

PREFACE

This volume, like the epic it deals with, passed through several stages before assuming its present form. Originally some of these essays appeared in the *Journal of South Asian Literature* (XX:1:1–168). I would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Carlo Coppola for inviting me to edit the section of that issue devoted to the *Mahābhārata* and for permitting me to incorporate it in this volume.

Not everyone who wanted to write could do so in time for the issue, and so the idea of a book emerged. In due course the alchemy of patience (and repeated requests) gradually transformed promises into finished products. Thus, after several years of a merely notional existence the book is now in your hands. But then some things are worth waiting for—a sentiment I hope the appearance of this volume will confirm.

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