Postmodern Spiritual Practices
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Like all books this one has many beginnings. One of its most important, however, took place in the office of Professor Wolfgang Haase at Boston University in the winter of 1998. Professor Haase generously invited me to be a plenary speaker at that summer’s meeting of the International Society for the Classical Tradition in Tübingen. He then asked what I would like to speak on. I said “the classical roots of poststructuralism.” I remember thinking to myself as I left his office, “boy you’ve really done it this time. Now you’ve got to write this thing. You don’t know a thing about it.” There followed several months of feverish work. The resulting address and later article, “The Classical Roots of Poststructuralism: Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault” (*International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 5.2 [1998]: 204–25), was in many ways the first draft of a book I might have never written otherwise. I thus owe a deep debt of gratitude to Professor Haase for the confidence he showed in a newly minted associate professor from a modest university in west Texas.

In the ensuing years, numerous friends and colleagues have provided emotional, intellectual, and moral support for this project. Sharon Nell and Micaela Janan both read the entire book in draft form and provided crucial help with clarifying obscure formulations, eliminating errors, and unknotting tangled webs of argument. Victoria Wohl read and offered sound advice on chapters 3 and 4. Jill Frank did the same for chapters 3 and 6. Mary Ann Friese Witt provided invaluable advice on chapter 2, as did Peter Burian on chapter 3, and Chuck Platter on chapter 6. David Wray, who identified himself as one of the readers for The Ohio State University Press, gave the manuscript a detailed and acute reading, and the final result is inestimably improved by his
extraordinary care. The other anonymous reader provided additional sound advice, and Eugene O’Connor was a wonderfully supportive editor. All remaining errors and infelicities are thus stubbornly my own.

This book could not have been written without the generous support of a sabbatical provided by the University of South Carolina and a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. I owe a debt of gratitude to both. The year I was able to devote to research and writing was one I will always cherish.

Finally, I must thank my teachers, in particular Carl Rubino, who first showed me that the greatest classicists were not those who had simply accumulated the most information, but those who also reflected on their practice in a sustained and sophisticated manner. I also owe an unpayable debt of thanks to my long-suffering wife, Ann Poling. Really, honey, someday I’ll slow down. And to you, Sam, the boy with the Mohawk who asks about Plato, all I do is really dedicated to you.

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