

## ABOUT THE SERIES

*Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations* is a critical series. It aims to explore the emergence and consequences of concepts used to define “Latin America” while at the same time exploring the broad interplay of political, economic, and cultural practices that have shaped Latin American worlds. Latin America, at the crossroads of competing imperial designs and local responses, has been construed as a geocultural and geopolitical entity since the nineteenth century. This series provides a starting point to redefine Latin America as a configuration of political, linguistic, cultural, and economic intersections that demands a continuous reappraisal of the role of the Americas in history, and of the ongoing process of globalization and the relocation of people and cultures that have characterized Latin America’s experience. *Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations* is a forum that confronts established geocultural constructions, that rethinks area studies and disciplinary boundaries, that assesses convictions of the academy and of public policy, and that, correspondingly, demands that the practices through which we produce knowledge and understanding about and from Latin America be subject to rigorous and critical scrutiny.

In this pathbreaking study, Irene Silverblatt makes a number of inter-related arguments. She takes Hannah Arendt’s insights into the origins of a modernity that allowed “civilized” peoples to embrace fascism and applies them to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when Spanish colonialism dominated the globe. Professor Silverblatt joins Latin American scholars like sociologist Anibal Quijano and philosopher Enrique Dussel in arguing that “modernity” originated with the Spanish/Christian victory over the Moors, the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian peninsula, and, simultaneously, the colonization of “Indians” and the slave trade. This confluence of events set the stage for the development of a capitalism

that used race thinking to justify the exploitation of labor (through serfdom and slavery), linking ideas about race and Christianity to bureaucratic control of colonized populations.

Describing how the early modern state was formed in conjunction with colonialism, Silverblatt argues that the barbaric underside of the modern world was born in the subsequent mix of bureaucratic rule, race thinking, and the capacity to rationalize violence. She uses records from the Spanish Inquisition in Peru to illuminate these modern processes: Inquisition trials show the modern side of an institution we customarily brand as pre-modern and provide material to understand the civilizing/modernizing processes from the perspective of the colonies. Chronicling the interplay of bureaucracy and race, colonialism and statecraft, *Modern Inquisitions* confronts our assumptions about civilization, its origins, and our role in its creation.