

## Acknowledgments

RHETORICAL COMMONPLACES are always produced out of other, earlier commonplaces; they may not have completely specifiable beginnings, but there are key moments at which elements come together to produce a new configuration. Something similar happens when an individual human being is born and raised; each of us is always in some way a product of our parents and our upbringing. My parents Michael and Mary-Jo Jackson played critical roles in generating the specific configuration that is me, and in encouraging me along the path that eventually led to my writing of this book. For this I will always remain grateful.

One of the threads of my argument in this book involves the importance of ideas that students pick up during their college educations; the process of discovery and self-crafting that enables students to come into contact with novel notions and carry them into the wider world is importantly facilitated by talented and committed professors who seek to craft spaces within which students can really *learn*. I was fortunate to have several such persons playing an important role during my undergraduate years at the James Madison College of Michigan State University: my primary adviser Michael Schechter, Linda Racioppi, Richard Zinman, Norm Graham, Folke Lindahl, and Eric Petrie. I am indebted to all of them for many years of advice, support, and conversation. Outside of JMC, I learned more about the use of textual evidence and about the craft of argument from courses taught by John Coogan (Department of History) and Sheila Teahan (Department of Literature) than from any other courses.

My graduate education in the Department of Political Science at Columbia University was, as graduate education tends to be, less open-ended and exploratory; professional socialization, while not the overwhelming or exclusive point of the exercise, is certainly foregrounded. Ira Katznelson, whose seminar on “the lineages of American political science” I took during my first semester at Columbia, remained my most important adviser and mentor as I

wound my way through the program. Ira encouraged my interest in historical processes of social construction and concretely illustrated that a historically sensitive social science was both possible and productive. Along the way, I also benefited from conversations with Jack Snyder, John Ruggie, Charles Tilly, Hendrik Spruyt, Anders Stephanson, Peter Johnson, and Volker Berghahn.

Almost more important than the professors with whom one works in graduate school are one's fellow students; much of the actual learning takes place in conversations over drinks or dinner, or (in the case of Columbia) while riding the subway to someplace in lower Manhattan. My most important interlocutors at graduate school were the members of the informal "relational constructionist group": Sherrill Stroschein, Daniel Nexon, Stacie Goddard, Allyson Ford, and Alex Cooley. Traces of discussions with them undoubtedly show up throughout the book. Mark Blyth, several years ahead of me in the program, was an important early source of peer support and helped to convince me that I wasn't crazy to tackle 'the West' as a dissertation topic. Plus, he knew where all the good bars in the city were—a real help for a first-year Ph.D. student and newcomer to New York.

While at Columbia I was fortunate enough to be able to teach in the Contemporary Civilization program for two years as a preceptor (from the Latin for "you're not a professor so we don't have to pay you as much"); that experience, and especially the weekly preceptor meetings during which we would compare notes and discuss pedagogical strategies, made an invaluable contribution to my development as a teacher. I thank David Johnston for the opportunity, and my fellow preceptors for many stimulating debates and discussions.

One of the most important institutions in academia is the professional conference, as this provides an opportunity to obtain critical feedback on one's work and to make connections to scholars at other institutions. Conferences are also essential for graduate students looking to have their wacky ideas taken seriously, as positions that might be a hard sell in one's home department often fly better in the broader environment of a conference. It's also nice to get out and be related to simply as a fellow scholar, something that is perennially difficult when interacting with faculty members in whose courses one once sat as a student. The first professional conference I attended was the International Studies Association-Northeast conference in 1996; at that meeting, Yale Ferguson and Bob Denmark made me feel extremely welcome in the profession, and their support has remained important to me over the years. At the 1997 ISA-NE conference I met Naeem Inayatullah, whose relentless commitment to not letting me get too comfortable with my analytical tools has decisively improved my scholarship for the better. At the 1998 main ISA conference I got to know Alex Wendt and Iver Neumann, both of whom have remained extremely important interlocutors and collaborators in the ongoing effort to

keep social-theoretical considerations at or near the center of mainstream debates in the field.

Conferencing has also enabled me to create and sustain important conversations with a number of other scholars, who commented on various pieces of the project as I presented it in different formats. At the risk of accidentally forgetting someone, let me publicly single out Daniel Green, Jennifer Sterling-Folker, Peter Mandaville, Benjamin Herborth, Thomas Berger, Steve Rosow, Martha Finnemore, Yosef Lapid, Colin Wight, Jacinta O'Hagan, Mark Salter, Mustapha Kemal Pasha, Peter Katzenstein, Colin Elman, Jutta Weldes, Mlada Bukovansky, Friedrich Kratochwil, Jim Mittelman, David Blaney, Patricia Goff, Kevin Dunn, Fred Chernoff, Andrew Oros, Peter Howard, Nick Onuf, Hayward Alker, and—perhaps most significantly—Janice Bially Mattern, whose broad agreement with the contours of my transactional constructionist position enables the kind of detailed discussion of specific nuances that is sometimes difficult to have with other scholars. I am deeply grateful that I can get into arguments with Janice about *precisely* how the power of language operates at the most basic analytical level, and look forward to doing so for years to come.

I have also had wonderful opportunities to present working drafts of sections of this book in a number of places: the Columbia University Forum on the Core, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Johns Hopkins University, Michigan State University, the Council on Comparative Studies at American University, the ISA workshops “Identity and IR” and “Civilization(s) in World Politics,” and the Northeast Circle at ISA-Northeast. I would like to thank all of the participants in those occasions for their helpful and critical feedback. Bud Duvall also invited me to present a chapter in the Minnesota International Relations Colloquium; his comments, along with those of Ron Krebs and the other participants in the colloquium, were among the most incisive that I received, and helped me to sharpen the argument considerably.

Students in several of my courses have heard earlier versions of parts of the argument of this book and have often served as the first audience for a half-formed idea—and as some of my most perceptive critics. I would particularly like to thank the students in my “Culture and Identity in World Politics” seminar at New York University (1998–2000), those in my “Borders and Orders” (2002) and “The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations” (2001–5) courses at American University, and participants in the study-abroad program in Kraków, Poland, during the summer of 2004, with its associated seminar “The Eastern Boundaries of Western Civilization.”

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Dan Nexon and I have been discussing the theoretical and conceptual issues surrounding a transactional social constructionist approach to world politics for so many years now that I am sometimes unclear which of us came up with a particular point first. In a sense, it doesn't really matter; although the basic philosophical commitment may be virtually the same, what we do with those points in our individual empirical work is rather different. But I would be seriously remiss in not acknowledging a debt of gratitude to Dan for our ongoing theoretical explorations, which have informed this book in so many ways that I couldn't even begin to list them all.

The credits of Hollywood films have recently begun to list "production babies" near the end; in that spirit, I want to acknowledge my two production

babies—Quinn and Chloe—whose arrival made things more interesting in a variety of ways. Exogenous shocks—even those that aren't really exogenous because they were planned—can alter a network profoundly, and I have no idea what this book would have looked like or what kind of scholar I'd be had they not come into the world when they did.

My wife Holly has been my truest companion for years, unfailingly supporting and advising my endeavors even when they took me away from her side to dusty archives and chaotic offices. She has helped me to tease out the implications of my philosophical positions for a variety of spheres of life and has kept me from disappearing into the great black abyss of academia during those times when I most needed to be reminded of the world outside of work. She has been and remains my best friend and staunchest confidant—my partner in the truest sense of the word. I cannot imagine having written this book without her at my side, and cannot imagine dedicating it to anyone else.