ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank my amazing editors at Columbia University Press—Lauren Dockett, Anne McCoy, Jennifer Perillo, and Stephen Wesley—and copyeditor Annie Barva for their bold support for the kind of writing that I have opted for in this book as well as in *The Summons of Love* (published by the press in 2011).

Thanks also to my agent, Elizabeth Evans, for her continued faith in my ability to keep inventing new modes of writing.

Finally, an immense thanks to the highly motivated (and motivating) students—both at Harvard and the University of Toronto—who have taught me to cut through the shroud of impenetrable rhetoric to the passion of the ideas beneath it. I would not have been able to write this book had I not spent two decades in the classroom distilling seemingly inaccessible concepts into something more accessible. That said, my biggest appreciation

xvi ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

is reserved for those students who have understood that sometimes such distillation is impossible—that there are times when the only thing to be done is to respect the text's resistance to being mastered in the usual sense of the term.

THE CALL OF CHARACTER



PART I

THE ART OF SELF-FASHIONING