This original study investigates the role played by literature in Sigmund Freud's creation and development of psychoanalysis. Graham Frankland analyses the whole range of Freud's own texts from a literary-critical perspective, providing a fresh and comprehensive reappraisal of his life's work. Freud was steeped in classical European literature but seems initially to have repressed all literary influences on his scientific work. Frankland traces their re-emergence, examining in detail Freud's many literary allusions and quotations as well as the rhetoric and imagery of his writing. He explores Freud's own attempts at analysing literature, the influence of literary criticism on his approach to analysing patients, and his creation of psychoanalytical 'novels', quasi-literary fictions fraught with profoundly personal subtexts. *Freud's Literary Culture* sheds new light on a multi-faceted, contradictory writer who continues to have an unparalleled impact on our postmodern culture precisely because he was so deeply rooted in European literary tradition.

**Graham Frankland** is Research Fellow in German at the University of Liverpool. He is currently translating Freud's 'The Unconscious' for Penguin Modern Classics.
For Janet
## Contents

*Preface*  
*Acknowledgements*  
*Introduction*  

1. The unconscious of psychoanalysis: Freud’s literary allusions  
2. A sublime ambivalence: Freud as literary critic  
3. The literary-critical paradigm: sources of Freud’s hermeneutic  
4. The frustrated *Dichter*: literary qualities of Freud’s text  

*Conclusion*  

*Notes*  
*Bibliography*  
*Index*
Throughout this book, the intention of which is to examine the role played by literature in Freud's creation, presentation, and development of psychoanalysis, my approach to his works will essentially be that of a literary critic. For this reason I shall not be aiming to make definitive pronouncements on the truth value of psychoanalysis, nor shall I address – at least, not explicitly – the various contemporary debates about the scientific and philosophical credentials of psychoanalysis, such as the feminist critique of Freud's patriarchal and phallocentric assumptions, for example, or the contentious issues involving memories of abuse recovered during therapy. Such omissions do not, of course, imply an imperious rejection on my part of the validity of these debates. In one respect, they correspond merely to a narrowing of focus that is essential when dealing with such a wide – and heavily trod – field as psychoanalysis. More importantly, they are a necessary corollary of my treatment of Freud's work not as a body of knowledge, but as a body of writing. I shall concentrate on analysing Freud's texts as texts – their rhetoric and imagery, their inner tensions and subtexts, their sources, their cultural background, and so on. Indeed, it is by focusing so intensively on the precise texture of Freud's works and, in particular, on his literary preoccupations and assumptions, that I hope to shed light on his creation of a new ‘science’ from some unexpected angles.

It should already be clear from this qualification that my own recourse to Freudian ideas – a recurrent theme of this book – does not constitute any endorsement of the absolute validity of those ideas. My work should leave the reader with not so much a new set of conclusions about psychoanalysis as a fresh sensitivity towards Freud's writing, an alertness to its rich contexts and fraught subtexts which, in the best literary-critical tradition, should ambiguate rather than definitively categorize his work. And yet the perspectives opened up by this ‘literary-critical’ approach are by no means without relevance to the current controversies and
debates about psychoanalysis. For example, my focus on the question of how profoundly Freud’s literary culture contextualizes psychoanalysis and reveals its essentially subjective origins in his own culturally acquired assumptions may subtly enrich – if only by the force of analogy – a feminist critique, say, of Freud’s assumptions about gender. Similarly, and again only implicitly, it could be seen to go to the heart of the controversy about the scientific status of psychoanalysis. My findings could, for example, easily be appropriated by a strident critic of Freud’s fundamentally unscientific methodology; equally, though, they could be invoked to question the whole relevance of the debate about his scientific credentials by revealing this to be based on too limited a critical paradigm with which to evaluate such a complex writer. Such issues are not conclusively resolved by this book. However, as commentators on Freud – and, for that matter, Freud himself – are generally at their weakest when trying to develop their sharpest insights into systematic theories or definitive, totalizing critiques, this irresolution may prove a fruitful one.
Acknowledgements

This book is based on the thesis for which I was awarded a PhD at the University of Liverpool in 1996. For help throughout its writing I am indebted above all to Dr Jim Simpson, whose course at the University of Liverpool first encouraged me to investigate Freud’s works further, and who then provided invaluable assistance as my doctoral supervisor. I should also like to thank Dr Helena Kirkby for kindly reading through the early drafts of this book.