

THE FOREIGNER IN THE GROUP: THE BRIDGE AND THE DOOR TO INTERCULTURAL INTERACTION

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Introduction

Today there is an intense flow of goods, services, information, capital, and people across the planet, fueled by an increasingly globalized and interdependent economy. Global corporations take for granted and appropriate the world's diversity and complexity through production division mergers and the establishment of multicultural teams, all of which facilitates the flow of highly skilled staff among various offices worldwide. According to Attali (2003), about 500 million people moved to another country for professional reasons in 2001, and one billion people traveled abroad for leisure. Migration is also on the rise, the result of natural catastrophes or wars, revolutions, extreme poverty, and religious or political persecution, according to the data of the *Observatoire International de Migration* (RSH, 2004), which shows that 150 million migrants have sought new life and work around the globe. Modern life attests to the influence that sweeping changes in the communication and transport systems have on the social world. Cultural values, information, and ideas that expand concepts and question absolute truths are easily transferred from one region to another.

We can confidently assume that economic trade (capital, property, goods, and companies) is well-received and even encouraged by present-day governments; however, the same cannot be said of people moving across borders, as illustrated by increasingly restrictive laws enacted or considered in most developed nations, which are the destination of choice of these travelers. The presence of foreigners in a nation has social, economic, political, and cultural implications that challenge today's governments and expose identitarian feelings among the individuals, groups, and societies who live the paradox of the new age: that of being singular in a plural world or being local in a global world.

The present article discusses the foreign presence in intercultural relations in contemporary society and organizations, investigating the following: a) three emblematic representatives of the foreign condition - the exile, the immigrant, and the expatriate; b) the challenges foreigners face in their relations with specific groups; and c) the foreigner seen in film fiction. An interpretative and interdisciplinary approach is employed, supported by sociology, psychosociology, organizational studies, intercultural studies, and cinema.

1. The foreign condition, emblematic representatives, and the foreigners' relations with others.

Foreigners often dislike being labeled in such a generic manner because it ignores their multiplicity, diversity, and singularity. In fact, there is no foreigner in the absolute sense of the word, but the term “foreigner” has several meanings and is used in different expressions and experiences.

Not trying to typify things, we can list some unique foreign conditions that are defined according to the reasons or conditions causing an individual to move to another location. While some of these definitions are old, others are quite recent. They are related to different spaces as well as different times; i.e., some are transient and others are, or could be, permanent. They include: a) political and religious exiles; b) economic and war refugees; c) tourists who travel the world; d) businesspeople who live on board planes; e) professional expatriates whose work must be conducted abroad (diplomats, military personnel, and worldwide professionals); f) expatriates who have employment contracts for a given or open time (executives, specialists, scientists, sports professionals, artists, writers, etc.); g) scientists and students who expatriate seeking education, exchange experiences, or research; h) modern globetrotters who wander around the world and do not settle in any specific location; i) voluntary immigrants (retirees, high net worth individuals, and adventurers); and j) spouses with different cultures, who opt to live in their spouses’ home country or even in a third country (Freitas, 2005).

A foreigner is always a foreigner in relation to other foreigners, but he can also feel foreign to himself depending on the way he accepts his conditions, lives his experience, and articulates his objective and subjective life history (Kristeva, 1988). The authors of the present paper believe that the experience of being a foreigner differs from one person to another and also based on the conditions and reasons behind the individual being placed inside a “foreign” territory.

Hamad (2004) is a Muslim French-Lebanese psychiatrist who works with immigrant children and adults in France. Part of his work involves counseling children and young adults who face difficulties overcoming cultural barriers and achieving good performance at school; he questions himself on which language he should use in clinical sessions and says that many times patients look him up because he is “one of us” and can “understand us.” This is a growing concern among social workers, and we see that ethnopsychiatry is increasingly important because it helps us understand the references of other people who are different from us and leads to better dialogue with those people.

But what is this other person? In principle it is an image of one’s self... a human being who identifies himself with a double of himself; our subconscious remains foreign and if subconscious formations come up periodically it is because we are listening and are able to admit something that escapes our control. According to Hamad’s (2004) clinical experience, when an individual no longer recognizes himself in reference to his group or elements of his culture, he perceives and feels that if the mirror no longer reflects his image as someone like the others, his belonging to the group is no longer confirmed. This leads to two possibilities: a) the search to rebuild, thanks to references from the other, in the new world and create a new identity; and b) a search to confirm his affiliation and his culture. Preserving symbolic references and joining another culture is refusing the unconditional joining of a truth intended to be the sole truth.

The discovery of the other makes the truths and affiliation values more relative, because this means there is exposure to the risk of the other, his manners, his language, and his mirror. When we talk about immigrants, we think first of economic reasons. However, it

is possible that they have elected to live their double. Maybe it is necessary to believe that leaving represents a subjective test that results from the private history of each individual, regardless of his economic, social, or cultural motivations (Maffesoli, 1997; Michel, 2002).

A foreigner begins to recognize himself for what he is not, but gradually feels the need to introduce himself and say where he is from and why he is there. At this point, we should highlight the importance of having proper documents, because these documents have an imaginary meaning that extends beyond the matter of legality and access to the rights this condition provides. It is not uncommon to see foreigners of any category very excited at the prospect of receiving their acceptance papers for the country in which they have chosen to live. Some laugh and cry at the same time, while others breathe a sigh of relief and express a dreamy pride of someone who not only has legal status but is also acknowledged by others, one who can now exist without problems. This individual is no longer an administrative case. He is no longer invisible! He is no longer the enemy (Freitas, 2005).

Yet not all foreigners are seen as enemies. The presence of a foreigner and his interactions with natives can benefit from the historical moment the host society is going through, as well as from the image of the immigrant's home country and whether these people are a rare or common sight. It is undeniable that some immigrants attract more goodwill than others, and specific countries have preferences in regards to neighboring or friendly nations. A country's image in relation to another is fed by various sources and this image can elicit local tender feelings such as friendship, empathy, openness, admiration, and a healthy curiosity. However, it can also provoke mistrust, precaution, caution, prejudice, and racism (Freitas, 2005). According to Simmel (1994) and Schütz (2003), a foreigner is not seen by local citizens as an individual and his qualities do not define him as an individual, but rather as a certain type of foreigner.

We have chosen three types of foreign figures – the exile, the immigrant, and the professional expatriate – to conduct a brief analysis of the meanings such experiences represent to these individuals and to those who receive them. These foreign figures can vary according to time, place, local laws, and the prevailing mood.

1.1. The exile

An exile is someone who has been forced to leave his home country to save his life or that of his family or escape prison, and has no possibility of returning. The need to move is a condition that cannot be negotiated, representing a form of psychic annihilation associated with the vanishing of all social affiliation as well as national and cultural ties that support identity. In exile, the individual's identity is questioned and he is defined only by the impossibility of his return. Giving up one's home country, whether for a given period or otherwise, makes the individual confront losses of different types. In the face of these losses and uncoupling, the exile must perform psychic work that represents some characteristics of what Freud calls "*mourning work*" (Freud, 1968). The status of the loss is complex even if it cannot be deemed a personal loss, as described by Freud, because the place of origin has not disappeared, but the exile must psychically absorb the loss and think of his home country without his presence; i.e., the country has not disappeared but the individual has disappeared from the country (Freitas, 2005).

This is the central argument of a Uruguayan author, Tourn (2003), who has been an exile in France since 1975. She is a psychiatrist and examines situations witnessed in her

clinic that illustrate great suffering. In addition to the behaviors, problems, symptoms, and signs of psychic and somatic suffering such as hypochondria, sleep disturbances, and repetitive nightmares, eating and sexuality problems, depression, anguish, and terrors, she assumes that the exile is just another factor that encourages the emergence of clinical signals whose interpretation continues to be associated with the personal history and childhood of each subject.

In exile, the loss of identity is compounded by a questioning of one's identity, to the extent that it engenders in the individual a "dis-identification" process or movement of "dis-illusion" of subjective distancing, which does not lack contradictory emotions, especially because the exile provokes the collapse of the myths associated with affiliation, unveiling the affiliation's illusory character. According to Freud, mourning is a normal reaction to the loss of a loved one or an abstraction that takes this loved one's place, such as the homeland, liberty, or an ideal. In exile, the nature of the loss is essential to the study of the resulting problems. The country has not disappeared, creating a paradox: If the exile is the subject of the loss of the homeland, he is also the lost object of his loved ones. He is in the place of the imaginary dead, and the psychic elaboration must lead to the acceptance not of the disappearance of the place but of the existence of the place without the individual.

The home country is hard to think of and represent because it overlaps with the archaic body associated with the existence that precedes, for the individual, the specific object. In addition to losing his homeland, the exile is frequently deprived of his native language, which means much more than mere use: it concerns thought, the effects of censorship, the impoverishment that the loss of the language engenders, and all the culture it supports. Among the multiple effects of loss of language, the need to change the language is accompanied by actual scars in one's memory and a meaningful identity associated with giving up privileged form of expression. According to Lévy-Strauss, words are translated, but culture is not: *cheese* is not the same as *fromage*.

Tourn (2003) describes studies demonstrating that, in many cases, exiles go through a euphoric first phase in which a maniacal and triumphant negation sustains the idealization of the country that has received this exile. Freud (1968) says that, following heavy psychological pressure, individuals can experience reactions of happiness, joy, and triumph that are typical of maniacal states. During the euphoric phase, the exile may see the host country as the blessed "*promised land*," unlike the home country that has expelled him. The exile may also feel a sense of unreality expressed in phrases like "*it's just like a dream*" or "*I still can't believe this is true*." In this phase, practical matters of everyday survival demand action and leave little time for reflection, but the subconscious keeps up its covert and silent work. Gradually, the "*promised land*" gives way to "*paradise lost*" in the imagination of the exile, giving rise to a phase of nostalgia. This process varies from one individual to another and there is no specific time frame. Ulysses is considered to be the archetypal exile (Homero, 1992), embodying the symbol of love for the homeland and building the myth of the journey back home.

After the initial phase of excitement with the new, foreigners often begin to see flaws in the "natives," criticize their behavior, and make unfair comparisons fueled by the loss and idealization of the native land, which will seem more beautiful, more brilliant, warmer, and packed with superlative adjectives. Some exiles are tempted to congregate with compatriots to demonize the nation that has received them, criticizing every detail and thus overcoming their own fears and anguishes (Taylor, 1999; Camillieri and Cohen-Emerique, 1989). Regarding affection, nostalgia is intimately associated with the senses:

the sounds, feelings, odors, tastes, food from back home, and so on. Sensorial pleasures augmented by their absence and idealization leaves marks on the body and in the mind, with memories of “*my land*,” “*back home*,” and “*when I was young*.” This is when a new paradox emerges: Being absent from the here and now, and immensely present there and in the past. The idea of the future becomes the myth of the return, which may or may not come true, but which will give the exile strength to overcome the nostalgic phase and help him adapt to his new surroundings (Tourn, 2003). Exiles frequently talk about repetitive dreams and nightmares (Todorov, 1996; Hamad, 2004; Kundera, 2000, and Tourn, 2003), as well as about “relic-objects,” which have the task of supporting one’s identity, restoring balance, safety, acknowledgement, and familiarity, and preserving the necessary negation to overcome the traumatic loss (Tourn, 2003). The conditions of an exile are described as “cold” in many of the clinical testimonials described by Tourn (2003), Kundera (2000), and Gabriel (1994). The home country is always described as warmer than the new country, where the dwellers are labeled as “cold” and “aloof.”

From 1851 to 1875 Victor Hugo lived in exile, a period during which he moved no less than 27 times. He kept intellectually and politically busy in the various political fronts he was engaged in against tyranny and capital punishment and on behalf of universal suffrage, women’s and children’s rights, freedom of the press, and human rights. Throughout Europe and in the United States he published articles, made statements, and gave lectures, all of which were collected under a six-volume publication called *Pendant l’exil* (n/a). This work contains contradictory feelings: the wish to survive with dignity and pride, the warm acknowledgement and gratefulness of his hosts, and an explicit homesickness that caused the death of many friends and much suffering to Hugo. The exile is “*the excellence of the desert*,” “*idyll at sea*,” but also the “*long night*,” “*the agony*,” “*the grave*,” and “*there’s no such a thing as a beautiful exile*.” In the face of so many changes, he considered seeking exile in Portugal or Spain, to go after the sun and leave behind the shorter days and longer mourning: “*Puisque je ne puis rentrer en France, je veux me rapprocher du soleil. Je supprimerai de ma vie au moins cela, l’hiver. Ayant l’exil à quoi bon l’hiver? L’exil suffit pour avoir froid*” (Tourn, 2003:48).

Not unlike Hugo, many exiles have found a new way of living, writing, and carrying out scientific research in their new country. Countries and societies that welcome exiles do so in respect to dignity and human rights, exalting this characteristic as a sign of their civilizing process. Many exiles have developed or maintained their scientific careers and intellectual work, playing an active role in humanitarian achievements and keeping narrow ties with the country that has welcomed them, even after they return to their native land.

1.2. The immigrant

Unlike the exile, the immigrant is someone who has chosen – spontaneously – to live in a place different from his home and has no impediments to his return. The possible reasons are diverse, from a desire for adventure and the unknown to pragmatic matters, such as economic survival or better living conditions.

Many cities of the old and new world are now veritable melting pots. New York, Chicago, Paris, and São Paulo are all examples of places that gather people from around the world, with a variety of languages and human diversity. This variety gives such cities a cosmopolitan status, in which the multiple cultural alternatives add urban glamour, idealize the migration process, and build a utopia of harmonious cultural diversity.

Belfort (2007) mentions Kant's study of man's nature, based on the case of the foreigner and his right of possession of the land, according to which an inhabitant of the Earth should be thought of only as part of the whole, originating a community of the land, even if not a legal community of possession. In other words, in Kant there is a right to possession that transcends the borders of the nations, because every man is entitled to a place on the planet and to present himself to a society without hostile reception.

However, this vision is increasingly farther from what we see in real life, with rising hostility towards foreigners and those who are different, bringing back old ghosts of exclusion and mutual annihilation. Unlike economic exchanges, the migration of people increasingly disaggregates and troubles today's societies. It brings to light the contradictions of local and even global capitalism at the same time it is seen as a psychic threat.

On the one hand, we have economic protectionism, the struggle for jobs and social benefits intended only for local inhabitants, coupled with the fact that immigrants represent a useful alibi for the government, which hides its interests behind the control of newcomers (Castro, 2005); on the other hand, this intense flow of people gives rise to the idea of a "possible invasion," on both social and psychic levels; that is, local residents see foreigners as an intrusion into their own psyche, bringing fears that they will be forced to change to live with people of other cultures, religions, habits, languages, and costumes. To this we can add a return of cultural roots and a renewed appreciation of the local identities and community groups. It is as if amid all the globalization there is a comeback of local and regional importance (Enriquez, 2008).

We can therefore say that current resistance or reaction to foreigners is fueled by economic, social, cultural, and psychic sources. The threat is represented by the foreigner who lives nearby, who is similar and lives next to the locals, rather than foreigners far away who are in their homes and interact with local inhabitants through electronic mediation. Le Pen, a French far-right political leader, always says in his campaigns that "*he loves foreigners, but back in their homes.*"

During economic booms, immigrants are welcomed and even invited to supply the labor necessary for large projects, providing a great contribution not only to the countries receiving them but also to their nations of origin. During prosperous times, everyone forgets that these workers have families that require jobs, healthcare, education, and leisure activities. However, when the economy turns sour, foreigners become the target of hostility, racism, and xenophobia; violence thus becomes essential in response to something that is different.

Simmel (1994) sees foreigners as a social form, a specific type of social interaction, which combines leave/move away and stay/remain. Proximity and distance are constituents of the foreigner. We could add that proximity and distance are also present in local inhabitants in the way they interact with foreigners during a given moment in time, because cultural and social changes derived from foreign presence are interpreted according to the moment, existing laws, fears, and ghosts that come to life or not.

1.3. The professional expatriate

The expatriate is a foreigner who arrives at his destination to work for a local office of the company employing him in his home country. Organizations decide to expatriate employees for several reasons. The most common are aspects related to expertise necessary

to carry out a new project, to innovation, or to control or reinforce organizational culture. Expatriation is increasingly frequent and provides different possibilities for the individuals involved. They can be expatriated for a given time and then return to their country of origin, there can be multiple expatriations without returning home, the expatriate can change job status at the local office after completing his original mission, and so on (Freitas, 2005).

The expatriate must demonstrate great professional competence, justifying his transfer to the local team; he must also be highly adaptive to local culture, reorganizing his experiences, building everyday life with his family, controlling his doubts and anguishes, learning local codes in his practices, and socializing in different manners. He is constantly challenged by the existing order, what has been done, uncertainty and ambiguity, and must always reach higher and learn more. Adjustment to everyday life means the foreigner can provide suitable answers to the situation he faces, without experiencing discomfort or disorientation. That is, he should not lose his balance when faced with the challenges imposed by the loss of his references and practical knowledge (Freitas, 2000 and 2005).

Considering that economic aspects are predominant in modern life, the expatriate apparently is a type of foreigner who moves about more easily than other foreigners because his presence is not considered an invasion, but rather a necessary partnership; an expatriate is seen as someone who adds new knowledge and perspectives to the team, contributing to the development and performance of the local organization. Literature on the subject mentions no demonstrations of racism, discrimination, or violence against expatriates, although it is understood that they must be accepted and legitimized by the group.

Expatriates are increasingly known as “*citizens of the world.*” However, even if this title is neutral or positive, we believe that no human being can be stripped of his own culture. This description refers only to an individual who has developed the capacity to easily adapt to other cultures in essential aspects, to deal with the unknown with less psychic pressure, or to respond to everyday needs without distress. Instrumental learning in professional work enables expatriates to deal with frequent changes without damaging their identity. Otherwise, they absorb the feeling of being foreigners as a given objective of their life and identify (Freitas, 2006).

2. The challenges of the foreigner in his relations with the group

In 1908 Georg Simmel wrote a seminal article, “*L'étranger dans le groupe*” (Tumultes, 1994) which made an original contribution by explaining the dialectic and paradoxical game intrinsic to the foreigner: he brings the faraway close and takes the close faraway; he is both the bridge and the door. The foreigner is someone who sets himself within a given environment, but his position is determined by the fact that he is not part of that environment from the beginning and he brings qualities that are not inherent to that environment. Distance and proximity are present in all human relations; distance can be interpreted as the distancing from the near, and the oddity as the proximity of the faraway, which is clearly a positive reaction, a form of interaction. The foreigner is an element of the group that includes exteriority and confrontation; he synthesizes proximity and distance, and this is the formal position that represents him.

Simmel (1994) points out that, in history, the foreigner first appeared as a trader and the trader as a foreigner. By nature, the trader does not have land in the sense of land being a vital substance in a spatial or social environment. In spite of all his charm, even in the intimacy of his interpersonal relations, in the eyes of the other he will be “*that who has no land*” (1994:200). The objectivity of the foreigner means not only distance and not siding with anyone, but this peculiar combination of proximity, distance, indifference, and engagement. Simmel also says that in old Italian towns, judges were brought from outside.

The foreigner is close to us to the extent that we share with him some national, social, or professional similarities, and, more generically, as a human being. The individual characteristics of a foreigner (of the country, town, ethnicity, or culture) are not perceived as individual, but are attributed to his foreign origin. He is seen and felt as a foreigner of a given type. However, for the foreigner joining a group, the others are not mere performers of typical anonymous tasks, but individuals, because the foreigner considers himself a singular individual and will perceive the others as himself; he is inclined to individualize that which is typical, building a social world based on pseudo-anonymity, pseudo-intimacy, and pseudo-typicality, says Schütz (2003).

But what is a “typical situation” of a foreigner who is trying to interpret the cultural model of a new social group to guide his own model? This is proposed by Alfred Schütz in his essay of social psychology, *L'Etranger*, written in 1944 (SCHÜTZ, 2003). According to Schütz, a foreigner is an adult who is trying to be accepted, or at least tolerated, by a new group. He acknowledges that in everyday life man does not have homogeneous knowledge, but rather incoherent knowledge, of course only partially and not exempt from contradictions. However, this seems coherent, consistent, and clear enough for him to understand and be understood in his new group. Every group has knowledge of recipes, a general perception, and a precept of action, which can be called an “interpretation scheme.”

The task of the cultural model is to eliminate the need to always seek or build new forms, as many forms exist and are collectively suitable for some situations. These usual ways of thinking remain if: a) social life remains the same, with the same problems; b) we can rest on the knowledge transmitted to us by our parents, teachers, government leaders, and traditions; c) regarding ordinary questions, it is enough to know anything about the type or general style; or d) the recipe system and interpretation schemes are simply accepted and applied by compatriots.

This “*c'est comme ça*” is not shared by the foreigner because he has other recipes and interpretation schemes. He does not have the particular story of the others, but another story that creates his biography as a newcomer to the group who, in the best hypothesis, is willing to share with him the present and the future, but he is excluded from the past. That which members of the group see as safety, for the foreigner represents an adventure, which he must investigate and question. This investigator role gives the foreigner a trace of objectivity; he discerns and can perceive limits (Simmel, 1994). However, this objectivity produces an ambiguous loyalty to the new group, to the extent that he is reticent or unable to fully replace his model for that of the group receiving him; he will be a “cultural hybrid,” and can be seen by the group as ungrateful because he refuses to acknowledge the model suggested for protection. He does not see that model as protection, but as a labyrinth.

From the perspective of the new group, the foreigner is always a “man without history” (Schütz, 2003); on the other hand, for the foreigner, his cultural model is still part of his personal history, an interrupted historical development, giving him a relatively natural conception of the world and leading to difficulty in validating any model other than

his own. However, the foreigner gradually shifts from being a spectator to being a member of the new group. After that, his pertinence system changes and his interpretation will demand a new type of knowledge; whatever he did before as a representation of the new group will prove inadequate, because it was merely a representation system and not a guide for interacting with the new group. The faraway becomes close and is enriched with the new experiences and simple convictions regarding strange objects that no longer coincide with the living experience amid these same objects. The foreigner realizes that a part of his usual way of thinking cannot withstand the living experience and social interaction, ceasing to be valid.

An interpretation scheme assumes the individual in the center. The foreigner faces difficulties in the new group and cannot share this starting point with the other members. He then tries to translate and seek his own model in equivalent terms; if they exist, they can be understood, but if they do not, he cannot simply make believe they exist because this would cause great dissonance. The exile, the migrant, and the expatriate face these difficulties because they must merge with the group and interact in an extended manner with the local inhabitants. The foreigners experience the strangeness and are bothered by it because they must be part of a new group and be accepted by it. These foreigners discover the other and themselves, a veritable exercise of alterity (Freitas, 2005; Schütz, 2003; and Kristeva, 1998). The strangeness and familiarity represent general categories of our interpretation of the world, defining the new, trying to understand the meaning, matching the new with the things we already know, and trying to form some coherence. Cultural adjustment is nothing but changing the strange into the familiar. After this point the foreigner will no longer be a foreigner (Todorov, 1996), that is, he goes from acculturation to transculturation, acquiring a new cultural code without giving up the old one, making the difference between culture and nature, inciting curiosity and tolerance.

Tourists interact only superficially with the locals because they are centered on themselves, committed only to the pleasure of their trip and lacking a need to be accepted by the natives. According to Morin and Kern (1995), tourism is now much more about consuming the other than developing true alterity. Easier communication and transportation are just two of the variables influencing the desire to seek out the other, the awakening of the curiosity about other forms of lives and social values. If the tourist is a traveler who sees only what he wants to, he still demonstrates some openness in regard to the other, even if he is not affected by this other. Michel (2002) reminds us that, in spite of the disdain and derogatory treatment tourists receive in some places, the much criticized tourist invasion has an undeniable merit: it is more peaceful than a war invasion, and the trip is not only an opportunity for peace and meetings, but also offers new perspectives for another type of "globalization."

Language is one of the most important cultural references and represents a huge challenge for the foreigner, even if he is skilled in the use of grammar. The language is not limited to passively learned rules and grammar. The foreigner is immediately faced with the need to transform his thoughts into interaction. We often hear stories about language blocks following arrival in another country. Fluency in a language requires a knowledge of interpretative subtleties because words have emotional value, the terms change with context and situation, each group has its own private jargon or code, and the whole history of the linguistic group is reflected in the way things are said, all of which cannot be learned passively, unlike vocabulary or grammar rules. According to Schütz (2003), to be at ease with another language, one has to write love letters in that language.

To move to another country without knowing its language is an enormous challenge, particularly if the foreigner does not know anybody in the new place. One is left speechless and the mother language is good only for talking to oneself or harboring thoughts. The foreigner realizes, to his shock, that his language is useless! The language of the others ignores him, and it is difficult to apprehend some meaning and put together some sense. It is as if the language were just noise. Not speaking the local language makes the foreigner a non-foreigner not only in the eyes of the others but also to him, because he is left unbalanced and cannot recognize himself in this state of helplessness. There are frequent cases of people who withdraw into communities of fellow foreigners, not only to have the protection of what is known to them but also to survive in another universe without having to learn a new language, a refusal to interact in the harsh challenges of everyday life, not suffer, or at least postpone the inevitable confrontation of loss and strangeness. Foreigners who have this condition for a set time are strongly lured to this temptation (Freitas, 2000 and 2005).

3. The foreigner on the silver screen

As we have stated above, foreigner is a generic category allowing multiple definitions because it extends beyond the real and formal and advances into the individual and collective imaginary. The subject can be approached from various sources and for each of these we have a vast range of possibilities. In order to take other interpretative paths and expand the understanding of this rich phenomenon, we can resort to art, because it reaches hidden and shadowy areas hardly reached by science. Since the artist is not bound by science, he can travel down untrodden paths with no road signs or destination. In art, doubt and lack of definition and clarity are not necessarily blocks to expression. Perhaps it is for this reason that psychology feels more comfortable with art. After all, one tries to express and the other tries to interpret that which is not necessarily explicit.

Cinema is an art that exists based on the relation between light and shadows, contradiction, paradox, and opposition, all of which are necessary for an image to express itself; otherwise the art simply does not happen. Due to its symbolic concreteness and influence in cultures (among both the elite and the masses), the cinema produces content and reflection expressed through aesthetic images in its quest to communicate with the other, the audience.

Cinema is produced around the world and reflects each individual and culture. It mirrors – with more or less distortion – societies and peoples. It is a natural provider of reflections. Among its multiple themes, the foreigner is recurrently found in films produced around the world. We will use some great filmmakers to illustrate and enrich our reflection on these foreigners, who are many and probably infinite. We opted not to use films focusing exclusively on the foreigner (as an exile, immigrant, or expatriate), but rather films that resort to different metaphors to throw more light (or shadows) on multiple meanings.

3.1. The foreigner as a destroyer of the order: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Theorem*

The arrival of a foreigner into the midst of a Milanese middle-class family in the late 1960s is the official subject of *Theorem*, the disturbing film by Pier Paolo Pasolini which had a considerable impact and provoked many different interpretations and definitions by cinema critics around the world. Interpreted by British actor Terence Stamp at the height of his good looks, the foreigner arrives and is received with a strange reaction that is neither expected nor unexpected. In a sequence of scenes with hardly any dialogue, he interacts with the home's dwellers: the maid, the mother, the son, the daughter, and the father.

The foreigner's contact with each member of the family has a variety of reactions and psychological impasses. In each instance, the foreigner provokes a reaction and the involved individuals plunge into themselves. Unhappy in their controlled and predictable world, the love for the unknown ends up causing them all to bring to the surface their own psychological prisons. In having sex with a stranger, they seek a kind of redemption, a search for meaning. After having sex with each member of the family, the stranger one day says he is leaving. The glass house of the Milanese bourgeoisie crumbles and nobody escapes his absence. The father, mother, son, daughter, and maid are destroyed in their social identity and are lost, looking for their true identity. Will it still be possible?

A left-wing intellectual, Pasolini expresses in this family the dominant bourgeoisie (at the same time tied to the social scheme it has built and continues to control) and the foreigner is one who is not tied to this capitalist prison-society, which is why he seduces and annihilates. Those people had no salvation because the imposition of social roles with the rigors of class separation had already destroyed any possibility of humanity in them. Pasolini's violent metaphor can be read as the expression of fear that foreigners many times provoke: that of overturning the order supporting our identity. In the desperate words of the son in the face of the imminent departure of his loved foreigner, we perceive the filmmaker's message: "*I don't recognize myself anymore. That which made me equal to the others was destroyed. You've taken me out of the natural order of things.*"

The metaphor of the foreigner as an element triggering a process of group desegregation reaches perfection in Pasolini's *Theorem*. The foreigner's arrival creates psychological conflicts between the parents and children, gradually leading to the destruction of the fragile family cohesion at the same time the foreigner paradoxically releases each member, father, mother, daughter, son, and even maid from the social and family prisons. In this case, liberation is synonymous with dissolution and death.

3.2. The foreigner destroyed by the dominant group: Luchino Visconti's *Conversation Piece*

The second to last film of Luchino Visconti, *Conversation Piece* (*Gruppo di Famiglia in um Interno*), describes the story of a solitary intellectual who collects 18th century family portraits, especially those of the conversation piece type. He has his routine interrupted when he rents the upper floor of his home to a marquise, who brings with her a lover, her daughter, and the daughter's boyfriend. With their vulgar, annoying, and

unexpected behavior, the tenants transform the professor's monotonous life into chaos. Faced with the reality of a family that, in the eyes of the professor, represents a chance of living the fantasy of his own lost family, the professor gradually lets down his defenses.

Leaving the safety of his world protected from the outside reality, in which he survives only through his paintings and books, the professor opens the gates of his feelings and becomes emotionally attached to that unlikely family. The coarseness of the marquise, played by Silvana Mangano, the disarming sincerity of the younger family members, and the emotional intensity of the lover, Konrad, soften up the old professor, as unlikely as this might seem.

Burt Lancaster, in one of the best performances of his life and under the guidance of Visconti, expresses the impasses of an intellectual who faces a new reality that demands action after looking at a world whose values he does not like and a society whose paths are unknown to him. The affection and love he feels for the young Konrad, which the professor feels as a possibility of life and of driving off death, helps the professor approach death.

The professor is as Italian as the family, and therefore the film is not about a foreigner to a place, but rather a foreigner in his time. The foreigner, in this case, is the professor who lives in a menagerie outside his time. The family group that bursts into his home, his soul, and his life, and which brings him back to real life is also the group of people that will cause his annihilation. In a film of rare beauty and poetry, Visconti, as a master artist, builds a masterpiece that shows the tragedy of decadence of a time period with humanism-filled poetry. Tragedy here is inexorable – as tragedies always are. However, involved in tenderness and melancholy, the film manages to stay away from a pessimistic view of the world. Decadence, in its acceptance, meets beauty.

3.3. The foreigner as an integrating and redeeming element: Percy Adlon's *Out of Rosenheim*

This fable about tolerance brings a completely rare view of the real and art world: the foreigner as an integrating element. Released in 1988, therefore before the fall of the Berlin wall, *Out of Rosenheim* tells the story of a German lady arriving at an inn and café in the middle of the Mojave Desert between Las Vegas and Disneyland. Friendly, fat, and grinning, Jasmin (played by Marianne Sagebrecht) is received with suspicion, rudeness, and disdain by café owner Brenda (CCH Pounder).

Apparently totally unaware of everyone's rejection, Jasmin distributes kindness, friendliness, and tenderness to the owner and regular customers, and little by little gains everyone's trust through her genuine kindness. Her unarmed fondness ends up tearing down the armor used by the others to protect themselves from their feelings. In the end, her cheerfulness and kindness spread to the place, changing a lifeless café into a magical and inspiring place where happiness is possible. The foreigner's vision in this film is so positive that the film's worldwide success raises a question: amid so much racism, xenophobia, and ethnocentrism expressed in government actions that are increasingly exclusionist regarding foreigners, particularly in rich countries that are a magnet to immigrants from poorer regions of the world, is it possible that people fantasize about this desire for communion by affection?

3.4. The foreigner as a driver of life and death

Film has built a very special place for the great moral, social, and sexual dilemmas, and for the foreigner it has produced a number of metaphors that point to several alternatives of negation and acceptance. In one of Hollywood's biggest blockbusters ever, Steven Spielberg's *ET*, we see a foreigner (from another planet, and therefore as foreign as one can be) who is an element of strangeness and who contradictorily brings fear and confrontation to adults and hope and love to children. Children – who have yet to crystallize their cultural identities – are shown as capable of having a direct and live relation with the foreigner, lacking the preconceived adult notions about the absurd situation of looking at a being from another planet. In this case, the film values tolerance, a crucial aspect when we are talking about relations with a foreigner.

Two films of Italian filmmaker Bernardo Bertolucci bring complex yet disturbing metaphors about the impact of foreigners, strangers, and the other on us. *The Conformist* (Il Conformista), Bertolucci's first international success based on a novel by Alberto Moravia, is one of the cruelest political films to date. In 1938, during Mussolini's government, an Italian becomes a Fascist and is called to assassinate a political dissident exiled in France. The objective plot shows frame-by-frame the crumbling of the identity of an individual (played by French actor Jean Louis Trintignant) who, in his quest for acceptance and interaction with the dominant group in power, gives up any personal convictions. Just like a gutless chameleon, he slowly merges with power – at the same time that he becomes invisible and safe – and takes up a discourse that is not his. At the end, he is a stranger to all since he is not actually any of them, and even worse, a stranger to himself, the result of a persistent negation of himself. This represents a moral impossibility that leads to destruction.

On another level, a foreigner not as a stranger but simply as another or as one who is not us but to whom we look for clues of our own identity, we have another great film of the 1970s which caused uproar around the world: *Last Tango in Paris* (L'Ultimo Tango a Parigi), also by Bertolucci. A man and a woman meet by chance in a vacant apartment for rent. In a fulminant meeting between a tortured soul and a flighty girl, two strange worlds join in a violent symbiosis. The two enter a vertiginous relation of sex, passion, and negation of each other that will lead to a tragic ending. The paradox of an absolutely intimate relation and the lack of knowledge of the other's background, and therefore identity, makes them both lose control. They never ask for the other's name and never admit the other as an identity outside him/herself. They stop for no sign of danger and take passion to the frontier of death. The foreigner, which in this case is the other, is the incarnation – in the actual sense of flesh, body, smell, ecstasy, and fluids – of the drivers of life and death.

4. Concluding remarks

In his essay "The disquieting foreignness," Freud (1985) says that there is no theory of beauty as a theory of the qualities of the feeling, because that which is strange is related to the frightening, causing fear and horror. The strange frequently produces an ambiguity that contains, at the same time, both fascination and fear. Freud says that the strange is the category of frightening that reminds us of the known, of the old and familiar; the strange

frightens us precisely because it is not familiar and exposes something we do not know how to approach. In many languages, the word “strange” or “stranger” has the same semantic origin as “foreigner” (Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, and Italian). The foreigner is always the strange, the different, the other, the non-standard.

As we gradually see a narrowing of the world through easier communications and transportation that lead to contact among thousands of people from different places and cultures for the most diverse reasons, we see that intercultural interactions are an increasingly common trait in contemporary life. These interactions tend to become more common in a world that is breaking down borders and combining into a single whole, which speeds up the spreading of information and cultural values, and challenges us with an unquestionably reality: we are all diverse.

The acknowledgement of human diversity challenges ethnocentrism and the idea of a single and pure cultural root. Today’s world gives us multiple affiliations, multiple identities, and multiple ties, which may be less solid than a single tie, but in their whole keep individuals and societies connected. This is why Affergan (1997) calls for a new anthropology which overcomes scholastic differences, detects the meaning of human worlds resulting from plural crossings between cultures, and acknowledges the need to learn alongside foreigners. This anthropology calls attention to people, their relations, and types of reciprocity, considering the redefinition of their identities and inter- and intracultural mutations that affect them.

This new anthropology acknowledges that tolerance structures alterity and that the meaning of the others is social, or a set of symbolized relations experienced by some inside the collectivity that is identified as such. Alterity allows us to reduce our perception of the other as an enemy, rival, or predator. The foreigner is always the other; he is not a comfortable presence and he does not exist without risks because he surprises us with the different.

We live in a civilization that travels, that communicates in many ways, and which faces the new, diversity, the different. Human beings in this civilization are no longer members of a single and determined culture, but of a culture permeated by mixture, miscegenation, cultural diffusion, new and multiple affiliations, and individual and plural identities. The fear to be overcome is the fear to be invaded psychically by the presence of the foreigner. It is the fear of emotional distance that denies the other. The fear of the absence of guilt and of the indifference for the life of the other is also a reflection of one’s self. Interculturality is the anthropological face of a new world civilization, and the foreigner is the bridge and door to this interaction, as Simmel stated.

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