

Statement of Grant Purpose

– Country of Interest: Peru – Field of Study: Literature
African and Indigenous Identity in Peruvian Theater

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I plan to research the diversity of Peru's theatrical traditions during the late colonial period at the Peruvian National Library (*Biblioteca Nacional Peruana*-BNP). Specifically, I will examine the theatrical representation of Afro-Peruvian and Quechua identities in two distinct modalities present in late colonial Lima: the festive and popular representations of minority communities and the Western theater tradition brought to Peru from Europe. To supplement my research, I plan to take graduate seminars in colonial theater at the *Pontificia Universidad Católica de Perú* (PUCP) and form relationships with academic organizations and theater groups, resulting in the organization of a roundtable forum on representation and diversity in Peruvian cultural production that will conclude my Fulbright project.

I have already acquired a renewable research permit allowing access to BNP special collections for the duration of my project under the support of *La Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos* (UNMSM). Enrollment at the PUCP will grant me access to the PUCP Archives and Special Collections that contain Peruvian manuscripts and periodicals dating from the sixteenth century. My formal application to PUCP is underway and I have met with Claudia Castillo, International Relations Coordinator of the PUCP, to review the application process. Dr. Eduardo Hopkins, a specialist in Peruvian colonial literature and theater at the PUCP, will serve as mentor and advisor during the project. Dr. Rodrigo Montoya, professor emeritus at the UNMSM and an expert on Quechua cultural history who has published extensively on the Quechua presence in Peruvian theater, has agreed to provide guidance and access to his extensive personal library.

Historian Steve J. Stern writes, "The fusion of native American and European histories into one history marked the beginning of the end of isolated stagings of human drama."¹ It is also true that this moment marked the creation of hybrid cultural production born of the interaction between coexistent—yet contrasting—literary and theatrical traditions of the Americas, Europe, and West Africa. The purpose of my study is to analyze Peruvian theater's fusion of these distinct drama traditions in the late colonial period. I propose to study the Eurocentric medium of theater following the theoretical perspectives of Walter Ong and Walter D. Mignolo, questioning notions of dominant Western discourses and artistic models by emphasizing the cultural contributions of African and indigenous groups from the mid-eighteenth century to independence. The project aims to expand the traditional corpus of Peruvian theater by documenting alternate modes of representation and lesser-known theatrical works. I will begin the project by accessing the PUCP Archives and Special Collections and the BNP Periodical Collection of colonial periodicals, fliers and pamphlets to examine alternative theatrical production in Peruvian minority communities. This will allow me to identify local currents in colonial theater prior to addressing the manner in which these African and indigenous oral and festive traditions began to interact with established European theater models. Guiding my research of Western theater trends will be two seminars on colonial theater and prose that are components of the M.A. in Latin American literature at the PUCP. These courses, unlike many offerings in American universities, emphasize the distinct ideological traditions of Western and indigenous communities, including study of theater in indigenous languages and the diverse settings that have influenced Peruvian theater. I will use this coursework to refine my previous study of specific works of drama that exhibit elements of African discourse within indigenous-influenced Western drama models.

Completing one seminar each semester among the diverse student body of the PUCP, which hosts students of all ethnic backgrounds from all provinces of Peru, affords me the opportunity to truly interact with a cross section of the Peruvian population. This interaction will lend my textual studies contemporary perspectives and additional insight into the complex topics of identity and

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multiculturalism that I will explore. A review of the current scholarship of Peruvian theater yields little study of the presence and contributions of Peru's African population to colonial theater. As noted director and actor Fernando Zevallos of Lima's long-running *La Tarumba* theater group proclaimed in a recent interview, "It's time to view the diversity of Peru with a tone of celebration" (Gabriel Chueca 2009, translation mine).ⁱⁱ My research of Peruvian theater from a multicultural perspective, also taking into account the African Diaspora, not only celebrates the diversity of Peru's artistic production, but also has the potential to reformulate current understandings of Peruvian theater and representation as Peru nears the celebration of its bicentennial.

Ultimately, I hope that my time as a Fulbright scholar yields two final products. First, my research will produce a journal article that will serve as a preliminary foundation for doctoral study of colonial Latin American and Peruvian literature and theater. The writing, editing and revision process would be under the guidance of my contacts at UNMSM and PUCP, resulting in a scholarly contribution truly born of the Fulbright exchange in Peru. Upon project completion, I will submit Spanish and English editions of the article to appropriate academic publications in both Peru and the United States. Furthermore, the editing & submission process will help me gain familiarity with the Peruvian editorial process to address the need for greater publication and distribution of Peruvian academic work in the U.S. academy. Second, to amplify the public visibility of my research topic as Peru's bicentennial approaches, I will employ my background as a leader of student organizations to plan an evening forum discussing the cultural politics of representation and identity in Peru. This event will feature short (re)presentations by the leadership of groups throughout Lima's theater community: the theater of the BNP, the Teatro de la Universidad Católica (TUC), *La Tarumba*, and the *Yuyachkani* theater group, an organization dedicated to advancing Peruvian theater from a multicultural perspective representative of the country's rich historical past and ethnic diversity. I am actively corresponding with the directorship of several of these groups to begin planning this event.

The Fulbright grant will afford me a deeper, contextualized understanding of Peruvian literature and theater and how the colonial period has contributed to the formation of more contemporary Peruvian ethnic identities through the merger of different cultural traditions. This project will serve to supplement my background in Latin American literature by allowing me access to important colonial collections that reside exclusively in the BNP, the PUCP, and the library of Dr. Montoya. This further specialization as a researcher and academic will serve to focus my research interests as I prepare to begin doctoral study in 2011, the next step towards realizing my career goal of lecturing and publishing as a professor of Latin American—specifically, Peruvian—literature and cultural production. Furthermore, the relationships forged with current and future Peruvian intellectuals at PUCP and UNMSM will encourage international collaboration and exchange of ideas over the course of my academic career. By collaborating with cultural and academic organizations from across Lima's scholarly and artistic landscape, I will also be able to apply my passion for the humanities to activities outside of the archives that demonstrate an intimate investment in the exchange of cultures within Peru and abroad.

ⁱ Steve Stern, "Paradigms of Conquest: History, Historiography, and Politics," *Journal of Latin American Studies* Vol. 24 (1992): 1.

ⁱⁱ José Gabriel Chueca, Op-ed with Fernando Zevallos. *Perú.21* 16 July 2009: 14-15. Print.