Acknowledgments

As I have worked toward completion of this book, many friends and colleagues have offered helpful suggestions on various chapters. Although I worry that this list is incomplete, I would like to note in particular Paul Apostolidis, Jennifer Culbert, Julia Davis, Tom Davis, Christine DiStefano, Susan Ferguson, Renee Heberle, Mona Lynch, Jeannie Morefield, Dave Schmitz, Lynn Sharp, and Bob Tobin. For their perceptive comments, I also want to thank the students enrolled in the capital punishment seminar I taught at Whitman College during the spring semester of the 2000–2001 academic year. Absent Whitman College’s generous sabbatical leave program, I should add, I could not have finished this project in a timely fashion.

I would be remiss if I were not to acknowledge the editors of the Law, Meaning, and Violence series, of which this volume is a part, and, more particularly, Austin Sarat, who first convinced me that I might have something of value to say about the politics of capital punishment. Also, from start to finish, it has been a delight to work with Jeremy Shine, editor for Political Science and Law, at the University of Michigan Press. I cannot guarantee that I have heeded each and every exhortation advanced by the two anonymous reviewers secured by Jeremy, but I can say with confidence that their commentary has made this a better book than it would otherwise be.

I have also benefited a great deal from my continued association with the staff and board members of the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington. In addition to making available documents that otherwise would have been more difficult to come by, and putting up with my many questions about various legal technicalities, this group of dedicated civil libertarians and abolitionists has helped to nourish a constant give and take between my intellectual and political work.

Over the course of the past half decade or so, my parents, Norman
Osborn and Marjorie Phipps Osborn, have supplied a constant stream of newspaper clippings on every conceivable aspect of the death penalty; for their support, in all its forms, I owe a debt that will never be repaid fully. Finally, on more than one occasion, Sharon, Jacob, and Tobin Kaufman-Osborn have expressed concern about what they take to be my unseemly preoccupation with the politics of state killing and with death more generally. Absent their good cheer, as well as their steadfast refusal to discuss these matters at the dinner table, this fixation might indeed have grown worrisome. To Tobin, for decoding the Washington State Penitentiary’s instructions on noose tying; to Jacob, for feigning appreciation of my feeble efforts at gallows humor; and, to Sharon, for reasons she understands, I express my heartfelt gratitude.