



# Domesticating Empire: Enlightenment in Spanish America

*Karen Stolley*

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Why has the work of writers in eighteenth-century Latin America been forgotten? During the eighteenth century, enlightened thinkers in Spanish territories in the Americas engaged in lively exchanges with their counterparts in Europe and Anglo-America about a wide range of topics of mutual interest, responding in the context of increasing racial and economic diversification. Yet despite recent efforts to broaden our understanding of the global Enlightenment, the Ibero-American eighteenth century has often been overlooked.

Through the work of five authors--Jose de Oviedo y Banos, Juan Ignacio Molina, Felix de Azara, Catalina de Jesus Herrera, and Felix de Arrate--*Domesticating Empire* explores the Ibero-American Enlightenment as a project that reflects both key Enlightenment concerns and the particular preoccupations of Bourbon Spain and its territories in the Americas. At a crucial moment in Spain's imperial trajectory, these authors domesticate topics central to empire--conquest, Indians, nature, God, and gold--by making them familiar and utilitarian. As a result, their works later proved resistant to overarching schemes of Latin American literary history and have been largely forgotten. Nevertheless, eighteenth-century Ibero-American writing complicates narratives about both the Enlightenment and Latin American cultural identity.

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