

### *Vers Nancy*

*Vers Nancy* is a short film consisting of an interview between a teacher, Jean-Luc Nancy, and his student, Ana Samardzija, while on a train ride in France. In this interview they discuss the concept of foreignness, while also touching upon the themes of difference, intrusion, and identity. The interview begins with Ana explaining that as a foreigner she wants to be accepted in France, and she believes the way to be accepted is by not being seen as different. Nancy responds by saying when we try to welcome foreigners we end up ignoring their foreignness and erasing their differences. They then discuss the meaning of intrusion and how it is easy to feel like an intruder in France because of the country's strong identity. They also discuss the limit of identity, and they talk about not being able to foresee anything in life. After Nancy and Ana finish discussing several topics concerning foreignness they are interrupted by another traveller, a black man, who utters the last words of the film.

The setting of *Vers Nancy* consists of a conversation between Nancy and his student, Ana, while on a train in France. The film's setting of a train ride is informal and comfortable, which allows the teacher and his student to be on the same level. Since the setting is more relaxed, it allows both characters to speak freely and voice their true opinion without repercussions. Typically, when a student sees their teacher outside of class it is weird and awkward; however, the director, Claire Denis, effectively uses the setting to make the situation comfortable. The informal train ride takes away the pressure, and allows the characters to speak openly on the topic of foreignness.

When we attempt to welcome foreigners, we end up ignoring their foreignness and in turn ignoring their differences. In the interview, Ana explains that when she came to France she did not want to be seen as different because she thought being different meant she would be rejected from society. When the home country attempts to accept these differences, we end up erasing them and then there are no longer any differences to perceive. In order to completely accept foreigners into our country, we must possess a certain type of knowledge. Knowledge is defined as, “awareness or familiarity gained by experience of a fact or situation.” The host country will gain awareness of real foreignness if we are willing to put in the effort and in turn experience acceptance of foreigners’ differences, strangeness, and otherness.

The term ‘intrusion’ usually has a bad connotation associated with it, because it projects a sense of threat. Foreigners in France generally feel like intruders and Nancy claims that this is because France has a powerful identity. Identity is defined as “the condition of being a certain person or thing”; therefore, France recognizes what kind of country it is, and will not allow outsiders to come in and change its identity. Strangeness is also related to identity because strangeness is something one cannot comprehend, and this lack of understanding showcases the limit of identity. Foreigners will always be outsiders if the home country continues to see them as strange intruders with differences.

The interview plays an extremely important role in this film. The technique of using an informal interview allows the student to ask her teacher relevant and stimulating questions in a comfortable environment. Ana continually asks questions about his previous comments and the questions do not seem staged, but instead it seems like a

normal conversation. The student is especially effective in her mode of questioning when she asks Nancy about his having the impression that the French are arrogant. This question pushes Nancy to go in depth about the powerful identity of France and the reason why foreigners constantly feel like intruders. By utilizing the technique of an interview the characters are able to develop a strong conversation concerning foreignness, and the audience is better able to understand what the characters are discussing.

After watching this film and listening to the arguments brought forward by Nancy, I would like to learn more about certain subjects he discussed. I would like to ask him about why he believes the convention is to welcome foreigners. I would argue that a lot of people consciously do not welcome foreigners into their country, so I am wondering why he believes convention is to welcome foreigners. I also would question him about France and why he thinks it is an arrogant country with a strong identity. If I were given the chance, I would like to conduct an interview with him in the same type of setting as the film, such as a plane ride, because the informal setting takes off the pressure. The idea of a formal interview causes stress for most people because it feels like we have to always say or do the right thing. We feel that if the interview does not go perfectly and according to plan, we have failed; however, *Vers Nancy* shows us that the interview does not have to be perfect in order to be a success.

The film shows the audience that the host country needs to assimilate the ideas of foreigners, regardless of how hard this can be. The host country believes that it does not have to adjust its lifestyle and beliefs, only the foreigners have to. We will welcome them, but they have to conform because we refuse to change. This interview shows the

audience that if the country truly wants to welcome foreigners, it must make sacrifices. However, even if the host country is willing to make sacrifices, it might not matter, because we may never accept foreigners as our own. Unfortunately, they might always be foreigners and intruders in our eyes, and they may never treat them the same way as they treat their fellow citizens.

*Vers Nancy* forces me to look at the way I approach new people, experiences, and ideas in the future. In my personal life, I will try to accept others' differences and not try to erase them or change them to be more like me. I have realized that the world needs different types of people or everyone would be the same, which would lead to a boring world. Foreigners bring a different perspective and we should put in the effort and take the time to learn their perspectives. In my academic life, I have learned to take what I have been given and try not to force things. *Vers Nancy* is an extremely successful film because it has given me a whole new outlook on foreignness.

## Works Cited

“Identity.”[thefreedictionary.com](http://thefreedictionary.com). The Free Dictionary, 2015. Web. 17 February 2015.

*Vers Nancy*. Dir. Claire Denis. Perf. Jean-Luc Nancy and Ana Samardzija. 2004. Film.