

Acknowledgments

It occurs to me that writing acknowledgments is not really about putting paid to a debt. Signs of gratitude don't discharge obligations, but instead model them as dischargeable—which doesn't seem very likely to be true. Rather too like the act of writing the book to which they are prefixed, these acknowledgments make me hopelessly aware of how much will be left unsaid, how poorly the little that does get said represents the personal and intellectual terrain of obligation.

But here goes, anyway. A book as long in the making as this one has accrued a sedimentary history—which in turn means many successive layers of indebtedness to be worked through, brought to light, made evidentiary to a kind of historicist consciousness that is, I guess, not very far from the thematic interests of this book. Graduate school, for instance: although little of *New Science*, *New World* resembles the long-ago dissertation on Bacon he directed, John Bender has pride of place for his early enthusiasm about the possibility of conjoining my physics past with my literature-based present. I am also indebted to the friends from those days, Thomas Moser Jr., Deborah Laycock, and Deidre Lynch, and to the Whiting Foundation, for the award through Stanford University of a Whiting Dissertation fellowship in 1984–1985, which greatly aided my initial researches.

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Finally, I wish to thank Metro Pictures for permission to reproduce

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