

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, rethinks area studies and disciplinary boundaries, assesses convictions of the academy and of public policy, and correspondingly demands that the practices through which we produce knowledge and understanding about and from Latin America be subject to rigorous and critical scrutiny.

Uruguayan Ángel Rama is one of three towering figures of Latin American literary and cultural criticism during the second half of the twentieth century, along with Peruvian Antonio Cornejo Polar, ten years younger than Rama (1936–97) and Brazilian Antonio Candido (1918–present), eight years older than Rama. The three of them constituted the pillar of radical ideas and criticism between 1960 and 1990. Candido established the links between literature and underdevelopment, Cornejo Polar is remembered for his concept of *heterogeneidad cultural y literaria* and Ángel Rama for *transculturación literaria y narrativa*. Rama took

the concept from the Cuban intellectual Fernando Ortiz (1881–1969). *Heterogeneidad cultural* is not associated with a specific name, although it was Cornejo Polar who made it central to his intellectual pursuit. It is a natural term regarding Andean history and culture, where the concentration of indigenous people—those of European and of African descent—have been coexisting since the sixteenth century. Rama and Cornejo Polar shared one key example to theorize their respective concepts: the novels of the Peruvian bilingual and bicultural anthropologist and novelist José María Arguedas.

The reader not familiar with Rama's life and work will find in the superb introduction by his translator, David Frye, a clear and concise guide. Within Rama's narrative and arguments, the reader will little by little be introduced to a jungle of information, ideas, analysis, and insights, but he or she will never get lost. Rama's clear prose and arguments take the reader through the different facets and faces of narrative transculturation. Written a few years earlier than his acclaimed *The Lettered City*, and during the time when structuralism and poststructuralism were invading bookstores in Latin America, *Writing across Cultures* is a signal case of the power of Latin American imagination. Rama (as well as Candido and Cornejo Polar) was writing simultaneously with the boom of Latin American literature, which coexisted with the debates on dependency theory and the emergence of theology and philosophy of liberation. This book is, in other words, a key to entering three decades of Latin American social thoughts, cultural criticism, and literary imagination.