

## PREFACE

Let me begin with a vulgar question: “Tumhi kai shodhta, madam?” (What are you looking for, madam?) This was the question the head of the Maharashtra State Archives in Mumbai impatiently asked me as I arrived for my annual research visit. His impatience was occasioned by what he perceived as my inability to answer a series of simple queries on the nature of my research: Which colonial records did I want to see, and for what purpose? My inarticulateness around his seemingly pedestrian question was not organized (as one would predictably assume) around my reluctance to reveal my interests in the figurations of sexual perversions in nineteenth-century India—the state-sponsored intellectual censorship and vandalisms of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute notwithstanding.<sup>1</sup> Rather, my hesitations stemmed more from a sense of archival aporia, from what I had realized through my own research was an unrepresentable search for an impossible object. In many ways, the present work is an attempt to trace and push against the force of that archival aporia.

The writing of this book was sustained by a network of friends and colleagues in multiple places. Geeta Patel has been instrumental in the conception and fruition of the project. Through innumerable phone conversations and readings, Geeta nursed me through the difficulties of archival and historical thinking. Central to this work was also the extraordinary support of the South Asian Studies feminist posse, a.k.a., Sisters under the Sari: Indrani Chatterjee, Raka Ray, Bishnupriya Ghosh, Parama Roy, Mrinalini Sinha, Kavita Philip, and Kamala Visweswaran. Since the book’s first incarnation, they have all served as unfailingly encouraging and critical commentators. I owe a special debt to Gina

Dent and Felicity Schaeffer-Grabel. To enumerate the timely interventions of support these two people performed would be impossible. Gina's expansive intellect and sensibility are everywhere in the workings of this project. Felicity's patience and love made it possible for me to imagine an end. Anindyo Roy gave each chapter a tough reading, offering provocative dialogue as only he could.

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Many of the ideas in this book took shape in workshops and seminars including those at "Feminist Interventions: Gender and History in South Asia," University of California, Santa Cruz; the Center for the History of European Discourses, University of Queensland, Brisbane; "Historical Problematics of Sexuality/Gender and the Global," University of California Humanities Research Institute; the Center for the Study of Women, University of California, Los Angeles; the Annual Weissbourd Conference of the Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts, University of Chicago; the Department of Anthropology Colloquium, Johns Hopkins University; "Histories of the Family in South Asia Con-

ference,” University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; the Center for the Study of Sexual Culture, University of California, Berkeley; and the Andrew Mellon Interdisciplinary Nineteenth-Century Working Group, University of California, Riverside. Support for this project was generously provided by the following sources: Ernestine Richter Avery Fellowship, Huntington Library; University of California President’s Fellowship in the Humanities; Faculty Residency Fellowship, University of California Humanities Research Institute; and multiple research grants from the Committee on Academic Research, University of California, Santa Cruz. These fellowships provided financial support for research at libraries, private collections, and national and regional archives in India, Great Britain, Pakistan, and the United States. Of particular note is the assistance of various archivists and staff at the Maharashtra State Archives, the National Archives of India, the India Office Collection at the British Library, and the Huntington Library. Ramakanta Hoom and Roya Rastegar provided timely research efforts in India and the United States, respectively.

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Though substantially revised, sections of my introduction and my discussions on sodomy statutes and Richard Burton appear from my article, “Without a Trace: Sexuality and the Colonial Archive,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. My chapter on Kipling appeared in abbreviated form in an essay entitled “Lingering Pleasures, Perverted Texts: Reading Colonial Desire in Kipling’s Anglo-India Fiction,” included in the collection *Imperial Desire: Dissident Sexualities and Colonial Literature*.

## NOTE

1. On January 4, 2004, the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI), Pune, India, was vandalized by a 150-strong mob, the Sambhaji Brigade, protesting against the institute’s alleged involvement in maligning the name of the Maratha

king Shivaji. A professor from BORI was thanked in the acknowledgments of a book, *Shivaji: A Hindu King in an Islamic Kingdom*, written by the American James Laine. The 128-page text provoked the wrath of the Sambhaji Brigade, a splinter group of the Maratha Seva Sangh, an organization involved in promoting Maratha consciousness, for a chance remark questioning the parentage of Shivaji, the Maratha king. Thousands of invaluable historical documents and artifacts were either systematically destroyed or stolen. The institute, one of the country's premier research centers, has become a victim of what Anupama Katakam calls "cultural terrorism and also the politics of a caste feud in Maharashtra" ("Politics of Vandalism," *Frontline*, January 17–30, 2004). The Maharashtra government, unwilling to take on the risk of alienating the Maratha lobby, has banned the book under sections 153 and 153A of the Indian Penal Code, and the book's publisher, Oxford University Press, has also withdrawn the tome from its Indian markets. For further reading on the subject, see Anupam Katakam, "Politics of Vandalism," <http://www.flonnet.com/index.htm>.