

INTRODUCTION

Without a Trace

There were no papers, the ostensible reason for my visit, and of course, no trace of the Rani. Again, a reaching and an un-grasping.

GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK, *A CRITIQUE OF POSTCOLONIAL REASON*

The archive still promises. At stake here is sexuality's embrace of that promise. The present work considers the relationship between sexuality and the colonial archive by posing the following questions: Why does sexuality (still) seek its truth in the historical archive? What are the spatial and temporal logics that compel such a return? And conversely, what kind of archive does such a recuperative hermeneutics produce? In what follows, there is no attempt to refuse or redeem our critical attachments to archival recovery; rather, this book engages sexuality's recursive traces in the colonial archive against and through our very desire for access. The archival responsibility of this book, if you will, is to propose a different kind of archival romance, one that supplements the narrative of retrieval with a radically different script of historical continuation. The critical challenge is to imagine a practice of archival reading that incites relationships between the seductions of recovery and the occlusions such retrieval mandates. By this I mean to say: What if the recuperative gesture returns us to a space of absence? How then does one restore absence to itself? Put simply, can an empty archive also be full?¹

But I am getting ahead of myself. To be sure, any meditation

on the authority of the archive must now inevitably elicit a rather weary and cautious recognition. Even as the concept of a fixed and finite archive has come under siege, it has simultaneously led to an explosion of multiple/alternate archives that seek to remedy the erasures of the past. In some ways, these archival expansions, these “archive stories,” resemble the contours of the earlier canon wars in literary studies as they question received notions of proof, evidence, and argumentation, particularly in fields of historical inquiry.² For better or for worse, the archive has emerged as *the* register of epistemic arrangements, recording in its proliferating avatars the shifting tenor of debates around the production and ethics of knowledge. Yet an awareness of *le mal d'archive* (archive fever) has scarcely attenuated the hunger for a recorded past (and present) at a time when we face the analytical challenges of surveillance, religious nationalism(s), and the literal destruction of innumerable historical records.³ As Jacques Derrida himself ironically (foot)notes, “the question of the politics of the archive is our permanent orientation here.”⁴

One serious challenge to theorizing the politics of the archive has been the very figurative flexibility of the concept itself. The heightened citation of the archive has become a preapproved allegory for any and all modes of contestation. Often robbed of historical specificity, the coupling of *archive* with minoritized knowledge formations—such as *queer*, *postcolonial*, and *feminist* in particular—has inevitably led to some simplistic and triumphant forms of empiricism. How does one, then, as is the case here, study sexuality’s relationship to the colonial archive without fetishizing its historical formation, without relinquishing its epistemological possibilities, and without commodifying its political contexts? Such problems are especially heightened when one is writing about British India in the nineteenth century, a geopolitical domain defined overwhelmingly by an imperial archive that was “not a building, nor even a collection of texts, but the collective imagined junction of all that was known or knowable, a fantastic representation of an epistemological master pattern.”⁵ There is in many ways also an established connection between sexuality and (post)colonial studies, one that derives less from a theoretical than from a historical context. Both, as Philip Holden rightly suggests, “find the latter part of the nineteenth century a period of radical historical discontinuity.” For sexuality studies, the late nineteenth

century, following Michel Foucault's pronouncements, is the period in which homosexuality emerges as a set of identifications that articulate and differentiate sexuality's relationship to knowledge and power. For (post)colonial studies, the period marks the intensification of imperial domains, territorial redistributions, and the rise of nationalist movements.⁶

Rather than render sexuality's relationship to the colonial archive through the preferred lens of historical invisibility (which would presume that there is something about sexuality that is lost or silent and needs to "come out"), this book pursues the questions of how sexuality is made visible in the colonial archive and of how this process paradoxically discloses the very limits of that visibility.⁷ In doing so, I propose a reading practice that redirects attention from the frenzied "finding" of new archival sources to an understanding of the processes of subjectification made possible (and desirable) through the very idiom of the archive. Such an archival turn, I will demonstrate, mandates a theory of reading that moves away not from the nature of the object, but from the notion of an object that would somehow lead to a formulation of subjectivity: the presumption that if a body is found, then a subject can be recovered. One way to conceive of this shift to the object as subject effect is to think of it as a trace, both beyond and within the Derridean spectrality model, to consider, as it were, both the forensics and metaphysics of the trace.⁸ That is, one must work with the empirical status of the materials, even as that very status is rendered fictive. The theoretical and historical provocation is thus to engage with the material imprint of archival evidence as a "recalcitrant event" (to borrow Shahid Amin's term), "to move beyond the territory of the contested fact, the unseen record, from the history of evidence and into the realm of narration."⁹ Here, the "recalcitrant event" as trace eludes the historian/scholar's attempts at discovery, offering instead new ways of both mining and undermining the evidence of the archive. I would complicate Amin's formulations further and suggest that to read archival evidence as a recalcitrant event reads the notion of the object against a fiction of access, where the object eschews and solicits interpretative seduction.

This book examines sexuality's relationship to the colonial archive through its spectacularizations in anthropology, law, literature, and pornography from 1843 to 1920. Each chapter focuses on a foundational

discourse for mapping sexuality in India and considers the emergence of sexuality under very different evidentiary patterns (e.g., legal jurisprudence and ethnography), at different historical moments (e.g., the Indian Penal Code in 1861 and the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871), and in very different locales (e.g., North-West Provinces and Burma). By turning to materials and locations that are familiar to most scholars of queer and subaltern studies, I consider sexuality at the center of the colonial archive, rather than at its margins. Throughout my readings, (lost and found) figurations of sexuality—from Richard Burton’s missing report on male brothels in Karáchi to a failed sodomy case in northern India, from the ubiquitous india-rubber dildos of colonial pornography to the archival detritus of Rudyard Kipling’s Indian Mutiny stories—are not objects that are lost and can be recovered, but subject effects sedimented through the enactments of disciplinary discourses. We return, as it were, to a narration of a narration. Within such formulations, sexuality’s foundational archival sites become more spaces of fact-reading than of fact-finding. As Gayatri Spivak suggests in my epigraph to this introduction, the rani of Sirmur must circulate without a trace, against the consoling mystifications of “papers” and the verifiable certainties of archival discovery.¹⁰ One must grasp, precisely to not fix. To read without a trace, following Spivak, is not a mandate against archival work, but rather a call to interrogate, without paralysis, to challenge, without ending the promise of a future.¹¹

In what follows I argue that the possibility of such readings lies in productively juxtaposing the archive’s fiction effects (the archive as a system of representation) alongside its truth effects (the archive as material with “real” consequences)—not as incommensurate, but as agonistically co-constitutive of each other. These (new) reading practices emerge not against the grain of archival work, but instead from within the archive’s own productions. Yet the imperative is not about founding presence, but rather about *confounding* our relationship to how and why we do archival work. The critical task lies in crafting an archival approach that articulates against the guarantee of recovery. The perspective I elaborate thus does not end with an argument for methodological reflexivity. It derives more importantly from an urgent need to complicate the very stakes of our archival mediations, especially given their mobilizations within a shifting (and often reactionary) language of political exigency. The con-

tinued efforts of the Hindu Right in India, and of the political Right in the United States, to mobilize the idea of the archive toward sectarian ends (most recently through the rewriting of textbooks) is a dangerous instantiation of the very logic I am referring to.¹²

LOST AND FOUND

We must always have
a place
to store the darkness

AGHA SHAHID ALI, *A NOSTALGIST'S MAP OF AMERICA*

The logic of this book, and the interpretive resources it requires, arises out of my commitment to two entangled and minoritized historiographies: one in South Asian studies and the other in queer/sexuality studies. Central to the argument is an understanding of area studies as vitally constitutive of the histories of sexuality, and vice versa. Through such an alignment, this book moves away from the conventional (and often reactionary) segregation of the two field formations as oppositional and discrete.¹³ I am drawn here by the archive's suturing effects as it mediates the struggles and motivations of the fields themselves. In doing so, my goal is not to stabilize either historiographical formation as if each were a text that could be translated over to the other. Instead, I explore the idea of the archive as it has been articulated within these discourses and attempt to make the concept of the archive itself the surface on which one can found their imbrication. Of critical interest is that such archival turns inevitably cohere around a temporally ordered seduction of access, a movement that stretches from the evidentiary promise of the past into the narrative possibilities of the future. That is, even as the analytical costs and limits of archival mandates are foregrounded, reading practices of recovery are nonetheless privileged over others. In both historiographical formations the idea of the archive is freighted with transformative hopes, ensconced in what Spivak has elsewhere called the perilous "simulacrum of continuity." The turn to the archive may carry futurity as its promised overture, but the break between what it desires and what it otherwise (re)covers renders its promise inevitably incomplete.¹⁴

Scholarship on South Asia, for example, has recast the colonial ar-

chive as a central site of endless promise, one where new records emerge daily and where accepted wisdom is both entrenched and challenged. These reformulations have decisively intervened in projects of colonial historiography, decentering not just the idea of a coherent and desirable imperial archive but also forcing us to rethink colonial methodologies and the relations between theories, methods, and the historical conditions that produce them.¹⁵ Implicit in this rethinking, however, is the abiding assumption that the archive, in all its multiple articulations, still constitutes *the* source of knowledge about the colonial past. The inclusion of oral histories, ethnographic data, popular culture, and performances (to name just a few) may fracture traditional definitions of the archive (and that, too, for the better), but these sites still produce a telos of knowledge production propelled forward by what one will find—if only one thinks of more capacious ways to look.¹⁶ Inspired in part by the intellectual provocations of the Subaltern Studies Group, as well as of their dissenters, the question of the archive and its formations has become a lively source of contention in South Asian historiography.¹⁷ In many ways, the failures of elitist historiography (both native and colonial) have come to be addressed through the promise of a new historiography that recovers subalternity as its focal point of narration.¹⁸ These efforts at “subalternizing” Indian historiography were echoed in much of the early work of the Subaltern Studies Group and later expanded to include a more self-reflexive analysis of the instrumentality of this new subaltern consciousness.¹⁹

Yet despite such shifts in critical modes, the additive model of subalternity still persists, where even as the impossibility of recovery is articulated, the desire to add and fill in the gaps with voices of other unvoiced subalterns remains.²⁰ Archival desire takes its theoretical form, I want to argue, through a willing of subjectivity that ironically rehearses the contradictions of its own analysis. Thus even as feminist scholars urge a multidisciplinary (i.e., not just history, please!) and gendered understanding of the colonial archive, initiating much needed critique, many still hold on to the idea of an archive that will somehow yield proper subjects of study.²¹ Betty Joseph’s account of the gendered presences in the East India Company archives instructively struggles with precisely such an archival imperative. While Joseph (a literary scholar) is careful

to mark the limits of archival retrieval via a reading of Spivak's foundational essay on the rani of Sirmur (she acknowledges that archives often operate as fictions "misread as the real India"), she is equally reluctant to give up on her own desire "to narrate the story of the silenced subject of the colonial archive in order to restore her as a historical subject." Rather, Joseph argues that if representations such as the rani function (albeit troublingly) "as fact, and have a force in history," then surely they deserve to be read (and the emphasis here is on the hermeneutical) as proper agents of history. Consequently, Joseph finds Spivak's "absenting" of the rani unsatisfactory, as it appears to deny Joseph the very material presence she so keenly desires. As Joseph states: if we refuse subjectivity to the rani, then the efforts of the colonizer to "write her out of existence [have] succeeded." The clear contradiction in Joseph's desire to write in a female subject, so "that artificial subjects can be replaced as often as possible by speaking ones," seems startling in an otherwise excellent study.²²

Such a privileged lexicon of erasures, silences, and subjects is echoed in sexuality studies as it has equally returned to the colonial archive as a site of recovery and legitimacy. Queer texts, subjects, and themes continue to be discovered exuberantly, and the process of "queering" pasts is executed through varied archival gains and losses.²³ The overall argument returns continually to narratives of recovery that operate, I would argue, through an archival logic of the "open secret." Homosexuality emerges as the structural secret of the archive, without whose concealment the archive ceases to exist. Alternately, the recovery of the hidden documents of homosexuality surrenders presence, but only to reinstate its archival liminality. To take some liberties with D. A. Miller's original formulations, writing the history of colonial homosexuality is thus ruled by the paradoxical proposition that the homosexual is most himself when he is most secret, most withheld from writing—with the equally paradoxical consequence that such self-fashioning is most successful when it has been recovered for history. This archival movement from secrecy to disclosure reinforces what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has famously called the epistemological status of the secret, where the relations of the closet—in our case, the archive—(relations between known and unknown) cluster around the articulation of homosexual and het-

erosexual histories. Such a movement from secrecy to disclosure relies on the maintenance, within the epistemological system, of the hidden, secret term, keeping all binaries intact.²⁴

Robert Aldrich's recent tome, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, exemplifies the perils of such efforts as he writes that it is crucial to bear in mind that "colonial homosexuality did not proclaim itself openly."²⁵ Aldrich's scholarly efforts are largely aimed at revealing the secret lives of a range of male homosexuals across colonial sites, from E. M. Forster in Sri Lanka to lesser known figures such as Jean Sénac in Algeria. While Aldrich's study focuses primarily on European sources, other writings on the relationship between history and homosexuality in non-European locations echo similar analytical models of recovery. Nayan Shah's much-cited early essay on sexuality and the uses of history in South Asia warns against such an unmediated recovery of the past. Shah is still one of the few scholars of sexuality who interrogates the overdependence on a recovered history to sanction our surviving present: "We may trap ourselves in the need of a history to sanction our existence. South Asian lesbians and gay men are present now. On that alone we demand acknowledgement and acceptance." However, even as he maintains that "the past is not a thing waiting to be discovered and recovered," the strategies of historical research he advocates still derive from a differentiated language of loss and discovery. Shah must rely on the coming-out materials of his contemporaries (classic models of the logic of the secret) to think critically of the archives of the past. A lexicon of "resisting silences" and "liberation" is grafted onto the project of archival research.²⁶

From literature and anthropology (the more favored locations) to law and science, the colonial archive continues to be held up as a storehouse of historical information on the secrets of sexuality's pasts. In anthropological writings on homosexuality and the colonial archive, for example, the archival turn has given rise to scholarship that sees itself as a vexed, theoretical antidote to earlier models of a flawed, colonial geography of perversions.²⁷ The archival mode here shifts from savage to salvage, whereby colonial ethnographic and anthropological materials are revisited and mined for their endorsements and descriptions of homosexuality in all its cross-cultural forms. Repeated in these cross-cultural

forays is the colonial turn to sites of alterity for the form and content of largely Western models of male homosexuality.²⁸

I want to be clear here that I am not suggesting that such archival modes are facilely flawed or merely enacting a different order of archival truth claims. The new material on homosexuality does not purport to simply “correct” and/or reveal the truth about the history of sexuality in the colonial period. There might be a certain evangelical flavor to some of the scholarship, but most of the work is keenly aware of the shifting parameters of space, time, and knowledge, and of the status of the archive in such entanglements. David Halperin, for example, has continually made a case for historicism in the study of sexuality, a historicism that acknowledges the alterity of the past alongside the irreducible cultural and historical particularities of our present. The recent turn to transnationalism in sexuality studies has further foregrounded historical differences across geopolitical sites, with the emphasis being on the uneasy and sometimes impossible portability of categories of sexuality.²⁹ As a result of such deliberations, evidentiary paradigms are being reinvented, as historical sources extend to include materials hitherto considered inappropriate and/or unreliable.

Despite such a rise in archival consciousness, historical anthropologists such as Ann Laura Stoler argue that the turn to archival research remains largely “extractive,” particularly in studies of colonialism. While there is no expectation of archival exhaustion (we have found it all), students of “the colonial experience ‘mine’ the *content* of government commissions and reports, but rarely attend to their peculiar *form* and *context*.” Hence, she advocates for scholars to move “from archive-as-source to archive-as-subject.” For Stoler, attention must be paid to the process of archiving rather than to the archive as a repository of facts and objects.³⁰ While there is much productive debate in Stoler’s work around the limits of the archival imperative in colonial historiography, there is a studied silence, or rather, a detachment from similar archival questions in sexuality studies. This detachment appears especially curious given Stoler’s remarkable readings of Foucault’s oeuvre in the context of empire. There is much talk of sex, intimacy, and affect, but no substantive engagement with such issues as they are understood (and heavily contested) in the context of sexuality studies. I am not interested here in

suggesting a corrective to Stoler's scholarship, but more in staging a conversation between the archival imperatives of colonial historiography and those of sexuality studies. What can sexuality studies, I ask, learn from the archival debates in colonial studies, and vice versa? Even as we ask what kind of history the colonial archive has, can we not, following Halperin, equally inquire what kind of history sexuality has?³¹ Let me now turn to that question.

"I ONLY FIND ONE IN THE RECORDS"

It cannot be doubted that such atrocities *are frequent* in the present day. A gentleman of the highest veracity assured me that a late Judge of Hooghly once mentioned to him that when about to sentence a native to imprisonment on proof of his having committed this crime *in corpore capellae*, he intimated his decision to the native jury, who hinted that, if so much severity was to be employed against so prevalent a crime, the prisons of Bengal would not be large enough to hold the culprits. Convictions for this crime are however rare; *I only find one in the Records*—of Unnatural Crime with a Cow—at Dinagepore. Police Report, L.P., 1845, p. 23.

NORMAN CHEVERS, *A MANUAL OF MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE FOR INDIA*

For Norman Chevers, one of the foremost colonial experts on medical jurisprudence, the discourse on "unnatural" sexual conduct in colonial India appears embedded in an evidentiary paradox: a known prevalence of the crime, and an equally known rarity of its documentation. That unnatural conduct, in particular, sodomy (*per os* or *per anus*), as a condition of the colonial subject was one of the familiar claims underwriting the project of colonial difference in India. Unlike sodomy in the metropole, sodomy in colonial India became naturalized as a frequent phenomenon (a "fact" corroborated by a "native jury"), and yet one sparsely documented in the official archive. Chevers's iterations render native perversity intelligible through a composite everywhere/nowhere model of colonial governance. Such a model scripts native perversity as an ontological presence through a language of proof, veracity, and certainty, even as it bemoans the colonial state's access to official documentation of such unnatural acts. These "atrocities" may indeed be everywhere, but "convictions are however rare."³²

Contained within the complex grammar of Chevers's observation is a production of sexuality's relationship to the colonial archive: a narrative

tracking of unnatural conduct that is ironically most attuned to the necessities of its archival absences. A colonial terminology of facts and figures adapts to sexuality's inchoateness, imputing absence to its object, precisely so that a different theory of recovery may appear. Chevers mobilizes a seamless network of evidentiary sources that range capaciously from the word of "a gentleman of the highest veracity," to a venerable "judge of Hooghly," to a "native jury," to arrive finally (and almost irrelevantly) at the official record, "unnatural crime with a cow—at Dinagepore." Each source is granted evidentiary equivalence, with the ("rare") official record emerging as a mere reflection of an already established claim. The colonial archive no longer reads as the failed effort to produce an exhaustive panopticon, but becomes instead (or perhaps in addition) even more successful through its articulation of that very failure. The lost record of sexuality produces an archive accustomed to failures and absences in a colonial landscape whose panoptical reach succeeds all the more for being exposed.

Chevers's comments produce the colonial archive not as all encompassing but rather as an arrangement of knowledges that settles subjects through a negative idiom of representation. Such an idiom depends on invocations of loss, absence, and paucity, which in turn make possible an even greater capture of the gaps in colonial scientism. Sexuality provides the sightline that marks viewing as a place of ironic reversal: a discourse of absence is wrenched from its doomed associations and cast into a different teleology of knowledge production. Throughout his writings on "unnatural conduct," Chevers isolates and folds anecdotal references to sodomy into a seamless narrative so overlaid with examples that it papers over the absence of the official record. What contains native unnatural conduct, what turns its excess back into order, is a refurbished colonial epistemology in which the excess of sexuality effects its own regulation. Chevers turns repeatedly to the figure of the native informant—the "native doctor," the "native jury," the native sodomite who is "convicted of the crime on his own confession"—to authorize his own observations. We are told, for example, by the "native doctor, Hingun Khan," that these "practices are so common as scarcely to be regarded as criminal by the ignorant," and that the "crime," because of its high prevalence, is held in "light estimation" by communities such as "the Seikhs [*sic*]."³³ Truncated excerpts on the presence of sodomy from

native histories of religion and law (ranging from mythological texts to manuals on ancient Hindu and Mahomedan law) provide further epistemic fodder for an economy of colonial knowledge that criminalizes only that which has already (not) been seen. Hindu mythology is seen to attribute “this crime to some of their deities” and even encodes an “atonement for sodomy” in its holy scriptures.³⁴ In such an elaborate and temporally stretched evidentiary landscape, it scarcely matters that official convictions for the crime are rare. On the contrary, like “the prisons in Bengal that are not large enough to hold culprits” of “so prevalent a crime,” the colonial archive almost balks from the weight of such enormous presence. The colonial archive is thus most empty precisely when it is most full.

Chevers’s archival diagnosis derives its much-cited authority from his extensive knowledge and access to the archives of the criminal courts (*Nizamut Adawlut*) of Bengal and the North-West Provinces of India, as well as from his expertise in the arena of tropical disease in colonial India. As Christopher Pinney points out, Chevers emblemizes the growing unease with the available vocabulary of evidence in mid- to late nineteenth-century colonial India. One notes, for example, the almost vertiginous movement of Chevers’s narrative in the quotation I began the section with, a narrative that folds excess into regulative logic. Even as an “empire of knowledge” expanded its taxonomical gaze, its instruments of surveillance and classification seemed continually incommensurate to the landscape it sought to map and measure. On the one hand, nineteenth-century India marked the age of a particular kind of colonial scientism, the center of which was the language of evidence and measurement. From the establishment of the *Great Trigonometrical Survey* of 1818, to the inauguration of *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* in 1881, to the publication of Herbert Risley’s 1891 magnum opus, the two-volume *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, the period is littered with discoveries and administrative projects that produce India as a laboratory of colonial scientism.³⁵ For example, Chandak Sengoopta’s history of how fingerprinting was born in colonial India attests to the relentless search for an empirical signature that, in its “simplicity,” would irrefutably “evidence” the native body.³⁶

On the other hand, Chever’s own writings testify to the “uncertainty of evidence in India,” where all is not as it appears to be. Colonial rec-

ords, for Chevers, are inherently unreliable as they demonstrate more the “general fallibility” of native evidence than the success of colonial governance. Natives inherently lie, cheat, and commit fraud, making them incapable of providing “true evidence.” Like the absent record of sexuality that paradoxically references a prevalent crime, native fallibility appears so widespread as to make its reform virtually impossible. According to Pinney, Chevers turns to colonial technologies such as the photograph precisely because they, like the fingerprint, offer a superior model of evidence, an index of native criminality that fixes meaning in clear and unmediated ways. Yet even as he endorses photography as an admirable recording device, Chevers underscores its function as an instrument of affecting power, rather than as a primary source of evidence. For Chevers, “no measure would . . . impress more vividly, even upon the minds of the ignorant and superstitious common people, [than] a conviction of the difficulty of eluding our evidence.”³⁷

Such claims to the authority of an imperial archive that records ceaselessly and exhaustively are of course entangled in many centuries of record making in colonial India. There is, of course, no self-evident or singular colonial archive. With the transformation of the East India Company from a trading operation to a ruling power in 1757 and its growth thereafter, the reliance on record keeping increased significantly, linking imperial governance to a massive archive of texts that literalized the distance between colonizer and colonized. In the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth, colonial governance was accomplished primarily through a “practice of archiving, a systematic circulation, preservation, and recall of written texts that allowed rule by remote control from London.” After company rule ended due to the events of 1857, the records passed over into the archives of the new imperial state. Central to this early archiving project, Joseph crucially argues, was the idea that the “official record was never deemed to be a repository for public scrutiny; it remained throughout this period an instrument of governance.”³⁸ It was only after Indian independence in 1947 that the archive was opened to public viewing, giving rise to what we now understand as a certain scholarly historiography of the colonial state. What has remained stable, even in exposure, is a narrative of the colonial archive as a secret archive, a space precariously hinged between a language of loss and recovery, absence and presence.

Chevers's description of an official archive, denuded of all traces of a crime that must surely exist, serves as an analytical preamble to my present work, which both seeks location in the archives of nineteenth-century colonial India and attempts to question some of the governing assumptions in the field of sexuality studies, particularly as Chevers's model of an (empty) archive of sexuality is uncannily echoed in the analytical models of contemporary scholars of colonialism. For scholars of colonialism and sexuality (among whom I count myself), the references to homosexuality troublingly reiterate the very colonial dynamic one attempts to exceed: homosexuality remains obvious and elusive—undeniably anecdotal (in colonial travelogues, ethnopornography, and such) yet rarely sustainable in any official archival form. Stoler, for example, articulates the difficult challenge of the “absent presence of the dangers of homosexuality” in Dutch archives. She speaks of the threat of homosexuality as a “deflected discourse, one about sodomitical Chinese plantation coolies, about degenerate subaltern European soldiers, never about respectable Dutch men,” only to withdraw and admit that “my silence on this issue . . . reflects my long-term and failed efforts to identify any sources that do more than assume or obliquely allude to this ‘evil.’”³⁹

If we are to consider such a vexed historical reiteration with the attention it demands, then our analysis must necessarily address how the encounter of colonialism and the emergence of archival logics segregate certain objects of study such as sexuality. To do so, this book must raise what may indeed be unanswerable and messy questions (but perhaps that is the nature of this kind of intellectual exploration): How is the history of sexuality recorded in the colonial moment, and how are we returning to it to produce a counter-record of that history? In what ways do our idioms of the archive merely rehearse a colonial mystification through which sexuality can only be interpreted as necessary absence? Is our critical history discontinuous with the methods and fields of argumentation of the past? If the imperial archive is the sign of colonialism's reach, then what do its records show? How does one think through the current privileged lexicon of erasure, silences, and recovery in a colonial context such as nineteenth-century India, whose archival instantiations emphasize the centrality, rather than liminality, of the race-sex nexus? How does one account for sexuality studies' claims

toward an innovative interdisciplinarity if the very turn to interdisciplinarity can also be understood as an epistemological ruse of the colonial state? The extent, and especially the history, of such theoretical formulations must surely be open to every interrogation. If not, then Chevers's reading of "unnatural conduct" as a space of absence remains intact, indeed strengthened, since it is now reproduced in liberatory political ends. We return to the figuration of an archive whose authority is lamented but is never finally arguable.

TRACE/EVIDENCE: A PROVISIONAL MAP

The traveler wandering from town to town forgot
the path to his house. What was mine, what was yours, both
of the self and of the other, lost,
then, to memory.

MIRAJI, *TIN RANG*⁴⁰

Any book on the concept of the archive must at least partially speak not just to the question of different archives produced by different disciplinary formations but also to the status and protocols undergirding all evidentiary claims. More vulgarly put: how do specific genres of texts produce specific histories, subjects, evidence, and how are those effects mobilized? Consider, for example, literary scholars who often anxiously mine the archive as proof of their commitment to serious historical labor and research. Even as literary scholars continue to proffer innovative readings of sexuality and the colonial archive, they often also find themselves lambasted for their flattening of extraliterary sources and for their preoccupation with discursive tropes of representation.⁴¹ The privileging of literary formations yields too much colonial discourse analysis, it seems, and too little engagement with historical documents. Historians, on the other hand, often turn to the transformative space of the literary to somehow remedy, fill in, or rupture what their official documents cannot seem to produce. There is a curious portability to literary sources, whereby they may supplement the historian's history but rarely appear to have a history of their own.⁴² While the rise of interdisciplinary research in the study of sexuality and colonialism has done much to undo the backlash against the overdetermination of some sources over others, it has done so only partially. Much of the scholarship pro-

duced under the rubric of sexuality studies and queer studies fixes sexuality within a short-lived history in which the materialities of colonialism and empire emerge as mere referents, rather than as terrains of thick description.⁴³

For the purpose of this book, which works to resist the dissipation that archival breadth often provides, these cautions against and for disciplinary thinking refer us back to the classificatory imperatives of colonial knowledge. The logic of these concerns in many ways recapitulates some of the pernicious aspects of colonial educational establishments in India. In nineteenth-century colonial India, more specifically, the demarcation of the separate domains of literature and history was created precisely to stabilize the writing of history in a fixed form and method. Such disciplinary divisions, Indrani Chatterjee argues, cover over the colonial state's inability to understand that precolonial history in South Asia, for example, was recorded primarily "in the dominant literary genre of a particular community, located in space, at a given moment in time." Over time, the leakages between history and literature became impossible to discern as communities changed modes of literary production. As earlier genres lost patronage, they equally lost the status of "history" and became framed instead in a more colonial understanding of literature.⁴⁴ Interdisciplinarity and disciplinarity, I want to underscore, partake of the same colonial episteme, where the undoing of disciplinary boundaries returns us not to a rupture but to a repetition whose lineaments require careful attention. In other words, one period's history becomes another's literature, making our much-touted interdisciplinarity a methodological requirement rather than an innovative hermeneutical choice.

The readings I offer thus intentionally move away from any extended claims to radical interdisciplinarity or straightforward historical value. Instead, I have allowed the materials in each chapter to guide me in staging disciplinary proclivities and features that found our very desire to write a history of sexuality that is (not) absent. Such a desire covers over the simultaneity of loss and recovery through the temporal language of metalepsis: we begin with presence to arrive later at absence. The return to the archive, I maintain, both fuels and empties reading practices: archival absence serves as the motivation for our hermeneutics, while archival presence paradoxically threatens the status of that

hermeneutics itself. The archival object of sexuality, after all, emerges only after it is lost, a be-coming that can conversely only take place if more stories of its loss are produced. Each chapter in this book curves around figurations of archival evidence that move the act of archival recovery into narratives of profound undoing. While the chapters are organized chronologically, they can be read in any sequence as their archival traces move in and out of each other's articulations. At the heart of each chapter lies a form of archival loss, troped either in a language of disappearance or paucity, simulacrum or detritus. This structure of representation materializes archival absence in all its historical prickliness, disorienting the teleological promise of archival claims; far from being exterior to the archive, the fact of re-presenting absence becomes the very condition of possibility for our archival returns.

The book's first chapter, for example, situates Richard Burton's missing report on male governmental brothels in Karáchi in the larger arc of an archive continually defined by documents that appear to exceed its grasp. Set against the changing, and often competing, definitions of ethnology, ethnography, and anthropology in nineteenth-century British India, and against the discursive problems associated with generating the moral content of colonial explorations of sex, this chapter attends to the archival myth surrounding Burton's missing Karáchi report. Rather than speculate on the absence or presence of this report, I am interested in articulating what is at stake by continuing to do so. What happens if archival attention shifts from the fetishized discovery of this report to a more careful understanding of the contextual force its evocation carries? What if the report, for example, were to be read less as a lost object of archival desire than as an embedded sign whose form (as an official technology of state intelligence) speaks the entanglements of sexuality, colonial governance, and anthropology? After all, as I demonstrate, the report emerges against the backdrop of the notorious conquest of Sind, a conquest that to this day remains embroiled in a landscape of missing or fictitious archives.

The second chapter turns to the paucity (and yet ever present lure) of legal sodomy adjudications to amplify the narratives of loss and invisibility that are the very conditions of possibility for our archival labors. Specifically, I trace the uneven legal history of a failed sodomy case, *Queen Empress v. Khairati* (1884), to ask why a colonial record that stum-

bles over critical issues of evidence, criminality, and legal codification becomes *the* archival trace for crimes against nature. The success of the case as legal evidence, I argue, draws on a colonial archive that fixes sexuality as both loss and abundance, as (forensic) invisibility and (anthropological) hypervisibility. Within such a colonial taxonomy, the legal failures of the case (no eyewitness, no victim, and no time) are effectively erased by the ontology of the offence: sodomy as “native habit,” unpunishable by colonial law. Even as we surrender to the archival incitement to make Khairati visible, we become, as it were, dupes to a colonial archive that settles sexuality precisely through an idiom of failure. To return to Khairati as a figure of (failed) sexuality alone is to effectively elide the very histories that produce her in the first place. By way of attempting such historical thickness, this chapter locates the Khairati case at the intersection of multiple debates on the codification of the Penal Code, the role of medical jurisprudence, and the expansion of the imperial archive. I argue that the Khairati case must be read equally as a corruption and a corroboration of the systems of proof and evidence that grant subjectification under the law. In doing so, the category of sodomy (and connectedly, of other unnatural offences) problematizes not just the legal translation of native sexual behavior but the task of archival hermeneutics itself.

In an effort to continue to focus on spectacularized forms of sexuality, chapter 3 engages the popular (and ephemeral) genre of mid- to late nineteenth-century pornography. As the most recognizable (and available) forms of illicit sexual expression, the colonial pornographic texts I examine strikingly caution against the seductions of historical recovery and access. Unlike the structure of absence and presence that haunts Burton’s secret report and the colonial case records of sodomy, mid- to late nineteenth-century pornographic texts are luxuriantly accessible objects (albeit in locked cupboards and private cases). Yet the abundance and availability of such texts refuses any easy recourse to the language of presence and empiricism. The shifting legal and sociohistorical representations of obscenity and of pornography betray murky genealogies of copyright, authorship, and reproduction that render the capture of a supposedly original text seemingly impossible. Consequently, a pornographic text may well be “found,” but its recovery pro-

duces a model of archival supplementarity that eschews any simple theory of recovery or origin. To explore such a model of archival supplementarity, I turn to the recurring figuration of the india-rubber dildo in colonial pornography, to narrate a more compelling and uncanny story of archival “realness” and evidence.

It is of course impossible to write a book about the archive in late colonial India without actively engaging with one of its most prolific contributors: Rudyard Kipling. As has been exhaustively documented, Kipling’s writings roam a range of genres and idioms, leaving one critic to exhaustingly wonder if the “sun ever sets on Kipling’s archive?”⁴⁵ By contrast, it may seem dubious that a book that centers questions of sexuality and the colonial archive should end with a discussion of an author who does not focus on sexuality in any obvious way. But in many ways that marks the point at which I wish to end. If the archival figuration of the india-rubber dildo instantiates a familiar avatar of sexuality, Kipling’s archive denaturalizes any presumptive understanding of sexuality’s customary forms, particularly under colonialism. Rather, Kipling turns to literary narrative to speak desire, slanted not through explicit objects of desire but through stories that fold desire into the lineages they travel.

To understand such lineages, my last chapter reads the Kipling corpus alongside the equally mammoth production of writings on the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Kipling’s Mutiny stories, I propose, press against the sedimented calibrations of archival access and recovery, compelled instead by the travails of archival formation itself. Refusing the solace of an authoritative post-Mutiny archive, Kipling’s fiction mines the Mutiny’s archival detritus as the very source of its narrations. That is, instead of transforming earlier records of Mutiny failures into glorious stories of colonial success, the Kipling text lingers on the difficult pleasures of writing, selecting, and transmitting archives. Writing such a text becomes a gendered movement in which the terror of the Mutiny becomes a source of extended male articulation, assuming semantic density through narrative forms shared only between men. The stories I examine are in thrall of the Mutiny’s narrative possibilities, celebrating an archive found (and not lost) by the epistemological stress of its own production.

There are perhaps risks in articulating the continuity and fractious-

ness of the colonial archive in a scholarly project that does not have at its center a saving vision. Instead, what all my chapters elaborate is the need for a project of archival hermeneutics that assembles reading practices adequate to the writing and survival of a robust and ethical queer/colonial historiography.⁴⁶ This book, following Elizabeth Povinelli, focuses largely on “who and what” is being recuperated “from the breach and shadow” of the colonial archive in our efforts at making queer history. In such explorations, the limits and possibilities of my scholarly interpretation go hand in hand with an obligation to what Povinelli calls a project of “radical interpretation.”⁴⁷ With such obligations in mind, the exigencies of (postcolonial) archival recovery return us to the detritus of a colonial landscape.⁴⁸ To move within and beyond such returns is the challenge of my present project. I do not thus see myself as disentangled from the questions I raise; the readings I produce are as much part of the colonial archive as the materials on which they focus.

In other words, if it is by now self-evident that the colonial archive has emerged as the preeminent center of historical interpretation and contestation in the historiography of sexuality, it is equally clear that the structure of the archive is necessarily inchoate. There is always a *politics* of the archive, as I have previously suggested, because it is rarely a simple matter of revealing secrets waiting to be found. My meditations, at the very least, suggest that archives are untenable without readers and that “across the gap between the archives and its motivating interests there is a perpetual agonism.”⁴⁹ What are the political stakes embedded in this relentless consumption of the idea of the archive? Is the relationship between the colonial state and the archive undone, or merely refurbished through our intellectual labor? After all, despite our efforts to democratize and widen the arc of the archive, it still survives as a talisman, as a sort of “pagan cult,” as Achille Mbembe describes it, where the powers of the archive recreate through an inventive but uncannily similar logic, the original act of creation. The debt of the colonial state, Mbembe warns, is paid off through its archival debris, where new life is breathed into the dead of the past through the archives of the present. Mbembe speaks specifically of the case of South Africa, where the artifactualization of memory through the idea of the archive as talisman “softens the anger, shame which the archive tends” because of its function of recall.⁵⁰ Sexuality studies is an equal accomplice in such archival

mythmaking and must remain alert to its own methodological and analytical foibles. To not do so would be to forgo the histories of colonization, to brush aside the possibilities accorded by the very recourse to the idea of an archive. This book is one record of such possibilities.

NOTES

1. These observations are largely drawn from a series of responses to my work by an anonymous reviewer at Duke University Press. I am also grateful to Milind Wakankar for sharing his unpublished writing on Dalit historiography and the text of disappearance.
2. Burton, *Archive Stories*, 1–25.
3. Any current awareness of the archive is impossible without an acknowledgment of its enduring (and embattled) presence in the scholarship on slavery. The project of this book in many ways is only possible because of such efforts. See, for example, Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*; and Sharpe, *Ghosts of Slavery*.
4. Following Michel Foucault (*The Order of Things*, 15), the idea of the archive animates all knowledge formations and is the structure that makes meaning manifest. Jacques Derrida has termed the quest for such a meaning-making network “archive fever,” where the literal and figural site of the archive provides the “commencement” to, and the “commandment” for, intellectual labor. “*Le mal d’archive*, archive fever” is the craving for this archive, the desire to enter it, to procure it, even unto death (Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 4n1). Such a deconstructive reading of the archive as a necessary and precarious repository of meaning has both been embraced and resisted by many historians and anthropologists. The social historian Carolyn Steedman, for example, reminds us of the material deposits of the past (dust, in her case) whose affective reach exceeds all forms of theorizations, enacting the “real” drama of archive fever: “You think, in the delirium: it was their dust that I breathed in” (Steedman, *Dust*, 19). To read further on Steedman’s ambitious claims about reimagining cultural history through such readings of the archive, see Tollebeek, “‘Turn’d to Dust and Tears,’” 237–48.
5. Richards, *The Imperial Archive*, 11. See also Blouin and Rosenberg, *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory*.
6. Holden, “Coda,” 304.
7. As William Cohen cannily puts it, “Even without Foucault, we might have suspected from the Victorians that silence about sexuality composes a strategic form, not an absence, of representation” (Cohen, *Sex Scandal*, 2).
8. Derrida uses the term *spectrality* to describe a model of historical attentiveness through which the past and/or the future presses on us with a demand that we cannot but answer. Yet Derrida is less interested in the material imprint of the trace that forces a forensics of presence, especially in formulations of colonial historiography. For an excellent reading of queer spectrality, see Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern*.

9. Shahid Amin, "Writing the Recalcitrant Event," a paper presented at the conference "Remembering/Forgetting: Writing Histories in Asia, Australia and the Pacific," University of Technology, Sydney, July 5, 2001.
10. It is worth noting here that Spivak's chapter on history extends the arguments of an earlier piece, "The Rani of Sirmur." In that prior piece, Spivak ends with the provocation that she will "look a little further, of course. As the archivist assured me with archivistic glee: it will be a search" (270). The quotation that appears as this epigraph to this introduction fulfils the promise of that early provocation, cautioning once again against the dangers of reading the colonial archives as verifiable documents or signs of historical subjectivity.
11. For a related call to the writing of queer history, see Goldberg, "History That Will Be." Goldberg attempts to challenge normative historical accounts of the conquest by analyzing a key encounter between an Araucanian chief and Bernal in Eduardo Galeano's *Memory of Fire* to posit a futurity open to multiple possibilities. While I am sympathetic to Goldberg's account, his emphasis on a reading that disrupts the heteronormativity of historical continuity (one must write to reproduce time and place) does little to destabilize the very status of literary narrative as evidence of past histories.
12. See "Statement by Faculty at Title VI Resource Centers in South Asian Studies, Maintaining Scholarly Standards in California Textbooks: Towards an Accurate Representation of Hinduism and Ancient Indian History," February 27, 2006, <http://southasiafaculty.net>.
13. I am, of course, not the first one to make this claim. Other scholars such as Ara Wilson have argued for a "queer regionalism" that more locally translates the relationship between Asian studies and queer studies. See Wilson, "Queering Asia"; and also Murray, Boellstorff, and Robinson, "East Indies/West Indies." My engagement, however, lies more with the broader historiographical questions undergirding such possible dialogues.
14. Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 207.
15. See Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity*; Prakash, "Impossibility of Subaltern History"; Ballantyne, "Archive, Discipline, State."
16. Several scholars of colonialism have interrogated the archival assumptions and predilections of colonial studies. For example, Thomas Richards has argued that the colonial archive (especially in South Asia) was a product of the combined merger of imperial knowledge as both "positive and comprehensive," while Nicholas Dirks contends that the colonial archive registers the state's increasing reliance on ethnographies as a form of knowledge. Richards, *The Imperial Archive*, 7; Dirks, "Annals of the Archive."
17. For a quick and thorough synopsis of the shifts in scholarship on South Asia, see Mathur, "History and Anthropology in South Asia."
18. Guha, *Elementary Aspects*.
19. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 271–311. Spivak's early critique powerfully made way for more capacious readings of the archive, as evidenced in the inclu-

- sion of questions of gender, race, culture, to name a few, in the more recent volumes of the Subaltern Studies Group.
20. One recalls here Bernard Cohn's early playful warnings of the seduction of gaps and lacunae: two anthropologists, Philius Fillagap and Lucy Lacuna, diligently attempt to find the missing record, without much heed to the epistemic questions at hand. See Cohn, "History and Anthropology."
 21. Antoinette Burton, for example, has been central in cautioning against our desire for what is still very much a "panoptical" and official archive, a site of colonial knowledge that serves as the standard through which disciplinary models are measured. In such a policed state of knowledge, texts that fall outside the purview of official archives become read as light on evidence, historically specious, and largely conjectures of too much cultural thinking. It is of course no coincidence, Burton points out, that such texts are usually gendered (as in the case of the writings of the three female colonial subjects she speaks of), and moored (or "dwell," to use her metaphor) in archives of their own making. Burton writes: "In this sense, guardians of the official archive—however delusional they may be—remain as convinced of its panoptical possibilities as they do of its capacity to legitimate those who submit to its feverish gaze." Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive*, 140.
 22. Joseph, *Reading the East India Company*, 23.
 23. For a noteworthy example of such "queerings," see Vanita, *Queering India*, 1–14.
 24. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 1–64.
 25. Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, 404.
 26. In all fairness, it is important to note here that Shah's essay appeared in a now classic collection, *A Lotus of Another Color* (1993), which was the first to bring South Asian queer materials together. See Shah, "Sexuality, Identity and the Uses of History," 122–24. See also Vanita and Kidwai, *Same-Sex Love in India*.
 27. Kath Weston has clearly demonstrated that the "classic debates which molded social sciences into a distinctive set of disciplines relied, often as not, on illustrative examples drawn from sexuality." Colonial ethnographers such as Sir Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, John Shortt, Bronislaw Malinowski, to name a few, use what Weston calls a "flora and fauna approach," producing scattered references to homosexuality in their varied writings on different geopolitical sites. Such references, Weston argues, have falsely been viewed as sources of empirical fact, rather than as hermeneutic signposts for early anthropology's relationship to sexuality in constructing narratives of culture and power. See Weston, *Long Slow Burn*, 12.
 28. Rudi Bleys's ambitious 1995 study, *The Geography of Perversion*, is one such example that interprets "male-to-male sexual behaviour among non-western populations in European texts between approximately 1750 and 1918" (1). Covering a dizzying, and often haphazard, array of colonial ethnographic materials from Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania, Bleys goes on an old-fashioned global hunt for the homosexual, with the occasional apology for not having enough materials by non-European subjects.

29. See, for example, Wallace, *Sexual Encounters*; and Fiol-Matta, *Queer Mother*. There is a rich body of scholarship on sexuality and diaspora/globalization studies, but such work overwhelmingly focuses on the analysis of contemporary issues, with colonialism appearing more as a referent than as a sustained period of study. See also Cruz-Malavé and Manalansan, *Queer Globalizations*. For a further critique of such global turns, see Arondekar, “Voyage Out.”
30. Stoler, “Colonial Archive,” 87, 109.
31. David Halperin writes: “Once upon a time, the very phrase ‘the history of sexuality’ sounded like a contradiction in terms: how, after all, could sexuality have a history? Nowadays, by contrast, we are so accustomed to the notion that sexuality does indeed have a history that we do not often ask ourselves what kind of history sexuality has” (*How to Do*, 105).
32. Chevers, *A Manual of Medical Jurisprudence for India*, 706. See also Chevers, *A Commentary on the Diseases of India*, 10–64.
33. Chevers, *A Manual of Medical Jurisprudence for India*, 706–8.
34. *Ibid.*, 705.
35. There is a well-established scholarly canon that explores the imbrication of surveillance, science, and governmentality in colonial India. For some key texts, see Arnold, *Science, Technology, and Medicine*; Edney, *Mapping an Empire*; Prakash, *Another Reason*; Baber, *Science of Empire*; Pinney, “Colonial Anthropology.”
36. Sengoopta, “Signature of Exceeding Simplicity.”
37. Chevers, *A Manual of Medical Jurisprudence for India*, 7–75. For a more nuanced reading of the relationship between photography and imperial surveillance, see Pinney, “Stern Fidelity.”
38. Joseph, *Reading the East India Company*, 1–33. For an earlier history of the record in Europe, see Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*. Clanchy attributes the rise in the production and retention of records to a rise in literacy—a rise that distinguishes Anglo-Saxon and thirteenth-century England from other periods in English history.
39. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 129n96.
40. The original reads, “Nagari nagari phira musafir ghar ka rasta bhul gaya / . . . kya hai mera kya hai tera apna paraya bhul gaya.” The cited translation of Miraji’s poem is provided by Geeta Patel in her wonderful book *Lyrical Movements*, 32. The publisher’s description on the cover of that book reads: “Miraji was an acclaimed Muslim male poet, who wrote under a Hindu woman’s name, and whom contemporary critics described as mad, sexually perverse, and a voyeur. Miraji’s short life (1912–49) spanned the final period of British colonialism in South Asia, and his work played a part in the nationalist struggle.”
41. A text like Anne McClintock’s much acclaimed *Imperial Leather*, for instance, is heralded for its deployment of a range of cultural texts, from fiction to advertisements, from maps to treaties, making literature only one of the many sources invoked. It is not that literature as a source is redeemed in such scholarly renditions, but placed more in commensurate relationship to other disciplinary sources.

42. Such a turn to literature's salvific possibilities is most noticeable in the early writings of subaltern studies scholars such as Partha Chatterjee and Dipesh Chakrabarty.
43. These are of course all space-clearing generalizations about disciplinary predilections; there are clearly many literary scholars who attentively mobilize historical materials and historians who understand the complexities of literary texts.
44. Chatterjee, *Unfamiliar Relations*, 6–9.
45. Kemp, "The Archive on Which the Sun Never Sets."
46. Discussions of queer historiography abound in current scholarship in sexuality studies. For example, scholars such as Eve Sedgwick and Elizabeth Freeman have variously turned to the idiom of "reparative criticism" to account for a queer "erotohistoriography" that transacts relationships between past and present archives through an interruptive politics of pleasure and hope. Sedgwick, "Introduction"; and Freeman "Time Binds or Erotohistoriography," 84–85. By way of a criticism of the "hermeneutics of suspicion model," Sedgwick writes: "The desire of the reparative impulse, on the other hand, is additive and accretive. Its fear, a realistic one, is that the culture surrounding it is inadequate or inimical to its nurture; it wants to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self" ("Introduction," 279). Other scholars such as Madhavi Menon and Jonathan Goldberg in "Queering History" have further nuanced questions of queer historiography through a careful attentiveness to the texts and intellectual imperatives of the early modern period.
47. Elizabeth Povinelli is one of the few scholars who complicates our turn to the colonial archive in her reference to the importance of "modal ethics." Through her work on aboriginal communities in Australia, Povinelli pushes the question of how and why we recover lost materials in the colonial archive. For Povinelli, translating into text a ritual practice that functions through its orality risks a return to the very knowledge technologies of colonial liberalism. Such textualizations in the colonial context largely focus on rituals that lift "sex out of corporeal practices," which Povinelli argues further emphasize the relationship between sexuality and structures of knowledge. See Povinelli, *Cunning of Recognition*, 73.
48. For an astute reading of the links between postcoloniality and archival hermeneutics and between Spivak's "The Rani of Sirmur" and Derrida's *Archive Fever*, see Shetty and Bellamy, "Postcolonialism's Archive Fever."
49. Osborne, "Ordinariness of the Archive." Similarly, see Proctor and Cook, *Political Pressure*.
50. Mbembe, "Archives and the Political Imaginary," 24.