreams, he obviously did not take them to heart. He includes this detail in order to demonstrate that he believed thoroughly, at that time, in the innocence of dreams. But in the course of the next day, he underwent a process of automatic interpretation – a vision on the road to Damascus, except in all probability his was a vision on a bike-ride to Grantchester.<sup>60</sup> The result of the epiphany was not a moral decision, but an intellectual certainty: 'my complete conviction' of the 'correctness' of this interpretation. This intellectual conviction then led to his absorption in Freud's work, principally the book on dreams and the essays on sexuality.

On the face of it, this is an odd response to a new intellectual enthusiasm. Tansley had few qualifications for this task – as he was to find out, after the event, when his readers wrote to him. Yet it repeats his own experience of his own dream: instead of resolving a moral dilemma, he emerged with an intellectual conviction of his own correct interpretation. In response to reading Freud, he did not engage in a moral or personal debate with Freud or any other worker in the field of psychoanalysis, but developed and then displayed his own intellectual convictions. In short, he responded preemptively with intellectual mastery, just as he had done with his dream. Faced by the confusion in his dream, which he knew signified an insoluble problem, he quickly arrived at 'complete conviction' of his own interpretation.

Tansley displayed his considerable intellectual virtues in this process: encountering an interesting problem, which led him to a profound conviction, he mastered the literature and provided a general, judicious and unbiased overview of a large and unstable field of antagonistic views. The very literary success of Tansley's book revealed something incongruous about his achievement: it was the first general account of the new findings in dreams, sexuality, psychopathology and the theory of the unconscious in English, when it came out in June 1920. Freud's most generally available book in English at that date was *The Interpretation of Dreams*, but in an American

edition. Tansley had published the right book at the right time. Yet the response from readers and, we may speculate, residual doubts of his own, led him to view with some scepticism his right to stand before the English public as an authority in the field of psychology. Perhaps the problem that he regarded as insoluble in his dream still remained insoluble, despite his having successfully displaced it into the intellectual terms of the relations between biology and psychology.

One of the strangest effects, then, of his proclivity for intellectual mastery was him appearing as an authority on psychoanalysis. A self-taught authority, and therefore in danger of occupying Freud's position as authority. It is this independence that so clearly marks Tansley's relations with psychoanalysis from the start. He is astonished to make the independent discovery of the meaning of his dream; he acquires his authority on psychoanalysis entirely independently. He is, it would seem, rather like Freud.

The similarity between the two men should not be discounted. Tansley was older than most of those interested in psychoanalysis at this period. In 1920, he was forty-nine. Born in 1871, he was four years older than Jung, eight years older than Jones, and fifteen years younger than Freud. More immediately relevant, perhaps, his scientific trajectory had two important similarities to that of Freud's: he was identified by others as the founder of a new scientific discipline – ecology for Tansley, psychoanalysis for Freud; and his appetite for the organization of colleagues into newly-minted institutions was, if anything, even greater than Freud's. Tansley's journals and his societies were commercial in the same way as Freud's were, not primarily affiliated with university departments, again, like Freud's, and were astutely sensitive to a new wave of internationalism in the early years of this century. There is, then, a strange similarity between these two men, on the face of it so different. Tansley's tone in discussing Freud was predominantly that of an equal, discerning the grounds for his undoubted admiration of the founder of psychoanalysis. It was Tansley who wrote Freud's obituary for the Royal Society, and, as Godwin astutely noted, nearly all of the gifts that Tansley described in Freud were ones that he 'unconsciously acknowledged' as being his own gifts – or were at least those they had in common.<sup>61</sup> The key difference between them, though, and it was one Tansley would have readily admitted, was Freud's striking originality. Nonetheless, in talking to Eissler, Tansley remembered that Rickman's 'impression was that Freud and I discussed analysis rather like two sovereigns when we conducted Analysis'<sup>62</sup>. Tansley had a right to be regarded as a sovereign in his own discipline, and may himself have viewed his analysis like that (from where else could Rickman have received his impression?). Nonetheless, it is a telling observation about how Tansley approached analysis with Freud.

What happened in Tansley's analysis? When recollecting it in 1953, he was evidently disappointed that he had made no great discoveries of forgotten scenes from his childhood, and he was disappointed that Freud spent more time discussing theoretical questions than Tansley's own unconscious.

Yet who exactly was to blame for this is not clear. Tansley made it plain to Eissler that he was not neurotic and did not need analysis:

We never seemed to penetrate at all deeply into my 'Unconscious', and I think the main cause of this failure was probably that I had no marked neurosis, but a fairly stable mental and emotional equilibrium which was difficult to upset or penetrate, so that there was little unconscious material which could be brought to the surface. The analysis was thus of the nature of a 'Lehranalyse', and could not closely resemble the analysis of a neurotic patient.<sup>63</sup>

Thus Tansley gives the impression that nothing much happened – and that it was a mixture of Freud's fault for being too interested in theory, and his own fault for not being neurotic enough.

... from a personal point of view, as I say, I don't think it was a really good analysis. I think he departed /laughs/ from his own technical procedure. Because of course he recognized that I was not an ordinary patient. /Laughs/ I wasn't, I wanted information to get to know more about the subject and so on, rather than concentrating on my unconscious, as I say.<sup>64</sup>

Tansley gives two different sorts of reason for this unsatisfactory state of affairs. Firstly, Freud didn't focus on Tansley's own personal life, being too ready to discuss general questions. Secondly, Tansley implies that he was a special patient, who was in analysis to learn about the theory, not cure himself of a neurosis. The image of the two sovereigns discussing analysis obviously appealed to Tansley; he liked to think of himself as Freud's equal and hence independent of him. As he said to Eissler: 'The best dream that I ever had I analyzed myself. And I told Freud what my interpretation would be. And he said I was perfectly right'. The same held true for Tansley's overall view of Freudian theory. Enormous respect and agreement – but somehow he was a special case:

I think in my own case, the Oedipus complex was almost negligible. Maybe, because my parents were exceptional people. But I, I could not trace by any means the sort of effect that the complex is supposed to have on one's life and emotions in my own case.<sup>65</sup>

Equally telling was Tansley's aside to Eissler about his dream: 'An excellent example, surely, of a frustrated, not a fulfilled, wish! But I did not say so to Freud.' Clearly, Tansley held himself back from the analysis, not willing to hurt Freud's feelings or provoke a conflict and thus preserving his independence from Freud. Despite his sovereign distance, though, he became and remained a great admirer of Freud's, perhaps even besotted with him. The most striking piece of evidence for Tansley's high regard for Freud comes

from a story recounted by his close friend and colleague, Harry Godwin: when Tansley, while at an Oxford social function in the 1930s, was asked to name the most influential man since Christ, he answered, without hesitation, 'Freud'.<sup>66</sup>

Yet these accounts still leave a mystery the question: why was Tansley there in the first place? Accepting for the moment that the reason he gave – that he needed to acquire more expertise about psychoanalysis in order to answer those of his readers who had approached him – is insufficient as a motive for starting analysis with Freud, the account he gave Eissler in 1953 made it transparently clear that he was there because of something in his dream, or as a result of his dream, which he analysed before he had read Freud and before his analysis: he was still seeking with Freud something that was 'left over' from his dream. Although his account of his analysis indicates his disappointment – he appears not to have found what he was in search of – the consequences of the dream constituted such an upheaval in his life that we should follow them all out before returning to the question of what, exactly, the dream changed in his life and what the dream signified that he changed his life in order to find.

The obvious question to ask is: what did Freud think of Tansley's dream? Tansley mentions this in his account of the dream to Eissler and in the written version of 1953: 'I recounted the dream and my interpretation to Freud in 1924, and he said the interpretation was undoubtedly correct'. Maybe this was what Tansley was in analysis for: Freud's approval of the interpretation of his dream? Certainly something to do with dreams took place early on in his meetings with Freud.

On Maundy Thursday, 1922 – the day when a sovereign reverses social roles, washes the feet of his or her subjects and gives out special gifts – Tansley presented Freud with a copy of *The New Psychology*, in which he inscribed the words: 'Prof. S. Freud, from the author, 13 April 1922'.<sup>67</sup> The next day, Good Friday, Freud returned the compliment – he gave Tansley a copy of the sixth edition of *Die Traumdeutung*, and signed it: '14.4.22 Herrn Prof. Tansley zur freundlichen Erinnerung an den Verf'. (To Prof. Tansley with friendly memories from the author.)<sup>68</sup> Two days later, on Easter Sunday, Freud reported to Jones on Tansley's analysis: 'Tansley is bringing up enormous resistance'.<sup>69</sup> To the commentator, it is no surprise that the giving of the gifts provoked something substantial in the way of analytic material. And it was, it appears, Tansley who began the cycle on the Thursday, only to be outmanoeuvred by Freud.

This was to be Freud's last communication to Jones concerning the analysis; as with other patients, once something 'analytic' started happening, his communications to those outside dried up.<sup>70</sup> We have no record of the next three months of Tansley's analysis; nor do any letters survive giving us a clue as to what happened in the second period of analysis in 1924. What we do have, again, are a record of the gifts Tansley presented to Freud and Freud's responses to them. In the first week of 1924 Tansley re-started analysis with

Freud, which came to an end with the summer break, when Tansley and his family returned to England. Tansley later admitted he did not have an extensive correspondence with Freud, but he did continue to send him gifts. The first was at the end of the year: a copy of A. A. Milne's *When We Were Very Young*, with the dedication: 'To Prof. Freud, A. G. T., Christmas, 1924'.<sup>71</sup> With this gift (the knowing reader at the end of the twentieth century imagines with a smile Sigmund Freud's reactions to James James Morrison Morrison Weatherby George Dupree taking great care of his mother, though he was only three), Tansley revealed yet another surprisingly astute intuition, this time in a very different field. This book was the first of Milne's (1882–1956) publications for children – the first addressed to his son Christopher Robin Milne. It was published on 6 November 1924, six weeks before it arrived on Freud's desk (although individual poems published in *Punch* in the preceding years had met with considerable immediate success, even provoking parodies, before the book was published).<sup>72</sup> The equally well-known *Winnie-the-Pooh* was first published in 1926, *Now We Are Six* in 1927 and *The House at Pooh Corner* in 1928. Milne's book must have been very little known in Vienna, when Tansley chose it as an 'end-of-analysis' gift. It is, of course, possible that Tansley was aware of Milne's work, may even have been a friend of Milne's, who studied mathematics at Trinity College, Cambridge, Tansley's own College, in the years 1900–03.<sup>73</sup> Nonetheless, the gift bears the hallmark which Tansley was to bring to further gifts to Freud: something quintessentially English, appropriate to Freud, given his tastes and interests, and yet in a mysterious sense inaccessible to him.<sup>74</sup>

Tansley's next contact with Freud came in 1928. Probably while attending the IPE meeting in July and August 1928 in Czechoslovakia and Poland, he paid Freud a visit in Vienna. It was to be their last meeting.

[S]eeing on the card I had sent in to him that I was now a professor at Oxford he immediately enquired: 'Ordentlich?' 'Jawohl', I replied. 'Das ist gut', he said. He had had enough experience of being 'ausserordentlich' himself to be acutely conscious of the difference, and was unfeignedly glad of my new academic status, which he was sure would be good for me psychologically. At the previous Christmas I had sent him a reproduction of Leonardo's cartoon of the Virgin, St. Anne and the infant Christ, and this he now showed me hung on the door of his study where he could always see it as he sat at his study table. I had known it was a gift he would appreciate because he was of course a great admirer of Leonardo, and it was unlikely that he had seen the original cartoon which hung in the Diploma Gallery at Burlington House in London. I was proud that my present was so much honoured, and flattered when he added, 'You do know how to give presents!' . . . I never saw him again and we exchanged very few letters.<sup>75</sup>

What do we learn of Tansley's relationship to Freud from the four gifts he made him: his own book, then A. A. Milne's book of children's verse,

followed at about the same time by Pepys's *Diaries* and the London Leonardo cartoon?<sup>76</sup> All four of them are very 'English' – the Leonardo because of its physical location, the others, being books, in a cultural rather than geographic sense. Tansley may have been careful only to send Freud things 'he would like and would be interested in', but he was also careful only to send Freud things that he didn't 'possess' already – because they were English. The Pepys *Diaries* and the A. A. Milne verses are telling: the first appears to contain a message that it was an Englishman, over two hundred years before Freud, who first conceived of the unravelling of the daily and inner life in a discipline of writing.

The Milne verses demonstrate an approach very different from Freud's but equally honouring to the inner life of the child – as if Tansley's message is that Freud may well be the great discoverer of the inner world of the child but his English contemporaries are pursuing equally searching, if infinitely more light-hearted and less scientifically pretentious, projects of understanding the mind of the child. With hindsight, we can acknowledge how culturally alert Tansley was with this gift – it is not clear whether Christopher Robin or Little Hans should serve as the exemplary child of the early twentieth century. With these truly excellently chosen gifts, Tansley thus conveyed a curious message: a repeated attempt to reveal to Freud the autonomy of English culture with respect to psychoanalysis – its autonomy in the quest for self-revelation, its autonomy in the quest for knowledge of the inner world of the child. Yet again, it is the 'sovereignty' question, with Tansley, this 'nice type of the English scientist', implicitly cast as not required to submit to Freud's sovereignty.

Interwoven with the account of Tansley's gifts is his account of Freud's response to the news of his Professorship at Oxford. 'Ordentlich?' is Freud's response – and Tansley then explains how Freud, knowing very well – too well, Tansley implies – the difference between 'Ordentlich' or ('Ordinarius') and 'Extraordinarius'. Tansley cannot resist letting Eissler – his reader – know what he already knew very well: that Freud was never 'Ordinarius' Professor with a seat on the Board of the Faculty of Medicine. But Tansley here distorts the more usual view of Freud's academic status: that he struggled mightily, as an outsider, and against considerable prejudice, to be appointed Professor Extraordinarius;<sup>77</sup> then having achieved it (in 1902) appeared perfectly content with his position, satisfied that it guaranteed him a place from which to disseminate his teaching and the social recognition that went with the title of Professor. In Tansley's implied version, Freud's position of Extraordinarius was the source of an acute sense of an inferior status, rather than the achievement of a long wished-for goal. Here the question of sovereignty is being harped on with a vengeance – and strictly to Tansley's advantage: he implies that he had now achieved something that Freud himself had long wished for and had never succeeded in (at the date of the conversation, Freud was seventy-two, and thus beyond an age at which one could hope for such promotion). But it is clear that the person who cares about being Professor Ordinarius is not Freud but Tansley. Freud's question to Tansley –

‘Ordentlich?’ – may well have been based on Freud’s acute awareness of the relevant differences between ranks, but it was addressed not from Freud’s own preoccupation with this issue but to Tansley’s pride at having fulfilled what must have emerged in his analysis with Freud as a heartfelt ambition of his own.

Tansley’s appointment to the Chair at Oxford does not only represent his assertion of independent, even higher, sovereignty in relation to Freud; he ‘was unfeignedly glad of my new academic status, which he was sure would be good for me psychologically’. It is here that there is a sliding from the issue of sovereignty to an issue more closely tied to Tansley’s analysis with Freud. It is not the fact that Tansley has become a Professor that is important to Freud, one might say; it is the fact that he has made what Godwin acutely called the ‘return to the mother subject’ of botany. What Tansley had done, in Freud’s eyes, we speculate, was finally resolve the crisis in his life which had been initiated by his dream and the events it referred to. The intriguing – but not, finally, atypical – form of that life-crisis was Tansley’s involvement with psychoanalysis and Freud. In this sense, we can stand back and see this psychoanalytic episode in Tansley’s life as a protracted transference neurosis. To remind readers: the transference neurosis is that structure created during psychoanalytic treatment in its central phase, after the initial phase when the pre-existing symptoms have been interpreted and disappear – the transference neurosis is the expression of the subject’s neurosis entirely in terms of his or her relation to the analyst, to psychoanalysis, and to ‘Freud’. Tansley’s dream undoubtedly precipitated him towards an intense relationship with Freud. Despite the fact that his account of the dream in his deposition to the Library of Congress affirms the *achievement* represented by the dream – an achievement of interpretative mastery – it is more than likely, given what happened in the next ten years of Tansley’s life, that it initiated a period of great confusion rather than clarification. ‘Nobody outside the psychoanalytically trained could possibly tell what it meant, that it meant hell, deep’, Tansley told Eissler. His moment of psychoanalytic understanding had revealed to him how his life had become hell. Thus precipitated into a period of emotional upheaval by the dream, we can regard his writing of the book, his resignation from Cambridge, his analysis with the man himself as the unravelling of this transference neurosis. And, Tansley plausibly intimates, Freud regarded the appointment to the Chair in Botany at Oxford as its final resolution.

One piece of evidence indicates that, no matter how Tansley had resolved his vacillation in the ‘displaced’ professional domain, his inner erotic preoccupations had not been resolved. We saw how the normally efficient Tansley failed to organize the 1925 International Psycho-Analytical Congress in Cambridge; when the 1929 IPA Congress took place from 27–31 July at Queens’ College in Oxford, Tansley, despite his being the sole member of the British Society who had a formal connection with the University, was at no point involved – the organizers were Joan Riviere and



Sylvia Payne, and guided tours of the Colleges were led by Ernest and Mrs Jones, Edward Glover, J. C. Flugel and the psychiatrist W. H. B. Stoddart. Tansley was absent from the Oxford Congress because he was in South Africa – the scene of his dream, his first trip there in reality – attending the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Cape Town and Johannesburg.<sup>78</sup> In a notebook from this period, there is the following undated paragraph:

There is no 'armour' to protect one against such elemental hurts, I find. You must know this because the knowledge that we are sharing the pain may help. I am numb toward everything but these two days. But I cannot, cannot regret them, nor can I face absolute finality. . . . It eases the pain to write but it is an indulgence, and I have hurt you too much already, my very dear.<sup>79</sup>

While it is difficult to be certain to what this refers, it is probable that Tansley's trip to South Africa allowed him to meet up with his 'beloved', and this note stands as testimony to the continued strength of their mutual feelings. The conflict of his dream after more than ten years was still as alive as ever. What is more, this theme of 'South Africa' may have infiltrated his professional work: one of Tansley's major ecological arguments in the 1930s was with John Phillips, a botanist based in South Africa, whom Tansley charged with drinking 'the pure milk of the Clementsian word'<sup>80</sup>: the 1935 paper in which he introduced the concept of the ecosystem was largely an attack on Phillips.<sup>81</sup> From the early 1910s on, South Africa was the scene of many important events and themes in Tansley's botanical work – and it probably continued to possess the secret emotional resonance stemming from his 'beloved's presence there.

We are thus reconstructing Tansley's 'neurosis' as having as its principal content the dual vacillation or splitting: splitting of his interest or commitment between botany and psychoanalysis, a vacillation or splitting that duplicated the stark choice in his dream between his love for a woman who was not his wife and submitting to the inferior but stronger forces of 'public opinion'. He is married to botany, but his beloved is psychoanalysis. Tansley himself used the terms splitting to describe his situation in 1923: 'I am doing psychological work here now [in Vienna], having resigned my lectureship at Cambridge . . . I shall continue to edit the journals and also to work at ecology, but I do not know to what this splitting of interest will eventually lead'.<sup>82</sup> His resignation from Cambridge and his moves in the mid-1920s towards becoming a fulltime psychoanalyst represent perhaps a more courageous defiance of 'public opinion'; yet it is recognizably a displacement of this defiance from one domain to another. And it is an interesting question whether the defiance of leaving botany for psychoanalysis was more or less stark than the alternative action of leaving his marriage for his 'beloved'.

It is natural, given this displacement, to seek understanding of his

vacillation between botany and psychoanalysis in the more private vacillation of his familial and erotic life. But of this we know very little. His wife Edith figures as hardly a shadow in any account he or any others gave of his life. She was his student at UCL, but, apart from acknowledgements of indebtedness to her in some early index work and two early collaborative articles they wrote together, she is remarkably absent from his professional life.<sup>83</sup> James Strachey's letters to Alix of 1925 include a portrait of Tansley family life, but it says as much about Strachey and his tastes as it does about his hosts:

Give me a well-off middle class household. Blazing fire in the bedroom, perfect bed, five-course dinner, excellent cooking, claret and port at dinner, hock at lunch, good coffee – what more can one desire? But besides these essentials Tansley himself is very nice & quite intelligent, Mrs. T is not too tiresome, and the girls most inoffensive though unluckily far from beauties. – They were all most affable; and last night Tansley went rather further, I think, than he'd intended, and poured out a good deal of his troubles: his life's interest hopelessly divided between his old love, botany and his new one, psychoanalysis.<sup>84</sup>

The plain fact is that we lack sufficient information about Tansley's private life to hazard guesses at the domestic resonances of his crisis, his vacillations and his decisions in the ten years – roughly – from the dream to his accepting the Chair at Oxford. According to his eldest grand-daughter, 'there was a frankness and openness within the family, quite unusual for the times'.<sup>85</sup> Subsequent evidence indicates only that he resolved the split in his professional life more successfully than that in his personal.

However, in Tansley's psychoanalytic writings, the theme of splitting is interestingly highlighted. We should not read too much into passages such as the following, from Tansley's *The New Psychology*, which, however apt they may or may not have been in Tansley's case, are not exceptional amongst those influenced by psychoanalysis:

Thus a man may be deeply attached to his wife and children, but have a mistress who satisfies both his physical and his mental sexual desires, or he may even have two mistresses – a physical and a spiritual one.<sup>86</sup>

But a note from 1926 to the British Psycho-Analytical Society indicates what 'clinical material' arrested Tansley's attention and stimulated his theoretical interest:

March 3, 1926: Mr A. G. Tansley read a short note on a definite type of masturbation-phantasy, in which he described a variety of phantasy turning on the procuring of a virginal sexual object for the masturbator by an older woman, and suggested that the imagery was determined by the early splitting of the subject's libido between mother and sister.<sup>87</sup>

However Tansley might have made use of his own analysis in working with such material, it wasn't received entirely favourably by his psychoanalytic colleagues:

Dr. James Glover and Dr. Ernest Jones, however, thought it more likely that the two female persons of the phantasy represented a splitting of the mother-imago.<sup>88</sup>

This rather peremptory correction of Tansley's clinical work may not have made him feel entirely accepted by his new scientific colleagues. But its content is of some interest: it indicates that where Tansley saw a split between two female persons in dream or phantasy that reflected two different persons in reality, a more sophisticated analytic reading attributed responsibility for the splitting entirely to the subject. Tansley's mother/sister interpretation allowed the subject too much of an alibi in disowning this responsibility – just as the subject-less 'procuring' evades the question of who is doing the procuring – and from whom (whose prior rights over the women are being ignored).

Such splitting of the mother into the figures of the affectionate and the sensual, the mother and the prostitute, was of course set out in Freud's paper of 1912 'On a special type of object-choice made by men'.<sup>89</sup> Whereas Freud had shown the origins of these two familiar cultural figures of women in defensive splitting in phantasy, Tansley in *The New Psychology* had proposed a biologically-grounded account of the two types of women necessary to civilization:

the feminine mind has two paths open to it, either of which may lead to fairly complete satisfaction – the sexual sphere with its normal result, in the case of permanent mating, of the care of the family and the administration of the home; or the herd sphere, in which the affect of public service takes the place of the sex affect. . . . It has even been suggested to the writer by Mr. Trotter that we may see a psychical and functional differentiation among women analogous to that existing among the bees – a splitting into two distinct classes, the one of perfect females, the other of non-sexual workers in the service of the community, derived from potential females.

It is certainly true that the type of woman most attractive to men – at least to what may be called the crude masculine sex instinct – is the type whose psychic energy is almost entirely concentrated in the sexual sphere, and when it is recognized that the other type is likely to play a more and more important part in the world, it is perhaps not unnatural that the masculine intelligence should tend to insist on the reality of such a segregation as has been indicated, so that the type attractive to the masculine sex instinct should not be destroyed or blurred. . .<sup>90</sup>

Tansley's account of the splitting of women into two types is very different from Freud's. It is true, just as in Freud, that one type of woman is desexualized; but this is the 'worker' female, leaving all sexual functions to the reproductive female. Freud's account has the wife and mother as desexualized, in contrast with the 'worker' female, the whore. Most crucially, the strict split between the two types is defensive for Freud, designed to de-sexualize the idealized wife/mother, whereas Tansley points to the needs of the male not to desexualize but to keep the functions divided – as if the category that is required by males is the 'purely sexual', where it is not clear if all the weight of the category derives from the 'purely' or from the 'sexual'. Thus, looked at more closely, we find in Tansley's account of the split functions of the female a more social, economic even, rather than psychic-sexual, analysis. Certainly this account of 1920 does not give us a clear idea of the sources of his conflict between the dream-figure of the wife dressed entirely in white and the 'beloved' who has gone away.

Thus, in attempting to understand the significance of Tansley's dream, we are left with fragments, rather than solutions. We have insufficient evidence to articulate Tansley's erotic and professional crises. We have been struck by the parallels between the figures of his wife and 'beloved', and his relationship to botany and psychoanalysis. In a moment of interpretative audacity, we might suggest that the core wish of the dream – the truly 'impossible' thing to contemplate, 'as impossible in the dream as it would be in real life' – was a desire to murder his wife (botany) in order to be with his new beloved, in which case, his ten-year dalliance with psychoanalysis was an 'acting out' of this core wish.

But when we look to Tansley's work in botany, one of its most striking and original features is the *lack* of 'splitting' – between Man and Nature, between Nature and Culture. Tansley's principal contributions were, in contradistinction to American ecology, to emphasize the systemic interrelations of human activity and botanical phenomena – he sees no real difference between those ecosystems which are natural and those which are 'anthropogenic' (nature 'produced by man', as he glossed it in 1923).<sup>91</sup> The American and 'preservationist' theme of the 'wilderness', prior to and independent of human intervention, with its image of 'virginal nature' and its ethos of non-interference, was not Tansley's, in whose work there is very little talk of 'mother Nature'. What is ever-present there is the possibility of the human control or 'regulation' (Tansley's preferred term) of natural processes. We might say that his natural posture is that of a celebration of the mastery of knowledge, rather than the erotic power of the object. Reading this posture alongside the dream, we note how the rifle is what symbolizes Tansley's knowledge, his 'superior equipment'. And, in terms of his life-choices, Tansley's quest for psychoanalytic knowledge continues his over-estimation of the importance of this mastery embodied in knowledge, at the expense of the resolution of his conflict by an erotic choice. Here we recall

how Tansley's principal responses to Freud are to emphasize his own mastery, his epistemic independence from his analyst. And it was this attitude that he reiterated in 1953 when interviewed by Eissler. More than that: this attitude helps us explain how Tansley felt it appropriate to submit his dream and its interpretation to the Freud Archives as the principal testimony concerning his place in the history of psychoanalysis. A strange decision: a dream which Freud never analysed, dreamt prior to any real knowledge of Freud or his writings. What Tansley's dream bears witness to is the superiority of psychoanalytic knowledge, and thus implicitly disdain for Freud himself. And, implicitly, also to the 'hell' of the erotic conflict in which he had found himself at this time. It is the mastery which always seems to win out over the recognition of the conflict.

Yet we should not underestimate how strong this conflict was for him; including the dream – anonymously – in *The New Psychology*, Tansley offers it as the clearest example of a dream in which symbolism expresses powerful emotions bound up with a deep conflict:

The more extreme forms of symbolism are met with in the dreams of adults when the affects are very deep and very strongly repressed as the result of conflict. Very many such dreams are concerned with sexual relations, and a great number are recorded in Freud's book, and in other works. A good example of such symbolism is contained in the dream of a man who dreamed that, armed with a rifle, he was alone in a sub-tropical country, separated from his friends and surrounded by a tribe of armed savages with spears and shields, who, however, remained quite passive. Psychoanalysis showed that he knew in the depths of his mind that he was in conflict with the public opinion of his fellows, which separated him from his beloved, and that while he thought much more highly of his own mental equipment (symbolized by the rifle) than of that of the 'herd man' (symbolized by the spears) who typifies public opinion, he was quite aware that he was powerless against them on account of their numbers and unanimity. The savages did not actively threaten him – they merely surrounded him: there was no overt conflict with public opinion – only a potential one. He was in no danger where he was, provided he remained there.<sup>92</sup>

In this censored version, the elements associated with place ('South Africa'), the figure of his wife dressed in white and the confusion about the rifle are omitted. Yet Tansley makes clear to the reader that the emotional significance of the dream is considerable: the affects are 'very deep', are 'very strongly repressed' and clearly associated with sexual relations. On the next page, he summarizes it as follows: 'The man with a rifle surrounded by savages and unable to break through them is a true poetic symbol of the man in conflict with the herd, which separates him from the object of desire'. Once again, we are tempted to see Tansley's involvement with psychoanalysis as

an attempt to arm himself with a more powerful rifle so as to win out over 'the herd'. As he said to Eissler:

- T It was really this remarkable dream of mine that impressed me most deeply. I [was] sure that psychoanalysis is going to be a very important fundamental contribution to the general theory of psychology. And that was why I went to Freud, you see. But I have also been an amateur, I have never got a professional, I always have been an amateur if you like /laughs/
- E But you always were engaged in /unclear/ /laughs/ You wrote a book on the topic!
- T Oh yes, I wrote a book that's true! That book I wrote before I went to Freud. As a result of this stirring up of my interest and emotion about the thing. . . .<sup>93</sup>

In this version, Tansley makes it clear that the book he wrote was an result of emotion stirred up by his dream and its interpretation.<sup>94</sup> Quite clearly, the book was an attempt at mastering these emotions. It may be fair to say that this was a desire to win the battle, as if that was the only way to resolve the conflict, and in that quest he may have later used psychoanalysis against 'the herd', such as Vera Brittain, who equated sexual freedom with sexual gluttony; but a truer resolution would be less couched in terms of the superiority of psychoanalytic knowledge than in his eventual return to his first love, botany. Like other analysts, including Freud, writing before the full lessons of World War One were digested, Tansley may have underestimated the erotic conflicts associated with mastery, with aggression – the rifle. Virginia Woolf, however, certainly had a keen eye for such erotics in her portrayal of Tansley as the arrogantly superior academic setting himself against the herd:

he was proud of it; that he was [Charles] Tansley – a fact that nobody there seemed to realise; but one of these days every single person would know it. He scowled ahead of him. He could almost pity these mild cultivated people, who would be blown sky high, like bales of wool and barrels of apples, one of these days by the gunpowder that was inside him.<sup>95</sup>

\* \* \*

When Tansley died in 1955, his papers passed into the care of Harry Godwin, and eventually were deposited in his old Department in Cambridge, now known as the Department of Plant Sciences. His wife Edith lived on to 1970, dying at the age of 101. As is well known, virtually nothing of Freud's presence in Vienna survived the Nazis. For years, the city of Vienna behaved as if it had successfully forgotten Freud. Early in the 1970s, Anna Freud was asked by the newly formed Sigmund Freud Gesellschaft in Vienna if she could help locate psychoanalytic books to furnish the beginnings of a Museum which was intended to occupy Freud's old apartment

there. Some time after 1972, she made an appeal to members of the International Psycho-Analytical Association for contributions to the library.<sup>96</sup> Somehow, she located the psychoanalytic books of Professor Sir Arthur Tansley, F. R. S., which he had bequeathed to Harry Godwin, along with his other books, papers, pamphlets and copyrights.<sup>97</sup> As a result of Godwin's gift, the Freud Museum in Vienna acquired forty-seven books from his library, including fourteen books by Freud in German, some of them first editions. It is the books of this 'nice type of the English scientist' that make up a significant portion of the oldest of Freud's books to be found in Freud's old apartment that now houses the Freud Museum in Vienna, making reparations for the destruction of the Nazis.

One of the consequences of this scouring of the psychoanalytic community for early editions of Freud's work is that Tansley's own library contains no psychoanalytic books. The books on botany from his library were donated to the Department in Cambridge, where, for a time, they were housed separately from the main collection; more recently, they have been integrated with that collection, and have thus lost their unity as elements in a distinguished botanist's life-work.<sup>98</sup>

Even Tansley's edition of *Die Traumdeutung*, with Freud's own dedication to him, has completed the circuit it started out on, a few days after his analysis began on 31 March 1922, from Freud's hands to Grantchester, and now back on the bookshelves of Berggasse 19. This journey of Freud's dream-book is a fitting allegory of Tansley's own journey, driven by his own dream which he interpreted himself, to Freud's books, then on to involvement with the psychoanalytic movement and the nine months he spent on Freud's couch, and back to his own field of ecology. Nonetheless, this circular journey of Freud's dream-book back to its point of departure was in danger of erasing its own history, the itinerary of its circuit as determined by Tansley's own history and analysis, which we have here attempted to retrace and reconstruct.<sup>99</sup>

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

We thank Dr Anna Dickens and Mr Martin Tomlinson for permission to quote from the materials which their grandfather, Sir Arthur Tansley, submitted to the Sigmund Freud archives and we are very grateful to Dr Kurt Eissler and the Library of Congress for access to these 'Three Contributions'. We also thank Professor Roger Leigh of the Department of Plant Sciences, the Librarian, Dr David Briggs, and the Assistant Librarian, Mr Richard Savage, for their assistance with materials from the A. G. Tansley Collection.

1 Sir Harry Godwin, 'Sir Arthur Tansley. The Man and the Subject, The Tansley Lecture, 1976', *Journal of Ecology* 65, 1977, p. 13 'Tansley undertook a more or less routine clerking post in one of the Ministries, where his powers were barely called upon'

2 *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones, 1908-1939*, ed. R. Andrew Paskauskas, introduction by Riccardo Steiner, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1993 (hereafter abbreviated to *FJ*), Freud to Jones, 6 April 1922, p. 468

3 Sigmund Freud, *Five Lectures on Psycho-analysis*, in Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (24 volumes), edited by James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London, 1953–74 (hereafter abbreviated to *SE*), vol. 11, p. 33.

4 *Three Contributions by Sir Arthur Tansley*, F. R. S., Sigmund Freud Archives, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC, USA (hereafter abbreviated to LoC), Interview with Kurt Eissler, summer 1953, p. 9. Quoting these words does not mean we endorse their accuracy – such is always the case, but particularly so when it comes to verdicts on a historical actor's inner mental states.

5 Harry Godwin, 'Arthur George Tansley 1871–1955', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of The Royal Society* 3, November 1957, pp. 227–46, this from p. 232.

6 Robert McIntosh, *The Background of Ecology Concept and Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 69.

7 'The Reconstruction of Elementary Botanical Teaching', *The New Phytologist* 16: 10, Dec. 1917, pp. 241–52. Psychological language infuses the piece.

8 F. E. Bower, 'Botanical Bolshevism', *The New Phytologist* 17: 5, 6, May/June 1918, pp. 105–7; A. D. Boney, 'The "Tansley Manifesto" affair', *The New Phytologist* 118: 1, May 1991, pp. 3–21.

9 Letter dated 18 Dec. 1918, Frederic Clements Collection, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, Laramie, cited in Frank Golley, *A History of the Ecosystem Concept in Ecology*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1993, p. 208.

10 *FJ*, Freud to Jones, 10 March 1910, p. 48.

11 *FJ*, Jones to Freud, 30 March 1910, p. 49.

12 William Cooper, 'Sir Arthur Tansley and the Science of Ecology', *Ecology* 38: 4, October, 1957, pp. 658–9, quoting a letter from Tansley dated Nov. 1923. The book was widely reviewed, and favourably by such luminaries as Havelock Ellis in the *Daily Herald*, 22 December 1920.

13 A. G. Tansley, *The New Psychology in its Relation to Life*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1920, p. 6.

14 Tansley, 'The impact of Freud's work and personality on a non-medical biologist', LoC, p. 2. Tansley's scrapbook of reviews and correspondence regarding *The New Psychology* is held in the A. G. Tansley Collection, Library, Department of Plant Sciences, University of Cambridge (henceforth Tansley Archive).

15 See Ruth Hall, *Marie Stopes: a biography*, Deutsch, London, 1977, and Ruth Hall (ed.), *Dear Dr Stopes: Sex in the 1920s*, Deutsch, London, 1978.

16 Tansley, 'The impact of Freud's work . . .', LoC p. 2. Jones mentioned to Freud that Tansley had approached him in a letter dated 6 May 1921 and Freud responded 19 May informing Jones that he had received Tansley's letter (see *FJ*, p. 424).

17 See *FJ*, Jones to Freud, 6 May 1921, p. 421, and Rundbrief by Jones, 19 Oct. 1920, Otto Rank Archives, Columbia University, New York, USA. We thank Ernst Falzeder for valuable assistance with unpublished Freud correspondence and the Rundbriefe.

18 Kardiner Oral History Interviews, interviews conducted by Bluma Swerdloff, 1963, Columbia University Oral History Project, New York, p. 102.

19 Freud to Anna Freud, 19 March 1922, Anna Freud Archives, Library of Congress, Washington DC, USA.

20 Siegfried Bernfeld, 'Sigmund Freud, M.D., 1882–1885', *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 32, 1951, p. 216.

21 *FJ*, Jones to Freud, 1 April 1922, p. 467.

22 Including *Elements of Plant Biology* in 1922 (based on the lecture course he gave to first-year medical students), *Practical Plant Ecology* in 1923, and a co-edited volume *Aims and Methods in the study of Vegetation* in 1926. See Godwin, 'Arthur George Tansley', p. 232.

23 Wicken Fen, purchased in 1899 by the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty, is the oldest of Britain's nature reserves. See Laura Cameron, 'Histories of Disturbance', *Radical History Review* 74, 1999, pp. 4–24 for possible connections between Tansley's ecology and psychology in this place/period.

24 Letter from Clements to Tansley, 12 Jan. 1923, Tansley Papers, Dept of Plant Sciences, Cambridge, cited in Golley, *History of the Ecosystem*, p. 209.

25 Letter from Tansley to Clements, 8 March 1923, Frederic Clements Collection, University of Wyoming, cited in Golley, *History of the Ecosystem*, p. 209.



26 Letter from Tansley to Clements, 30 May 1923, Clements Collection, University of Wyoming; cited in Golley, *History of the Ecosystem*, p. 209.

27 Freud to Abraham, 14 March 1924, Sigmund Freud Archives, Library of Congress, Washington DC, USA

28 Ernest Jones, 'Review, *New Psychology*', *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 1, 1920, p. 480

29 Rundbrief written by Jones, 19 Oct. 1920, Otto Rank Archives

30 *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, SE vol. 7, p. 131.

31 *FJ*, Jones to Freud, [?] Oct. 1922, p. 501.

32 Tansley, 'Review, C. J. Patten, *The Memory Factor in Biology*', *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 8, 1927, p. 292.

33 A. G. Tansley, 'Critical notice of *Versuch einer Genitaltheorie* by Dr. S. Ferenczi', *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 4, 1924, pp. 156–61.

34 Archives of British Psycho-Analytical Society, FAA/134 Committee Minutes.

35 'Autobiographical Introduction', probably delivered to Magdalen Philosophy Club, 5 May 1932, Tansley Archive, Dept of Plant Sciences, Cambridge.

36 Archives of British Psycho-Analytical Society, FAA/161 Committee Minutes.

37 Jones to Abraham, 12 Nov. 1924, Sigmund Freud Archives, LoC, Washington DC, USA.

38 Tansley was eventually elected an Honorary Fellow of Trinity College, but only in 1944, well after his retirement from the Chair at Oxford.

39 J. R. [John Rickman], 'Susan Sutherland Isaacs, C. B. E., M. A., D. Sc. (Vict.), Hon. D. Sc. (Adelaide)', *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 31, 1950, p. 270. Susan Isaacs would 'read some notes upon Child Life' at a meeting hosted by Tansley at his Granchester home 13 or 14 June 1925, see Perry Meisel and Walter Kendrick, *Bloomsbury/Freud: The Letters of James and Alix Strachey 1924–1925*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1986, p. 281.

40 See Cameron and Forrester, 'Tansley's Network', forthcoming.

41 A. G. Tansley, 'Freudian Psycho-Analysis', *The Nation and The Athenæum*, 12 Sept. 1925, p. 700.

42 In addition to pioneering Quaternary research in Britain with his wife, Margaret (who took up pollen analysis at Tansley's suggestion), Godwin (1901–1985, F. R. S 1945) was, like Tansley, a leader in the Nature Conservancy. See R. G. West, 'Harry Godwin', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society* 34, 1988, pp. 261–92

43 Godwin, 'Arthur George Tansley', p. 236.

44 Godwin, 'Arthur George Tansley', p. 236.

45 The source for Needham's reminiscence is a personal communication from Edward Timms (to Cameron, 17 March 1997), who asked Needham about interest in Freud in Cambridge in the 1920s. Charles Raven, botanist, distinguished historian of natural history and biographer of John Ray, probably had the same teacher in mind when he noted that in the early years of this century ecology and psychology were being drawn together – a comment which, without Tansley, would be somewhat mysterious. In a speech to the Cambridge Natural History Society in 1957, Charles Raven said

at the beginning of the century, the tide had begun slowly but surely to turn and though the gulf between the men of museums and the men of the open-air was still wide, the liveliest minds in biology were already moving towards a denial of the antithesis, towards ecological and psychological problems and to that sense of wholeness which is now influencing every department from medicine to nuclear physics.

Cited in F. W. Dillistone, *Charles Raven: Naturalist, Historian, Theologian*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1975, pp. 174–5.

46 *The Nation and Athenæum*, 1928 Brittain's letter, 28 July, p. 552; Tansley's first response (from Kielce in Poland), 11 August, p. 618, Brittain's next, 18 August, pp. 644–5; and Tansley's long and final rejoinder (from Saas Fee in Switzerland), 15 Sept., p. 757.

47 Godwin, 'Arthur George Tansley', p. 238.

48 Cameron, 'A. G. Tansley and the Place of Anthropogenic Nature', forthcoming 1999.

49 See John Forrester and Laura Cameron, '"Cure With A Defect": A Previously Unpublished Letter by Freud Concerning "Anna O."', *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, forthcoming

50 For instance, he gave a confidential opinion on a Prize Essay submission on 'The sense

of injustice and its relation to oral sadism' in a letter to Sylvia Payne, 18 June 1941, Archives of British Psycho-Analytical Society, G06/BA/F04/03.

51 A. G. Tansley, 'Sigmund Freud (1856–1939)', *Obituary Notices of Fellows of The Royal Society* 3, 1939–1941, pp. 247–75.

52 He published *The Values of Science to Humanity*, 1942, *Our Heritage of Wild Nature*, 1945; *Plant Ecology and the School* (with E. Price Evans) 1946, *Introduction to Plant Ecology*, 1946; *Brian's Green Mantle*, 1949, and *Oaks and Oakwoods*, 1952.

53 A. G. Tansley, 'The psychological connexion of two basic principles of the S. F. S.', *Society for Freedom in Science*, Occasional Pamphlet 12, March 1952.

54 The figure (seventeen ecologists out of sixty-one members) comes from Stephen Bocking, *Ecologists and Environmental Politics A History of Contemporary Ecology*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1997, p. 27.

55 F. R. Winton was also an early Associate Member of the British Psycho-Analytical Society, elected in the same year as the Stracheys, 1923, and remaining a member until his death in 1985. He was a physiologist who spent most of his working life at University College, London, apart from 1927–37 when he was in Cambridge.

56 The *Drei Abhandlungen* were known in translation as either *Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory* in Brill's translation of 1910 or from later editions on as *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* (1916, 1918, 1930, 1938). The first English edition to use the title *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* was that of James Strachey in 1949. Volume 7 of the *Standard Edition*, in which the *Three Essays* appeared, was published in 1953.

57 The typescript has 'hero' here and in the next parenthetical phrase – apparently a typing error, either Tansley's or introduced by Tansley's assistant (if he had one) or by the Sigmund Freud Archives. The third possibility seems more probable as the typescript is in Pica 10 pt, unlike Tansley's first document, which is Courier 12 pt. On the cover sheet for THE DREAM, a stamp specifies 'THE SIGMUND FREUD ARCHIVES/ *Recollections/Sir Arthur Tansley's*/self-interpretation of a dream/#832 (Copy)'. Given the date, the word 'copy' probably refers to a typing-out, rather than to a photostat or other mechanical copying process.

58 In choosing this expository structure, Tansley used a method similar to Freud's own, as first set out in the analysis of his 'specimen dream', the 'dream of Irma's injection' – Preamble, Dream, Analysis. Whereas Freud fuses the associations and their interpretation, Tansley separates them, and inverts the order of Preamble and Dream.

59 Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE vol. 5, p. 621.

60 Another epiphanic bike-ride to Grantchester was made by Bertrand Russell in the spring of 1902, when 'suddenly, as I was riding along a country road, I realised that I no longer loved Alys': Bertrand Russell, *Autobiography*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1963, pp. 147–8, also commentary in Ray Monk, *Bertrand Russell The Spirit of Solitude*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1996, p. 145. Russell was, during their undergraduate years together at Trinity, as Tansley put it (writing in the third person): 'the most penetrating mind with which he came into contact, and who was his favourite companion in midnight talks' (Godwin, 'Arthur George Tansley', p. 229). Russell's autobiography was published only after Tansley's death and we have no evidence if Russell – in Cambridge for most of the time till his dismissal by Trinity in 1916 – and Tansley talked intimately at this time. There is a faint possibility that either Tansley or Russell used each other's recounted story of an epiphanic bicycle ride for his own purposes.

61 Godwin, 'Arthur George Tansley', p. 243; see Tansley, 'Sigmund Freud: Obituary Notices'.

62 Eissler Interview, LoC, p. 4.

63 Tansley, 'The impact of Freud's work', LoC, pp. 4–5.

64 Eissler Interview, LoC, p. 3.

65 Eissler Interview, LoC, p. 7.

66 Godwin, 'Sir Arthur Tansley', p. 25.

67 Copy in Freud's Library, Freud Museum, London. We thank Michael Molnar for information and assistance concerning the books held there, and also unpublished correspondences held by the Museum.

68 Copy in Library, Sigmund Freud Museum, Vienna. Special thanks to Lydia Marinelli, Curator, for her generous assistance concerning books held by the Museum that were once owned by Tansley.

69 *FJ*, Freud to Jones, 16 April 1922, p. 474.

70 For examples, see his analysis of Loe Kann and of Joan Riviere, discussed in Lisa Appignanesi and John Forrester, *Freud's Women*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1992.

71 Inscription in Freud's copy in the Freud Museum, London

72 Personal communication, Ian Patterson, 26 February 1999.

73 In *New Psychology*, p. 197, Tansley referred to another children's author to illustrate his point that 'the moral law holds for animal communities just as it does for human societies' – 'Mr. Kipling, one of our greatest modern exponents of the glories of herd life and the herd instinct, has brought this out in his delightful stories of the wolf pack and the bee-hive'. He specifically recommended 'Mowgli's Brothers' in *The Jungle Book* (1894), 'How Fear Came' in *The Second Jungle Book* (1895), and 'The Mother Hive' in *Actions and Reactions* (1909)

74 Freud did not make professional use of Milne's verses, but his daughter Anna did, quoting and interpreting a passage from *When We Were Very Young* in her *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* (1936), Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London, 1968 (revised edn), p. 83, concerning 'Denial in Word and Act'.

75 Tansley, 'The impact of Freud's work and personality on a non-medical biologist', LoC. In the interview, Eissler asked Tansley if Freud ever gave him a gift and he replied 'No, he Yes, he gave me a portrait, a photograph, and a copy of the *Traumdeutung*'. The Leonardo figures in Engelmann's photographs of Freud's study, taken in 1938 visible from his desk, as Tansley noted with evident pride, when he saw it on his 1928 visit to Freud. There is no record of the Pepys *Diaries* ever having been part of Freud's library, neither in the collection of books he took from Vienna to London, nor in the portion sold when Freud was forced to leave Vienna. See Nolan D C Lewis and Carney Landis, 'Freud's Library', *Psychoanalytic Review* 44, 1957, pp. 327–56 and David Bakan's corrective 'The authenticity of the Freud Memorial Collection', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 11, 1975, pp. 365–7

76 The Leonardo used to hang in the Burlington, and thus off the beaten track – as Tansley recognized. Its acquisition by the National Gallery, London, was the occasion for a very public and impassioned campaign in the 1960s

77 Freud's desire to be a Professor is analyzed in both Jones's and Gay's biographies of Freud and in the detailed studies of Joseph and Renée Gicklhorn and of K. R. Eissler. In 1924 Freud pedantically corrected Pfister on this biographical fact: 'Actually I was never a full professor of neurology and was never anything but a lecturer. I became a titular professor in 1902 and a titular full professor in 1920, have never given up my academic post, but have continued with it for thirty-two years, and finally gave up my voluntary lectures in 1918'. (Freud and Oskar Pfister, *Psycho-Analysis and Faith*, London, Hogarth Press, 1963, 9 June 1924, p. 95) 'Titular' here means something between 'Associate' and 'Honorary'

78 We thank Peder Anker, historian of ecological science, for pointing out, when we noticed Tansley's absence from the IPA Oxford Congress, that he was probably attending the 1929 South African BAAS meeting (July 22–August 3).

79 Undated entry in notebook entitled 'Psychology' which contains notes for 1929–36, Tansley Archive, Cambridge

80 A. G. Tansley, 'The Use and Abuse of Vegetational Concepts and Terms', *Ecology* 16: 3, July 1935, p. 285

81 Tansley argued that Phillips simply trotted out F. E. Clements's theory that vegetation constituted a 'complex organism' which could be studied in the manner that physiologists approached the individual organism. Although Tansley had initially adhered to this idea, he increasingly expressed dissatisfaction with Clements's organismal analogy as well as his 'monoclimax' – the theory that there was a single end point to vegetational succession in a given climatic area. In his 1935 paper, Tansley wrote that Phillips's three linked articles in Tansley's *Journal of Ecology* (John Phillips, 'Succession, development, the climax and the complex organism: an analysis of concepts, I', *Journal of Ecology* 22, 1934, pp. 554–71 and '[Parts II, III]', 1935, *Journal of Ecology* 23, 1935, pp. 210–46, pp. 488–508) invited 'attack at almost every point'

82 William Cooper, 'Sir Arthur Tansley and the Science of Ecology', *Ecology* 38: 4, Oct. 1957, p. 659, citing letter dated Nov. 1923.

83 'Notes on the conducting tissue-system in Bryophyta', *Annals of Botany* 15, 1901, p. 1 and 'On the structure of *Schizaea malaccana*', *Annals of Botany* 17, 1903, p. 493. Edith also created the index for *Types of British Vegetation*, Cambridge University Press, 1911, for which Arthur thanked her in the Preface.

84 Meisel and Kendrick, *Bloomsbury/Freud*, p. 216, letter dated 23 Feb. 1925. According to his grand-daughter, Dr Anna Dickens, Tansley's daughters 'were well known for being attractive both in appearance and intellect'

85 Personal communication, Dr Anna Dickens, Cambridge, 23 June 1999. Given the

insufficient evidence as to the identity of Tansley's 'beloved', it is not appropriate to give extensive information concerning those whom we regard privately as candidates. If a cache of papers belonging to any of those candidates emerged and illumined further aspects of this study, this might well change our view of what is appropriate to publish. Permission to publish from the close relatives or estate of the person would still be needed.

86 Tansley, *New Psychology*, p. 223.

87 D. Bryan, 'Reports. British Psycho-Analytical Society', *Bulletin of the International Psycho-Analytical Association*, in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 7, 1926, p. 533.

88 Bryan, 'Reports', pp. 533-4

89 Freud, 'A special type of object-choice made by men', *SE* vol 11, pp 165-75.

90 Tansley, *New Psychology*, pp. 236-7

91 A. G. Tansley, *Practical Plant Ecology*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1923, p. 48  
For more detailed analysis, see Cameron, 'Histories of Disturbance', *Radical History Review* 44, 1999, pp 4-24 and Cameron, 'A. G. Tansley and the Place of Anthropogenic Nature' (forthcoming).

92 Tansley, *New Psychology*, p. 130.

93 Library of Congress Interview, Kurt Eissler, p. 12.

94 A number of passages in *New Psychology* single out a married man who conducts 'a serious illicit love-affair' (p. 103) as peculiarly subject to intense conflict; see also p 111

95 Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (1927), London, Penguin, 1992, p. 100

96 Information received from Dr Richard West, Godwin's colleague and executor, who donated much of Godwin's estate, including Tansley's papers, to the Department of Plant Sciences, Cambridge, and informed us (14 May 1999) that it was Godwin who donated the books to the Freud Museum in Vienna. Tansley's will was probated 14 April 1956.

97 Ms letter, undated but clearly after 1972, addressed to members of the international psychoanalytic movement, Anna Freud Archives, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

98 Dr Peter Grubb of the Department of Plant Sciences in Cambridge has a small private collection of Tansley's botanical works, received from Sir Harry Godwin. Tansley's own edition of Freud's works in English, prepared by his long-standing friend James Strachey, found its way into a secondhand bookshop in Cambridge in the 1970s, where it was eagerly acquired by Edward Timms, now Professor of German at the University of Sussex and a distinguished commentator on psychoanalysis. He retained the original invoices that came with the set, from which the following information is derived. Tansley subscribed to the *Standard Edition* on 2 April 1953, ordering it through the London bookseller I. R. Maxwell of 4-5 Fitzroy Square. Before his death in 1955, Tansley certainly received two other volumes (Vol. 13, 1953, and Vol 18, 1955, dispatched to him in May 1955). The final volume must have been delivered to Tansley's estate in 1974.

99 In a chance conversation with Lydia Marinelli, Archivist of the Freud Museum in Vienna, JF discovered the presence of Tansley's books on the bookshelves beside which he was sitting. As professional librarians and experts on the history of psychoanalysis, the Freud Museum staff had excellent records of the source of the books, but no knowledge of the identity of Sir Arthur Tansley, F. R. S.

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