

## 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 the 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.

As Walter Mignolo notes in his introduction to this volume, the work of Rodolfo Kusch (1922–1979) is central to de-

colonial thinking. Kusch's distinctive philosophy, in relating mestizo consciousness and border hermeneutics, can now be recognized as deeply illuminating of such notions as Du Bois's "double consciousness" and Anzaldúa's "mestiza consciousness / la conciencia de la mestiza." It has been crucial for the contemporary work of Mignolo, María Lugones, Rengifo Vázquez, Pablo Wright, and Ricardo Salas Astrain, among many others. Originally published in 1970, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América* is the first of Kusch's work to be translated into English. It details a philosophical journey that takes him from the western coast of South America into the highlands of Peru and Bolivia, from the Latin American mimesis of European modernity—deeply entrenched in the intellectual classes—to an immersion in the indigenous cosmology of Quechua, Aymara, and Chipaya inhabitants from the highlands. Between the urban middle class and the Indians of Bolivia lies a social strata (*el pueblo*) characterized by "popular thinking," a mode of thinking more akin to that of the Indian than to that of the middle classes. Kusch's goal is to identify and help to activate an indigenous and popular way of thinking which interacts with, but at the same time differs from, derivative ways of thinking entrenched in the urban middle class, be they liberal or Marxist. Thus Kusch offers a critique of Marxism and an understanding of Peronism that are logical consequences of understanding popular ways of thinking rather than of attention only to the instrumentality of social claims made by the working class.

Kusch's parents migrated from Germany to Argentina before he was born. As Mignolo suggests, Kusch's notion of a "mestizo consciousness" derives from the experience of displaced Europeans recognizing their out-of-placeness in a foreign context. Yet it is the modernity that Europeans brought with them to America that Kusch seeks to distinguish from indigenous thinking, a modernity with an ideological predisposition to judge problems from a purportedly scientific point of view, to indiscriminately presuppose democratic ideals, and to expect certain predetermined forms of religiosity.

This book has three primary goals: to uncover basic aspects of indigenous thinking, to weigh the possibilities that thought offers, and to establish how it articulates with elements of European modernity. Kusch identifies a connection between indigenous thought and interiority, affectivity, and attention to emotional experience, as well as a resistance to prioritiz-

ing the rational over the affective, the exterior world over the interior of the human being. By so doing Kusch uncovers European philosophy's repressed subjectivity, its drive to situate logic before subjectivity, and its inclination to place the person at the service of the institution, instead of the other way round. Kusch's relentless critiques of the idea of "development," which was very much alive during his lifetime, serve to expand his questioning of the instrumentality of Western principles of knowing and understanding. In light of these tendencies, he examines the meaning of knowledge in an indigenous context—a knowledge, he shows, that focuses not on causality (why), but on modality (how). In exploring the articulation of indigenous with urban thinking, he assesses, for example, the implications of forming cooperatives, noting particularly the failure of cooperatives that outsiders organized in Bolivia in the 1960s, despite a tradition of a communal system of reciprocity, *ayni*, which is several thousand years old. Not to be confused with Lévi-Strauss or with the Castañeda of *The Teachings of Don Juan*, Kusch approaches his investigations not only as a constant process of shifting the geopolitics of knowing and understanding, but in a relentlessly de-colonial manner.

Bringing to his analysis a knowledge of Western philosophy, a deep understanding of the foundation of indigenous thought (Guaman Poma de Ayala, *Popol Vuh*, Huarochiri manuscript), and a sound understanding of Argentinian history, Kusch identifies "negation" as the underpinning of both popular and indigenous rationality (two distinct ethnic configurations). What one learns from Kusch is to dwell at the intersection of indigenous and European legacies, and to be constantly mindful of "the popular."

