

regions as intricately related historically, socially, spatially and politically. These conversations have gained prominence at SLACA and other scholarly associations.

This year, our special session called "Conversion across the Americas," which will take place at the AAA meeting in Washington, DC (Nov 28–Dec 2), seeks to advance this reframing, aiming to bridge the discursive conceptual divide between these two regions to produce a more fruitful conversation and to promote a cross-disciplinary dialogue between anthropologists and scholars in other disciplines who are concerned with the common cultural grounds in Latin America and the Caribbean.

For more information about these and other issues, see our section's website at www.aaanet.org/slac.

Please send any comments, suggestions, ideas, including photos for future columns to Hortensia Caballero-Arias at Centro de Antropología, IVIC, Carretera Panamericana Km 11, Caracas 1020-A, Apartado Postal 21827, Venezuela; hcaballe@ivic.ve.

Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists

DAVID L R HOUSTON, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

The Fog of Self

It is striking, sometimes, how we, as the human animals we are, so often seem to muddle our way through our selves and that search for identity. Hidden in the placid appearance is an underlying turmoil of many different, secret selves.

News about the Episcopal church might lead one to think that the entity is fast dissolving into a collection of tiny splinter groups. Some sources would suggest that the Episcopalians

are at a crossroads, with the issue of homosexuality being not "the" issue but, as one interviewee put it, "the last straw." Without asking what the other

straws are or might have been, it is curious how often it seems that "we," those alteric minds and bodies that are muddling through our identities (above, remember?), are somehow perfectly coherent, superbly organized and in the minds and eyes of those others, even vengeful (it's that "homosexual agenda" thing). The reality is otherwise: there is no organization and precious little coherence. There are many interested parties, splinter groups, of a sort. How odd it all is that the sides and "armies" set against each other make it appear as though legions were readying a flanking maneuver when it is, in fact, little more than utter chaos. For too many, the secret self reflects this same internal chaos—fog of self—in those who seek solace in the simple understanding of identity.

Cut to Steve Stanton, the now-former city manager of Largo, Florida, who was summar-

ily dismissed from his job of 14 years after he found himself outflanked by other parties and then had to prematurely disclose his very personal decision to transition from male to female. The very public nature of the episode lays bare much of the contradiction and chaos that seems to accompany these types of events; contradictions when members of the local city government say, "we support you" and then vote him out anyway; chaos in the wide array of reasons given to deny or support him. There is religious fervor: "If Jesus was here tonight, I can guarantee you he'd want him terminated." There is activism: "a really clear example of the type of employment discrimination that transgendered people face every day." None of this seems orchestrated. Rather, it has a randomness that is difficult to characterize. The comment from one the more ardent opponents expresses much of this confusion: "He has to take into consideration the consequences of that personal decision." Indeed, muddling through should be so easy. The more broadly construed fear appears when this same opponent suggests, "It could become very awkward." For whom might it be so awkward?

The Piece Process

In an odd play on our own technology, we the marginalized must often cut and paste to move

through that fog of self. It is very much a piecemeal process, borne of strength and weakness and a willingness to retain some measure of hope.

Enter Suze Orman, appearing in a single page business highlight, replete with mini-interview. She exudes confidence as a self-made individual whose tour de force is her success in educating women about money. The interview proceeds along expected lines—money, stocks—and then the interviewer asks about her non-working life: "What about your partner?" Without skipping a beat, Ms Orman says only "K T." "But," presses the interviewer, "are you married?" Ms Orman replies that she has been with Kathy for 17 years and would very much like to be married, something they cannot do. Then it is on to more stocks and financial advice. It is as casual and commonplace as the weather. Nothing is amiss and nothing is "abnormal." There is no evidence of a lost soul, a danger to society. It is just one day in the life. She has, indeed, put it all together for herself, step-by-step, piece by piece. That supposedly nefarious and degenerate side "they"

warn us about does not show up in a closer look. It is a success story in the American tradition of success stories: up from nothing. There is no fog here. It can happen, it is just rare. Our focus on collective entities should not distract us from the realities of the individuals that make them up. We are all made up, but it is never easy getting there.

Join us. SOLGA wants you! Visit www.solga.org—news, mentors, listserv and more. Please send any comments, suggestions, ideas for new columns or just say "hi" to David Houston at dlrh-an@uvm.edu.

Society for Linguistic Anthropology

MARK ALLEN PETERSON AND JAMES STANLAW, CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

It's that time again. We're into the last weeks of the semester, everyone is starting to burn out and get itchy for summer freedom. Attention is slipping. There's only one thing to do: show movie clips! The following is a list of a few films that offer illustrations, insights and humor about our favorite topic, language.

This year's films were drawn primarily from a lingo listserv discussion of films from earlier this year. Thanks to Hal Schiffman (U Pennsylvania), Kathryn Remlinger (Grand State Valley U), David Samuels (U Massachusetts-Amherst), Beth Lee Simon (Purdue), Kerim Friedman (National Dong Hwa) and Robin Queen (U Michigan).

Amistad (1997)

This historical legal drama about African prisoners who seize control of the slave ship in which they are incarcerated is also a film about language ideologies. From the difficulties the prisoners have coordinating their activities given a lack of common speech to the ways their intelligence is dismissed because they cannot communicate with officers of the court, including their attorney, there are at least ten scenes useful for illustrating key issues in language, culture, race and class.

Ball of Fire (1941)

Linguist Bertram Potts (Gary Cooper), one of several university professors working on an



Barbara Stanwyck teaches Gary Cooper and some stodgy old professors some new words.

Transsexual
Nelly Crossdressed
Intersexual Flame
Bisexual
Trans FTM Butch
Queer Bear M
Dyke Metro Close
hime Qr
Close

Transsexual
Nelly Crossdressed
Intersexual Flame
Bisexual
Trans FTM Butch
Queer Bear M
Dyke Metro Close
hime Qr
Close

Transsexual
Nelly Crossdressed
Intersexual Flame
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Trans FTM Butch
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Dyke Metro Close
hime Qr
Close

encyclopedia project, discovers his article on “slang” is out of date. In his efforts to find a key informant he encounters nightclub singer Sugarpuss O’Shea (Barbara Stanwyck), whose testimony could put her mobster boyfriend away for life. Sugarpuss invites herself to stay with the professors at their residence. Their relationship blossoms when she teaches him that some idioms, like “yum-yum” have to be experienced to be properly understood. Can your students spot the many examples of bad linguistics?

Children of a Lesser God (1986)

A well-acted film that depicts a relationship between a deaf woman who has turned her back on a world that defines her by her deafness, and the man who tries to teach her English (but can’t help trying to manipulate and mold her). A good film if you want to discuss ASL, multilingualism and lip reading.

Executive Decision (1996)

In this film, Middle Eastern terrorists take over an airplane and intend to crash it in the US, spreading biological weapons (nerve gas) across the whole east coast. There are four or five clips in this movie in which the filmmakers use Arabic in combination with darkness and shouting to create an effect of cacophony and chaos. The use of incomprehensible language to instill fear can be a great introduction to discussions of language ideology.

Mad Hot Ballroom (2005)

This film about NYC public school students in a ballroom dance contest reveals how thoroughly and explicitly multilingual interactions are not only between students but between teachers and students, and teachers and administrators, both in the classroom and other school related activities. Great for sparking discussions on codeswitching, language acquisition and multiple Spanishes.

Nell (1994)

In the tradition of *L’Enfant Sauvage* this film raises issues of language acquisition, language/brain relationships, twin languages and the relationship of language to society. Jodie Foster plays Nell, who grows up in isolation in a North Carolina forest and is forcibly reintroduced to it by various doctors and officials. For further resources on “wild child” movies, visit www.feralchildren.com or <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~haroldfs/popcult/wildchild.html>.

Santa Fe (1940)

The racist stereotypes in this “classic” Western are—or should be—deeply disturbing to contemporary viewers. But the film features a scene in which a Native American woman tells the future. She speaks her own language, and Olivia de Havilland translates expertly. The scene illustrates a key principle of American language ideology, the “feminization of language learning,” according to which women learn languages and men stand around and wait for the women to translate (“What’s she saying, Kit? You speak the

lingo”). For a more contemporary example, take a look at *The Mummy* (1999).

(For more linguistic moments in the movies, see the SLA columns from May 2000 and May 2001. Films discussed include: *Airplane*, *Bambi*, *Beavis and Buttthead Do America*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *Canadian Bacon*, *Dances with Wolves*, *Encino Man*, *L’Enfant Sauvage*, *The Funeral*, *I Cento Passi*, *Phenomenon*, *Tampopo*, *Taxing Woman*, *The 13th Warrior*, *The 25th Hour*, *Wayne’s World*).

Got news, movies of ideas you want to discuss? Contact Mark Allen Peterson (petersm2@muohio.edu) or James Stanlaw (stanlaw@ilstu.edu).

Society for Medical Anthropology

KATHLEEN RAGSDALE AND JANELLE S TAYLOR,
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

SMA Takes a Stand on the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

By Mimi Nichter (Chair), Mac Marshall, Roland Moore, Mark Nichter and Nathaniel Wander
(Alcohol, Drug and Tobacco Study Group)

The commercial production and promotion of tobacco constitutes a global problem. Each year, approximately five million people die from tobacco-related diseases. In terms of its significance in international health, tobacco kills more people worldwide than malaria, maternal and major childhood conditions, and tuberculosis combined. By 2030, the annual number of deaths caused by tobacco is projected to rise to 10 million, with half of these deaths occurring among the 35- to 69-year-old age group. As a consequence, smoking will cause one-third of all deaths globally in the next 20 years. The majority of these deaths will occur in low income countries.

Controlling the Industry

Created under the auspices of the World Health Organization, the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is the first-ever global health treaty. The objective of the FCTC is “to protect present and future generations from the devastating health, social, environmental and economic consequences of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke.” It provides the basic tools for countries to enact comprehensive tobacco control legislation and take on the powerful tobacco industry. On February 27, 2005, after four years of intensive negotiations, the FCTC became international law. To date, the FCTC has been ratified by 145 countries.

The mandatory provisions of the FCTC include: a comprehensive ban on advertising, sponsorship and promotion, with narrow exceptions for countries such as the US that face con-

stitutional conflicts; large graphic warning labels on cigarette packs; elimination of deceptive and misleading labels such as “light” and “low tar”; protection of non-smokers in public places and places of work; and specific measures to reduce tobacco smuggling.

The treaty also encourages parties to enact other tobacco control policies, such as: increasing tobacco taxes; eliminating duty-free sales of tobacco products; considering litigation against the tobacco industry; prohibiting the sale of tobacco to minors; and including tobacco cessation services in national health plans.

What is the US position on the FCTC? Although the US signed the treaty in 2004, to date it has not been ratified. In President Bush’s view, the treaty interferes with US economic interests. Indeed, the Bush administration has close ties to the tobacco industry, and the US played a destructive role in the FCTC negotiations, attempting to weaken almost every provision of the treaty and supporting positions consistent with those of the tobacco industry. The mere signing of the treaty without ratification commits countries to support it, but does not create a legal obligation to abide by its provisions. Thus, the US signing of the treaty has been viewed by many as a public relations move which does little to protect people from the harm of tobacco.

Why should the SMA urge ratification of the treaty by the US?

The SMA urges ratification of the treaty by the US. Support of its effective implementation domestically and internationally would enable the US to become a leader in protecting public health around the world. It would send a strong message that our country is ready to take action to turn the tide of the global tobacco epidemic rather than appearing to be under the wing of Big Tobacco. That the US, the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world, is not involved in the fight to help save lives through controls on tobacco is unacceptable. As an organization and as individuals, we can take action by contacting our state’s senators and congressional representative, asking them to persuade the US government to ratify the FCTC. We can also write letters to newspapers, thus keeping the issue alive and urging a wider readership to put pressure on their elected officials to ratify the FCTC.

What can we do as medical anthropologists?

Many of us conduct research in countries where the FCTC has been ratified and where implementation of the treaty is already underway. We need to be involved in monitoring this implementation process. We can do so by monitoring the successes in terms of how the treaty is implemented (for example, whether advertising bans are enforced); how the industry is bending the rules (for example, opening up shops which have the name “Camel”); the emergence of new products which give the illusion of safety, and whether the industry is targeting young adults through “cigarette giveaways” in bars and clubs. Research can also