The Indomitable Country Girl in Michael David Apted's Film *Nell*

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Abstract.

As a means of exchange and self-accomplishment, language can also be an instrument of globalization and domination. This aspect of language is highlighted in Michael David Apted's film *Nell*. Nell, the eponymous protagonist, is a subject of conflict between two ideologies based on her inability to gain a conventional language. Concealed in the rafter of a cabin in the backwoods of North Carolina forest after her mother's death, Nell is thought to be a wild child who has not learnt about social skills as she speaks unintelligible language. She, therefore, becomes an attraction, a curiosity for her manners. Jerome Lovell, the town doctor, decides to help her remain in her mother's cottage, while Paula Olsen and her boss, Alexander Paley, plan to use her as a laboratory study case. Their divergent views about the girl's future life send them to court where they are assigned to observe and assess her for three months. The outcome shows that Nell's strange language results from the special language she had with her twin-sister and the imitation of her mother's slurred speech. Leaning on feminist and postmodern perspectives, this article analyzes how attempts to tame and integrate Nell into the modern American society failed.

Key words: language, indomitable, seclusion, globalization, cottage, audience.

Résumé

Moyen d'échange et d'autonomisation, le langage peut également être un instrument de mondialisation et de domination. Cet aspect du langage est mis en évidence dans le film de Michael David Apted *Nell*. Nell, le héros éponyme, est un sujet de conflit entre deux idéologies scientifiques due à son incapacité à s'exprimer de manière conventionnelle. Dissimulé dans le chevron d'une cabane dans les bois de la forêt de Caroline du Nord après la mort de sa mère, Nell est considérée comme un enfant sauvage qui n'a appris ni les habitudes mondaines ni la vie sociales et parle une langue inintelligible. Elle devient alors une attraction, une curiosité pour ses manières. Jérôme Lovell, le médecin de la ville, décide de l'aider à rester dans la maison de sa mère, tandis que Paula Olsen et son patron, Alexander Paley, l'utilisent comme un cas d'étude en laboratoire. Leurs points de vue divergents sur l'avenir de Nell les conduit au tribunal où ils sont assignés à l'observer pendant trois mois. Le résultat montre que le langage étrange de Nell résulte de ses échanges avec sa sœur jumelle et l'imitation de l'élocution de sa mère suite à des troubles cardio-vasculaires. En se nourrissant des approches féministes et postmodernes, cet article analyse comment les tentatives des scientifiques pour apprivoiser et intégrer Nell dans la société moderne américaine ont échoué.

Mots clés : langue, indomptable, isolement, mondialisation, cabane, public.

Introduction

The issue of language is central to human life and it has plurality of meanings and usages. Humans' use of language as a means of exchange and self-accomplishment determines their existence and singularity. In this scope, women are most of the times denied parts of its use. *Nell*, a film produced by Michael David Apted in 1994 and played by Jodie Foster as the main character, underlines the use of language as a means of globalization and domination in connection with Nell's inability to fluently express herself. The main actors are Jodie Foster (Nell), Liam Neeson (Jerome Lovell, 'Jerry'), Natasha Richardson (Paula Olsen), and Richard Libertine (Alexander Paley). The film is based on Mark Handley's play *Idioglossia*, screenplayed by William Nicholson. *Idioglossia* dramatizes the complexity of language in both linguistic and pathological facets. After her mother's death, Nell who has never seen the outside world remains alone in her mother's cottage and suddenly faces a series of events when people she has never thought about come around. She confronts a world that attempts to tame her according to its standards. Some studies have been conducted on Nell but most of them were directed toward "feral children" or children growing up with little or no contact with human beings. There are as well many reviews about the film and a phonological study of Nell's language by Linda Wright in her article *Universal Phonological Principles in Nell-Speak*, (Spring Semester 2006), but none of them deal with the girl's condition as a woman. In fact, an essential question that comes out when watching the film relates to the producer's choice of a female protagonist in developing an issue that attracts modern means of communication. This paper aims to show how scientists and their modern practices fail to subdue a diminished country girl. The language issue in this paper is neither linguistic nor stylistic. What is at stake is rather Nell's plight as society's handicapped woman who struggles to express her free will and the use of information technologies. Based for the most part on feminist and postmodern perspectives, a three-step analysis will be carried out. The first point articulates Nell's reclusive life and her communication trouble. The second point is her confrontation with the outside world and its aftermaths and the third and final point relates to the protagonist's lesson to her community.

I- Seclusion and Language Performance

Violet Kellty, Nell's late mother chooses to live in a small log house cottage in the middle of the forest as Henry David Thoreau did in *Walden. Walden* that was originally titled *Walden; Or, Life in the Woods* chronicles the two years that Thoreau himself spent in a cabin on a property owned by his friend and writer Ralph Waldo Emerson, near a pond called Walden Pond. But, unlike Henry David Thoreau, the cottage is Violet's permanent residence.

Sustained by stone blocks, the cottage faces a large river dotted with natural stones suitable for swimming. With its wonderful view, the landscape is the visitor's first attraction. It is a pastoral environment with no modern equipments such as electricity, telephone, running water. The furniture is made of woods. Thus, like transcendentalists, Violet lives a reclusive space. Turning around, one can see lamps hanging all over the house or candles in a position waiting to be lit.

The movie starts with a young man riding a motorbike in a thick North Carolina forest. He finds in a cottage the corpse of a dead woman taken care by an unknown person. Later, news report from the archive states that the woman, walking home one Sunday morning, after Church service, had been assailed by rapist gangsters who abused her. She delivers twins baby girls – unknown to viewers. One of them dies, and the other called Nell stays with her mother until the age of twenty. Both of them live in that remote cabin until the death of her mother. To preserve her privacy, no one was allowed inside Violet's cottage. Billy, the biker, comes to deliver his usual good stuffs and returns without entering the house. The price is left in a purse laid on a stone. But this time, after putting the goods on the usual stone and as he is about to leave, Billy hears a strange noise inside, which draws his attention every time he makes a move forwards. Finally, he enters with the box to discover a dead woman's body laying on the floor.

At first, Nell's face is not displayed. Only her hands cleaning and taking care of a woman body are apparent. She prepares the body for burial. Feeling the presence of an unknown person, Nell disappears to conceal herself in the house since her mother warns her about men being dangerous and wicked. Being aware of that and following the recommendation of her late mother, Nell lives in a concealment posture. Alone, Nell plays; she speaks as she would do with someone, runs around as if she were exercising. She sleeps at day time or works inside her house, and is active outdoors only after sunset. She explains that her mother told her about her rape and

warned her that men are evildoers. She based her explanation on a biblical verse from the King James Version, in the Book of *Isaiah* chapter1, verse 4: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward."

Nell's attitude toward men could be compared to that of Lawrence Kasdan's protagonist in *Body Heat* (1981), who epitomizes the postmodern hero as someone who is neither smart nor talented enough to succeed in his various enterprises. Though Nell is verbally diminished, she reacts strangely; that proves she is not brainless. This is particularly highlighted by the use of temporal distortion. The filmmaker constantly jumps into Nell's past life with her twin sister. The protagonist herself is nostalgic of her past, and is frequently with her late sister. She imagines herself in their past childhood, playing together, running in the forest, swimming or playing on the river bank or inside the cottage. At times, she sees her sister and physically runs after her. Milly follows Nell wherever she goes: in town, in the hospital, in the woods.

Nell lives in harmony with her environment. She bathes in the plain river, displaying her total nakedness, imitating or playing with an unseen person. She talks in front of the mirror to invisible people in a language she is the only one to understand. She cannot live anywhere else than in the cottage that is all she has and all she knows. She remains of her loved ones. Her late mother and late sister (Milly) whom she treats with reverence and love are there. Unlike modernists who always celebrate the new and consider ideas from the past to be "old-fashioned," Nell, like postmodernists, borrows from the past and combines it with new styles as – a "pick and mix" approach. She eats corn-flakes, wears modern cloths, and accepts her inspectors' ways of life. Like postmodern heroes, Nell earnestly manages to survive by making painful sacrifices, temporarily giving up her life style to face the enemy.

The mother's death triggers new problems in the girl's behavior. When Billy discovers the corpse, he informs the Sheriff of the town who looks for Jerry Lowell, the town doctor, to see him off to the place. Meanwhile, Billy, the dispatch rider who delivers Violet's food stuffs, comes back with friends to watch the fearful Nell. Nell, in fact, expresses a mood of cynicism, pessimism, and fear, but she is not resigned to death. Thus, from inside the cottage, she sees the predators and starts screaming for help. This is the starting point of Nell's problems with the

outside world and media as well. Luckily, she believes in God, and also in her mother's promise of a protective Angel to take care of her.

Jerry Lowell is first person mesmerized by the beauty of the country girl. When he enters the cottage, he is fascinated by the woody-styled cabin with almost everything from the natural surroundings. No one knows about another person living in the cottage with Violet. When he is left alone, Jerry inspects the house and finds a terrified and troubled young woman hiding in the rafters of the cottage and humming a music-kind sound. When Nell sees the doctor, she screams fiercely, speaking furiously and speedily in a bizarre language and manners. The Sheriff backs the doctor up and both go out of the cabin. But Jerry comes back alone to talk to the girl who slams the door on him. Again, Jerry remains in the cabin and looks around. In so doing, he notices late Violet's Bible with a note inviting whoever finds it to look after Nell. Jerry and the Sheriff decide to bring her to social services, but the major inconvenience to the girl's integration is her discomfited language which she has acquired by imitating her mother's inaudible language.

Indeed, after her rape, Violet is reported to have a series of strokes that affect her fluency and her way of speaking. Fluency in language is gained by performance which is the concrete use of language. The lack of practice creates a handicap in the girl's oral expression. Consequently, she mumbles her words. As such, she cannot be understood by common people.

Language does not necessarily mean production of sounds. It is also gesture and behavior. Every language has its codes to be unveiled by users. Since her mother has passed away, Nell has to abide by a new life style; hence, she must learn to speak as the people of her new world do, and adopts their habits and style of life to avoid perishing. Relying on Bakhtin's argument that the moral conscience is guided by love, sentiment, and responsibility for others, Jerry Lowell is touched by the girl's dilemma. As a consequence, he decides to help her adjust in her self-protected surroundings. Nell's encounter with the people of the town is the beginning of a new episode of her life.

II- Nell's Interaction with the New World

Following her mother's death, Nell has to face a new reality, and make her own experience of what her mother told her about the world and people's morality. As Dr. Jerome Lowell soon discovers his inability to treat Nell, he acts like the mother's promised Angel, requesting the help

of Dr. Paula Olsen, a psychologist and researcher, who works with autistic children, to take care of Nell. The choice is in connection with Nell's inability to speak fluently. Paula examines the girl and then reports to her boss Dr. Paley. Both her colleague Dr. Paley and herself are interested in studying the girl as a "wild or feral child." They find in her a way to satisfy not only a curiosity but also to gain a scientific prowess they desire to achieve. Dr. Paley is radical about the girl's removal from the cottage to an institution and explains his position by arguing that Nell has never left the cottage since her birth. Indeed, she knows nothing about civilization: she has never watched television, listened to Rock and Roll, seen modern world images, and seen cars. The question then is to know her personality and the language or "tongue" she speaks.

Without informing Jerry, Paula and Dr. Paley decide to remove Nell from the cottage for medical surveillance. They request a court order entitling them to institutionalize Nell for "further study" but Jerry gets another court decision against Nell's removal from her cottage. At the first audience, Jerry supports the girl's independence and respect of her private life, arguing that she has her house, her life. As such, she does not need anybody's help. Nell's case testifies to the thirst of power or fame that characterizes human nature. The Paley's aspiration is to take advantage of the girl's plight for their professional growth or distinction.

The legal decision confers Olsen and Lovell three months to observe and interact with Nell in the forest cottage and take notes concerning her real needs. Thus, Paula goes back to town and brings back a lab-funded houseboat, electronic equipments to monitor Nell's "wild child" behavior. The houseboat contains all the modern commodities with video and cameras for recording purpose, electric bulbs. Almost immediately, Paula discovers that Nell speaks English. The distortion of her language is based partly on her mother's aphasic speech after a stroke. Paula's outcome might match Mary Klages' proposed postmodern motto which states: " 'Think globally, act locally' – and don't worry about any grand scheme or master plan." (2007, 10) Klages sends the records to Dr. Paley, explaining that she has not found any abnormal reaction in the girl's behavior. Thus, to abide by Mary Klages's statement, before taking any major decision concerning Nell's future life, Dr. Palley's group must closely analyze her case as unique instead of generalizing it.

In the meantime, annoyed and confident at a time, after settling a tent a short distance from the cottage, Jerry Lowell often goes inside just to sit in order to inspect and listen to Nell. He tries

to comfort her, assuring her of his friendship while learning her language. He tells her a story of his childhood, playing joyfully and innocently with other boys. The three months monitoring favors Nell's acquaintance with Jerry's presence. Therefore, she gets self-assured and fearlessly reacts by moving toward him. As Nell comes to trust Jerry, she sees him as a friend, the "*ga'inja*" her mother promised would come to comfort her. Jerry later realizes that "*ga'inja*" means guardian angel.

In the end, Nell is brought to town for the very first time by her new friends Jerry and Paula. The former antagonists began an unwilling friendship over the girl's case during their stay in the forest. In town, Nell befriends the Sheriff's depressed wife. In addition, she has an unfortunate encounter with some vulgar crook boys in a pool hall when she flees from the supermarket leaving her friends behind her. The boys' attitude encourages Jerry and Paula to take her away from them. Meanwhile, Dr. Paley keeps on giving Nell the "wild child" profile even after studying films of her showing that she does not fit that quality. Through Nell's interaction with the world, two aspects of language are highlighted: language as a means of globalization and of domination.

a) Language as a Means of Globalization.

Different languages are source of richness and diversity. "Nellish" or Nell-speak describes the girl's speech as her unique language. That Language characterizes and individualizes her as an entity. But one of the scientist groups wants her to adhere to the universal language that can be described as a known and widely spoken language. There are as well universal languages in many domains of activities and one of the most common is computer science language. A computer illiterate is like a blind person in today's global society.

Nell's communicational trouble is a magnet to entice modern means of communication whose roles are to dispatch news around the world. Her language problem is a metaphor of a broken communication between identified entities such as politicians who refuse to listen to each other to peacefully settle issues. Language as a means of identification allows its users to claim belonging, to a community or togetherness. Dr. Paley describes Nell's language as a "tongue" referring to indigenous or uncivilized people's means of communication. For Linguists,

specifically structuralists, language is foremost a set of codes used for communication. A code itself is a sign to be unveiled. Therefore, the understanding of a given language requires apprenticeship. At the tribunal, the audience is unable to understand Nell's verbal communication. Since her first test on Nell, Paula told Dr. Paley that she speaks English, meaning she is like all of them. But really, Nell mumbles her "English." She does not pronounce words, nor react the way people do. Therefore, she is abnormal and needs to be educated. The girl's state attracts series of communication systems. They range from the rustic mouth to ear system through the static image and written system to the postmodern high technologies with its screened live images and sound systems.

Billy, the first witness of the scene talks to the town sheriff who reports to Jerry the doctor. Then, Billy continues talking about Nell to some people and a journalist reporter overhears him. The latter goes to the cottage to report on her. First, Nell quietly welcomes him with his apparatus. Then she starts screaming bitterly when he makes his first shot flashings. The television reporters come with helicopter which frightens her as well. It is then a ballet of journalists coming up and down looking for breaking news.

These scenes of the film exemplify Frederic Jameson's statement when he says that "society has moved beyond capitalism into the information age, in which we are constantly bombarded with advertisements, videos, and product placement." (1991) Nell is placed in a situation where she cannot escape curiosity created by the advertisement of information technologies. The journalists demonstrate two facts. The news reporter comes with a camera to catch fixed pictures and written description of the place to attract people's curiosity. The video reporters come with their high-technology machineries to catch living pictures showing the girl's behavior and details of her living environment. They display another dimension of technological evolution or revolution in connection with postmodernist technoculture. They use a flying machine that overflies the entire area. *Nell* highlights contemporary American news consumerism. The performance of information technologies leads journalists to chase latest and attractive news worthy to be showed or sold. The American tip of exaggeration is displayed with Nell's story, since overstatement is a motivation for consumerism. There is no more privacy, no more secrecy; the globalization of the world is forced on people and former private affairs are exposed to global knowledge.

Nell seems to be a combination of "good" and "evil" features making her a complex individual. She reconciles Jerry's and Paula's views and contributes to make them husband and wife. She is fearful with a doubtful future until the end of the last audience opposing the two scientist groups. The subsequent implied purpose of the trial is the use of language as a means of domination.

b) Language as a Tool of Domination

Domination is generally defined as the exercise of power or influence over someone or something, or the state of being so controlled. During slavery, in America, slaves were forced to change their names and were scattered in order to prevent them from communicating with their fellow slaves. Therefore, the master's language is imposed on them to control them. In light of that process, Nell, is on the process of being controlled by a system that uses machines, high technology to identify the language she mumbles and then make her speak common language. To undertake the monitoring process, two scientist groups – Paley and Paula on the one hand, and Jerry and Paula on the other – are opposed. This opposition raises the question of conflicting opinion. Dr. Paley's group wants Nell to speak their "English" language. For, speaking the same language reveals two aspects of domination. On the one hand, it shows a sense of belonging. Those who speak the same language claim a society that advocates uniformity of behavior and have the same codes and conventions. Seeing something dissimilar is strange, abnormal and needs improvement. Paula uses her machines to monitor Nell and determines whether she responds to human characteristics set by society. Here, the constructed forms of knowledge are offered to her by force.

For Dr. Paley, Nell has human features but animalistic behavior that needs to be redressed. His group thinks they can use technology to overcome most of life problems. Dr. Paley positions himself as a medium to advertise America's nationalism, consumerist and bourgeoisie culture that are brought to Nell by Paula's boathouse. At the town supermarket where they send Nell, the same American consumerist culture is displayed. Nell just grasps quantities of canned boxes, fast foods and whatever bottles or drinks she finds. Her gesture in the supermarket is the satire of the American life standards she refuses to abide. The gesture contrasts with her views about

civilization. On the other hand, it indicates women's domination based on Nell as a female character with language problem. This can be seen as a metaphor of women's denial of speech and decision making. Nell is used as an object of scientific experimentation. Dr. Paley's stating that Nell's new life has already started is his way of imposing modern social life style to the girl. He sets aside Nell's desire to depart from town noises: music, Rock and Roll, cars, gas, and pollution as in Dellilo's *White Noise* (1998). He requests a court decision to remove Nell from her cottage to a kind of prison in order to tame her.

Considered abnormal due to her slurred language, Nell is not associated to the decision about her future life. As a diminished character, Nell embodies, in a postcolonial terms, a subaltern seeking voice. In the same way, as women who are denied of speech in their societies, Nell is not allowed to express herself because of the rules and regulations of the consumerist world in which she is brought. Therefore, she mumbles her views to these scientists who speak on her behalf. Rightly, at the last audience, it is Jerry, the male doctor who plays the role of interpreter. It is important to underline that the audience members listen to Jerry's speech while looking at Nell's gestures rather than listening to her. As such, one can say that Nell speaks under the cover of Jerry, epitomizing Gayatri Spivak's conception of the subaltern. In light of this essay, Nell plays many subordinated roles that could be qualified as a subaltern or colonized person. Like a slave or a subaltern, she is denied self-expression. Silenced by the experience of her life, and deprived of speech, Nell's desire to speak can be analyzed from a postcolonial standpoint. She is a subaltern seeking a voice of her own while a group of scientists wants to give her a voice matching their desire. The process to make her get their language has a pink of colonization or objectivation of the subject.

As a subject, Nell does not have a voice or a permission to defend herself unless she speaks the language of the oppressor. Jerry is the one who volunteers to defend her case at court. But, in the end, Nell stands up to take the floor by force. As she does, she constructs a self-identity and shows her desire to communicate her visions to the world. It is worth stating that language is not only oral but also factual as well as gesture. Imposing modern language to Nell is a way of compelling her to use a type of language; that of modern consumption, including manufactured foods, modern music and all that goes with.

The second group, led by Jerry, pleads for the girl's freedom and autonomy. Paula's position in the two groups is due to the double role she plays on both sides before siding Jerry. As a woman, she quickly understands Nell's desire for autonomy, and to live in communion with her natural environment in light of the environmentalist feminists' thoughts. These feminists assimilate woman's vulnerability with the fragility of nature. Nature can not physically defend itself against human's brutality. Paradoxically, its destruction has negative consequences on human life. Likewise, Violet's rape contributes to her daughter's distorted language. But Nell's handicap has not prevented her to deliver a memorable lesson to the world.

III- Nell's Lessons to the World.

One characteristic of postmodern society is the praise of free will which seems to be denied of Nell. She claims her freedom to live where she wants, insisting to live outside American polluted and noisy society. She fights cultural assimilation and encourages separate life styles and mutual respect.

When one examines some of the characters' life, one finds out that Nell has a blameless attitude that makes her purer than anybody else in the story. She has clean and lovely personality; she is gentle, and loves people and nature as well. The Lullaby she sings at the beginning of the film demonstrates her love for independence, quietness and nature: "Quiet […] quiet doggies, quiet eyes, quiet all, quiet tree, quiet wind, quiet everywhere." Her soothing song is her way to praise solitary life in the wood where everything is pure, natural and quiet. In her "wood," she reconciles Jerry's and Paula's contradictory views over her condition and that leads to their union at the end of the film. Innocently, she faces a cohort of scientists with their technology, rushing here and there to find out abnormality in her life since she lives by instinct, relying on godly and natural facts.

Despite her language trouble, Nell starts protesting since the first outsiders intrude into her life. She screams out of fear and disagreement against the inner thought of her environmental aggressors. She struggles to prevent Paula from taking her blood for analysis. She protests Dr. Paley's proposal to institutionalize her by crying. As a result, at the town hospital where she is brought to escape the media exposure, she tries to harm herself by striking her head against the

hospital glass-halls, not knowing the reasons of her presence there. She stops talking and interacting with her friend Jerry. Acting as her mother's promised angel, Jerry continues to back her. He is with her whatever the situation. He moves her from the hospital to a hotel where he cries for her case. He takes her from those villains who want to use her either for mockery, sexual pleasure or for laboratory study case until the day of the trial.

When they go to town for the second audience after the three-month surveillance, Nell's lack-of-concerns attitude discourages Jerry who pleads for her freedom. Nell starts worrying again for her security. At the court, the following day, thanks to the media advertisement on her case, Nell's plight attracts many people in the court house as it has been with the media in the forest. The motley audience consists of people from different backgrounds, nationalities, generations, social classes, physically or psychologically challenged and races. Every race, continent, corner of the world is concerned with freedom, free will and freedom of speech. Nell is not expected to win the trial, first, because of her inability to speak and second because of her status as a disable woman. The two scientist groups take turn and try to convince the jury with well constructed arguments. Dr. Paley, who had never seen Nell, delivers the expert opinion that she has Asperger Syndrome and belongs to an Institution. He insists that Nell's past life is gone and a new one has started. So, the details of that life have to be settled. Dr. Paley gives voice to postmodernists who argue that people have become disillusioned with the idea that they can use science and rational thought to make the world a better place, ignoring the negative effects of the so-called 'progress,' which are pollution, environmental perturbation that are harmful to human populations. Angrily, Jerry interrupts Dr. Paley several times to defend Nell's capabilities to take care of herself. But to maintain order, the court warns him to keep quiet. In the meantime, betraying her panic, Nell stands up and moves forward to speak for herself, something even her friends did not expect. In so doing, she finally shows that she is just like them, only stronger in mind, consciously trying to ride the world of evil, refusing uniformity of life. One of the film reviewers, James Hitchcock said that "…it is made quite clear in the film that Nell is neither mentally ill nor mentally handicapped. She merely speaks a different language – both literally and metaphorically – from the rest of the world." So, when everything seems to collapse, helpless and defenseless, Nell addresses the audience in a special unexpected way. Knowing that the audience does not understand her speech because of her specific manner and language, she asks

Jerry who takes time to observe and learn her language to interpret for her. Nell speaks to the audience members saying:

> "Jerry speak for Nell?"
> From the time Maw walk with the Lord, Nell been alone. Nell been afraid, but every soul (is) afraid, everywhere. And the kind/sweet Lord, he quiets our tears, our many tears. Everyone is gone. Many things for knowing. You have big things. You're knowing big things. But you're not seeing into each others' eyes. You're aching after quietness. I've lived a small life. I know small things...dear souls...Jerry and Paula and Maw and May. I know all souls go away, and Nell is alone. Jerry stays with Jerry, and Nell stays with Nell. No fear for Nell...no cry for Nell. I have no bigger sorrows than you.

In this memorable lesson to the audience, Nell first, refers to the Lord who, she says, is with her mother. She talks about the presence of the Lord who cares for everybody even frightened souls, God that also wipes tears and soothes hearts. She tells them that while physically alone, she is not alone spiritually since her loved ones have departed from her. She then moves to address the audience reminding them their material possessions and intellectual knowledge. She points out the state of hypocrisy of the modern world and people's thirst for quietness. She concludes by the insignificance of her own life and the fact that she has limited knowledge and has known few people. She talks about the individuality and the fate of all living souls. She asks the world not to fear nor cry for her because she is self-sufficient.

As to avoid cultural and religious limitations and barriers, Nell has a male interpret but plays the foremost role in leading the speech for interpretation. In so doing, she shows the capability of dominated or minority people to stand for themselves and reverse the logic of dualism and of domination that confers superiority to everything on the male side. Another way to see it is the complementarity between men and women: Nell speaks and Jerry translates. The fact of being side by side, pleading for the same problem shows the importance of the issue, and the fact that women's claims are righteous and worthy to be advocated. In the end, Nell and Jerry teach the audience how patience can solve most of world problems.

By his patience and confidence, Jerry learns the girl's language. Moreover, nothing can be acquired without effort or learning. Jerry and Nell help the audience realize that one needs to be supportive and supported when one is overwhelmed by sorrows of life. The last point is that the world should not downcast nor reject handicapped people but rather integrate them based on their physical or mental state. That last exhilarating revolt enables Nell to experience total freedom for the first time and for the rest of her life. Nell's victory over scientists brings people to share her views.

Nell acts as God's messenger to the scientists who fail to tame her. She shows them the joys of the natural world by drawing them together after a fight over her institutionalization. She becomes the channel which enables them to share the stories of their intimate lives each time they quarrel. In the last scene which takes place five years later, Jerry and Paula bring their daughter to visit Nell in her cottage during her birthday. There again, Nell teaches a song she sang with her twin sister to Paula and Jerry's young daughter. In so doing, not only does she overturn the American global society, she also communicates her inner thought to the coming generations, showing the importance of self-accomplishment and quietness. She is surrounded by friends from town. Instead of staying with the group, Jerry and Paula choose to sit in the cottage veranda to watch the scenery. This last scene is the celebration of Nell and her friends' victory over the so-called American civilized modern world. Nell is indomitable. She is pushed out of the cottage, which represents her self-determination to live in a natural environment. But she forces herself back in the cottage.

Conclusion

Nell is a drama film. Three mains themes connected to women's domination and American contemporary life are explored through this film. The first theme about seclusion and language performance shows the protagonist struggling to remain in her mother's cottage by hiding in the rafters. Left alone after her mother's death, Nell faces her destiny confronting new realities of life. She mostly expresses fears, apprehensions, and a profound uneasiness regarding contemporary social institutions and people. Secondly, due to her inability to fluently express herself, she becomes an object of curiosity for scientists and the town. Nell does not speak the

common language but claims cultural hybridity where modernism and tradition could stand side by side through acceptance of various voices, and different ways of life. Thus, scientists try to make her an object of research, addressing her as a "wild child" to reeducate so as she can get common language. This highlights the problem of domination based on men's will to always force their view on women and shows how globalization is imposed on people both by men and Information Technologies. The third theme concerns Nell's victory over the scientists and her reunification with nature through a long struggle undertaken by her friends Jerry and Paula. But more, she teaches historical lessons to a variety of audience members, confessing the way she felt after her mother died, then, criticizing American modern society that is starving for quietness and peace. Finally, her speaking of a different language, which is the metaphor of the film, alludes to American diversity that attracts people across the world.

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