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[1]Reading *Ollantay*: The Negotiation of Communication in Colonial Quechua Theater

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The Quechua theatrical work *Ollantay* (discovered in the 18th century) provides a vital opportunity to observe how the colonial Quechua peoples contextualized the importance of communication. My reading of *Ollantay* focuses on the negotiation of communication between characters as a didactic means of social interaction for indigenous peoples living in colonial Latin America. The act of communication is prioritized over the actual message communicated between characters; it is clear that those that abide by this communicative equation find themselves in positions of either power or accomplishment and those that ignore this rule do not. In order to sustain a hierarchal position it is not necessary to maintain absolute control over communicative expression; rather it is imperative to cede control of the conversation at times to other characters. Reading *Ollantay* from this perspective–as a social model of negotiated communication–may provide the reader a better understanding of indigenous thought processes during the colonial period in Latin America.

While focusing on asymmetric economic solutions in his article, "Economic Democracy, Social Dialogue, and Ethical Analysis- Theory and Practice," Jorge Arturo Chaves additionally provides a description of dialogue that equally functions within the present investigation. Chaves elaborates on his concept of dialogue in the following lines:

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[1] This investigation was presented at the 9th Ohio Latin Americanist Conference at Ohio University, February 26, 2010 and is a truncated version of ***Ollantay* y la negociación comunicativa en el teatro quechua.**

> ... a dialogue conformed by rational rules of communication, respectful of all the participants, that guarantees that the conceptions, points of view and interests of all of them will be valued, according to the standards of fairness, inclusion and reciprocity. It is not only a social democratic practice, but also an ethical principle that bestows an ethical character to the procedure itself and then an ethical unity to the participants who might have a very diverse conception on the material content of other ethical values (155).

In an article in the *Journal of Peace Research*, Richard Jackson explains that "As a mode of conflict management, bargaining and negotiation is the primary method by which social actors settle their disputes" (324). Likewise, Isolde J. Jordan notes in his study titled, "Análisis pragmalingüístico del diálogo literario" that "Tanto la manera directa de comunicar información pertinente por medio de diálogo como la aceleración del ritmo narrativo, también a través del diálogo, confieren al relato en el que predomina el discurso directo entre personajes una dinámica muy especial" (218). The "dinámica especial" in *Ollantay* pertains to the various intricate relations between the characters based on negotiation of the dialogue itself. In spite of dealing with other matters, these three concepts of communication, negotiation, and dialogue (Chaves, Jackson, and Jordan, respectively) function as the axis of this investigation of *Ollantay*. The majority of the characters in the play have the opportunity to express themselves even though they are not on the same social plane within the context of *Ollantay*. They have to come to a compromise. In other words, it is necessary to maintain equilibrium within the conversation and if this is not attained, there will be consequences due to the lack of communicative negotiation.

It is possible to note in the opening scene of *Ollantay*—in a conversation between Ollantay and Piqui-Chaqui, Ollantay's servant who also takes the role of the fool—the model of dialogue proposed by Chaves. It surprises Piqui-Chaqui that Ollantay does not fear establishing a relationship with the daughter of King Pachacutic given that Ollantay and Cusi-Cuillur, the princess, are of distinct sociological levels within the Inca empire. Upon hearing Piqui-Chaqui's worries and warnings of such a relationship, Ollantay responds to his servant, " No me desanimes, si no quieres perecer. No hables más, o te hago pedazos entre mis manos" (225). The manner that Ollantay speaks to Piqui-Chaqui is aggressive and threatening. However, Ollantay's subject responds to Ollantay utilizing a defiant tone, "Arrástrame, pues, si quieres, como a un muerto" (225). What's more, his master mandates that Piqui-Chaqui leaves in order to send a message to Cusi-Cuillur, but Piqui-Chaqui answers his master in a mocking tone, telling him that if he takes this message to Cusi-Cuillur, every one will call him "correveidile" (227) and thus, Piqui-Chaqui doesn't take Ollantay's petition seriously. Obviously, it is Ollantay who is the authoritarian figure of the two characters, given that he is the master. Yet at the same time the gran jefe de los Andes is also flexible because he allows his own servant to treat him in a demanding way. Therefore, in this first dialogue it is possible to note two distinct attitudes on Ollantay's behalf: First, he establishes a hegemonic position in the conversation with Piqui-Chaqui and then, he withdrawals within the same dialogue, ceding some communicative power to Piqui-Chaqui. As a result, Ollantay creates a communicative space where he plays both an active and receptive role and consequently, we can consider this a dialogue in negotiation. Pique-Chaqui, in turn, reciprocates but in an inverse approach, representing himself in front of Ollantay in an inferior, receptive

manner at the onset of the conversation. Piqui-Chaqui endures Ollantay's threats, but soon after he informs his superior that he doesn't want to be the one that constantly delivers messages to Cusi-Cuillur. Thus, Piqui-Chaqui also participates in the negotiation given that he does not permit his master to maintain complete authority in the dialogue.

The act of negotiative communication is far from being static, as can be noted in the dialogue between Ollantay and the astrologist, Willca Uma. Willca Uma initiates the conversation not by addressing Ollantay; rather he directs his words toward Inti, the Sun god. By doing so, he has established, via communication with a deity, a position of authority. Piqui-Chaqui recognizes Willca Uma's jurisdiction and advises Ollantay to not speak badly of the astrologist. However; Ollantay bows down to Willca Uma and immediately criticizes the astrologist of always being the bearer of unfavorable fortune. A little later though, Ollantay surrenders himself to Willca Uma saying, "Sepulta en mi garganta el cuchillo que tienes en tu mano y arráncame el corazón; a tus pies me arrojo" (230). Ollantay interacts with Willca Uma utilizing a combination of humility and burlesque tone. Willca Uma in turn, abandons his communicative superiority and adopts a more passive strategy, accepting Ollantay's claim that the he is indeed a messenger of bad news: "Ya ves que (la flor) parece estar seca [...] La estrujo [...] Mira como llora [...] ¡Llora! [...] ¡Llora!" (230). The conversation, much like that of a game of chess, demonstrates a technique of communicative bargaining as Ollantay and Willca Uma negotiate the dialogue itself. At times it is key to commence with force and at other times it is more beneficial to start the dialogue in a submissive manner. These two conversations—between Piqui-Chaqui and Ollantay, and later between Ollantay and Willca Uma—exemplify Richard Jackson's concept of negotiation given that Ollantay

and the other individuals in the work, are in an on-going bargaining process of communication. Jackson reiterates this idea noting that, "It should not be seen as a single process or one discrete activity. It is instead a continuous set of related activities involving actors, decisions, and situations" (324).

It is possible to note that almost all of the characters in *Ollantay* conform to the communicative norms indicated in this study, with the exception of Pachacutic and at times Rumiñahui, the military chief of Cuzco. Pachacutic adheres to his own guidelines of communication, which do not obey the rules of conduct identified by Chaves. For that reason, if all of the individuals present in a scene are not included in the dialogue, it is impossible for them to settle their disputes (Jackson 324). Therefore, Pachacutic is creating, through his lack of communicative negotiation, a situation that will ultimately cause him to lose control over his reign. I will discuss this topic in more detail later in this study.

It is also necessary to clarify Rumiñahui's position in *Ollantay*; a character who vacillates between success and failure throughout the work. He appears ready and willing to fight before considering the possibility of negotiation. For example, in the third scene, Pachacutic suggests that there should be an effort to avoid "la efusión de sangre" (236), but it appears that Rumiñahui does not heed Pachacutic's warning; rather he offers a verbal tirade of war plans, ignoring his superior's previous announcement. In other words, Rumiñahui negates the dialogical process essential to communicative negotiation. In a later scene (X), Rumiñahui is given permission to begin his march toward Ollantay and again, he immediately accepts the order to attack Ollantay's army without considering the possibility of negotiation whatsoever. After Ollantay's forces massacre his army,

Rumiñahui complains that "nadie se me ha presentado; nadie me ha mirado de frente" (250), perhaps echoing Ollantay's perspective before the battle began, given that Rumiñahui did not try to negotiate with him first. But Rumiñahui begins to achieve success after entering into negotiative dialogue with the new king, Yupanqui. That is to say, Rumiñahui listens to Yupanqui's claim that Rumiñahui, the military chief, is to blame for the warriors lost in battle; he also recognizes his failure and then asks for the opportunity to work freely in order to capture Ollantay. It is clear that Rumiñahui has begun to work within the previously stated dialogical norms in this investigation and he eventually is able to capture the rebel leader.

The rules of communicative negotiation and the consequences of not adhering to them form a large part of the didactic message in *Ollantay*. We have already established that Pachacutic does not obey these regulations and suffers as a cause of this. Now it is important to investigate what is his agony as a result. Pachacutic's power deteriorates because his war chief, Rumiñahui, is unable to conquer Ollantay, causing the king to lose control of his reign. He later dies without seeing Ollantay's defeat. Besides this crucial aspect, the king's family is also destroyed; he never meets his granddaughter, his daughter is imprisoned in a cave, and his son-in-law (Ollantay) has the upper hand in a ferocious battle between the two. Obviously, Pachacutic is the one who incarcerates Cusi-Cuillur, his own daughter, but all of this has resulted because first, he refused to negotiate with Cusi-Cuillur nor with Ollantay. As a result, Pachacutic dies without having resolved what Piqui-Chaqui refers to as "la madeja muy enredada" (254).

The didactic message in *Ollantay* has an added element because it includes a few historical Inca figures as some of the characters. For example, upon situating Pachacutic–

–a powerful king who greatly extended the Inca Empire during his reign—in this work causes another preoccupation: if a historical king of this stature suffers within the play because he does not adhere to the rules of dialogical negotiation then everyone else—the public—is also subject to these norms and consequences of not obeying them. It is a very pertinent lesson because, as Arturo Fox explains in his book, *Latinoamérica: Presente y pasado*, "una vez que (los incas) se hicieron poderosos realizaron convenientes correcciones en la historia de los Andes, presentándose a sí mismos en sus crónicas orales como el pueblo que había traído la civilización a la región de los Andes" (46). Although the image of the potent Pachacutic is reduced in *Ollantay*, given that he never overcomes Ollantay, the lesson of negotiation is one of the underlying messages of this work, which demonstrates that the Incas very well might have understood the importance of education, whether it is in an altered crónica or in theatrical form, and it also appears that they knew that the use of education could be utilized in order to help the kingdom defend itself against other empires. In other words, *Ollantay* is not only a theatrical work, but also a lesson in the art of negotiation. It is also possible that the dissemination of *Ollantay* throughout the Inca empire—at least six manuscripts have been found in various parts of Latin America—was a strategy to educate its people about how to maintain Inca control over its territory. In *Pre-Colombian Masterpieces*, Abraham Arias-Larreta supports this point of view regarding didacticism in Ollantay: "In accordance with the traditional rules of the Incan theatre, the conception of the drama is based in a didactical purpose with political and social purview. Everybody in the empire should profit from the aesthetic and pedagogical ends of the Quechua plays" (90). Interestingly, the lessons in *Ollantay* are not limited to the time period of the Inca Empire as Ventura García Calderón explains in

the prologue of another version of *Ollantay*:

> Así el drama profético que era el *Ollantay* en sus lejanos orígenes, deviene un episodio perfectamente contemporáneo. Ollantay somos nosotros, el indio Ollantay se subleva en cada uno de nosotros. Y en su aventura pretérita vamos a buscar explicaciones de nuestra más reciente sensibilidad (VI).

In her article titled, "How to Win in Defeat, or to the Victor Belong the Spoils but the Loser Gets Immortality, " comparative mythology expert Verlyn Flieger elaborates on *Ollantay*'s didactic role:

> Performance under Spanish rule of this and other dramas in the kingship cycle, while not promising the return of Pachacutec himself, could and did hold out the hope to a downtrodden people of a return of Inca rule. It was a clear reminder of their lost power and an incitement to get it back. That this was the case is indicated by the suppression of *Apu Ollantay* and other royal dramas by the Spanish, who forbade them to be performed after the uprising of Tupac Amaru II, a dynastic descendant, in 1781.

Negotiation is pertinent even to this day, or perhaps even more important than when *Ollantay* was written. If the authoritarian body does not adhere to the communicative norms, that is to say, if it does not permit everyone to have an opportunity to express themselves, then the people might possibly rebel. Therefore, *Ollantay* can be read as a didactic model in order to govern the people of a nation/empire/kingdom or it can be interpreted as an educational text used in order to protect the empire from enemies by showing the importance of negotiation before war.

The negotiation of communication permits an individual to maintain control in

regards to the other characters, but it can also do exactly the opposite if said person is not willing to negotiate the dialogue. The concept of communicative negotiation in this study focuses on the process of participating in the conversation (based around ideas from Chaves, Jackson, and Jordan), but it is not limited to the messages that are found within the conversation itself. For example, this study is based on the version of *Ollantay* that was translated from Quechua to French to Spanish. This fact is mostly irrelevant in this investigation because it is not the characters' language that is the primary focus; rather it is their negotiation of who speaks. That is to say, in order to sustain control or power, it is not required to maintain absolute control of communicative expression, rather it is necessary to concede the opportunity to express oneself to others. Therefore, an inept figure still has the possibility to communicate an idea to the dominating character if this model is followed. Didacticism of communicative negotiation is based on the observations made by Arturo Fox and Abraham Arias-Larreta and equally in the text itself of *Ollantay*. The commentaries of these two critics foster the idea of the importance of education for the peoples of the Inca Empire and the use of theater as a didactic medium. In *Ollantay*, the text emphasizes various times the need to not "verter sangre estérilmente y de no inmolar (sacrificar, matar) inocentes" (237). This position supports the idea of the negotiation of communication because it demonstrates the importance of initially not acting aggressively without trying first the possibility of peace. In the dialogue, if some one does not allow another to express themselves, then the first person suffers later on in the play. It is possible to consider *Ollantay* then, as a guide to the Incas about the norms of communicative behavior in order to achieve and maintain stability.

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