## Preface

In a memoir of her analysis with Sigmund Freud, the American poet H.D. describes her first impressions of Freud's consulting rooms, viewed from a "reclining yet propped-up" position on the famous couch:

I face the wide-open double door. At the foot of the couch is the stove. Placed next the stove is the cabinet that contains the more delicate glass jars and the variously shaped bottles and Aegean vases. In the wall space, on the other side of the double door, is another case or cabinet of curiosities and antiques; on top of this case there are busts of bearded figures—Euripides? Socrates? Sophocles, certainly. There is the window now as you turn that corner, at right angles to this cabinet, and then another case that contains pottery figures and some more Greek-figure bowls. Then, the door to the waiting room. At right angles again, there is the door that leads through the laboratory-like cupboard-room or alcove, to the hall. These two last doors, the entrance door and the exit door, as I call them, are shut. The wall with the exit door is behind my head, and seated against that wall, tucked into the corner, in the three-sided niche made by the two walls and the back of the couch, is the Professor. [Hilda Doolittle (H.D.), "Writing on the Wall," in *Tribute to Freud*, 22]

This cluttered, enclosed space—part office and consulting rooms, part laboratory, part collection of antiquities—is inhabited by two persons, and two personas: "the Professor" and (in this case H.D.'s) "I." There is a documentary impulse at work in H.D.'s description, but it also provides a metaphorical register through which the arrangement of the rooms comes to mirror the mind as psychoanalysis renders it: a jumble of seemingly unrelated thoughts, its passions represented and impelled by figures that may at first seem marginal, like the elderly man squeezed into a corner behind the sofa. The contents of this analytic interior are intrinsically fascinating because of what transpires there, but the element that most interests me is

the one set of objects that H.D. attempts to interpret: whose busts are displayed on that case? As she speculates, H.D. attributes one of her own preferences to Freud—Euripides—and lights upon Socrates, that other famous seeker of knowledge about the self, but finally expresses certainty about one identification: Sophocles.

Of course: it *has* to be Sophocles in the history of psychoanalysis, even if the identity of the busts remains a mystery. This is the insight with which I began this project to account for the seeming inevitability of psychoanalytic knowledge and its pervasive effects on twentieth-century habits of mind. The story that I shall tell about the impact of Freud's ideas does not attempt to characterize the psyche and its contents, or the analytic scene and its private transactions, but instead unfolds the institutional and cultural affiliations of psychoanalysis that the busts signify as part of the typical office decor of a professor with a taste for the classics.

One of the greatest pleasures of concluding this book is the opportunity to acknowledge the many friends and colleagues who have criticized, reoriented, and sustained my research and writing. From the beginning, this project has been motivated by an intensely interested skepticism about psychoanalytic ideas, evolving out of the strong feminist critique of Freud's views on gender. I do not mean to imply that all the people whose names appear below share the book's perspectives on Freud. The guidance and encouragement of Nancy Armstrong, Peter Brooks, Christine Froula, David Marshall, Sheila Murnaghan, and Linda Peterson fostered my work on this project, and I thank them wholeheartedly for their example and support. Peter Brooks deserves particular thanks for his role as director of the dissertation that laid the groundwork for the book, and he has been a key reader of the work over the years. Sarah Kofman's readings of Freud's texts were important models, and she encouraged some of my initial efforts to interpret Freud's writings and question psychoanalytic ideas. Jann Matlock has exemplified how to do interdisciplinary feminist research in cultural history and literary studies.

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I dedicate this book to my husband and daughter, Panos and Alexia Zagouras, with many thanks for their understanding and humor.

## FREUD AND THE INSTITUTION OF PSYCHOANALYTIC KNOWLEDGE