I have often wondered if my interest in authors who wrote themselves in order to obscure themselves stems from my own anxieties about the permanence of the printed word—my own longing (that I imagine everyone shares?) for words that linger on the page for a moment only and then—miraculously, mercifully—disappear before their inadequacies can be exposed. I think I will always harbor this anxiety, but I have been blessed with mentors, colleagues, friends, and family members who have known how to couch their criticism in kindness and without whom I could never have summoned the courage to keep this work up or to set these words down.

The germs for this book’s ideas began many years ago, when, as an undergraduate at Harvard, I stumbled somewhat accidentally (to fulfill a requirement) into Lynn Festa’s course on “Sex and Sensibility during the Enlightenment.” Thank goodness for requirements. That course is one of the reasons I decided, years later, to study the eighteenth century. I owe a debt, too, to Beth Lyman, my undergraduate thesis advisor and the first to introduce me to performance theory.

I arrived at Yale believing I would study Gertrude Stein, and I often joke that I decided to study the eighteenth century because that’s what all the cool kids at Yale were doing. People who knew those kids know how infectious their enthusiasm for their subject can be, and how much truth there is in the joke. My advisors, Joe Roach and Jill Campbell, reminded me of the kind of scholar I wanted to be. By asking generative questions, Jill helped me to write the book I was trying to write, and everything I was struggling to say in early drafts she has helped me to say better. Joe’s ebullient personality, sense of humor, and limitless generosity constantly remind me why I got into this profession in the first place. His love for the literature he reads, the performances he watches, and the job he does (not to mention the Marlon Brando impression with which he lightened the mood at my prospectus defense) is infectious and has sustained me even when the obstacles seem insurmountable and the rewards small.

My professors Ala Alryyes, Wendy Lee, Claude Rawson, Katie Trumpener, and Elliott Visconsi offered me advice and support in the classroom and out-
side of it, on the dissertation and beyond. My fellow graduate students Dan Gustafson, James Horowitz, Daniel Jump, Heather Klemann, Hilary Menges, Lina Moe, Nichole Wright, and especially Andy Heisel provided a supportive community at and between our Eighteenth-Century Working Group sessions. I had the good fortune in graduate school to feel welcome within not one field, but two; I owe gratitude as well to the Performance Studies Working Group and especially to Joe Cermatori, Emily Coates, Miriam Felton-Dansky, Jason Fitzgerald, Jacob Gallagher-Ross, Chris Grobe, Dominika Laster, Paige McGinley, Madison Moore, John Muse, Alex Ripp, and Ariel Watson. Marc Robinson, Katie Trumpener, and Brian Walsh went above and beyond the call of duty by reading and commenting on substantial portions of the dissertation-in-progress. So, too, did Linda Peterson, whose scholarship on Mary Robinson and whose cheerful support undoubtedly helped to make this project what it is. Sadly, Linda passed away as this book was in production; she will be greatly missed.

My original cohort at Yale could not have been more supportive: a special thank you to Liz Appel, Sam Cross, David Currell, Mahni Ghorashi, Laura Miles, Fiona Robinson, Jesse Schotter, and Steve Tedeschi. When they weren’t available, I found an extremely welcoming (and hilarious) adoptive cohort in Sam Fallon, Len Gutkin, Matt Hunter, Andrew Karas, Tom Koenigs, Sebastian Lecourt, Sarah Mahurin, Tessie Prakas, Natalie Prizel, Aaron Ritzenberg, Justin Sider, and Joe Stadolnik. Thanks, too, to Erica Sayers and Ruben Roman, who never ran out of Hershey’s kisses.

The intellectual communities that have supported this project extend far beyond Yale. At Stanford, where I spent a year as a visiting student, John Bender, Blakey Vermuele, and Peggy Phelan welcomed me into their classrooms, their colloquia, and their conversations. Nathalie Phillips, James Wood, and especially Doug Jones and Derek Miller were generous with their thoughts, their time, and their friendship.

These communities include, too, those that cross institutional boundaries but are sustained by Joe Roach’s influence and by the shared strangeness of studying performance within literature departments. I am especially grateful to Emily Anderson, Misty Anderson, Paula Backscheider, Jason Shaffer, and Stuart Sherman for their thoughtful comments on the work in progress. Conversations with and talks by Robin Bernstein, Laura Engel, Elaine McGirr, Felicity Nussbaum, Nick Salvato, and Sharon Setzer added greatly to my understanding of my topic in particular and literary and performance studies in general. Joe’s dedication in using a Mellon Foundation grant to fund Interdisciplinary Performance Studies at Yale gave performance studies scholars
in New Haven a community within and outside of our home departments. The program also gave me a postdoctoral fellowship that allowed me to continue my research after graduating, and for that, too, I am extremely grateful.

I have been fortunate to discover a wonderful institutional home at Ryerson University in Toronto, and I owe a deep gratitude to my colleagues in the English Department—especially Jason Boyd, Jennifer Burwell, Dennis Denisoff, Wendy Francis, Irene Gammel, Morgan Holmes, Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, Nima Naghibi, Luanne MacDonnell, Andrew O’Malley, Dale Smith, Sophie Thomas, and Monique Tschofen—as well as beyond the English Department—especially Ben Barry and Peggy Shannon. Colleen Derkatch and Laura Fisher deserve special thanks for their support, their humor, their fashion advice, and their wide-ranging knowledge of Toronto cocktail bars. In addition, I have benefitted from my proximity, in Toronto, to several other great universities and their faculty members’ and graduate students’ generosity and time. Special thanks to Brian Corman, Simon Dickie, Alex Hernandez, Tom Keymer, Laura Levin, Danny O’Quinn, Fiona Ritchie, Terry Robinson, David Francis Taylor, Marlis Schweitzer, and Katie Zien. Thanks, also, to the members of the Toronto Performance Studies Working Group and the Eighteenth-Century Working Group, both of which have provided a rich intellectual community for me in Toronto.

A two-week stint at the Mellon School for Theater and Performance at Harvard University at a critical moment allowed me better to put the issues I address in this book into context. The members of my cohort that year were insightful and inspiring. I owe a special thanks to Martin Puchner for founding the School, to Rebecca Kastleman for making sure it ran so smoothly, and to Andrew Sofer for his invaluable comments on my manuscript.

LeAnn Fields, my editor at Michigan, has provided a home not only for this book but for so many like it that don’t fit neatly into categories of performance studies, theater history, or literary studies. The field wouldn’t be what it is today without her vision and support. I am grateful, as well, to my anonymous readers, and to Christopher Dreyer, Marcia LaBrenz, and the entire staff of the University of Michigan Press. My fabulous research assistant, Kate Jefford, worked diligently and quickly to prepare the manuscript for publication; and my indexer, Daniel Gundlach, approached his task with endless patience and admirable diligence. An essay based on parts of Chapter 1 appeared as “The Over-Expressive Celebrity and the Deformed King: Recasting the Spectacle as Subject in Colley Cibber’s Richard III,” *PMLA*, 126.4 (October 2011): 950-965. Parts of Chapter 3 were published as “Creating Character in ‘Chiaro Oscuro’: Sterne’s Celebrity, Cibber’s Apology, and the
Life of Tristram Shandy," The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation 53.2 (Summer 2012): 141-162. I appreciate the thoughtful comments and careful attentions of both journals’ readers and editors, particularly Jean Howard, Patricia Yaeger, and Nancy Vickers. Fellow members of the Yale Eighteenth-/Nineteenth Century Colloquium and the Yale British Studies Colloquium as well as of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, the American Society for Theater Research, American Theater in Higher Education, and Performance Studies International commented on and influenced this work in its early stages.

I am grateful to the archivists, curators, and staffs of the libraries where I conducted much of the research for this project: the Beinecke Library at Yale University, the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale University (especially Susan Odell Walker and Cynthia Roman), Yale University Libraries, Stanford University Libraries, Belmont Public Libraries, the New York Public Library, Ryerson University Libraries, and the Thomas Fisher Rare Books Library at the University of Toronto. Thanks, also, to the staffs of the coffee shops that allowed me to sit for long hours with laptop and library books: Blue State and Booktraders (New Haven), Vineapple (Brooklyn), and Seven Grams and Ezra’s Pound (Toronto).

All of these places and crossings have introduced me to countless friends and confidantes whose influence over this work is indirect but no less important for being so. In Toronto and beyond: Tushar Arora, Jo Baron, Teresa Bejan, Amanda Hollingworth, Sameer Farooq, Mandy Goodwin, Jess Prince, Ali Qadeer, Belinda Schubert, Lee Slinger, Penny Smith, Morgan Sonderegger, Nick Stang, Heather Stewart, Erin Stropes, Anna Treusch, David Weinfeld, Isla Whitford, Nathan Whitford, Brad Wong, my Y Ladies and my friends at the Ramsden dog park; and especially the Cesare-Schotzko family (Nikki, David, Leo, and Duncan), Kavitha Krishnamurthy, Ronit Rubinstein, and Larry Switzky. In New York: Alison Cherry, Colleen Clark, Josh DeFlorio, Colleen Egan, Mike Hines, Wally Novacich-DeFlorio, and the Novacich family. In New Haven: Priyanka Anand, Cynthia Chang, Lucy Currell, Ben Siracusa Hillman and Betty Luther Hillman, Jamie O’Leary, Francis Song, Nikki Strong, and Owen Wolfram. In the Bay area: Davey Hathorn and Kathy Lee, the Ghorashi family, and especially Jeff Lamont. And in Cambridge: Laura Perry, Tess Mullen, Julia Reischel, and Heather Thomason for realizing women could run a theater company (imagine!) and the Six-Headed Monster (Ellen Ching, Candice Cho, Christine Mulvey, Lauren Sirois, and Laura Yilmaz) for pretty much everything. Thank you.

Finally, there are a few friends missing from the lists above because they
transcend all categories and have been instrumental to this project at multiple stages of its development. Sarah Novacich, Nathalie Wolfram, and Molly Farrell: thanks for lunches, for laughter, and for flowers; for reading everything from prospectus to page proofs and from edits to emails; for THE VOICE, for takeout, for early mornings and late nights, and for Thursdays. And then, of course, to my family: Robert and Christy Fawcett, Claire Fawcett, and Scout Fawcett: thanks for teaching me the words to everything (and for forgiving me even when I got them wrong).