



Three generations of Yumbada dancers at the Ecuadorian Ministry of Culture in Quito, 2008. Photo courtesy K Fine-Dare

field consultants (and their offspring) from my doctoral research days, meet new ones interested in (and tolerant of) my work, and form relationships with Ecuadorian colleagues whose intellectual and social generosity has been indispensable. Ecuadorian anthropologists struggle daily with low pay, scarce international academic recognition, and little to no funding for research or translations of their works. Nevertheless, they have built excellent programs at universities such as the U Politécnica Salesiana, FLACSO, U San Francisco de Quito, Pontificia U Católica de Ecuador, and U Andina Simon Bolivar, and regularly send their students out to conduct work that has expanded our understanding of urban cultural dynamics and has given the urban arena greater legitimacy as a site of academic inquiry.

In recent years I have seen Ecuadorian students as well as local community members not affiliated with universities conduct research at public festival performances that have proliferated partly as a result of neoliberal flows of capital into state and municipal projects designed to attract tourists. Quito is no longer merely a way station to sites of what is often marketed as “truer” culture and nature (the Galapagos, the Amazon, the Otavalo market) but has become a significant tourist destination itself. The opening of two urban archaeological sites—La Florida and Rumipampa—has also fostered an awareness of the complexity of Quito’s multicultural past among both tourists and local residents.

Although the headquarters of the Ecuadorian indigenous confederation (CONAIE) is in Quito, the city until only recently was viewed merely as a bureaucratic locale of state-mandated indigenous governmentality rather than as a homeland. Urbanites who seek recognition as legitimate *indigenas* in order to secure constitutional rights to water and other resources constitute a dynamic presence in Quito. This dynamism sometimes fuels ideological and linguistic friction between a Kichwa-speaking “old guard” from communities outlying Quito proper, and much younger activists who typically (but not always) lack fluency in Kichwa. That the latter are also tapping into Ministry of Culture and Municipality of Quito funds to promote both tourist visitation of indigenous cultures and “New Age” spiritualist activities that cross transnational divides has put them sometimes uncomfortably in the midst of arenas formerly designated for indigenous peasant performers or urban mestizo impersonators of indigenous folklore. This tightrope between state interests and community purposes has lately been one of the paths I’ve been trying to follow.

My work also concentrates on what some descendants of indigenous hacienda peons in Northwest Quito consider a grey area, where they feel themselves to be “*ni*

*chicha, ni limón*.” In June 2010, I wept with female teachers who announced that after four years of working without pay they had to close their elementary school in Barrio San Enrique de Velasco because of a lack of local recognition and state support. Although the school was defined as an alternative intercultural school, in these women’s minds it primarily served as a safe house imbued with indigenous values to allow children respite from poverty and domestic violence. In this school they were also able to express their feelings artistically about the destruction of the forest and springs enfolding their community as a result of state-sponsored condominium development. I look forward to returning this summer to help them translate their school into a cultural center where the Quito Basin indigenous organization (Kitu-Kara), community history and the will of several families intersect to keep bulldozers—real and institutional—at bay.

*Please send any comments, suggestions and ideas, including photos for future columns, to Annelou Ypeij at j.l.ypeij@cedla.nl or to CEDLA (Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation), Keizersgracht 395-397, 1016 EK Amsterdam, Netherlands.*

## Society for Linguistic Anthropology

MARK ALLEN PETERSON AND JAMES STANLAW,  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

### Linguistic Moments in the Movies, Part VII

*By Mark Allen Peterson (Miami U)*

It’s May, time for our annual roundup of films and film clips suitable for initiating discussions about language—or just a good laugh at the way the media industry represents language.

#### *The Gods Must be Crazy* (1981)

I went to this film when it first opened in Los Angeles almost thirty years ago, and I loved it. I felt rather guilty a few years later (in 1985), when I read the brilliant review in *American Anthropologist* by Toby Alice Volkman (87[2]: 482–84) describing the ways the film served myriad propaganda purposes for the South African apartheid regime. Apart from using the film to show how a comedy can serve a repressive political regime, clips from this film remain one of the most accessible ways to illustrate click languages.

#### *Hanazakari no Kimitchie* (2007)

Like *Mulan* (1998) or *She’s the Man* (2006), *Hana Kimi* (as it’s known by its fans) is a recent gender-switching comedy—in this case, a 12-part television series. Japanese high jump athlete Sano (Shun Oguri) is injured saving the life of American Mizuki (Maki Horikita), one of his biggest fans. Mizuki travels to Japan where she poses as a boy in order to enter the all-boy high school Sano attends and persuade him to rejoin the track team. Much of the humor stems from Mizuki’s efforts to speak Japanese like a boy, and her efforts to repair her errors when she slips.

#### *License To Wed* (2007)

Manic Robin Williams plays an Anglican reverend with a legendary premarital counseling program, while Mandy

Moore and John Kasinski are the couple who suffer through it. Much of Williams’ humor in the film stems from word play, especially sexual innuendo. There is also a scene that plays on the formality of religious registers. Williams is teaching a group of kids about the Ten Commandments and while they articulate these in the familiar high code (ie, “Thou shall not commit adultery”), Williams immediately translates these into low code versions (“It’s not neat to cheat”) and then absurdly low code word play (“going out looking for milk when you’ve got perfectly good jugs at home”).

#### *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome* (1985)

In his travels across a barren post-apocalyptic world, Mad Max (Mel Gibson) encounters a community of children who speak a Creole language. The children perform a ritual telling of their origin myth which can only be described as “post-television” because the speaker carries a “tel” (a combination of speaking stick and framing device shaped like a TV or movie screen), visual props are framed by the tel at various points, and the children punctuate the speaker’s tale with special effects. There is a scene at the beginning of the ritual in which one speaker hands off the tel to another that parallels aboriginal rules about who can tell what stories based on their relationship to the story and to those who were in or were observers of the story.

#### *Singin’ in the Rain* (1952)

When sound comes to Hollywood, it’s a disaster for actors whose dialect and diction don’t match the personas they’ve built up in the public mind through their films. There are several funny scenes of dialect coaches working with movie stars, one of which culminates in a tongue-twisting song. This film is useful for discussions of how ways of speech index microsocial distinctions, and works well with articles about dialect coaches training salespeople at overseas call centers.

#### *William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet* (1996)

Shakespeare’s play is set in a late 20th century urban metropolis that looks a lot like Miami, with direction that draws from the style of music videos. But there’s another kind of indexicality at play as well. In several scenes references to anachronisms are re-envisioned. Thus when the Duke says, “Put up your swords,” there is a quick cut to the handguns the rival families carry, which are embossed with the brand “Sword 9mm.”

Thanks to Carmen Esparza, David McIntosh, David Samuels and Kathryn Nemeth.

### Call for Nominations for SLA Co-Contributing Editor

James Stanlaw has completed his current term as co-editor of this column. Nominations are being sought for a new co-editor. Please send your nominations to Nominations Committee chair Chaise LaDousa at [cladousa@hamilton.edu](mailto:cladousa@hamilton.edu)

*Please send your comments, contributions, news and announcements to SLA contributing editors Jim Stanlaw ([stanlaw@ilstu.edu](mailto:stanlaw@ilstu.edu)) or Mark Peterson ([petersm2@muohio.edu](mailto:petersm2@muohio.edu)).*

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