

About the Series

History, as radical historians have long observed, cannot be severed from authorial subjectivity, indeed from politics. Political concerns animate the questions we ask, the subjects on which we write. For over thirty years the *Radical History Review* has led in nurturing and advancing politically engaged historical research. *Radical Perspectives* seeks to further the journal's mission: any author wishing to be in the series makes a self-conscious decision to associate her or his work with a radical perspective. To be sure, many of us are currently struggling with the issue of what it means to be a radical historian in the early twenty-first century, and this series is intended to provide some signposts for what we would judge to be radical history. It will offer innovative ways of telling stories from multiple perspectives; comparative, transnational, and global histories that transcend conventional boundaries of region and nation; works that elaborate on the implications of the postcolonial move to "provincialize Europe"; studies of the public in and of the past, including those that consider the commodification of the past; histories that explore the intersection of identities such as gender, race, class, and sexuality with an eye to their political implications and complications. Above all, this book series seeks to create an important intellectual space and discursive community to explore the very issue of what constitutes radical history. Within this context, some of the books published in the series may privilege alternative and oppositional political cultures, but all will be concerned with the way power is constituted, contested, used, and abused.

Mrinalini Sinha has been widely recognized for her brilliant and innovative scholarship on British colonialism in India and her penetrating analysis of race, class and gender in the persistence of political hierarchies and the construction of both colonial and anti-colonial discourses. In *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire*, Sinha displays again a remarkable capacity not only to provide genuinely new interpretations of old questions, but to be innovative even in what she deems a "historical event," in this case the debates generated by the publication of a single book.

When Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* appeared in 1927, it set off a chain of controversies that both illuminated the increasingly transnational status of the colonial question in the interwar period and introduced new discourses on the relationship between the political and the social under imperial rule. Mayo, a U.S. citizen with impeccable right-wing credentials, sought to intervene in favor of continued British rule in India with her "revelations" of social degeneracy in Hindu communities and with dire predictions of contagion unleashed should India gain its independence. But as Sinha cogently demonstrates, neither Mayo nor her supporters could contain the diverse interpretations of and reactions to *Mother India*, and whatever ideological work Mayo intended the text to perform, the outcome quickly escaped her control. One of the most challenging problems for historians, and especially radical historians, in the wake of the linguistic-cultural turn has been to understand how shifts in discourse and ideology occur, and to what political ends. *Specters of Mother India* provides us with a fascinating and compelling study of the way in which a particular publication can provoke a storm of criticism and a public debate that destabilizes and ultimately reorients the discourse on crucial political questions, whether in the realm of the anticolonial struggle or in the movements for women's rights.